Richard Wurmbrand (1909-2001)

2(Books by Pastor & Mrs. Richard Wurmbrand)

[rp-wurmbrand.otl]

https://www.google.com/search?q=Richard+Wurmbrand

[WurmbrandMichael.otl][Shakespeare.otl][persecution.otl]

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[tvom.otl]
[kafka.otl]7

Please note:
I do not know of a standard 3-character abbreviations for
the books of the Bible. For my own convenience
(and in this text file) I used the abbreviations below.

For example, if Pastor Wurmbrand referred to John 3:16
in any of his books, you will find "JHN 3:16" in that book;
1 John 3:2 under "1JN 3:2", etc.

(If the columns below appear misaligned, you might have to
change to "full window" view and to use a non-proportional font
such as Courier or New Courier.)

OLD TESTAMENT

GEN...Genesis	2CH...2 Chronicles	DAN...Daniel
EXO...Exodus	EZR...Ezra	HOS...Hosea
LEV...Leviticus	NEH...Nehemiah	JOE...Joel
NUM...Numbers	EST...Esther	AMO...Amos
DEU...Deuteronomy	JOB...Job	OBA...Obadiah
JOS...Joshua	PSA...Psalms	JNH...Jonah
JDG...Judges	PRO...Proverbs	MIC...Micah
RUT...Ruth	ECC...Ecclesiastes	NAH...Nahum
1SM...1 Samuel	SOS...Song of Solomon	HAB...Habbakkuk
2SM...2 Samuel	ISA...Isaiah	ZEP...Zephaniah
1KI...1 Kings	JER...Jeremiah	HAG...Haggai
2KI...2 Kings	LAM...Lamentation	ZEC...Zechariah
1CH...1 Chronicles	EZE...Ezekiel	MAL...Malachi

NEW TESTAMENT

MTT...Matthew	EPH...Ephesians	HEB...Hebrews
MRK...Mark	PHP...Philippians	JAS...James
LUK...Luke	COL...Colossians	1PE...1 Peter
JHN...John	1TH...1 Thessalonians	2PE...2 Peter
ACT...Acts	2TH...2 Thessalonians	1JN...1 John
ROM...Romans	1TM...1 Timothy	2JN...2 John
1CO...1 Corinthians	2TM...2 Timothy	3JN...3 John
2CO...2 Corinthians	TIT...Titus	JUD...Jude
GAL...Galatians	PHM...Philemon	REV...Revelation

Most texts that are...
a. italicized in the book are enclosed by tildes (~).
b. bold in the book are enclosed by bullets ( ).

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About

"No contemporary person has meant so much for the opening of the eyes of the West to what is going on in the Communist camp - except the much decried Wurmbrand. Before Wurmbrand came, we spoke to deaf ears."
The Revd Michael Bourdeaux, Director of the Institute for the Study of Religion and Communism, London

"Wurmbrand irritates, but opens our eyes ... Wurmbrand has got the world to hearken, even if he has sacrificed himself. He has shouted the cry of the martyrs."
The Revd Ingemar Martinson, General Secretary of the Slavic Mission, Sweden

"Wurmbrand is an Iron Curtain Paul. He is the most authoritative voice of the Underground Church, more than a living martyr."
~Underground Evangelism~

"Since the Sermon on the Mount was delivered, no one has preached with love like Richard Wurmbrand."
~Haratta~, Finland

"Wurmbrand has brought to the universal Church a new dimension, reminding it about the martyrs."
~Church Times~, London

"Wurmbrand burst like a fireball across the cool complacency of some."
USA Congressional Record

"We were hit by a hurricane called Wurmbrand."
~Tablet~, New Zealand

"We have checked and can say with almost certainty that there has never been a Pastor Wurmbrand in Romania."
Finnish Communist newspaper

"The manifestations of Wurmbrand are determined by high emotions, they are without compromise and often naive ... His judgements about church politics prove a terrifying narrowness ... The danger of Wurmbrand's grotesque distortions consists in the fact that he calls Christian groups in Eastern Europe to resistance until death ...
Gerhard Simon in ~The Churches in Russia~

"In the present Communist regimes strong powers for the humanization of society lie hidden ... Wurmbrand becomes really dangerous."
Van de Heuwell, then Director of Public Relations, the World Council of Churches

"Pastor Richard Wurmbrand possesses a bordello and nine night clubs in the USA."
From the Soviet Film, ~The Emissaries~, which had as its target the smuggling of religious literature into the USSR, organized by "Jesus to the Communist World"

"Wurmbrand is the devil's mouthpiece."
~Arbeiterzeitung~, Switzerland

"Wurmbrand is a new St John the Baptist ... a voice crying in the wilderness."
~Christianity Today~, USA

"Wurmbrand is a Marxist theologian."
~The Pilgrim~, USA

"Wurmbrand is a passionate anti-Communist and anti-Soviet. His books are full of unveiled hatred."
Several Soviet newspapers

"Wurmbrand completely rejects scholarly objectivity."
~Reformatorisch Dagbladett~, Holland

"Wurmbrand is a red pastor."
~Vaderland~, South Africa

"Wurmbrand misuses the pulpit for spreading his political views."
The Swedish Bishop Strom in ~Dalademokraten~

"Wurmbrand is one of the most active voices of anti-Communism."
~Polititcheskoie Samoabrazonvanie~, Moscow

"Except the Bible, nothing has shaken me like Wurmbrand's ~Tortured For Christ~. It is the message of the century. Even more: since the persecution of Christians by Nero, it is the most powerful Act of Martyrs."
Dr Kurt Koch, renowned German evangelical pastor and author

"Wurmbrand is broadly charitable in his understanding of God's love and the nature of man. Not even an ounce of contentiousness appears in his books. Perhaps the agony of long imprisonment purges that out of a man."
~Alliance Witness~, USA

"Wurmbrand suffered beastly treatment by the Communists, so he has remained with a confused mind. He is not Evangelical, so he cannot be trusted. He is rather a mystic."
A Dutch Christian magazine

"Wurmbrand is intemperate."
~Catholic Herald~, London

"Wurmbrand speaks softly, without flourished comparisons and without dramatic exaggerations ... His concepts of Christianity come from the original sources ... Loud promotion does not correspond to his character.
Richard Wurmbrand is surprisingly near to the Nazarene whom he represents. Weak in health, he catches through unyielding spiritual power. He descends from the podium exhausted and has made his audience ashamed rather than inflamed."
~Berner Tagblatt~, Switzerland

"Wurmbrand is a dirty Jew."
~Christian Vanguard~, USA

"Wurmbrand has been pro-Nazi."
~Verden Gang~, Norway

"Wurmbrand, a fascinating and passionate (sometimes even excessively so) personality, appears always firm in the fight against the scepticism of occidental Christianity, which, with rare exceptions, cannot believe that Communism might be a menace for her."
~La Suisse~, Switzerland

"Wurmbrand's book ~If that were Christ would you give Him your blanket?~ convinces one to give his blanket not only to one's persecuted brother, but even to one's persecutor, so full of love is it."
~Nuova Republica~, Italy

"The denunciations of tortures and barbarisms in the Communist camp made by Wurmbrand are more moving than those of Solzhenitsyn."
~Il Citadino~, Italy

"Wurmbrand's attacks on Communism's treatment of Christian prisoners was viewed by many as sensationalist until Solzhenitsyn's ~Gulag Archipelago~ confirmed his description of the atrocities."
~Dialy News~, California

"Thank God for me like Solzhenitsyn and Wurmbrand. Both have written books on their imprisonment in Communist countries These books have been made available to us for a reason - a divine warning."
~Tacoma News Tribune~, USA

"Some church leaders in the West attack Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, the leading fighter for the Underground Church, accusing him of lying and exaggerating regarding the atrocities in Communist prisons. I have personally met Christians who sat in prison with Wurmbrand. They told me, 'Not only is everything which Wurmbrand says true, but much, much more. Nobody can describe the ferocious things happening there.'"
Mrs Anutza Moise, author of ~A ransom for Wurmbrand~ in ~Morgenbladet~, Norway

"Reverend Richard Wurmbrand still bears the marks on his body of hideous Communist tortures. He is an internationally respected author, lecturer and evangelist."
~Boston Herald~, USA

"The publicity given Solzhenitsyn has brought to light the truth of Wurmbrand's outspoken statements. Should we not back up Wurmbrand and his Christ-like mission to the Communist world?"
~Reformatio~, Switzerland

"Both Solzhenitsyn and Wurmbrand are giants in modern church history."
~Dagen~, Norway

The following - excerpted from a preface to Pastor Wurmbrand's book, " The Total Blessing," is from Tom White, Director of The Voice of the Martyrs, USA:

The facts about the author are much simpler: He is an ordinary Christian who lived in very unusual circumstances.

He is a pastor of Jewish descent, who served in Romania in Fascist and Communist times. His wife, Sabina, and he were also in jail under Communists, the author for fourteen years, his wife for three. Both parents of his wife, three sisters, a brother and six foster children (they count as foster children only because legal adoption was not

possible) were killed in the holocaust.

During his term in jail, he never had any books or writing materials. He could only meditate and have spiritual experiences, favoured by the fact that he spent years in solitary confinement.

After the ordeal, Wurmbrand arrived in the West where he founded an international organization dedicated to helping persecuted churches and families of prisoners. It was founded to be the voice of the martyrs: making known [not only] their suffering, but also their splendid examples of love and heroism.

The organization has its offices in 40 countries and expands its work to 70.

In different countries it works under different names. In the USA it is called "The Voice of the Martyrs." In the UK it has been founded by the Revd Stuart Harris and is named "Release International."

Mr Harris was the first Western pastor to come to Romania in a time of fierce persecution; he met secretly with the author to get first-hand information about the suffering church, and brought its message to Great Britain.

The organization provides churches oppressed by Communism and Islam with God's word and literature in 63 languages, legally where possible. Where this is not possible they introduce books by other ways. In some cases they create, at great risk, secret printing presses within countries with oppressive regimes.

Pastor Wurmbrand wrote much about the suffering churches and missionary problems. This time he has written a book about God and human life. Most of the thoughts contained in this book come from when he was alone in a cell, 30 feet beneath the earth, never, but never, seeing sun, moon, stars, trees, flowers, birds, butterflies. He never saw any other color than grey - the grey of the walls and of the prison uniforms. He never heard a voice except the insults of those who watched him.

So don't wonder if some of these thoughts seem strange. They come from a man who lived a strange life.

1909-2001

From: david m witt <dcwitt1@juno.com>

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TimDarcie@AOL.com, tommyhellfighter@juno.com
Date: Mon, 19 Feb 2001 15:38:08 -0600
Subject: Richard Wurmbrand 1909-2001

Dear Prayer Warriors,

The Lord has granted Richard Wurmbrand the desire of His heart: He is home at peace with Jesus!!! I ask you all a few months ago to pray that God complete all that need to be done to bring our dear father in the Lord home. God has granted is so and on Sat. Feb 17th Pastor Richard Wurmbrand pasted away to be with Jesus and Sabina and so many more.

I believe my life and even all of your prayers are part of Pastor Wurmbrands reward and legacy. If it were not for him I would not understand and love our persecuted brothers and sisters today. If I were not in this work I would not e-mail you the notes of prayer. So in one way or another I think all of us can say we have been impacted by this servant of God.

If I had time today I could write you quotes and storys of Richard Wurmbrand all day long. On a human level, possibly only behind my parents, are Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand in terms of the effect they have had on my life. I will always consider them spiritual parents. So the loss of Pastor Wurmbrand is the loss of a spiritual father. God has prepared me well in that I knew it was time and I have been praying for the homecoming, and I have so many of Richard Wurmbrand's writings to feed upon. Therefore his influence is not gone.

For a beautiful overview and testimony of Pastor Wurmbrand's life please visit the web page http://members-proxy-1.mmbrprxy.home.net/amschl/richardwurmbrand/ I think the time spend reading his story might be worth your time.

I take the staff today who have taken care of Richard Wurmbrand. They are doing well and request your prayers during these busy and emotional days.

I will be at the memorial this weekend if any of you can come I would love to see you.

Until we see him in heaven,
David

All and everyone are invited to the services this weekend

Visitation and Testimonial Services will take place on Friday, 2/23/2001 at 7PM in the Memorial Chapel, entrance through Gate 1, and Saturday, 2/24/01, 1PM in the Hillside Chapel, Gate 17, at the Rose Hill Cemetery, 3888 Workman Mill Rd, in Whittier, CA. 90601 (phone: 562 699-0921; fax: 562 699-6372; http://rosehills.com). The Grave is located in the Garden of Meditation, the first plot behind the funeral building, right by the entrance

lot 410 grave 4
curb 108 4 4 rows left 8 spaces

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REVEREND RICHARD WURMBRAND
1909-2001

Rev. Wurmbrand spent 14 years in Romaninan communist prisons, of which nearly three years in a solitary cell. His life experience was described in several worldwide bestsellers (see biography and funeral announcement below.) From his book In God's Underground comes this description, in a poem, of what he considered to be one of his most important spiritual experiences:

"Alone in the cell, now, I felt Satan’s presence. It was dark and cold, and he was mocking me. The Bible speaks of places "where satyrs dance," and this had become such a place. I heard his voice day and night, " Where's Jesus? Your Savior can't save you You've been tricked, and you'

ve tricked others. He isn't the Messiah?you followed the wrong man" I cried aloud, "Then who is the true Messiah who will come?" The answer was plain, but too blasphemous to repeat. I had written books and articles proving Christ was the Messiah, but now I could not think of one argument. The devils who made Nils Hauge, the great Norwegian evangelist, waver in his faith while in jail, who made even John the Baptist doubt in his dungeon, raged against me. I was weaponless. My joy and serenity were gone. I had felt Christ so close to me before, easing my bitterness, lightening the darkness, but now I cried, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani" and I felt utterly forsaken.

"During those black, horrible days, I slowly composed a long poem which may not be easily accepted by those who have not known any similar physical and spiritual state. It was my salvation. By word, rhythm and incantation, I was able to defeat Satan. Here is an unrhymed and unmetrical version which gives the exact meaning of the Rumanian:

From childhood I frequented temples and churches. In them God was glorified. Different priests sang and tensed with zeal. They claimed it right to love You. But as I grew, I saw such deep sorrow in the world of this God that I said to myself, "He has a heart of stone. Otherwise He would ease the difficulties of the way for us." Sick children struggle with fever in hospital: sad parents pray for them. Heaven is deaf. The ones we love go to the valley of death, even when our prayers are long. Innocent men are burned alive in furnaces. And heaven is silent. It lets things be. Can God wonder, if, in undertones, even the believers begin to doubt? Hungry, tortured, persecuted in their own land, they have no answers to these questions. The Almighty is disgraced by the horrors that befall us.
How can I love the creator of microbes and of tigers that tear men? How can I love Him who tortures all his servants because one ate from a tree? Sadder than job, I have neither wife, child nor comforters, and in this prison there is neither sun nor air and the regime is hard to endure.

From my bed of planks they will make my coffin. Stretched upon it, I try to find why my thoughts run to You, why my writings all turn towards You? Why is this passionate love in my soul, why does my song go only to You? I know I am rejected; soon I will putrefy in a tomb.
The bride of the Song of Songs did not love when she asked if You are " rightly loved." Love is its own justification. Love is not for the wise. Through a thousand ordeals she will not cease to love. Though fire burns and the waves drown her, she will kiss the hand that hurts. If she finds no answer to her questions she is confident and waits. One day the sun will shine in hidden places and all will be made plain.

Forgiveness of many sins only increased Magdalene's burning love. But she gave perfume and shed tears before You said Your forgiving word. And had You not said it, still she would have sat and wept for the love she

has towards You, even being in sin. She loved You before Your blood was shed. She loved You before You forgave. Neither do I ask if it is right to give You love. I do not love in hope of salvation. I would love You in everlasting misfortune. I would love You even in consuming fire. If You had refused to descend to men, You would have been my distant dream. If You had refused to sow Your word, I would love You without hearing it. If You had hesitated and fled from the Crucifixion, and I were not saved, still I would love You. And even if I found sin in You, I would cover it with my love.
Now I will dare to say mad words, so that all may know how much I love. Now I will touch untouched strings and magnify You with a new music. If the prophets had predicted another, I would leave them, not You. Let them produce a thousand proofs, I will keep my love for You. If I divined that You were a deceiver, I would pray for You weeping and, though I could not follow You in falsehood, it would not lessen my love. For Saul, Samuel passed a life in weeping and severe fasting. So my love would resist even if I knew You lost. If You, not Satan, had risen wrongly in revolt against Heaven and lost the loveliness of wings and fallen like an archangel from high, hopeless, I would hope that the Father would forgive You and that one day You would walk with Him again in the gold streets of Heaven.
If You were a myth, I would leave reality and live with You in a dream. If they proved You did not exist, You would receive life from my love. My love is mad, without motive, as Your love is, too. Lord Jesus, find some happiness here. For more I cannot give you.

When I had completed this poem, I no longer felt the nearness of Satan. He had gone. In the silence I felt the kiss of Christ, and everyone is silent when he is kissed. Quiet and joy returned."

Sign Guestbook

BIOGRAPHY
Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, 91, author of 18 worldwide Christian bestsellers, translated in over 70 languages mostly describing his 14 years of communist imprisonment, was born the youngest of four boys, in a Jewish family in Bucharest, Romania. Shortly thereafter, the father, a dentist established a practice and moved the family to Istanbul, Turkey. Upon the death of the father from a flu epidemic in 1919, the now extremely poor family returned to Romania. Richard, intellectually gifted, fluent in 9 languages, had a stormy youth, was active in leftist politics and working as a stockbroker when marrying Sabina in 1936. Same year, the Jewish couple met during a vacation in the Romanian mountains, a German carpenter who placed a Bible into their hands. Hardly having any education and unable to answer their questions, this carpenter did not do much more than urge these two young, educated, Jewish intellectuals

to just take the time and read at least one of the Gospels, in essence a short biography of the most famous personality of the Jewish people, Jesus Christ. Sabina and Richard meeting also other Jewish-Christians converted and were baptized. They joined the church of the Anglican Mission to the Jews in Bucharest, Romania. Eventually studying on his own, Richard a charismatic speaker, was first ordained as an Anglican and then after WW II re-ordained as a Lutheran minister. Their only son, Michael was born in 1939.

Due to Romania's declaration of war against England and the other Western Powers, at the beginning of WWII, the foreign Anglican minister had to leave Romania. Rev. Richard Wurmbrand and his wife Sabine, without thought to family or possessions, continued unafraid and without respite an intense illegal missionary Christian work. They smuggled numerous Jewish children out of ghettos, preached daily in many bomb shelters and ended up arrested many times for underground Christian activities during a state of war. At least one time they were a few hours away from being sentenced to be shot by a military Romanian tribunal, which had no patience or understanding for two Jews turned Christian and their other Jewish-Christian followers conducting such underground activities while Romania was at war. The Wurmbrands, loved and respected by many Romanian Orthodox Christian personalities though, escaped only through the intervention of the chief editor of Romania's main newspaper of the time. Sabine's parents, two sisters and a brother perished in Nazi massacres. Also killed by Romanian Nazi Legionnaires in Romania was Isaac Feinstein, an influential Jewish Christian missionary to the Romanian Jews who was the main factor in the conversion of the Wurmbrands. Their lives during that period was described in Wurmbrand’s book, Christ on the Jewish Road.

In the short period after the end of WWII and the transformation of Romania into a communist state (1945-1947) Rev. Wurmbrand printed and organized the surreptitious distribution of one million Russian Gospels to the Russian troops that occupied Romania. He pastored a church of 1, 000, mostly made of Jewish converts. In February 1948 Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, though under Swedish diplomatic protection, was kidnapped from the street by the Communist government and disappeared in the Communist prison system. In preparation for a show trial he was kept under a secret name for nearly 3 years in a solitary cell, underwent tortures and was sentenced to 25 years of prison as an enemy of the communist state. The show trial was never held as he resisted all tortures to make him confess imagined crimes. He spent 14 years in Communist prisons in two periods, 1948-1956 and 1959-1964. He succeeded to convert to the Christian faith high-ranking secret police officers who helped his eventual release. His wife, Sabina was also imprisoned in a slave-labor camp for 3 years. In 1964 the communist government allowed him and his family be ransomed for $10,000 by Norwegian Christians. His books Tortured for Christ and In God’s Underground

describe above in detail.

The events that gave him worldwide recognition in the Western World have not been gathered before in any book and therefore are narrated here.

The Wurmbrands arriving in December 1965 in Oslo, Norway,and not understanding Norwegian, visited their first Sunday the American Lutheran Church. Impressed by the freedom of worship they cried uncontrollably during the entire service. Rev. Myrus Knutson, the minister of the church, from deep compassion opened generously his home to the refugee family while checking through the US embassy government connections on the veracity of this refugee's strange accounts of suffering and torture. His contacts answered, "fully reliable" and so Rev. Wurmbrand was invited to speak at the largest NATO base chapel meeting in Oslo. The meeting being opened for questions, Colonel-Chaplain Cassius Sturdy asked Pastor Wurmbrand why the West should or not try and coexist with communism? Wurmbrand, always dramatic in his behavior, quickly stepped off the podium, snatched the colonel's wallet from his pocket and replied," I took your money, your money is in my pocket. Let's coexist!" He replied further that of course communism wants to coexist once it had occupied half the globe. There might be no solution for cancer but no one has decided to coexist with cancer and thus an accommodation with communism is not possible. Every thief would like to coexist with the police but this is unacceptable. Colonel Sturdy stood up on the spot and said, "Gentlemen, let's send this man to America to snatch the wallets from all leftist and open their eyes." Indeed, a collection was taken on the spot and Rev. Wurmbrand was organized an itinerary within a month with speaking engagements mostly in the Eastern United States.

Arrived alone in New York most meetings were small military chapel gatherings and Rev. Wurmbrand scheduled immediately his return for lack of any success. He went though to Philadelphia to visit the only friend he knew, a Jewish-Christian minister. This minister discouraged him from trying to stay in the United States as he was too old and to feeble to pastor a church, and, "you will not be able to raise a salary" were his final words. He asked the minister to show him a little bit Philadelphia. It so happened that the biggest anti-Vietnam rally was that day underway at which a Presbyterian minister was the main pro-left speaker. Stopping out of curiosity to listen Rev. Wurmbrand, 6'3" went straight for the microphone, shouting, "you know nothing of communism, I am a doctor in communism. You should be on the side of communism's victims instead of defending their torturers." "How could you be a doctor in communism?" was the sarcastic reply. "Here are my credentials," answered Wurmbrand, taking off his shirt to show deep torture scars on his torso. The police took Wurmbrand away asking him to get dressed, yet it was enough for newspaper people to take dramatic photographs and ask for interviews. Next day in nearly all major newspapers in the United States,

and some abroad, on page one were pictures of the minister who showed his torture scars and request for interviews and speaking engagements poured in so that Rev. Wurmbrand had to postpone his return and prolong by 1 ½ month his stay in the States. He had to return for another 3 months speaking tour. In May 1966 he testified before the U. S. Senate's Internal Security Subcommittee. His testimony became the US Government most sold publication in the following three years. Together with the family he immigrated to the United States in November of 1966.

Once in the States the Wurmbrand family started Christian Missions to the Communist World, presently Voice of the Martyrs, Inc. (based in Bartlesville, Ok., General Director Tom White) a world wide organization having as its aim to help Christians persecuted by communist regimes, evangelize leftist and having also an important thrust presently, after the fall of communism in Russia, in Arab countries. The mission has branches in over 35 countries in the Free World. The organization activities and Rev. Wurmbrand speaking in many countries effectively drew the attention of the world to the plight of their fellow forgotten Christian brethren. Wurmbrand's message at all times: "Hate the evil systems, but love the persecutors and try to win them to Christianity." Profound faith, sharp thinking and quick wit combined to give him a warm personality. His principle, "help anyone and give to anyone who arrived to ask from you, even you can help or give only a little." Christian Leaders around the world have called him a living martyr and " the Iron Curtain Paul." Rev. Wurmbrand spoke in practically most countries of the Free World, conducted many influential televised interviews. An example would be an amazing 1 1/2 hour appearance with Madelaine Murray O'Hare, the outspoken atheist, that left her literally speechless. Wurmbrand not initially invited to the interview asked from the audience, "I have travelled throughout the world and saw many charitable works like Christian hospitals, Jewish orphanages, even Buddhist nursing homes. Could you give me an example of any atheistic charitable establishment?" Ms. O'Hare remained silent for over 3 minutes, upon which Allan Burke, the moderator invited Rev. Wurmbrand into the debate. Unfortunately, O'Hare did not agree to the subsequent release-publication of the videotape.

Unknown yet in the Free World are theological works already translated and to be published by the VOM organization, Wurmbrand wrote before him being imprisoned under communism. A few of his sermons appeared as " Sermons in Solitary Confinement."

Rev. Wurmbrand kept speaking and actively traveling way past 85. Rev Wurmbrand was confined for the last five years, to a bed due to severely advancing leg neuropathy contracted during his 3 years of solitary confinement when he was obliged to stand interminable hours and being kept close to starvation. He died 2/17/01 of respiratory failure. His wife Sabina died 8/17/00. He is survived by his son, Michael.

Visitation and Testimonial Services will take place on Friday, 2/23/2001 at 7PM in the Memorial Chapel, entrance through Gate 1, and Saturday, 2/24/01, 1PM in the Hillside Chapel, Gate 17, at the Rose Hill Cemetery, 3888 Workman Mill Rd, in Whittier, CA. 90601 (phone: 562 699-0921; fax: 562 699-6372; http://rosehills.com). The Grave is located in the Garden of Meditation, the first plot behind the funeral building, right by the entrance.

General Map

Detailed Map

For details on Mrs. Sabina Wurmbrand, click on this line!

FROM: MICHAEL WURMBRAND
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E-mail: amschl@home.net

Communists

15:05 8/16/2015

http://j.mp/i7rw-us

http://www.crossroad.to/Quotes/communism/communist-senate-hearing-wurmbrand.htm

COMMUNIST EXPLOITATION OF RELIGION
Congressional Testimony of REV. RICHARD WURMBRAND
HEARING Before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act
and Other Internal Security Laws, of the Committee on the Judiciary, Washington, D.C.

UNITED STATES SENATE
EIGHTY-NINTH CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Friday, May 6, 1966
The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:20 a.m., in room 18, Old Senate Office Building, Senator Thomas J. Dodd presiding. Also present: Jay G. Sourwine, chief counsel; Benjamin Mandel, director of research; Frank W. Schroeder, chief investigator; and Robert C. McManus, investigations analyst.

Senator Dodd: I will call this hearing to order. We have as our witness today Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, who is a refugee from Rumania. Mr. Sourwine will introduce and read a copy of Dr. Wurmbrand's credentials.

I must say, before you do so, that we are grateful for your appearing here. I am familiar with the nature of your testimony -- I think I am -- to an extent. I feel that you are rendering a real service to the cause of the free world.

Go ahead, Mr. Sourwine.

Mr. Sourwine: Mr. Chairman, this letter of credentials, which I shall read pursuant to your instructions, was given to Dr. Wurmbrand by Dr. Hedenquist, who is the mission director of the Svenska Israels missionen. The reason is explained the text. It reads:
"Pastor Richard Wurmbrand is a refugee from Rumania, a country which he had to leave because of the antireligious persecution. Fleeing from there, he has not the usual credentials, which have been taken from him at his arrest by the secret police of the Communists....

"During the whole war he has been pastor of our mission in Rumania. Since our mission retired from Rumania in 1945, from that year to 1948 he has been a pastor of the Norwegian mission to the Jews....

"He was also a professor of the Old Testament in the Seminary of Bucharest.

"From 1948 to 1956, he was in prison for religious motives. Released in 1956, he was no more authorized by the Communist authorities to fulfill his duties. From 1956 to 1959 he preached and exercised his other pastoral functions illegally.

"Rearrested for this in 1959, he was again in prison until July 1964, when he was released on the basis of a general amnesty.

"Since 1964, he was pastor of the Evangelical Church in Orshova, a Rumanian town.

"Continuing to be the object of persecution and being in great danger, our Scandinavian mission to the Jews succeeded to make him escape from three.

"We recommend him as a most reliable person, a fine Christian who has published several books against atheism and communism and who has got a burning heart for Christ and for all people in need.
This is signed by Dr. Hedenquist, doctor of theology, mission director in Sweden for Svenska Israels missionen.

Reverend Wurmbrand: He is the former secretary of the World Council of Missions.

Senator Dodd: Without objection, this letter will be included in the record. Since it has been read, it will not be reprinted.

Mr. Sourwine, you may proceed. I have some questions which I might as well ask to begin with, rather than wait until later.
Pastor, how many languages do you speak?

Reverend Wurmbrand: ...Something like 14.

Senator Dodd: Obviously, you speak English.

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; English, French, German Hungarian, and so on.

Senator Dodd: Did you come directly from Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: No, no; from Rumania I went to Italy; from Italy to Oslo, and then from Europe I came to the States.

Senator Dodd: From where?

Reverend Wurmbrand: From Paris.

Senator Dodd: When was that?

Reverend Wurmbrand: I came to the States 3 weeks ago.

Senator Dodd: Were you required by the secret police to make any commitments before you could leave Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Before I left Rumania I was called twice to the secret police. The first time they said that they don't know yet if they will allow me to leave the country with my family. They said: "Dollars have been received for you. You will have to leave the country, but perhaps we will let some time to pass, because your remembrances of

prison are too fresh and you have too good a pen."

Senator Dodd: What?

Reverend Wurmbrand: A pen. "You can too well write. Perhaps we will keep somebody here of your family as hostage." The second time they called me again and they said: 'Now you will leave the country, but be very cautious when you come out. You may preach Christ as much as you like. We know that you are a preacher, but don't touch us. Don't speak against Communists. If you will speak against communism, for $1,000 we can find a gangster who will liquidate you. We play with you with open cards. You come from prison. You have met in prison men whom we have brought back from the West."

And that is the truth. I have been in prison with a Rumanian Orthodox priest, Vasile Leul, who has been kidnapped from Austria. I have seen his nail torn out and broken, and so they reminded me of that. "You know how our prisons are and that you can come back in prison."

And the third thing which they said: "We have also another possibility with you. We can destroy you morally outside. We will find story with a girl or a money story or something else and people will be stupid enough to believe it. We will destroy you if you touch us."

And under these conditions I was allowed to come out. And very sorrowfully in the West I found people in the West, even religious leaders, who told me the same thing: "Preach Christ as much as you like but don't touch Communists."

Senator Dodd: As I understand it, you said you came to this country 3 weeks ago. ...

Reverend Wurmbrand: One month today.

Senator Dodd: Were you in prison from 1948 to 1956?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes, and then imprisoned again in January 1959 to 1964.

Senator Dodd: Were you in the same prison all of that time?

Reverend Wurmbrand: No, no; we were transferred from one prison to the others.

Senator Dodd: From 1956 to 1959 as I understand it, you exercised your religious function in spite of the law against such activity, did you not?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes, yes.

Senator Dodd: How did you do this?

Reverend Wurmbrand: When I came out from prison in 1956, I was licensed to preach - of course, nobody can preach in our country accept he has a license from the Government - and in the beginning I got a license, but which was withdrawn from me after the first week of preaching.

The motives are so comical you would say. In a sermon I said that Christians must keep hope, because of the wheel of history turns....

"You meant us, that communism will change, that communism will fall. Never will it fall." It has been reproached to me that in a sermon I have said Christians must practice patience, patience, and again patience. "Ah, you meant that the Americans will come and we must be patient until they come."

Everything was misinterpreted, and so the license has been withdrawn from me. And then generally in the Soviet countries there exists the underground church which works as the first Christians worked. Only now we understand texts of the bible which we had not understood before. I did not know why it is written in the Bible that a man named Simon was called Peter. Simeon was called Niger and so on. Everyone is called otherwise than his mother called him. So it is with us now. In every village I was called by another name. I was called Valentin, Georgescu, Ruben. In every village I had another name, and so I could preach.

I did not understand in earlier times why Jesus, when He wishes to have the last supper said: "Go in town and you will see a man with a pitcher and go after him and where he enters prepare the supper."

Why does he not give an address, a number, and a street? Now we know it when we make secret prayer meetings. We never give the address. We don't know if that man is not the informer of the secret police. We tell to the main to wait in a public garden or somewhere, and when one with a flower here, or with a necktie passes, go after him. We don't introduce ourselves to each other, and if somebody asks the name of the other one, we know that he is the informer of the secret police. And so we have developed a technique of secret church work and so I could work.

Senator Dodd: How did you keep alive.? How did you sustain yourself?

Reverend Wurmbrand: The Christians sustained me everywhere. I had no salary, I had no regular salary but the Christians everywhere sustained me. In Rumania the first question asked of a pastor or a priest of any denomination, is: Has he been in prison? If he has been in prison he is all right. All the Christians sustain him.

Senator Dodd: You were rearrested in 1959, as I understand it.

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes

Senator Dodd: Were you kept in the same prison until your release in 1964?

Reverend Wurmbrand: No. Then, also, I was in several prisons.

Senator Dodd: Could you describe for us the cell in which you were kept in solitary confinement?

Reverend Wurmbrand: There were different cells. In solitary confinement I was the first 2, nearly 3 years. It was in the most beautiful building of Bucharest in the building of the Secretariat of State for Internal Affairs. It is a building before which all foreigners stand and admire it. I can tell you that your White House is a very little building in comparison with ours. And there, beneath the earth, 10 meters beneath the earth, are the cells. There are no windows in the cells. Air enters through a tube. And there were a few desks with a mattress, with a straw mattress. You had but three steps for to walk. Never were we taken out from these cells except for interrogations when prisoners were beaten and tortured.

For years I have never seen sun, moon, flowers, snow, stars, no man except the interrogator who beat, but I can say I have seen heaven open, I have seen Jesus Christ, I have seen the angles and we were very happy there.

But the treatment was very bad. The purpose was to make us mad. You didn't hear a noise. A whisper you didn't hear in this cell. The guard had felt shoes. For years, not to hear anything. In all these years of prison we never had a book, we never had a but of paper, we never had a newspaper, nothing to distract our mind except that from time to time tape recorders were put on the corridor. I didn't know what a tape recorder is. I had not seen such a thing.

But at once we heard beautiful Rumanian music, and then we enjoyed it. We didn't know what has happened with the Communists that they make us enjoy, and after 10 or 15 minutes at once you heard, "Ha, ha, ha don't beat," the torturing of a woman. This lasted for half an hour the torturing of a woman. And of 100 prisoners who had been in that cell, in that corridor, everybody recognized that it is his wife or that it is his girl. I myself thought also that it is my wife.

Never will a Westerner understand, if I would not have the mark on my body, which are my credentials.

Senator Dodd: Excuse me, never will who understand? ...

Reverend Wurmbrand: A Westerner can't understand God is here and knows that I will not tell you the while truth because if I will tell you the while truth, you will faint and rush out of this room, not bearing to hear what things have happened. But I will tell you that in a prison they crucified a cat before ourselves.

They beat nails in the feet of the cat and the cat was hanging with the head down, and can you imagine how this cat screamed and the prisoners, mad, bead on the door, "Free the cat, free the cat, free the cat," and the Communists very polite, "Oh, surely we will free the cat, but give the statements which we ask from you and then the cat will be freed," and I have known men who have given statements against their wives, against their children, against their parents to free the cat.

They did it out of madness, and then the parents and the wives have been tortured like the cat. Such things have happened with us.

Senator Dodd: Did you have any fellow Christians like you imprisoned?

Reverend Wurmbrand: We had hundreds of bishops, priests, monks in prisons; my wife who is near me, she has been with Catholic nuns. My wife tells that they were angels; such have been put in prisons. Nearly all Catholic bishops died in prison. Innumerable Orthodox and Protestants have been in prison, too.

Senator Dodd: The point I was getting at - and I guess I did not make it clear - where the Christians treated any differently or mistreated any differently?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Everybody in prison was very badly treated. And I cannot be contradicted on this question, because I have been with physicians, I have much more broken bones than anybody, so either I broke my bones or somebody else broke them. And if I would not have been a clergyman but a murderer - it is a crime to torture a murderer, too.

The Christian prisoners were tortured in a form which should mock their religion. I tell you again in the prison of Pitesti one scene I will describe you about torturing and mocking Christians, and believe me I would renounce to eternal life to paradise after which I long, if I tell you one word of exaggeration. God is here and knows that I do not say everything. It cannot be said. There are ladies here. There are other people hearing it.

One Sunday morning in the prison of Pitesti a young Christian was already the fourth day, day and night, tied to the cross. Twice a day the cross was put on the floor and 100 other cell inmates by beating, by tortures, were obliged to fulfill their necessities upon his face and upon his body. Then the cross was erected again and the Communists swearing and mocking "Look your Christ, look your Christ, how beautiful

he is, adore him, kneel before him, how fine he smells, your Christ."

And then the Sunday morning came and a Catholic priest, an acquaintance of mine, has been put to the belt, in the dirt of a cell with 100 prisoners, a plate with excrements, and one with urine was given to him and he was obliged to say the holy mass upon these elements, and he did it. And I asked him afterward, "Father, but how could you make this?"

He was half mad. He answered to me: "Brother, I have suffered more than Christ. Don't reproach to me what I have done." And the other prisoners beaten to take holy communion in this form, and the Communists around, "Look, your sacraments, look, your church, what a holy church you have, what fine is your church, what holy ordinance God has given you."

I am very insignificant and a very little man. I have been in prison among the weak ones and the little ones, but I speak for a suffering country and for a suffering church and for the heroes and the saints of the 20th century; we have had such saints in our prison to which I did not dare to lift my eyes....

Senator Dodd: Now, did the Rumanian secret police employ brainwashing techniques?

Reverend Wurmbrand: The worst thing has been the brainwashing. All the tortures of times before were nothing in comparison with brainwashing.

To describe very shortly brainwashing: First of all we were doped. The dope was put in our food. I did not know about this dope. But we saw only the results, a dope which gave two results. First of all, what the physician calls aleulia which means lack of power of will. The power of will was completely broken. If we were told, "Lift your hand," I lifted it. If I was not told to let the hand down, I would never have left it down.

We were at the same time very much undernourished. We had times when we received 100 grams, one slice of bread, a week. It was told to us, "We give you as many calories as you need to be able to breathe only, " and so our power of will has been broken.

Second, this drug or perhaps it is another drug, produces the delirium of self-accusation. I have seen prisoners knocking during the night on the door and saying, "Take me to the interrogator, I have new things to say against me." Prisoners quarreled with their interrogators to say against themselves more than the interrogators asked from them.

And then we have had in prisons the curious phenomenon that we as priests received confessions from other prisoners. Now everybody is a sinner, but not everybody is a criminal. Men who have never murdered confessed that they have murdered, that they have committed adultery, that they have stolen. They felt they had to accuse themselves. This has

also been the result of doping.

And after we were doped like that - that is the secret of all the Soviet show trials, in which the prisoners accuse themselves - then the time of brainwashing came. For 17 hours a day from 5 in the morning to 10 in the evening we had to sit like this. We were not allowed to lean. We were not allowed to rest a little bit our weary heads upon our hands. To close your eyes was a crime. Seventeen hours a day we had to sit like that and hear from the morning to the evening: "Communism is good, communism is good, communism is good, communism is good," until you heard one who was already 20 years in prison under the Communists shouting, "Communism is good, communism is good, communism is good, I give my life for communism."

It was after the technique of Professor Pavlov, a scientific suggestion.

In prison there were not only priests and pastors. We have had hundreds of peasants and young boys and girls who were put in prison for their Christian faith. These were separated and for them there was a special brainwashing, not only that "communism is good," but "Christianity is dead, Christianity is dead, Christianity is dead. Nobody more believes in Christ, nobody more believes in Christ, you are the only fools."

And so on. And I must tell you that you may know how far this brainwashing went. I do not like to pose here like a hero. I believed that Christianity is dead under this influence. I believed -

Senator Dodd : I did not hear that.

Reverend Wurmbrand: I believed that Christianity is dead under this suggestion. Nobody goes more to church. They gave us post cards. I have not seen my wife for 10 years. They gave me post cards, they gave to all of us post cards: "Write to your children and wife; they may come and on that day see you and bring your parcels," so on that day we were shaved; we expected and expected until the evening and nobody came. They had not sent the post cards, but we did not know.

Then came the brainwashings. "Your wives are laying in bed with men, " obscene words, "Your children hate you. You have nobody to love in the world. You are the only fools. Give up faith. Nobody is more Christians. Christianity is dead."

I believed also that nobody is more a Christian. I had read in the Bible that there will be in the last time the great apostasy, that people will leave the faith and I believed that I lived now this time. But I said to myself if Christianity is dead, I will sit at its tomb and will weep until it arises again, just as Mary Magdalene sat at the tomb of Jesus and wept until Jesus showed Himself. Then when I came out of prison I saw Christianity is not dead. The number of practicing Christians in Rumania according to the figures given by the Communists themselves in 20 years of Communist dictatorship has grown 300 percent.

Senator Dodd: How do the Communists use religion for their own purposes if they do?

Reverend Wurmbrand: That is a very tragic side. The worse thing in Rumania has not been the persecution of Christians. The persecution has make the Christians to be of steel. The worst thing has been the corruption of religion. They have put as religious leaders their man. A bishop, a pastor, a preacher, just a man like other man and can commit sins. Now if they found a preacher or somebody else in adultery or in some money irregularity or I do not know what sin, they called him and blackmailed him and said, "Now you must become our man. Otherwise we publish what we have found." Or they found others who were weak ones, whom they promised I do not know what. They never keep their promises. And these men, they put at the leadership of religion everywhere.

They have their bishops, their bishop vicar, their professors of theology, their presidents of the Baptists and Pentecostals and so on. I could give names. I know this from firsthand. Because many of these, when we came out of prison, out of remorse confessed to us what they have done. And now they use these men. With us in Rumania religion is a very great thing. You do not find much religious difference in Rumania. By these weak Christians, the Communists used religion for their propaganda.

When the Communists came to power in Rumania, they convoked in the building of our parliament a congress of all the cults. There were 4,000 priests; pastors, rabbis of all religions were there. Our Prime Minister Gorza, said the same things which you hear now in the West. This was in 1945 when they came to power with us. "You know Rumanian communism will not be like Russian communism. We are a democratic communism. We will not persecute the church. We are on the side of monarchy. We will never collectivate agriculture. We are something entirely else and you should be on our side and then we will protect religion and we will give salaries to the priests."

And the priests, good men, simply believed him and cheered him. Priests and bishops one after the other stood up and said, "Well, if your communism is otherwise than the Russian communism, if it will be a good communism, we do not object against communism in principle." And one after the other stood up and praised this form of communism. There was only one in that congress who protested and said that communism can never change, that terror is an essential part of communism, because communism is contrary to human nature....

But what has happened? I went to prison, this was one of the charges against me. I met in prison all those who had praised communism, all those who have collaborated with communism, and they were treated just like me. They had been the fools. There was only one difference that I

was in prison with a good conscience and they were with a bad conscience. In prison they had remorse. Religion was used for Communist propaganda in our country.

Just to give you one example: To the Orthodox Church of Rumania foreigners come and see the liturgy and see everything so beautiful. The church is open. They do not understand the language, they do not know what is preached. I will give you the test of the sermon. It was a sermon about an epistle of St. Paul where it was written that Chris is our peace , and so the priest explained, "Christ is our peace. Who is against peace? American imperialists. And who is on the side of the peace? We, the Socialist countries."

So you see that Christ identifies Himself with socialism and so on. Such sermons they have. They have used the religion for their own purposes in the country. Then they have used the religion for getting political positions in the West. They are not fools to send in the West representatives of the Communist Party. They send bishops with great beards and beards are always very impressive here in the West, and through these beards they influence the West.

Senator Dodd: I have many more questions, but would you show your wounds and scars, if you have some?

Reverend Wurmbrand: I apologize here before the ladies.

Senator Dodd: Take your time. If ever a man was entitled to time, I think you are.

Reverend Wurmbrand: Look here, look here, look here. Look here, look here. And so the whole body.

Senator Dodd: What is the scar behind your ear?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Here they put the knife and said, "Give accusatory statement against your bishops and against the other pastors. Do you give or not? And they cut. It is true that they did not cut very deeply.

Senator Dodd: These are all knife wounds?

Reverend Wurmbrand: They tortured by all means. They beat until they broke the bones. They used red-hot irons, they used knives, they used everything. And what was the firs thing is not they beat, not what they did, but how they did it. They interrogated you very politely, and if you did not wish to say what they asked they said, "Well, we have the first. On the 15th you will be beaten and tortured at 10 o'clock in the evening."

Imagine what 14 days were after this. We have had prisoners who during this time, which has been given to them, knocked at the door, "I can't bear it. I will say everything," before they have been tortured.

Senator Dodd: I wish you would turn around before you put your shirt on.

Reverend Wurmbrand: And that it may be very clear, it is not that I boast with these marks. I show to you the tortured body of my country, of my fatherland, and of my church, and they appeal to the American Christians and to all freemen of America to think about our tortured body, and we do not ask you to help us. We ask you only one thing. Do not help our oppressors and do not praise them. You cannot be a Christian and praise the inquisitors of Christians. That is what I have to say.

Senator Dodd: All right. You may put on your clothes. That scar on your right breast, do you remember how that was inflicted?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; by knife.

Senator Dodd: By knife?

Reverend Wurmbrand: By knife. I have been in Oslo. I went to a hospital. There were several physicians. I can give their names. I spoke with them about religion. In the beginning they said, "We are atheists," and then they saw my body and I asked them what treatment do I need. They said: " About treatment, do not ask us. Ask only the one in whom we don't believe, but who has kept you alive, because according to our medical books, you are dead. A man who has what you have, with four vertebras broken, cannot live. According to our medical books, you are dead. If you are alive, then the one in whom we don't believe has kept you alive." ...

I have been not the worst tortured. The proof is that I am alive. So many died. Nearly all our Catholic bishops have been so handled that they have died, and in that time the Russians were in our country, they decided that the Catholic bishops should be killed. One of the members of the Government has been Gromyko, one of the murderers of Christians. . ..

Senator Dodd: You saw and heard this yourself.

Reverend Wurmbrand: ...I must just pour out before you my heart. I speak for a country and I speak for a church. We are very, very sad there about all these compromises. I must tell you I have been in England before I came to the States, and I have spoken with high Christian officials from England. The Archbishop of Canterbury and many canons and so on have been in our country recently, last year. So I asked Christian

leaders - I will not tell names - "Why have you sat at banquets with our inquisitors? I am a little pastor, I cannot interrogate you, but I speak for the others who cannot speak for themselves. "Why have you sat at banquets with our inquisitors?"

I was answered, "We are Christians and must have friendship and fellowship with everybody, with the Communists, too. Don't you agree?"

I said, "I can't polemicize with you. I have not read the Bible for 14 years. You must know Christianity better than I. Faintly I remember in the Bible it is written that friendship with the world is hatred toward God. But supposing you must have friendship and fellowship with everybody. How is it that you have had friendship and fellowship only with our inquisitors, and with us never?"

Never have these great men of the West been in the houses of Christian martyrs. I have an only son and I love him. I cannot look to him. He looks like a skeleton. He has hungered. He will never be healthy. And so many of our children died. All these great relates from the West are great men. I am very little in comparison with them. But I always asked myself, "Well, all right, make friendship with the Communists. But only with the Communists?" They never inquired about us.

I asked them, "Why did you go to see the Pope, who is all right, who does not need your visit?" "When you have been in Rumania why have you not visited the tombs of the Catholic bishops killed in tortures? Why have you not shed there a tear? Why have you not put there a flower? That is what we expected. Why have you not left 10 pounds? Ten pounds would have been the salvation of a Catholic family there. You go to see the Pope. The Pope is all right. He has to eat and to drink." But I must say we are very sad there about these compromises with communism. We do not understand. I am a man who does not understand politics. I have not read newspapers for 14 years.

It may be right for a state to have peaceful existence with communism. I do not know. That is a question for Johnson and Goldwater to decide. But the church can never have peaceful coexistence with atheism. Everybody would laugh if I would say that health can peacefully exist with the microbe of tuberculosis, that the FBI can coexist peacefully with gangsters, that the church can peacefully exist with drunkenness, but communism and atheism is much worse than drug addiction and drunkenness. You drink a little wine and the next day it passes, but communism poisons youth and our children since 50 years. How can there be peaceful existence with this on the side of churchmen and the church leadership I cannot understand.

I must say I have been very sad. I have read in your periodicals that, I do not know why, church bodies here ask the admission of Red China in

the organization of allied nations. It may be right. I do not know politics. I do not know what this organization of allied nations is, but I ask myself, "You, a church periodical, why don't you write about the tortures inflicted to Chinese Christians by the communists? That is your business and leave the business of politics to the Senate and like this."

I express here the grief and the great pain of a suffering country and of a suffering church, and I apologize if I am a little unpolite. ...

Mr. Sourwine: You were being questioned by the Rumanian secret police, were you not?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes.

Mr. Sourwine: When you say they wanted to know how they could win the World Council of Churches for their purposes, did you mean for the purposes of Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: No, no, no; for the purposes of communism, for the purposes of the whole Communist world.

Mr. Sourwine: In other words, the Rumanian secret police are, in your opinion at least, just like any other communist secret police?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Sure, there is no difference at all, and our interrogations, if they were important ones as mine, they went to Moscow. I know it from the Orthodox priest, Vasile Leon, who has been kidnapped from Austria and he has been brought to Moscow. In Moscow he has been interrogated about me. In Moscow they knew everything about Rumania. They worked hand in hand. At that time the secret Rumanian police had Soviet advisers.

Mr. Sourwine: I think you have touched on this, but can you perhaps give us a little more on the subject? What has been the policy and practice of the communists with respect to religion in countries where they have come into power?

Reverend Wurmbrand: They used three great instruments.
1. First of all, the persecution, to make everybody afraid. They never accepted that they have put anybody in prison for religious motives. They found always political motives. Now I will give you the political motives. ...

"...a pastor, was sentenced to 15 years in prison. He was one of the greatest saints whom I have ever seen in life. The charge against him was he preached on a Sunday morning in a village about John 21 where it is said that the Lord walked on the seashore and he saw the apostles and

asked them, "Have you something to eat?" They said, "We have not," and then Jesus said, "Throw your nets on the right side."

So the pastor preached from the pulpit. He asked, "Have you something to eat?" And when he asked, "Have you something to eat?" Everybody began to weep, because with us, peasants have nothing to eat. After the collectivization of agriculture our peasants have nothing to eat. Peasant children do not see milk and fruit. Everything goes to the collective and from the collective perhaps to Vietnam. Nobody knows where it goes. Our population does not see. They began to weep because they had nothing to eat and then the pastor, not knowing in what world he is, said, "Dear children, you have nothing to eat because you throw your nets on the left side. You must throw them on the right side." He meant the side of the clemency and of the goodness of God.

The next day there was the secret police, "Aha, you have said not to go to the left-wing with the communists but with the right side, the imperialists." The man got 15 years of prison.

So there has been, first of all, this method of persecution. There has been, 2. secondly, the method of corruption. We live in the times of the abomination of the desolation of the holy places.... For the first time in church history the leadership of churches is dominated by the central committee of an avowed atheistic power. The central committee of the party decides who must be patriarch, who must be Baptist preacher, Pentecostal preacher, and so on. Everywhere they have found weak men or women with some sin. Those they have put in the leadership of churches and so you could hear in our theological seminary in Bucharest the theology that God has given three revelations - once through Moses, second through Jesus, the third through Karl Marx, and so on.

Religion is corrupted from within. Religion has been widely used and is still as the tools of communist politics. The priests everywhere had to propagate the collectivization of agriculture and everywhere when communists have something important to do, knowing the influence of religion, priests and pastors are put to preach these things.

Mr. Sourwine: Have the communists shown themselves to be opposed only to Christianity, or to all religions?

Reverend Wurmbrand: To all the religions. The Jewish religion has been persecuted just as the Christian religion. In the prison of Gherla we had a whole room with rabbis who were in prisons. We had in prison the Moslem priests and so on.

Mr. Sourwine: Did they segregate the rabbis in one room

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes.

Mr. Sourwine: The Christians in another, and --

Reverend Wurmbrand: No, no, they were at a time kept with us, but the rabbis, because they had to respect certain dietary laws and the Sabbath and so on, they separated them in order not to provoke collision with other prisoners.

...Senator Dodd: Were the rabbis subjected to the same kind of torture that you suffered?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; sure, sure. There was no difference in this. I must say it may look anecdotic for you. I had a discussion once with the commandant of the prison of Targulacna, and he said, "We are not like the Fascists who made the racial differences and persecuted the Jews and Hungarians. We are not so. Look around you. We keep in prison Rumanians, Hungarians, and Jews all alike. We don't make racial differences."

Mr. Sourwine: That could be interpreted to mean that he was saying people of the Jewish faith were being persecuted for their religious activity, but not for their race. Is it true that there is no anti-Semitism in Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: There is anti-Semitism. Just before we left the country, everywhere where Jews were in high positions as chief engineers or directors in ministry and so on, they were silenced and put to lower functions. ...

Mr. Sourwine: Just as a matter of racial prejudice?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Sure. They could have been atheists They were even members of the Communist Party, but if they were of Jewish origin, they were put to lower positions. From the secret police all the Jews have been driven out.

Mr. Sourwine: Are there any Buddhists in Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Buddhists? No; we have none. Perhaps a few intellectuals, just a few.

Mr. Sourwine: Have the communists done anything, to your knowledge, to try to win position and influence for communist agents in the religious community of the free world?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Sure. We had a professor, Justin Moisescu.

Mr. Sourwine: Moisescu?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Moisescu, yes. He was a professor. He had never been a priest. Truly a very clever and a very cultured man. He was professor of church history, but a layman. With us there has been a law that you can't be professor in a theological institute unless you are a priest. So he resigned. He didn't wish to be a priest.

...he was known in the whole country as a whoremonger, as a drunkard, nobody appreciated him. At once we heard that in a few weeks he had become priest, bishop, metropolitan of Yasi. That is the highest function with us after the patriarch.

Mr. Sourwine: That is the Rumanian Orthodox Church?

Reverend Wurmbrand: In the Rumanian Orthodox Church. Whatever will be the consequences for me, I have told you how I have been threatened, and these threatenings are not simple words.

Recently from Italy two Rumanians have been kidnapped. We have their names. An I know what can happen to me. But I will tell you this Justin Moisescu personally has denounced a group of 400 Christian peasants from his own bishopric. I have been imprisoned with them. He has denounced the priests whom he ordained when he knew that they said some counterrevolutionary word.

He has a very impressive beard and he has come out to the free world and was accepted as a bishop, and those in the West believe that they speak with the Orthodox Church of Rumania and they speak with the secret police of Rumania.

And now the interesting thing is I would not mind accepting men like him and like Gromatca, this arch traitor and others. I don't mind that they are accepted in the West. But I ask myself in every bargain, in every business, both parts must win. I give you the product but you must give me the dollars for it. We accept your traitors. What does the East accept from us?

If we had posed to Rumania this question, "We will accept Justin Moisescu, you must accept a Bible society in Rumania," we would have it. But we accept without asking for it.

Justin Moisescu is a member of the secret police. They sent to America the priest Liviu Stan. Everybody knows Liviu Stan is a man of the communists. When the communists came to power he was among the first ones who put posters on our walls that Christians must vote and go with the Communists. These posters were signed and the others by this Liviu Stan. The communists in Rumania are not so stupid to send here a man who will say. "I come from the side of the communist party" Liviu Stan came as a representative of the Orthodox Church of Rumania. And so they have many men. They have sent recently a priest, Ananaia.

Now that is a very interesting thing about this priest, Ananaia. This priest, Ananaia, has been with me in prison. He has been 10 year in

prison. He has been beaten. He has passed through brainwashing. And they have such a confidence in brainwashing that they had the confidence to send him to the West and he does their work.

Senator Dodd: He is a priest in good standing, and of what church?

Reverend Wurmbrand: In the Orthodox church.

I speak out of the pain of a heart. I can't polemicize. I am a very little pastor. I can't polemicize with great religious bodies, but I am a man who has read nothing for 14 years. And now I came out to the West. I had always been very interested in missions and I wished to know what happens in missions. I took in hand the International Review of Missions, edited by the World Council of Churches, and I read there in the issue of January that in Rumania, orthodoxism and protestantism grow in an atmosphere of full religious liberty.

If the man who wrote this has not taken thousands of dollars from the Rumanian secret police, he deserve to be hanged for stupidity. He could have taken money for this. I believe he has not taken money. And then I wrote to them a letter, and said,
"Either you lie or I lie. If I lie, I promise that never more will I be a pastor. If you lie you have to withdraw. Now to see if I lie or you lie I ask you to answer the following 20 questions, if you say there is full religious liberty in Rumania.

"Where is the office of the World Council of Churches of Religion in Rumania? It has offices everywhere. In the communist countries it has none.

"Where is the Bible Society? We have no Bible Society. Show me one Bible printed in 20 years. We have no such thing. Tell me the name of one Christian who for 20 years could publish a book. Give me the name of one Christian professor of humanistic sciences in our country. Tell me on Sunday school in Bucharest where it can be attended.

"Tell me where is the YMCA in Rumania. Where are the pastors Ghelbegeanu, Vacareanu, and so on?" They are in prison.

"Please answer to me these questions. If you have received answers, I have received answers."
There is no possible answers. It is not right for Christians to mock our sufferings. The communists have mocked us enough. Don't praise our inquisitors. That is the only thing which we ask. I apologize before these great Christians bodies. I am really a very little man but I speak for the great saints who suffer in prison. It is not right to praise our inquisitors or to think that now they have become better.

Mr. Sourwine: Are the restrictive measures imposed upon the exercise of religion in Rumania today as stringent as they were 10 or 15 years ago?

Reverend Wurmbrand: No; they are no more stringent and I will explain to you why.... Generally our men are very poor with us, unbelievably poor.

My salary when I left Rumania was $28. You say it is little, $28 a week. It was $28 a month. My son was not allowed to finish his studies because of my condemnation. He worked as a building worker and had $30 a month. Our bishop has $70 a month. And now our population is very, very poor.

Senator Dodd: When you say dollars, you mean the equivalent?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; the equivalent of $70. Now I was in a very poor family with five little children, and I caressed a child and the mother said to me, "This child is so good, it doesn't weep even when it is hungry." It had given up weeping because the child knew it is useless to weep. You can't get food. And so this child was not beaten, because it didn't weep any more. The Rumanian people does not weep any more. And, therefore, it must not be beaten any more.

The Rumanian people, as well as the other peoples behind the Iron Curtain, are desperate. They have abandoned hope that they will ever be released. For years we have heard a broadcast station: "Rebel against communism, rebel against communism," and when we rebelled we were abandoned.

And we see how our oppressors are helped. I will tell you a scene. Believe me, God is here. I tell you the scene just as it happened. It was in the years of brainwashing, the 14th year of prison. We are gathered to a meeting, and Major Alexandrescu, the commandant of the prison of Gherla, delivered us a speech and said:
"You fools, you set for 15 or 20 years in prison and expected the Americans to come. You expected the Americans will come and release you. Now I will give you the news. The Americans come but not to release you. They come to help us, to help us, to make business with us, to make trade with us. You fools have not known. The Americans if you beg them, they give you nothing.. If you insult them, if you mock them, they give you money. We have been more clever than you. "
These are words which I have heard myself. Such things have happened in our country.

Mr. Sourwine: Are there any open churches in Rumania today, which anyone may attend?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Just I didn't finish this question. So there is a relaxation in what sense? Our people has given up the fight. Political underground movements don't exist any more with us. They have no such. And so everything has quieted down in the country, and so they don't

need any more of the same terror. I have been for years in prison with thieves and murderers. Even before having been put in prison I have been chaplain of a prison. A thief after he has stolen is a gentleman. He give to the waiters the greatest tips and he invites girls and he invites you and he orders the best wines. He has not worked for his money. And such thieves are the communists. They have stolen half of Europe, they have stolen Russia, too. They have stolen a great part of Asia. And now they have what they have stolen and they are gentlemen and they expect the next occasion to steal again.

In this sense there is a relaxation with us, but it is not an essential one. We continue to have the avowed dictatorship of an atheistic party. We have one party. There can be no religious freedom where there is one party. We have elections. Now a joke is make with us that when God created Adam, He created only one woman, Eve, and He said to Adam, "You are free to choose for wife whomsoever you wish." But there was only Eve. And so are the elections with us.

Our Government doesn't mind old women coming to church, but our childhood, our youth is poisoned with atheism. We are not allowed to counteract, and what bitter fruits will come out of this seed nobody can know.

Now you have asked another question, do we have open churches in Rumania? If somebody comes to Rumania - it is another situation in Russia - if somebody comes to Rumania, he is really impressed.

The Orthodox liturgy is something very beautiful. It is grand. And if you come in Rumania you see thousands of churches open, liturgies, sermons, many people in the church. And I have spoken with Americans who have been there and have told me, "I was very impressed." And now there is really a certain religious liberty. In Rumania you are allowed to say as much as you like that God is good. You are not allowed to say that the Devil is bad. St. John the Baptist could have saved his life if he had said: "Repent because the kingdom of heaven is near." Nobody would have touched him. He was touched when he said, "You, Herod, are bad."

If Christ would have delivered a thousand "Sermons on the Mount" they would not have crucified Him. They crucified Him when He said, "You vipers," then He was crucified.

In Rumania you can say God is good but you can't say "communism is cruel, they commit atrocities, it is a crime to poison children with atheism." If you do this you go to prison. There are many priests, rabbis, and pastors who compromise and don't put the dot on the "I." There exists the real church and the real religion and that which compromises.

Mr. Sourwine: Are there churchmen in Rumania today who willingly

cooperate with the communist authorities?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Surely. The Orthodox hierarchy nearly entirely. Of the Catholic hierarchy, not one. The Catholic bishops died in prison, all except four. These four have house arrest. At the Vatican council no Catholic bishop was allowed to come. Came a Catholic priest, a well-known traitor, Augustine, who is the real leader of the Catholic Church; the leadership of the Baptists, for example is entirely in the hands of the communists.

I have here a document which I present to the Senate, a list of 150 Russian Baptist pastors recently deported to Siberia. Not all arrived in Siberia. Many died of tortures.

Senator Dodd: Can you talk a little more slowly? I could get your pronunciation better.

Reverend Wurmbrand: This is a list of 150 Baptist pastors of Russia who have been recently deported to Siberia. I have the names , the addresses, the names of their wives, of their children. They have not all arrived to Siberia, because of the tortures many died

Senator Dodd: These were Rumanians?

Reverend Wurmbrand: No, no, Russians. And I give it to the Senate.

Mr. Sourwine: Mjr. Chairman, do you wish this list and the document of transmittal to go into the record? There is an English translation to be made.

Senator Dodd: Yes; I believe it should be in the record.

Senator Dodd: I don't quite understand this. These are 40 Russian Baptists?

Reverend Wurmbrand: 150

Senator Dodd: Were they in Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: No, no, they are Russians. We got from Russia. Here I have another very interesting document.

Mr. Sourwine: If you would excuse me, please, I believe the Senator's question raises a point you should clear up. How do you have this information about Russia? Have you been in Russia?

Reverend Wurmbrand: I have worked for years secret missionary work among the Russian soldiers who occupied our country. I speak Russian fluently, and we brought many Russian soldiers to Christ. To preach Christ to the

Russians means Heaven on earth. They seek the Gospel as the thirsty soil seeks water. They have not known Him. The beauty of the Gospel you know it when you preach to Russians; how they live it and how they enjoy it, and so I have made some connections.

In a public sitting I can't say how I have arrived to have these lists.

Mr. Sourwine: You know it to be authentic?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Personally I can tell you from where I have this list, but it is absolutely authentic. It can be controlled. Surely in a public sitting I can't say how I have received it.

I present to the Senate also a very interesting document, the most interesting I have ever known in this matter, the document, "Li Wei Man." It is a letter of the Central Committee of the Communist party of China addressed to the Central Committee of the Communist party of Cuba. Now recently they have quarreled but this letter is an older one in which they teach how to win the leadership of the churches for communism, how to make that the communists should be leaders of the churches. It is an unequaled document of Machiavelianism. We have lived these things but never have I seen it put on paper as this.

Mr. Sourwine: May I suggest this be printed as an appendix to the record, Mr. Chairman?

Senator Dodd: Yes.

Senator Dodd: I take it what you have been telling us must be more or less common knowledge in Rumania, is it?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; surely.

Senator Dodd: Would it be accurate to deduce that the embassy officials of the several countries must have heard it too?

Reverend Wurmbrand: They don't wish to be troubled in their quietness. They close their eyes before this menace. I have met men who simply close their eyes when I told them about these things. They know that they are true. But they have a certain policy of friendly relationship with the communist countries, and they are very honest men, but they are duped exactly as we were duped in Rumania.

Wherever the communists came in the beginning, they said the same thing which I read here in newspapers and in periodicals. "You know Stalin's communism has been very bad, but Yugoslavian communism or another kind of communism, this is very good."

A little lion in its first days you can play with him just like with a puppy. When he becomes great, only then he is a lion. Yugoslavian communism is this little communism. And American communism a very little one and English communism is a very little one. When they grow, when they can do whatever they will to do, then only we can see them.

With us, in the beginning, we also had a very nice communism. I have seen in Rumanian Communist demonstrations signs with the slogan, " God save the King." I have seen the communist Secretaries of State making great crosses, showing themselves as being on the side of religion and making compliments to religion and bowing to religion and saying they are Democrats. In the beginning, they have put in prison party members who said that the agriculture must be collectivized. And they have gone together with the bourgeois party, with the Liberal Party of Tatorescu and with other Democrats.

I have seen in the West Social Democrats collaborate with them. In Rumania, I have seen dying Social Democrats in the same cell with me; they died. Communists in Rumania, too, were nice until they had the whole power in hand. When they had the whole power in hand, they have done things exactly as in Russia, and so they will do everywhere. There is no difference.

Mr. Sourwine: You mentioned demonstrations by the Communists. Does Rumania have anything like the demonstrations that are so prevalent in this country, demonstrations against the Government's activities or against its policies?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Nobody can say a word of criticism. Such a thing doesn't even enter in the mind of somebody. I will tell you something of which may be laughable for you. It is very tragical with us. But the story is just as I tell you. I know the man.

A man was in a barbershop in a little town, Sibiu. While the barber shaved him, he said to the barber: "What should I do? My hair falls." The barber said, "Very well, I will make you a friction but you must not be anxious about this. The most intelligent people of the world have been bald." On the other seat there was an officer of the secret police and he said to the barber, "What have you said now?"

"I have said that the most intelligent people of the world are bald. "

"So, you assert that Stalin has not been intelligent." It is a question of laughter for you but it is tragical with us. Nobody dares to say a word.

I stopped in Newark, and in Philadelphia, a demonstration against the war in Vietnam. I had not this clerical suit on. I stopped the demonstrators and I undressed myself to the belt. Afterwards I heard that it is illegal here in the States, and that I could have gone to prison for this. I undressed myself.

Senator Dodd: It would have been all right on the bathing beach.

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; it was not on the beach. And I told them, "This have Communists done to me. Do you think that American Christians should fight against communism?" So they surrounded me and asked me, "Why have Communists done to you this?" I said to them, "Suppose that I am a murdered. Do you agree that a murderer should be tortured? Has Oswald been tortured? Has Ruby been tortured with you?" They all said, "No; murderers have not been tortured." I continued: "Then know that I have not be charged with murder. I am a clergyman." They stopped the demonstration. In Philadelphia there was again such a demonstration.

I am not a man of politics. I can't speak for the war of Vietnam or against the war in Vietnam. I speak this general principle that Christians must be on the side of righteousness. They must never be on the side of the inquisitors of Christians. They must be on the side of the victims of the inquisitors, they must be on the side of the Christians.

In Philadelphia there was a great meeting. A pastor with clerical suit, a Presbyterian pastor, delivered a speech in which he praised Communists and said that Communists are all right and it is stupid to fight against them. I have learned something from the Communists. In a minute - after - the pastor was no more in the pulpit, I was in the pulpit. I said: "Now I will speak about communism. What do you know about communism? And I will show you my credentials, how I have studied communism." I undressed myself to the belt. I did not know that all these bad reporters are there and took pictures. And I showed them my body. "That is what Communists do to Christians, and you, Pastor, why don't you make demonstrations, if you are a Christian and if you have youth in you and vigor, why don't you demonstrate before the Soviet and Rumanian Embassies and the other embassies against torturing Christians?" And then the public, which has been there booed him and shouted to him " Judas."

These are Judases. They may be all right innerly, I don't know their hearts, but I think that Christians, if they wish to demonstrate, they should demonstrate against those who have recently deported 150 Baptist pastors.

Mr. Sourwine: The subcommittee has received substantial information to the effect that the Rumanian Communist Government has infiltrated into this country Communist-trained clergy with other missions than those of a spiritual nature. Do you have any information about that?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Rumanian Communists are very interested in the fact that you have here, in the States, something like 300,000 on their side. They can't very well win them for communism, but they can win them for a

leftwing Christianity which supports communism. They have sent here several men, Moisescu, Liviu Stan, and so on. These don't come with Communist slogans but with the words: "You must love your Rumanian fatherland. *** You must have connections with the Rumanian patriarchy."

When I came out from Rumania I saw for the first time a Rumanian newspaper which appears in Bucharest, and which nobody in Bucharest has ever seen. The Voice of the Fatherland it is called, and in the fatherland nobody sees this newspaper. Only your American Rumanians see it and in France. I have never seen it. My son looked at it, and we have never seen it. In this newspaper you read about priests and churches. In our newspapers you will never have a word about the church. There you have pictures of priests and monasteries and how fine it is and so on. They make this propaganda, surely.

Senator Dodd: You mean this paper is only distributed in the free world?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Only in the free world. They have at midnight, which corresponds to I don't know what hour here in the United States, it is noon or I don't know what, they have religious services which are jammed in Rumania, but they are emitted from Rumania. We have no religious services on the broadcasts. These are broadcast religious services only that the Americans should know how fine the Communists are and that they have religious services.

Mr. Sourwine: Are you saying that the religious services of the Rumanian Orthodox Church ...are broadcasts in Rumania at a time which is midnight in Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes.

Mr. Sourwine: Beamed to the Western World?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; sure.

Mr. Sourwine: To the free world?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Sure.

Mr. Sourwine: And not broadcast in Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Sure. In Rumania, nobody hears them.

Mr. Sourwine: Of course, a broadcast beamed from Rumania to the United States necessarily will have enough power to be picked up in Rumania if anyone wanted to tune in.

Reverend Wurmbrand: First of all, it is a very inconvenient hour. It is midnight for us. Secondly, in Rumania it is jammed.

Mr. Sourwine: It is what? ...

Reverend Wurmbrand: They jam it in Rumania.

Mr. Sourwine: So that even those who know about it, who might try to pick it up ----

Reverend Wurmbrand: It is jammed. You can't hear it in Rumania.
In this moment, no reprisals would be taken. No reprisals are taken today if somebody hears foreign broadcasts. But everything is noted. What happens with us? We have waves of terror. We have had a great wave of terror from 1948 and 1949 which lasted until 1955. We had the relax until 1958 when nobody was arrested but everything was noted.

Then in 1959 came again a wave of terror, and all those who were noted for years before were taken in. And now the whole spy work continues with us. You are not arrested. But everybody knows that he is spied out and that everything is noted. How far this inner spy net goes is unimagined.
In a little townlet of ours there is a little Baptist church with only 22 members. The pastor of that church told me that he is the informer of the secret police and that he knows three members of his church who give information against him. So it was in the church in which I was. The servant of the church had the order to inform who comes to me. I had no salary. So, usually men who came to me brought a little parcel with food and clothes and so on. The servant had to spy out who comes with parcels. In the smallest churches you have five or six who have to spy out what the others do. One neighbor spies the other. Children spy on their father and so on. It is without end so nobody dares to do a thing.

Senator Dodd: I am somewhat interested in these interrogations to which you were subjected. If I understand you correctly, they lasted for hours; is that right?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; surely.

Senator Dodd: Without going into a lengthy explanation, what did they ask you?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Well, they asked many things.
First of all they wished to know who has said counterrevolutionary things of all the bishops and priests and pastors and laymen whom I knew.
Who has spoken against the Government.
Who has something against the Government. How we organized and so on, without end.
And now at a certain moment I was tired with being beaten. They told me

at a certain moment,

"Mr. Wurmbrand, supposing that you are not a counterrevolutionary, you are a well-known pastor in the whole country and everybody had confidence in you and you spoke with bishops and all kinds of men and you have been in so many villages and towns and everybody confessed to you and so forth. Tell us who are the counterrevolutionaries. Don't speak about your activity. You are all right. You are not a counterrevolutionary. But then show your loyalty toward our Government, tell us who the counterrevolutionaries are. Are you disposed to do so?"

So, I said, "Yes; I am disposed."

When they heard that I am disposed, they asked me: "Do you smoke, do you wish liquors?" Everything I could have at that moment. And he knew, the officer, that he will receive another star there if he gets from me this information. And then he asked me now, "Who are the counterrevolutionaries?" I said, "As you know I have worked on an international scale, so I can tell you the counterrevolutionaries not only in Rumania but even in Russia."

Oh, he was so glad. I said: "In Russia, you have had as Secretary of State for Internal Affairs, Yagoda. Yagoda has killed thousands of people as counterrevolutionaries. Then you have discovered who has been the counterrevolutionary: Yagoda has been. Yagoda has been shot as counterrevolutionary.

"Then you have had as Secretary of State for Internal Affairs, Beria, and Beria has killed other thousands of people as counterrevolutionaries. Then you have found out who has been the counterrevolutionary: Beria. " Why do you seek the counterrevolutionaries in the church? See them in your own party. And in Rumania it has been the same thing.

Communists are not only anti-Christian. They are anti everything. They are anti their own comrades.

I have been in prison. I have been there with Lucretiu Patrascanu, the great Communist leader, who has brought communism to power in our country. He was put in prison and tortured until he became mad.

My wife has been in prison with Gheorghe Cristescu... the founder of communism in Rumania, who has been in prison for communism under the borgeois. He has been with my wife together, and he said to my wife, " Forty years ago I fought for the 8-hour labor day and now my Communist Party has come to power and I have to work 14 hours a day."...

Senator Dodd: What was the name of the prominent woman Communist in Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Ana Pauker, and she was also in prison.

Senator Dodd: Do you know her?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes, yes surely; she has also been in prison, and she has been kept a short time and then afterward she died of cancer.

Senator Dodd: We don't have any more questions. Do you have anything more you want to say, Pastor?

Reverend Wurmbrand: I want to say something. I owe it to those with whom I have been in prison. I have told you so many sad things. I don't wish to end with this note. I must tell you that in these great tortures and this great suffering, Christians have shown themselves as saints and as heroes, and if I am allowed to conclude with just one scene which I have seen myself.

It was at the canal. With us, 150,000 men and women have been arrested to build a canal. Beaten, tortured, hungry, without anything, they had to build a canal.

Senator Dodd: Build a canal?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; a canal, the Danube Canal. My wife has worked and shoveled the earth. At this canal, there was a religious brigade of 400 men, bishops, priests, peasants who loved Christ, sectarians and so on, all who were for religious motives in prison.

Over this brigade criminals have been put, and to the criminals it has been promised that they will be released if they torture these Christians. This promise has never been kept. But imagine a criminal who is sentenced for life, if he knows that he has such a hope. If they saw you in this brigade making a cross as it is a habit with us in Rumania, or folding your hands or saying a word about God you were beaten to death.

And now a Sunday morning the political officer of the prison comes, the whole brigade is gathered, and just at random he sees a young man. He calls him, "What is your name?" He says the name. "What are you by profession?" He said, "A priest." And then, mocking, the Communist said, "Do you still believe in God?"

This priest knew that if he says yes, this is the last day of his life. We all looked to him. For a few seconds he was silent. Then his face began to shine and then he opened his mouth and with a very humble but with a very decided voice he said: "Mr. Lieutenant, when I became a priest I knew that during church history thousands of Christians and

priests have been killed for their faith, and notwithstanding I became a Christian and I became a priest. I knew what I became. And as often as I entered the altar clad in this beautiful ornate which priests wear I promised to God, "If I will wear the uniform of a prisoner, then also I will serve Him. Mr. Lieutenant, prison is not an argument against religion. I love Christ from all my heart."

I am sad that I can't give the intonation with which he said these words. I think that Juliet when she spoke about Romeo, she spoke like that. We were ashamed because we - we believed in Christ. This man loved Christ as a bride loves the bridegroom. This man has been beaten and tortured to death. But this is Rumania. Rumania is a country which is mocked, which is oppressed, but deep in the hearts of the people is a great esteem and a great praise for those who have suffered. The love to God, the love to Christ, the love to fatherland has never ceased. My country will live. With this I finish.

Senator Dodd: Your testimony has certainly been very impressing. (At this point, a member of the audience later identified as L.D. O'Flaherty, addressed the Chair).

Mr. O'Flaherty: Mr. Chairman, we have pretty substantial reason to believe that our brother is in danger of his life, and I don't know what steps we could take to have him claim asylum here. He has asylum in France, but we fear for his life because as he as told you, they have told him they will bump him off, get a gangster to bump him off. What arrangements if any - I am not a politician or a political science scholar - what arrangements could be made for his asylum in this country? Can he make a declaration to secure asylum here for his protection?

We know individuals have followed him from city to city unknown to him, and I ask this openly here.

Senator Dodd: Would you identify yourself? I didn't get your name.

Mr. O'Flaherty: O'Flaherty. L.D. O'Flaherty.

Senator Dodd: O'Flaherty?

Mr. O'Flaherty: I am a businessman, a Christian businessman. I am a director in a certain organization here that is giving him support, Friends of Israel. On that basis I make this request. I don't think he understands the danger.

Reverend Wurmbrand: We have a God who protects us. We have the angels around us.

Senator Dodd: I think we had better discuss this matter privately with

the pastor after the public hearing. I don't think it is a matter which should be discussed publicly.

Mr. O'Flaherty: Thank you.

Senator Dodd: We will adjourn this hearing now subject to further call.

(Whereupon, at 11:50 a.m., the subcommittee adjourned subject to the call of the Chair).

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Consent and Release

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New Titles

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Rose Hills Cemetery

10:51 2/17/2010

Visitation and Testimonial Services will take place on Friday, 2/23/2001 at 7PM in the Memorial Chapel, entrance through Gate 1, and Saturday, 2/24/01, 1PM in the Hillside Chapel, Gate 17, at the Rose Hill Cemetery, 3888 Workman Mill Rd, in Whittier, CA. 90601 (phone: 562 699-0921; fax: 562 699-6372; http://rosehills.com). The Grave is located in the Garden of Meditation, the first plot behind the funeral building, right by the entrance

lot 410 grave 4
curb 108 4 rows left 8 spaces

Search Results
for "Wurmbrand" at
http://rosehills.com/graveLocationSearch/placement.aspx

Name Date of Death
WURMBRAND, SABINA Friday, August 11, 2000
WURMBRANDT, RICHARD Saturday, February 17, 2001

Grave Search Detail

WURMBRANDT, RICHARD
Date Of Death: Saturday, February 17, 2001
Burial Property Name: Garden of Meditation
Burial Section: 3
Burial Lot: 410
Grave/Niche: 4
Entrance Gate: 1

Sabina
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http://www.persecution.com/news/index.cfm?action=article&newsid=74

OBITUARY - Sabina O. Wurmbrand (1913-2000)
August 14, 2000

Sabina O. Wurmbrand (1913-2000)

Sabina O. Wurmbrand, co-founder of The Voice of the Martyrs, a Christian mission with offices in 30 countries, went home to the Lord Friday, August 11, 2000, at 10:15 p.m. She had been seriously ill for the past several months and was hospitalized in Tijuana, Mexico.

She was born Sabina Oster on July 10, 1913 in Czernowitz, a city in the Bucovine region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which became part of Romania after WWI, and since WWII has been part of the Ukraine. This area was an important educational and cultural hub for the Jewish faith. Sabina graduated from high school in Czernowitz, and then attended classes for two years at the Sorbonne in Paris, France, where she studied languages, and became fluent in many during her life. After her studies there, she was employed in Bucharest, Romania.

While in Bucharest, she married Richard Wurmbrand on October 26, 1936. During a vacation later in 1936, both Richard and Sabina were converted and baptized in the Christian faith, joining the church of the Anglican Mission in Bucharest.

During the WWII occupation of Romania in 1940-43, Sabina's parents, two sisters, and one brother were killed in Nazi concentration camps. Sabina was active in the Romanian underground from 1940-45. She smuggled

numerous Jewish children out of ghettos, preached daily in bomb shelters, and was arrested several times for underground Christian activities during a state of war. She and her husband Richard were spared from execution through the intervention of the chief editor of Romania's main newspaper and the interest shown in their case by prominent religious leaders. During this time, Sabina was one of the founders of the Jewish-Christian Church in Bucharest.

At the end of World War II, Sabina traveled regularly to Budapest, smuggling in goods and food, especially salt, that were needed by refugees living there. During her travels, she would actively speak to the Russian occupation forces about the Christian faith. In 1946, she organized a soup kitchen in Bucharest which served 1,000 people a day during a severe drought. During the summers of 1946 and 1947, she organized Christian camps for Romania's religious leaders of all denominations, and held daily devotions for them. During these years she also conducted street meetings with gatherings of up to 5000 people.

After Richard's arrest by the Communist government in 1948, she encouraged many young ministers to continue underground Christian activity. She was arrested in 1951 and taken to a prisoners' labor camp to build a river canal. She loaded and unloaded box-cars with stones. She spent three years in prison, and was under house arrest for several years after release. The Communist authorities promised to free her if she would divorce her husband and renounce her faith, which she refused to do. She and her family escaped Romania in 1966, traveling throughout Europe and America, speaking for the newly founded organization, Christian Mission to the Communist World, which became The Voice of the Martyrs in 1992. Sabina actively spoke to churches, groups, and conferences for 32 years after the founding of the ministry, and accompanied her husband to testify at Congressional hearings on religious persecution. She wrote and published a book, The Pastor's Wife, detailing her Christian testimony and life, which continues to be published in six languages.

Sabina's life was characterized by an understanding of Christian love and forgiveness, with an effort to redeem lives for Christ. She is survived by her husband, Richard; a son, Michael; and two grandchildren.

The funeral will be Wednesday, at the Sky Rose Chapel of the Rose Hill Cemetery in Whittier, California. USA Headquarters for The Voice of the Martyrs is located in Bartlesville.

---End.

Senate Testimony
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COMMUNIST EXPLOITATION OF RELIGION - Richard Wurmbrand - From Hell To Heaven

Crime/Corruption Miscellaneous Keywords: RICHARD WURMBRAND, TORTURE, BEATINGS, DEATH, HELL, HEAVEN, COMMUNISTS
Source: United States Senate - Committe On The Judiciary - 89th Congress
Published: Friday, May 6, 1966 Author: Richard Wurmbrand - U.S. Senate Testimony
Posted on 03/20/2001 21:27:07 PST by Uncle Bill

COMMUNIST EXPLOITATION OF RELIGION

HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY ACT AND OTHER INTERNAL SECURITY LAWS OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

UNITED STATES SENATE
EIGHTY-NINTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION

TESTIMONY OF REV. RICHARD WURMBRAND
COMMUNIST EXPLOITATION OF RELIGION
Friday, May 6, 1966

US. Senate, Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws, of the Committee on the Judiciary, Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:20 a.m., in room 318, Old Senate Office Building, Senator Thomas J. Dodd presiding. Also present: Jay G. Sourwine, chief counsel; Benjamin Mandel, director of research; Frank W. Schroeder, chief investigator; and Robert C. McManus,

investigations analyst.

Senator Dodd: I will call this hearing to order. We have as our witness today Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, who is a refugee from Rumania. Mr. Sourwine will introduce and read a copy of Dr. Wurmbrand's credentials.

I must say, before you do so, that we are grateful for your appearing here. I am familiar with the nature of your testimony. -I think I am to an extent. I feel that you are rendering a real service to the cause of the free world.

Go ahead, Mr. Sourwine.

Mr. Sourwine: Mr. Chairman, this letter of credentials, which I shall read pursuant to your instructions, was given to Dr. Wurmbrand by Dr. Hedenquist, who is the mission director of the Svenska Israels-missionen. The reason is explained the text. It reads:

Pastor Richard Wurmbrand is a refugee from Rumania, a country which he had to leave because of the anti religious persecution. Fleeing from there, he has not the usual credentials, which have been taken from him at his arrest by the secret police of the Communists. Our mission, knowing him since 26 years, certify hereby that he is an Evangelical Minister who has had until now the following functions:

From April 1939, to January 1940, he was secretary of the church's mission to the Jews which had to retire from Rumania at the last date because of the war. During the whole war he has been pastor of our mission in Rumania. Since our mission retired from Rumania in 1945, from that year to 1948 he has been a pastor of the Norwegian mission to the Jews.

In the same time he has worked also in the representation of the World Council of Churches for Rumania.

He was also a professor of the Old Testament in the Seminary of Bucharest. From 1948 to 1956, he was in prison for religious motives. Released in 1956, he was no more authorized by the Communist authorities to fulfill his duties. From 1956 to 1959 he preached and exercised his other pastoral functions illegally.

Re-arrested for this in 1959, he was again in prison until July 1964, when he was released on the basis of a general amnesty.

Since 1964, he was pastor of the Evangelical Church in Orshova, a Rumanian town.

Continuing to be the object of persecution and being in great danger,

our Scandinavian mission to the Jews succeeded to make him escape from three.

We recommend him as a most reliable person, a fine Christian who has published several books against atheism and communism and who has got a burning heart for Christ and for all people in need.

This is signed by Dr. Hedenquist, doctor of theology, mission director in Sweden for Svenska Israelsmissionen.

Reverend Wurmbrand: He is the former secretary of the World Council of Missions.

Senator Dodd: Without objection, this letter will be included in the record. Since it has been read, it will not be reprinted.

Mr. Sourwine, you may proceed. I have some questions which I might as well ask to begin with, rather than wait until later.

Pastor, how many languages do you speak?

Reverend Wurmbrand: There are legends about me that I speak very many languages. Something like 14.

Senator Dodd: Forty?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Fourteen.

Senator Dodd: Obviously, you speak English.

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; English, French, German Hungarian, and so on.

Senator Dodd: Did you come directly from Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: No, no; from Rumania I went to Italy; from Italy to Oslo, and then from Europe I came to the States.

Senator Dodd: From where?

Reverend Wurmbrand: From Paris.

Senator Dodd: When was that?

Reverend Wurmbrand: I came to the States 3 weeks ago.

Senator Dodd: Were you required by the secret police to make any commitments before you could leave Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Before I left Rumania I was called twice to the secret police. The first time they said that they don't know yet if they will allow me to leave the country with my family. They said: "Dollars have been received for you. You will have to leave the country, but perhaps we will let some time to pass, because your remembrances of prison are too fresh and you have too good a pen."

Senator Dodd: What?

Reverend Wurmbrand: A pen. "You can too well write. Perhaps we will keep somebody here of your family as hostage." The second time they called me again and they said: "Now you will leave the country, but be very cautious when you come out. You may preach Christ as much as you like. We know that you are a preacher, but don't touch us. Don't speak against Communists. If you will speak against communism, for $1,000 we can find a gangster who will liquidate you. We play with you with open cards. You come from prison You have met in prison men whom we have brought back from the West."

And that is the truth. I have been in prison with a Rumanian Orthodox priest, Vasile Leul, who has been kidnaped from Austria. I have seen his nail torn out and broken, and so they reminded me of that. "You know how our prisons are and that you can come back in prison."

And the third thing which they said: "We have also another possibility with you. We can destroy you morally outside. We will find story with a girl or a money story or something else and people will be stupid enough to believe it. We will destroy you if you touch us."

And under these conditions I was allowed to come out. And very sorrowfully in the West I found people in the West, even religious leaders, who told me the same thing: "Preach Christ as much as you like but don't touch Communists."

Senator Dodd: As I understand it, you said you came to this country 3 weeks ago.

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes, sir; just today it is 1 month.

Senator Dodd: Three weeks?

Reverend Wurmbrand: One month today.

Senator Dodd: Were you in prison from 1948 to 1956?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes, and then imprisoned again in January 1959 to 1964.

Senator Dodd: Were you in the same prison all of that time?

Reverend Wurmbrand No, no; we were transferred from one prison to the others.

Senator Dodd: From 1956 to 1959 as I understand it, you exercised your religious function in spite of the law against such activity, did you not?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes, yes.

Senator Dodd: How did you do this?

Reverend Wurmbrand: When I cam out from prison in 1956, I was licensed to preach - of course, nobody can preach in our country accept he has a license from the Government - and in the beginning I got a license, but which was withdrawn from me after the first week of preaching.

The motives are so comical you would say. In a sermon I said that Christians must keep hope, because of the wheel of history turns, and the wheel of life.

"You meant us, that communism will change, that communism will fall. Never will it fall." It has been reproached to me that in a sermon I have said Christians must practice patience, patience, and again patience. "Ah, you meant that the Americans will come and we must be patient until they come."

Everything was misinterpreted, and so the license has been withdrawn from me. And then generally in the Soviet countries there exists the underground church which works as the first Christians worked. Only now we understand texts of the bible which we had not understood before. I did not know why it is written in the Bible that a man named Simon was called Peter. Simeon was called Niger and so on. Everyone is called otherwise than his mother called him. So it is with us now. In every village I was called by another name. I was called Valentin, Georgescu, Ruben, In every village I had another name, and so I could preach.

I did not understand in earlier times why Jesus, when He wishes to have the last supper said: "Go in town and you will see a man with a pitcher and go after him and where he enters prepare the supper."

Why does he not give an address, a number, and a street? Now we know it when we make secret prayer meetings. We never give the address. We don't know if that man is not the informer of the secret police. We tell to the main to wait in a public garden or somewhere, and when one with a flower here, or with a necktie passes, go after him. We don't introduce ourselves to each other, and if somebody asks the name of the other one,

we know that he is the informer of the secret police. And so we have developed a technique of secret church work and so I could work.

Senator Dodd: How did you keep alive.? How did you sustain yourself?

Reverend Wurmbrand: The Christians sustained me everywhere. I had no salary, I had no regular salary but the Christians everywhere sustained me. In Rumania the first question asked of a pastor or a priest of any denomination, is: Has he been in prison? If he has been in prison he is all right. All the Christians sustain him.

Senator Dodd: You were re-arrested in 1959, as I understand it.

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes.

Senator Dodd: Were you kept in the same prison until your release in 1964?

Reverend Wurmbrand: No. Then, also, I was in several prisons.

Senator Dodd: Could you describe for us the cell in which you were kept in solitary confinement?

Reverend Wurmbrand: There were different cells. In solitary confinement I was the first 2 , nearly 3 years. It was in the most beautiful building of Bucharest in the building of the Secretariat of State for Internal Affairs. It is a building before which all foreigners stand and admire it. I can tell you that your White House is a very little building in comparison with ours. And there beneath the earth 10 meters beneath the earth are the cells. There are no windows in the cells. Air enters through a tube. And there were a few desks with a mattress, with a straw mattress. You had but three steps for to walk. Never were we taken out from these cells except for interrogations when prisoners were beaten and tortured.

For years I have never seen sun, moon, flowers, snow, stars, no man except the interrogator who beat, but I can say I have seen heaven open, I have seen Jesus Christ, I have seen the angels and we were very happy there.

But the treatment was very bad. The purpose was to make us mad. You didn' t hear a noise. A whisper you didn't hear in this cell. The guard had felt shoes. For years, not to hear anything. In all these years of prison we never had a book, we never had a bit of paper, we never had a newspaper, nothing to distract our mind except that from time to time tape recorders were put on the corridor. I didn't know what a tape recorder is. I had not seen such a thing. But at once we heard beautiful Rumanian music, and then we enjoyed it. We didn't know what has happened

with the Communists that they make us enjoy, and after 10 or 15 minutes at once you heard, "Ha, ha, ha don't beat," the torturing of a woman. This lasted for half an hour the torturing of a woman. And of 100 prisoners who had been in that cell, in that corridor, everybody recognized that it is his wife or that it is his girl. I myself thought also that it is my wife.

Never will a Westerner understand, if I would not have the mark on my body, which are my credentials.

Senator Dodd: Excuse me, never will who understand?

Reverend Wurmbrand: A Westerner can't understand.

Senator Dodd: A Westerner?

Reverend Wurmbrand: A Westerner can't understand God is here and knows that I will not tell you the whole truth because if I will tell you the whole truth, you will faint and rush out of this room, not bearing to hear what things have happened. But I will tell you that in a prison they crucified a cat before ourselves. They beat nails in the feet of the cat and the cat was hanging with the head down, and can you imagine how this cat screamed and the prisoners, mad, beat on the door, "Free the cat, free the cat, free the cat," and the Communists very polite, " Oh, surely we will free the cat, but give the statements which we ask from you and then the cat will be freed," and I have known men who have given statements against their wives, against their children, against their parents to free the cat. They did it out of madness, and then the parents and the wives have been tortured like the cat. Such things have happened with us.

Senator Dodd: Did you have any fellow Christians like you imprisoned?

Reverend Wurmbrand: We had hundreds of bishops, priests, monks in prisons; my wife who is near me, she has been with Catholic nuns. My wife tells that they were angels; such have been put in prisons. Nearly all Catholic bishops died in prison. Innumerable Orthodox and Protestants have been in prison, too.

Senator Dodd: The point I was getting at and I guess I did not make it clear, were the Christians treated any differently or mistreated any differently?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Everybody in prison was very badly treated. And I cannot be contradicted on this question, because I have been with physicians, I have much more broken bones than anybody, so either I broke my bones or somebody else broke them. And if I would not have been a clergyman but a murderer – it is a crime to torture a murderer, too.

The Christian prisoners were tortured in a form which should mock their religion. I tell you again in the prison of Pitesti one scene I will describe you about torturing and mocking Christians, and believe me I would renounce to eternal life to paradise after which I long, if I tell you one word of exaggeration. God is here and knows that I do not say everything. It cannot be said. There are ladies here. There are other people hearing it.

One Sunday morning in the prison of Pitesti a young Christian was already the fourth day, day and night, tied to the cross. Twice a day the cross was put on the floor and 100 other cell inmates by beating, by tortures, were obliged to fulfill their necessities upon his face and upon his body. Then the cross was erected again and the Communists swearing and mocking "Look your Christ, look your Christ, how beautiful he is, adore him, kneel before him, how fine he smells, your Christ." And then the Sunday morning came and a Catholic priest, an acquaintance of mine, has been put to the belt, in the dirt of a cell with 100 prisoners, a plate with excrements, and one with urine was given to him and he was obliged to say the holy mass upon these elements, and he did it. And I asked him afterward, "Father, but how could you make this?" He was half mad. He answered to me: "Brother, I have suffered more than Christ. Don't reproach to me what I have done." And the other prisoners beaten to take holy communion in this form, and the Communists around, " Look, your sacraments, look, your church, what a holy church you have, what fine is your church, what holy ordinance God has given you."

I am very insignificant and a very little man. I have been in prison among the weak ones and the little ones, but I speak for a suffering country and for a suffering church and for the heroes and the saints of the 20th century; we have had such saints in our prison to which I did not dare to lift my eyes.

I am a Protestant, but we have had near us Catholic bishops and monks and nuns about whom we felt that the touching of their garments heals. We were not worthy to untie their shoelaces. Such men have been mocked and tortured in our country. And even if it would mean to go back to a Rumanian prison, to be kidnaped by the Communists and going back and tortured again, I cannot be quiet. I owe it to those who have suffered there.

Senator Dodd: Now, did the Rumanian secret police employ brainwashing techniques?

Reverend Wurmbrand: The worst thing has been the brainwashing. All the tortures of times before were nothing in comparison with brainwashing.

To describe very shortly brainwashing: First of all we were doped. The dope was put in our food. I did not know about this dope. But we saw

only the results, a dope which gave two results. First of all, what the physician calls alleluia which means lack of power of will. The power of will was completely broken. If we were told, "Lift your hand," I lifted it. If I was not told to let the hand down, I would never have left it down. We were at the same time very much undernourished. We had times when we received 100 grams, one slice of bread, a week. It was told to us, "We give you as many calories as you need to be able to breathe only, " and so our power of will has been broken.

Second, this drug or perhaps it is another drug, produces the delirium of self accusation. I have seen prisoners knocking during the night on the door and saying, "Take me to the interrogator, I have new things to say against me." Prisoners quarreled with their interrogators to say against themselves more than the interrogators asked from them. And then we have had in prisons the curious phenomenon that we as priests received confessions from other prisoners. Now everybody is a sinner, but not everybody is a criminal. Men who have never murdered confessed that they have murdered, that they have committed adultery, that they have stolen. They felt they had to accuse themselves. This has also been the result of doping. And after we were doped like that - that is the secret of all the Soviet show trials, in which the prisoners accuse themselves - then the time of brainwashing came. For 17 hours a day from 5 in the morning to 10 in the evening we had to sit like this. We were not allowed to lean. We were not allowed to rest a little bit our weary heads upon our hands. To close your eyes was a crime. Seventeen hours a day we had to sit like that and hear from the morning to the evening: " Communism is good, communism is good, communism is good, communism is good," until you heard one who was already 20 years in prison under the Communists shouting, "Communism is good, communism is good, communism is good, I give my life for communism."

It was after the technique of Professor Pavlov, a scientific suggestion.

In prison there were not only priests and pastors. We have had hundreds of peasants and young boys and girls who were put in prison for their Christian faith. These were separated and for them there was a special brainwashing, not only that "communism is good," but "Christianity is dead, Christianity is dead, Christianity is dead. Nobody more believes in Christ, nobody more believes in Christ, you are the only fools."

And so on. And I must tell you that you may know how far this brainwashing went. I do not like to pose here like a hero. I believed that Christianity is dead under this influence. I believed -

Senator Dodd: I did not hear that.

Reverend Wurmbrand: I believed that Christianity is dead under this suggestion. Nobody goes more to church. They gave us post cards. I have

not seen my wife for 10 years. They gave me post cards, they gave to all of us post cards: "Write to your children and wife; they may come and on that day see you and bring your parcels," so on that day we were shaved; we expected and expected until the evening and nobody came. They had not sent the post cards, but we did not know. Then came the brain washings. " Your wives are laying in bed with men," obscene words, "Your children hate you. You have nobody to love in the world. You are the only fools. Give up faith. Nobody is more Christians. Christianity is dead."

I believed also that nobody is more a Christian. I had read in the Bible that there will be in the last time the great apostasy, that people will leave the faith and I believed that I lived now this time. But I said to myself if Christianity is dead, I will sit at its tomb and will weep until it arises again, just as Mary Magdalene sat at the tomb of Jesus and wept until Jesus showed Himself. Then when I came out of prison I saw Christianity is not dead. The number of practicing Christians in Rumania according to the figures given by the Communists themselves in 20 years of Communist dictatorship has grown 300 percent.

Senator Dodd: How do the Communists use religion for their own purposes if they do?

Reverend Wurmbrand: That is a very tragic side. The worse thing in Rumania has not been the persecution of Christians. The persecution has make the Christians to be of steel. The worst thing has been the corruption of religion. They have put as religious leaders their man. A bishop, a pastor, a preacher, just a man like other man and can commit sins. Now if they found a preacher or somebody else in adultery or in some money irregularity or I do not know what sin, they called him and blackmailed him and said, "Now you must become our man. Otherwise we publish what we have found." Or they found others who were weak ones, whom they promised I do not know what. They never keep their promises. And these men, they put at the leadership of religion everywhere.

They have their bishops, their bishop vicar, their professors of theology, their presidents of the Baptists and Pentecostals and so on. I could give names. I know this from firsthand. Because many of these, when we came out of prison, out of remorse confessed to us what they have done. And now they use these men. With us in Rumania religion is a very great thing. You do not find much religious difference in Rumania. By these weak Christians, the Communists used religion for their propaganda. When the Communists came to power in Rumania, they convoked in the building of our parliament a congress of all the cults. There were 4,000 priests; pastors, rabbis of all religions were there. Our Prime Minister Gorza, said the same things which you hear now in the West. This was in 1945 when they came to power with us. "You know Rumanian communism will not be like Russian communism. We are a democratic communism. We will not persecute the church. We are on the

side of monarchy. We will never collectivate agriculture. We are something entirely else and you should be on our side and then we will protect religion and we will give salaries to the priests."

And the priests, good men, simply believed him and cheered him. Priests and bishops one after the other stood up and said, "Well, if your communism is otherwise than the Russian communism, if it will be a good communism, we do not object against communism in principle." And one after the other stood up and praised this form of communism. There was only one in that congress who protested and said that communism can never change, that terror is an essential part of communism, because communism is contrary to human nature.

What would you say if I would take the purse out of your pocket? Everyone wishes to have something. A dog wishes to have a bone, and communism is against human nature because it does not allow you to have anything of yours and so communism must use terror. At that congress there was only one who said these things. This one is now before you.

But what has happened? I went to prison, this was one of the charges against me. I met in prison all those who had praised communism, all those who have collaborated with communism, and they were treated just like me. They had been the fools. There was only one difference that I was in prison with a good conscience and they were with a bad conscience. In prison they had remorse. Religion was used for Communist propaganda in our country.

Just to give you one example: To the Orthodox Church of Rumania foreigners come and see the liturgy and see everything so beautiful. The church is open. They do not understand the language, they do not know what is preached. I will give you the test of the sermon. It was a sermon about an epistle of St. Paul where it was written that Christ is our peace , and so the priest explained, "Christ is our peace. Who is against peace? American imperialists. And who is on the side of the peace? We, the Socialist countries."

So you see that Christ identifies Himself with socialism and so on. Such sermons they have. They have used the religion for their own purposes in the country. Then they have used the religion for getting political positions in the West. They are not fools to send in the West representatives of the Communist Party. They send bishops with great beards and beards are always very impressive here in the West, and through these beards they influence the West.

Senator Dodd: I have many more questions, but would you show your wounds and scars, if you have some?

Reverend Wurmbrand: I apologize here before the ladies.

Senator Dodd: Take your time. If ever a man was entitled to time, I think you are.

Reverend Wurmbrand: Look here, look here, look here. Look here, look here. And so the whole body.

Senator Dodd: What is the scar behind your ear?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Here they put the knife and said, "Give accusatory statement against your bishops and against the other pastors. Do you give or not?" And they cut. It is true that they did not cut very deeply.

Senator Dodd: These are all knife wounds?

Reverend Wurmbrand: They tortured by all means. They beat until they broke the bones. They used red-hot irons, they used knives, they used everything. And what was the first thing is not that they beat, not what they did, but how they did it. They interrogated you very politely, and if you did not wish to say what they asked they said, "Well, we have the first. On the 15th you will be beaten and tortured at 10 o'clock in the evening." Imagine what 14 days were after this. We have had prisoners who during this time, which has been given to them, knocked at the door, "I can't bear it. I will say everything," before they have been tortured.

Senator Dodd: I wish you would turn around before you put your shirt on.

Reverend Wurmbrand: And that it may be very clear, it is not that I boast with these marks. I show to you the tortured body of my country, of my fatherland, and of my church, and they appeal to the American Christians and to all freemen of America to think about our tortured body, and we do not ask you to help us. We ask you only one thing. Do not help our oppressors and do not praise them. You cannot be a Christian and praise the inquisitors of Christians. That is what I have to say.

Senator Dodd: All right. You may put on your clothes. That scar on your right breast, do you remember how that was inflicted?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; by knife.

Senator Dodd: By knife?

Reverend Wurmbrand: By knife. I have been in Oslo. I went to a hospital. There were several physicians. I can give their names. I spoke with them about religion. In the beginning they said, "We are atheists," and then

they saw my body and I asked them what treatment do I need. They said: " About treatment, do not ask us. Ask only the one in whom we don't believe, but who has kept you alive, because according to our medical books, you are dead. A man who has what you have, with four vertebras broken, cannot live. According to our medical books, you are dead. If you are alive, then the one in whom we don't believe has kept you alive."

Senator Dodd: I think it is important for our purposes to understand this completely. As I take it, they cut you, but they must have been asking you questions.

Reverend Wurmbrand: Surely, surely. I had worked in the representation of the World Council of Churches in Rumania, and after the war this World Council of Churches made a great relief work and I myself had relationship with the Rumanian patriarchs and with the bishops and with the Baptists and with the Pentecostals and Lutherans and so on, and we worked with all these. And now they wish to make with us in Rumania a great show process, a great show trial as they have made in Hungary with Cardinal Mindszenty and so on, and they wished from me accusatory statements against all these with whom I have had connections, and because I did not wish to give these accusatory statements, I and others have been tortured. This has been the usual thing. Nobody enters in the Rumanian secret police without being beaten, without being tortured. I have been not the worst tortured. The proof is that I am alive. So many died. Nearly all our Catholic bishops have been so handled that they have died, and in that time the Russians were in our country, they decided that the Catholic bishops should be killed. One of the members of the Government has been Gromyko, one of the murderers of Christians. Perhaps you will understand why I call his name.

Senator Dodd: Yes; I do.

Reverend Wurmbrand: I have seen Catholic priests, heroes, dying not only for Christ and confessing Christ to the end, but dying for the Pope.

I have heard the word of a Catholic priest, I will not tell his name. He was asked, "Do you still believe in the Pope?" and he said, "Since St. Peter there has always been a Pope, and until Christ will come again there will always be a Pope. And the actual Pope, Pius the 12th has not made peace with you and never will a Pope shake hands with you." He was trampled under the feet and tortured to death. Under our eyes he was killed. At that time a member of the government who killed this Catholic priest has been Gromyko, and the priest died with the hope that never will a Pope shake hands with his murderers.

Senator Dodd: You saw and heard this yourself.

Reverend Wurmbrand. Yes, surely; and it is not only one case. I could never finish if I would tell you what I have seen. I must just pour out before you my heart. I speak for a country and I speak for a church. We are very, very sad there about all these compromises. I must tell you I have been in England before I came to the States, and I have spoken with high Christian officials from England. The Archbishop of Canterbury and many canons and so on have been in our country recently, last year. So I asked Christian leaders – I will not tell names – "Why have you sat at banquets with our inquisitors? I am a little pastor, I cannot interrogate you, but I speak for the others who cannot speak for themselves. "Why have you sat at banquets with our inquisitors?"

I was answered, "We are Christians and must have friendship and fellowship with everybody, with the Communists, too. Don't you agree?"

I said, "I can't polemicize with you. I have not read the Bible for 14 years. You must know Christianity better than I. Faintly I remember in the Bible it is written that friendship with the world is hatred toward God. But supposing you must have friendship and fellowship with everybody. How is it that you have had friendship and fellowship only with our inquisitors, and with us never?"

Never have these great men of the West been in the houses of Christian martyrs. I have an only son and I love him. I cannot look to him. He looks like a skeleton. He has hungered. He will never be healthy. And so many of our children died. All these great relates from the West are great men. I am very little in comparison with them. But I always asked myself, "Well, all right, make friendship with the Communists. But only with the Communists?" They never inquired about us.

I asked them, "Why did you go to see the Pope, who is all right, who does not need your visit?" "When you have been in Rumania why have you not visited the tombs of the Catholic bishops killed in tortures? Why have you not shed there a tear? Why have you not put there a flower? That is what we expected. Why have you not left 10 pounds? Ten pounds would have been the salvation of a Catholic family there. You go to see the Pope. The Pope is all right. He has to eat and to drink." But I must say we are very sad there about these compromises with communism. We do not understand. I am a man who does not understand politics. I have not read newspapers for 14 years.

It may be right for a state to have peaceful existence with communism. I do not know. That is a question for Johnson and Goldwater to decide. But the church can never have peaceful coexistence with atheism. Everybody would laugh if I would say that health can peacefully exist with the microbe of tuberculosis, that the FBI can coexist peacefully with gangsters, that the church can peacefully exist with drunkenness, but communism and atheism is much worse than drug addiction and drunkenness.

You drink a little wine and the next day it passes, but communism poisons youth and our children since 50 years. How can there be peaceful existence with this on the side of churchmen and the church leadership I cannot understand.

I must say I have been very sad. I have read in your periodicals that, I do not know why, church bodies here ask the admission of Red China in the organization of allied nations. It may be right. I do not know politics. I do not know what this organization of allied nations is, but I ask myself, "You, a church periodical, why don't you write about the tortures inflicted to Chinese Christians by the communists? That is your business and leave the business of politics to the Senate and like this."

I express here the grief and the great pain of a suffering country and of a suffering church, and I apologize if I am a little unpolite.

Senator Dodd: You were the representative of the World Council of Christian Churches?

Reverend Wurmbrand: I was one of the workers of the office of the World Council of Churches. This man who give me a certificate, this Pastor Hedenquist, was at that time one of the leaders of the Council of Churches who came to Rumania.

Mr. Sourwine: You were responding to the chairman's question about what had been asked of you under interrogation. Did you complete that answer?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Well, it is a very interesting thing. Jesus says that the children of this world are wiser than the children of light. You are a political body. You interrogate me about what I have been asked about the World Council of Churches. The World Council of Churches never put to me this question.

Senator Dodd: Never what?

Reverend Wurmbrand: They have never put to me the question, "You have been arrested. One of the main subjects of your interrogation was that you represented us in Rumania. Please tell us what you have been interrogated about?"

I was never asked by them. The secret police wished to know everybody with whom they worked and with whom we had connections and so on. One of the great purposes of their interrogation was to know how they could win the World Council of Churches for their position.

Mr. Sourwine: How they could win?

Reverend Wurmbrand: The Council of Churches to defend their position.

Mr. Sourwine: How did you answer that one?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Well, I hoped - I must say that I was mistaken in the answers which I gave - I hoped that the World Council of Churches will never be won to their position.

Senator Dodd: Will never be what?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Won for their position.

Senator Dodd: Work for their position?

Reverend Wurmbrand: That they will never, so I had hoped. And now when I came out I read last month there was a sitting of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, in which they took the following decision, a very nice decision: "We ask both parts to keep peace."

But in the East nobody published this decision of theirs. Nobody in the East has the slightest ideas of this decision. So this disarms only the West. Such decisions are taken. They look very fine. The purpose has been accomplished.

Mr. Sourwine: You mentioned questions about the World Council of Churches. Was there more than one, or was there just the single question of how they could win it for their purposes?

Reverend Wurmbrand: No; there were also other questions; what relief they sent and to whom they gave this relief and what was the political purpose of this relief, and so on. They considered then the World Council of Churches - that was in 1948 - they considered the World Council of Churches as an American spy organization. They do not consider it any more like that.

Mr. Sourwine: You were being questioned by the Rumanian secret police, were you not?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes.

Mr. Sourwine: When you say they wanted to know how they could win the World Council of Churches for their purposes, did you mean for the purposes of Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: No, no, no; for the purposes of communism, for the purposes of the whole Communist world.

Mr. Sourwine: In other words, the Rumanian secret police are, in your

opinion at least, just like any other communist secret police?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Sure, there is no difference at all, and our interrogations, if they were important ones as mine, they went to Moscow. I know it from the Orthodox priest, Vasile Leon, who has been kidnaped from Austria and he has been brought to Moscow. In Moscow he has been interrogated about me. In Moscow they knew everything about Rumania. They worked hand in hand. At that time the secret Rumanian police had Soviet advisers.

Mr. Sourwine: I think you have touched on this, but can you perhaps give us a little more on the subject? What has been the policy and practice of the communists with respect to religion in countries where they have come into power?

Reverend Wurmbrand: They used three great instruments. First of all, the persecution, to make everybody afraid. They never accepted that they have put anybody in prison for religious motives. They found always political motives. Now I will give you the political motives.

A Unitarian pastor, a friend of mine, has been put in prison and sentenced to 7 years under the charge that on a Christmas Eve he has said that Jesus being a baby Herod wished to kill him but his holy mother fled with him to Egypt. That was the charge. "Aha, you meant us under Herod, and you hope Nasser will be on the side of the imperialists and therefore you mentioned Egypt."

Another friend of mine, a pastor, was sentenced to 15 years in prison. He was one of the greatest saints whom I have ever seen in life. The charge against him was he preached on a Sunday morning in a village about John 21 where it is said that the Lord walked on the seashore and he saw the apostles and asked them, "Have you something to eat?" They said, "We have not," and then Jesus said, "Throw your nets on the right side."

So the pastor preached from the pulpit. He asked, "Have you something to eat?" And when he asked, "Have you something to eat?" Everybody began to weep, because with us, peasants have nothing to eat. After the collectivization of agriculture our peasants have nothing to eat. Peasant children do not see milk and fruit. Everything goes to the collective and from the collective perhaps to Vietnam. Nobody knows where it goes. Our population does not see. They began to weep because they had nothing to eat and then the pastor, not knowing in what world he is, said, "Dear children, you have nothing to eat because you throw your nets on the left side. You must throw them on the right side." He meant the side of the clemency and of the goodness of God.

The next day there was the secret police, "Aha, you have said not to go

to the left-wing with the communists but with the right side, the imperialists."

The man got 15 years of prison.

So there has been, first of all, this method of persecution. There has been, secondly, the method of corruption. We live in the times of the abomination of the desolation of the holy places. There have always been bad Popes and good Popes and bad priests and good priests. For the first time in church history the leadership of churches is dominated by the central committee of an avowed atheistic power. The central committee of the party decides who must be patriarch, who must be Baptist preacher, Pentecostal preacher, and so on. Everywhere they have found weak men or women with some sin. Those they have put in the leadership of churches and so you could hear in our theological seminary in Bucharest the theology that God has given three revelations - once through Moses, second through Jesus, the third through Karl Marx, and so on.

Religion is corrupted from within. Religion has been widely used and is still as the tools of communist politics. The priests everywhere had to propagate the collectivization of agriculture and everywhere when communists have something important to do, knowing the influence of religion, priests and pastors are put to preach these things.

Mr. Sourwine: Have the communists shown themselves to be opposed only to Christianity, or to all religions?

Reverend Wurmbrand: To all the religions. The Jewish religion has been persecuted just as the Christian religion. In the prison of Gherla we had a whole room with rabbis who were in prisons. We had in prison the Moslem priests and so on.

Mr. Sourwine: Did they segregate the rabbis in one room --

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes.

Mr. Sourwine: The Christians in another, and --

Reverend Wurmbrand: No, no, they were at a time kept with us, but the rabbis, because they had to respect certain dietary laws and the Sabbath and so on, they separated them in order not to provoke collision with other prisoners.

Mr. Sourwine: Did the prison authorities permit the Jews to follow their dietary requirements?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes.

Mr. Sourwine: To practice their religion?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; under one form. They could follow the dietary rules, not eating everything which has been given to them. That is all. They did not give them any special food.

Senator Dodd: Were the rabbis subjected to the same kind of torture that you suffered?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; sure, sure. There was no difference in this. I must say it may look anecdote for you. I had a discussion once with the commandant of the prison of Targulacna, and he said, "We are not like the Fascists who made the racial differences and persecuted the Jews and Hungarians. We are not so. Look around you. We keep in prison Rumanians, Hungarians, and Jews all alike. We don't make racial differences."

Mr. Sourwine: That could be interpreted to mean that he was saying people of the Jewish faith were being persecuted for their religious activity, but not for their race.

Is it true that there is no anti-Semitism in Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: There is anti-Semitism. Just before we left the country, everywhere where Jews were in high positions as chief engineers or directors in ministry and so on, they were silenced and put to lower functions.

Mr. Sourwine: Would you expand on that?

Senator Dodd: Just repeat it.

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes, yes. Just before we left Rumania a few weeks before we left Rumania, all kinds of Jews who were chief engineer or directors or something great in different institutions have been put to lower positions just because they were Jews.

Senator Dodd: To lower positions?

Reverend Wurmbrand: To lower positions.

Mr. Sourwine: Not because of religion?

Reverend Wurmbrand: No, no.

Mr. Sourwine: Just as a matter of racial prejudice?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Sure. They could have been atheists. They were even members of the Communist Party, but if they were of Jewish origin, they

were put to lower positions. From the secret police all the Jews have been driven out.

Mr. Sourwine: Are there any Buddhists in Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Buddhists? No; we have none. Perhaps a few intellectuals, just a few.

Mr. Sourwine: Have the communists done anything, to your knowledge, to try to win position and influence for communist agents in the religious community of the free world?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Sure. We had a professor, Justin Moisescu.

Mr. Sourwine: Moisescu?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Moisescu, yes. He was a professor. He had never been a priest. Truly a very clever and a very cultured man. He was professor of church history, but a layman. With us there has been a law that you can't be professor in a theological institute unless you are a priest. So he resigned. He didn't wish to be a priest.

And the, what discussions he had with the secret police he knows, he was known in the whole country as a whoremonger, as a drunkard, nobody appreciated him. At once we heard that in a few weeks he had become priest, bishop, metropolitan of Yasi. That is the highest function with us after the patriarch.

Mr. Sourwine: That is the Rumanian Orthodox Church?

Reverend Wurmbrand: In the Rumanian Orthodox Church. Whatever will be the consequences for me, I have told you how I have been threatened, and these threatenings are not simple words.

Recently from Italy two Rumanians have been kidnaped. We have their names. An I know what can happen to me. But I will tell you this Justin Moisescu personally has denounced a group of 400 Christian peasants from his own bishopric. I have been imprisoned with them. He has denounced the priests whom he ordained when he knew that they said some counterrevolutionary word.

He has a very impressive beard and he has come out to the free world and was accepted as a bishop, and those in the West believe that they speak with the Orthodox Church of Rumania and they speak with the secret police of Rumania. And now the interesting thing is I would not mind accepting men like him and like Gromatca, this arch traitor and others. I don't mind that they are accepted in the West. But I ask myself in every bargain, in every business, both parts must win. I give you the

product but you must give me the dollars for it. We accept your traitors. What does the East accept from us? If we had posed to Rumania this question, "We will accept Justin Moisescu, you must accept a Bible society in Rumania," we would have it. But we accept without asking for it. Justin Moisescu is a member of the secret police. They sent to America the priest Liviu Stan. Everybody knows Liviu Stan is a man of the communists. When the communists came to power he was among the first ones who put posters on our walls that Christians must vote and go with the Communists. These posters were signed and the others by this Liviu Stan. The communists in Rumania are not so stupid to send here a man who will say. "I come from the side of the communist party" Liviu Stan came as a representative of the Orthodox Church of Rumania. And so they have many men. They have sent recently a priest, Ananaia.

Now that is a very interesting thing about this priest, Ananaia. This priest, Ananaia, has been with me in prison. He has been 10 years in prison. He has been beaten. He has passed through brainwashing. And they have such a confidence in brainwashing that they had the confidence to send him to the West and he does their work.

Senator Dodd: He is a priest in good standing, and of what church?

Reverend Wurmbrand: In the Orthodox church.

I speak out of the pain of a heart. I can't polemicize. I am a very little pastor. I can't polemicize with great religious bodies, but I am a man who has read nothing for 14 years. And now I came out to the West. I had always been very interested in missions and I wished to know what happens in missions. I took in hand the International Review of Missions, edited by the World Council of Churches, and I read there in the issue of January that in Rumania, orthodoxism and protestantism grow in an atmosphere of full religious liberty.

If the man who wrote this has not taken thousands of dollars from the Rumanian secret police, he deserves to be hanged for stupidity. He could have taken money for this. I believe he has not taken money. And then I wrote to them a letter, and said, "Either you lie or I lie. If I lie, I promise that never more will I be a pastor. If you lie you have to withdraw." Now to see if I lie or you lie I ask you to answer the following 20 questions, if you say there is full religious liberty in Rumania.

"Where is the office of the World Council of Churches of Religion in Rumania? It has offices everywhere. In the communist countries it has none.

"Where is the Bible Society? We have no Bible Society. Show me one Bible printed in 20 years. We have no such thing. Tell me the name of one

Christian who for 20 years could publish a book. Give me the name of one Christian professor of humanistic sciences in our country. Tell me on Sunday school in Bucharest where it can be attended.

"Tell me where is the YMCA in Rumania. Where are the pastors Ghelbegeanu, Vacareanu, and so on?" They are in prison.

"Please answer to me these questions. If you have received answers, I have received answers."

There is no possible answers. It is not right for Christians to mock our sufferings. The communists have mocked us enough. Don't praise our inquisitors. That is the only thing which we ask.

I apologize before these great Christians bodies. I am really a very little man but I speak for the great saints who suffer in prison. It is not right to praise our inquisitors or to think that now they have become better.

Mr. Sourwine: Are the restrictive measures imposed upon the exercise of religion in Rumania today as stringent as they were 10 or 15 years ago?

Reverend Wurmbrand: No; they are no more stringent and I will explain to you why. I have been in a very poor family, a family with five children. Generally our men are very poor with us, unbelievably poor.

My salary when I left Rumania was $28. You say it is little, $28 a week. It was $28 a month. My son was not allowed to finish his studies because of my condemnation. He worked as a building worker and had $30 a month. Our bishop has $70 a month. And now our population is very, very poor.

Senator Dodd: When you say dollars, you mean the equivalent?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; the equivalent of $70. Now I was in a very poor family with five little children, and I caressed a child and the mother said to me, "This child is so good, it doesn't weep even when it is hungry." It had given up weeping because the child knew it is useless to weep. You can't get food. And so this child was not beaten, because it didn't weep any more. The Rumanian people does not weep any more. And, therefore, it must not be beaten any more.

The Rumanian people, as well as the other peoples behind the Iron Curtain, are desperate. They have abandoned hope that they will ever be released. For years we have heard a broadcast station: "Rebel against communism, rebel against communism," and when we rebelled we were abandoned.

And we see how our oppressors are helped. I will tell you a scene.

Believe me, God is here. I tell you the scene just as it happened. It was in the years of brainwashing, the 14th year of prison. We are gathered to a meeting, and Major Alexandrescu, the commandant of the prison of Gherla, delivered us a speech and said:

"You fools, you set for 15 or 20 years in prison and expected the Americans to come. You expected the Americans will come and release you. Now I will give you the news. The Americans come but not to release you. They come to help us, to help us, to make business with us, to make trade with us. You fools have not known. The Americans if you beg them, they give you nothing.. If you insult them, if you mock them, they give you money. We have been more clever than you."

These are words which I have heard myself. Such things have happened in our country.

Mr. Sourwine: Are there any open churches in Rumania today, which anyone may attend?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Just I didn't finish this question. So there is a relaxation in what sense? Our people has given up the fight. Political underground movements don't exist any more with us. They have no such thing. And so everything has quieted down in the country, and so they don't need any more of the same terror. I have been for years in prison with thieves and murderers. Even before having been put in prison I have been chaplain of a prison. A thief after he has stolen is a gentleman. He gives to the waiters the greatest tips and he invites girls and he invites you and he orders the best wines. He has not worked for his money. And such thieves are the communists. They have stolen half of Europe, they have stolen Russia, too. They have stolen a great part of Asia. And now they have what they have stolen and they are gentlemen and they expect the next occasion to steal again.

In this sense there is a relaxation with us, but it is not an essential one. We continue to have the avowed dictatorship of an atheistic party. We have one party. There can be no religious freedom where there is one party. We have elections. Now a joke is made with us that when God created Adam, He created only one woman, Eve, and He said to Adam, "You are free to choose for wife whomsoever you wish." But there was only Eve. And so are the elections with us.

Our Government doesn't mind old women coming to church, but our childhood, our youth is poisoned with atheism. We are not allowed to counteract, and what bitter fruits will come out of this seed nobody can know.

Now you have asked another question, do we have open churches in Rumania? If somebody comes to Rumania - it is another situation in Russia - if

somebody comes to Rumania, he is really impressed.

The Orthodox liturgy is something very beautiful. It is grand. And if you come in Rumania you see thousands of churches open, liturgies, sermons, many people in the church. And I have spoken with Americans who have been there and have told me, "I was very impressed." And now there is really a certain religious liberty. In Rumania you are allowed to say as much as you like that God is good. You are not allowed to say that the Devil is bad. St. John the Baptist could have saved his life if he had said: "Repent because the kingdom of heaven is near." Nobody would have touched him. He was touched when he said, "You, Herod, are bad."

If Christ would have delivered a thousand "Sermons on the Mount" they would not have crucified Him. They crucified Him when He said, "You vipers," then He was crucified.

In Rumania you can say God is good but you can't say "communism is cruel, they commit atrocities, it is a crime to poison children with atheism." If you do this you go to prison. There are many priests, rabbis, and pastors who compromise and don't put the dot on the "I." There exists the real church and the real religion and that which compromises.

Mr. Sourwine: Are there churchmen in Rumania today who willingly cooperate with the communist authorities?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Surely. The Orthodox hierarchy nearly entirely. Of the Catholic hierarchy, not one. The Catholic bishops died in prison, all except four. These four have house arrest. At the Vatican council no Catholic bishop was allowed to come. Came a Catholic priest, a well-known traitor, Augustine, who is the real leader of the Catholic Church; the leadership of the Baptists, for example, is entirely in the hands of the communists.

I have here a document which I present to the Senate, a list of 150 Russian Baptist pastors recently deported to Siberia. Not all arrived in Siberia. Many died of tortures.

Senator Dodd: Can you talk a little more slowly? I could get your pronunciation better.

Reverend Wurmbrand: This is a list of 150 Baptist pastors of Russia who have been recently deported to Siberia. I have the names , the addresses, the names of their wives, of their children. They have not all arrived to Siberia, because of the tortures many died.

Senator Dodd: These were Rumanians?

Reverend Wurmbrand: No, no, Russians. And I give it to the Senate.

Mr. Sourwine: Mr.Chairman, do you wish this list and the document of transmittal to go into the record? There is an English translation to be made.

Senator Dodd: Yes; I believe it should be in the record.

Mr. Sourwine: Will you hand that list to the reporter?

(NOTE: The list and the document are not listed in this Net publication as they were too copious in nature. However, the information can be copied from the original transcript. Try your local library).

Senator Dodd: I don't quite understand this. These are 40 Russian Baptists?

Reverend Wurmbrand: 150.

Senator Dodd: Were they in Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: No, no, they are Russians. We got from Russia. Here I have another very interesting document.

Mr. Sourwine: If you would excuse me, please, I believe the Senator's question raises a point you should clear up. How do you have this information about Russia? Have you been in Russia?

Reverend Wurmbrand: I have worked for years secret missionary work among the Russian soldiers who occupied our country. I speak Russian fluently, and we brought many Russian soldiers to Christ. To preach Christ to the Russians means Heaven on earth. They seek the Gospel as the thirsty soil seeks water. They have not known Him. The beauty of the Gospel you know is when you preach to Russians; how they live it and how they enjoy it, and so I have made some connections.

In a public sitting I can't say how I have arrived to have these lists.

Mr. Sourwine: You know it to be authentic?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Personally I can tell you from where I have this list, but it is absolutely authentic. It can be controlled. Surely in a public sitting I can't say how I have received it.

I present to the Senate also a very interesting document, the most interesting I have ever known in this matter, the document, "Li Wei Man." It is a letter of the Central Committee of the Communist party of China addressed to the Central Committee of the Communist party of Cuba. Now recently they have quarreled but this letter is an older one in which

they teach how to win the leadership of the churches for communism, how to make that the communists should be leaders of the churches. It is an unequaled document of Machiavelianism.

We have lived these things but never have I seen it put on paper as this.

Mr. Sourwine: May I suggest this be printed as an appendix to the record, Mr. Chairman?

Senator Dodd: Yes.

Senator Dodd: I take it what you have been telling us must be more or less common knowledge in Rumania, is it?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; surely.

Senator Dodd: Would it be accurate to deduce that the embassy officials of the several countries must have heard it too?

Reverend Wurmbrand: They don't wish to be troubled in their quietness. They close their eyes before this menace. I have met men who simply close their eyes when I told them about these things. They know that they are true. But they have a certain policy of friendly relationship with the communist countries, and they are very honest men, but they are duped exactly as we were duped in Rumania.

Wherever the communists came in the beginning, they said the same thing which I read here in newspapers and in periodicals. "You know Stalin's communism has been very bad, but Yugoslavian communism or another kind of communism, this is very good."

A little lion in its first days you can play with him just like with a puppy. When he becomes great, only then he is a lion. Yugoslavian communism is this little communism. And American communism a very little one and English communism is a very little one. When they grow, when they can do whatever they will to do, then only we can see them With us, in the beginning, we also had a very nice communism. I have seen in Rumanian Communist demonstrations signs with the slogan, "God save the King." I have seen the communist Secretaries of State making great crosses, showing themselves as being on the side of religion and making compliments to religion and bowing to religion and saying they are Democrats. In the beginning, they have put in prison party members who said that the agriculture must be collectivized. And they have gone together with the bourgeois party, with the Liberal Party of Tatorescu and with other Democrats.

I have seen in the West Social Democrats collaborate with them. In

Rumania, I have seen dying Social Democrats in the same cell with me; they died. Communists in Rumania, too, were nice until they had the whole power in hand. When they had the whole power in hand, they have done things exactly as in Russia, and so they will do everywhere. There is no difference.

Mr. Sourwine: You mentioned demonstrations by the Communists. Does Rumania have anything like the demonstrations that are so prevalent in this country, demonstrations against the Government's activities or against its policies?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Nobody can say a word of criticism. Such a thing doesn't even enter in the mind of somebody. I will tell you something of which may be laughable for you. It is very tragical with us. But the story is just as I tell you. I know the man. A man was in a barbershop in a little town, Sibiu. While the barber shaved him, he said to the barber: "What should I do? My hair falls." The barber said, "Very well, I will make you a friction but you must not be anxious about this. The most intelligent people of the world have been bald." On the other seat there was an officer of the secret police and he said to the barber, " What have you said now?"

"I have said that the most intelligent people of the world are bald."

"So, you assert that Stalin has not been intelligent." It is a question of laughter for you but it is tragical with us. Nobody dares to say a word.

I stopped in Newark, and in Philadelphia, a demonstration against the war in Vietnam. I had not this clerical suit on. I stopped the demonstrators and I undressed myself to the belt. Afterwards I heard that it is illegal here in the States, and that I could have gone to prison for this. I undressed myself.

Senator Dodd: It would have been all right on the bathing beach.

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; it was not on the beach. And I told them, "This have Communists done to me. Do you think that American Christians should fight against communism?" So they surrounded me and asked me, "Why have Communists done to you this?" I said to them, "Suppose that I am a murdered. Do you agree that a murderer should be tortured? Has Oswald been tortured? Has Ruby been tortured with you?" They all said, "No; murderers have not been tortured." I continued: "Then know that I have not be charged with murder. I am a clergyman." They stopped the demonstration. In Philadelphia there was again such a demonstration. I am not a man of politics. I can't speak for the war of Vietnam or against the war in Vietnam. I speak this general principle that Christians must be on the side of righteousness. They must never be on

the side of the inquisitors of Christians. They must be on the side of the victims of the inquisitors, they must be on the side of the Christians.

In Philadelphia there was a great meeting. A pastor with clerical suit, a Presbyterian pastor, delivered a speech in which he praised Communists and said that Communists are all right and it is stupid to fight against them. I have learned something from the Communists. In a minute - after - the pastor was no more in the pulpit, I was in the pulpit. I said: "Now I will speak about communism. What do you know about communism? And I will show you my credentials, how I have studied communism." I undressed myself to the belt. I did not know that all these bad reporters are there and took pictures. And I showed them my body. "That is what Communists do to Christians, and you, Pastor, why don't you make demonstrations, if you are a Christian and if you have youth in you and vigor, why don't you demonstrate before the Soviet and Rumanian Embassies and the other embassies against torturing Christians?" And then the public, which has been there booed him and shouted to him " Judas."

These are Judases. They may be all right innerly, I don't know their hearts, but I think that Christians, if they wish to demonstrate, they should demonstrate against those who have recently deported 150 Baptist pastors.

Mr. Sourwine: The subcommittee has received substantial information to the effect that the Rumanian Communist Government has infiltrated into this country Communist trained clergy with other missions than those of a spiritual nature. Do you have any information about that?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Rumanian Communists are very interested in the fact that you have here, in the States, something like 300,000 on their side. They can't very well win them for communism, but they can win them for a leftwing Christianity which supports communism. They have sent here several men, Moisescu, Liviu Stan, and so on. These don't come with Communist slogans but with the words: "You must love your Rumanian fatherland. *** You must have connections with the Rumanian patriarchy." Whey I came out from Rumania I saw for the first time a Rumanian newspaper which appears in Bucharest, and which nobody in Bucharest has ever seen. The Voice of the Fatherland it is called, and in the fatherland nobody sees this newspaper. Only your American Rumanians see it and in France. I have never seen it. My son looked at it, and we have never seen it. In this newspaper you read about priests and churches. In our newspapers you will never have a word about the church. There you have pictures of priests and monasteries and how fine it is and so on. They make this propaganda, surely.

Senator Dodd: You mean this paper is only distributed in the free world?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Only in the free world. They have at midnight, which corresponds to I don't know what hour here in the United States, it is noon or I don't know what, they have religious services which are jammed in Rumania, but they are emitted from Rumania. We have no religious services on the broadcasts. These are broadcast religious services only that the Americans should know how fine the Communists are and that they have religious services.

Mr. Sourwine: Are you saying that the religious services of the Rumanian Orthodox Church –

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes.

Mr. Sourwine: Are broadcasts in Rumania at a time which is midnight in Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes.

Mr. Sourwine: Beamed to the Western World?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; sure.

Mr. Sourwine: To the free world?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Sure.

Mr. Sourwine: And not broadcast in Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Sure. In Rumania, nobody hears them.

Mr. Sourwine: Of course, a broadcast beamed from Rumania to the United States necessarily will have enough power to be picked up in Rumania if anyone wanted to tune in.

Reverend Wurmbrand: First of all, it is a very inconvenient hour. It is midnight for us. Secondly, in Rumania it is jammed.

Mr. Sourwine: It is what?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Jammed.

Mr. Sourwine: They jam it in Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: They jam it in Rumania.

Mr. Sourwine: So that even those who know about it, who might try to pick it up ----

Reverend Wurmbrand: It is jammed. You can't hear it in Rumania.

Mr. Sourwine: Suppose a group of persons were called together trying to tune in that broadcast above the jamming. Would there be reprisals against them? It is an illegal thing?

Reverend Wurmbrand: In this moment, no reprisals would be taken. No reprisals are taken today if somebody hears foreign broadcasts. But everything is noted. What happens with us? We have waves of terror. We have had a great wave of terror from 1948 and 1949 which lasted until 1955. We had the relax until 1958 when nobody was arrested but everything was noted.

Then in 1959 came again a wave of terror, and all those who were noted for years before were taken in. And now the whole spy work continues with us. You are not arrested. But everybody knows that he is spied out and that everything is noted. How far this inner spy net goes is unimagined. In a little townlet of ours there is a little Baptist church with only 22 members. The pastor of that church told me that he is the informer of the secret police and that he knows three members of his church who give information against him. So it was in the church in which I was. The servant of the church had the order to inform who comes to me. I had no salary. So, usually men who came to me brought a little parcel with food and clothes and so on. The servant had to spy out who comes with parcels. In the smallest churches you have five or six who have to spy out what the others do. One neighbor spies the other. Children spy on their father and so on. It is without end so nobody dares to do a thing.

Senator Dodd: I am somewhat interested in these interrogations to which you were subjected. If I understand you correctly, they lasted for hours; is that right?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; surely.

Senator Dodd: Without going into a lengthy explanation, what did they ask you?

Reverend Wurmbrand Well, they asked many things. First of all they wished to know who has said counterrevolutionary things of all the bishops and priests and pastors and laymen whom I knew. Who has spoken against the Government. Who has something against the Government. How we organized and so on, without end. And now at a certain moment I was tired with being beaten. They told me at a certain moment, "Mr. Wurmbrand, supposing that you are not a counterrevolutionary, you are a well-known pastor in the whole country and everybody had confidence in you and you spoke with bishops and all kinds of men and you have been in

so many villages and towns and everybody confessed to you and so forth. Tell us who are the counterrevolutionaries. Don't speak about your activity. You are all right. You are not a counterrevolutionary. But then show your loyalty toward our Government, tell us who the counterrevolutionaries are. Are you disposed to do so?" So, I said, "Yes; I am disposed."

When they heard that I am disposed, they asked me: "Do you smoke, do you wish liquors?" Everything I could have at that moment. And he knew, the officer, that he will receive another star there if he gets from me this information. And then he asked me now, "Who are the counterrevolutionaries?" I said, "As you know I have worked on an international scale, so I can tell you the counterrevolutionaries not only in Rumania but even in Russia."

Oh, he was so glad. I said: "In Russia, you have had as Secretary of State for Internal Affairs, Yagoda. Yagoda has killed thousands of people as counterrevolutionaries. Then you have discovered who has been the counterrevolutionary: Yagoda has been. Yagoda has been shot as counterrevolutionary.

"Then you have had as Secretary of State for Internal Affairs, Beria, and Beria has killed other thousands of people as counterrevolutionaries. Then you have found out who has been the counterrevolutionary: Beria. " Why do you seek the counterrevolutionaries in the church? See them in your own party. And in Rumania it has been the same thing.

Communists are not only anti-Christian. They are anti everything. They are anti their own comrades.

I have been in prison. I have been there with Lucretiu Patrascanu, the great Communist leader, who has brought communism to power in our country. He was put in prison and tortured until he became mad.

My wife has been in prison with Gheorghe Cristescu. Everybody in Rumania knows the founder of communism in Rumania, who has been in prison for communism under the bourgeois. He has been with my wife together, and he said to my wife, "Forty years ago I fought for the 8-hour labor day and now my Communist Party has come to power and I have to work 14 hours a day."

They are anti absolutely everything. It is not only anti-Christian.

Senator Dodd: What was the name of the prominent woman Communist in Rumania?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Ana Pauker, and she was also in prison.

Senator Dodd: Do you know her?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes, yes surely; she has also been in prison, and she has been kept a short time and then afterward she died of cancer.

Mr. Sourwine: I have no more questions, sir.

Senator Dodd: We don't have any more questions. Do you have anything more you want to say, Pastor?

Reverend Wurmbrand: I want to say something. I owe it to those with whom I have been in prison. I have told you so many sad things. I don't wish to end with this note. I must tell you that in these great tortures and this great suffering, Christians have shown themselves as saints and as heroes, and if I am allowed to conclude with just one scene which I have seen myself.

It was at the canal. With us, 150,000 men and women have been arrested to build a canal. Beaten, tortured, hungry, without anything, they had to build a canal.

Senator Dodd: Build a canal?

Reverend Wurmbrand: Yes; a canal, the Danube Canal. My wife has worked and shoveled the earth. At this canal, there was a religious brigade of 400 men, bishops, priests, peasants who loved Christ, sectarians and so on, all who were for religious motives in prison.

Over this brigade criminals have been put, and to the criminals it has been promised that they will be released if they torture these Christians. This promise has never been kept. But imagine a criminal who is sentenced for life, if he knows that he has such a hope. If they saw you in this brigade making a cross as it is a habit with us in Rumania, or folding your hands or saying a word about God you were beaten to death.

And now a Sunday morning the political officer of the prison comes, the whole brigade is gathered, and just at random he sees a young man. He calls him, "What is your name?" He says the name. "What are you by profession?" He said, "A priest." And then mocking the Communist said, " Do you still believe in God?"

This priest knew that if he says yes, this is the last day of his life. We all looked to him. For a few seconds he was silent. Then his face began to shine and then he opened his mouth and with a very humble but with a very decided voice he said: "Mr. Lieutenant, when I became a priest I knew that during church history thousands of Christians and priests have been killed for their faith, and notwithstanding I became a

Christian and I became a priest. I knew what I became. And as often as I entered the altar clad in this beautiful ornate which priests wear I promised to God, "If I will wear the uniform of a prisoner, then also I will serve Him. Mr. Lieutenant, prison is not an argument against religion. I love Christ from all my heart."

I am sad that I can't give the intonation with which he said these words. I think that Juliet when she spoke about Romeo, she spoke like that. We were ashamed because we - we believed in Christ. This man loved Christ as a bride loves the bridegroom. This man has been beaten and tortured to death. But this is Rumania. Rumania is a country which is mocked, which is oppressed, but deep in the hearts of the people is a great esteem and a great praise for those who have suffered. The love to God, the love to Christ, the love to fatherland has never ceased. My country will live. With this I finish.

Senator Dodd: Your testimony has certainly been very impressive. (At this point, a member of the audience later identified as L.D. O'Flaherty, addressed the Chair).

Mr. O'Flaherty: Mr. Chairman, we have pretty substantial reason to believe that our brother is in danger of his life, and I don't know what steps we could take to have him claim asylum here. He has asylum in France, but we fear for his life because as he has told you, they have told him they will bump him off, get a gangster to bump him off. What arrangements if any - I am not a politician or a political science scholar - what arrangements could be made for his asylum in this country? Can he make a declaration to secure asylum here for his protection?

We know individuals have followed him from city to city unknown to him, and I ask this openly here.

Senator Dodd: Would you identify yourself? I didn't get your name.

Mr. O'Flaherty: O'Flaherty. L.D. O'Flaherty.

Senator Dodd: O'Flaherty?

Mr. O'Flaherty: I am a businessman, a Christian businessman. I am a director in a certain organization here that is giving him support, Friends of Israel. On that basis I make this request. I don't think he understands the danger.

Reverend Wurmbrand: We have a God who protects us. We have the angels around us.

Senator Dodd: I think we had better discuss this matter privately with the pastor after the public hearing. I don't think it is a matter which

should be discussed publicly.

Mr. O'Flaherty: Thank you.

Senator Dodd: We will adjourn this hearing now subject to further call.

(Whereupon, at 11:50 a.m., the subcommittee adjourned subject to the call of the Chair).

The Appendix is not included in this document.

Please consult your local library should you like the additional information.
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VOICE OF THE MARTYRS - Richard Wurmbrand

Communists Should Not Teach In American Colleges

"What the Communists
have done to Christians
surpasses any possibility
of human understanding."

Reverend Wurmbrand

Since Americans are running towards totalitarianism at breakneck speed, and since they have allowed the Communists to establish the vast majority of The Communist Manifesto here in America under the guise of Liberalism with more freedom and liberty gobbled up by the minute, it is only fitting to let some light shine on the future of American children and grandchildren, for the day is approaching, when they grab complete power.

1 Posted on 03/20/2001 21:27:07 PST by Uncle Bill
[Reply | Private Reply | Top | Last]

To: Uncle Bill
BTTT and bookmark!

2 Posted on 03/20/2001 22:02:58 PST by MadAsHell
[Reply | Private Reply | To 1 | Top | Last]

To: Uncle Bill
And people wonder why I advocate that the teaching and propagation of communism be outlawed in America.

3 Posted on 03/20/2001 22:16:04 PST by Bonaparte
[Reply | Private Reply | To 1 | Top | Last]

To: Bonaparte

Thanks so much for reading this. I know few will, as it is very long. The first time I read this years ago, I just sat silent for hours thinking about things.

4 Posted on 03/20/2001 22:38:41 PST by Uncle Bill
[Reply | Private Reply | To 3 | Top | Last]

To: Uncle Bill
I have known people like this man. I've heard much worse than even this. Much worse. All the lies and compromises that led to the enslavement of Rumania, you can hear every day from the liberals right here in this country -- and from the national council of churches.

5 Posted on 03/20/2001 23:05:54 PST by Bonaparte
[Reply | Private Reply | To 4 | Top | Last]

To: Uncle Bill
This is a long read. Don't have time right now for anything but a bump. Thanks for the post, I'll be back.

BTTT

6 Posted on 03/21/2001 18:48:18 PST by Inspector Harry Callahan
[Reply | Private Reply | To 1 | Top | Last]

To: Inspector Harry Callahan
BTTT

7 Posted on 03/22/2001 14:17:56 PST by Uncle Bill
[Reply | Private Reply | To 6 | Top | Last]

To: Uncle Bill
"A little lion in its first days you can play with him just like with a puppy. When he becomes great, only then he is a lion. Yugoslavian communism is this little communism. And American communism a very little one and English communism is a very little one. When they grow, when they can do whatever they will to do, then only we can see them With us, in the beginning, we also had a very nice communism. I have seen in Rumanian Communist demonstrations signs with the slogan, "God save the King." I have seen the communist Secretaries of State making great crosses, showing themselves as being on the side of religion and making compliments to religion and bowing to religion and saying they are Democrats. In the beginning, they have put in prison party members who said that the agriculture must be collectivized. And they have gone together with the bourgeois party, with the Liberal Party of Tatorescu and with other Democrats. "

8 Posted on 03/22/2001 15:29:23 PST by Man
[Reply | Private Reply | To 1 | Top | Last]

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Sermons

10:09 7/21/2015

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Sheen, Fulton

09:58 7/4/2015

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Timeline

1945 - Communists seized Rumania
1948 - RW arrested

1959 - rearrested and sentenced to 25 years in prison
1964 - released in a general amnesty
1966 - May - testified in the Senate's Internal Security Subcommittee;
18 deep wounds

Videos

00:48 2/20/2010

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rlp5yv2nq5E

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_1j5FXC2Aw

Richard Wurmbrand- Ca un stejar- 1 of 3

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnVqYVBB-ig&feature=related

The Faces of God
(This is the word of God)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edG2Xpsv9Uw&feature=related

A Church in Chains
Richard talks of Mihai
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnYVGJY4NBQ&feature=related

"Tortured for Christ" Richard Wurmbrand
Who is this man?
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqdPkDPMCwk&feature=related

Tortured for Christ in Atheist Romania - Richard Wurmbrand (2 of 3)
silence you could with a knife
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http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4LHPN3Muxc

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Tortured For Christ - Richard Wurmbrand part

How Much Are You Willing To Suffer For Christ? Part:2 of 3

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0zgFsQHTgU

Richard Wurmbrand, WRM part-7, July 10,1992, WRM-videos, MTP

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MUADA2E9VU

How Much Are You Willing To Suffer For Christ? Part:1 of 3

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4gUTxuHbms

How Much Are You Willing To Suffer For Christ? Part:3 of 3
Scars
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shYbSeGJaes

he Torchlighters: The Richard Wurmbrand Story Trailer

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOA8iJ9YZWQ&feature=PlayList&p=
EEAEACBB00C1688D&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=1

YG

06:28 5/21/2015

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Videos
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http://j.mp/i7rw-v2 Animated
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http://j.mp/i7rw-v4 The Faces of God
http://j.mp/i7rw-v5 Interview with Richard & Sabina
http://j.mp/i7rw-v6 Centenar 1909-2009 (2:24:50)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgtorX9Oovo

Blogs

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100 Prison Meditations

Richard Wurmbrand
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100 Prison Meditations
(Cries of Truth from Behind the Iron Curtain)

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U.S.A.

[Note: The tilde (~) is used here to enclose words that are italicized in the book. CPM]

[Back cover]

Richard Wurmbrand had plenty of time to think during his fourteen years in a Communist prison. He reflected on his life, his world, and especially his Creator. His fellow prisoners included other pastors, theologians, and Bible scholars. They shared ideas and insights, and even preached sermons to each other.

The captivity he endured included years of solitary confinement. Although deprived of human companionship, he remained in intimate communion with God. He examined in depth the revelation of the Bible and its mandates for the Christian life.

His meditations from those years are provocative, challenging, sometimes disturbing. They are the thoughts of a man who has been close to God and close to death. After reading his contemplations, you will read the Bible in an entirely different way. You will look on your fellow man in a new light. You may even live in a new way.

Richard Wurmbrand is a Rumanian pastor. When the Soviets took over Rumania he worked with the underground Church. Arrested for this work, he served eight years in prison. When released, he went right back to his underground ministry and then back to jail. After his final release, he was able to leave Rumania through the efforts of Christians in Norway. Today he heads the mission organization known as "Jesus to the Communist

World."

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This is the fourteenth title which I have had published since I arrived in the free world.

I had come to the West, after fourteen years in Communist prisons, almost unknown, and not at all familiar with the Western reader.

I owe it to Edward England, a man wholeheartedly dedicated to providing the church with food for souls, that my books could appear, spread and be translated in over fifty languages.

God rewarded his work. The publishing of these books, which tell of the struggle, the heroism and the faith of Christians under unspeakable oppression, led to the founding of the International Christian Mission to the Communist World.

Edward England provided the English-speaking Commonwealth with books extolling Christ; this mission in whose foundation he played a decisive role now does the same thing secretly in Communist countries.

Our mission and I express herewith our thanks.

Richard Wurmbrand

Preface

While in Australia recently, I received the news that my daughter-in-law in California had been gravely injured in an automobile accident that demolished the car. Her nine-year-old daughter, who was with her at the time, had also been hurt. When I called California to learn the details, my granddaughter, in answer to my inquiries, exclaimed, "I have good news! I received a cat for a present!" Then followed a graphic description of - the cat.

Jesus taught us to become like little children, to take a detached view of events, even tragic ones. We may bleed, we may be traumatized, but still we can experience joy in little things that might be considered childlike or unsophisticated.

This is exactly what happened to me in jail.

I spent fourteen years in Communist prisons (not many by Communist standards: the Rumanian Baptist pastor Hrapov has been in jail for twenty-seven years; the Catholic Paulaitis for thirty-four; the Orthodox monk Michael Ershov for forty-four). We were hungry, beaten, tortured. For years we were individually isolated in solitary cells, where we heard nothing, not even a whisper.

We had not books or writing materials, much less a Bible. We never saw a child, and seldom a woman. We saw no colors: our world was gray. The walls were gray, our uniforms were gray, even our faces were an ashen gray. We soon forgot that blue, green, red, violet exist.

During those long gray months, those leaden years, what did we think about? Certainly not about Communism or about having to suffer. Our minds were too childlike to be controlled by events.

Shakespeare, in "Henry IV," wrote, "Thought is the slave of life." Humanistic philosophy also claims that material conditions determine how our minds work. This might well be true for adults, but not for children. A child lying in a hospital bed after a major accident can have uppermost in his mind a promised toy. We had the same experience. We thought often about things completely unrelated to the pains endured. This is not to deny that everything in jail could be a problem. Will there be many worms in our soup today? Will it contain at least five beans, or perhaps a few more? Will we be allowed to use the

toilet? Will I be beaten today? How should I mislead my interrogator so as not to denounce others and cause their arrest? Will I ever be freed? We had problems, but would not allow these to obsess us.

Not long ago, during a board meeting of the Christian Mission to the Communist World, my granddaughter sat on the carpet near us playing with her toys. Overhearing our melancholy discussion of mission problems, she asked, "O papa, what is 'problem'? Where is the word "problem" found in the Bible?" I replied, "Nowhere." Puzzled, she queried, "Then why do you, pastors, worry about something that is not in the Bible?"

This happened years after my release from prison. While in jail, we did not live with problems. Let them beat, starve, mock us. With such things our torturers busied themselves. We were free to rejoice in the mysteries of the Word of God. With such things we kept busy.

I thought about God and about the Bible, about its words, its letters, even the blank spaces between the letters. At times I saw these shapes more vividly than the black letters. During those years the only author I considered apart from the Bible was Shakespeare.

Charles Dickens once said his father gave him this advice: "Each day read a page of the Bible to know God and a page from Shakespeare to know men." Perhaps because I am Jewish, and thus basically Oriental, I think much in images,

not in propositions. With me in my cell were the Bible characters of old, as well as the saints of all ages - that "cloud of witnesses" mentioned by Paul. I also saw, as in a theater, Shakespeare's characters.

From childhood I have possessed a fantastic memory, which, with much exercise, expanded even more in prison (though there were temporary breakdowns as a result of being doped). All prisoners indulged in images. Drugs, which were put in our food for brainwashing, enriched the imagery. But we knew that beyond the images lay the Truth, so complex that even a multitude of images could not exhaust it. We must be able to look at it in its nakedness, in its simplicity. This I attempted to do.

The day I was baptized, the Jewish Christian pastor Isaac Feinstein gave me a verse: "Reuben [my Hebrew name] shall live

and not die." In a similar vein, Shakespeare said about King Richard II, "God for his Richard has a glorious angel. Then, if angels fight, weak men must fall."

With this in mind, I did not waste time, between beatings and tortures, thinking about how badly I had been beaten or fearing that I would be beaten again. Instead, I recited verses of Scripture, Shakespeare, and other poetry. I even composed poems.

"All places that the eye of heaven visits are to a wise man ports and happy havens" ("Richard II"). This even includes Communist prison cells. Atheists believe they put me in jail. I believe God sent me there, to allow me to delve more deeply into the truths concealed within His words.

The outward circumstances, the complete silence, the situation of not being distracted by either sight or sound - all were highly favorable to deep thought. This is when I composed the essence of meditations presented in this book.

After three years of solitary confinement, we were moved to common cells. There I met with many theologians, some of them exquisite Hebraists and scholars in Greek. Now my

thoughts could be chiseled and honed. Later, when free, I could complete the work with scholarly research.

God says we should serve Him not only with all our heart, but also with all our mind. This means intellectual work, hard work. As children we used our brains to learn algebra and geometry. As adults we explore the mysteries of molecules and atoms. When man split the atom, he created the ultimate weapon. Why should we not ponder diligently every atom of the Word of God, however challenging the task, so that we might counter with the ultimate Truth? This desire is strong within me, as I contemplate the words of life that can conquer the destructive forces of godless thinking.

Imprisoned Christians mocked gnawing sorrow. In chains, sometimes in straitjackets and gagged (we were considered mad), awaiting the specter of death as often as the cell door was opened, we thought about God's Word.

Christians in the free world also contemplate His Word. But because thoughts given by God in those extreme circumstances

might resound with deeper harmony, I publish them. "They breathe truth that breathe their words in pain." I am confident that these reflections conceived in silence and nurtured in pain will enable you to delve more profoundly into truth, in order to know "the" Truth.

Richard Wurmbrand

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1 The Mystery of Jesus' Sacrifice

Suppose you were living 2,000 years ago in Palestine, that you were sinful, heavy with guilt, and Jesus told you, "Your sin is grave and deserves punishment. 'The wages of sin are death.' But tomorrow I will be flogged and crowned with a crown of thorns for you - I invite you to assist them when they drive nails into my hands and feet and fix me to a cross. I will cry in anguish, and I will share the sorrow of my mother whose heart will be pierced by compassion for me as if by a sword. You should be there to hear my cries. And when I have died, you shall know that your sins are forgiven forever, that I was your substitute, your scapegoat. This is how a man gets saved. Will you accept my suffering for your offense, or do you prefer to bear the punishment yourself?" What would you have answered?

I believe that this dilemma should be placed before a soul seeking salvation. Fifteen hundred years before the historical birth of Christ the Bible says, "This day have I begotten thee" (PSA 2:7). It also says to the penitent 2,000 years after Golgotha, "Today I die for you." Jesus' life and death are outside of time and space.

Would you accept? More than once in Communist prisons I have seen a pastor receive a beating to the blood in place of another prisoner. A name would be called and the pastor would simply say, "It is I." In Auschwitz, Maximilian Kolbe, a priest, offered to take the place of a Pole sentenced to death by the Nazis. The Pole was the father of many children. The

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commandant of the camp accepted the substitution and the Pole was

spared. Kolbe died by asphyxiation. Had you been that Pole, what would you have decided?

I lived many years in an isolated subterranean prison cell, in timelessness, something akin to the weightlessness experienced by astronauts. Just as they know no difference between heavy and light, I knew no distinction between past, present and future. In my prison cell Jesus' presence was immediate. His life did not belong to the past, nor was it a series of successive events. He put before me the problem which I have put to my readers. He told me, "You are a sinner and are condemned to eternal punishment for your transgressions, but I am ready to save you. Because of your sin, I will endure rejection, flogging, the pains of crucifixion and the agony of seeing my holy mother broken-hearted at the foot of the cross. My blood will cleanse you from all sin." I had to decide whether or not to accept the sacrifice of the innocent Son of God for my sins. I believed that to accept would be a greater wickedness than all I might ever have done in my life and I flatly refused this proposal. Jesus was glad of my "No."

Then came the real question, the thing He had had in mind from the beginning. "What if I incorporate your being into mine, if you become part of my body, if you deny yourself as an independent self, and I will live in you henceforth and you will be 'crucified with me' (GAL 2:20), 'buried with me' (ROM 6:4), and share the fellowship of my suffering? People in churches will sing, 'safe in arms of Jesus,' while you will be safe as an arm of Jesus, nailed like His to a cross, but also imparting goodness like His. Do you wish to become my co-worker for the salvation of mankind, alleviating sufferings, filling up 'that which is behind the afflictions of Christ' (COL 1:24), and imparting eternal life to others? By virtue of my presence in you, the real fruits of my wounds will appear in your soul."

I have accepted this proposal. Christians are meant to have the same vocation as their King, that of cross-bearers. It is this conscience of a high calling and of partnership with Jesus which brings gladness in tribulation, which makes Christians enter prisons for their faith with the joy of a bridegroom entering the bridal room.

When George Vins, the general secretary of the Baptist Union of USSR, was sentenced for his faith, believers present in the courtroom covered him with flowers, and his little daughter,

hoisted on a stool, recited in front of the Communist judges, "Father, with Christ you are free in prison, and freedom without Him is prison." The believers waiting outside the building received him with a Christian hymn.

The relative of a Christian prisoner in Red China said to someone who sympathized with her, "You should not feel sorry for us, for if he were not in that slave labor camp, how could the others here come to know the Gospel of the Lord Jesus?"

In the same spirit we should receive the crosses of poverty, racial discrimination, personal betrayals, unfaithfulness of marriage partners, rebellion of children and all other sorrows of life.

A man who smugly accepts Christ's dying for him and shouts Hallelujah about the innocent Son of God receiving punishment he himself deserves should be more severely punished than before. The Gospel, the good news, is the privilege of becoming a member of the Body of Christ, of suffering, of dying in pain with Him, and also of being resurrected with Him in glory.

Because sacrifice is implicit in a conversion, the call of the Evangelist has the name "altar-call." Every being placed upon the altar in Jerusalem, lambs, rams, and pigeons, died. Someone dies for you. This time it is not an animal, but the Son of God. He has decreed it and nothing you can do will change His mind. You can only ask for the privilege of being

able to sacrifice yourself as well henceforth for the glory of God and for the good of your fellowmen. In return you receive the right to die to sin and to the world and its laws.

The reality of a conversion is in becoming one with Him. It is shameful and abominable to accept His substitutionary death otherwise.

2 Why All the Suffering?

Reading the Bible in a solitary cell, from memory, I am struck by the extent to which suffering pervades it. It begins with the catastrophe of mankind's expulsion from paradise, and it concludes with the majority of mankind entering hell.

Why do even saints have to suffer? Why are there sufferings in the animal and vegetable kingdoms? Why is a baby born with suffering? Is suffering God's only educational method? Why does evil exist? Why have Christians suffered for decades in Communist jails?

After dedicating forty years of his life to missionary work among the Australian aborigines, a pastor fell sick. He suffered greatly as he was being transported on primitive roads to the city and was barely able to breathe. He asked his family to sing and to read to him from the Bible. Finally he said, "Stop praises. I have served Him my whole life and He does not care for me." He took the Bible from his wife's hand and threw it into the bush. He could find no answer to the problem of suffering.

The only answer which I believe should be given is not to ask the question. Jesus, when He was on the Cross, asked God why He had forsaken even His only begotten Son. His question is followed only by a question mark. All that is revealed to us is that the question exists and that we can live with it.

A sufferer once came to a pastor and asked him many questions. The pastor answered, "Kneel here in church and

ask Jesus for the answers." The man replied, "Do you really think I will hear a voice from heaven?" "No," said the pastor, "but by keeping quiet in prayer for several hours before God, you will realize that you can go along without answers to all your problems. This would have been Jesus' answer and it will quiet you." You do not need more than His peace, which passes all understanding. You do not need both peace and understanding, for understanding presupposes qualifications which of most us do not have.

The Talmud (Haghiga) says that there were four men who ascended to the highest firmament, Ben Azai, Ben Zoma, Elisha ben Abuya and Rabbi Akiba. Ben Azai saw the glory of God and died. Ben Zoma saw and went mad. Elisha ben Abuya became irreligious. Only Rabbi Akiba returned unharmed.

Paul writes about a man who was caught up into paradise, but he could not communicate to anyone about what he experienced because the words he heard in paradise were unspeakable words (2CO 12:2-4).

A legend says that Moses once sat near a well in meditation. A wayfarer stopped to drink from the well and when he did so his purse fell from his girdle into the sand. The man departed. Shortly afterwards another man passed near the well, saw the purse and picked it up. Later a third man stopped to assuage his thirst and went to sleep in the shadow of the well. Meanwhile, the first man had discovered that his purse was missing and assuming that he must have lost it at the well, returned, awoke the sleeper (who of course knew nothing) and demanded his money back. An argument followed, and irate, the first man slayed [sic] the latter. Whereupon Moses said to God, "You see, therefore men do not believe in you. There is too much evil and injustice in the world. Why should the first man have lost his purse and then become a murderer? Why should the second have gotten a purse full of gold without having worked for it? The third was completely innocent. Why was he slain?"

God answered, "For once and only once, I will give you an explanation. I cannot do it at every step. The first man was a thief's son. The purse contained money stolen by his father from the father of the second, who, finding the purse, only found what was due him. The third was a murderer whose crime had never been revealed and who received from the first the punishment he deserved. In the future believe that there is sense and righteousness in what transpires even when you do not understand.

Faith in God is the sole answer to the mystery of evil.

3 Respect Poverty

In prison, I come to the lowest level of poverty. I possess nothing, which makes me look in a new light at this verse - "Rob not the poor, because he is poor. Neither oppress the afflicted in the gate" (PRO 22:22).

Do not rob the poor of his only wealth, that precious jewel, poverty itself. St. Francis of Assisi spoke about "sorella poverta," sister poverty. Ascetics and saints of all ages have abandoned earthly joys for this valuable friend. Moses preferred the poor life of a pastor to being grandson of Pharaoh. Buddha left his father's palaces to know the serenity which only utter poverty can give. Christ, possessor of heaven, chose birth in a stable, life as a carpenter among oppressed people and death among thieves on a cross. He said, "Blessed be ye, poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God" (LUK 6:20).

With what right do I take away the source of a man's blessedness? If I deprive him of poverty, I deprive him of the Kingdom of Heaven. Imagine how it would have been had the rich man of the parable (LUK 16:19-31) been what is usually called good-hearted and divided with poor Lazarus his purple robes and fine linen, and invited him to dine sumptuously with him every day. He would have called Lazarus into future hell.

Poverty is the entryway to the Kingdom of Heaven. The ugly embryonic stage when we look like frogs and apes is the prologue to manhood. Destroy a caterpillar because it is a

repugnant worm and you will have destroyed the future butterfly. Taking away a man's poverty, we take from him the source of eternal happiness.

But must we not help the poor? We surely must - by sharing his poverty, by demonstrating our regard for his high estate. Mother Theresa of Calcutta set an example. By sharing the experience of poverty a poor man is given the sense of his dignity before God and other men, whereas a few pennies thrown to him degrade him.

We commonly confound the unpleasant with the bad. Poverty is unpleasant, but it is a Christian's trial of love. What girl is not seduced into admiring a handsome boy who offers her rings and bracelets and cars and castles? Would she choose to live with that same young man in a humble cottage? It was easy for Job to love God with his family and cattle and gold secure. But what was the nature of his love? A trial had to be made in order to strengthen Job's faith.

Before I went to prison, my own social and material situation was very comfortable. In moments of self-examination, I asked myself whether I really loved God or loved rather the

many outward and inner gifts with which He had endowed me. Then, in solitary confinement, hungry, trembling for cold, without even shoes - then I could really check whether I loved God or His gifts. How I rejoice to discover that songs of praise flew from my lips under those circumstances! The faith had been tried.

Christians do not fear hunger and would not readily rob the poor man of this experience. For Jesus says even to the rich, who are familiar with black caviar and other dainties, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of" (JHN 4:32). The angel Raphael said to Tobit in the apocryphal book of this name (12:19), "It seemed, truly, as if I ate and drank with you. But I used an invisible meat and a beverage which men cannot see." The meat of the angels, of which men also can partake, consists in seeing God, in loving Him even in times of affliction, and in doing His will in all things. You cannot sit

luxuriously in restaurants, listening to jazz music, served by half-naked waitresses, and eating from an endless menu, and at the same time participate at the heavenly banquet. Nobody can have both worlds. Heavenly food is reserved for those who are hungry.

Kierkegaard spoke truly when he said, "To represent a man who by preaching Christianity has attained and enjoyed in the greatest measure all possible worldly goods and enjoyments, to represent him as a witness to the truth is as ridiculous as to talk about a maiden who is surrounded by her numerous troop of children" ("Attack Against Christendom").

After years of preaching, a pastor should be poorer than before he began his ministry.

Our God is that of the narrow gate and of the needle's eye. If, because of your social position you are not among the hungry, this is a simple matter to remedy: you can fast. But do not rob the poor of poverty. Do not rob the hungry of heavenly manna. Your well-intentioned acts of philanthropy can be robberies.

4 Right Attitude Toward Poverty

It is our greed, our idolatry of money, which makes us equate poverty and unhappiness. The correct attitude of a well-to-do Christian towards a poor one is not pity, but rather envy or emulation. Although you might have more bread than your poor brother, and butter and anchovies upon your bread, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (LUK 4:4). The poor man has a privilege which you do not: Jesus has been sent to preach the Gospel to the poor (LUK 4:18); only a poor man can fully hear the message. Rich men hear only a watered-down Gospel delivered by pastors who have never hungered or fasted, who are rich or would like to be so.

Such pastors do not wish to lose their rich contributors and preach to them from the Gospel only so much as will not give offense. They never tell their rich parishioners that they have as much chance to enter the Kingdom of Heaven as a camel to enter through a needle's eye, in other words, that their whole religion is in vain.

I repeat the question put in the former meditation: should we not help the poor? Surely we should, but on one condition: not to rob him of his previous poverty.

The way to help the poor is to follow Jesus' example and become poor like them.

We read in the Hebrew book, ~Shemen ha tov~, how Rabbi Havyim Auerbach of Launtzitz was once petitioned by a shoemaker who had no wood to heat the room in which his

wife and newborn infant lay. The rabbi immediately awakened a wealthy neighbor. The rich man invited the rabbi to come in, but the rabbi said he preferred to speak outside. It was bitter cold and the rich man had to stand shivering on the street and talk with the rabbi for a long time. At last the rabbi mentioned the shoemaker's plight and said, "Now that you have felt the cold yourself, you will know what to do." The rich man brought wood to the shoemaker's family, dragging it there himself in a wheelbarrow. Whoever has not felt the noose about his own neck cannot know the situation of someone who is in deadly danger.

No welfare state or philanthropic millionaire can replace the charitable works done long ago by monks and nuns who had taken vows of poverty. These people, some of them former members of the upper class, gathered the poor into the first hospitals,

homes for the aged people and orphanages. They descended in reality and in spirit to the level of those whom they strove to help, and truly loved their neighbors as themselves. Embracing poverty for themselves, they could appreciate its value for others. The aged, the cripples, and the poor were helped not only with bread, but also by being brought to regard as a privilege what they had until then seen as a handicap.

In the United States and other countries there are now so many poverty programs which do not work. St. Francis of Assisi's program worked. He became poor and influenced many rich men to give away their money, not in heavily borne taxation, but in jubilating love.

There are diverse manners of giving help. I read that natives of Portuguese colonies, when they were sick, passed by the state hospitals and traveled many miles further to a Christian hospital. When asked why, since the state hospitals were as well equipped and gave the same treatment as the Christian ones, the natives answered: "Yes, the treatment is the same, but the hands are not the same." It is only the empty hand that can caress.

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"Neither oppress the afflicted in the gate" (PRO 22:22). "Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (HEB 13:12). Jesus longed to arrive at Golgotha to fulfill the salvation of mankind. But in those days everyone, even executioners with victims, were stopped at the gates to answer questions, to show their papers. I too have seen it. It is not easy to be taken outside a prison gate, not even for an execution. The executioner knocks at the gate: the guard looks suspiciously through the peep-hole, then checks the written order. So it was also in times before.

It is written in Proverbs, "Do not oppress the afflicted in the gates." Those who belong to Jesus are so happy to bear afflictions for His sake: do not stop them again at the gates to question them, to slow down their heroic march towards self-sacrifice by offering them pardons or conditions. By doing this you further oppress the afflicted ones who glory in their afflictions for Christ's sake.

A Christian must so conduct himself that his children will joyfully say like Jacob, "God of my father" (GEN 32:9). Jacob had ancestors of whom he could boast. Abraham had left the highly civilized Ur of Chaldee, living as a stranger in a barren

land in order to be free to worship God as he knew best. Isaac was ready as a child to magnify God by his death. Such men should not be robbed of the afflictions which promise them an eternal weight of glory.

Affliction has its difficulties. Often you are overcome by despair. God seems to have hidden His face from you. But then you realize that it has only been for sport, like play with a child. You seek Him, find Him again, God and you, both exhilarated, both open wide with joy.

There is a deep teaching in the Talmud: "Before a man eats and drinks, he has two hearts." He feels both his own hunger and another's. Once he has eaten and drunk, he remains with only one heart, with thought only for his own comfort.

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Instead of robbing the poor of poverty and the afflicted of the affliction which will constitute his future glory, see that you yourself are among the men with two hearts.

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5 Untruthfulness in Biblical Personalities

We cannot tell the Communist interrogators the straight truth about our church activity. If we were to give frank replies to all their questions, more arrests would follow. We remember Rebecca used an immoral ruse to give Jacob the blessing normally due to Esau as first-born (Genesis 27). The ethical value of an action is judged not only by its accordance with certain moral rules, but also by its long-range results.

If Rebecca had not done this, Isaac would have given the blessing to Esau. Then Esau's descendants would have been the chosen people instead of the Jews. Some savage would have had to try to become the Saviour of the world. Wild men would have been the holy prophets.

What catastrophe if Rebecca and Jacob had not cheated and lied in that one circumstance! Their behavior was part of God's plan. Isaac's sight had grown weak so that Jacob might be mistaken for Esau and receive the blessing.

Obviously to take such action even in exceptional circumstances is a dangerous choice. Others will justify their selfish deceits by holding up what you have done for holy motives as an example.

The Midrash says: "Jacob later married Rachel, but on the marriage night, Laban, her father, substituted Leah, a girl whom Jacob disliked (GEN 29:23-25). In the morning, he saw he had been cheated and told Leah, 'During the night, I call you so often, "Rachel," and you answered. Why did you deceive me?' She said, 'Your father called you "Esau"

and you pretended to be your brother. You deceived your father. No teacher is without a disciple. I have learned from you.'"

We must be aware of this danger but Christians cannot altogether forego the serpent's wisdom.

Can a Christian be a police inspector, an undercover agent, a diplomat or an officer in war without using ruses?

How could the underground church survive in countries where there is persecution if it did not follow Rebecca's example? Such strategies are shocking because they are the exception to the Christian rule of complete truthfulness.

Words are spoken for various purposes other than for communicating truth. Sometimes they serve self-defense, like the words of Paul, "I have committed nothing against the people or the customs of our fathers" (ACT 28:17). In 1TH 2:14-16, Paul had burst out against certain customs. He had nullified an essential part of Jewish law when he declared circumcision of no value. But now he was in danger of death. In such cases, in moments of crisis, words have to be the servants of another master than truth.

Old Testament Joseph said, "I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews" (GEN 40:15). This was not the fact, but we can appreciate his desire to cover up the sin of his brothers who had sold him as a slave.

Let us have in view the many sides of human life when we judge the ethics both of biblical personalities and of our fellow men.

6 What is Caesar's?

Many Christians have submitted to Hitlers, Stalins, Maos and the multitude of lesser white, black and yellow dictators. Many did it with good intentions, guided by the Lord's words, "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" (MTT 22:21).

The words have been misunderstood. Jesus did not advise His disciples to give anything to Caesar. His words were addressed to the Pharisees. Has an order given to a German soldier any validity for a British soldier? The Pharisees and Jesus' disciples were at odds with one another: the words were spoken to Jesus' detractors, not to His friends.

Jesus had no coin of His own - "They brought unto him a penny" (v. 19). Jesus' foes were caught in Caesar's monetary system, while Jesus' disciples owned nothing.

The Hebrew Bible does not even contain the verb "to have." Christians consider possessions to be wrong, for they are only administrators of God's possessions. Owning nothing, the Christian could owe nothing to Caesar.

Who was this Caesar anyway? A foreign conqueror who had occupied Palestine, he had contributed nothing to its well-being. He had never planted a tree, built a highway, or even visited the country. Yet he had established tax-collectors to milk its riches, and had slaughtered anyone who dared resist his edicts. Nothing in Palestine belonged to Caesar.

If you say to a Czech, Hungarian or Pole, "Render to the

Soviets the things which belong to them," he would understand you instantly. Nothing belongs to them. These words can only mean, "Give them a boot in the back and send them packing."

This was also the sense of Jesus' words. If the Pharisees were so convinced that they served God, why were their minds preoccupied with things which are not godly? Jesus commands them, "Do both things: serve a tyranny and serve God at the same time." He knew they would soon realize that these things are not compatible. One must choose between being

Caesar's bootlicker and a true servant of God who stands before a godless king like Herod and tells him to his face, "What you do is unlawful." This is the attitude which cost John the Baptist his head.

It is a misuse of Jesus' words to interpret them as counseling submissiveness to despots. My own interpretation is in fact the contrary. Just as the soul is higher than the body, so the sacerdotal dignitary excels and instructs the regal; the celestial, the terrestrial. It is the duty of kings to obey church leaders, rather than the reverse.

7 Someone's Missing in Jesus' Genealogy

"Who can believe in the Bible's inerrancy?" a pastor once asked me. "I can show you at least one sentence which is positively untrue. It is MTT 1:17 where we find the assertion that there were forty-two generations from Abraham to Christ. But there are more in the genealogy of Luke 3 and in those of the Old Testament."

There is even stranger aspect to Matthew's genealogy. Matthew was a publican and he knew how to count accurately. He claims to give the names of forty-two generations. But if you thoroughly check, you will find that he only gives 41 names.

It is not immediately apparent that one person is missing. Attention to verses 11 and 12 of Matthew 1 reveals that one and the same Jechonias is counted twice. The genealogy is divided into three groups of ancestors, each of fourteen persons, but the last person of the second group is also the first person of the third group.

There is one name wanting in this list: it is yours. Jesus has to be conceived in you as utterly as He was conceived in the womb of Virgin Mary.

Jesus said, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister ..." Up to this point His words are easily comprehended. Every believer can be His little brother or sister. But He offers one other possibility; He says, "... and mother" (MTT 12:50). We can

be mothers to Him, insofar as Jesus is

conceived in us. His relationship with us will encompass that of son and mother, and we will be motherly towards Him.

All love contains an element of self-interest. You love father - he gives pocket money; you love mother - she gives candies. Your brothers and sisters are also your playmates. Only motherly love is completely unselfish. I know of a mother beaten to death with an axe by her son who, before she died, asked him whether he had hurt himself in doing it. A mother's love exists without asking any return.

Your attitude toward Jesus can be motherly. Then you will be the forty-second generation, the missing link in His genealogy.

Matthew's text was not meant to be simple history; nor was it meant to give mathematically precise figures, but rather figures which have a symbolic meaning. Both Matthew and Luke give a multiple of seven as the number of Jesus' ancestors, forty-two in the first case, seventy-seven in the other. Seven in the Bible is the holy figure, a topic which will be explored in a later meditation.

One could say it is untrue that a coronation confers a kingdom, but it is a true symbol of its being conferred. So in the same way, the generations from Abraham to Jesus were not truly forty-two. Matthew himself gives only forty-one names. But the report contains a true spiritual message.

Something can be true without being factual.

8 Male and Female Words

For many years I never saw a girl or a woman. This increased my curiosity regarding everything to do with the feminine.

Like most languages, Hebrew has male and female nouns.

English, which has the same article for all nouns, is an exception in the family of human languages. In German, "table" is male and has the article ~der~, "lamp" is female and has the article ~die~, "bread" is neuter and has the article ~das~. Adjectives and verbs also take different forms according to the gender of the noun. This is also true in Slavic and Latin languages.

The Hebrew has not only male and female nouns, but also male and female forms for one and the same noun. For example, "ship" is ~ani~ in its male and ~anijah~ in its female form. ~Shir~ and ~shirah~ are male and female forms of the word "song." ~Erets~ and ~artsah~ are the two forms for "earth," ~asham~ and ~ashamah~ for "sacrifice."

The male and female forms represent the active or passive aspects of the nouns in question, and their usage can greatly affect the inner meanings of many passages in the Bible.

Even when he writes in Greek, a language in which the noun does not have this peculiarity, John considers "the great winepress of the wrath of God" (REV 14:9) as not being so cruel a thing as it would seem. According to the rules of Greek grammar, he has to use the masculine gender for the noun, "winepress," but he defies the grammar and

puts the adjective "great" in the feminine gender to show that with God even wrath has a gentle character.

The suffix "ah" in Hebrew usually indicates femininity. Women's names often end with "ah," as in Bathshebah, Dalilah or Sarah. However, this ending also shows direction in the sense of "tending toward." What is thus expressed in the genius of the Hebrew language is that objects tend toward a female, passive or subject form. They all begin by asserting their independence, but in the end will all be submitted to the will of God.

~Ruah~, the Hebrew word for spirit, is female. In GEN 1:2, "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters," the verb "moved" also takes the feminine form. Thus an exact translation of these words, a rendering which would reproduce a Hebrew's feeling reading them would be "The female spirit moved in a womanly manner upon the face of the waters."

The frequent name for God in the Hebrew Bible, ~Adonai Sabaoth~, means not just "the Lord of hosts," but, exactly

translated, "The Lord of the female hosts," like, "the Amazons." Male and female Christians both, all who believe are ~brides~ of Christ and warriors with feminine characteristics. The direction for all of us must be toward acquiring more female characteristics: gentleness, quietness, submission, passive acceptance of everything the Bridegroom decides.

Biologists have discovered that all fetuses are created female. Later the Y chromosome sends a flood of male hormones over some fetuses, causing them to develop into males. The Y chromosome does this work by producing H-Y antigen, a substance found in the cell walls of all men, but not in women.

Every embryo is female in the beginning. Through becoming brides of Christ, through putting ourselves in the feminine position toward Him, we return to our original state, to the purpose for which we have

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been created, to be Christ's brides.

A male, at conversion, also becomes a bride of Christ, not a bridegroom.

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9 Manner of Breathing

New prisoners ask us, "How can I resist torture?" Among many other pieces of advice, we tell them, "Breathe deeply, rhythmically."

Paul writes, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1CO 10:31). This includes a saintly manner of breathing.

Life of mankind began when God breathed the breath of life into Adam (GEN 2:7). In what rhythm and manner will God have breathed?

The Bible speaks about many kinds of breathing. The sinner is compared to "a wild ass that snuffs the wind at her pleasure" (JER 2:24). Jeremiah also speaks about men who neigh after their neighbors' wives (JER 5:8). The persecutor Saul of Tarsus is described as "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord"

(ACT 9:1). Jesus himself had a breath apart. "He breathed on His apostles," and they received the Holy Spirit (JHN 20:22). Orthodox priests still breathe on persons as part of the baptismal rite.

What is your manner of breathing? Do you exhale anger, lust? Or do you have the quiet, majestic, serene breathing of a man who has no attachment or repulsion towards the world, and who is undisturbed by it? Such breathing must be practiced.

Yoga exercises can be useful but do not solve problems. A man can practice yoga in the morning and begin to neigh

and to breathe hatred in the afternoon. One must practice breathing to the glory of God in the moments of greatest temptation. When others shout at you or torment you physically, when you are in danger, or are attracted toward sin, proceed slowly and begin to breathe in the holy manner: deeply, evenly, rhythmically. This will help you be a victor.

The language of the Bible teaches us to be attentive to our manner of breathing. In Hebrew, ~ketsar af~, "short of breath," is the expression for "impatient"; ~ereh apaim~ "long of breathing," means "patient, serene." The states of our souls are connected with our breathing. When one breathes deeply for ten minutes in a slow, even rhythm, constantly thinking, "Now I inhale; now I exhale," anger becomes impossible. One who has the foolish desire to become angry can practice breathing in the opposite manner.

Do everything to the glory of God: even the manner in which you breathe is known by the Almighty. Trees breathe slowly and live longer; insects, the contrary.

10 Unintelligible Words

The Bible contains, in its original, words whose meaning we do not know, e.g., ~eshpar~ in 2SM 6:19 and 1CH 16:3. The Authorized version translates it "flesh," but puts the word in italics to show that the meaning is uncertain. Some Jewish commentators translate it as "cake of dates."

No one is sure of the meaning of the words ~selah~ and

~miktam~ which are frequently found in the Psalms. The renowned Jewish interpreter Rashi says that selah means "eternally." Ybn Ezra thinks it is a musical sign. The Septuaginta translates selah as "pause."

~Miktam~ appears in the heading of Psalms 16, 56, 57, 58, 59 and 60. The Midrash, a Jewish commentary, says David was humble (~makh~) and righteous (~tam~), hence, ~miktam~. Rashi believes it is, like ~selah~, the indication of a melody. Ybn Ezra and Luther derive the word from ~ketem~ - "gold." A note in the Authorized version calls Psalm 16 "a golden Psalm." Others consider the Babylonian word ~kafamu~ as the source of ~miktam~ and translate, "a psalm of atonement." All of these are guesses.

The Greek word ~epiussion~, which appears in The Lord's Prayer (MTT 6:11), exists nowhere else in Greek literature. The English translation "daily" in the expression "daily bread," is arbitrary. Jerome used "our supersubstantial bread." There are many other words whose meaning remains a

mystery. One possibility is that no meaning at all should be attributed to such words. Nowhere does the Bible affirm that everything in it must have meaning.

The ~Mumonkan~, a 12th century fundamental book of Zen Buddhism, says, no-meaning is the meaning of the walkers of the "way."

The Hebrew text of the Bible has musical notations. The Old Testament is a song in which some sounds are there simply for their musical beauty, without any sense, like the "tra-la-la" in popular songs of modern nations.

The whole Bible is an inimitable symphony. Not only the meaning of the sentences, but their very sound can move the soul to ecstasy. To give just one example: in English we read that the multitude of believers were "of one heart and of one soul" (ACT 4:32). This is a deep thought, but in Greek it is a beautiful sound also, a rhyme: "Kardia kai psyche mia." Letters, syllables, and whole words could have been written in the Bible just for the splendor of the sound. Anyone whose ear is attuned will enjoy them. They cannot be translated.

Luther called our reason "a beast" because of its tendency to interfere in religious matters. The rational mind seeks sense and logic in everything, including the Bible. But

why should the Bible be bound to always make sense to the mind? It speaks rather to the soul.

Kruger, the president of the Boer republic, went hunting, leaving behind his sick wife with a sick child. Upon his return he heard his wife singing, which was not her habit. Entering the house he found her sitting in bed with the dead child in her arms. Within a short time she also died, still clinging to the baby.

Forsaking everything, Kruger tramped through fields and forests, trying to make sense of life and love, which unite us for a time, until death forcibly separates us. His friends alarmed, sought him for many days and found him hungry, singing and with deep peace in his heart. He had not found the meaning of things, but he had given up seeking.

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Why must we always apply logic and syllogism to everything? Why not simply sing a melody, as the nightingale does, without constructing meaningful sentences? It is in its music that the deep sense of the Bible is to be found - where the heart simply sings, sometimes in unintelligible words, about the unintelligible ways of God.

Thinking like this, I did not mind when my speech became blurred, because of the circumstances in which I was detained.

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11 Almah

Everyone would consider it bad taste to publicly discuss or write about whether his wife was a virgin at marriage, but many debate whether Mary was really a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus.

In many circles it is contested whether Isaiah really prophesied the virgin birth. The argument is that in his words (ISA 7:14), "The Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive," the Hebrew expression "almah" does not necessarily mean "virgin." It could also mean "young maid."

Like other nouns in Hebrew, the word "virgin" has two forms. "Elem," the male form, is always used for a very young boy who could not have known a woman yet, like David

when he killed Goliath (1SM 17:56). In this passage the Authorized Version translated "elem" as "stripling." The word occurs again in 1SM 20:35 in reference to "a little lad" who accompanied Jonathan.

Since "elem" in the male form surely indicates a virginal boy, why then should the female form, "almah," not also have the inference? Surely Matthew the Evangelist knew better Hebrew than the modern professors of theology, and his translation of Isaiah's prophecy was, "a virgin shall be with child" (MTT 1:23). For myself, I would believe in the virgin birth of Jesus even if it were not written in the Bible.

We humans all have split characters. How could it be otherwise, since we inherit from our parents features which

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come from two divergent and often contradictory lines? Jesus, however, was One: He is not ravaged by inner antagonisms. His heritage comes from a single line.

You can rely on the Bible. Mary was a virgin when she conceived Jesus. The One who kept her pure and holy by His grace will also see that you appear before Him with virginal purity.

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12 The Double Sense of the Word "Netzah"

They gave me twenty-five years, which was practically the same as life imprisonment. The day I received the sentence, the following thoughts occurred to me. Hebrew biblical words have a cluster of meanings, giving them a spectrum like that of the rainbow. Let us examine two meanings of the word netzah. This word can mean "perpetual" - "Why is my pain perpetual?" asks Jeremiah (JER 15:18). But netzah also means "victory" (1CH 29:11 and ISA 25:8). Thus, what appears to be a despairing, unanswered question in Jeremiah could also be faithfully and literally translated, "Why is my pain? It is to serve victory."

It is said that King Solomon once stood at the seashore admiring the fleets of many nations passing by. He asked the high priest who was standing beside him, "How many ships a year do you think pass through our waters?" The priest answered, "Only three." The king, thinking the priest was being insolent, said indignantly, "How dare you give such a reply? I see dozens of

ships at this very moment." - "An illusion," responded the high priest. "In reality all ships sailing on all the seas are only three: the ship of desire for money, that of desire for fame, and that of desire for pleasure. These are the three forces which drive through the seas, whatever name a vessel takes for a while."

The king pondered this for some time. In his Song he had foretold of a fourth ship, a very small one, unable to navigate beyond the small lake of Galilee, but in the end surpassing all

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others. This would be the ship of the Messiah, a ship powered by the sacrifice of the Son of God, by intense love, by the desire to serve.

It sails in defiance of all the laws of hydrodynamics. The wonder accomplished by the Messiah when the tempest ceased and the ship was rescued at His command is an even greater miracle than is commonly thought. Mark wrote that the waves had beaten into the ship, "so that it was now full" (MRK 4:37). Any vessel thus full of water will sink whether the sea is stormy or calm. But this ship, the ship of Jesus does not sink, not even when the waters of sins, crimes, schisms, heresies and persecutions have filled it to the brim. It advances toward victory.

Its "perpetual" (netzah) great sorrows are but the shadow of the ~netzah~, the victory toward which it sails.

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13 Two Senses of"Sabahtani"

"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabahtani," was Jesus' cry from the Cross. The Evangelist translated these words from the Aramean: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But this is not the only possible translation.

Sabahtani is the first person, past tense of ~leshabeah~ which means "to forsake." But ~leshabeah~ also means "to glorify." It is frequently used in this sense even in modern Hebrew prayers. So the words of Jesus could have been translated, "My God, my God, to what (degree) have you glorified me!" These were the words with which the Therapeuts, a subdivision of the Essenian sect of Jesus' time, finished their prayers. It was an expression of amazement at the multitude of

graces received.

On the last evening, the Lord prayed, "Glorify thy Son" (JHN 17:1), probably using the Aramean word, ~meshabeah~. The apparent result was not glorification, but being abandoned by most of His disciples, being flogged, mocked, crucified, and forsaken by God. Is this how the heavenly Father answers prayer?

But Jesus' supplication that evening could also have had an entirely other, mysterious, sense: "The hour has come. Our plan should now be fulfilled. Forsake, reject (shabeah) thy Son, that thy Son may glorify (also ~shabeah~) Thee through bearing everything with patience and love." Thus the whole Passion which followed is a consummation of Jesus' prayer.

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It may also seem strange that Jesus' words, "You have forsaken me," are in the past tense, while He was being forsaken then and there - the crucifixion was a very present event. Why then does Jesus use the past tense? Ordinarily someone would not ask while being beaten, "Why did you mistreat me?" He would say, "Why do you beat me?" using the present tense.

One of the secrets of spiritual strength is to live outside of time. A present-day revolution with all its immediate horrors is difficult to endure. But we can easily bear reading about the French Revolution and its guillotine of 200 years ago. God and the spirit live eternally. Eternity is not timelessness, but life beyond time. You can decide how you wish to regard an episode of your life, in the present or in the past. Everyone sometimes ponders pleasant memories of the past and relives them as if they were present. The opposite can be done as well. You can transfer today's difficulties into the past, thereby enabling yourself to cope with them serenely. In this manner they cannot break you. This is how we resisted.

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14 How to Examine Yourself

Solitary confinement tempts you to endless brooding over your past life. St. Paul writes, "Let a man examine himself" (1CO 11:28). How should one proceed? There is no specific instruction in the Bible, but Christian experience of

hundreds of years has taught us at least one thing: Do not be too thorough in self-examination. A little creature in the laboratory can be examined so extensively that it dies from over-exposure.

Rather than examining all the details of your own life, try to fathom the depth of your faith in the value of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

Once a man was greatly concerned about the state of his soul. No sermon or religious book could satisfy him. Finally, he heard about a hermit who was reputed to have great wisdom. The man took a horse and rode to the mountaintop where the sage lived. He found the sage in meditation at the entrance to his cave. The sage asked the man what he desired. "I seek salvation," said the man. The sage was silent for a long time. Then he said, "Why don't you seek a horse instead?" - "I have a horse," the man replied. Turning toward the rear of the cave, the sage remarked, "So that is it," and said no more.

As the man rode down the mountain on his horse, he thought and thought about his meeting with the sage. All at once he was enlightened: Why should he seek a horse? He had one. He was riding on it. Therefore why should he seek

salvation: God sent His Son into the world that the world might be saved through Him. Salvation was already assured. A man riding on a horse should not bother to seek a horse unless he had overtired or killed the one he has. The Savior can not be exhausted. Unless a man flees from salvation, unless he consciously refuses it, he has it without much ado. Jesus has come to seek and to save what is lost. We do not have to seek Him. His desire for us to be in paradise is much greater than our own. His desire to forgive our sins is much greater than our desire to be forgiven. Salvation cannot be sought, but only accepted. When the man arrived in the valley, he understood.

Christians often say, "I was saved five or fifteen years ago." This cannot be so. We were all saved 2,000 years ago, when Jesus died for us on Golgotha. Perhaps it was only five or fifteen years ago that we realized it.

When we approach Holy Communion, the main thing we must ask ourselves is, "When I hear the words, 'This is my blood, shed for you and the remission of your sins,' do I understand them as clearly addressed to me? Do I know, as surely as a rider knows

he has a horse under him, that my sins are forgiven and forgotten and dealt with?" If I understand this, I have examined myself well and am worthy of Holy Communion.

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15 The Bible's Imprecise Time

I lost the notion of time, I didn't know what hour or what day it was, my solitary cell being subterranean; I didn't even know if it was spring or summer.

The authors of the Bible knew their lives are eternal. Time did not matter for them and so they were quite imprecise in dating events.

In JHN 21:1 we read, meta tauta-"after these things Jesus showed himself again." How long was it "after these things?" You search in vain.

Chapter 3 of Matthew starts with the words, "In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea." In the preceding verse, John and Jesus could not have been more than 2 or 3 years old, so three decades must have elapsed before John began his public ministry. For the Evangelist it was still "in those days."

Both John and Matthew were speaking about events between which much time passed as if they took place simultaneously. Before Einstein this would have been considered inaccurate. Now we know that a statement about the simultaneity of two events acquires meaning only in relation to the place where an observer is situated. It belongs to the subjective part of our observation, not to the objective part which constitutes history.

The spirit blows wherever it wishes, says Scripture (JHN 3:8). Wind and spirit are the same word in Greek. I can place myself spiritually in a position such that events distant

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from each other in time appear to occur simultaneously. It is like some Americans who like to watch two or three TV programs at the same time.

Can the preaching of John the Baptist occur "in those days," i.e., at the time of his childhood? This is how

Matthew saw the events. Who am I to accuse him of inaccuracy?

We have a promise, "Ask and it shall be given you" (MTT 7:7). This verse seems to contradict much of our experience. Every believer knows of answered, but also of unanswered prayers. We have asked and were not given. But how much time has passed since we asked?

Moses asked God, "Let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan." The Lord answered, "Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto Me of this matter" (DEU 3:25-26). Here is an instance not of an unanswered prayer, but of a prayer clearly refused. How does this fit with, "Ask and it shall be given you?" Well, a little later, some 3,500 years, or, to use the biblical expression, "in those days," Jesus was on Mount Tabor with His disciples and "there appeared unto them Moses and Elias" (MTT 17:3). Mount Tabor is in Canaan, beyond Jordan, in the Promised Land. So Moses' request was finally granted, only with a few thousand years' delay. Not much for one whose life is eternal.

We have before us not an eternal life, but eternal lives. The Hebrew has no singular for life. Most Hebrew nouns which end with "im" are plural, and the biblical word for life is "haiim." We will have a multitude of lives and opportunities. I believe that all prayers will be answered.

Eternal life is more than infinite. Kantor, a Jewish disciple of Einstein, conceived the notion of "transfinite." When you draw an endless line in one direction from a given point, its mathematical value is x, infinite. But when you draw from the same point two or more endless lines in different directions, you have something beyond the infinite. Kantor

calls it "the transfinite," and uses the Hebrew letter ~Aleph~ for its mathematical symbol. The possibilities of eternity are inexhaustible. "Ask and it shall be given you." Do not ask when. Heaven is outside of time.

Periods of time in general are not objective physical facts, but are dependent upon the observer. Time and space are by their very nature confused representations of the only real thing: the interval in the space-time continuum! Let us think biblically, outside of time.

16 The Things Beyond the Bible

The Bible contains what God revealed to us, taking into account the condition and capacity of our hearts and minds.

Jesus told His disciples, "I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now"(JHN 16:12). We wonder what He would have said, had we been capable of receiving all His words.

The Biblical authors have left many interesting things untold. Paul complains that time fails him "to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson and of Jephthae; of David also and Samuel and of the prophets"(HEB 11:32). Much of Paul's time was absorbed by dealing with all the trifling questions which produced so much strife among the first Christians.

Jude had intended to write about the most important subjects of "common salvation" (Jude verse 3). We have remained without the knowledge of his thoughts in this matter because he had instead to exhort the believers to beware of "ungodly men" who had crept into the leadership of the church.

Biblical authors also had to adjust their messages so as not to offend the prejudices of listeners. The first Christian sermon, that delivered by Peter on Pentecost, calls Jesus simply "a man approved by God" (ACT 2:22), "exalted by the right hand of God" (ACT 2:33). Peter does not say that Jesus is the Son of God. This would have been too difficult

for the Jews to accept. Diplomacy is a factor in all intelligent preaching.

We must come to understand not only what the pastor says, but also what he might have said, had we been open for the whole truth.

When a statue of Kruger, the president of the Boer Republic, was made in Pretoria, Kruger's wife asked the sculptor to make the president's top hat hollow so that when it rained the birds could drink from it. Those familiar with the history of the Boer Republic are inspired by this statue, encouraged to emulate that great statesman in their own actions. Birds get from that same statue only a few drops of water.

If we do not remain little birds in faith, we will come to know what the authors of the Bible could not tell their contemporaries. The river of life will give us more than a few drops of water.

Cod passes us through prison to give us new ability to understand.

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17 Euphemisms in the Bible

Some tortures are obscene. If ever freed, should one tell what happened?

The Bible consistently avoids mention of an essential part of life, an aspect overworked to the point of offense in current language: The word "sex" never occurs in the Bible, nor do words for the sexual organs or sexual intercourse. The latter is replaced with "to know": Adam ~knew~ Eve his wife" (GEN 4:1). For the female sex organ, the word commonly used is "the shame"- ~boshet~, or sometimes "The navel" (SOS 7:2). The general tendency of biblical style is toward euphemisms.

This applies not only to sexual matters. In Acts, we repeatedly find the expression that Jesus was "hanged on a tree" (ACT 5:30). The crucifixion evoked too gruesome a picture.

Scripture also avoids telling the complete story of certain wrong actions. In GEN 35:22, in the Authorized Version, the word "it" is written in italics, a type used whenever the translators have added something to the original text. In Hebrew this sentence remains incomplete: "Reuben lay with his father's concubine. Israel heard." We would expect to be told the details of the incest and of the terrible clash between father and son, which must have followed. However the Masoretes left a blank space in the Hebrew text after the words "Israel heard," to teach us that the worst in bad things is better left unsaid.

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In GEN 4:8, after the words ~Vaiomer Cain~, "And Cain said," the Masoretes left another blank space with a circular mark indicating an intentional omission of something important.

Both the Samaritan text of Genesis and the Septuagint, the first Greek translation, add at this point that Cain said to his brother, "Let us walk out into the fields." The Syriac version is, "Let us go to the desert." But knowledge of a more far-reaching discussion between the brothers seems to have been kept orally. The Targum, an Aramaic paraphrase of the text, adds that Cain said, "I thought that the world has been created in mercy, but it is not governed according to merits of good works, nor is there any judgment or a judge, nor shall there be any future state with rewards and punishments. Why is my sacrifice refused?"

The Bible as given by God prefers to pass over Cain's words with silence. By such omissions we are taught not to reproduce or quote the words of wrongdoers. Such words are too often contagious.

The Bible also avoids the use of epithets. The Jewish historian Josephus Flavius of the first century wrote that Pilate was a corrupt and cruel mass-murderer. We know from the Talmud that the high-priests of Jesus' time were merchants more than servants of God, stooges of the Roman empire, who obtained their high positions through bribes. But the Bible gives no reproach against the personal lives of Caiphas and Pilate. It tells only what they did to Jesus. The Evangelists did not consider it their calling to publicly denounce their sins.

We know from historical sources that the lives of the whole Herodian dynasty were debauchery. The Gospels report only the minimum about their dealings with the children in Bethlehem and with the apostles. One private sin is mentioned only because it led to the death of John the Baptist.

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We, who delight in every defect we discover in an adversary, benefit by emulating the Bible's use of euphemisms and silence.

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18 A Language Without the Word "Word"

The Word of God was given through the Hebrew people. This can be asserted clearly in any language except Hebrew itself. The chosen people, the depository of the Word of God, have no specific word for "word." They use ~davar~,

which also means "thing."

The evangelist John wrote in Greek, but thought in Hebrew. In his native tongue, the prologue to his gospel would read, "In the beginning was the ~davar~, the thing, and the thing was with God and the ~davar~, the real thing, was God."

To speak in words which have no substance in reality is to chat, not to speak.

You cannot comprehend the Bible if you look at it as a mere collection of words.

The Mamunkan, one of the great books of Zen Buddhism (13th century) says, as if animated by the Hebrew spirit: "Words do not express things; phrases don't show the mind-movement. He who receives only words is lost; to stagnate with sentences is to be deluded."

It is obvious that words can express only words, not feelings, experiences or objects. The latter express themselves without words.

As Einstein has connected space with time and has created the concept of the four-dimensional space-time continuum, the Hebrews conceived the unique notion of "davar," the thing-word with two aspects, one verbal and the other in the physical or spiritual reality.

In Hebrew Jesus could not have said simply, "Thy word is truth" (JHN 17:17). He must have used here davar, which is more than "word." Words alone, even divine words, are not the truth: they can be cloaks for cruelty, strife and greed as well as inspirations for holiness. "Thy davar, thy word-thing, in its double aspect, is the truth," just as, after Einstein. events are no longer placed only in space or only in time. Instead we have the notion "interval" in physics, which comprehends them both.

The Italian sculptor Tommassi ornamented the cemetery of Buenos Aires with statues, each representing one of Beethoven's symphonies. When a friend asked me to describe them, I found myself at a loss for words.

Beethoven expressed what he felt in notes which, when played, give sounds. The sculptor carved in marble what he felt when he heard the music. I looked upon the figures of stone. If

I put my own feelings into words, what relation would they bear to Beethoven's symphonies?

A blind man once asked a friend to describe milk to him. His friend began, "Milk is white." The blind man stopped him with a second question, "What does white mean?" "White is the color of a swan," was the reply. The blind man then asked, "What is a swan?" The explanation was, "It is a bird with a bent neck." He persisted in questioning. "What does 'bent' mean?" The friend bent his elbows and said, "Touch my arm now and you will understand what I mean by the word 'bent.'" The blind man touched his friend's elbow and exclaimed, "Now I know what milk is like!"

If the Bible is only an accumulation of words, we will know about God only as much as the blind man knew about milk .

We have to arrive through the words to the real thing, to God himself. Only then will we be illuminated.

A man asked a saint, "Who is God?" The saint replied, "Who are you?" The man said, "I am so-and-so." The saint asked, "Do you know so-and-so?" He said, "Of course."

The saint held up a dust-whisk and asked, "Do you see the dust-whisk?" The man replied, "I see it." The saint stopped the dialogue as useless.

"God" is a sound produced by English-speaking people to communicate about a mysterious being. Another, a small mysterious being, myself, about whom I also know almost nothing is called "Richard" in English. French people pronounce the name, "Rishaar," and Germans in a manner which cannot even be approximated in English spelling. I see an object which the English call "dust-whisk." It is used for wiping dust away only by adults. Children would regard it as a toy. It can also be useful for spanking or for drawing a line.

With men who remain in the sphere of words, discussions lead nowhere. Words are useful only if they lead out of the realm of mere chatting to the "davar,"to the reality-word.

With what words could I explain God? Should I say He is a King? This is a title which many good men, but also Herod, Nero and Henry VIII bore. I might confuse minds calling Him "King."

Should I call Him "Father?" Luther had a very harsh father and was reluctant to address God with the words of the Lord's prayer.

Even "God" is a word used not only for the Creator, but also for cruel beings like Moloch and Quetzlcoatl who asked thousands of human sacrifices.

We have to pass from simple words to the davar, the real thing, in order to apprehend God, not only Creator, but also Keeper and Destroyer.

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19 Don't Trouble Him

Just as death was an unspeakable pain for Jesus, His birth must also have caused Him great anguish. It is written in ACT 10:44, "The Holy Ghost fell." The advent of the Spirit, which for us is uplifting, is for Him a fall. "The seeds fell," says Jesus in the parable of the sower (MTT 13:4). Before developing into wheat, they must first fall from the hand of the Master. Later Jesus explains that the ground stands for different types and qualities of men (LUK 8:12-15). For each one, the coming to earth is a falling. This is the meaning of birth for every man. How much more must the birth of the Son of God have been a descent, the pain of which He preferred not to mention. The depth of His fall is shown in the fact that He is put in the most humble place, a manger.

We Christians are so bold as to sing, "Come into my heart." But what sorrows await Him there! Many faithful souls, foreseeing how their faults will grieve the Master, repeat Peter's words as he fell down at Jesus' knees, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (LUK 5:8).

The Roman centurion, instead of inviting Jesus as we do, told Him, "Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof." This officer was praised for his faith above all others in Israel. What a contrast to our habit of troubling Him about all manner of trifles, and never being willing to appeal to an angel. We insist on summoning the Master himself for our needs and ask whenever possible for visible signs.

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A really loving soul is careful not to disturb the Beloved. I

know about a girl who was in love with a young man whom she knew to have a great career ahead of him. She felt that, being uncultured herself, she would be a burden for him in society. He loved her heartily, but she refused his advances and caused him to marry another girl, more suitable for his social status. Sometimes the greatest love is shown in renouncing the beloved.

Jesus' coming to earth was a great agony for Him. His coming to fulfill your prayer troubles Him. So many were healed of blindness simply by asking, and then, with eyes wide open for the world's temptations, they ran after their lusts, forgetting to whom they owed their sight. Christians renounce many things. Renounce also your many requests. Give Him peace in the hours when He wishes to be alone.

Should you not trouble Him even when you are terribly hurt? Perhaps not, for what will you do should Christ accept your prayer and alleviate your suffering? Might this not mean a terrible loss for you?

Once, in his sleep, a man swallowed a venomous snake which stuck in his throat. He awoke in terrible pain, but not knowing its cause. A woodsman, a man of experience, passing by, fiercely beat the man until he was black and blue. At last the snake was vomited out and slithered away. Had the man begged the woodsman to give him peace, and had his request been granted, he would have died.

None of us receives more blows than absolutely needed: "the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (MTT 10:30). Our lives are foreordained. Does our heavenly Friend not also know how many sufferings we must endure?

Do not trouble the Master. He knows.

20 Exaggerations in the Bible

Much has been written by believers about the Bible's accuracy, but its obvious exaggerations are seldom mentioned.

"To Jesus of Nazareth give all the prophets witness," says Peter (ACT 10:43). But there were Hebrew prophets like Obadiah or Amos who did not ever mention the Messiah.

A Samaritan woman who met Jesus told people, "Come, see a

man which told me all things I ever did" (JHN 4:29). This certainly cannot be accurate. It would take years to reveal someone's every action. Jesus had shown her only that He knew of her many sexual transgressions.

Critics would say that such statements are inaccuracies which entitle one to call the Bible into doubt. But those who know the human heart learn from such statements about the impact Jesus made upon his contemporaries.

During World War II, my wife went to Budapest under dangerous circumstances to bring relief to the suffering Christians there. For a long time we had no news from her. During that time, I was unable to read anything without seeing her picture on the pages of every book or newspaper I opened. I could have said like Peter, contrary to the experience of other men, "All books and magazines contain only Sabina's image."

For a time after her interview with Jesus, the Samaritan woman was obsessed with the remembrance of all her mistakes, and in such a state of conscience she could

truthfully say, "He told me all things I ever did."

For Peter, who had seen the risen Lord and was full of the experience of the Messiah, it must have seemed that all the prophets had spoken only about Christ. It was just while Peter was speaking in this way, which normally would be considered exaggeration, that "the Holy Ghost fell on them."

Many Christian preachers and writers are too insistent on accuracy. The Holy Spirit does not fall on those who listen to them because Jesus is not their all. They are filled with observations and thoughts about other things besides the Lord.

The apostle Paul also exaggerates when he says, "All they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus" (ACT 19:10) But Paul never went farther than Asia Minor. Persia, Russian Asia and China were unknown to him. Paul's assertion shows with what his mind was consumed: not with wealth, fame or pleasure, but with a dream so strongly felt that it seemed real: Asia at the feet of Jesus.

Such dreams are truth. A simple description of facts is uninspired boredom. God's truth has wings; it sees the distant future as being present.

I could well understand Paul's assertion when, after my liberation, I was preaching in Taiwan. Although I was speaking before only 10,000 persons on a small island of China, this was not how I experienced it. Before my spirit and before my eyes were the 900 million of mainland China who have no way to hear the Gospel. It was to them that I spoke.

Every night during my years in solitary confinement, I delivered a sermon to my congregation at home. I was sure that my words reached them. Words are heard not only by those whose physical ears perceive the sound. Perhaps Paul knew more about telepathic communication than we do.

It is an exaggeration to consider something as exaggeration simply because it appears so to us. It is not that

the Bible exaggerates; we exaggerate in criticizing it.

Many things which previously were considered Biblical exaggerations have later proved true. Moses called Palestine "a land that flows with milk and honey," an obvious boast (DEU 26:9). But recently a scientist has shown the earth to be capable of over three times its present food yield, and cited Israel as an example:

(1) The average cow in Israel produces 50% more milk a year than the U.S. average.

(2) In Israel, an orange grove is yielding 16 tons of fruit a year - a world's record.

(3) An acre in Israel grows twice as many peanuts as are grown on Jimmy Carter's peanut farm.

(4) Cabbages and tomatoes grown in Israel are among the finest anywhere.

All of this is achieved despite limited rainfall in this little country. So Moses' boast is not such an exaggeration after all.

Biblical authors regard numbers as unimportant. On the day of Pentecost, when the Christians of Jerusalem, 120 of them,

were gathered together and became filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter explained the occurrence as being the fulfillment of a prophecy of Joel: "It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh" (ACT 2:17). A hundred persons can hardly be called "all flesh."

Such statements are normally called exaggerations. But if a man cannot readily find simple words for his feelings, if he clothes them in superlatives, should we call this a lie? Is ~Faust~ a lie because Goethe, feeling the power and complexity of evil, personified it as Mephistopheles? Peter was so overwhelmed by the fiery cloven tongues which had sat upon each of the disciples (ACT 2:3) that he could not speak except in superlatives.

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Nehemiah exaggerates too when he says, "Thou hast multiplied the children of Abraham as the stars of heaven" (NEH 9:23). But there are billions of stars, not that many Jews.

The Bible is an Oriental book. One cannot appreciate its truth by applying Anglo-Saxon standards to it. The rules of truthfulness vary from one culture to another. In the Anglo-Saxon world, a statement is true only when it exactly fits reality. In fact, understatements are often preferred. With the Japanese it is otherwise. It is correct to say what is pleasing to your interlocutor, even if this is not the real state of affairs. Hyperbole is the normal for an Oriental. God has made His revelation to us through an Oriental book, and the Bible is inerrant according to the Oriental mentality which produced it.

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21 Sayings Missing in the New Testament

It is important to observe in the Bible not only what it contains, but also what it omits.

One of the interesting features of the New Testament is that Jesus never asked anyone to tell Him about the circumstances of his sins. He knew men to be sinful, so the details of their trespasses, be they small offenses or huge crimes, did not interest Him. Instead of probing in dirt, He went from one man to another saying, "Be of good cheer, son; be of good cheer, daughter. Your sins are forgiven."

Another important feature is that no one ever said to

Jesus, "Please, forgive me," or "I am sorry." On the last evening all the apostles fled and one denied Him. Later, when the resurrected Lord appeared to them, it would have been seemly for them to ask His forgiveness. None did.

Whoever looked into Jesus' face saw there so much love and goodness that he felt, "With Jesus forgiveness is self-evident. His willingness to forgive me is much greater than my readiness to ask for forgiveness. His wish for me to be saved is far greater than my own. His desire for my fellowship in heaven is greater than my wish to go there." We do not have to approach Jesus with words of apology, but only trusting in His goodness.

There is something else that cannot be found in the New Testament: Jesus never turned down anyone's invitation.

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To refuse an invitation would be foreign to His nature. You just invite Him into your home and heart. He accepted invitations even from His worst enemies. He will surely accept yours.

Let us be attentive to the verses missing in the Bible.

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22 Words Missing in the Bible

Now that, being a prisoner, I have nothing, I realize the importance of the fact that in the Old Testament the verb"to have" never occurs. It does not exist in the Hebrew language, not even in modern Hebrew. To lack even a word for expressing the idea of having is real "not having."

It is sinful to have. All the first Christians who were "possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet" (ACT 4:34-35). They were Jews and discovered, thanks to Jesus, what had long since been revealed through the genius of their language: it is wrong for God's people to have. A child of God can only administrate things which really belong to the Creator.

In Greek the word echo is used for "to have," but it has several other meanings as well: "to be able," "to be possessed with," "to can," "to count," "to do," etc.

The idea of "having" is a false notion. l was born without my consent - I did not choose the time or place, my bodily shape or my inherited character. My life developed in circumstances which were largely not of my own forming. I do not "have" my life. It proceeds according to laws established beyond myself. Nor do I have the things appertaining to life.

The renowned tenor Caruso was obliged to sing in the opera on the day of his mother's death, in order not to disappoint the thousands of fans who had come especially

to hear him. After the performance he exclaimed, "I believed in the beginning that I had a voice; now I realize the voice has me."

Even joys and sorrows are given or withheld by others, and in the last analysis, by one other Being.

Not only is the infinitive "to have" absent from the Hebrew vocabulary, but even the genitive case is little in use. In Hebrew one does not normally say, "the house of a man" because nobody is meant to own one. In everyday Hebrew speech the genitive is replaced by the so-called "construct case," which consists in shortening the word for the thing possessed. Thus any person or object reduced to being a possession loses value.

In the Lord's prayer the word "I" is missing completely, although it is one of the most frequently spoken words in the prayers of men.

There is one thing worse than praying before an idol: praying before one's own image and bowing to it.

Christians should not be I-centered, but God-centered. The "I" should completely disappear in prayer, even as a reminder of the identity of the person who prays. True prayer is an outstreaming of love so pure that all that matters is the good of the whole and the will of God.

Another word which is completely absent from the Bible is the word "history." History is the record of events as they succeed each other in time. In history an event is assumed to be the effect of preceding events which are its cause. All this is illusion. What I see in a cinema also seems to be a succession of events, but the projectionist could have run the film

backwards, showing the events in inverse sequence, or the film could have been spliced to put the events in a different order. Everything is pre-determined by God. The pen with which God has written all things which will happen until the end of the world has long since dried, and will not again be dipped in ink to write an alternative version.

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23 Interesting Biographies Missing in the Bible

The New Testament recounts repeatedly and in great detail the life history and conversion of the persecutor Saul of Tarsus to Paul the future apostle, although there must have been other biographies which at the time, when Acts of the Apostles was written, seemed more interesting than that of the persecutor.

Paul said, "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison ... and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme" (ACT 26:10-11). Not only had he killed Christians, he broke their resistance and made some of them become apostates.

These were the first renegades and martyrs of Christianity, but the Bible does not report their names or even tell the story of their suffering, betrayal or heroic death.

Perhaps the biblical authors wished to prevent future abuses in the veneration of saints. In later centuries, stories of martyrs were told in minute detail and often embellished with fantasy.

The Bible says about the fellow prisoners of Old Testament Joseph, who was put in charge of them, "Whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it" (GEN 39:22). Likewise Christ is the doer of the lives of martyrs. It would not have been biblical to make a great fuss over them; they themselves would not have desired it.

Why should martyrs be so honored? What they have done

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is not the maximum, but the minimum required from a disciple of Christ. Even to be like Christ in life and death would be below what could be expected of him. Whoever is like Christ is not Christ. We are meant to be Christ. We are the body of Christ -

so we are He. "You will be like God," the devil said to Eve. "Ye are gods," said Jesus. The union between the believer and God is perfect. Martyrdom is a small thing in comparison with this calling.

Other highly interesting biographies are absent from the Bible. We are told in ACT 2:41 that on one day, in Jerusalem alone, three thousand souls were added to the Church. Did they remain steadfast? Did they, in their turn, bring others to the Church?

Why do you need answers? We continually hear about many who accept Christ at evangelical mass rallies. What happens with these people afterwards? Are their decisions sincere?

Whoever puts many questions gets many depressing answers. The Bible teaches us to rejoice that some men had at least partial good will and good intentions, even if only for one day.

A Samaritan woman brought her whole town to Christ (JHN 4:30). Had she continued like this, no unconverted cities would have remained in Palestine. The Bible tells us only what she did on that one day. After this a veil is thrown upon her life.

A thief, Zacchaeus, promised under the Lord's influence to give half his goods to the poor and to restore four-fold what he had stolen (LUK 19:8). The Bible story concludes with his promise, but we are not told whether he fulfilled his pledge. The holy author rejoiced that a thief showed even a single moment of contrition.

Jesus praises an officer as being the most faithful man He had ever met (MTT 8:10). It would seem to be instructive to know how this officer continued his life.

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A man who is faithful today might not always remain so. However the Bible does not give us whole biographies, but teaches us to rejoice in the little and transitory good we find in men.

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24 Echad and Iachid

An ancient Chinese parable tells of a hunter who went out to set traps with his son. The son, despite all warnings, set the traps on the road, instead of waiting to arrive in the forest.

Soon many people were caught in the traps, including the boy's mother and sister. Next, love and truth and hope were caught, and finally even the road fell into the snare. The world remained without a road.

After a long time, the father convinced his son to unlock the traps. The road was so happy to be free that it stretched out until the whole world became a road. "How beautiful ~my~ road is now!" exclaimed the boy. The road, hearing that someone claimed it as his possession, died. Since that time there has been no road in the world.

It is a pessimistic story. There is a road to God. The Bible is His revelation, a map that must be read with careful attention to its wording. This road also cannot be claimed by anyone as "mine"; it is God's only.

The Bible's main teaching is that God is one; our faith and baptism are one. But the Hebrew language has two expressions for the concept "one."

~Iachid~ stands for absolute oneness, as in GEN 22:2: "Take thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest ..." ~Echad~ represents composed oneness as in GEN 1:5: "It was evening and it was morning, one day" (so in Hebrew).

God is never called ~iachid~ in the Hebrew Bible, but always ~echad~, a composed unity. The literal translation of

DEU 6:4, the keystone of the Jewish faith, is: "Listen, Israel, Jehovah, your gods (plural) is a Jehovah of composed unity (echad)."

"God was never alone, but being the only One, was many, for He was not wordless, nor wisdomless, nor powerless, nor counselless" (Hippolyt). "There are always present to Him the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit through whom and in whom He made all things freely and spontaneously" (Irenaeus).

God knows himself with perfection. This self-knowledge is called the Eternal Son. He possesses all the attributes of the Father whom He knows. The two are united in perfect Divine love. This love also has all the attributes of the Father. We call this love Holy Spirit. The three entities are one. This oneness is ~echad~, composed, a oneness between entities who also retain their distinction.

The "Zohar," an ancient book of Jewish mysticism, referring to DEU 6:4, also proclaims God as a Trinity. Asking why God's name appears three times in this verse, it answers: "The first, the Lord 'Jehovah,' is the Father above. The second name is of Jesse, the Messiah who is to come from the family of Jesse through David, and the third is the way which is below, and the three are one."

The atom, nature, the individual - all are unities. Parts in a state of extreme tension achieve the miracle of oneness.

There is oneness in diversity, and tension even within the Godhead. "It pleased the Father to bruise His son" (ISA 53:10). The Son, in agony in Gethsemane, begged the Father to spare Him. The Father's decision stood.

Jesus said, "Who has seen me, has seen the Father (JHN 14:9). Is this also true when you have seen Jesus weeping and in despair?

Jesus also spoke the mysterious words, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you" (JHN 16:7), giving the impression that the two cannot be in the same place at once.

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We commonly say that Jesus is our mediator and intercessor with the Father, which seems to imply that the Son intervenes to change the Father's decision in our favor.

God is one, ~echad~, not ~iachid~. If His Unity were not so complex, there would not be such a great need to proclaim it.

The Church is one, man and wife are one - ~echad~, composed unities. Believe in Oneness despite diversity and tensions which sometimes impair the basic harmony. This Oneness cannot be broken.

The way is not your property. Nobody can possess the One. The one God, the one Church, owns us.

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25 The Mystery of Unanswered Prayer

The Bible is full of unaccepted prayers.

Paul writes, "Without ceasing ... I make request ... to have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you" (ROM 1:10). Instead of a prosperous journey, he traveled as a prisoner in fetters and was shipwrecked. Other examples abound throughout the Bible.

Every request in prayer shows a lack of submission to what God in His wisdom and love has foreordained. What would the world be like if God were to change His plan every time someone expressed a desire in prayer?

The Talmud says that the Jewish high priest entered the most sacred place of the temple once a year to pray for the people, and always concluded his prayer with the words, "God, disregard the requests of Wayfarers." This was wise: everyone who traveled on Monday asked that there be no rain on that day; likewise those who traveled on Tuesday, Wednesday, etc. If God listened to them all, the people would perish because of drought.

The following story illustrates the best manner of prayer. Two Christians each planted an apple tree in front of his house. When the time for reaping apples came, the first looked angrily at his tree: it bore not even one apple. When he approached his neighbor's house, he became even angrier. The branches of his brother's tree were cracking under the weight of beautiful fruits. He asked his brother, "Explain this to me. We planted our trees at the same time; we serve

the same God. How is it that He gave you so many apples and none to me? "The other answered, "Perhaps you did not pray for your tree." "What! Not pray?" said the first, "I prayed every day: 'God, give rain; God, enough, now stop the rain. God, sun is needed now; too much now, it might scorch my tree.' I never neglected prayer, and it was all in vain. How did you do it?" The brother replied, "I am not so keen at prayer as you are. I prayed only once, in the beginning, like this, 'Father, I have planted an apple tree and wish to have fruit in due time. It is not for me to teach you how much sun and rain to give. You are a more ancient gardener than myself. You created Eden and all trees grow under your direction. Grant me apples in due time.'"

We experience unanswered prayer because we ask for too many things without knowledge of their long-range results.

There is really only one Christian request: "Here I stand, a sinner forgiven by grace and, at the end of my life, I pray to dwell in heaven with my beloved ones. Teach me to serve you on earth as I journey toward your heaven." Such a prayer never goes unheeded.

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26 Why Did Jesus Choose a Devil as Apostle?

Under Communist pressure, some pastors became renegades. Does this annul the value of their messages of times before?

"Jesus said: One of you is a devil. He spoke of Judas Iscariot" (JHN 6:70-71). If Jesus knew Judas was a devil, why did He choose him to be an apostle?

We learn the word of God from the psalms of David, a murderer and adulterer, who normally should have spent his life in prison; from Solomon, never satiated with women and in the end an idolater; from Peter who turned coward when courage was required. God chose these men to teach us to distinguish between the message and the sins of the messengers, to accept our teachers in spite of their weaknesses and their great sins. If we were to reject works of art produced by immoral men, there would remain almost no great works of art.

We are all strengthened by the hymns: "There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins," and "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." These and other familiar evangelical songs were composed by William Cowper, who later became a national poet of Britain, but never again used his gift in the service of God.

Cowper wrote in his hymn that sinners plunged beneath the blood of Christ lose all their guilty stains. But about himself he wrote, "There is no encouragement in the Scripture so comprehensive as to include my case, nor any

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consolation so effectual as to reach it." He admitted the free forgiveness of God's love to every case except his own: "I believe myself the only instance of a man to whom God will promise everything and perform nothing."

Does this tragic change of attitude, which Cowper kept until his death, diminish his value as a hymnist? We have to

distinguish between the song and the composer.

In the West, the lives of political leaders, high-ranking officials and even Church leaders are probed with such thoroughness that even the archangels would not be found faultless if submitted to such examination. We might better simply say, "Does this man perform his political, economical and religious duties well?"The rest belongs to God. No one is without sin and even men who have committed grave offenses have been useful in the Kingdom of God.

Perhaps it was to teach us this that Jesus went to the extreme of appointing a devil as an apostle. He could not have chosen worse than that.

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27 Why Did Jesus Not Allow Himself to Be Made a King?

When Jesus perceived that the Jews would make Him a king, He departed (JHN 6:15). Surely He would have been a better king than Herod and He must have known it. Why, then, did He not accept?

We can only postulate His motives.

One reason would be that the choice would not be His. Nations are fickle: today they elect a king; tomorrow they overthrow him. Christ does not accept the roles we choose for Him. The choices must be His. His decision was to be a Savior for eternal life rather than a king in this life.

On the other hand, the fact that He was a good Savior does not prove that He would have been a good king over Judea, just as a good Sunday school teacher might not necessarily be a good prime minister.

As man, He sometimes showed utter indifference toward human suffering, just as He could also show compassion. None of these attitudes dominated Him.

He chose among them. He was told about innocent Galileans killed by Pilate. A kingly person in the earthly sense would have shown indignation and would have organized the tyrant's overthrow. Jesus said simply: "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"

(LUK 13:2-3).

He is told about a catastrophe, a tower which has

collapsed killing eighteen people: Jesus does not give instructions about building more safely in the future, nor does He organize relief for families of the victims. He repeats the above words and makes this another occasion for teaching repentance. He acknowledges only one real motive for grief: that of not being a saint.

This is the correct attitude for a Savior, but not for an earthly king.

When Jesus heals a man inhabited by demons, He causes a large herd of swine to drown (LUK 8:33). Jesus shows callousness toward this destruction of property. But it was acceptable for a Savior to destroy a herd and leave someone impoverished in order to heal his fellow man, and therefore Jesus does not justify himself, nor do the evangelists defend His action.

He achieves the objective to be expected from a Savior. For an earthly king such behavior would not be right.

Jesus predicts a national tragedy: the destruction of the Jewish state. He does not call upon men to risk their lives in defense of their fatherland as a secular king would have to do. He tells His disciples, "At such time flee"(LUK 21:21). The abandonment of their countrymen at such a tragic time forced the final break between Christianity and Judaism.

The Savior had entrusted the disciples with a deposit of eternal truth which had to be kept intact. This was more important than the defense of their land.

So thinks a Savior. An earthly king has another calling. These two purposes do not mix.

Jesus could not be an earthly king, and those who try to make Him the Solver of earthly problems are mistaken.

28 Why the Outbursts of Rage With Jesus?

The Bible teaches that God is love. It does not teach that He is all love or only love. His actions also have other aspects .

Job said, "God has delivered me to the ungodly and turned me over into the hands of the wicked ... He has broken me asunder, he has also taken me by my neck ... and set me up for his mark. His archers compass me round about" (JOB 16:11-13). When I read these lines, I envision St. Sebastian pierced with arrows from all sides by the persecutors of Christianity. Job would say that God was the first cause of what Sebastian suffered.

Job surely believed in one God, but speaks as if there were a plurality in Him. He describes God as one would describe an enemy, but says in the same chapter, verse 19 [JOB 16:19], "My witness is in heaven," which means he visualizes God as one who takes his defense.

Jesus represented God on earth. Whoever saw Him, saw the Father (JHN 14:9). Jesus could not be all love.

He sometimes burst into what seems to be unmotivated rage. The Pharisee who invited Him to dinner did not make any unkind remark to Jesus or about Him, but merely wondered why Jesus had not washed His hands before the meal. Jesus began to vituperate at all Pharisees, calling them fools and hypocrites.

A lawyer, another guest, tried to do what I also would have done, in an attempt to appease Jesus. In answer, Jesus

speaks harshly about all lawyers and even about the lawyers' fathers (LUK 11:38-52).

Anyone would have objected to such behavior from a guest.

It is best that we accept God and Jesus, His messenger, as they are. It is wrong to impose human ethics and human patterns of behavior upon God.

Jesus wished to die crucified, this being the only way to pay the ransom for human sin. In order to be crucified, He had to arouse violent hatred toward himself. Without this hatred, neither the atoning death of Jesus nor our salvation

could take place.

The first apostles had the same aim, knowing that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church. They also willingly evoked hatred towards themselves.

In Rome some Jews believed the message of Paul, others not, but he generalized in accusing the whole nation, "This people is waxed gross and their ears are dull of hearing" (ACT 28:24-27).

Jesus and His apostles often did things which filled others with anger. It was necessary. Similar behavior is practiced sometimes in the underground church today.

29 About Eternity

Eternity is not endless time. Such a thing does not exist, as there are no spaces without dimension. Eternity is a state in which time no longer exists (REV 10:6). The philosopher Boethius has given the definition generally accepted by the Christian Church. Eternity is "the total, simultaneous and perfect possession of an endless life." As the Greek thinker Parmenides put it: eternity is whole, unique. In eternity nothing has been or will be. "All is at once, one, continuous."

Imagine a motion picture. When we view it through the projector we see the events recorded on the film successively, and each one seems to be the effect of those preceding. Once in a cinema I found myself praying for an innocent man suffering terribly on the screen. I implored God to save him. But what was to happen was already recorded on the film. My business was only to behold.

We should live with the perspective of eternity in the present, in perfect serenity. Everything has been foreknown, predestined (ROM 8:29). As Omar Khayyam expressed it so well:

> With earth's first clay, they did the last man knead
> And then of the last harvest sow'd the seed.
> Yea, the first morning of creation wrote
> What the last dawn of reckoning shall read.

Islamic tradition attributes to Mohammed the words, "The pen wherewith God has written all things which will ever happen has long since dried." Christians, too, believe in predestination.

Therefore the ideal attitude for a believer is the contemplative one. Jesus says, not just to Martha, but to all men: "Ye are careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful, and Mary has chosen that good part" (LUK 10:41-42). Almost every Christian today would say she had made the wrong choice: she had chosen not to prepare a dinner for a dozen hungry men, but quietly to behold the beauty of the guests.

Nowhere does the Bible enjoin us to "Be active," but on countless occasions we are told, "Behold," behold without interfering. "Behold, there came wise men" (MTT 2:1). Instead of beholding them, men showed them the way to Bethlehem, and it cost the lives of many innocents. "Behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him" (MTT 8:2). At that time, men knew no cure for leprosy. Do not interfere unless you are sure of being able to help. Just behold: the Lord will do the rest.

"Behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea" (MTT 8:24). One of two things will happen: either you will drown and go to the Father, or you will escape and live for the Father. So, do not panic but simply behold. In all things, the bigger the fuss, the more discordant the results.

We are not yet in eternity, but we can catch a glimpse of it by passing as much time as possible in quiet contemplation.

30 The Quest for God

The quest for God is old.

An Ugarithic poem, "Ludlul bel nemequi" (I'll praise the Lord of wisdom") dating from 2500 B.C., contains the moving verse:

> Oh, that I only knew that these things are well
> pleasing to a god.
> What is good in one's sight is evil for a god.

What is bad in one's mind is good for his god.
Who can understand the counsel of the gods
in the midst of heaven?
The plan of God is deep waters.
Who can comprehend it?

Men seek the right relationship with God but because His will, His predilections, and thoughts are unknown to us, we tremble at every step that it might sever the loving relationship.

Such fear disappears only when we pass from relationship with God to possession of God.

In Jesus, the Son of God became man. A marriage feast between the divine and the human natures took place.

I can now say, "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine" (SOS 6:3). He is my possession. He disposes of me, but I also dispose of Him. It is no longer a relationship between two entities who can at any moment become separate. The barrier is broken by Christ. God is no longer alone, and the

tormented heart of man is no longer single. The heart now responds to God in Shakespeare's words: "No more can I be servered from your side, than can yourself in two divide" (Henry VI).

The difficulty of not understanding God's way disappears. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" (ROM 9:20). The soul which possesses God knows that His control of the world cannot be judged by man's myopic view. "The deceived and the deceiver are his" (JOB 12:16). He who possesses God is satisfied with this and asks no questions.

On the last day, the Lord will say to some, "I never knew you" (MTT 7:23). How can a Creator not know His creation?

He created us, but not as creatures external to himself; He created us that we might live and move and have our being in Him (ACT 17:28). He desired union with us in eternal embrace and not as a knower/ known duality. Those rejected in the end will be those who have not realized this and have remained knowers of God.

They have had a relationship with a distant God, perhaps even a good relationship, prophesying in His name and casting out devils and doing many wonderful works (MTT 7:22), but they remained separate from God, unpossessed of Him. They did not belong to their beloved, and their Beloved was not theirs.

The renowned Christian mystic, Meister Eckhardt teaches that he who adores God is an unbeliever. Those who believe unite with Him, and no one is left to be adored.

31 Relative Weight of Wonders

When I wondered why God does not free us through an angel, as it happened when St. Peter was in jail, I remembered in Acts 2, there are 27 verses about the teachings given by apostle Peter and only nine words about miracles: "many words and signs were made by the apostles."

Miracles play a minor role in the Christian religion primarily because it is too easy to regard as miraculous what is not.

Missionaries who went to the Ambrim tribe in the New Hebrides preached without success until they took out their artificial teeth and put them back again. This was the start of a breakthrough. The chief exclaimed that the gods had come to them in the likeness of white men.

Many healings considered miraculous have no more value than that, although I myself have also experienced real miracles of reconstituted health.

What takes place after the miracle can also be a problem. In Shakespeare's "Henry VI," when the king heard about a blind man wonderfully cured, he said, "By his sight his sin is multiplied."

If regeneration does not accompany the cure the former blind man will be possessed by new passions which will make him a worse man than before. This is also true of other infirmities. I have personally known blind persons healed to the great detriment of their souls.

We should also have in view that some of the biblical miracle stories derive from questionable translations. We are told that Elijah was fed by ravens-orevim-in Hebrew (1KI 17:6). The same Hebrew word is used in ISA 13:20 for "Arabs." What if Arabs fed the prophet?

There have been so many miracles in the course of history history. They do not usually convince anyone except sometimes the person who benefits. Jesus told those who sought Him,"Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves" (JHN 6:26).

In the search for miracles what counts is the satisfaction of the desires of the self. But Jesus teaches us to deny ourselves. If the self is not mortified, every miracle only increases the demand for more and magnifies egoism. So the Bible does not emphasize miracles, but rather the teaching which brings about new birth.

Let us walk securely according to the biblical teachings, and if God does a miracle, let us rejoice.

32 The Crime of Fear

It is fear which made some Christians around us become Judas's.

REV 21:8 enumerates eight categories of men who shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. First on the list are not the unbelievers or murderers as would be expected, but the fearful.

Fear is so human. Peter feared in Gethsemane. We all do, but it is more abhorred by God than many gross offenses. It seems that there are many battles ahead even in eternal life. God's universe is vast and courage will be one of the great criteria of selection.

A Christian never flies except to the devil's throat. He can say of himself what King Charles of Frances says in Shakespeare's "Henry VI"; "Him I forgive my death that kills me when he sees me go back one foot or fly. My army, rather with their teeth the walls they'll tear down than forsake the siege."

We are Jesus' sheep. Sheep do not run from the wolf. They cannot defend themselves, but they witness for their Creator by enduring their deaths patiently, without turning their backs to the enemy.

Children of God can be burned at the stake, but they cannot be made to give in. We are assigned to be the scourge of demons.

When Henry Vl said, "Of all base passions, fear is the most accursed," he expressed a biblical thought.

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33 Science and the Bible

Not only biblical authors, but also other sages of antiquity knew things which modern science is only now discovering. Aristotle, Greek philosopher of the third century B.C. wrote in "On the generation of animals" that lead ore increases in size and becomes thick and white when air gets into it. Until the beginning of this century this idea was considered to be just an oddity from barbaric times.

Some seventy years ago, flotation was discovered by the modern world. Powdered mixture of ore and rock is mixed with water and air forced in. The ore becomes white, increases in bulk and floats on the surface of water. This process is used today on millions of tons of ores all over the world. So the ancients knew something after all.

The more so ancients inspired by God, the authors of the Bible: it is foretold that at the return of Jesus "the Mount of Olives (on which He will stand) shall cleave in the midst thereof ... and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north and half of it toward the south" (ZEC 14:4). The Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society 1958 tells that the rocks in the Jordan Valley are in considerable tension, that the valley is in a state of shear. This means that geologically, the whole Mideast is moving northwards. Science makes us wait for the moment of the mount's cleavage, but we wait also for His feet to touch its peak. We are not fools.

Science has shown what a big influence genes, climate,

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food, sickness and bodily structure have upon our character. The phases of the moon and the spots in the sun are factors in our behavior. The greatest incidences of crime occur during the hottest months of the year.

Our minds are complex, but our souls even more so. Who in antiquity knew about the Oedipus, Electra and Pygmalion complexes, etc., about the innate subconscious which can lead us to commit terrible deeds? Because of these things, some say, the biblical moral criteria are obsolete.

It is true that many in ancient times were ignorant. But there was One who knew what was in man (JHN 2:25) and because He knew, He taught, "Judge not" (MTT 7:1). He knew. He said, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world" (JHN 3:17). He said this in times when court procedures were simple and straightforward - if a man stole or killed, he was condemned. Mitigating circumstances were not taken into account. Jesus' attitude was scientific long before the conception of human behavioral science.

The whole scientific method - unbiased, exact and thorough investigation, based on facts alone, comes from Jesus. In a world of unrestrained passions, He said "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen" (JHN 3:11), so much, nothing more, exactly like in a scientific laboratory. "Go and show John those things which ye do hear and see" (MTT 11:4). No fantasy, not even religious fantasy, only the observed facts, just like a scientist gathers data.

Jesus taught mankind to study what happens in nature: "Behold the fowls of the air," and "Consider the lilies of the field" (MTT 6:26-28). From the birds men learned aviation, and from the lilies they learned botany and agronomy.

Never regard science as a danger for religion. Einstein, a scientist whose name the whole world respects, has written, "Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind."

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The great difference between science and religion is that the first does not establish immutable truths and eternal dogmas. It approaches truth by successive approximations

without ever making the claim to complete accuracy. Religion has a definite revelation from God - Heaven and earth will pass away, but Jesus' words will stand forever.

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34 How to Read the Bible

In prison we repented of many sins. We repented also of the manner in which we had read the Bible.

The Talmud fixes a rule, "Ein dorshim maase bereshith beshanaim" - "You do not speak about Genesis, the things of the beginning when you are in two." God created the universe all alone. Adam was one single man. The Bible is read properly only when you transpose yourself completely into the situation and state of spirit of the author at the moment of writing.

Remember the Bible is only a summary. Adam lived 930 years, but the Bible has only one chapter and a half, 40 verses, to devote to so long a life.

Just as Cuvier reconstructed the skeleton of a prehistoric animal from a single bone, we are called upon to re-create everything from just a few words.

Remember that much of the Bible is poetry. Although Hebrew poetry does not rhyme, one of its characteristics is an alphabetical structure, e.g., JOB 13:7-11, in which every line starts with an "H." The whole Psalm 119 is arranged alphabetically, beginning with verses which have "a" as first letter, others which have "b" and so on. Poetry can reveal truth, but not necessarily accuracy of detail.

The Bible is meant to be read very slowly with special pauses for respiration and meditation. In the Hebrew text there is the ~athnach~, a sign which divides a verse into main clauses. Another sign for pausing is the ~segholta~ [ ] which

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subdivides the clause before ~athnach~. 1KI 13:18, read according to Hebrew punctuation, would be as follows: "And he said unto him, I am also a prophet as thou art (segoltha - a pause. Breathe and reflect) and an angel spoke unto me by the word of the Lord (the angel would not speak to you, reader, unless you pause as prescribed for meditating

and evoking him), saying, bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water (athnach - deep respiration, meditation). But he lied unto him. (Pause. Here there is a sign called ~silluq~, which separates this verse from the following.)

Zaqeph-qaton (written [ ]) stands for a slight pause. "And now thus says Jehovah thy creator, O Jacob (zaqeph-qaton, a slight pause) and thy former, O Israel (athnach, big pause), thou shalt not fear for I have redeemed thee (slight pause), I have called by thy name, mine thou art (stop before passing to the next verse.) The zaqeph gadol plays the role of the zaqeph-qaton where no conjunctive accent precedes.

It is good to know all this. The accents can reveal the interpretation of doubtful passages, as in ISA 40:3: "The voice of one that cries (zaqeph-qaton, pause) in the wilderness (zaqeph-gadol, pause) prepare ye the way of the Lord." Wherever two zaqephs occur in the same clause, that which comes first is stronger. We must therefore read, "The voice of one that cries: In the wilderness prepare ye the way of the Lord" and not, as it is usually punctuated, "The voice of one that cries in the wilderness: prepare ye the way of the Lord."

Learn to read the Bible slowly, breathing rhythmically, with pauses to put in the correct accents. In this way you can immerse yourself in the Spirit in which the Bible was written, and thus be able to participate in the Oneness which is its essence.

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35 Open Space

Some people complain about sermons and devotional books that they are not dense enough, that they should contain more teaching. This is like complaining about a love letter that too much paper is wasted on empty spaces.

When a lover once complained about this, the black letters grew and grew to satisfy him until the sheet of paper was totally black.

Woe to a religious book which leaves no place for questions. If matter, the physical universe, is mysterious, the more so God. Man has to search. He cannot be given pre-masticated .

It is good to ask questions in religion, but you must ask the right ones. Herod inquired of the wise men (MTT 2:7) what time the star appeared which heralded the birth of Jesus. He did not ask how they knew that the star had anything to do with the appearance of the Messiah.

After the Lord told the parable of the sower (MTT 13:3-8), the disciples asked, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" rather than asking the more important question about why men's destinies differ so greatly and what can be done to change them.

Seeing the senselessness of many questions, Jesus did not answer them. Jesus revealed what people needed to know, not what they asked for.

For many years I thought that I believed the whole Bible to be the Word of God. When I was in prison, I discovered

that my belief was incomplete. The Bible consists of white sheets of paper inscribed with black letters. I had believed only the black letters to be the Word of God. But there is meaning in the blank spaces, too.

The blank space can be used for decoding the ciphered parts.

In JER 25:26 we read about Sheshach, but no adversary of Israel is known by this name. The Hebrews used a simple cipher called ~Athbash~ in which the first letter of the alphabet, "a," can be exchanged with the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet "t"; the second letter, "b," with the second last, "sh," and so on. By applying this code to the word ~Sheshach~ the result is "Babel," the Hebrew name for "Babylon." In those days Babylon was a super-power. It would have been too dangerous to denounce it openly, so a nickname was used.

Many things in the Bible are coded. There are stories of sins and salvation of persons thousands of years and thousands of miles apart. Decode! You might find that you yourself are meant and are called by a code name.

There are numerous contradictions between Bible texts - LUK 9:3 forbids the apostles to carry staves, MRK 6:8 allows

it; LUK 10:4 forbids sandals, MRK 6:9 allows. Many other things are sometimes allowed and sometimes forbidden. You have to find out which Bible verse applies to you at a certain moment, what things are allowed or forbidden you. There is plenty of space in the white places of the Bible for your notes and thoughts. When you have found sure guidance from God, it will be part of His eternal Word, the part for you for that given moment.

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36 Oneness

For many years I was one person alone in a cell.

God is also one, and we are created in the image of God, the image of His oneness (GEN 1:26). It is written, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord" (DEU 6:4). The chosen people of God are one. We read "Who is like your people Israel, a nation that is one in the earth (1CH 17:21 according to the original). Except for God and His people, oneness is nowhere to be found, yet without it, there is no Godhead, nor can the real church exist.

Oneness creates a special state of spirit. The Jews sing, ~Huh echad veein sheni~. "He is one and there is no second." This applies to the oneness of the children of God, too. The believer being one, without division in knower, known and act of knowledge, becomes a deep mystery for himself. Moses and Aaron said, "What are we?" (EXO 16:8). They did not know. Likewise, David asks, "Who am I and what is my life?" (1SM 18:18).

Live in oneness, without self-contemplation, self-admiration, self-despite or self-pity. No one exists apart from this one self, no one to admire or despise you or recognize in you that your self is being despised or praised. It is a simple, serene existence. No winds blow, no tempests arise.

Deify yourself, become godlike in oneness and you will be one in the spirit with all who do likewise. It is written, "You shall take on the first day (of the feast of tabernacles)

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the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees and the boughs of thick trees and willows of the brook" (LEV 23:40)

All of these references to boughs and branches refer to Israel. Just as the citron has both taste and fragrance, so does Israel have men who are both learned and righteous in actions. Just as the fig has a taste but no fragrance, so Israel has men who have learning, but no good deeds. As the myrtle has fragrance but no flavor, so has Israel men who do good works but are not learned. And just as the willow has neither taste nor fragrance, so Israel has men who are neither learned nor righteous. And what does the Holy One, praised be He, do with them? He said, "Let them be interrelated, united in one group, and they will be able to atone for one another. When Israel does so, it will be exalted" (Leviticus Rabbah 30:2).

Oneness in the Church is achieved through mutual forbearance, mutual compensation.

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37 Where and What is God?

A Jewish book of mysticism. "The Zohar" writes, "The creatures of the earth think of Him as being on high, declaring 'His glory is above the heavens' (PSA 113:4) while the heavenly beings think of Him as being below, declaring 'Thy glory is above all the earth' (PSA 57:5).

Both have limited vision. God is outside of space. The one who is all in all cannot have a certain place to dwell, to the exclusion of other places. Therefore Christ who is God says, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay his head" (MTT 8:20). If He were limited to space, He would not belong to Godhead.

God occupies no place anywhere. Creator of the universe, which has space as one of its attributes, He existed before there was such a thing as place. Space is required by material objects, but not by thoughts, ideals and desires which do not rest in a point fixed by geographical coordinates. God is spirit, not a material object which must exist somewhere. When the Bible says that He is in heaven, it is to indicate His elevation. God dwells in Israel, in Zion, in His Church: such things are said for the purpose of giving honor to an institution or a people. But these assertions in the Bible are never exclusive - they do not limit God. They do not mean that He is in Zion, but not in Britain; in church, but not in a factory.

Nor can time be applied to God. The biblical Hebrew has

no tenses to indicate time: you cannot say that things have been, or are or will be. You enter the sphere of Divinity, of timelessness. The Hebrew verb has only two fundamental categories, the perfect and the imperfect. ~Oseh~ means "in the process of being done." ~Asah~ indicates completed action. Biblical Greek also has a verb form called ~Aorist~, which literally translated means "without horizon." God is the Creator of the universe, which has time as one of its attributes but He and His people are timeless. He was when there was no time. He will be when "there should be time no longer" (REV 10:6).

God is called Father and King because we humans associate these titles with our concept of esteem. He did not procreate us as a father did. He did not become king by inheritance or conquest as other kings do. He is above all that we can say in human words.

When Livingstone went to the cannibals, he wished to teach them "God is love," but they did not have the word "love." So he asked them what was the best thing they knew. They replied "Unboy," which is the smoked meat from the arm of a man. So Livingstone preached, "God is the best unboy." He was criticized for this, but wrongly. God is not unboy, it is true, but neither is He love. Love is a sentiment shared by humans and superior animals. But is God merely a human sentiment? Because love was the highest thing the Greeks knew, John said, "God is love," just as Livingstone said, "God is unboy" for those who knew no better.

There are no human words and categories to indicate how and where God is. Whenever attributes are applied to God, they are what are called "anthropomorphisms," likenesses from human life which are used to tell something about Him. We are limited in our thoughts and words about God, but let us know that, beyond all our limitations, He is.

38 Why Did Jesus Change Water Into Wine?

I spent many years among criminals, hearing from them of all the debacles that alcoholism produces. 1, had I such

power, would change all the alcoholic beverages into water. Why did Jesus do the opposite and change water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana? (JHN 2:7-11).

The word "wine" in Biblical times did not mean what it means today. Natural fermentation produces a maximum of only 14 percent alcohol. Higher alcohol content kills the yeast cell which produces it. Modern alcoholic beverages which are 50 percent or more alcohol are a result of freezing and distillation processes unknown in antiquity. In ancient Palestine, wine contained no more than 8 percent alcohol because of the limited amount of natural sugar in grape juice. The Jews had no sugar cane and so could not add sugar.

A second consideration is that both the English Bible and the Greek New Testament translate two different Hebrew words as "wine" or, in Greek, "oinos."

(1) ~Tirosh~ occurs 38 times and has correctly been translated into Latin as "must" or "fresh wine." This word probably does not refer to a fermented drink, but indicates rather a fresh fruit of the harvest as in the expression "corn, wine and oil." In JOE 2:24, HOS 9:2 and PRO 3:10 ~tirosh~ is said to be filling the presses, so it

could not be anything other than grape juice freshly squeezed. Isaiah speaks about ~tirosh~ as "found in the cluster." I cannot understand how translators could use the word "wine" for a juice still in the cluster. Micah said, "Thou shalt tread ... tirosh" (MIC 6:15), which cannot possibly be considered as wine.

(2) ~Yayin~ occurs 153 times and means fermented wine, but with a limited percentage of alcohol as explained above.

If the story of the events in Cana is translated so that Jesus changed water into must, it would be more consistent with the condemnation of drunkenness and the commandment of sobriety so often repeated in the Bible.

39 Daring Arguments With God

Saints have sometimes dared to argue with God. And sometimes they have won. When God decided to destroy the Jewish people because they were worshiping the golden calf, Moses said to Him, "Turn from thy fierce wrath and repent of this evil against thy people .... And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people" (EXO 32:14).

Job accused God of laughing at the trial of the innocent and giving the earth into the hand of the wicked (JOB 9:23-24). David prayed in despair, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord?" (PSA 13:1).

The Lord said to Cain (after the latter killed Abel) "Where is Abel, your brother'?" He answered, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" (GEN 4:9). Cain was, in effect, saying"You, O Lord, are the Keeper, the one who should watch over all creatures, and yet you ask me concerning Abel." The situation may be compared to that of a thief whose burglary escaped notice until morning. When the watchman caught him, he asked, "Why did you steal?" The thief answered, "I am a thief by profession, and I do my work regularly. Your profession is to stand watch at the gate. Why did you abandon your profession? And now you ask me why I stole!" Thus, too, did Cain speak to God: "I killed Abel; but you created in me the impulse to evil. You are the Keeper of all and yet you permitted me to kill him. You have killed him! If you had accepted my offering as you accepted

his, I would not have been jealous of him" (from the Midrash).

A man once came to a pastor for advice. "What should I do about blasphemous thoughts which pass through my mind?" he said. "I am assailed by the idea that there is no God and that if He does exist, He is not good. This drives me to madness because if this were the case, the world and life would be entirely senseless. How could we continue to be in a world without a good God?" The pastor answered "Do not fear. Just go on with your 'blasphemous' thoughts."

Rabbi Elimelekh of Lizhensk once sent his disciples on the eve of the Day of Atonement to observe the actions of a

tailor. "From him," he said, "you will learn what a man should do on this holy day." From a window they saw the tailor take a book from his shelf in which was written all the sins that he had committed throughout the year. Book in hand, the tailor addressed God: "Today, the day of forgiveness for all Israel, the moment has come for us - you, God, and myself - to settle our account. Here is the list of all my sins, but here also is another volume in which I have written down all the sins that you have committed, the pain, the woe and the heartache that you have sent me and my family. Lord of the universe, if we were to total the accounts exactly, you would owe me much more than I would owe you! But it is the eve of the Day of Atonement, when everyone is commanded to make peace with his fellow. Hence, I forgive you for your sins if you will forgive me for mine." The tailor then poured himself a cup of wine, pronounced the blessing over it, and then exclaimed: "L'hayyim! (To life!), Master of the world. Let there now be peace and joy between us, for we have forgiven each other, and our sins are now as if they never were."

The disciples returned to Rabbi Elimelekh, recounted what they had seen and heard and complained that the tailor's words were overly impudent before heaven. Their master answered that God himself and His heavenly court

had come to listen to what the tailor had said in great simplicity, and the tailor's words had caused great joy in all the spheres.

Speak with God as with a friend. You can prevail over Him. If you consider something He does unjust, say so. Do not cover your inner complaints with flatteries which are not sincere.

God had decided that only males would inherit in Israel. The daughters of Telephehad pleaded with Moses to return to God and to tell Him that since their father had no sons, the law should not apply to them. They should inherit, even though they were females. Moses returned with God's answer, "The daughters of Telephehad speak right" (NUM 27:7).

Be daring with God. Not all His decrees are definitive. Through clearly expressing your dissatisfactions and doubts, you may receive understanding.

40 El - A Name of God

Hebrew is a unique tongue - spare, lean, sinewy, yet rich, even poetic. Built around a skeleton of a mere four hundred roots, it impresses when flashed out. Able to bear heavy burdens of thought, it flexes its musculature with great subtlety and hides the secrets of its skill from all but the learned or enlightened.

Many languages contain homonyms, but none so many as the Semitic tongues. Yet the different meanings of a word must have a connection between them in the deeper layers of our psyche, or men would not have chosen to use the same vehicle for different notions.

Therefore, by translating a given Hebrew word into its English equivalent, one does not carry across the whole truth, since in Hebrew, as in several other Semitic idioms, a word has not one but a cluster of meanings. In the Chicago Assyrian dictionary, for instance, eight pages were needed to relate all the possible interpretations of the Semitic word ~abu~.

A modern illustration of this clustering of meanings (in this case, among homonyms) comes to mind. Sigmund Freud once wrote of a German psychotic who was obsessed with the idea that rats (Ratten in German) were attacking him. Under psychoanalysis it was established that he was worried about two things: he could not pay the installments (in German, ~Raten~) on his house, and because of this he was not able to marry (in German, ~hei-raten~). These concerns,

exhibiting themselves in similar words, were behind his obsession with rats.

Likewise, with Semitic languages, words with the same or similar sounds are related to each, though more deeply, strongly, or expressively than is the case with our modern European languages.

We must keep these subsurface relationships in mind in order to understand ~El~, a name frequently used for "God" in the Hebrew Bible. (The corresponding Sumerian and

Ugaritic name for God is ~Il~.) In the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament there were no vowels. The name El was written with the letters ~Alef~, a mute sound, and ~L~. Therefore, "El" is not the only possible pronunciation of these two letters: they are sometimes pronounced "Al."

As "El" they meant "God," "toward," or "against"; as "Al" they meant a mild prohibition, a negative wish, like the Greek ~me~. We find this "Al" in 1SM 22:15: "Let not the king impute anything ..." It is obvious that nobody could give the king an order, so the word "Al" is substituted for an absolute command. It is used only with the so-called jussive form of the verb, which is a semi-command.

When a Hebrew pronounced or read a word, all its possible connotations collaborated in producing an impression upon him, just as a chord struck on a piano sets up sympathetic vibrations in every other stringed instrument within range. Likewise, when he approached God ~El~, he knew he was approaching a mysterious being who cannot be reached in this life but who always remains a direction "toward" - El - which one moves.

In addition, the one who worships Him automatically becomes a man who is "against" - the same word ~El~. Henceforth he must swim against the stream. Christians, wrote Paul, are not conformed to this world (ROM 12:2). They know which way the wind blows, but they follow their own course.

The moment one calls upon God ~El~, another string

vibrates: "Al"-the discreet advice, "Please don't!" A relationship with God includes, then, acceptance of the "Al," of His plea, "Don't rush to do this thing you have in mind." It also invites recognition of the fact that He never spoke against an action unless it was harmful to the individual or to society.

Rabbi Pinhas of Korez once spoke these mysterious words: "People think they pray to God, but it is not so. For the prayer itself is the essence of Godhead." The meaning is clear when one understands that in Hebrew ~El~ signifies the aim. God, as well as the directing of the heart to Him. Prayer is ~El~ just as the person to whom one prays is ~El~. Thus, "Toward" and "God"are the same word in divine revelation.

It behooves us, then, to pronounce ~El~, the name of God, bearing all this in mind. Let us repeat it with love ... ~El~. Just as the name of an earthly beloved – of a bride, of a child, of a sweetheart – brings honey to the mouth, so the names of the Lord, infused with His glory, are sweet.

The Lord taught His disciples to pray, "Hallowed be Thy name" (MTT 6:9). Summarizing His work on earth that last evening before Gethsemane and Golgotha, He said to His Father, "I have manifested Thy name" (JHN 17:6). If we pronounce His name with piety and devotion, our eyes will behold His attributes and His wonderful works.

Often we use the word "God" casually. without reverence. Not so the Jews who, when they write the scroll of the Law for the synagogue, immerse in water for purification as often as they come to one of His names. If they write it fifty times a day, they immerse fifty times – sometimes, in winter, in icy water.

In an acorn resides an oak. In the short name ~El~, Godhead itself lives. Pronouncing His name with devotion helps to unite our mind with His and enlarge our understanding.

Between us and our names there is often a difference. A human being can have the name of Mary without being pure; the name of Magdalene without watching faithfully at the

foot of His cross; the name of Paul without being an apostle; the name of Richard without having a lion-heart. With God the difference between himself and His name does not exist. We magnify Him when we magnify His name. He speaks through us when we have His name reverently on our lips.

If the names of God are a flight of steps leading to God himself, ~El~ is the first step. Flies buzz indiscriminately from blossoms to dunghills, bees only from flower to flower. So we should move from one name of God to another, settling from time to time also on His commandments, precepts, miracles, and on His life as reflected in His saints.

The Moslem "Allah" is not the same as ~El~. Allah refers only to the Creator and no one else. The Hebrew "El,"as well as "Elohim," another name, like the word "god" in English, was used also for men. God said to Moses, "Thou shalt be to

Pharaoh instead of God" (EXO 4:16). Jesus said to His Jewish audience, quoting The Psalmist, "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?" (JHN 10:34). He called them gods "unto whom the word of God came."

If we seek earnestly to know God--~El~ and speak His holy name with reverence, we too may find ourselves, in time, individuals toward whom the desires of many turn. Our loving words and our meek "don'ts" will have value. We may even become symbols to those who are against unrighteousness. Such are the gracious significations included in the seminal holy syllable

~El~.

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41 Compound Names of God

"Tao [God] named is not the real Tao," said Lao-Tse, and there is truth in this assertion.

The possibility of giving names to any thing or person, including God, is circumscribed by the limitations of language itself. First of all, a given language has a certain number of letters or characters at its disposal in the formation of words. Suppose, for instance, that God had a name requiring for its expression an English "w," a Spanish "n"(as in ~mana~), or a German"". Such a name would not have been accessible to the Hebrews because their language contained neither these sounds nor their corresponding letters. By the same token, the Hebrew name of Jesus - ~Jeshua~ - cannot be written accurately in English.

Second, the potential for giving names depends on the available substantives, verbs, adjectives, and so on, of a language. The aggregate is called in Sanskrit ~naman~, from which the Greeks derived ~anoma~ and the English ~name~. The name of God, then, is the sum total of words in which His character can be expressed. Thus, when you pray, as Jesus enjoined in the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be Thy name," recognize its limitations. Look to the reality for which there are no names in our language, the real person beyond any name in any tongue.

Because no name is complete or all-embracing, there are many names for God in Scripture. The Son of God could be called in Hebrew "the Lamb" or "the Lion of Judah."

But when He was introduced to the Eskimos, these names were meaningless, since they had no knowledge of such animals. Other names had to be found.

One should be wary of confounding a name with identification. God has many aliases because every name of His is only an approximation.

Even the word "name" has a double sense in Hebrew. The corresponding word is Shem. Now, Shem is one of the sons of Noah and the progenitor of the Semitic race. In Scripture His name stands for the Semites, just as Japheth stands for the Indo-German race descended from Him (GEN 9:27). When Jesus taught His Jewish disciples the "Our Father," He said "Jitgadal shimcha." We have here a typical example of how ideas reduced to words can be exposed to different interpretations. The words can be correctly translated "Hallowed be thy name" and "Hallowed be thy semitic race." He who wishes to hallow God must of necessity approach Him as He is, beyond words.

To overcome this difficulty, the Bible provides not only simple names of God such as El, Elohim, JHWH (Jahweh, or Jehovah), but also compound names, just as in mathematics one uses not only whole numbers but also decimals to arrive closer to reality.

For instance, the Lord appeared to Abraham as ~El-Shaddai~ (GEN 17:1), which means "a sufficient God," "a nurturing God," or more literally "God - a female breast," that is, a God who feeds one at His breast.

The English Authorized Version says, "I am the Lord that heals thee" (EXO 15:26). But the Hebrew uses only two words, a compound name of God, "Jehovah-Rophe," the healing Jehovah. Furthermore, the Hebrew does not contain the idea that He heals "thee." God does not revolve around your person. He simple heals.

"Jehovah-Jireh" (GEN 22:14) means literally "God who sees to it or who provides." "Jehovah-Megaddesh"

(LEV 20:8) is God who renews or sanctifies.
"Jehovah-Shalom"(JDG 6:24) is God-peace.

"Jehovah-Nissi" (EXO 17:15) means "God - my wonder" or "God - my sign." This compound name is also the name of an altar built to God, to indicate that approaching the altar can signify approaching God himself.

The name "Jehovah-Tsidkenu" (JER 23:6) meaning "God - our righteousness," belongs not only to Godhead, but also to His people, since the Jewish nation is called by this name. Thus, to join His flock is like joining God.

One interesting compound name is "Jehovah-Shammah" (EZE 48:35), meaning"God is there." In Hebrew, "there" when applied to a male subject is ~sham~, when applied to a female is ~shammah~. Here is a case in which the name of Jehovah is linked to a female substantive, indicating the all-encompassing nature of His love and concern for His creatures.

The names by which a sovereign God deigns to be called in Scripture to reveal His character to humanity are many and varied and could inspire volumes. Their very multiplicity underscores the difficulty of reducing Godhead to the limitations of human language. But they are intended to reveal to sinful man the many facets of a loving God.

How sad it would be for a lover to know only the name of his beloved, when he desires the beloved herself. To sanctify the name of God - to pray "Hallowed be Thy name" - means to advance from knowledge ~about~ God to the blessed reality of His presence.

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42 Anohi and Ani

There is often little resemblance between the peoples and the languages they speak. Missionaries who have lived among primitive tribes sometimes found, to their surprise, that the native languages were far ahead of the natives. The language bore the stamp of thought and development.

The grammar of the Ambrim tribe in the New Hebrides is more precise than that of English. ~Ire~ is an"inclusive we," comprising both speaker and the person spoken to. ~Komai~ is an "exclusive we," in which the person spoken

to is not included. In a sermon, "Our Father" would be used with the inclusive pronoun, to include the congregation; but when the preacher prays, "Our Father," he would use the exclusive pronoun so as to exclude God, the person addressed.

The uncultured, degraded Jews, who had emerged from 400 years of slavery, had a highly developed language, such as you would not have expected in a nation at that level.

There are two Hebrew expressions for "I": ~Ani~ and ~Anohi~. ~Ani~ emphasizes the pronoun. It is used when one boasts "I did it." When attention is focused upon the action rather than on the person who performed it, the expression ~Anohi~, in the sense "I ~did~ it!" is used.

The Ten Commandments begin with the words ~Anohi Adonai Eloheiha~ (EXO 20:2), which shows that the sentence is to be read "I ~am~ the Lord thy God." The emphasis is not "I" but that the Lord ~is~ our God, a God who has freed

people from slavery and wishes to free us, too; a Lord on whom we can rely.

The words of Cecil Rhodes, the founder of the British Empire in Southern Africa, were, "So much to do; so little done." He had been a man for whom it was important that great achievements of the English should be accomplished through him. Although he had had forerunners, and others would continue his work, this could not satisfy him. He passed away feeling that ~he~ had done little. Rhodes would have used ~Ani~ to refer to himself.

The Christian or divine manner of thinking is just the contrary. The ~Ani~ disappears in ~Anohi~. The self is denied (LUK 9:23). The work to which we are called is what is important. We do our little part. We are happy if others do even more and better than we.

The whole structure of the Hebrew language de-emphasizes the role of the individual, putting the accent on the deed performed. The English sentence "Moses guarded a horse," which tells us what Moses did, can be translated in Hebrew only as ~Shamar Mosheh sus~ - "Guarded Moses a horse." The important thing is the guarding of the horse. That this was done by Moses was of secondary importance.

Even the first verse of the Bible sounds different in Hebrew than in English. In English the emphasis is on God. "In the beginning ~God~ created." We are meant to know that the universe is His doing and we should adore Him. In the Hebrew the emphasis is that in the beginning God ~created~ the heavens and the earth. The order of the words in the original GEN 1:1 is "In the beginning created God." Rejoice in the beauty of creation - this is the primary meaning. The Hebrew text satisfies also one's curiosity about who is behind it. It was created by a God who keeps himself in humility.

Such nuances as ~Ani~ and ~Anohi~ or putting the verb before the subject show how important the manner of reading the Bible is. The Master asks a lawyer, "How do you read?" It is

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obviously not the same thing to read "~I~ and the Father are one," "I ~and~ the Father are one," "I and the ~Father~ are one," "I and the Father ~are~ one," or "I and the Father are ~one~.

In reading the Bible, much depends upon the voice and intonation. I have met only once in my life (in Finland) a pastor who recited from memory the Bible text for the sermon so convincingly that the sermon which followed was superfluous. The Bible reading had already brought souls to conversion and illumination.

Let us learn to think in the Hebrew manner even though speaking another language. De-emphasize the self; focus on the action performed.

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43 The Keri and the Ketib

In the 10th century A.D., the Masoretes, a number of authoritative rabbis, established ancient rules in writing for the proper transcription and reading of the Old Testament. Besides certain alterations in spelling and wording due to the addition of vowels which did not originally exist, the present text also contains the musical notations for chanting the Scriptures, along with .some strange annotations called ~Keri~ or "the reading" as distinguished from ~Ketib~, "the writing."

The Masoretes established that certain words were to be written one way, but read another. The simple written text veiled certain mysteries of the Bible. Often a simple story contains details which seem irrelevant, but are actually secret meanings which lie beneath the surface in coded language. The Keri is the key for unlocking the code and revealing the deeper meaning of the story.

A case of Keri versus Ketib is found in 2KI 5:12 2ki0512 in which Naaman the leper asks, "Are not ~Abana~ and ~Pharpar~, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" It would be difficult to prove any sort of qualitative difference between the rivers of Palestine and Syria, nor can we definitely identify any Syrian rivers by these names. But the Keri of the Masoretic text soon reveals the hidden meaning by changing the spelling of the "rivers" to read: "Are not ~Amanah~ and ~Parpar~ better?" Soon the hidden meaning becomes clear.

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Hebrew words often have male and female forms, like the male and female substantives in German and Latin. ~Amanah~ is the female form of ~Amen~. It connotes complete female submission, saying "Amen" to all the Divine spouse has decided. ~Par~ is an animal brought as sacrifice and ~parpar~ is thus superlative sacrifice. Naaman's question may now be understood in its deeper sense "Are not saying a superlative "Amen" (complete submission to God's will, as exemplified by the Virgin Mary's acceptance of the angel's decree that she become the mother of the Lord), and offering valuable sacrifices - are these not more worthy than washing in the River Jordan?"

The most obvious answer is "yes." But when God commands something ordinary or common, simple obedience assumes a higher aspect, and may become worthier in God's eyes than an action that may seem more valuable. Many would be ready to do great works for the Lord, but would not be willing to humbly scrub the floor of an orphanage or mission office. Naaman was not required to seek a high spiritual action, such as the saying of ~Amanah~ or bringing of ~Parpar~. The leper had to do something common: to wash himself in the Jordan, because that was God's will for him. May we learn from the revealed meaning of this story!

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44 How to Speak

I regretted in jail the manner in which I had previously preached. The Hebrew word for "to speak," ~leomer~, implies the notion "to speak excellently." The speech of a child of God cannot be other than excellent. Hence, the expression "to speak excellently" would be a tautology in biblical Hebrew. ~Leomer~ is also used in biblical Hebrew for "to command."

When Jesus spoke He spoke excellently, commandingly, whereas most men only chatter. He spoke in beautiful parables, in a noble manner, and His followers spoke nobly also. The following parable illustrates how believers learned the secret of ~leomer~ from Christ.

A wise king asked a renowned painter whether he could paint a dragon for him. Happy to serve the king, the painter replied, "Certainly." The king then asked him, "But have you ever seen a dragon?" As the painter had not, the king advised him, "Seek first to see a dragon and paint it afterward." The painter knew that dragons were mythical figures, and reflected about the meaning of the king's order. He thought, "The king must have meant I should first look for a man as evil as a dragon." So we went from jail to jail until he found a fierce criminal, whose very appearance breathed murder. He returned to the king and told him, "I am ready to paint. I have seen a dragon." The king inquired, "Does this dragon appeal to you." "No," replied the painter. "Go again," said the king, "and find a dragon which attracts rather than

frightens you." After years passed in meditation, the painter returned to the king and said, "I found the dragon you mentioned in my own bosom. It is my own wicked heart. I will paint it." And he painted his self-portrait.

The beauty of this parable shows that those who understood it had learned from Jesus to comprehend the Hebrew manner of speaking exquisitely.

Jesus says (meaning that He spoke the following words in the most beautiful and compelling way), "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, the evil eye, blasphemy, pride,

foolishness" (MRK 7:21-22). Christ said this long before the psychoanalysts and more beautifully and powerfully than they. And in the same sublime manner, He said that the remedy for the evils within the human heart is "the blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (MTT 26:28).

It was said about Jesus, "Never man spoke like this man" (JHN 7:46). He spoke excellently, in accord with the genius of His language. Let us also learn to speak exquisitely and in a manner which gives pleasure.

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45 Jesus' Multiple Crucifixions

Several places in Jerusalem are shown as having been the site of Golgotha. This is as it should be, for there have been a multitude of Goliaths. Jesus was not crucified only once.

Sculptors and painters have tried to help us encounter the crucifixion that occurred 2,000 years ago. But Jesus suffers even more cruelly today when those who were once enlightened fall away and "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh" (HEB 6:4-6).

A mass falling away, the great apostasy, is taking place today, just as was prophesied for the days before Christ's coming again. Today's crucifixions occur as a mass phenomenon. It is not just a few hundred people shouting, "Crucify Him"; not just a small band of soldiers flogging Him and hammering nails into His flesh. Now millions participate. And they are crucifying a glorified Lord, one who is in heaven where the anguish of heart for the eternal fate of mankind is much more intense than on earth.

Charles Gardiner, famous mining engineer in South Africa, once refused to dismount from his horse to examine some gold which was being shown to him. He said, "Earth of this chemical composition cannot contain gold." Walker, a carpenter who discovered a reef whose contents in gold and diamonds was assessed at 3 billion dollars, died in poverty because he thought the diamonds were merely shining toys for children. Unenlightened men often pass by things of high

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value without giving them due importance. This is forgiven without much ado.

But once you have been enlightened, be careful; tremble once you have tasted the heavenly gift, fear once you are a partaker of the Holy Spirit. To taste the Word of God and the powers of the world to come is a great responsibility. Henceforth, by abandoning your faith, you become one of the henchmen who crucify the Son of God afresh, this time a glorified Son of God (HEB 6:6).

The first crucifixion, though a horrible crime, brought salvation to mankind. Your fresh crucifixion of the Lord may also prove beneficent in some way - everything concurs to the good in the wise plan of God - but the Church will no longer be able to renew you to repentance. Beware!

While others crucify Him afresh, my aim in life is to de-crucify Him. Will you join me in this?

In order to de-crucify Him you must forget about yourself.

Once there was a saintly monk who prayed a great deal but also spent much time caring for the beard of which he was quite proud. An angel appeared with the message that this was displeasing to God, and that the beard should be sacrificed. The monk was humbled and immediately accepted the reproach. Carefully he plucked out his beard, hair by hair. Now, every time he prayed, he thought with satisfaction about the fact that he had given up his beard. The angel appeared again and told him sadly, "Nothing has changed. Your mind still dwells upon your beard."

Abandon what is good within you as utterly as you forsake the evil within you. May He, and only He, live in you. By so doing you de-crucify Jesus.

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46 The Jesus

One of the strange things in the Gospel is that sometimes the definite article is placed before the names of Jesus, Peter, and other personalities, as if these were not proper names.

It is most irregular to place the definite article before a proper name. I would not refer to my wife as "the Sabine" or

to my son as "the Michael." Usually an article is placed only before a generic name, e.g., "the Christian," or "the believer." It is as if the Evangelists intended to portray certain types rather than real persons.

"The Jesus" (~ho Iisus~ in Greek), is the prototype of "the Jesus-type man," who responds to certain circumstances in a certain manner according to a spiritual law. Similarly there is "the Peter-type man," and the "Pilate-type."

In Hebrew, even the spelling of the name changes when the definite article is placed before it. "The" in Hebrew is ~ha~. After this prefix the first letter of a name or a noun is Jesus in Hebrew is ~Yeshuah~; "The Jesus" would be ~Ha-Yyeshuah~. "The Peter" would be "Happetrus."

The Greek article and this little prefix ~ha~ in Hebrew have great depth and can be a matter for much fruitful meditation.

In his splendid collections of Sufite stories, Indries Shah tells of a Moslem monk who attended religious discussions, listening attentively to all that was said, but always remaining silent. People wondered why he came and considered him too stupid to understand their debates. One

day the monk invited the others to visit his monastery. They were brought to a grand marble building, splendidly carpeted, with dervishes everywhere in meditation. These rose and bowed respectfully when the monk appeared. The guests realized how they had erred in thinking disdainfully about their host. After a good meal, the guests were given pleasant rooms for sleep. When they awoke, the monastery was gone. They had been sleeping on a mountain top, on stones, and were half frozen. They cursed the monk who, through some magic, had made them believe in the existence of the luxurious temple, and they worried about how to get down from the mountain. But all at once they found themselves at their usual gathering in one of their homes, where religious matters were heatedly being debated. The monk sat in the corner as usual, without saying a word.

The people fell upon him, demanding an explanation. He said, "You are caught in deceit. You are not able to distinguish truth from falsehood. Otherwise you would be quiet and sure, knowing the truth only for living, and not as

subject for debate. Would you debate 2 x 2 = 4? You have accepted one illusion after another, a monastery all of marble, then a hostile mountaintop. Perhaps even this room and your religious discussions are simple illusions like the others." Having spoken these words, he disappeared.

Those who belong to "the Jesus," to "the Jesus-type," to what the Bible calls the body of Jesus, belong to it now as much as did Jesus of Nazareth 2,000 years ago. A foot is as much a part of a body as a head, requiring no discussion or debate to bring them together. "The tribes of Israel said to David, Behold we are your bone and your flesh" (2SM 5:1). Christians can say the same words to Jesus Christ.
When they suffer, Jesus suffers. When they are received and helped, Jesus is helped. They belong to the "ho Iisus. "They are no longer spectators of the life of Jesus, another person than themselves, but actors in the drama of "ho Iisus."

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47 Kala

The Gospels have retained some of the words which our Lord spoke on the cross in the Aramean language, e.g., "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabahtani?" Others are known only in the Greek translation.

One of Jesus' utterances as He died can have different meanings. This is the word, "It is finished" (JHN 19:30), in the sense that the work of redemption of our sins through His shedding of blood has now been accomplished. The corresponding Hebrew word, which Jesus will have pronounced is "Kalah" which means also "Bride." Could this not have been a last thought of love for Jesus' bride, the Church? Does it not perhaps show that she and her purity until His return were His last desire?

If a cry after His bride was one of our Lord's last words, we can be at peace. He will help us to overcome all our handicaps.

Isidore of Seville ran away from school, finding scholarship too difficult. Sitting down beside a spring that trickled over a rock, he watched the water as it fell in drops, one at a time. The drops had worn away a large stone. This sight inspired him with hope that his dullness could be conquered. Later he became one of the greatest scholars of his time. These drops of water gave Britain a brilliant historian, and the Church a famous teacher.

Everyone belonging to the Church, the bride of Christ, can be confident, however humble and backward he might

be. For over three years Jesus was aware of the sins, doubts and misunderstandings of His apostles. Once He had to call Peter "Satan" to bring him to his senses (MTT 16:23). He said to them all, "How long shall I suffer you?" (MTT 17:17) but He loved them passionately, and when nailed to the cross, He sighed, "O, bride."

The sins of believers are only temporary. "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him" (1JN 3:2). Each of us will be another aspect of Jesus, as beautiful and pure as He is.

We were His last thought. May He have pre-eminence in our lives today, and be our last thought too. May our parting word be "Bridegroom," as His perhaps was "Bride."

48 Identification with Christ

David sang, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life" (PSA 16:10-11). Peter explains in ACT 2:27-31 that the prophet was speaking these words about Christ, that is, about someone other than himself someone who would appear on earth many centuries in the future. Why then did David use the first person, not the third, speaking about the Messiah as if He were David himself?

This is because believers and the Messiah are not two persons, but one. We are His body, "We are of His flesh and of His bones" (EPH 5:30). The unity between ourselves and Christ could not have been expressed more realistically.

It can be understood figuratively that we are His flesh, but how can one explain symbolically that we are also "His bones"? It is a common expression that the Church is the mystical body of Christ, but it is not biblical. The words "symbolic" and "mystic" never occur in Scriptures.

We are called ~His~ body, period. My body is myself. My legs do not walk: ~I~ walk. My lungs do not breathe: ~I~ breathe.

It is not Christ's members who suffer or rejoice: it is always Christ himself. The identification is complete.

David speaks about the Savior using the first person, exactly as the Savior uses the first person when He speaks about me, the sinner for whom He dies. Psalm 69 is also Messianic. It is Christ himself who speaks through the pen of

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David: "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (verse 21), and "the zeal of thine house has eaten me up" (verse 9).

In the same psalm, we also read the words, "O God, thou knowest my foolishness and my sins are not hid from thee" (verse 5). Christ does not say that He will suffer ignominy for someone else's foolishness and wrongs, but for His own. He has identified with the sinner. Luther writes in his commentary to Galatians, "the Christian is Christ." By the same token, we could say, "Christ is the Christian."

Identified with Him, we must share his fate. "In the day of trouble he shall hide me in his tent"(PSA 27:5 according to the Hebrew). The rule established by the Jewish teachers called Masoretes for writing the "s" in the Hebrew word ~sukkah~, "tent," is that it be exceptionally small, half the size of the other letters, to show that one who wishes to be protected by Him must accept confinement and constraint in a small place just as He himself found solace with only a little flock. (I was in a small cell with space only for two steps to and fro.)

But the letter "m" in ~iom~, "day," in "day of trouble," is

written unusually small. For believers, days of trouble are small in comparison with the eternity of glory. We are identified with Him on His cross, but also in His victory.

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49 The Undivided Bible

The original manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments are not divided into chapters and verses. The first division into chapters was made by Cardinal Hugo of Santa Clara in 1250, the first division into verses, by the Parisian printer Robert Stephanus centuries later.

In its original version, the Bible is not even divided into words: a whole book of the Bible, sometimes several together, constitute a single word. When Scripture is read in this manner, it makes an extraordinary impression.

In English, "male and female" in GEN 1:27 evokes the picture of two separate beings who are united and can therefore also be disunited. Whatever is compounded can disintegrate. The original version reads, "maleandfemalecreatedhethem." "Maleandfemale" is something so essentially united that the idea of separation is impossible to consider.

In our Bibles, we read, "Peter and Andrew, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew, etc" (MTT 10:2-3). The original has "Peterandandrewphilipandbartholomewthomasandmatthew." It is one indivisible word. There is one God who has revealed not tens of thousands of words, but only one. Not a single part can be omitted without deforming the whole and making it crumble.

The Lord's prayer, in the original, does not begin with "Our Father," which suggests that He might be a Father

without being ours, or that He might be ours without having a fatherly relationship with us. The original reads, "Ourfather." We Christians cannot conceive of a god which should not be ours. He is a father toward us or He ceases to be our god. The Hebrew as used by Christ for "our Father" was a single word, ~Avinu~, the possessive pronoun being part of the whole.

A Jew came to a rabbi and asked him to pray that he might earn a decent living. "Unite with God and you will get a livelihood," the rabbi advised. The Jew said, "But I do not know how to unite with God."

The rabbi was amazed. "You do not know how to unite with the Godhead and yet you complain about having no livelihood'? You want a minor wish granted and are not worried about the major problem?"

The main thing is to realize the unity of the Godhead, "thefatherthesonandtheholyspirit," one God expressed in one word, the unity of His revelation, the unity of reality, our unity with the whole of it and with God. Einstein's concept, "The whole reality is one electromagnetic field," is expressed

by the manner in which the Bible is written in its early manuscripts.

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50 Why Such a Strange Book?

It is strange that for the purpose of our salvation we were given a book which is so difficult to understand, with whole chapters of boring and seemingly useless genealogies or enumerations of persons without importance. Ezra 10, for example, contains a long list of priests conspicuous only for the fact that they had taken foreign wives. The book is also repetitive with some episodes recounted three or four times. Religious writers with the inspiration and clarity of John Chrysostom or Spurgeon could surely have written better literature than the biblical authors.

The Bible is written so as not to be understood at first glance. In ACT 22:11 Paul writes about being unable to see because of the glory of the heavenly light. I have lived in dark prison cells. When I saw the light again it blinded me, and I had to readjust myself slowly. Only those who grow accustomed to dwelling in glory can understand the secrets of the Bible.

The carnal mind longs after limitation, accuracy, precise definitions and well-established borders. It shuns eternity where these things disappear. God prefers to commune with us in silence. The thirty years in which Jesus spent in silence reveal more about God than what He spoke in three years.

Words express only part of reality: the best part of wisdom is that which words cannot contain. The moment a soul speaks, its inner nature is sullied by its transitory passions,

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interests, prejudices, surmises or theatricality. The true nature of the soul is desecrated by expression.

The Bible is not a great work of art. Rhetoric begins when the last reality has been drowned. Eloquent style is a sign of degeneration.

The lives of many great poets were unhappy because they spoke too much. Romeo and Juliet spent their first night together declaiming poetry to each other. Could their marriage have been a happy one?

The Bible is a strange, silent caress of the bride by the Beloved. It contains words and whole chapters whose value no one can see. But this is their value. If a bride is reading a passionately interesting novel, filled with exciting detail and embellished with beautiful style, the bridegroom remains uncaressed. But in the the Bible there are whole chapters of endless genealogies and lists of names. One grows bored and puts the book aside. This was the purpose: to put the book down sometimes and entrust yourself to the inebriating silent embrace where the problems of the text cease to exist. You have His kiss. To prepare you to receive it is the purpose of the Holy Book.

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51 Bible Monologues

Being in a lonely cell, for many years the only talks I knew were monologues. The Bible contains several monologues of God, for example, "Let us make man in our image" (GEN 1:26), or "They will reverence my Son" (MTT 21:37).

Let us learn from God! Speaking with oneself has a healing value. God put some of His revelations to us in the form of monologue, not because of His need for healing, but in order to teach us how to find it.

None of us is a unitary being. We are all to some degree split between conflicting tendencies in our personalities. Everyone has his ideal self or "I," what the psychologist Jung calls "the animus," and everyone has an evil urge which attracts him as well. "The pastor Hermas," one of the oldest Christian writings, asserts that every man has a personal devil just as he has a guardian angel. We are torn by many influences coming from opposing directions.

As often as we say "yes," there is also something in us saying, "no." This is our inner counterpart with whom it is very important to clarify matters.

I have known men with powerful criminal instincts who overcame them by using the method of the monologue. First they proclaimed aloud to themselves their desire to commit the wrong action; then they pleaded the victim's defense, loudly crying his cry when attacked; they spoke out the reproaches of their wives and children for what they had done, the prosecutor's condemnation, and their own

possible defense. At last they determined not to do the deed.

A man was greatly troubled because he had killed an enemy in a bayonet fight during World War 1. He discussed the matter with the victim within himself. He convinced his counterpart that it had been a fair fight in which both had obeyed orders and had been dedicated to the good of their respective fatherlands. He expressed his regret and promised to make restitution by adopting a child from the former enemy nation.

Whenever conscience nags or doubts haunt, it is best not to repress these voices, but to weigh the pros and cons aloud to oneself. The blood of Christ will always be sufficient for past sins. The light of the Holy Spirit will be enough to dissipate doubts.

The purpose of God's monologues differs from ours, but we can learn from Him of their value.

52 The Value of Willing Rightly

"She said within herself" (MTT 9:21). "He spoke within himself" (LUK 7:39).

What is important is not so much what we say with our lips as what we say within ourselves. Whenever we speak to others we look to the consequences of what we say in case we should be held responsible. We might be drawn before court; we might lose our jobs; we can have all kinds of complications. For many reasons we do not outwardly express everything we inwardly feel.

God looks at the heart. He hears our inward speech, both good and bad, and it is according to this that He judges us.

Now a man's inward speech can be as diverse and incongruous as his outward speech. I speak within myself; I also inwardly judge what I say. I may criticize my inward speech or, at other times, approve it. Man is not of one piece. We are always torn between conflicting desires which are expressed by contradictory inner voices. Behind all this strife is the final reality within us which, observing this whole life in serenity, hears our inner talks, but remains silent. This is Christ within

us, the one whom the Hindus call, "The jewel in the lotus-flower."

The battle must be won within. Outwardly your talk might be most edifying, but perhaps the Lord's words apply to you: "Ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess" (MTT 23:25).

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How can we make the inside clean? Simply by willing. The Lord once said to Mechthilde, "When you have to receive my body and my blood7 will for the glory of my name to have the fervor and all the zeal which the most burning heart has ever had for me. Then you will be able to approach me trusting, having this preparation, because I will look to the fervor which you wish to have and I will take account of it as if you would really have it."

Something similar is told of St. Gertrude. She, upon approaching the sacrament, expressed the desire to receive it with the same sentiments as the holy virgin and the greatest saints. Then the Savior appeared to her and told her: "Now you appear to the citizens of heaven really adorned as you wished to be."

God looks to the best in you. From the whole biography of a Roman officer the Bible records only a few minutes in which he showed strong faith (MTT 8:19). Of the whole degraded life of a Samaritan woman, the Bible retains one day when she was a zealous missionary (JHN 4:30). From everything which you think, if you have the desire to be as holy as man has ever been, God will retain this one inner wish. All your other thoughts will be set aside.

Inwardly formulate the highest wishes even if you do not have the slightest power to fulfill them, and you will receive the highest praise.

Outwardly we can master ourselves only in part. Our strongest decisions are consumed by the fire which we have in our blood. We cannot check the inner movements of our souls while we are awake and we have even less control during sleep.

Have the right desires and do not be afraid. It is written, "The Lord was with Joseph"(GEN 39:2). Not everything Joseph did was right. Anyone who knows what despots the

ancient kings were cannot imagine Joseph being prime minister of Egypt without making grave compromises with his conscience. He had to bow before the gods of Egypt, and

to conform to the habits of the heathen. But God also knew his moments of victory over temptation. And He knew Joseph's highest desire, which remained valid before Him even if it was unfulfilled in Joseph.

The Lord was with Joseph and will be with you, if beyond outward deeds and inward thoughts, even if not feeling love, you desire to love. If you desire holiness without having the slightest beginning of it, holiness will be imparted to you.

53 God's Thankfulness to You

Cleanse yourself within and God will be thankful to you. God thankful! Such an idea may never have occurred to you, but it is implied in the sermon on the mount: "For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye?" (LUK 6:32). Now, thanks from whom? Evidently from God. He thanks you if you can love those who do not love you.

The ear of wheat and the flower bow in gratitude towards the earth from whence came the water and minerals they needed in order to grow. And through Christ's descent to earth, God himself bowed in thanks to all those like Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Buddha and innumerable others, who overcame human attachments, lust, greed, and selfishness, who loved those unworthy of love, who did good to those who had given them evil, and who lent without hope of receiving.

Jesus bowed gratefully before the apostles who gave up everything for Him, and washed their feet. He knew that all these apostles had tragic lives and dramatic deaths ahead of them because of their love for Him, and so He bowed before them like a servant and washed their feet.

Cultivate good thoughts toward your fellow men. If they have wronged you, remember that all their evil is "such stuff as dreams are made of." After a few years, you yourself will not remember it. Evil works die as men die and as dreams vanish. The Bible speaks about "dead works" (HEB 6:1).

A man's evil toward you will have passed away but your

good thoughts about him will remain. If good thoughts do not arise spontaneously in you, will to have them even though your heart still harbors resentment or hatred. God does not judge the surface of your heart, but looks to your deeper regret that such voices remain inside you.

Take special advantage of the moments immediately after Holy Communion. The King is within you then as surely as He was in the womb of the Virgin Mary. This is the time for inner communion with the inner king.

We often act like madmen. When He is outside, surrounding us, we chatter within ourselves; when He is inside, we are busy gossiping outside. Do not fear the ugly voices which speak within you. God knows what to do about them.

The Rabbi of Berditschev once prayed: "Lord of the Universe, the people of Israel are the phylacteries of thy forehead. When a Jew drops his phylacteries, he lifts them up with loving care, cleanses them of every stain and then, with a kiss, makes amends for their abasement. Lord of the World, The phylacteries are fallen to the ground."

God is closer to you than you are to yourself; He feels your griefs and your joy more keenly than you do. Your evil thoughts stain His holy name more deeply than your own, so He will be sure to free you of them, to keep you holy in spite of them or even to bring some good out of them.

A mother's love for her child is more tender than the child's self-love. Rely on Christ for this too. Think about Him as you would think about a loving mother.

In Hebrew the word for Holy Spirit is a female noun. Catherine of Sienna might not have known Hebrew but she had the right intuition, for whenever she went to Communion she considered herself as a child sucking the breast of her mother.

Your wrongful inner talks are forgiven even before you utter them. It is only righteous that it should be so. Before we are born, before we have done the slightest evil, we are already sentenced to death because of offenses committed by

others. Before the Jewish people existed and could offend God in any way, God told Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved in a foreign country for four centuries (GEN 15:13). It is only fair that we be forgiven even before repentance, because of what the new Adam did for us on the cross.

You think forgiven evil thoughts, you speak forgiven inner words. You hear inner voices today which in the spiritual reality have long since been erased. Time is a confusion in your mind. You hear today what belongs to your past. You present is intimate communion with Him.

You can make God rejoice over you with singing (ZEP 3:17). Do not miss the opportunity.

54 The Lord of Hosts

Theologians speak about the attributes of God. The Bible never mentions such a thing. The very word "attributes" implies qualities which are assigned to Him by men. Hindu religion rightly distinguishes between Brahman Nirguna, godhead as it is, and Brahman Saguna, godhead as we see it. The biblical name corresponding to Brahman Nirguna is "El eljon," - "the most high God" (GEN 14:19).

Touch the wing of a butterfly and you destroy the splendor of its colors. The holy contents of the notion "Godhead" are desecrated through investigation. The biblical names of God are equivalent to what Indians call Brahman Saguna and must be accepted with caution. Divine, mysterious existence is encased in the words of a fallen race whose language cannot possibly express the reality of God.

"Lord of hosts" is not one of God's names, but is simply how some men thought of Him during a certain period of spiritual evolution.

Once they called Him Lord of Hosts, certain conclusions followed. He ordered Joshua to set an ambush for the enemy (JOS 8:1-2). "Joshua destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel had commanded" (JOS 10:40). By the same command, he "set a city on fire" (JOS 8:8). "Joshua offered burnt

offerings unto the Lord," (JOS 8:31) after having killed all the inhabitants of Ai because of such an order.

Calvin believed all these things literally. He wrote, "The

literal sense of Scripture is the whole essence of faith and Christian theology. It is better to confess ignorance than to play with frivolous guesses. Allegories are the scum of the Holy Spirit, they are harlots seducing me."

I am a disciple of what is called the typological school. I believe that the accounts of the wars in the Bible are symbols of our own spiritual battles.

God sides with no army. Nehemiah says, "There was no beast with me save the beast I rode upon" (NEH 2:12). We have no enemy except the one within ourselves. The assembling of armies is always a bad sign. Even victorious armies have no real splendor, and to find them glorious implies delight in the slaughter of men. Lao Tsu rightly says that "victories should be treated as funeral rites." A man of God exercises quiet restraint and avoids using weapons whenever possible.

The many accounts of war in the Bible are of great value to us in a negative sense.

Indis Shah again tells the Sufite story: A man got lost in a forest. He wandered for several days unable to find a way out. Then he met a wild, unkempt-looking man whom he assumed to be an inhabitant of the wood. He asked the man for directions. "I myself have been lost in this forest for 10 years," replied the man. "Then you cannot help me," the first said. "On the contrary," said the other. "I can show you hundreds of paths which do not lead out of the wood." Negative experiences have exceptional value. The many histories of war in the Bible teach that nothing is achieved by war.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Seek the ways of peace.

55 What is Abraham's Greatness?

Why does Abraham play such a prominent role throughout

the Bible? Why are all nations blessed in his seed'? Why can no one be saved except through becoming an heir of Abraham and entering into the covenant which God made with him? He was far from always being a good man. Why did God choose him?

God does not choose the best, but those whom He intends to make best.

God's first lesson for Abraham was to be ready, for his faith, to reject his civilization and form a minority of one. The Midrash, (a Rabbinical commentary to the Old Testament) tells us that Abraham's father, Terah, was a builder of idols. As a boy Abraham wished to test them. He prepared food, put it before the biggest idol and waited to see if it would eat. When it did not, he chopped up all the idols with an axe and put the axe in the hand of the largest. When his father returned home, he found the havoc and asked for an explanation. Abraham said, "I brought food to the gods. They quarrelled over who should have the most, and the big one smashed the heads of the others." The father replied, "Don't be silly. These gods cannot move. Tell me what really happened ..."

Then Abraham said, "Well, if they cannot move, they are not gods," and he chopped off the head of the last idol and ran away from home. At first he worshipped the moon, but when he realized it faded before the sun, he adored the sun.

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But the sun too was transitory, so he came to believe in the one unseen God who had made sun, moon and all other things. When this faith of Abraham's was rejected by all his people, he left them, preferring to be with God, even if alone.

Next God taught Abraham obedience. Although Abraham had treated Hagar and Ishmael harshly, he could also be soft-hearted. When God told him He would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, he pleaded for them.

When he was commanded to bring his only beloved son, Isaac, as a sacrifice, he did not pray for the son to be spared.

We do not know why God asked for Isaac's sacrifice. Perhaps the son had committed an evil deed worthy of such punishment.

In Romania, an officer was suspect of treason during wartime. His father, a general, asked the king for permission to preside over the military tribunal which would sentence his son to death. Abraham might have had to show that one must sacrifice affection for the sake of morality.

In any case, when God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, He contradicted His own law which forbade killing, as well as His promise to establish an everlasting covenant with Isaac and his seed (GEN 17:19). Isaac had no children. With his death, everything would be finished. But Abraham, by fulfilling a commandment which contradicted the law and the promise, put God under an obligation to forgive us when we stray from the law or break our own promises.

Although Abraham might not always have been good, there was surely greatness in him.

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56 Why Is God Harsh Against Some?

Before the settlement of the state of Massachusetts, God wiped out the Indians by plague. Winthrop, who was governor of the state at that time said, "If we have no right to this land, yet our God has right to it. If he be pleased to give it to us taking it from people who have so long usured upon him and abused his creature, who shall control him on his terms?"

To a modern Christian reader it might seem strange that I wrote, "God wiped out the Indians by a plague." Well, if not He, then who? I wrote in biblical language. Except for what is written in the Bible, we know about the essence of God as much as a fly knows about the nature of a king.

God says, "I plagued Egypt"(JOS 24:5). God wiped out the Canaanite nations, women, children and all.

Some ask whether this was ethical, but how ethical is ethics when it judges God? God is sovereign.

If the word "morality"can be applied to God, He must be said to employ a different morality from ours. A general remains well protected in the rear while he commands his soldiers forward into enemy fire. Is this ethical? A ruler may sentence a citizen to death, although the citizens are forbidden to kill. As social life differs from private life, even

less is the behavior of God meant to resemble ours.

At first glance it might seem unreasonable that the One who condemns us for killing even a single person should lawfully destroy whole populations. But all laws are based

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only on the will of God. He changes them when He likes. They are not necessary in themselves. Reason and faith are two separate conditions which do not harmonize in all things. There are even two separate logics, the physical one and that of faith. Aristotelian logic does not apply to religion in which 1 is equal to 3, one God a trinity.

The life of believers defies ordinary logic. Every believer should hate war, the killing of God's creatures whom we are taught to love; but we also remember, "Machir ... was a man of war, therefore he had Ghilead and Bashan" (JOS 17:1). Though it is important for a believer not to fight, it is also important that Ghilead should be possessed by him and not by people full of hatred. While we must loathe war, we also had to defeat Hitler, the lover of war. The logic of faith solves such problems.

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57 Implications of Our Prayers

The "Our Father" is given us as a warning against using too many words in prayer. Every request of God has many implications.

When we say, "Thy kingdom come," we should not use these words without knowing their consequences.

We say, "Come, Lord Jesus" (REV 22:20) but it is written. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there comes a falling away first," the great apostasy (2TH 2:3). Whole nations will forsake the Christian faith; the Christians will be hated by all nations for Christ's name sake. "And then shall many be offended and shall betray one another" (MTT 24:1-10). You wish for the Lord's coming. But have you made your decision? Will you be among the traitors or among the betrayed?

The coming of Christ brings eternal, definitive doom for

unbelievers, among whom will be many of your cherished friends. It is written "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness and not light" (AMO 5:18).

Do you wish Jesus to come? On that day the believers "shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men who have transgressed against God, for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched" (ISA 66:24). Perhaps among these carcasses shall be members of your own family.

The Jews cannot bear to read this as the last verse of Isaiah

and in their synagogues, in public readings, they repeat after this verse the comforting one which precedes it. They also do this after the last verse of Malachi which concludes the Old Testament with the words of God: "Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

But however you read it, the situation will be the same. When the Lord comes, all His opponents shall perish.

Although this wrath is beneficent, although their being consumed will show them that God rules in Jacob unto the ends of the earth" (PSA 59:13), nonetheless it will be a difficult day to bear. Are you prepared to bear it?

The answer depends on whether you are born again . For those who have passed through new birth the sight of hell will be a source of joy. St. Thomas Aquinas wrote that the tortures of the damned will be one of the delights of heaven. This is because we will be changed in a manner which we cannot now imagine. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for them that love Him" (1CO 2:9).

After a conversion the things which made you happy before become abhorrent and the things which displeased you become your joy. So, in the glorified body, we will appreciate the righteousness and the wrath of God in a manner incomprehensible for us now. Can an alcoholic believe that he will ever come to hate alcohol? So we cannot fathom that we will ever rejoice at seeing hell. It must be enough for us that it seems good in His sight (MTT 11:26).

It is written that it pleased God to bruise Jesus (ISA 53:10). In our present stage of development this is unintelligible. But if God can find pleasure in the innocent suffering of His Son, knowing the purpose it accomplishes, it might easily be that we will find pleasure in the righteous punishment of the wicked.

"Thy kingdom come." Do not speak these words lightly.

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58 The Inerrancy of the Bible

Inerrancy of the Bible is an article of faith for Christians. Reason is insufficient to prove it because there is no infallible mind which, having examined all arguments for and against, can establish the Bible's infallibility.

According to G"del's [Godel] incompleteness theorem, no system can prove its own consistency without recourse to concepts that the system itself cannot generate but which are supplied from outside by a larger system, subject itself like everything else in this world to incompleteness and so on and so on. You overcome this only through a leap of faith. I belong to the Church established by Christ and it is our faith that the Bible is inerrant.

But which Bible? Not only are there numerous translations, but also there are texts which are included in some scriptures and excluded from others.

There are over 5,000 manuscripts of the New Testament. No two agree. Early copies call the robber pardoned by Pilate "Jesus Barabbas." Later copyists found this confusing and offensive and omitted the word "Jesus" from the robber's name.

MRK 16:9-20 and JHN 5:3-4 are missing from all old manuscripts, and MRK 11:26 is omitted by almost all.

When the church historian Eusebius died in 340, only a segment of the Church acknowledged the epistles of Jacob, Jude, 2 and 3 John, and 2 Peter as Scripture. Luther never

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acknowledged the epistle of James, even though he translated it.

St. Athanasius, who died in 364, was the first teacher to quote all 27 books of the New Testament.

The Sinaiticus, a text of the New Testament from the third century, includes two letters of Barnabas, and a book, "The pastor Hermas," which is excluded from our Bibles.

Books which are so inspired that Biblical authors quote them, "The book of the wars of the Lord (NUM 21:14), "The book of Jasher" (JOS 10:13), and many others are not included in Scripture.

There is also a vast difference in texts among the manuscripts which exist. Here are four versions of 1CO 15:51, all equally correct depending on which Greek manuscript is consulted:

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

We shall all sleep, but we shall not all be changed.

We shall not all sleep, nor shall we all be changed.

We shall all rise, but we shall not all be changed.

In another familiar passage, only one Greek letter makes the difference between the King James Version's translation, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men," and the Revised Standard Version's, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is well pleased." Some manuscripts have that letter; some do not. Other Bible verses can be read in over ten different ways.

The discoveries at the Dead Sea of old Biblical manuscripts have complicated the problem even more. The scrolls essentially confirm previous Scriptures, but also differ from them in certain parts.

In the Old Testament, the name Nebuchadnezzar is spelled in seven different ways. Which is the inerrant spelling?

The conclusion to be drawn from this is that God has willed to give us a text with variations, problems, missing

parts: a text which should leave our minds perplexed and should be one more factor in convincing us that in faith we do not have to rely on reason.

In Jerusalem there are two places believed to have been Golgotha, and two sepulchres of Jesus. For many other important Biblical events, several sites are claimed. It is because the Biblical events are not merely geographically located: they fill the whole world. Jesus died only once for our salvation. But He is crucified afresh as often as saints fall away (HEB 6:6). The Church is also the prolongation of His life. In this sense, there are innumerable Golgothas and places where Jesus is buried and where He performs miracles. So it is with the Bible. It is inerrant, but it does not have only one text. Christians have lived and believed and died martyrs' deaths for various texts. The truth of God shines through many texts and through various translations.

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59 Problems of Punctuation in the Bible

The original manuscripts of the Bible have no punctuation. Sentences without punctuation put our minds to work. The sentence, "Charles I walked and talked half an hour after his head was cut off" is obviously absurd. It acquires meaning when commas are placed after "talked" and before "his." We must also sometimes work hard to guess a Biblical writer's intention.

GEN 22:2, as it stands in the Authorized Version, is incorrect, because of wrong punctuation. We read "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest." But Isaac was not Abraham's only son. If the last comma is omitted, the passage makes sense: "thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest." Ishmael had not been loved.

LUK 23:43 is punctuated in a certain way by Seventh Day Adventists and others who do not believe in immediate entrance into eternal life after death, but think that the dead remain dead until a resurrection on the final day. They read, "Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise." The mainstream of Christianity prefers the following punctuation: "Verily I say unto thee, today thou shalt be with me in paradise." Paradise can be entered immediately after death, provided one had faith in the Lord.

Much depends upon punctuation in JHN 14:6 also. As it now reads in the Authorized Version, Jesus says He is three things: the way, the truth and the life. I personally do not understand what being the way means. A primitive in the

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Philippines, when told by a missionary that Jesus is the way, asked, "What kind of a way? Is it a mountain trail?"

My punctuation would be: "I am the way: the truth and the life." Truth has absolute demands which, if fulfilled, would annihilate life. Life has desires which can be totally fulfilled only through renouncing the truth. He who has come not only full of truth, because mankind could not bear the truth alone, but full of "grace ~and~ truth" (JHN 1:17), showed the way again on the last evening. The way is a loving attention to the demands of both, of life and truth.

ROM 9:5 can be punctuated in at least three ways, giving three different meanings:

(1) "Christ came, who is over all God ..." This is the only text in which Paul declares Christ to be God. The verse was thus understood by the majority of interpreters until the 8th century.

(2) "Christ came, God who is over all be blessed for ever." So Erasmus. It is a doxology to God, not an assertion that Christ is God.

(3) "Christ came, who is over all, God be blessed for ever." Here the praise is divided between Christ and God.

Let us thank God for the diversity of thoughts which are given through the Scriptures. Everything is possible to God, including all the different punctuations and translations of the Bible which express His truth.

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60 Does the Bible Teach Literalism?

Due respect must be given to every letter of the Bible, but the Bible has been written with a purpose: to bring men to salvation. Therefore its authors sometimes sacrifice the

letter. The purpose is more important than the means.

Paul quotes Hosea as having said, "I will call them my people which were not my people, and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God" (ROM 9:25-26). The translation is not literal and does not correspond to any version of the Hebrew text. Paul felt free to adapt the text for his own purpose. He applied to the Gentiles words which were intended by the Jewish prophet for the ten tribes of Israel separated from Judah (HOS 1:4-2:33) and made them sound more forceful.

In ROM 11:26, Paul gives the great teaching, "All Israel shall be saved." Needing some verses from the Old Testament to substantiate the promise, he says, "It is written: There shall come out of Sion the deliverer." But these words are not to be found anywhere. In PSA 14:7, David had expressed a desire, "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Sion." Certain that God has fulfilled this pious desire, Paul modifies David's words so that they no longer express a wish but an assurance: "The deliverer shall come out of Sion."

Paul assures the Jewish believers, "The deliverer shall turn

away ungodliness from Jacob" (ROM 11:26), saying that this too is written. The only possible reference is to ISA 59:20 where no such promise is given. There we read that the Redeemer shall come unto them that turn from transgression. It is Jacob who has to turn away from sin, not the Deliverer who will cause the turning. But Paul, when he read Isaiah, realized that men cannot change their hearts through their own endeavors. This must be the work of the Lord. He quotes the verse according to his own interpretation and not literally, as it is in the Old Testament.

We should also remember that many of Paul's epistles were written in prisons where he had to quote from memory, not having the scrolls of the Old Testament at hand.

Matthew quotes in his Gospel (MTT 2:23) "what was spoken by the prophets" about Jesus: "He shall be called a Nazarene." However, these words cannot be found in any prophetical book. The worse for them. They should have been there.

Matthew renders the prophets the favor of putting these words in their mouths. It is like attributing some words of John Chrysostom to a poor preacher whom you wish to uplift.

The sons of Jacob are enumerated in the Bible in 17 different sequences, showing the unimportance of sequences in the timeless sphere to which belief in the Bible moves us.

Value every letter of the Bible but seek fulfillment of the aim which is beyond it: the salvation of souls. Do not be like the child in Khartoum who loved the statue of General Gordon riding on a camel. Every day the lad asked to be taken to see General Gordon. When he reached the age of seven he asked, "Who is the uncle riding on General Gordon?" He had mistaken the camel for the hero. The Bible is not God: it is the carrier of His message.

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61 About Angels

It is normal for a Christian to commune with angels. The Lord has said, "Ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending" (JHN 1:51).

This is not a privilege reserved only for children of God, but for all men of prayer. Cornelius, a heathen, "saw an angel of God coming in to him" (ACT 10:3). When telling the story to Peter, he did not express any amazement (ACT 10:30). Why else do angels exist if not to serve men? An angel of the Lord also came to Peter himself (ACT 12:7).

The gap between man and angel is not so big as we imagine. Men are tadpoles of angels. Angels are accomplished believers. The Lord has said that in the resurrection we will be like the angels of God in heaven (MTT 22:30), implying that now we are embryonic angels, sure to attain full growth, because fortunately abortions are unknown in the spheres above.

Why do we not all see angels?

Their appearance can be dangerous for those who are spiritually unprepared, a shock, like touching a high-power electrical wire. The keepers of Jesus' tomb "became as dead" when they saw the angel of the Lord (MTT 28:4). So angels sometimes present themselves garbed as men. Cornelius tells Peter, "A man stood before me in bright

clothing." On the ascension day, the apostles beheld "two men in white apparel" (ACT 1:10). They were angels.

You cannot be sure that you have not met an angel.

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perhaps you did not recognize him as such. The Bible recommends hospitality. "Thereby some have entertained angels unaware" (HEB 13:2).

Keep communion with angels. Value them, hut at the same time know their limitations. They do not know everything. Each angel has only a certain assignment and can do no more.

If the angel who announced to the virgin that she would become pregnant with the Lord had also told Joseph, there would have been one sadness less. But he could not - he had received only one commission.

If the angel who warned Joseph of the danger to the life of the infant Jesus had also told all parents in Bethlehem about Herod's evil intentions, a mass slaughter would have been avoided. But the angel did not know everything.

Seek therefore communion with the Lord himself.

For mysterious purposes of their own, angels sometimes fight with men. Do not be afraid. Jacob defeated an angel (GEN 32:24-28). This is what prevailing prayer is about.

Even if an angel opposes you, you can win. Only One is almighty. Always submit unconditionally to Him alone.

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62 When Jesus Can't

"Christ Jesus ... made himself in the likeness of man" (PHP 2:5-6). He became the most perfect man, but still a man, a being with essential limitations. Certain things He could do; others not.

"In his own country ... Jesus could do no mighty work" (MRK 6:1-5). He had met unbelief. He had brothers and sisters (MTT 13:55-56), but they did not believe in Him (JHN 7:5), and Jesus was not able to bring them to

conversion. What an education Mary must have given them; but in vain.

It is usually said that the Lord performed "many" miracles. Blind men received their sight, lame walked, lepers were cleansed, deaf heard, and dead were raised up MTT 11:5). But how many?

A dozen may have been awakened from death, but thousands remained dead and their relatives remained uncomforted. Thousands of sick retained their maladies. He fed hungry multitudes on a few occasions but He did not solve the problem of hunger, not even in little Palestine. Many went to bed without having eaten. Nor could Jesus make all who heard Him preach the Gospel accept it.

All Jesus' mighty works happen on a small scale.

This is because He had become human. You too are human. Why then do you wonder, why do you despair about the many things you cannot do?

"Ye cannot do the things that you would" (GAL 5:17);

you cannot fully overcome the lust of your own flesh. You cannot overcome all adverse circumstances. This state is a characteristic feature of human nature. Angels are also limited. Only with God is everything possible.

If you are converted, God helps you to become a saint, but a human saint, who will bring goodness and love into the world of wickedness as the gulf stream brings warmth to the ocean. But the gulfstream is constituted of water, like the cold ocean surrounding it, and its warmth can penetrate only to a certain distance, no more.

The devil wins through spectacular feats. A man in the country of the Gadarenes who was possessed of devils could pluck chains asunder and break fetters in pieces (MRK 5:4). When Jesus drove the demons from him the man became a disciple. He might later have been thrown in jail for his faith, and worn chains for Jesus, as so many thousands have done throughout history. But he could no longer break the fetters. No instance of a chained Christian accomplishing such feats is known.

The Lord does not raise us above the human, but makes us saints in our human weakness. Accept your weakness and bring to it the warmth of love.

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63 Before We Call, He Answers

God says that He will create new heavens and a new earth (ISA 65:17). One of the characteristics of life in these is that before their inhabitants call, He will answer (ISA 65:24). Modern physicists have considered the possibility of an anti-telephone, a device by which the inquirer of the future will get his reply before ringing up to ask the question. What is a theoretical technical development of the future was promised in its fullness to God's children in an age when such technology was not yet dreamed of.

Einstein's special theory of relativity showed that anything traveling at a speed greater than light - which he considered impossible - would go backward in time. Scientists now assert that tachyons, faster-than-light particles, are known to exist although they have not yet been detected. Once man is able to handle them, mankind will be caught in a paradox; It will technically be possible to communicate so that answers precede questions, which would mean the cessation of communication.

Perceiving all solutions in advance, problems will stop arising in my mind.

The child who said that Mona Lisa smiled so beautifully because she had an intuition that da Vinci would paint her, and that da Vinci painted her because she smiled exactly as he wished a model to do, was not mistaken.

The spirit passes light in speed. In exceptional circumstances, a man can perceive in the unconscious of a fellow

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man questions which have not yet arisen to a conscious level, and reply to them. The one who receives the answer does not even know that it is an answer.

Some believers are sad that they do not feel any fellowship with God. But it is not necessary. The communion is established on a faster-than-light level, and consists in God's

granting you things for which you never felt any desire. Many believers testify that they have received salvation or other gifts of God for which they have not sought. The wish was in the depth of the soul and was fulfilled before they became aware of it.

Such will be the rule in the new heavens and on the new earth. Communion with God as between two beings who need to communicate will be replaced by union in love. We will be ~in~ God. Eternity will be an embrace in love. No wind will blow any more. We will no longer cry out for fear of the tempests, and the tempests will no longer need be stilled. Answers will precede requests, which therefore will not be made. All will be calm, all serene. This is eternity.

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64 The Body Language of Jesus

Besides spoken language, every man has another, the language of the body, which is in fact more ancient than speech. Whoever can understand this language has a deeper insight into his fellow men. See how many gestures of the Lord are reported in the Gospel: the stretching out of His hand, the lifting of the eyes, the touching of children. His body spoke: could it have been less than eloquent? Was it not the word become flesh?

The pupils of the eyes enlarge when something exciting occurs. An honest man looks straight into another's face. A facial tic or the manner of shaking hands speaks volumes. Warm hands or pale, cold ones, especially those with a little black shadow on the central parts, tell much about a man's character. So does a full, straight, smooth and shining face as compared to a crooked or gloomy one.

Body parts too are character clues. Socially active girls are found among those with slender legs rather than among those with big hips.

Jesus would have been completely unintelligible to His disciples had He not had a very developed body language.

He tells them, "I am come to send fire on earth and what else will I than it should be already kindled?" (LUK 12:49). Any arsonist might have said the same.

When the Salvation Army started its work in India, the governor of Bombay forbade the display of its flag because its

motto, "Blood and fire," was misleading. Such

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inflammatory words as Christ's, coming direct from the mouth of a man accused of spreading riot among an oppressed people, could be even more misleading.

Under ordinary circumstances, every peace-loving citizen would have abandoned Him when He proclaimed the kindling of fire as His program, since He did not qualify His words or explain that He meant them symbolically or spiritually. But His eyes, His face, His gestures must have spoken. None of His disciples was disturbed when He spoke such dangerous words, or even when He added, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, nay, but rather division" (verse 51).

Two disciples of John the Baptist, looking upon the manner in which Jesus walked, said, "Behold the lamb of God" (JHN 1:36). It is written about the Jewish king Ahab that he repented "and walked softly" (1KI 21:27). Once I became suspicious that a man was a Soviet infiltrator because of the way he walked. Ensuing events showed that I was probably correct. Jesus walked in a manner apart.

Besides His body language, the intonation of His voice must have been significant. I have already written that the Hebrew Old Testament contains musical notation for every saying and is meant to be chanted rather than recited.

If anyone, even God, had told me as He told Abraham, "Take your only son whom you love and bring him for a burnt offering" (GEN 22:2), I would not have done it. Neither would Abraham. We do not know in what manner God uttered this command. But listen to the words being chanted with transcendent harmonies in a synagogue according to the melody of thousands of years! Abraham, listening, felt peace in his heart and understood it to be only a test, a ritual showing to what length love of God must go, a foreshadowing of God's sacrifice for us. Therefore Abraham immediately fulfilled what was demanded.

We receive guidance from the Lord. Be attentive to its music and to the gestures of the messengers.

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65 The Numbers and the Story

Ancient Hebrew and Greek had no written symbols for figures. Letters were used to express numbers. Every word of Scripture can be understood as part of a story or teaching, or it can be considered a number because it is constituted of letters which are also figures. The sum of the numerical values of the letters in a word gives its mathematical value.

The first word of the Old Testament, ~Bereshit~ ("In the beginning") has the numerical value 913:

B r a sh j t

2 + 200 + 1 + 300 + 10 + 400 = 913

All biblical words can thus be transcribed.

The Bible can be a communication in numbers or in text or both. Which is the primary value of the Bible?

Mankind uses thousands of languages and dialects. French- and English-speaking Canadians, French- and Flemish-speaking Belgians, Afrikaansk- and English-speaking South Africans - all engage in bitter conflicts over which language should be spoken in their countries. But all nations of all continents employ the same system of numerals. No disagreement here.

Numbers probably correspond to a deeper layer of the human psyche. Symbols might have been used as figures before they were used as letters.

In 1965, at the site of the New York World's Fair, a capsule was buried to be opened after 5,000 years. It contains

a message of 1,271 figures containing in mathematical formulae the essential information about life on earth. If in that future time the same symbols are used, like in the Bible, for both letters and figures, those who read the formula could encounter double meaning, just as we do when reading Scriptures in the original.

The key figure in the Bible is the figure 7, the symbol of human holiness. There are directions in which a man can move: forward, backward, upward, down, to the right or to the left.

And there exists something more excellent, the holy attitude, to remain quietly at the center, like Mary when she sat still at the feet of Jesus. This is symbolized by 7.

Seven plays an exceptional role in physical reality too. Think of the 7 colors of the rainbow and the 7 musical notes on the diatonic scale.

Two Israeli scientists, Nobel prize winner Isidor Rabi and William Markowitz, discovered "chordmater universal time," a system of defining time which is more exact than astronomical measurement. A second is no longer defined as a fraction of the time in which the earth accomplishes an orbit, but is the time which an electron near the outer edge of an atom of cesium wobbles: 9,192,631,770 times. This figure is a multiple of the sacred 7 which is the mathematical seal of God's creation.

The old Semitic people did not have a decimal system, but a heximal one - six figures plus zero. This system passed into Europe through the Arabs and its remnant survives still in the French language which has no words for seventy, eighty, or ninety. These numbers are expressed as sixty-and-ten, four-times-twenty and four-times-twenty-plus-ten.

Since 6 was the last simple figure in the Semitic system, our 7 was written by them as 10, 8 was 11 and so on, until they jumped from 16 to 20. In this system, 10 (our 7) was the first composite figure. It became the symbol for how great a zero, a man of nothing, could become if he placed before himself the great One, God. Therefore 7 is the figure of

holiness, and 6, being the last simple figure, became the symbol of pettiness. The apocalyptic beast is 666, the superlative of 6, a paper tiger (REV 13:18). Do not fear it. Jesus will destroy it with His breath. The numerical value of Jesus in Greek is 888, the antithesis of 666, surpassing the apogee of human holiness. He represents divine sainthood.

There are secrets enshrined in the mathematical structure of the Bible. We read in PRO 1:1, "Solomon, son of David, king of Israel." The value of the three proper names is

Solomon	David	Israel		
373	14	541	=	928

which, strangely, is the total number of instructions contained in the whole book of Proverbs. It is like an indication for the reader, "Seek sense not only in the text of the Bible, but also in its mathematical form."

The Apostles, all fishermen, toiled a whole night and caught nothing. When the resurrected Lord appeared (John 21) and told them where to throw the nets, they caught many fish. The catch was not due to their skill. Every fish caught was a sign of grace. They counted them and found 153 fish. Is it a simple coincidence that the word "grace" occurs 153 times in the New Testament?

Every figure in the Bible has a deep meaning. Nothing in it is superfluous.

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66 Why Are So Many Biblical Questions Unanswered?

Having read the Bible, there are a few things we know. Many more questions remain unanswered.

How is it that there is a God? Who made Him? Why did He make man? Why did He allow or ordain him to sin? Why does suffering exist? Why do even fish in the depths of the sea have cancer? Why do beings live on each other? Will we know one another in the life hereafter? How is it that the death of a being 2,000 years ago affects the state of our souls? Why is it important that Fiji Islanders should know the stories of the Jewish kings? Why should some souls suffer eternally in hell for sins committed here during only a fragment of time? And so on and so on.

There is a Mexican story which contains the best solution to the problem of all those unanswered questions.

A dwarf named Tchuda, tired of the world's mockery and derision, decided to end his life by throwing himself into the abyss from the mountain Tchumanda. On his way he met the beautiful Armida who was going to commit suicide because of betrayal by her lover. They were joined by prince Christopher who was on order from the king to seek and kill the bandit Fukinama. This thief would be recognized by the six fingers on his right hand.

The three stopped to rest at an old monastery where they were received by the abbot Timothy. Although Timothy had

not been a monk for long, the fame of his holiness had already spread far and wide. When Armida bowed to kiss the

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holy man's hand, she noticed six fingers. The wanted criminal had become a saint.

And ...

Most people want to know what happened next with the dwarf, the princess, the knight and the king who had ordered the bandit's death. There are some however who do not ask any more questions but are in ecstasy about this one great wonder: the bandit has become a luminous example of love, and when asked how it occurred, he answered, "God performed it through the sacrifice of Christ."

The other questions remain unanswered, forgotten. The elect do not ask them anymore. The Bible contains no answers to satisfy the curious.

I hope you are not among these.

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67 The Forbidding of Quarrel

We can discover the facts of nature, we can establish causal relations. We know why certain phenomena will produce others of a predictable nature. We do not know why existence exists, why it is as it is, why there are causal relations and why the effects are these and not others.

One of the basic facts of nature is the struggle for life, a struggle that every living creature has to accept. Every species fights against some other species. The herbivores destroy the life of plants. As for mankind, beginning with the first generation born after the expulsion from paradise, there have always been conflicts, fights, killings.

There is one exception to this rule which God establishes for His children: that even the slightest quarrel must be completely excluded. When elephants fight, the grass is injured, and when Christians attack each other, their souls are doomed for eternity.

The motive of a quarrel is unimportant. An admiral once

said to some officers who were clashing, "I know not what the argument is, but I do know that the enemy is out there." "Christians wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (EPH 6:12). Internecine conflict for any reason is not permitted.

With a Christian, harsh criticism addressed against him does not produce a backlash. If you must justify your

comportment, you can spend your life trying to satisfy your adversary, instead of taking the actions you have chosen.

Every believer who quarrels with another is foolish and forfeits one of the qualities which characterize him as a believer.

During the reign of Henry VIII, Bishop Ridley and Bishop Cranmer, reformers of the Church in Britain, were so opposed to Bishop Hooper, another eminent reformer, that they put him in prison. They found him guilty of ideas about reformation that were too extreme - he refused the invocation of saints in giving an oath, and disapproved of bishops wearing heavily ornamented vestments. A few years later, under Mary Stuart, all three were imprisoned and finally burned at the stake. From his prison cell, Ridley wrote a conciliatory letter to Hooper.

The wise Indian King Asoka, who took the ideas of his country into Asia Minor and influenced the Essenes, cut into rock the motto: "samavaya eva sadhuh" "Concord alone is meritorious."

Struggle for life is the general law of nature, but for saints there exists an exemption. They do not struggle for life, but live to combat struggling.

However a limit to concord does exist. A Jewish ballad tells of a little sardine swimming off the shores of Eilat. He meets a shark, and of course politely says "Shalom" (Peace). One thing leads to another, and to placate the shark, the sardine gives up his tail, some fins from his belly, some scales from his back but nothing helps. In desperation the sardine tells his foe that for a real and lasting peace he is prepared to give everything. Hearing this, the shark relents, utters the

magic word "peace," bares his teeth and swallows the sardine whole.

There must be a limit to the desire for peace.

Kissinger reportedly said, "I have gone to the Soviets as the first Christian entered the arena to be devoured by wild beasts, but I was determined to speak to the lion.

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When I happily exclaimed, 'You see, we have agreed to communicate,' the lion replied, 'I don't know about your side, but what I have to say is simply the grace before a meal.'"

Do not quarrel, but do not allow anybody to swallow you either. Children of God are too valuable a species: we have to survive.

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68 The Truth Is Only in the Whole

There is no single Bible verse on which one can rely absolutely. Only the whole Bible gives the truth. A kidney removed from the body is no longer a kidney, but a piece of meat. Even the commandments given directly by God have meaning only when connected with other parts of Scripture, and augmented by common sense.

Considered alone, the commandment given on. Mount Sinai, "Thou shalt not kill" (EXO 20:13), is unpracticable. Taken literally it forbids all killing, including the killing of animals. It has to be modified by the idea contained in GEN 9:3: "Every moving thing that lives shall be meat for you," for God has given to some animals other animals as food. The prohibition "Do not kill" does not forbid hunting for livelihood, which can be considered, as Aristotle put it, "a just war."

The Commandment also does not forbid killing in just wars for the defense of the motherland, or in defending an innocent person from attack.

Killing is not forbidden absolutely. Augustine taught that God forbids men to kill without himself renouncing that right. God says, "I kill and I make alive," and indeed, the

sixth commandment is given by the same God who orders the death sentence many times. On earth the state authority represents God in this: "The ruler is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil" (ROM 13:4)

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Suicide is killing, even though the murderer is the person killed, and is considered unlawful. But even here there are exceptions. Samson killed himself in order to kill a multitude of God's enemies with him. Christian virgins, preferring purity to life, killed themselves when compelled to become prostitutes under the Roman emperors. Many believers, when they were unable to bear any more torture, committed suicide in Communist and Nazi prisons to avoid becoming traitors.

On the other hand, the interdiction also includes the propagation of hatred. Streicher, the editor of a powerful anti-Jewish magazine in Nazi Germany defended himself at the trial of war criminals in Nuremberg saying that he never even slapped a Jew. Nonetheless he was justly sentenced to death because his publications portrayed the Jews as so disgusting and dangerous that those who read them became possessed by the desire to kill Jews.

Never stop at the letter of isolated verses, but draw all the conclusions they imply.

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69 How Old is the New Testament?

The New Testament is the more reliable the earlier the texts were recorded. With the passing of time, memories fail and subsequent events make men record things as happening other than as they really did.

Are the Gospels late forgeries as some assert? Intelligent forgers, in order to accredit a book with being old, would specially mention things to make it appear so. There is no sign of this in the New Testament. On the contrary, the Gospels contain certain sayings of Jesus which do not square with future events, and which a later writer would surely have modified to prove the teacher's infallibility.

In MTT 24:15-16, Jesus tells His disciples in Judea to flee into the mountains, obviously the mountains of Judea,

when they see Jerusalem besieged. However the church historian Eusebius informs us that the disciples fled instead to Pella, on the east side of the Jordan. A late author of the Gospel would have modified Jesus' speech in such a way that their departure to such a distance and, as consequence, their break with Judaism, was foretold or ordered by Jesus.

According to LUK 21:20, Jerusalem would be encircled by armies. This took place during the fall of Judea to the Babylonians, not during the Roman siege. But Jesus was not speaking in military terms. A city attacked by an overpowering army can be said to be encompassed by horror. A later author would have made an exact description of the many sufferings which were to befall the Jewish nation at

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that time. He would not have missed magnifying Jesus' prophetic role by knowing every detail in advance. However, our only knowledge of the atrocities comes from the historian Josephus Flavius.

In Egypt a papyrus was discovered showing that John's Gospel circulated in Egypt at the end of the first century. The Gospel must have been written before 70 A.D. because it does not mention the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem which occurred at that time. The temple is there described as functioning, and when Jesus speaks of destroying it, the Jews tell Him, "Forty and six years was this temple in building" (JHN 2:20) ... Even the Acts of the Apostles must have been written before the destruction of the temple. Had they been written later, this event would have been used to show what a great prophet Jesus had been: He had predicted the destruction of the temple and, behold, it happened.

The five porches of the pool mentioned in JHN 5:2 were buried under rubble at the fall of Jerusalem. So they remained until excavated recently. The Gospel says " There is at Jerusalem a pool, having five porches."

The devil has tried everything to dispel belief in the Bible. A scholar, who might be sincere and not know for whom he works, could point out that what is called the first epistle of John has 39 Greek expressions which do not appear in John's gospel, whereas the gospel uses thirty words not found in the epistle, etc. Linguistic specialists analyzing my own writings of different periods, books written before and

after my imprisonment, would likewise conclude that they are not from the same author.

Those who doubt the authenticity of the authorship of the New Testament would do well to doubt their doubts. We can rely on the Gospels. They were surely written very early by first-hand witnesses.

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70 No History Book

There are those who debate whether or not the Bible is a reliable history book. It is a phantom question. The Bible is no history book at all. The word "history" occurs nowhere in it. The word which comes closest is the Hebrew ~toldot~, but this is used only to indicate genealogy or origin.

Biblical personalities are much interested in the past. Joshua wishes to speak to the Jewish people about an immediate question, but begins by enumerating the important events which took place 400 years earlier (chapter 24). When Stephen, the first martyr of Christianity, is charged with blasphemy, instead of speaking in his own defense, he tells the lives of all the forefathers beginning with Abraham (Acts 7).

But the biblical manner of recounting the past does not constitute what modern men regard as history. The succeeding generations are spoken of not as about men of different times, but as all one. Joshua says, "Your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt" (JOS 24:7). Those who had actually seen God's miracles in Egypt had died in the desert, and Joshua spoke now to a new generation which had never been in Egypt. Still he says, "~Your~ eyes have seen," not "the eyes of your parents."

Jesus says to His apostles, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me ... unto the uttermost part of the earth" (ACT 1:8). The apostles however, did not even know about the extremities of the earth. But it is their teaching and example and spirit

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which witnesses even now on all continents, after 2,000 years. Jesus makes no distinction between the first apostles and their successors after many generations.

The biblical story cannot be called history, because it mocks objectivity. It pursues an aim, and things are told in a manner conducive to attaining it.

In the books of Chronicles there are 323 verses regarding the arrangement of the temple cult, 73 on David's activities and 100 on Judah's genealogy. The Messiah had to come from this tribe and what happened in the temple was more important than the king's politics.

In 2 Chronicles, 480 verses deal with the very few pious kings and only 342 with the 17 wicked ones. The rulers of the dissident Samaria are omitted completely. Edifying episodes are heightened. The result is more an ideal picture than a real one.

The Jewish writings record the convictions of the writers more than the facts.

The author of Chronicles was probably a Levite. In his books, the Levites are mentioned 100 times, whereas in the books of Kings they are mentioned only once and in those of Samuel, only twice.

In I Chronicles 1-9, all narrative is eliminated. What is important religiously is the transmission of the seed of David from which the Messiah will stem. Therefore in the beginning of the second book of Chronicles there are 102 verses about the descendants of Judah, 81 about those of Levi and only 186 about those from the other 10 tribes.

"But one thing is needful" (LUK 10:42). Do not pursue "objectivity," but rather make your memory and your history serve this one thing, the triumph of the Word of God.

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71 Our Attitude Toward Rulers

Every Christian could take as his motto Shakespeare's words, "May that thought when I imagine ill against my king and brethren be my last breathing in this mortal world."

Such loyalty from a citizen puts an obligation on the ruler. Among the Jews, the chosen people, "the king's palace was by the court of the prison" (NEH 3:25). This is the right place for a king to dwell - where he can always have in view how much his sovereignty costs those over whom he rules.

In order for the king to have the majesty and the power of a ruler, others must die in wars under his command. Orphans remain behind. Driven by poverty and lack of education, they end in prison. The king may have neglected to spread morality among his people. His life should remain close to the lowliest of the rejected so he will perceive his kingdom truly.

In Biblical Greek, "to rule" and "to feed" are the same word, ~poimaino~. What matters is not how many state banquets the king attends, but how much care he has taken that the hungry be fed.

In Aramean, the name for Jesus, "lamb of God," is ~talya Aeloha~, which also means "servant of God. "The king can be the first servant of a country only if he has the character of a lamb.

Unfortunately not all Jewish kings had this character. Solomon, although his might as a religious poet is undenied, as king is remembered for two things: his many wives and

concubines, and his love of luxury. The heathen king Hamurabi is known in history for his righteous laws; likewise the Indian king, Asoka. But not Solomon.

How did he administrate his country? What was his economic policy? What were the relationships between the different classes of the population? Did he provide for charity? Were his judgments righteous or abusive?

His son, Rehoboam, said to the people about Solomon that his father loaded them with a heavy "yoke" and chastised them with "whips" (1KI 12:14). When you read about the Roman Caesars, some French and English kings, Hitler, or Stalin, a shudder passes through you. Good rulers have always been the rare exception.

If the ruler does not fulfill his duty, the believing citizen has to review his attitude. Every nation has a ruler, but also an angel (Daniel 10). The angel can be in conflict with the civilian authority. Then the believer must obey the highest authority, the angel.

Let us remember that Elijah resisted arrest (2KI 1:10), bringing death upon the officers of an unrighteous king.

The Christian is a loyal citizen of a country, but not a bootlicker of tyrants.

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72 Commanded Love

One of God's strangest commandments is that we should love him (DEU 6:5). Can love be commanded? Can a young man command a girl, "Love me and not somebody else"? Could she do this through her own effort?

The imperative "Love" can be expressed in Hebrew in two forms: ~ohev~ can mean only the order to love; ~ahavta~ has a double sense, both the imperative "love" and the perfect tense of the verb: "You have loved." ~Ahavta~ is used by the Bible in this text, not ~olev~." Thus God reminds you, "You come from Me; I shaped your soul; you loved me once; I was your great passion. This was your first sentiment although you may have forgotten it; but now remember, ~ahavta~, you loved me once. Return to this first love!" This is the deep sense of the biblical commandment. It is the only perspective from which God can be loved with the entire heart.

From the earthly point of view, love of God contains a dose of foolishness. I owe Him gratitude for many blessings, and I admire many of His creations. But why did He create the deadly scorpions and the viruses of so many illnesses? Why are there earthquakes and floods and bereavements? Why so much poverty and injustice in a world in which He is almighty? Why is Christianity such a small light? Why do hundreds of millions live and die in darkness? Could the punishment of sinners not be less than an eternal hell?

The fact that my thoughts are not conjoined with His shows that I have no imaginary God. If I had decided how

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God should be, I would have chosen Him to create a universe without suffering, age and death. But I know I have the real God because my heart, the heart of a fallen sinner, is in disagreement with Him.

God said to Adam, "Of the tree of knowledge of good ~and~ evil, thou shalt not eat" (GEN 2:17). Man has to choose between good and evil, one or the other - he cannot have

them both. God is otherwise, as are those in the heavenly spheres. They know both good ~and~ evil (GEN 3:22). This is the cleavage between us.

The ultimate good is unintelligible for us, so we cannot be commanded, "Love God." Instead we must be reminded that we come from the sphere where things are known otherwise. The Lord says, "Return." Remember, ~ahavta~, you have ~loved~. Return to your first love. Seated in heavenly spheres, the veil will be lifted and you will receive new understanding.

There you will understand an ancient mystical teaching which has never been written, but is expressed in a Japanese dance. Once there was a prince of such beauty that all who beheld him could do nothing else. All activity ceased in his presence. So the prince donned an ugly mask in order for men to live. Perhaps you can understand from this the existence of a beneficent God and yet of so much suffering.

Let us love God as He is known in heaven to deserve. Bernard of Clairvaux said, "The measure of loving God is to love Him without measure." Do not love Him for His special gifts - a certain moment He may withhold them. Love Him without reason. Sometimes He may afflict you. When Israel was young, he loved God and followed Him in the wilderness (JER 2:2). Love Him like this again.

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73 Peculiarities of the Hebrew Alphabet

When the Japanese Imperial orchestra plays their own national music, they have no conductor. Harmony is achieved because the musicians breathe in the same rhythm, constituting, as it were, a single organism. This is how we can understand why Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit upon His apostles.

You sense something of this when you read the Bible. Dozens of authors have contributed to it, with no single coordinator to harmonize the writings. But the authors breathed the same air of heavenly spheres in the same rhythm.

The Hebrew alphabet teaches you not so much how to read and write, but how to breathe. Two letters, the ~aleph~ and the ~ayin~ are unsounded. In transliteration the former is represented by the smooth breathing sigh "e" and the latter

by that of the rough breathing "e." When these letters are pronounced, you hear nothing: the speaker opens and closes his mouth without making the slightest sound. Jesus said to John, "I am the Alpha and the Omega" (REV 1:8).
These are two letters of the Greek alphabet. But Jesus and John were both Jewish and it is unlikely that they would have spoken with one another in Greek. Jesus must have spoken Hebrew. Might He not have said, "I am the Aleph and the Ayin, which would mean,"I am the silence and the even deeper silence"? Or will He have said, "I am the Aleph and the Tay, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which

was written at that time +, a cross? Will the sense have been "I am the silence and the cross"?

The ~yod~ is often silent. "My beloved is mine" says the bride in the song "Dodi li. "In the word ~li~, which stands for "mine," the ~yod~ is silent, one might even say quiescent, giving peace. No need even to pronounce it. She continues, ~veani lo~ (SOS 2:16) and "I am his." ~Lo~, the word for "his" ends with the letter ~vav~, again unsounded, quiescent. What long speeches Romeo and Juliet deliver to each other. Not so here. The mutual possession is so sure and so strong that words cease.

Just as the Hebrew alphabet starts with a silent letter, the Bible is more conspicuous by its silences than by its words. It is silent about the first thirty years of Jesus' life. We know that at the age of twelve Jesus spoke with the priests in the temple but the subjects they discussed are not revealed.
Mary sat a whole night at Jesus' feet and listened to Him, but we are not told what He said.

In many places in the Hebrew Bible, the sign - called ~athnach~ (respiration) divides verses into two main clauses, as for example, in PSA 2:1, "Why do the people rage (respiration) and the people imagine a vain thing?" Omission of a deep respiration in the midst of this verse would result in a reading unfaithful to the Hebrew text. Other readers breathe at the same point and this establishes the harmony of the orchestra.

There are many words in the Bible whose aim is to bring you to the great silence. "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (HAB 2:20).

74 Orthographic Errors in the Bible

The renowned American preacher Billy Sunday once said, "If the English language gets in my way, I tramp all over it." This is the sentiment of the biblical authors, too.

There are a few letters of the Hebrew alphabet which are written one way when they occur at the beginning or middle of a word, but which have another form when used at the end.

This rule of orthography is unfailingly respected throughout the Bible with but one exception. A strange "orthographic error" has been perpetuated for 3,000 years in all Hebrew manuscripts and printed Bibles, and never corrected. The synagogue keeps the error in the Bible even though few of the rabbis could provide an explanation.

In ISA 9:6-7, some 700 years before the birth of Christ the coming of a child who will be the prince of peace is announced. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." The Hebrew expression for "of the increase" is ~lemarbeh~, written with a final "m" in the midst of the word.

The Kabbalah, a collection of old Jewish writings containing mystical thoughts, explains that the coming of this child was prophesied in the Scripture with a final "m," which has the form of a square without any opening, to show that He will be born from the closed womb a virgin.

There is also what we would today call a typographical error in the Bible. In the old manuscripts, as well as in

modern scientific editions of the Hebrew Bible, the name Manaseh is written erroneously in JDG 18:30. Since there are no vowels in the original Hebrew, the word is written: MNSH, with the N always appearing above the line of the text.

The explanation is that Jonathan, about whom this verse reports, was the first idolatrous priest in Israel. He was a grandson of Moses, written in Hebrew, MSH. The author of the book of Judges did not wish to shame the great legislator.

He thought that respect for Moses' name was more important than accuracy in the genealogy of an idolater. So he added an N to the name of Moses, thereby changing it to Manaseh. For the few who have to know the whole truth and also to teach us how to communicate a truth in a diplomatic manner, the N is written above the line.

Is the Bible inerrant? Yes, it is, even in its obvious errors. The truth is revealed from them too.

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75 Qualified Almightiness

If God is almighty, why does He not free us?

The Bible calls God "Almighty" (GEN 17:1, etc.). The Greek word for it is ~pantocrator~, which means "having power over all things." Jerome translated the word into Latin with "omnipotens," which can be interpreted as meaning "able to do anything." The two concepts are not identical.

There are things which God cannot do. The Bible says, "It was impossible for God to lie" (HEB 6:18). He cannot cease to exist. He himself has limited His sovereignty, and has given a Scripture which "cannot be broken" (JHN 10:35). He cannot act contrary to His own character, or change His mind in essential things and say, "I will not have love anymore," or, "there will be no righteousness and wrath in me." There is therefore a "must" even in God and in His providence.

As with God, so with man - we also "must" pass through tribulations. Jesus says, "The Son of man must suffer many things" (LUK 9:22), and again, "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of war ... These things must come to pass" (MTT 24:6).

Prayer is important, but its scope is limited. Speaking about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and Judea, Jesus teaches His disciples, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day" (MTT 24:20), when it would be more difficult to find means of

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transportation. He does not say, "Pray that the calamity

itself should not come." One could as well pray that 2 + 2 not equal 4.

There exists a "must." When sins arrive at their peak, they bring with them unavoidable catastrophe, because it is in the unchangeable nature of God to punish sins. You can only ask for an alleviation of it.

God must have a certain character. What has no characteristics cannot exist.

How could we arrive at union with God if we could not be certain that He is on the peak toward which we advance? If there were no "must" with God, we would strive to be holy and He might have changed to unholiness. He might even have changed His desire to be united with us.

God has power over all things. He is as the Bible calls Him, pantocrator, but He has no power over His loving heart to make it cease beating for us. Our eye must be single (LUK 11:34), which means it must be the single eye. His eye and my eye are one.

The eye wherewith He sees me and my own eye are the same. The heavenly bridegroom says to His bride, "Thou has ravished my heart with one of thy eyes" (SOS 4:9), with the eye which is one and the same as His own.

God wished, wishes and will wish unity with us.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today and for ever" (HEB 13:8).

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76 Should a Christian Defend His Country?

Generally, it is dangerous to try to establish general rules by which a Christian should be guided. God has said, "You shall be turned into another man and then let it be ... that you do what is at your hand" (1SM 10:6-7 after the Hebrew), or as St. Augustine said, "Love and do what you like."

Jesus said to the first generation of disciples, "When ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies ... flee" (LUK 21:20-21). Many of us would have said, "Then enlist in the army." But a treasure of divine knowledge had been

entrusted to the disciples which must not be lost. It was more important for the little band to defend this knowledge than defend a fatherland which advanced toward destruction God's decree.

Jeremiah, when the Jewish state was threatened by the Babylonians, delivered speeches which would today be considered high treason. He counseled surrender to the enemy without any resistance. Since the Jews were the chosen people, their mere survival was more important than the nobility of a heroic fight.

The occasions when such choices are necessary are rare. No Christian would defend a Nazi Germany or a Communist Russia.

Otherwise the commandment of God stands, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers" (ROM 13:1). If your government has decided that a war is in the interest of the

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nation, you obey. It is not wrong to kill in a just war. "After the return of Abraham from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer ... Melchizedek, king of Salom (a type of Jesus) blessed him" (GEN 14:17-19). Just this time had been chosen by Melchizedek to bless Abraham! Those who have fought against tyrannies are also blessed. The Christian can do much. Abraham with a small group of what we would today call "freedom fighters" conquered world powers.

It is essential for children of God to participate in the fight against evil, even when this fight takes the form of war. Their role is "to sanctify the war. "This is the expression used in the Hebrew of JOE 3:19. They should bring into the war the notions of righteousness and love. But foremost, the Christians' role is to prevent war, bringing the rulers of nations to living faith in Christ and teaching those who believe that the best guarantee of peace is strength.

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77 The Name of God

Jesus says to God, "I have manifested Thy name." But which name did He manifest? Was it Jehovah, Elohim, El-Shadai, Lord of Hosts? There can be different explanations. May I suggest one.

When my wife was in Communist prisons, she brought one of her guards, let us call her Nina, to Christ. Sabina taught her the creed and the Our Father. One day this new Christian said to my wife, "I cannot just repeat the Lord's prayer like a parrot. I must understand it. I say, 'Hallowed be thy name,' not knowing what His name is. Could you please tell me!" My wife answered, "God has all names. In the Bible He is called God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is also God of Nina. He is your personal God. Nina is His name. Now sanctify it."

The biblical revelation goes even further. In both Hebrew and Greek the Bible text speaks not about a God ~of~ Abraham, ~of~ Isaac and so on, but simply God Abraham, God Isaac, God Jacob. He identifies himself with his friends and believers. It is not enough to believe that God is one. The Jews sing in the synagogue, "Huh echad veein sheni." (He is one and there is no second.) These words occur also in the Vedas. Each believer who comes to the One does not stop at being a second who obeys and adores the first, but becomes one with the One. God is God Abraham, and Abraham is Abraham God. Jesus says it, "Ye are gods" (JHN 10:34).

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The notion of oneness in Hebrew differs from that in the European languages. Man and wife shall be "one flesh" (GEN 2:24). In the Hebrew it is written about Samuel that "he shall be Saul to the Lord" (1SM 1:28), which means he will feel so united with Saul that he will mourn when Saul fails. If Saul errs, Samuel will become twice as good to compensate for Saul's mistakes.

When Samuel died and went to the place of the righteous, he could assure Saul who had to die the next day, "Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me" (1SM 28:19). Where else could Saul have gone after death? He had to be with Samuel because he was one with him. Samuel was Saul before God.

The unity between husband and wife is not a perfect one. Samuel and Saul clashed with each other, but deep underneath there was a unity which could not be sundered. Such is our unity with God. He is God Abraham, God Isaac, God Nina, God Richard and God you. These are His names.

78 Scarcity of Biographical Data

No scrupulous modern biographer would attempt to write a biography of Jesus on the basis of the scarce data which the Bible gives about Him. Even about Jesus' earthly life we know next to nothing. Thirty years are passed over with silence. This is to show us that God keeps files on no one.

Job says, "What is man ... that thou shouldest try him every moment" (JOB 7:17-18)? What a man is in the present moment is what counts. What he has been before can be erased by the grace of God. Never hold past sins against a man, rather hold a man against his past sins.

George Muller, the British philanthropist, founder of many orphanages and renowned as a man of prayer, was in prison for theft in his youth. So was Skrefsrud, the renowned Norwegian missionary to the Santals in India.

St. Vincent of Paul was ordained at the age of 19 although the Council of Trent had fixed 30 as the minimum age. He was silent all his mature life about his invalid ordination and about an adventurous escape from slavery which had occurred only in his imagination. He was also silent about the fact that in his youth he had sought the parishes with the fattest incomes.

What does an ugly past count, when God sees a beautiful present?

79 The Bible Teaches Poverty

When God makes Abraham a declaration of love, Abraham's answer is, essentially, "what will you give me?" (GEN 15:1-22). Let it not be so with us. May we not be only parasites on God. May our relationship with Him not be all asking but also giving.

When you are converted you must become poorer than you were before, for Jesus' sake. Then when you purchase a dress, you can offer Him the difference in price between a plain and a fashionable one. Jesus has given His blood for me. Should I not offer Him everything I have?

Jesus forbids His disciples to have two coats (MTT 10:10). What would He say about those who possess several houses and several cars?

The prophet Hosea had to buy his wife's love with money. Jesus is in the same predicament - He has had to buy His bride. Paul writes, "Ye are bought with a price" (1CO 7:23). The price paid for us is "the precious blood of Christ" (1PE 1:19). Would we sell ourselves to Him for less? Would we give our lives to Him simply because He is right, even if He had no forgiveness of sins, no paradise and no earthly blessings to bestow? Are we His profiteers, or do we find in Him a beloved to whom to give our all?

Jesus said, "Blessed be ye poor"(LUK 6:20). The strongest Greek word for poverty, ~ptohois~, a word indicating abject misery, is used here.

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The Lord asks the apostles, "Do you not remember the five loaves ~of the five thousand~?" (MTT 16:9). The superfluous bread does not belong to me but to the poor.

George Muller, who became a legend for the orphanages which he founded and supported by power of faith and prayer, wrote in his diary, "We found the cheapest and plainest rooms in Bristol, but still too good for servants of Jesus. Our Master had nowhere to lay His head."

As Jesus knelt to wash the feet of His disciples, St. Hedwig of Silezia, a princess, gave gifts to the poor, kneeling before them. After such a life, Hedwig was able to say as her last word at her death, "Welcome."

Wealth is especially dangerous for ministers.

A journal of architecture published a photograph of the villa of a renowned American evangelist as being the most beautiful villa of the year. This man might have a better chance of preparing good sermons in a modest apartment.

I have heard sermons in cathedrals in rich countries and sermons delivered in prison by pastors in chains. The latter had the more durable influence upon my soul.

Rabbi Yehiel Mier, having no money to give a beggar,

gave him one of his wife's rings. When the wife learned of it, she was upset, "That was a very costly ring with a real diamond in it," she said. Rabbi Yehiel, hearing this, searched the town for the beggar. He came home triumphantly and assured his wife, "I found him and warned him to be sure to sell the ring for a good sum of money."

Let us be souls who freely give ourselves with all we have to Him. Love poverty! Become poor.

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80 Dove-Like Israel

Israel and the Holy Spirit are both likened to a dove, as if to say that they belong to the same species. The Holy Spirit is God. We too are partakers of the divine dove-like nature (2PE 1:4).

The Bridegroom says to the bride who is a symbol of His nation, "You have doves' eyes" (SOS 1:15). Why is Israel called a dove? "Song of Songs Rabbah," a Jewish book of wisdom, explains: "The dove is faithful. Israel was likewise faithful to the Holy One, praised be He, at Sinai. For they did not say that ten commandments, or twenty or thirty were enough for them, but they said, 'All that the Lord has spoken we will do and be obedient' (EXO 24:7). The dove is distinguishable among all other birds. Israel is likewise distinguished by deeds. The dove is modest. Israel is likewise modest... The dove does not leave its nest even if someone has taken its brood. Israel likewise continues to visit the temple site even though the Temple has been destroyed. The dove journeys and returns to its nest. Israel likewise 'shall come eagerly like birds from Egypt and like doves from Assyria' (HOS 11:11). Others are attracted to the dove; likewise, converts are attracted to Israel. The dove, unlike other birds, offers its neck for slaughter without struggling; children of Israel likewise give their lives for the Holy One, praised be He. The dove does not leave its mate; Israel likewise does not leave the

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Holy One, praised be He. The dove atones for sins. Israel likewise atones for the nations of the world."

Belong to the dove, like Israel of God!

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81 Humility

One of the main characteristics of a great man is his humility. Abraham is considered the father of all the faithful in the Jewish, Christian and Moslem religions. What was his opinion of himself? "Behold, I am dust and ashes" (GEN 18:27). David was a king, a poet, a man after God's heart, his opinion of himself? "I am a worm, not a man" (PSA 22:6).

We arrive nowhere without a humble acknowledgement of our unworthiness. A politician once asked a bishop, "What can I do to obtain wisdom for ruling this country?" It was raining. The bishop told him, "Go outside in the rain for half an hour and stand with your head up in an unprotected place." The politician did this. When he returned, the bishop said, "Did God grant you some wise instruction?" The man answered angrily, "The only thing I could think about was that I am a fool." The bishop nodded, "Quite a discovery for a first try."

Start like Paul with the recognition, "I am an abortive" (1CO 15:8, in the original). Only then will you be able to take upon yourself the burden of being famous. Sir Thomas Moore, martyred under Henry VIII of England, said, "We must stand fast at the risk of being heroes." Heroism is not something to be sought, but to be accepted though it endangers the more precious virtue of humility.

Remain humble, knowing that whatever your aims and however many skills you employ, you will not attain your earthly aims.

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Engels was right when he wrote to the Russian revolutionist Vera Zasulitch on April 23, 1885, "Men who bragged about having made a revolution, always realized next day that they did not know what they were doing, that the revolution performed had no resemblance to the one they intended. This is what Hegel called the irony of history, an irony only few historic personalities avoided."

This applies not only to social revolutions. Not only have men like Lenin and Hitler died disappointed. Certainly the Church is not what the Church fathers intended. How unlike

it is to the first church full of love in Jerusalem.

Luther intended a reformation within the Catholic Church and died very unhappy about the chaos which resulted from his efforts. Wesley too was disappointed. Mission founders have similar experiences.

Do not be proud. We are not made for successes, at least not for lasting ones. We are all shaped as vessels for the use of the Master. His purposes are fulfilled in our lives, "It is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (PHP 2:13).

Be humble and remember that even your humility does not come through your own merit. Then you will be a chosen vessel.

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82 Strange Commandment

You may sometimes wonder about the commandments God gives His prophets, whom men are taught to regard as models of life for their people. The first word which the Lord ever said to the prophet Hosea was, "Take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms" (HOS 1:2). Hosea complied. But why should a prophet have to do such a thing?

I believe the best explanation is given in the Talmud (Pesahim 87 a-b):

> The Holy One, praised be He, said to Hosea, "Your children have sinned." Hosea should have said, "They are your children, children of your dear ones, children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, show them your mercy." However, not only did he not say this, but he said, "Lord of the universe, the entire world belongs to You. Replace them with another people." The Holy One, praised be He, thought: "What shall I do with this old man? I shall tell him to marry a harlot and to beget children of harlotry and then I shall tell him to send her away. If he is able to send her away, I will send Israel away. And it is written, "The Lord said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry..." So he went and took Gomer. When two sons and a daughter had been born to

him, the Holy One, praised be He, said to Hosea, "You must separate yourself from your wife." Hosea answered, "Lord of the universe, I have children from her. I cannot put her away or divorce her." The Holy One said to him, "Your wife is a harlot and your children are children of harlotry. You do not even know if they are really yours. Yet you refuse to divorce her. How then, should I act toward Israel? They are the children of those whom I have tested, the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and one of the four possessions which I have acquired in My world: the Law, heaven and earth, the Temple and Israel. And yet you tell me to supersede them with another people."

When he realized that he had sinned Hosea rose to ask mercy for himself. The Holy One, praised be He, said to him, "Before you ask mercy for yourself, ask mercy for Israel."

None of the great men and women of God could be completely exempt from sin; they needed it. It was in the Providence of God that they should know it, so that their hearts would be soft for the multitude which sins. Taught by their own experience of life, they ceased to condemn, but began to intercede for those who trespass against the will of God.

You also may have received some strange guidance from God. Perhaps its purpose was to teach you humility.

83 Jesus Incognito

Jesus often wished to keep incognito. He passed through Galilee with His disciples "and he would not that any man should know it" (MRK 9:30). Might some people have Jesus near them even now, without knowing that it is He?

Angels too like to walk among men unrecognized. It is written: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unaware" (HEB 13:2).

Jesus is the Lord of angels - He might have taught them to pass incognito.

Like all who wish to remain hidden, Jesus uses pseudonyms. Even "Jesus" is a pseudonym. Isaiah foretold that a virgin would bring forth a son "and they shall call his name Emmanuel" (ISA 7:14). How can someone who does not bear this name be the person who fulfills the prophecy? If Mr. Smith is announced, the arrival of Mr. Taylor is not what you were entitled to expect. But before the birth of this child from a virgin, an angel tells Joseph, "she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus .... Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord by the prophet saying ... they shall call his name Emmanuel" (MTT 1:21-23). Strange.

Nor is the name "Jesus" the last name which He will bear. Jesus appears to His apostle John saying that he who overcomes in the fight of faith will be made a pillar in the temple of God, and adding, "I will write upon him my new name" (REV 3:12).

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In eternity Jesus will have another name. ~Jesus~ (Yeshuah) in Hebrew, means "Salvation." In eternity there will be nobody to be saved. Apart from the name inscribed on those who overcome, "He has a name written, that no man knew, but He himself" (REV 19:12). We say "Jesus," but this is only the name under which He made himself known to us. It is not His only name.

Even during His earthly life, Jesus did not always bear this name. "When eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus" (LUK 2:21). Until that time He had no earthly name. He was simply the Son of God incarnate, the Divine child. He could have been called by any name.

Scripture states, "You shall keep my statues and my judgments which if a man does, he shall live by them" (LEV 18:5). It is not written, "which an Israelite" or "which a believer in Christ" does, but "a man," any man. Scripture also says, "This is the law of man" (2SM 7:19 in Hebrew). This is not the law of those who believe in the right name, but in the law of man, correct for all men. Although no man can be saved without knowledge of Jesus, there might be people who know Him and love Him as He

walks among them incognito, under another name. There are people in all religions who in reality belong to Him.

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84 Problems Connected With Death

I write the things below not as teaching, but to acquaint Western believers with the doubts and tempests in the spirit through which many Christians pass when in solitary confinement, with death reigning around them.

In biblical perspective, death is not something to worry about. Perhaps chrysalises practice some funeral rite when one ceases to be along them, not knowing it had become a butterfly. So the believer passes at death to a higher stage.

We, the living, also remain in communion with them.

Luther abolished public prayers for the dead because such prayers had been abused for commercial purposes. Greedy priests sold indulgences which were supposed to help the dead escape torments.

However, prayer mentioning the dead has a thorough biblical foundation. Nehemiah prayed, "Now therefore, our God ... Let not all the trouble seem little before thee that has come upon us, on our kings ... and on our prophets" (NEH 9:32). When Nehemiah spoke these words, Israel no longer had kings. They were all dead, living in another sphere, but participating in what happened to Nehemiah's contemporaries. The troubles of the living Jews were shared by their former kings who had passed beyond death.

The verse is not always interpreted like this, but it can be understood in this manner.

The living also share in something which seems to be of great concern to the dead. Boaz said, "Ruth the

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Moabitess ... have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren" (RUT 4:10).

It is important that we perpetuate in honor the names of our earthly predecessors and those who brought us to

faith .

When I was in prison, I had the strong impression that three men who had been greatly influential in my conversion and were then dead, Isaac Feinstein, Christian Wolkes and Giuseppe Cavane, were near me, imploring that I keep their good names through remaining faithful in tribulation. Let it be our concern "that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren." Because Boaz took this care, the name of the dead husband of Ruth is mentioned in our Bible.

As a rule, dead saints are gathered unto their people (GEN 49:33). They belong to the same church as we and we work together with them for salvation under our common head, Jesus Christ. The saints who have passed away "are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple"(REV 7:15). But perhaps there is also another alternative.

We belong to the Body of Christ who gave himself for sinners. Perhaps we too can give ourselves for sinners. Paul wrote, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (ROM 9:3). Moses also asked to be blotted out from the book of life if God would not forgive the Jewish people (EXO 32:32). In principle this might be possible.

In his ~95 Theses~ which started the Reformation, Luther, who believed in purgatory, approved of the popular belief that Popes Severinus and Paschal were willing to endure the pains of that place for the benefit of the faithful.

This is the concept of the Boddhisatva which is also found in Indian religion. The Boddhisatva is a man who refuses entry into the eternal bliss to which he is entitled, preferring

to suffer and pray for those who, enmeshed in sin, have difficulty reaching this aim.

The question of our relationship with those who are on the other shore preoccupied us much in prison. Around us many, just the best, died. We could be killed any moment. This made us to think in a manner apart, which probably would not be shared by Christians who lead the ordinary life.

My granddaughter told me: "I enjoy being prayed for by

many. I would not like to miss this joy in heaven." Prayers for the dead might not be of any use to them, but should we do only what is useful?

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85 Strange Idiom

In the text of our Bibles, it is apparent that God is the author of all our calamities.

"God sold the Jews into the hands of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor and into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab" (1SM 12:9). Why should God deliver His people into the hands of His enemies?

God says through the prophet Jeremiah, "I will cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness" (JER 7:34). We learned that God is represented by Jesus who changed water into wine to give men pleasure. Yet He boasts of making joy vanish.

To understand those parts of Scripture which blame the evil upon God, we have to remember a peculiarity of the Hebrew language.

The Old Testament Joseph, when in prison with the butler and baker of Pharaoh, predicted to the one that he would be restored to Pharaoh's favor and to the other that he would be hanged. In the Hebrew original it is written that he, Joseph, "restored the chief butler unto his office but hanged the chief baker" (GEN 41:13). In fact, however, Joseph continued to remain in prison and took no part in the advancement of the one man, nor in the execution of the other. However, it is in the nature of the Hebrew language to call one who predicts or warns the "author" of the respective action.

Jesus spoke with His disciples in Aramean, a Hebrew

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dialect. When He told them, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (JHN 20:23), the words did not have the same meaning for them as they would for us. The words did not bestow upon the disciples an actual power to absolve or not to absolve sins. This power rests with God alone.

The apostles were called to proclaim the Gospel. Those who accepted their message would receive the divine pardon, the others not. The disciples were thus, as in the case of Joseph, the "authors" of the forgiveness or lack of forgiveness of sin.

But now another question arises. The Hebrew language was fashioned by God to be a vehicle of His revelation. Why then does this idiom exist which gives the impression that the blame for evil lies on God just like the authorship of good? There is a deep meaning in it.

We usually hate men who wrong us and retaliate against them. God wishes to exonerate the wrong-doer in our eyes. He wishes that we harbor no bad feelings toward him. So He has formed His chosen language so as to give the impression that the tyranny of a Sisera in olden times or that of a Stalin or Hitler in modern times are His decision. Then we can love even the tyrants and their tools. Our account is only with God, and Him we love.

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86 Do Not Brood About Yourself

"Examine yourselves whether ye be in faith" (2CO 13:5) is not the same thing as brooding about the state of your soul. Man is simply what he is just as every other element in nature. If you simply are what God created you to be, a creature in His image, nobody will ever call you to any account. "No reckoning was made" with those who worked at the repair of the temple in Jerusalem "because they dealt faithfully" (2KI 22:7).

Man began to judge his own state and to discover that he was naked only after he had listened to the serpent in the garden of Eden instead of obeying God.

A greater percentage of women get cancer of the breast among those who continually check for it than among those who do not. The same danger lies in the self-examination and dissection of one's soul.

A thorough self-examination is not even possible, because you cannot be a judge in your own cause. This is an elementary rule of justice.

According to G"del's [Godel] incompleteness theory, no system can explain its own consistency without recourse to concepts that the system itself cannot generate. The criterion upon which you judge yourself must come not from your own mind, but from outside. But it remains your own mind which decides which outside criterion to adopt. Thus any attempt to judge yourself is futile. Men of different opinions judge themselves according to various criterions.

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Hitler was sure he did well to exterminate the Jews. Jesus' judges were sure that they did well to sentence Him. A sinner sins even in trying to determine his own sin and to evaluate true repentance.

Examine yourself only whether you have faith, as the Scriptures enjoin: whether you believe there is a greater intelligence than your own who has thought about everything, who shapes and directs your life; then enter into a calm attitude of mind.

The Hebrew word ~avon~ means "sin" as well as "punishment." The very fact that you are a sinner is punishment enough, causing you to miss the inexpressible joys of righteousness. Do not add useless autoflagellation to your punishment.

There is a secret in your sinfulness. Cain, after killing his brother, said ~Gadol avoni minso~, which, literally translated, is, "My sin is great by its being borne" (GEN 4:13).

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (ISA 1:18). The sins become white through the greatness of the sin-bearer. Because sin is in itself such a terrible punishment, Jesus took it upon himself. It was His joy to do so. To be a sin-bearer is His most beautiful crown. By entrusting your sins to Him you add a jewel to His crown.

Examine yourself only to see if you are in faith, if you believe your sins to be white as snow because they now belong to Jesus, and, with this, enter into peace.

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87 The Red Dragon

"Behold a great red dragon" (REV 12:3). Why is

this dragon, whose intent is to devour the Christ child, colored red?

Sin is also associated with red. It would seem that to speak about the color of sin would have as much sense as speaking about the melody of a fruit, but God says, "Let us reason together. Though your sins be as crimson, they shall be as wool" (ISA 1:18). So sin is red and righteousness is white.

It was no accident that Communism and Nazism, the two great anti-Christian movements of our age, both chose red flags. Not only did they fulfill a prophecy, but the choice also derived from a source deep within the experience of mankind.

The French psychologist Alfred Binet related an experiment with a hysterical woman whose body was paralyzed on one side; When a dynamometer was placed in her right hand she could squeeze it to register only 12 kg. If she was shown a red disk, the pressure of her squeeze was immediately doubled (in "Researches about the alterations of conscience with hysterical persons" ~Philosophical Magazine~, vol. 17/1889, France).

Goethe, who developed a theory of light, also attributed dynamic character to the color red, which he distinguished as being an active color.

Every color is a suffering of light, because colors are

produced by light breaking through a prism. Red is its greatest suffering.

Animals can be driven mad by showing them a piece of red cloth. Toreadors make use of this fact in bullfighting. All primitive people have a predilection for red, and so do little children.

White is not actually a color, but the fullness of light, light which has not passed through a prism. The righteous will stand before Christ, the lamb of God, clothed in white (REV 7:9). In contrast to the color of the dragon, white is the color of quietness, of contemplation, the good part chosen by Mary of Bethany (LUK 10:42).

The servants of the red dragon delight in the sight of blood. Persecutors have shed rivers of martyrs' blood. The righteous, on the other hand, are givers of life.

In a world dominated or terrorized by the red dragon, in a world where love is scarce and relationships are icy, the righteous bring the warmth of love.

No scientist can explain how it is that a stream of warm water, the Gulf Stream, flows between the cold waters of the ocean, which, so to speak, form its walls, how that moving hot stream exists within the motionless cold. So the righteous, clothed in white, journey toward heaven through a world inhabited by passionate red monsters, a world which is in contrast with the radiant love of the righteous, icy and cold.

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88 Strange Expressions in the Hebrew Bible

Biblical Hebrew is a very poor language, with only 400 word stems. For this reason it contains many homonyms and strange expressions which we often find contain spiritual messages. A few examples follow.

Elisha asks his teacher Elijah, "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." There is of course no quantitative measurement of spirit, so these words might seem senseless, but among the Jews, the eldest son commonly received a double portion of inheritance. Thus Elisha's words imply, "Make me your principal spiritual heir."

Some adversaries of the Jews wrote a letter to the Persian king Artaxerxes, saying among other things, "We are salted with the salt of the palace" (EZR 4:14 in the Aramean original). Salt of the palace is an expression for salary from the king. The English word "salary" also derives from "salt."

We read, "Saul was the son of one year in his reign" (1SM 13:1 in Hebrew). This was a manner of saying that he was childish as a ruler.

The Hebrew has no special word for "period." The word ~iom~ is used for both "period" and "day." So, from the biblical text it cannot be established whether God created the world in six days or in six periods.

~Kavod~ means both"glory"and "heavy." These homonyms express the spiritual truth that it is a glory to carry heavy burdens for the love of God. ~Lekoneh~ means "to get as result of a relationship of love"

or "to conceive." Eve says, ~Qanithi~, "I got a man from the Lord," when she gave birth to her first son (GEN 4:1). Later on the word became used for "buying." The Jews did not intend commerce to be a cold, selfish transaction, but rather a relationship in which, governed by love, two parties exchange needed items. Let Christian merchants profit by this teaching.

~Leshaal~ means "to ask" as well as "to lend." Thus, to lend (leshaal) to everyone who asks (shaal) is a teaching inherent in the very fiber of the Hebrew language.

The name of the first king of Israel, Saul (Sheoul in Hebrew) means "lent." Therefore "as long as he (Samuel) lives, he shall be lent to the Lord" (1SM 1:28), could also be correctly translated, "Samuel shall be Saul to the Lord." One man can take another's place before God.

~Hattath~ means both "sin" and "sin-offering." God said to Cain, "If thou doest not well, ~hattath~ lies at the door." It is well for every man who has committed ~hattath~. a sin, to remember that by so doing he has brought Jesus, the sin-offering, near to him, ready to forgive. Thus Jesus, too, is me before God as Samuel was Saul.

The Bible speaks about men baptized for the dead (1CO 15:29). When certain Christians were martyred, others who had wavered until that time, encouraged by the martyrs' example of faith, came to take their place in the church and became baptized.

When a believer fails, another can, through fasting. mourning, praying, and working twice as hard as before, make good the loss which the Kingdom has endured. Therese of Avila taught "When you see a sister sinning, be thou much holier so that God may receive the same amount of love." Samuel practiced this substitution for Saul, and in this sense, Samuel was Saul before God.

You too can be a shield for another before God, replacing through your excellence in faith someone else's frailty.

89 Punishment for Children

Little children mocked Elisha and said unto him, "Go up, thou bald head, go up, thou bald head. And he turned back and looked on them and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came out two she bears out of the wood and tare forty two children of them" (2KI 2:23-24).

What the children were mocking was probably not just baldness, but perhaps something like the tonsure of Catholic priests in times before or the tonsure of the Oriental religions, which may have been used by Jewish prophets. But why such a harsh punishment for a childish prank?

Our modern concept is that a child cannot be held responsible for wrong behavior. Everything is blamed on society, family, school, or the police; children's crimes are usually attributed to poverty, although the majority of poor children do not commit crimes, and many offenders have more money than those they rob.

The ancient Jews believed, however, that a child should not commit crimes, a child should not steal, should not mock religion and if he does, he should receive due punishment.

Still, why was the punishment so severe?

Jews believe that Elijah still walks on earth in disguise, and one legend tells of a man who asked to walk beside him to learn from him the ways of God. In beggars' rags, they sought hospitality at a poor man's house. The poor man received them in a friendly way and shared the milk of his own cow with them. In the morning, leaving the house,

Elijah cursed the cow and it died. The second night they asked the hospitality of a rich man. The rich man spoke harshly to them and sent them, without food, to sleep in his barn. In the morning Elijah advised the man to dig in a certain place and the rich man found treasure buried there. Later Elijah and his companion met a child, who kindly went out of his way to give directions. When they passed a bridge, Elijah pushed the boy into the river where he drowned. At last Elijah's companion could not bear it any longer and

asked for explanations. Elijah said, "the cow I cursed had anthrax. If I had not killed it, the family would have been poisoned. The rich man whom I made even richer, although he was bad, was involved in big financial speculations. The treasure will encourage him to even wilder schemes with the result that in the end he will lose everything he has. The loss will make him wiser and soften his heart. In the good child I saw criminal tendencies. He would have destroyed his soul and broken the hearts of his parents, had he continued to live. I saved him by giving him death."

There are men like Elijah with special endowments from God who can see criminality in children before it has developed, as botanists distinguish what future flower will grow from what to us is just a seed. Only such enlightened men are licensed to a severity forbidden the ignorant. Elijah was entitled to do what he did as a doctor who could diagnose a fetus as abnormal would be justified in performing an abortion. [I don't understand. CPM 05/03/96]

It is not correct for those who are ignorant to judge prophets. We should rather learn from them to maintain a careful watch over our children and never to prefer our children to God. If they sin, they must be punished, and, in extreme cases, rejected.

Children are responsible for what they do. As St. Therese of Avila sought martyrdom among the moors at the age of seven, so a wicked child must atone for his wickedness.

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90 Learn From Flowers

Christians should know something about flowers. Jesus taught "Consider the lilies" (MTT 6:28). He calls himself "the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys" (SOS 2:1). Without this biblical teaching, we would never have had Masefield's lyric at the end of "The Everlasting Mercy."

O lovely lily clean,
O lily springing clean,
O lily bursting white,
Dear lily of delight
Spring in my heart again
That I may flower to men.

We can learn from flowers not to be disturbed that the Christians are constituted of so many denominations. There are 35,000 species of orchids alone.

The number of Christian denominations has to increase even more. Our ultimate hope is for every believer to be an Abraham, a friend of God and a man under God's direct guidance, each to be his own denomination. Men differ from each other. Each person will have his own gifts and visions and uniting them will be a profound love which transcends their differences of view.

Flowers do not quarrel with each other. The right relationship between denominations and believers is mutual admiration.

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Secondly, every flower is wisdom personified. Orchids are masters in adopting different shapes for the purpose of multiplication.

The Mediterranean's Ophrys resembles a female wasp and emits a similar odor to attract the male wasp. In the wasp's attempt to mate with the plant, he picks up pollen masses, which eventually brush off onto another flower. The Santa orchid has a platform which resembles a nectar-bearing flower, so it attracts bees in search of nectar which it does not have.

Australia's flying-duck orchid springs a trap when an insect lands on its lips. With a jerk, the orchid tosses the intruder into a cup formed by petals around a green column. The escaping insect carries away pollen masses to deposit on the next flower.

Other orchids display other curiosities to attract specific pollinators (National Geographic Magazine).

Christians also wish to multiply. Paul writes, "Unto the Jews I became a Jew, that I might gain the Jew; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law ... to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1CO 9:20-22).

Christianity has an amazing multitude of approaches, all

of them correct so long as we pursue the one aim: ever to increase the Church of Christ.

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91 Lesser-Known Personalities of the Bible

Paul writes to the Romans, "Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, salutes you" (ROM 16:23). An inscription was found in excavations at Corinth, "Erastus, procurator, aedile, laid the pavement at his own expense." According to archaeological evidence the pavement is from the middle of the first century. The identity of name, location and date make it likely that the subject is the same person ("A Guide to the Excavations of Ancient Corinth," American School of Classical Studies, Athens, 1936). To receive a greeting from such a person, one who does not profit from his position to enrich himself, but, on the contrary, spends from his pocket for a public need, would be an honor indeed.

Gamaliel is the only New Testament name also celebrated by the Talmud, a book commonly opposed to Christianity. It is believed that Gamaliel's father, Simeon, was the old man who took the baby Jesus in his arms and said the prayer, "Nunc dimittis" (LUK 2:25-35). His grandfather was the renowned Rabbi Hillel. Gamaliel was so honored that he is one of seven Jewish teachers to whom the name "Raban" was given, a title also born by Jesus. Magdalene addressed him as"Rabbuni."

Gamaliel was also called "the beauty of the Law."

Unlike other Pharisees, he was not a bigot. It is said that he once bathed in Greece in a place where a statue of a heathen goddess stood. Reproached for this, he silenced his critics by saying that the bath was not built for the goddess,

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who does not have the habit of washing herself, but for men, the statue serving as ornament.

Gamaliel was Paul's teacher of religion. He also undertook the defense of St. Peter when persecuted.

His attitude toward Christianity fluctuated. After a period of mild tolerance he became its passionate adversary. He composed a prayer against the Hebrew Christians which is

still recited three times daily in Orthodox synagogues: "Let there be no hope to them that apostate from true religion, and let heretics, how many so ever may be, all perish as in a moment. And let the kingdom of pride be speedily rooted out and broken in our days. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who destroyest the wicked and bringest down the proud" (Home, "Introduction to Scriptures," 8th edition, Volume III, p. 261, quoted in "The Life and Epistles of St. Paul" by W. Conybeare, Scranton & Co, Hartford, 1900).

Archaeologists, however, discovered that Gamaliel's tomb bears a Christian inscription, indicating that toward the end of his life he received Christ as his Savior.

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92 Sources of the Bible

The Bible is not entirely a direct revelation from God. It contains quotations from numerous other books, some of which are known.

Jude quotes two apocryphal books in his epistle. The story told in verse 9 that Archangel Michael contended with the devil about the body of Moses comes from the book, "Assumption of Moses." The saying in verse 14, "The Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all," is a quote from the book of Enoch.

In ACT 17:28, St. Paul quotes the Greek poet Eratus. Since Eratus, like Paul, was a native of Cilicia, it was natural that Paul be familiar with his writings. Eratus was renowned for his astronomical poems, and Ovid declared that his reputation would endure as long as the sun and moon. Eratus' only lasting reputation, however, is that Paul quoted from one of his poems: "Thou who amid the immortals are throned the highest in glory, Giver and Lord of life, who by law disposes of all things; Known by many a name, yet the almighty forever; Hail, O Zeus, for to thee should each mortal voice be uplifted. Offspring are we too of thine, we and all that is mortal around us."

How many preachers today would dare quote the Book of Mormon or the Koran as freely as Paul quotes this ode to the heathen deity Zeus, a poem which proclaims that not only men but all that is mortal, including animals and plants, are God's offspring?

Paul also quotes three other Greek poets. From Aratus he takes the words, "In God we live, we move and have our being" (ACT 17:28). The saying, "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1CO 15:33), is a line from "Thais," a comedy of Menander, and could well have become a proverb.

"The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies" (TIT 1:12) is from Epimenides of Crete (8th century B.C.), whose sayings were considered prophetic. Plato called Epimenides a divinely inspired man and Plutarch called him a man dear to God, but his harsh judgment against a whole nation certainly does him no honor.

Judgmental generalizations about a people should be avoided, but they lose their sharpness if they come from a son of that nation. The Jewish prophets spoke harshly about the Jews, and Luther about the Germans. Their intentions were beneficent.

Even great artists can sometimes write on a low intellectual level. It is correct to show respect towards poets and men of letters not only when they are at their peak, but even when they fail, as Paul shows Epimenides in this instance.

These are but a few examples of the sources from which the authors of Scripture took some of their inspiration.

93 The Phoenicians

Most Christians are aware of their debt to the Jews in matters of knowledge of God. We also owe much to another biblical nation, the Phoenicians. They were among the Canaanites, and are also called in the Bible by the names of their cities, Sidonians, or Tyrians. The Greeks gave them the name Phoenicians. Jesus speaks of them favorably as compared with the sin-fulness predominant in Jewish cities of the time (MTT 11:21).

The Phoenicians were the first people to introduce an alphabet as we now know it, with 22 symbols for different sounds (as in the Hebrew, they had no letters for vowels). This was a great advance over the hieroglyphs of the Egyptians or the cuneiform characters of Mesopotamia.

When you read your Bible, remember that we learned our alphabet from the Phoenicians.

The word for our holy book, "Bible" is a Phoenician word. These people had a town named Byblos which was renowned for its trade in papyrus and for its use of script. Eventually the idea "book" became identified with the name of the town. When rabbis translated the Hebrew writings into Greek for the first time, they gave the book the name "Bible."

The Hebrews had received exact indications from God about building a sanctuary to Him, but they did not know how to construct such huge edifices. They learned it from the Phoenicians, from Hiram, King of Tyre (1 Kings 5).

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The Lebanese of today are the successors of the Phoenicians. Remembering in love the heritage we received from the Jews, let us remember in love this people also.

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94 The Need for Theological Clashes

Paul quarreled with Peter and Barnabas in matters involving doctrine and church leadership. He taught us to reject heretics (TIT 3:10). Apostle John likewise advises us not to receive into our house anyone who brings a false doctrine (2JN 10).

In later ages the difference between Christian truth and heresy became blurred. At Interlaken, Switzerland, two rivers merge, one thick with salt and mud, and the other pure. For a time they run in the new bed without mingling, as if there were a border between them. But finally they merge. The mud triumphs, invading everything.

It is difficult to distinguish water from mud, but this filtration must be made. Truth alone frees us. Theological error only compounds bondage. Debates and clashes on religious issues were not avoided in the time of the apostles and they cannot be avoided now.

Immediately after the Reformation the newly-founded Protestant church was torn by four main theological quarrels:

(1) The fight against antinomians led by Agricola. ~Nomos~ is the Greek word for law. The antinomians asserted that law should only be the business of magistrates, and should play no role in religion. Luther opposed them, saying that law comes from God and must be respected under the new covenant.

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(2) Schwenkfeld and Osiander did not believe that Christ's righteousness can be ascribed to us. They believed that in order to be justified before God, we must have an essential righteousness of our own, and that Christ cannot manifest himself fully in us because of our inherent sinfulness. Luther taught to rely totally on Christ for our salvation.

(3) Professor Major and Amsdorf went so far in denying any human merit in salvation that they declared good deeds as harmful for those who wish to obtain eternal life. Luther believed that good deeds are the natural fruits of faith.

(4) The great synergetic quarrel started by Melanchthon who granted the human will a part in our salvation. Our will for the good, he said, is not dead, but only sick, and can still cooperate with the Holy Spirit. In opposition to him Flavius believed that fallen man can only oppose divine endeavor, and God forces us to be saved. Luther kept the golden middle with his doctrine that our will plays no active role in salvation, but can participate by suffering, receiving, and accepting it.

We have to endure theology and pass beyond it to love our brethren. Theology can only be endured. It is repugnant to make the word of God a matter of debate, most often of low quality. But there are many repugnant things a man cannot avoid. We have to orientate ourselves among the different tendencies in religious thought. If we are unable to recognize heresy, neither will we be able to discern the truth.

We therefore have to accept the strife among believers both in the past and those today, but in this, as in all other matters, right measure is the most important Christian value.

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95 The Holiness of Sex

In the modern world the sexual organs are commonly the objects of greedy desire, obscenity and dirty jokes. In biblical times the sexual organ was held in such honor that oaths were given on it, as today some people would swear on the Bible or on the crucifix. "Abraham said unto his eldest servant ... Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh and I will make thee swear" (GEN 24:2-3).

The usual biblical name for the male organ is "vessel," and for the female, ~boshet~, or "shame," in the sense that it is shameful to speak about it in a degrading manner.

These are the organs of procreation. Understand clearly the meaning of this word. We ~pro-create~. We create in behalf of God. When God wishes another human being, He assigns a male and female the high calling of creating it. Among the people of God, sexual union is considered sacred. Isaiah wrote, "I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, and I went unto the prophetess and she conceived" (ISA 8:1-2). In this instance the sexual act was performed like a religious ceremony, under the supervision of a priest.

The standard of social justice in the Bible was high, with the result that there was no occasion for sexual impurity in Israel. Today rich men contribute to sexual immorality not only by overt sexual wrongs, but by driving thousands of girls into prostitution by paying unjust wages.

The New Testament begins by recording a long series of

sexual acts: "Abraham begot Isaac and Isaac begot Jacob" and so on (MTT 1:2). Some of these unions were illegitimate, but what distinguished them all from ordinary sexual intercourse was the aim pursued in them. Abraham begot ~Isaac~.

Modern people mate without giving any thought to the personality which might result. But Abraham and Sarah's purpose was to bring into life a child of a certain character who would further bear the seed of the Messiah to come.

Leah, when she was past the age of bearing, gave her

handmaid to her husband that the holy seed of Jacob should not be lost. Later she herself gave birth to a son, saying, "God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband" (GEN 30:9-18).

Let us also treat sexuality with deep respect; let us procreate with reverence and for the purpose of bringing new servants of God into the world.

This does not mean however that sexual union should not be pleasurable. Dietrich Bonhoeffer expressed it well when he wrote, "To long for the transcendent when you are in your wife's arms is, to put it mildly, a lack of taste, and it is certainly not what God expects of us. We ought to find God and love Him in the blessings He sends us. If He pleases to grant us some overwhelmingly earthly bliss, we ought not to try to be more religious than God himself."

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96 Unusual Letters in the Bible

The original manuscripts of the Bible do not have upper- and lower-case letters; all letters are of equal size. However, there are some exceptions in Hebrew which have nothing in common with English orthographic rules prescribing the use of capital letters for God, proper names or the names of countries. In the German language, ~all~ substantives begin with a capital letter.

In the Hebrew Old Testament, only in some 35 places are letters of unusual size used, either bigger, smaller or above the line, to alert the reader to special paragraphs which were considered very important. For example, in RUT 3:13, the word "lini" which means tarry is written with a bigger "L" because it is very necessary for believers to learn to tarry. Boaz said to Ruth at midnight, "Tarry this night, and it shall be in the morning ..." In other words, do not be in a hurry. Do not try to achieve things under adverse circumstances. ~Tarry~. A beautiful morning will come; Boaz will marry Ruth; David and later on Jesus will be descendants of this marriage. "Tarry" is written here with the only bigger "L" in the Bible.

Jesus believed not in the verbal but the literal accuracy of Scripture. He said, "... one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law ..." (MTT 5:18). Historic events since then have proved that He was right.

St. Athanasius fought against the heretic Arius for an "i." Arius said that Christ is "homoiusios," of similar substance

with the father. Athanasius said that he is "homousios," of the same substance. Had Arius' "i" been accepted, the whole Church would have gone astray.

Believe in every letter of Scripture, even the size. It is no accident that the Communists oblige people to write "God" with a small "g," and that Solzhenitsyn refused to have his novel published if the word were not printed with a capital "G."

97 What Is the Truth?

The Hebrew word for truth, ~emeth~, is used for many other notions which, if practiced, bring the truth with them. ~Emeth~ also means "perseverance," "reliability," or"faithfulness." It is impossible to attain the truth without possessing these qualities as well. Persevere in forgiveness and humility, enable God to rely on your self-denial, and you will not have to seek truth. It will seek you.

A girl had an illegitimate child. Wishing to shield her lover from the anger of her father, she accused the pastor of being the guilty one. The girl's father came to church one Sunday morning with the baby, thrust it into the arms of the pastor and shouted, "Here, villain, take your bastard. You are a whoremonger." Astonished, the congregation waited for the pastor to defend himself. Instead he caressed the child and said, "So be it! What a beautiful boy. I will give him all my love." From then on the congregation shunned him. Earning his living by manual labor, he cared for the child. After many years, the girl felt remorse and confessed the truth to her father. The following Sunday the father publicly apologized to the former pastor who now sat on a bench in the rear of the church. "I apologize. I have been misguided; you are completely innocent" the father said. The pastor replied, "So be it. A handsome boy. I really like him. He is mine." Still not a word in his own defense; no explanation!

Faithfulness to the One who, when reviled, did not revile in return, who was silent before Pilate, though accused of the

worst crimes. Men like this have the privilege of truth in religious matters.

But how much truth do these have?

What did Jesus mean when He said "I am the truth"? (JHN 14:6).

We have the truth in matters which can be repeated experimentally or about facts which can be documented unchallengeably. We have certain truths in mathematics, physics, etc. In most matters, objective truth is still beyond our reach.

A person must be very daring to assert he has the final objective truth in religion. Northern Europe is Lutheran; the Southwest is Catholic; the East, Orthodox; India, Hindu and the Middle East, Moslem. Can truth be geographically conditioned?

The most murderous influence in religious history has been the assumption of objective truth in religion. We have to live with relative truth, accepted by our minds as result of long heritage, education, climate, circumstances of life, and the interplay of historical events. As in other domains, we must rely largely on probability in some religious matters, too.

Some have broken with their heritage and have converted from other religions to Christianity. But how many religions did one examine before becoming a Christian? Converts are also limited in their choices. Biblical religion was inherited, not a matter of personal choice. Such expressions as "personal acceptance of Christ" or "a personal Savior" do not occur in the Scriptures. One cannot even find the word "personal." This may seem strange for modern believers who scoff when a man is Catholic or Protestant because it is the religion of his parents, without a personal search for the truth.

Biblical religion was also collective. One belonged first to a nation into which one was born, the Jewish one. Later one belonged to a collectivity, the church, which was advised to

"bring up the children in the nurture and admonition of the

Lord" (EPH 6:4), not leaving them to make the impossible choice among hundreds of religions when they became mature. Jude sets as our aim not a personal but a "common salvation" (Jude 3). At maturity you consciously adhere to what has been infused into you since birth.

Abraham's son, Ishmael was circumcised at the age of thirteen by his own consent. Another son, Isaac, received circumcision at the age of eight days, according to God's commandment. He decided nothing. His parents chose to enter him into the covenant with the Creator.

Reason made Ishmael practice a rite. Reason later caused him to mock his brother, the bearer of God's promises. Isaac received his religion not by personal choice, but through God's grace as bestowed upon a family called to become a great nation. He was God's choice. He possessed the truth.

Jesus is the truth in the sense that He always embodied the truth He taught. Jesus was identical with the road He walked, completely satisfied with the life He led. Therefore He IS the life.

We, on the other hand, are always in conflict with the truth we recognize; we hate the ways we have chosen for ourselves, or to which existence has led us, and we are dissatisfied with our lives. In contrast with this sinful attitude of ours, Jesus embodies complete acceptance of what God allotted to Him as human knowledge and a way of life. He had no inner conflict about the problems of existence. Let us follow Him in this.

If we can be faithful and persevere in following the small truths we know, the greater truth will gladly come to abide in us.

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98 The Legitimacy of Questioning

The Bible is full of questions to put to God. Jeremiah asks "Wherefore doest thou forget us for ever and forsake us for so long time?" (LAM 5:20). The book concludes without answer, with the discouraging words, "Thou has utterly rejected us, thou art very wroth against us" (LAM 5:21).

Woe to a faith which does not question. Reason questions everything it sees and hears. Only a reason undedicated to

God does not question who He is and what He does and what His intentions are. The answers we receive are as inconclusive as those of science. If matter and its constituent particles, the atoms, are mysterious, the more so is God, their Creator. He has given us a revelation which would not be worthy of Him if it were not also enigmatic.

The whole of reality can be comprehended only with the whole of our being. When we try to understand it with so small a part of ourselves as the intellect, it is unavoidable that we fail.

What is our relationship to God? Has He predestined everything? If so, what is our responsibility?

Jesus tells the parable of the sower. "A sower went out to sow his seed, and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside ... some fell upon a rock ... some among thorns ... others on good ground" (LUK 8:5-8). The harvests were brought in accordingly. In succeeding verses of the same chapter it is clearly revealed that the different types of ground symbolize different types of men.

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We have been made to live in different circumstances with different innate characteristics, more or less favorable to spiritual development. Before ever sinning ourselves, we have been sinned against through the genes transmitted to us, through erroneous upbringing, or through others' mistakes. Other people, through no seeming merit of their own, have been privileged in heredity, education and experiences of the world.

God said, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated ..." the children not being yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election may stand (ROM 9:11-13). This means that the essential character (the seed) and the conditions (the soil) are determined.

But if we are destined to fall by the wayside where the fowls of the air can devour the seed, since we have been created with intelligence, could we not erect a scarecrow and save ourselves? If arid soil has been our allotment, could we not irrigate and fertilize?

It is natural that human reason questions whether

everything is predestination or if there exists a bit of space for free will. The apocryphal book of Jesus ben Sirah replies: "Do not research thing which surpass your mind, and do not try to know things which are hidden. Reflect about things which are permitted; do not be busy with what is mysterious."

Mishna, a Jewish book of wisdom, says, "For whomsoever tries to solve the following four problems, 'What is above, what is below, what has been before the beginning of the world and what will be its end' - for those who do not respect the secrets of Godhead, it would have been better not to be born."

It is normal to ask questions and normal to shrink back from the depths these questions open. We will never fathom them. Therefore, although we continue to ask, we seek no answers in this life to all the questions, but just trust in a God of love.

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If we can also rejoice in the fact that we have no answers, this shows we have reached the great truth known, alas, by few: the whole universe and all of life are great question marks. There can be no replies in this world, but only in the next.

A child in elementary school sometimes asks amazingly profound questions, answers to which cannot begin to be understood until the child reaches the university.

Let us wait patiently for life eternal and in the meantime let us act vigorously in love. All the "whys" and "ifs" will not help. Ask instead, "What can I do?" and "How can I improve on what I am?"

One of the answers you will receive at once is: "Rejoice about the existence of ever-to-be-asked and never-to-be-answered questions, about the whys and whethers. They are proof that we are not made only for earthly life but for eternity. For the time being, let it be with us as it is in the life of trees. To their questions, branches respond with flowers and fruits, not with words. Make roses blossom even on your crosses."

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99 Is the First Chapter of the Bible Wrong?

God said, "Let there be light" on the first day of creation (GEN 1:3). Critics disparage the Bible on this account, asserting there cannot be light without the sun, which appeared only on the fourth day. But God, who could make the glowworm, phosphorescent matter and the aurora borealis, could surely cause light before making the sun.

Upon close examination, the words about the creation of light on the first day have a deeper sense, as does the whole first chapter of the Bible. I reproduce below the opening passage in Hebrew with the word-for-word translation in English:

Bereshit bara Elohim et hashamaim ve-et haarets

In the beginning created God (et) the heavens
and (et) the earth.

This is the word-for-word translation except for ~et~, a word which has no English equivalent. This was originally written in Hebrew with the mute sound ~alef~ and the ~tav~, which is like our "t." The vocalizations were added in the Hebrew Bible only after many centuries. Aleph-tav could also stand for ~ot~, in which case the sentence would read, "In the beginning God created; a sign of this creation would be the heavens, and another sign, the earth." Such a translation would rightly convey the sense of the text, but would be open to question because, although ~ot~ can be written v, it is usually written aleph-vav-tav.

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If we do not accept this explanation of the word ~et~, the problem of its meaning remains. The renowned Jewish medieval commentator Ibn Ezra says, "The particle ~et~ signifies the substance of the thing." Another Jewish scholar, Kimchi, agrees, adding that ~aleph~ and ~tav~ are the first and last letters of the alphabet. ~Et~ therefore indicates the beginning and end of all things (like the Alpha and Omega in Greek).

The meaning of the Bible's first sentence is then, "In the beginning God created the substance of heaven and earth." The Syriac version conveys this idea. St. Ephrtem the Syrian's interpretation is along these lines, too. God did not create a finished universe, but its essence, open to development. Such an interpretation would also elucidate

the problem of the creation of light on the first day.

Nothing has a greater velocity than light. Thus God started the essence of the universe by creating the entity which has the greatest speed.

God said, "Let there be light," i.e., "Let us hurry with great speed towards the perfect kingdom!"

Later God said, "Let there be a firmament" (GEN 1:6). The word firmament suggests some kind of fixed vault dividing the skies from earth. The Hebrew text here uses the word ~rakiah~, best translated, "expanse," because it has as its root a verb which means "to stretch out." This rendering of the word ~rakiah~ also ties in with the notion of a universe created in its essence. Far from suggesting a firm vault, the idea of ~rakiah~ is a splendid presentiment of the modern theory according to which the universe is continually expanding, stretching out.

If a source of light is becoming nearer to you, then the whole spectrum of the light is shifted towards the violet; if the source is becoming more distant, then the whole spectrum is shifted towards the red, like the pitch of a train whistle which changes according to whether the train is approaching or receding.

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The nearest cluster of stars, which is about 43 million light-years away, and which contains about 2,500 galaxies, has a shift corresponding to a speed of recession from us of 750 miles a second. The most distant cluster so far investigated has a red shift over one hundred times as great, corresponding to a speed of recession which is almost half the speed of light.

Thus does science report exactly what the Bible says, "God created heavens and stretched them out" (ISA 42:5).

The first chapter of the Bible is right. God created the ~rakiah~. Moreover, the fact that the story of creation starts with the making of light before the sun proves the Divine authorship of the Bible, for no human author would want to create such difficulties for himself.

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100 About Prayer

Jesus taught us to cry day and night toward God (LUK 18:7). However, God should not be likened to some unrighteous judge from whom justice can be obtained only by wearing him out with insistent pleas.

Why is it written, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest?" (MTT 9:38). If He is full of love, why does He not simply provide the laborers without waiting for our prayer?

We pray in order to obtain clarity. Only a life of prayer will teach you that neither questioning God nor theology have any part in prayer. Prayer will teach you to pass your life in silence, at the bosom of a God whom we cannot fully understand .

When extreme need or threat arises, it is good to cry. Nobody whispers when threatened by a dragon. God says to Samuel, "their cry has come unto me" (1SM 9:16). If the cry is missing, the realization of our great danger in this valley is missing. But after the cry the silence returns.

It is a good biblical custom to ask for signs from God. Jonathan says to his arms bearer, "If the Philistines tell us, 'Tarry until we come unto you,' then we will stand still in our place ... but if they say thus, 'come up unto us,' then we will go up, for the Lord has delivered them into our hand" (1SM 14:9-10). Ask for certain concrete things, as Jonathan asked for guidance in initiating a battle against his enemy. Make it clear what sign you wish and consider

receiving the sign as guidance. You can even ask for answers to concrete questions as David does in 1SM 23:10-12.

Let prayer for others, even for great sinners, be one of defense. Rabbi Nehemiah said, "When the Israelites constructed and worshiped the golden calf, Moses sought to appease God's anger, saying, "Lord of the universe, they have made an assistant for you. Why should You be angry with them? This calf will assist You: You will cause the sun to shine and the calf will cause the moon to shine; You will take care of the stars and the calf will take care of the planets; You will cause the dew to fall and the calf will make the winds to blow; You will cause the rain to fall and the calf will cause

vegetation to sprout." The Holy One, praised be He, said to Moses, "You are making the same mistake that the people are making! This calf is not real!" Moses then replied, "If that is so, why should You be angry with Your children?" (Exodus Rabbah).

Let your words with God also be wise and convincing.

A man can pray in any decent bodily position. Those with high calling sometimes use what we would call advanced yoga positions, like Elijah who put his face between his knees, which is possible only after much physical exercise (1KI 18:42).

Use your eyes in prayer. I do not know how the custom of closing your eyes in prayer arose. Jesus' habit was to lift them. The bridegroom in Solomon's song says to his bride, "Thou has ravished my heart with one of thine eyes" (SOS 4:9). ("Having ravished the heart" is expressed by the single Hebrew word ~levavtini~, which is the strongest word for uniting two hearts.)

Jesus is attentive to our eyes while we pray. He observed that a publican, "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven," knowing his own sinfulness, and says, "this man went down to his house justified" (LUK 18:13-14).

At other times, believers show God great love through the expression in their eyes. Learn to use your eyes correctly in your communion with God and with men.

The End "100 PRISON MEDITATIONS"

Alone With God

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[The following is from the back cover of the book:]

'I try to put into these sermons my deepest, perhaps my ultimate dying thoughts. I preach only because it is in my character to do so, as it is in the nature of nightingales to sing.'

Imprisoned for three years beneath the ground in solitary confinement, Pastor Richard Wurmbrand composed sermons, delivered every night to an unseen congregation. He committed them to memory by summarizing them in rhymes.

These previously unpublished sermons, the fruit of Wurmbrand's extreme deprivations, demonstrate in a new, personal and stimulating way the relevance of the Bible for today, and reveal unique insights into the character of God.

Born in Rumania, Jewish Christian Richard Wurmbrand now lives in the United States. He is the author of ~From the Lips of Children~, ~If Prison Walls Could Speak~ and ~Sermons from Solitary Confinement~.

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Prologue

This is a book arising from a completely idle life, a life in solitary confinement in a Communist jail in Bucharest. I spent three of my fourteen years of prison alone in a cell, thirty feet below ground, with fifty pounds of chains on my feet and manacles on my hands, without ever seeing the sun, moon, stars, rain, or flowers, without paper or pencil, book or newspaper, let alone the Bible.

I never heard the slightest noise. The guards wore felt-soled shoes, and one could not hear their approach.

I never saw a human face except for the torturers, whose visage was something less than human.

I never saw a color. I forgot that colors exist - violet, blue, red, yellow. Always I saw only the grey walls and my dull grey uniform.

Today thousands of Christians, Jews and other innocents are in a similar situation in Vietnamese, Chinese, Soviet, Mozambique, Ugandan prisons. They have long since ceased to ask themselves the usual questions that are in the minds of men. Instead, they ask, Do I live or vegetate? Is what I experience still existence? Is the whole of life only a nightmare? Does a God exist? Does existence exist? If God exists, so what? What is the good of His existing if He does not help us? If He cannot overthrow evil, how could He make a world?

During my years of solitary confinement I composed 350 sermons. I created them in my mind, because I

could not write them down. I delivered them every night to an unseen audience. I also committed them to memory by using the simple mnemonic device of summarizing them in short rhymes, which I repeated again and again.

When I was released from prison I did not sleep until I had committed all of them to paper. I managed to do so for 348 out of the 350.

As one puts a bouillon cube in boiling water to make soup, so I have diluted these very concentrated rhymes and reconstructed more or less my sermons.

It has not been difficult for me to reposition myself again in the atmosphere of that solitary cell, because even while free I continue to live in prison. I read only about the suffering Church. I write and preach about her, I work for her, I dream about her. Though the Jews left Egypt, Egypt did not leave the Jews. Whoever has passed through long years of imprisonment remains a prisoner even after he has been freed.

Some of the sermons I preached to my invisible congregation have already been published in two volumes, ~Sermons in Solitary Confinement~ and ~If Prison Walls Could Speak~, which have been well received. Many readers have said they were edified. This is what encourages me to present a few more sermons delivered under those exceptional circumstances.

These sermons focus on the fundamental questions that torment every man in his subconscious. When one is faced with them under special circumstances as I have been, one realizes that all other so-called "practical" thoughts about material or spiritual life are more often an escape from these ultimate concerns that plague the soul.

Thoreau says, "The art of life, of a poet's life, is, having nothing to do, to do something." Many great

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works of poetry have come out of a life of idleness, about which others have wondered. My idleness in the solitary cell has helped me to formulate questions. No answers are needed.

A man went to his pastor asking advice about some difficult problems. The pastor replied, "Kneel in church for two hours and you will have the answer."

The man said, "Do you really believe that the good Lord will appear to me in two hours' time and clarify my thinking?"

"No," said the pastor, "but you will realize in that time that you can live well enough with the questions unanswered and keep perfect trust in life."

This is the conclusion I have reached, too.

Jesus asked on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" No angel came with a reply, but He was enabled to bear heroically the pain of the mystery together with the physical pain and end His earthly life with the triumphant shout, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

I hope my book will serve you to this end.

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page 11 How We Pass the Time

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

I am sure you would like to know how we spend our

time in prison. I must say, it passes quickly.

When I thought about the possibility of going to prison and heard stories of food deprivation and starvation, I was fearful. Now I realize that hunger is easy to bear. Sometimes a well-intentioned rich man thinks about the hunger of the poor more than the poor man thinks about it. Man has often dwelt in situations where food resources were scarce. Hunger has been the rule, satiety the exception. So man has elaborated mechanisms of adaptation to hunger. A Huguenot once survived forty-six years in prison. She probably did not have much to eat during that period, yet she survived.

I am not preoccupied with hunger.

For one thing, I travel a lot. Sometimes I hover for hours over Africa. I can see its darkness, its dense, dimly lighted jungles inhabited by wicked demons. I see Israel, the Arab countries, India, China, the vast ant-hill of Asia, a place of many crimes and few altars. I fly over Australia, Polynesia, the New Hebrides.

I remember reading how Patton brought the New Hebrides to Christ. Has his work remained? For years he preached in vain. Then he dug a well. When the natives asked him what he was doing and he explained, they laughed him to scorn. "Water comes only from above. It

cannot come from below," they assured him. But it came. And when they saw it, they accepted Christ and all the teachings of the Church, though there exists not the slightest connection between the drawing of water from a well and the cleansing of sins through the blood of Christ.

Have Communists come in the meantime and shown them some greater "miracle," perhaps a tractor, which might convince them that the whole philosophy of Marx is true? Such are the foundations of vast systems of thought accepted by men. A boy enamored of a Catholic girl will accept the dogma of the Pope's infallibility, of the bodily assumption of Mary, and of transubstantiation. He may believe in it sincerely. He might even be ready to suffer for it later. But the point of departure of his convictions is valueless.

I pass to America, the hope of the world for liberty, a hope which will deceive. I can see Scandinavia, England, Russia, France, Europe, the place of constant senseless wars in which nobody is ready to make the gesture of extending the first hand of real friendship.

But I travel even further. I have this trivial globe, and mankind. There are other stars and other beings and other endeavors to stem the stream of evil.

From my stellar pulpit the whole world is my parish. I pray for all of it, though from a practical standpoint I can be only a rank-and-file soldier on a very small sector of the front.

Nobody can fight without interruption. I tap the Gospel by Morse code through the wall. But I must also have some relaxation. The discussions by code embrace many topics: religion, politics, and stories from private life. Sometimes a prisoner simply entertains by telling a joke.

Tonight I heard a good one:

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Three men sat in a prison cell and asked each other why they had been arrested. One said, "I was arrested for sabotage."

"What did the sabotage consist of?"

"I came to my job five minutes late."

"And why are you in prison?"

"I am in for spying."

"And what did the spying consist of?"

"I came to the factory five minutes early, and they thought I was trying to spy on its secrets."

Then the third was asked, "Why are you in prison?"

"Because I came to work punctually, which meant that I must have connections in the West who sent me a

good watch."

I pay my dues to human nature and laugh a little. But I weep a little about the tragic background of this joke, because the three persons mentioned really sit in prison. Under Communism all roads lead to jail.

But then I remember that I have better things to do than amuse myself or brood about such things. I can spend some hours in the communion of saints. People usually imagine them to be somewhere far away, although the Bible tells us that they encompass us (HEB 12:1).

So I evoke the story of St. Gerard, a child who once went into the church to the statue of the holy virgin with the little Jesus and said to the Child: "I am so alone; I have no one to play with," whereupon Jesus descended from the statue and played with him. I recall the story of St. Bernard of C1airvaux, who also stood before a statue of Jesus and told Him how he loved Him and how he thirsted after the love of the Savior. His biography says that Jesus again descended from the statue and hugged St. Bernard.

That other men do not have the same experience as

Gerard and Bernard of Clairvaux is their own fault! Every man can see outwardly only what he has within. He who harbors no God in his heart does not meet God, and he who denies the possibility of a saint having intimate contact with God neither plays with the child Jesus nor is hugged by Him. For a child, these stories reflect life, just like all other happenings. "Except ye become as little children..." said the Master.

I remember when my son Mihai first told me that he had seen Jesus walking through our rooms. He did not tell me this when it happened because it did not seem extraordinary to him. He told me a few months or perhaps a year later. The supernatural was the natural in our home.

I spend my hour among these beauties. Whoever does not deliberately choose them will pass his time in ugliness. Modern art expresses the ugliness of the human soul that has abandoned Christ and the saints.

It is said that a match-maker introduced a young man and a girl, who were intended to marry. The young man was indignant after seeing the girl and said: "How did you dare show her to me? She has only one eye, her nose is crooked, her lips are lop-sided. She is thick as a barrel but has a very thin neck. Her hands are much too short. I cannot marry such a girl!"

The match-maker replied, "Well, what should I do with you if you are a man who does not appreciate Picasso?"

Communism is to politics what Picasso is to art. As he distorts his models on canvas, the Communists contort the bodies of their adversaries.

A Communist officer told me, "If God created man he created him to be tortured. This is obvious. There are some four or five zones of the human body whose touch produces pleasure. But there is not an inch of the human

body which cannot ache. You can torture a man by pulling his hair or by beating him on the soles of his feet. Man is created for torture, and I merely fulfill the Creator's will."

When you ask them why they beat, they laugh and give their standard reply, that boys' tops cease to spin if they are not whipped. And man and a wooden toy are all the same to them! Another standard reply is that the more heads you cut off, the taller you appear yourself! And that is exactly what they did in Romania, cutting off the heads of not only their adversaries but even their comrades who were competitors.

You try to counter with an obvious argument: "You have two sets of doctrines which do not square with one another: on one side Communism, which means even etymologically 'to seek the good of the community,' and on the other hand this treading on human individuals and their rights." The police officers reply indifferently, "What if the doctrines do not square? We have methods to make them square. Everything squares under a whip."

They use this whip a great deal. They enjoy ugliness. I enjoy beauty.

And so between a whipping and a joke, a pleasant journey and immobilization in heavy chains, between hunger and philosophizing that it is easy to bear (if so, why do I have to convince myself about this easiness?) between the communion of saints and the mockeries of devils unleashed against us, the time passes quickly.

Don't worry about us. All things will pass. This too will pass. Amen.

page 16 Desire To Escape From the "I"

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

In at least one respect I am like St. Anthony the Great. He never washed himself. I did not take a bath in years either. He slept in a tomb in order to remind himself constantly that this is the abode in which all earthly life inevitably ends. My cell is also like a tomb. It is thirty feet beneath the earth. The few planks which constitute my bed could as well become my coffin. I don't fear death. I am in a tomb without having died.

What will be my future?

At this moment I am completely useless. My life consists of eating watery soups and getting endless beatings. The sticks are all alike. They make the same noise when they fall upon my back. The pain does not impress me much any more. Nothing ever happens in my life. Why should I wish to prolong my existence in this world? That I may be released? Of what use can a broken man be in freedom?

And if I recover? I will deliver some sermons again. Previously, when preaching on the subject of the blood of Christ, I had contemplated how to form the sentences more beautifully, instead of feeling the horror of Christ's suffering and living the love which prompted Him to endure it. In one of the first Christian sermons I ever heard, the pastor yawned while preaching about Calvary. How unlike Dickens who, while reporting for a

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newspaper a speech in Parliament on the sufferings of the poor in Ireland, was so overcome that he was unable to take it down in shorthand.

A man speaks about the sufferings of a poor God and yawns. No wonder the audience yawned too. Pastors and flocks are fed up. They are also fed up with good sermons. They are too wise. Fools for Christ are needed, but I am not one of them. I don't see any point in being free.

Neither do I wish to keep my "I" in eternity. Why should I care for life after death when I have none before death? My "I" has simply become uninteresting to me. I am as little concerned about its eternal destiny as about what will happen to it tomorrow. I wish to be an "I" no longer. I reject my "I." My desire is to be a "he." "When he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1JN 3:2).

I once brought to Christ a Jew who was over ninety years old. He told me of a dream in which he saw himself in heaven and asked, "Where is Wurmbrand's place?" But he received no answer. The question was probably still pending. At least, that was what I thought when he told me his dream. Now I am inclined to think that there will be no "Me" there. Why should I care about receiving a crown, which I will cast at His feet anyway, over-awed by His majesty when I see Him? (REV 4:10). Is it not best to finish completely with the "I" and become "He"?

There was a time when I was obsessed with erotic fantasy. My head was a merry-go-round of lustful images. At first I fought against them in vain. Then I said to myself that if marriage is a symbol of the union between Christ and His Church, erotic imagination and love-play, which are basic to marriage, might also have a holy sense. When I stopped worrying about these

fancies, they lost their importance.

Now my conscience has been almost freed from existence. It is independent of the "I" and lives the imaginary life of being "He."

Is this sheer madness, like so many other things

happening to me, or am I one of the privileged few who have fulfilled the commandment of Christ to deny the "self"? But if I have denied the self, who is the one interested in knowing if this has really happened? Who then is happy that the denial of the "I" has occurred? We are running around in a vicious circle. One must have a very strong "I" and be a giant in faith to reject his "I," which is not only all that he has but also all that he is. Whoever burns the candle at both ends must have a great and glorious candle to burn. And what happens to the strong "I" who has rejected the "I"?

Jesus did not have the rich psychological vocabulary we have. He could not have spoken in Hebrew about the self, the ego, the id, the many complexes we worry about today.

I have always used Biblical language, speaking exactly as Scripture does about denying the self. In more precise modern language, I imagine that what Jesus meant us to leave was the ego.

In my dealings with people I have discovered that you don't impress them by showing how smart you are. You win them rather by sitting at their feet and giving them a chance to teach you. Even an idiot can teach something. The usual attendance in churches is composed of men of lower IQ than that of a pastor. If the pastor does not know stupidity but only intelligence, he will not be fruitful.

We have to learn from another to raise his ego. The ego is the desire to be superior. It is the high opinion one holds about oneself and one's achievements. I don't

believe as does Freud that the strongest desire of a man is the sexual urge, though it is enormous. The strongest desire is to uphold his ego, to appear valuable before his fellowmen.

Respect another's ego, but renounce your own. I believe this is what was meant by Jesus' commandment to deny the self.

There is a tension in us because the ego is torn apart in the effort to present a more beautiful image before the

world. Tension ceases when we become indifferent to what people think about us. I have been a pastor much beloved by my family and my congregation, and much hated by anti-Christian Jews because of my missionary work to win Jews for Christ. Now I am only despised and mocked by every man with whom I speak, because I speak only with wardens and interrogators. What do their opinions count? For Juliet it was enough to be loved by one single young man in Verona. Others might have passed near this girl of fourteen without even casting a glance at her. She was happy.

I don't know how much I have achieved, but I wish to lose not the self - I have come to the conclusion that such an endeavor is chasing after the impossible - but self-assertion. The Tao-Te-King says, "Clay is moulded into a vessel, but the ultimate use of the vessel depends upon the part where nothing exists. Doors and windows are cut out of the wall of a house, but the ultimate use of the house depends upon the parts where nothing exists." I wish to become such a useful nothing.

I am in the lowest social category, a man who will probably die in prison, sentenced for crime. But I am content to be so low. I have so little to renounce now. It seems ridiculous even to attempt to give up self-assertion. What have I to assert and before whom?

For a long time I have played with the ideas of what I

would do if I were a pope, a king, a polar explorer, again a little child. Then I became pious and thought about the eternal salvation of what I recognize to have been my ego. Now I fancy only to be "He." I don't strive to be He. I believe I am. Psychotherapists would call it the Messiah complex. Well, they would have applied the same diagnosis to Him, and they would not even have been mistaken. He really believed He was the Messiah. And I believe I belong to His body, as much as His brain and His heart belonged to His body during His earthly life. Every part of Him was He. And I am He. Luther wrote "The Christian is Christ." Only this He lives eternally. He does not need the appendix of a little "I."

When Michelangelo finished his Pieta, he exclaimed, "Only the marble separates me from my statue." I would say, "Only 120 pounds of flesh separate me from

being fully He."

"To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

page 21 To Know The Holy Thing

MY BELOVED

It is only natural that nobody knows about these sermons of mine. People live during the day on words. I speak silences during the night.

We have been put in subterranean cells, thirty feet below the surface, where no noise is heard. Our captors did not know that ascetics have always sought out solitude, silence, eventlessness, a life in which nothing disturbs the spirit, as ideal circumstances for their development.

For me it is all right to be in a cavern, locked away. Thoughts can pass through thick walls. And it is ideal to have a life without events. A man from a neighboring cell asks, "What day is it?" I can give the answer, "Every day God is my date. I have no other."

Nor is silence a torture for me. Jews have been prepared for silence even through their language.

The Hebrew language has silent letters. The ~Aleph~, first letter of the alphabet, is a scarcely audible breathing, and the ~ayin~ a trifle stronger breathing but still almost inaudible.

The Lord said to John, "I am the Alpha and the Omega" (REV 21:6). This is how the words appear in the Greek New Testament. But Jesus and St. John were both Jews, so they probably spoke Hebrew. How would Jesus have said that he is the ~Aleph~? Would he have

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pronounced the name of the letter, or would he have simply breathed on the apostle as He had done on another occasion, and would this breath have been the ~aleph~? As for the ~tav~, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, it was written at that time as a cross. Would

Jesus have made the sign of the cross? When did this sign begin to be used as a holy sign? We find an abundance of crosses in the catacombs, perhaps as a result of this conversation.

There are different signs written below and above the Hebrew letters to make them pronounceable. They are what we would call vowels in other languages. But not all of these can be heard. The ~shevah~, the first "vowel" of the Hebrew Bible, is in reality only a half-vowel. It is a very short "e." A half-vowel (hataph-segol) begins the name of God, ~Elohim~. ~Brit~, the Hebrew word for "covenant," also has a half-vowel at the beginning. It has to be pronounced quickly. It is as if the structure of the Hebrew language itself would teach one to speak little about holy things. One learns most about them in silence.

The name which we spell "Jehovah" starts in Hebrew with a very short vowel almost without forming the lips for it and finished with a silent "h." By the way, Jehovah, like all substantives and names ending with a "h," is a feminine name. Jeshuah, the name of Jesus in Hebrew, is also a feminine name. It is like calling a boy "Helen" or "June."

The earliest evidence of man's religion, outside the Biblical line, is the worship of the female. Archaeologists have dug up a whole galaxy of female figures from about 2500 B.C., usually of naked women, standing or seated, often pregnant. The earliest temple compounds in the whole world, dating from around 3000 B.C. in Mesopotamia were dedicated to the worship of the Mother,

some temples even being suggestively of oval form. The first recorded extra-Biblical divine being was a goddess. The word for Spirit in Hebrew, ~ruah~, is a feminine substantive.

I had never thought about these things before imprisonment. Now they have become extremely important to me. Protestants have weighed exaggerated veneration of the virgin Mary against the teaching of the Scriptures. It is like judging the loud cries of tortured men with Bible verses teaching soft speech. This great veneration for and appeal to Mary must have originated

with men who suffered terrible deprivations and at the same time passed through a dark night of the soul in which they could not apprehend the nearness of Jesus. In an extremity of torture, prisoners always cry, "Mother."

I have deviated completely from what I had intended to say. It is because for the first time I preach what I think. In the pulpit, pastors preach what they have thought of in their study while preparing their sermons. Congregations would wonder very much if one Sunday morning their pastors were to tell all the wandering thoughts that pass through their minds as they give their prepared message. They have doubts just when they preach certainties, attractions towards a sin just when they thunder against it. They surely would not thunder if it did not exercise such an attraction.

But you must bear with me. I come back now to my subject.

The surroundings of our solitary confinement are conducive to silence. The wardens have felt-soled shoes. We do not hear them walking up and down the corridor. They rarely speak to us. Everyone sits alone in his cell without any book or writing material and, according to his preparation, broods or meditates, loses himself in

erotic imagination or makes practical plans for an uncertain future.

Rarely do we hear the cry of somebody being beaten because there are special rooms for beatings and torture somewhere else. Sometimes we hear the ravings of someone who has gone mad. But he would be quickly gagged or given some injection. And then again, silence.

The only real and more constant interruption of the silence is the "telephone," the tapping signals in Morse code through the walls or the pipes of the central heating. Usually the wardens do not disturb this. They know our codes and are interested in listening in on what we communicate to each other. There are always the naive few who allow some secrets to slip through their communications.

The number one topic of all conversations is divining when and how the Americans will come. We set dates by which time we feel we surely will have been freed. With absolutely no possibility of obtaining real information, except perhaps on a bit of paper found in the toilet or from a prisoner arrested six months before, nevertheless we tap to each other estimates and commentaries on the most "recent" sensational events.

Frogs living in a well discuss the ocean they never saw. Insects living only a summer talk about skiing. Men existing in tiny subterranean cells with minds long since gone mad philosophize about the effects of world events on them, events of which they know nothing.

The conversations do not last long. The invasion of sound gives way to the deep silence in which I can meditate I do not desire to be free. I ~am~ free. The tyrant of Syracuse once went to the slave-philosopher Epictetus and told him, "I'll pay the ransom for you and you will be liberated."

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Epictetus replied, "Why do you care about me? Free yourself."

"But I am a king," said the amazed tyrant.

"This I contest," was the answer of the philosopher. "He who masters his passions is a king even while in chains. He who is ruled by his passions is a slave even while sitting on a throne."

Real freedom does not depend upon external circumstances. There exists the wonderful liberty of which the children of God partake, even when in straitened circumstances or trammeled by prison walls.

I am not freed of passions but I am free from the desire to know trifles. What matters when I will be free? The period since my birth has been brief. In the millennia before I was born the world went on without considering my presence in it important. I am sure that events continue their course undisturbed by my absence.

Nor do I wish to know other things. I wish to know only "the holy thing" about which Luke speaks in

mystery (LUK 1:35). One day of His, one day of being ~with~ Him, is worth a lifetime of knowledge about Him, which is putting into human words the inexpressible.

Why my Beloved keeps me in prison I do not know. But I remember from ~A Midsummer Night's Dream~, which I consider the profoundest of Shakespeare's plays, these words: "The course of true love never did run smooth ... (To be crossed is) as due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs, wishes and tears." There has never been a great love without its share of enigma and drama. So also is the love between Jesus and me. Let Him do as He likes. Reason will never fathom His ways. Genera11y "reason and love keep little company."

God did not free Daniel. He left him in the lions' den until he was freed by Darius, who threw him there. Perhaps I too will be freed by the Communists, not by the

Americans or the miraculous intervention of God. But I do not lose much time thinking about this.

I wish to know God in the supreme sense. The Hebrew word for "to know," ~iada~, and the Greek ~gnosis~ are both used also for union between husband and wife. I wish to know him intimately, to have the beatific vision, to see "the holy thing" in its fullness.

Life and death depend upon this.

I once told a Jewish boy of twelve, "If Jesus is the Messiah and you reject Him, your soul will be eternally lost," to which he answered earnestly, "But it is also the other way around. If Jesus is not the Messiah and you adore Him, you are eternally lost." And so we sat down to find out which of us was right.

The life of Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor, centered around Jesus long before he met Him on the road to Damascus. He had ordered Christians to be killed. Whether Saul was a national hero fighting against a dangerous impostor or a killer of innocent believers in the true Savior depended upon the reality of the vision he had before his eyes.

Mary Magdalene waited at the tomb of Jesus. He had

forgiven her many sins. Everything depended on what would happen that Sunday morning. If He were resurrected, the remission of sins granted by Him was valid. If He remained entombed, her sins would return and she would have added to her former transgressions the grave offence of having followed a false Messiah.

I am in the same situation. If Jesus is not the Truth, I will have squandered my life and youth in useless suffering. If He is, I will have gained everything.

Will he come once to free me from my doubts?

No thief could sleep if he knew that a sack of gold lay in the next room. I also spend one sleepless night after another. But some day I will get hold of "the holy thing."

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I surely prefer Communists to lukewarm, nominal Christians. If Jesus is not the Savior, if He was a deceiver or one deceived or, as some say, a psychopath, things cannot be left as they are. It becomes the duty of every honest man to go from door to door to warn men of the pernicious influence of Christianity.

He has to give Himself to me totally or I will reject Him totally. I will never be satisfied with glimpses, with possibilities and probabilities of truth. I must know Him. I must live in His embrace, or I will deny Him as One who does not give all He promises.

Tons of lead are shovelled and smelted in the hope of getting one grain of radium. Years of prison are not too much if once one may have one day with Him. His days are rare, as tungsten and vanadium are rare. His day comes slowly, but when it comes it will compensate for years lost in the darkness of prison cells.

On that day words will no longer mask contrary intentions. Truth will triumph. Human and divine natures will marry, as they are united in Him. We will see things as they are. I will know "the holy thing"; whether this happens in prison or in the bosom of my family will make no difference. Amen.

page 28 Morals Apart For The Elect

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

Truth is revolutionary. It even revolutionizes its own definition.

One thing comes up again and again. At every interrogation I tell the officer fairy tales: I invent stories to lead him astray. When he asks for concrete details and the names of those with whom I worked underground, I give him the names of people I know are abroad, of some who have died recently, or of their own top stooges within the Church. I usually succeed in making my story plausible, at least for a time, so as to delay a beating until they have checked all the names.

When I return to my cell, I am no longer alone. I have with me a preacher, Mr. Morals, who delivers long sermons about how wrong it is to lie. He quotes Spurgeon to me: "It is never right to do a little wrong to obtain the greatest possible good. Your duty is to do the right: consequences are with God." Or, "I have no right to commit a sin to increase usefulness. I have to be righteous even if it undoes usefulness." I wonder why my Mr. Morals is such a boring preacher, always delivering the same sermon. I would like to hear him speak for a change about how stupid it is to betray brethren to the police while leaving "the consequences to God" - such consequences as hungry wives and orphaned children for whom nobody will care.

The authorities consider it complicity with a counter-revolutionist if you give a piece of bread to the child of a jailed Christian. Mr. Morals teaches that nobody should go against the law of the land, because it is wrong to break laws. The main thing to be concerned about is keeping the magnificent "I" righteous. The consequences belong to God. Let Him rain manna again for families of imprisoned Christians.

I have high respect for Mr. Morals. But I believe he delivers his sermon in the wrong place. I would make the proposal that he do some of his preaching to the Communists. Their questioning me about things which are not their concern is surely less moral than my giving deceptive answers.

I am a child of God. In most spheres God's children do not have the same moral standards as common men.

We love our enemies, whereas others consider it right to defeat them. We do the beautiful though unproductive deed: we squander money on costly perfume with which to anoint a Man who will be scourged and crucified tomorrow as a criminal. Others much more practical and better fitted than we to lead charitable, even Christian charitable, institutions condemn such squandering because the money is needed for the poor. Has not God Himself put it in our hearts to provide for them?

We are glad that Jesus is righteous, and we need not try to become righteous ourselves through any deed or attitude of our own.

The others are reasonable, of course. They choose between right and wrong, and they make the proper choice. We believe that all things work together for our good - St. Augustine adds: "even our sins" - and we don't make any choices.

Some have before them two ways: one leading to life,

the other to death. We admire them when they step decidedly towards life. But for us death is abolished. The Lord told us, "Whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (JHN 11:26). We are utterly disinterested in this constant oscillation between two paths and hundreds of bypaths. Others exercise their will for good purposes. We don't believe in free will. We believe that right choices as well as their fulfillment are gifts from God, often given to those who seek them least.

I lie to my oppressors. Is truth an absolute obligation? Does the Bible always give the facts as they are? Does it not strain some truth, on occasion even yield truthfulness to love and respect?

I remember a verse from the book of Judges (JDG 18:30). I often thought about it, first, when Nazi persecution and, later, when Communist domination obliged us to prevaricate. In it Jonathan, an idolatrous priest in Israel (as a matter of fact the first), is called the son of Gershom. In the Hebrew

original, in all the manuscripts, the name Manasseh is written here in a strange manner: [Hebrew characters not printed] The "n" is suspended above the line to show that it is an addition that veils some secret.

Gershom was a son of Moses. The first idolatrous priest was therefore a grandson of the lawgiver. The writer of the sacred book did not wish to do Moses the indignity of publicizing the fact. Therefore he changed the name Moses to Manasseh. In Hebrew it took the addition of just one letter. For the few who might understand the subtleties of Scripture and the reason why a letter would be written above the regular line, a reminder of the real fact was left. But the "n" in this position is not the same as a normal "n." A musical note written above a given line can change the whole tune.

Now, was it truth to call Gershom the son of Manasseh when he was actually the son of Moses? Does

it please Truth when a great man of God is put to shame? Does she not rather rejoice when she sees respect for such a man?

Does Truth desire only fact, or is she enamored of other values as well, such as love for the brethren whom I have to protect from arrest? Does Truth consider herself more important than me? Once, using a piece of thread, I cut deeply into my flesh between the toes and did my best to infect the wounds with chalk, in the hope of gaining a better life in the infirmary. Did I offend Truth through this pretence?

The whole matter will have to be elaborated on much further.

The world teaches us to pretend, to be hypocrites. Jesus, too, teaches us to pretend, but with a difference. He does not teach us to show ourselves as we are. When you fast, He says, look like a man who is feasting; when you pray, let people think you are taking a nap; when you give alms, conceal the fact (MTT 6:1-6,16-18). This is holy deceit. Mr. Morals would condemn this. He would insist on the obligation to tell people exactly what you are doing. He would have rebuked the woman from Tekoah who fabricated a heart-rending story in order to

convince David he should forgive his son Absalom, who had greatly sinned (2 Samuel 14). Is Truth so adamant in harshness that she would never yield to a fable in order that grace might conquer?

Jesus pretended. When He came to Emmaus, "He made as though he would have gone further," though in reality He wanted to stay with His disciples (LUK 24:28).

It just passes through my mind that if Michelangelo had not started as a genial forger, claiming that a sleeping (Cupid he had made was some old Greek sculpture, today we might not have his ~Pieta~. People

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might not have paid any attention to him.

Dare anyone condemn Desdemona, who died with a lie on her lips defending her beloved Othello, who had killed her just because he loved too much and had been the jealous victim of intrigue? Jesus Himself strained the truth at love's behest when He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Every one of them knew how painful crucifixion was.

I believe that all the implications have not yet been drawn from the teachings of the Lord. The simple fact that the business of the merchants of religion doesn't prosper should show us that they don't squeeze out of their merchandise - religion - all the profit it can give. If they were to extract more wisdom from Jesus, they could then glean from the public much more interest in religion.

Jesus has given us His Word - one talent. We should make it ten talents. There are still new worlds to be discovered in the realm of Christian thought. To discover them we have to have courage to leave the secure shore of commonly accepted morals. I, on my part, will "lie" whenever necessary in order to protect my brethren.

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THE ABSOLUTE DUTY OF TRUTHFULNESS

BELOVED BRETHREN AND SISTERS

A Jewess came to a rabbi and told him her troubles and pains. After weeping and sighing for an hour, she finally said, "Rabbi, I feel better now. My headache has disappeared."

"No, my daughter, it has not disappeared," said the rabbi. "Now I have it."

Since the time the Communists took over our country, we have had to start secret Christian activities, first within the Soviet army and then, when the terror began, among Romanians themselves. Secret activity is not possible without a certain amount of lying and deceit. The consciences of many Christians were troubled about this, but instead of living with their troubles, they put them on my shoulders. Their headaches became mine.

Now I lie at every interrogation. Through Morse code the prisoners from the cell nearby tell me that they do the same, but afterwards they feel as if they have sinned greatly and ask me what to do.

I know you all have the same problem, so I will tell you what I think in this matter.

If an authority, the state or your parent acts unjustly, your duty is to resist and oppose the authority. Don't ask me for Bible verses justifying this attitude. There exists a

natural law for which no divine revelation is needed. In the Christian era, some men, like Thomas Aquinas for example, justified even the murder of tyrants in extreme cases. (See "Widerstandsrecht" by Ernst Wolf, in the dictionary ~Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart~, 3rd ed., vol. VI.) Luther also recognized this right of resistance.

Do you think your hands remain pure if you refrain from killing the tyrant? He may kill millions of innocents, as did Hitler, and you will be co-responsible if you could have prevented the carnage by destroying the tyrant and his clique of murderers.

The Lutheran bishop Eivind Berggrav of Norway, who sat in prison under the Nazi occupation, later said before the Lutheran World Federation, "If the authority becomes arbitrarily tyrannical, we have a demonic situation, which means a regime which is not submissive to God. It would be a sin to submit to a diabolic power. In such circumstances we have in principle the right to rebellion in one form or another."

If we have the right to resist the tyrant and to deny him the possibility of continuing to live, even more then

do we have the right to oppose his inquisitive delving into what he is not entitled to know - the secret activities of the church. We can lie to the Communist persecutor.

Not that it ever becomes right to lie. But it is wrong to prefer your personal purity to responsibility for your neighbour. If you speak the truth, you put your brethren in prison. If you speak the truth, you make the existence of an underground church impossible and deprive whole nations of the Gospel. In order to avoid the guilt of having lied, we take upon ourselves a worse burden. Bonhoeffer said, "True innocence manifests itself just through entering into the communion of error out of love toward another."

We cannot assume the responsibility of telling the

truth to tyrants, because it will help them torture and kill Christians. I will not justify lying either, but I will gladly accept its responsibility before God. I discover that I am able to live with my conscience after having lied.

Here we have a case in which one doesn't have a choice between good and evil, but only between two evils.

Though we sometimes have the duty to lie, still we have the absolute duty of truthfulness. It is a grave sin to trespass against either duty.

The duty to be truthful is obvious.

Christianity presents an incredible message that contradicts the whole of human experience, namely, that a virgin gave birth to the Son of God, that angels appeared and spoke to shepherds regarding the newborn Babe, that stars led wise men to His very house, that Jesus performed miracles as had no man before, that after having died on the cross, He was resurrected bodily and ascended to heaven.

St. Paul, when proclaiming this message to the heathen, offered as proof of its veracity the fact that most of these things regarding Jesus had been predicted by the Jewish prophets. At that time it was no easy matter to become a Christian. It could mean being thrown to the wild beasts. Every man had to think seriously before making such a decision. The most sensible approach would have been to ask the closest Jewish neighbour if his Scripures had really foretold all these facts about Jesus, to which the answer was invariably, "Jesus was a fake, an impostor, condemned as such by our high

priests."
One can see the dilemma of Christianity in the Gospels themselves. The prophet Malachi had predicted that before the appearance of the Messiah, Elijah

the prophet would come again. When this objection was brought to Jesus, He answered, "Elijah has come - he is John the Baptist." So priests and Levites were sent to inquire of John the Baptist, who flatly denied that he was Elijah, thus appearing to cancel all the claims of Jesus to be the Anointed.
Under these difficult circumstances it was of the utmost importance that every Christian be an example of truthfulness in private life. His character was the main accreditation of his strange faith. That is why Peter was so harsh to Ananias and Sapphira, who with an outright lie had pretended to be more self-sacrificing Christians than they really were. When discovered, each suffered a shock and died on the spot - as do primitive people today who violate a taboo.
Christians should be truth incarnate, in the full sense of the word. The Greek word for truth is ~aletheis~, which means "nothing hidden." The Hebrew word ~emet~ is composed of the first, middle and last letters of the alphabet, indicating that truth exists only when it is all of a piece from beginning to end, without any alteration or misrepresentation. Every half-truth is a full lie.
But somehow life leaves us all forsworn. I don't know a man who would never act or pretend. I can understand Ananias and Sapphira. They loved the Lord and His company. They wanted to belong and for this sacrificed the greatest part of their substance. They also reserved something for themselves because they sensed rightly that the first love of Christians would not last. Very soon financial quarrels would arise among them (Acts 6), and they might find themselves with nothing in their old age. Their thoughts were much too complicated to be told to enthusiastic apostles who had given away everything. Curiously, the name Sapphira means in Hebrew "calculation."

Peter, who had himself pretended to be a hero on the night of Jesus' betrayal, was harsh to them. Some time

later, he was rebuked publicly by Paul for pretending to be faithful to the Jewish religion. John, the apostle, was very nearly befriended by the high priest, who hated Jesus. For such treatment he must have indulged in some prevarication.

Life is impossible without the theatre of courtesy, gentleness, good manners – the niceties which never correspond entirely to the state of the heart. So, then, absolute truthfulness is necessary and absolute truthfulness is impossible. How can we resolve this problem?

In a sense, every man's life is a pretence because to be an "I," a separate entity, is a lie. Jesus said you must deny yourself (LUK 9:23), that is, acknowledge the unreality of the "I," which is no more than the point of convergence of a multitude of hereditary features, of social influences, of the impact of good and evil spirits, of works of nature, and so on. A Hindu once asked a child, "Break open that fruit and what will you see in it?"

"Seeds," came the reply.

"Break open the seeds and what do you see?"

"Nothing."

The Hindu said, "When there is a nothing, a tree grows."

Your pretence will cease only with your denying the "I." Then truth will grow on your boughs.

Constantine the Great suffered terrible remorse about having killed his son. He asked all kinds of heathen priests and philosophers if there were forgiveness for him. He received only negative replies. Then he asked the Christians, and they told him how easy it is to receive forgiveness. On whom does the sin lie? On the "I," but the lie of its existence can easily be detected. The "I" can be denied. Then only Christ remains. He gladly bears

the responsibility of everything which has ever happened. He is the Lamb which has taken away the sin of the world. He said, "I am the truth."

Therefore, when the "I" is denied, only the one incomparable, indivisible Truth remains, and lies will disappear. To whom should ~the~ Truth lie? Before whom does He ever have to play-act if He is all? Jesus is the intellectual and spiritual expression of reality. He is for me the only "I." If He is my all in all, the truth embodied in Him will accredit itself. It is His concern, not mine.

Jesus is a Saviour to the uttermost. Thus He saves me

from the constant nagging worries about whether or not I have spoken or served the truth. I leave Him this burden, too.

A Russian brother told us about an occurrence in Odessa.

The underground church wanted to baptize a group of some twenty individuals. They considered a fish-hatchery at the edge of town to be the best place. The old caretaker was known to go to bed early. Fish would not create a disturbance. There was plenty of water. So the baptism took place there.

The next day, the old caretaker went to the president of the Soviet and asked to be given another job. "Why?" he was asked. "You will never find a more suitable place to work."

"No, I will never go back. The hatchery is haunted." And he explained: "Last night I saw some twenty beings who looked like men, but in reality they were something else. Beauty that was not earthly radiated from everyone. They sang songs entirely unlike anything we sing in our pubs. Then they entered the water one by one, and when they came out of it, I had no doubts any more. They were unearthly. I could not explain who they were. But I won't go back."

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The caretaker saw things better than we do when we have a baptism. He observed that we are moved into an entirely new sphere - that of the children of God. The difference between a child of God and a man is much greater than that between a man and an ape.

We are partakers of the divine nature (2PE 1:4) and belong to the world which gives commandments, not to that which strives to obey them. Non-Christians who acknowledge the obligation to be truthful find themselves the victims of inner tension because their fallen nature keeps them from adequately fulfilling their duty. As Christians we don't have the duty of truthfulness: we have its character. We speak it as it is given to us. We can have the full confidence that what we speak is truly what God wishes the other man to know.

We don't have to calculate like Ananias and Sapphira what to give and what to say in order to justify ourselves. Everything has been given. We are just, through the blood of Christ, and never need any further justification. Saving truth emanates spontaneously from our renewed heart.

As children of God we live in a mysterious sphere. Our father in faith is Abraham, who was ordered by God to commit what is considered among men to be a horrible crime: to kill his own son. He was prepared to do so, and he was praised for his willingness.

All human moral standards cease to be valid here. We have as our God a Being who not only bruised His Son but found pleasure in doing so (ISA 53:10). If the salvation of mankind cost so much, the Father paid the price willingly. Why should this Father object to letting me, another child of His, purvey to my interrogators what humans would call an untruth, in order to save the underground church, His messengers of salvation? I have no "I." Let Him decide. Amen.

page 40 The Spaces in the Bible

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

Until I went to prison I thought I believed that the Bible was the Word of God. If anyone had asked me if I believed the ~whole~ Bible to be His Word, without hesitation I would have answered, "Yes."

I realize now that I was mistaken. I had only thought I believed so. The Bible consists of white sheets of paper (in former times, of parchments), on which are imprinted or inscribed black letters. Around these characters, between the lines and words and in the margins, is a considerable mass of blank space, perhaps even more than that occupied by words. The Bible could not exist without this empty space. Does it also belong to the Word of God, or is it sheer nothing? Does a "nothing" exist? Something that is cannot be nothing. The figure zero never occurs in the Bible.

Is it not possible that the empty spaces in the Bible - its silences - are at least as important as its words? One can find contradictions and debatable matters in the words of the Bible, but nobody can contradict the silence of the depths of its blank spaces.

We are told that when the Lord Jesus was brought to the temple at the age of twelve He amazed the priests with the questions He asked and the answers He gave. I am not very much interested in the amazement of the priests. I would have preferred to know what Jesus'

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questions and answers were. They cannot be found in

the black letters of the Gospel. But keep quiet and you will find them. They are contained in the blank space. In the quiet of a subterranean solitary cell I can read them.

In the prologue to his Gospel St. Luke writes that he first inquired diligently of eyewitnesses about all the episodes in the life of Jesus. In the course of his inquiries he must have gone to the house of Lazarus to ask about the visits of Jesus in Bethany. Martha told him that she had had a quarrel with her sister in the presence of Jesus. Luke may have considered the matter a trifle, he noted it. Then he asked Mary to tell her side of the story. She answered, "Martha chided me for not helping out in the kitchen, but I preferred to sit a couple of hours at the feet of Jesus and listen to Him. I did not wish to lose a word of what He had to say."

"You are the person I need," St. Luke would have exclaimed. "Please tell me the teachings that Jesus gave on that evening."

She surely would have answered, but nowhere do we find this information in Luke's books. We are only told that Mary listened to Him and that Jesus praised her for choosing the good part.

That is to say, we do not find Mary's memories about Jesus' talk in the black letters of the Bible. They are in the white space between chapters 10 and 11 of St. Luke.

There have been centuries of debate about the question of whether the bread and wine in holy communion really become the body and blood of the Saviour. But one thing is above debate: paper takes on a different value when the Bible is printed on it. That is why multitudes of Jews and Christians who have never read the Bible can be seen kissing it in synagogues and Orthodox churches. If the Word can become flesh,

sanctifying the womb of the virgin who bore Him, then the written Word can also give exceptional value to sheets of paper on which it is inscribed.

Even stones can become holy. Soviet soldiers told us about the church of the Holy Blood of Christ in Leningrad, closed by the authorities, whose walls bear hundreds of inscriptions: "God, give me love," "Lord, give me happiness," and others like these. Why do people feel instinctively that the right place to inscribe such requests is on the wall of what was once a church? Is it not like any other wall? Why do Jews travel clear

around the world just to pray at the wailing wall in Jerusalem? Could they not do the same thing leaning on the wall of their kitchens?

I know a good portion of the Bible by heart and "read" whole chapters from memory in my prison cell, but it is not at all like having the real Book before me. Its very paper is a marvel. In every fibre there are as many atoms as there are drops of water in the ocean or blades of grass on the whole earth. And the atoms are constituted of smaller particles. Electrons travel at the speed of 10,000 miles per second. While I read a page of the Bible, they will have travelled the distance from Bucharest to Tokyo countless times, while keeping the Word of God inviolate. The electrons constituting my own eyes also travel, perhaps lovingly chasing those of the Bible. The piece of paper is not dull and dead. It is one of God's mysteries; it is a cyclone of energy.

Paper has a dramatic history of its own. It was once a tree in the forest. Sunbeams played through its branches, birds made their nests in it and chirped, ants and insects scurried over its bark, lovers kissed each other in its shadow. Then rude men felled the tree. Seeing the wretchedness of slave labourers, it would not have known for whom to weep. It could almost forget its

own tragedy at the sight of prisoners who were hungry, dirty, poorly clothed, unskilled in this work, often injured, and who were forced to do this hard work under the surveillance of wardens with whips. A part of the tree became paper on which pornography or hate literature was printed. A part of it became Scripture. There exists a chosen people of God; there exists the elect of God in every nation; there are chosen walls; there exist chosen sheets of paper.

Mad thoughts? Perhaps. Which thoughts of a prisoner are not mad? Many of my ideas are foolish, although frenzy has not completely seized me yet. Otherwise I would not know that my ideas are foolish and I would not feel unhappy.

My observations about the travel of electrons applies to all paper, not only to that used for printing Bibles. True, but it is only through reading Holy Scripture that one gains an awesome respect for matter. Materialists do not love matter. They have no sense of its "earnest expectation" (ROM 8:19), do not sympathize with its "bondage of corruption" (ROM 8:21).

Listen! Maybe I will hear the ringing of church bells outside. It is a Sunday morning. Bells. Men have made brass express adoration for God. Materialists cannot make matter radiate the praises of atheism, of the nonexistence of God. The Word becomes not only flesh but matter. Jesus Himself as an incipient embryo was matter before becoming flesh.

The atom is mysterious; the world is mysterious; the Bible is also mysterious. If its meaning were plain, it would be the work of men. But it comes from another sphere. Let us take advantage of what is clear in Scripture and trust for the rest. One day we will be in the light, and then we shall no longer see "through a glass, darkly" (1CO 13:12).

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Never stop at the black letters of the Bible. If you were to ask me which Bible verses support me the most today, my answer would be, "The Bible verses which comfort me most are two verses which are not in the Bible."

First, I am happy that the Bible never mentions Jesus' asking anybody what sins he had committed, how many, of what gravity, under what circumstances, with what complicity. He met sinners and told them, "Be of good cheer, son or daughter, your sins are forgiven."

Second, what I appreciate is that the Bible records no instance in which anyone apologised or asked Jesus for forgiveness during His earthly life. On the last evening before His crucifixion the disciples had forsaken Him and one had denied Him. Afterwards, when they met their resurrected Lord, they should at least have said, "I'm sorry." But whoever looked into the face of Jesus saw so much kindness, so much love, such a willingness to forgive, that he knew there was no need to ask.

And so I say, read not only what the Bible records in black on white, but read its white spaces. Listen to its silences. They are eloquent. You are not asked what sins you have committed, nor are you commanded to utter long prayers of repentance. Rather, believe that His blood has cleansed you of all your sins, and rejoice.

Where we don't understand a part of the Bible, it is the simplest thing to say humbly, "I can't understand," and to reflect that we are acquainted with only the fringes of reality. The Author of the Bible can be trusted.

The proof of God's existence is that He has produced the Bible, and the proof of the Bible is that so marvellous a book could have been produced only by God.

Communists and some scientists claim that the world was not created by God. And if they were right? There would be reason enough to adore Him if He had produced only the Bible.

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A man who has lost, in addition to his beloved ones, all his belongings, his health, his reputation, his liberty or even just a needle, must seek these things in the Bible. He will surely find more than he has lost - the conviction of the irrelevance of the things lost. One thing is needed. Following the Bible, you will have chosen the good part. And you will find the Beloved. Amen.

page 46 Sins Are So Small To Him

BELOVED BRETHREN AND SISTERS

There is an abyss of sins in every one of us, the muck of generations.

On a certain Sunday I had preached twice and by evening was tired and in need of rest. But I felt a strong impulse to go to the pub which was just opposite my parsonage. When I told my wife about it, she objected vigorously.

"You spoke twice today against drinking, and now all the neighbours will see you going to have a drink. You can't do such a thing. You'll be slandered."

"Come with me," I replied, "so they will slander us both."

When we entered the pub, I understood why I had been brought here. In the midst stood a Russian captain with his finger on the trigger of a revolver, threatening to shoot everybody. He was drunk and had asked for more liquor. It had been refused him, and now he was terribly angry. People had hidden behind the bar and under tables. They could not parley with him, not knowing Russian. I could speak the language.

When I asked him what was happening, he quieted down a little and explained his demand. I assured him that I would take care of it if only he would keep quiet. I went to the pub owner and promised him that my wife and I would sit with the captain and entertain him so

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there would be no further trouble. "Give him one bottle

more."

The pub owner was so happy he exclaimed, "Pastor, you have saved my life! I will always remain grateful. Henceforth in my bar you can drink as much as you like free of charge."

The Russian captain, my wife, and I sat down at a table. A bottle of wine and three glasses were served. He was polite. He filled the glasses. My wife did not drink and I did not drink, but he showed courtesy. He would empty all three glasses. He was drunk, but he was used to drinking. He could reason and understand.

So while he drank, I told him the old, old story about the Son of God, who came down from heaven, was born of a virgin in a stable, taught love, led a life of sorrows, in the end was crucified for our sins, was raised from the dead, ascended to heaven, and is preparing for every repentant sinner who puts his confidence in Him an eternal abode in bliss. He listened attentively while drinking.

When I finished, he said, "Now that I know who you are, I will tell you who I am. I am an Orthodox priest. When, under Stalin, 80,000 priests were killed, I was terribly frightened. And so I accepted the offer which the Communists made to become an atheist lecturer.

"Though believing in God, I agreed to go from town to town, from village to village, to convince people that there is no God, no Christ and no eternal life. I have destroyed the faith of many people, including my former parishioners. I could not conquer fear. My punishment from God has been that with this hand with which I gave holy communion before, I have had to shoot Christians who refused to serve in the Red Army.

"And now I drink and drink to forget what I have

done, but I cannot forget. Waiter, bring another bottle."

Silently I adored the Holy Spirit, who brings us to the right place at the right time.

I asked the captain, "Do you still know the creed?"

He vaguely remembered it. Many years had passed since he had said it last.

So I began to recite in Russian, "I believe in one God, the Father almighty," and so on until I came to the words, "I believe in the remission of sins." I asked him, "Do you believe in this article of the creed?"

"I made it clear that I believe the whole Christian faith," he answered. "It was only fear that made me deny it."

I insisted, "Do you believe in the remission of sins?"

"Yes."

I pressed hard, "Do you believe in the remission of your sins?"

"Oh, no!" he shouted. "My sins have amounted to crimes and have been far too many."

"The creed does not state that only small and few offences are forgiven, but everything, all sins, without counting the number or looking at the size. When John the Baptist saw the Lord Jesus, he said, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' If you alone had committed all the murders, thefts, lies, perjuries, and adulteries committed by all mankind from the beginning but now believe in Jesus, behold, He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Do you believe in the remission of your sins?"

In tears, the officer repeated again and again, "I believe in the remission of my sins." Jesus had performed a masterwork. He had found not a lost sheep, but a lost shepherd.

I never saw this captain again. It was wartime. On the

next day he had gone further towards the front with his regiment. What did he do afterwards?

On the first day of her conversion the Samaritan woman brought the population of a whole town to Christ. What did she do later? Did her enthusiasm last? Did she continue to win multitudes as in the beginning, or did she pass into the arms of another husband? Jesus praised a Roman centurion for having faith such as one could not find even in Israel. What deeds did he perform with this faith? Or, once satisfied with the miracle he had expected, did he return to his duty, which was training soldiers to kill? Zaccheus promised to return everything he had extorted and give fourfold to everyone he had defrauded. Did he keep his promise?

I like EZE 20:3: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you." He wanted us to know a part of the story. Let it be enough for us. This captain, the Samaritan woman, the centurion, and Zaccheus all had ~one~ good moment when they put their trust in Jesus. The rest is not our business.

The Russian captain had been cleansed. What looked

to me and to him like a mountain of sin seemed to Jesus, who sees things from highest heaven, an insignificant mound.

In Old Testament times the Jews went astray by believing in Moloch. In Hebrew, Moloch means "the king who has reigned." Too often we have our souls fixed upon ugly events in the past. Christians believe in Jimloh, "the King who will reign." Worshippers of Jimloh believe that the past is forgiven and also repaired. Christians also believe in a holiness towards which we evolve. "He which hath begun a good work in you," writes the apostle Paul, "will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (PHP 1:6).

The Hebrews used the word ~hatath~ for a sin of a man

towards a fellow man, and ~asham~ for the sin of a man towards God, such as breaking the Sabbath or disobeying some ritual law. But ~asham~ meant also the restitution which a thief had to make for what he had stolen. In ISA 53:10, it is said that Jesus will make his soul an ~asham~, which means not only an offering for sin, but also a restitution for it. In some mysterious ways the Almighty will restore all I have done wrong.

In Shakespeare's ~Hamlet~, a wretched Claudius seeks to pray:

> O my offence is rank, it smells to heaven!
> It has the primal eldest curse upon 't;
> A brother's murder. Pray can I not.
> Though inclination be as sharp as will,
> My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
> And, like a man to double business bound,
> I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
> And both neglect...
> My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer
> Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder?'
> That cannot be, since I am still possess'd
> Of those effects for which I did the murder,
> My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
> May one be pardon'd and retain th' offence?

I reply: "Claudius, I can give you the answer. We can now speak freely with each other, both belonging to the same unreal world. You were buried after you died. I am buried alive. It doesn't make much difference. We can communicate. Yes, Claudius, you can be forgiven

too, though you can repair nothing. If you were now to send away your wife whom you obtained in a criminal manner, you would bring upon her new unhappiness and new temptations. If you renounced the crown, one

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who never prays might pick it up. Leave things as they are and believe in Jesus, the ~asham~, the restitution."

You can begin every day anew, unburdened by the past. And don't be afraid today of repeating the same old wrongs. Rather, be pleasantly surprised if it happens otherwise. God knows that your piano is bad and that you cannot make it produce good melodies. Only your inner state counts. God judges you according to your will only. Would Menuhin's concert be as pleasant to the ear if he played a gypsy's violin instead of the Stradivarius he uses? God looks at what you will, not at how much you can fulfil.

Your sins are remitted. Amen.

page 52 Measure In Delicacy

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

Mary Stuart accidentally stepped on the toes of the henchman when she was on the scaffold. It is said that her last words were, "I beg your pardon, sir executioner." She was a queen. Her good breeding was instinctive .

Likewise Christians, children of the heavenly King, show meekness when they are ill-used.

Christians simply love and shine. They do so even when, like their Master, they wear a crown of thorns and have in their hand a reed for a sceptre.

Believers also show kindness to those doomed by God.

God said to Moses, "Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon: behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land: begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle. This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee." And Moses "sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth unto Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace" (DEU 2:24-26).

Moses had been given the order to destroy a king. But as in the case of Pharaoh, God allowed Moses to proffer

peace and an amicable agreement to the heathen king.

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It is permissible to send words of peace even to those utterly rejected by the Creator.

The Christian is engaged in warfare as long as he lives on this earth. But his role can be compared to that of a military physician. He has to give medicine and comfort to the wounded on both sides.

Such Christian delicacy has produced changes in the heathen world.

Mahatma Gandhi wrote, "It was the New Testament which really awakened me to the rightness and value of passive resistance and love towards one's enemies." In 1908, when he was almost murdered by a Moslem, he did not prosecute him nor give evidence against him. This forgiven murderer became a disciple of Gandhi.

A similar story is told about the Christian Mrs. Rathenau. Her husband, finance minister of Germany, had been killed by a Nazi only for the crime of having Jewish blood. Mrs. Rathenau cared for the murderer in prison and defended him. During the war, this murderer became a leader of the Gestapo in Marseilles. He atoned for the evil done in the past by helping multitudes of Jews escape, with the result that in the end he was hanged.

Edmund Campion, English Jesuit, betrayed by a Catholic turned Protestant, was thrice tortured on the rack. Then he was sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered. A ~Te Deum~ was sung at this occasion. But the traitor had come to death row asking forgiveness. Campion gave it. He helped his denunciator escape the pursuers who sought revenge: he gave him a letter to a German nobleman recommending him for service.

These are the attitudes God likes. They are at the opposite pole to that of the Spanish patriot Narvaez who, when asked on his deathbed by his confessor if he had forgiven all his enemies, replied, "Father, I have no

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enemies. I've shot them all."

But there is a limit to Christian forbearance and charity. In the end, Moses killed Sihon and his subjects because they were not responsive to delicacy. At times we have to have measure in love. One single devil whom we have pitied can destroy a paradise.

One day of softness and a nation can lose overnight happy institutions built up through generations of struggle .

Do not think it virtue to be delicate only. When occasion demands, tell a devil in high position that he is a devil.

The good pastor is the one who has the proper measure even in love.

We read in REV 20:3 that after the Devil has fulfilled a thousand years of prison, he will be given a period of amnesty for "a little season." But once free, he will start his wicked deeds again, gathering together the nations of earth for another world war, which only God will bring to a fiery end.

Jesus is full of grace. One cannot find the right expression in English for saying how full of grace He is. In Hebrew the singular "mercy" does not exist. The word is plural: ~rahamim~ - "mercies." Nobody can obtain from God only one mercy, because He has only indivisible bushels of it. In the New Testament, the corresponding Greek work ~oiktirmos~ is also used frequently in the plural form.

Shakespeare wrote, Troubles come not singly, but in battalions. Likewise, a sin never occurs alone but in the company of many others. And graces abound even more. But a plurality of mercies does not mean that there is no limit to them. The universe is constructed mathematically. We might not know how many stars there are, but there is a certain definite number. Jesus

taught us to forgive much, and He told us exactly, mathematically, how much to forgive. He taught us not to remit indefinitely, but exactly 490 times

(MTT 18:22). Where there are figures, we have a very exact teaching.

Jesus was not full of grace alone, but of "grace and truth" (JHN 1:14). Now, John thought in Hebrew. In Hebrew the letter "v," which stands for "and" is part of the following word. John wrote "andtruth" as a single word. Grace which is not limited by the supreme interest that truth should triumph is a dangerous fancy.

A man can love many things. He can have a passion for only one. Results are achieved only if that man desires one thing exclusively and does not squander his energies simultaneously on a hundred other things. I admire the Communists for concentrating all their efforts on the fulfilling of their supreme passion. Our passion is the triumph of Christ, the establishment of His kingdom, which necessarily includes the overthrow of everything which opposes it. We have a place for delicacy, for genuine-love towards the enemy, but only in the measure to which this would not defeat our main purpose. To love the enemy so much as to enable him to overcome us is idiocy.

I love my enemy, but I do not forget that while I spend my time preparing a series of good deeds for him, he prepares weapons to destroy my church. He might strike quickly and unexpectedly while I indulge in sentiments of love.

In extreme cases in the heat of battle, the military doctor might be forced to shoot. He also is a warrior. We Christians have to adopt the military mentality, remembering how many are the metaphors about warfare in the New Testament: "the weapons of our warfare" (2CO 10:4); "Put on the whole armor of

God... we wrestle ... having on the breastplate ... taking the shield ... the helmet ... the sword of the Spirit" (EPH 6:11-17); "Let us put on the armor of light" (ROM 13:12).

In war I don't admire so much the hero who dies for his fatherland as the one who lets the enemy die for his. A live hero is worth more than a dead one. Truth is exclusive. With Christ as our Commander, right is on

our side, we must conquer.

We allow ourselves gestures of delicacy, we nurture love for all men, including our enemies, with one limitation: we must be victorious. Every gentle act which does not hinder this is welcome.

I remember the first Soviet officer I met. I asked him if he believed in God. I would not have minded if he had said "No." Freedom is given to every man to say "Yes" or "No" even to God. But he gave me the most amazing answer: "We have no order to believe. If we get such an order, we will."

I had met the typical Soviet man, a being who has been robbed of the highest gift made by God to man: to be an individual in his own right. He had been changed into a robot who waited for orders about what faith to embrace or reject. The Communists don't allow any sphere in which the individual is free. One has to be a Marxist even in art and science. Because of Einstein's discoveries, the universe we live in bears his name. Yet his book ~The World As I See It~ is forbidden in Communist countries because he expresses his belief in God - an incredible irony.

Such a regime has to disappear. Brethren, do everything you can to this end. Don't ask, "What can I, a single man, do?" If everyone asked himself this, no collective good would ever be achieved. The regime ~must~ disappear.

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Therefore, love the Communists and be gentle towards them only in the measure to which this does not conflict with the main purpose. Robots must be changed into men again. Christ must be proclaimed and accepted freely. His kingdom must come.

After having prayed and fasted many years, the fathers in the desert - the first generation of monks who fled to the wilderness of Thebaide from the corruption of the church which had become a state institution in the fourth century - gathered for counselling. St. Anthony the Great asked them, "Let everyone say which Christian virtue he considers the highest."

A few arose immediately and said, "Love." Others said, "Humility." Some said, "Obedience." Some put "Silence" on the highest level. In the end they asked St. Anthony, who had listened attentively to their debate, which in his opinion was the highest virtue, and this would prevail.

"All these virtues you have mentioned are excellent," St. Anthony said, "but the highest is to have in all things the right measure."

Measure therefore your delicacy.

The same Bible that teaches love and gentleness also forbids one even to greet certain men (2JN 10, 2JN 11). Saying "Good morning" to such men (whom John describes) makes one a partaker of his evil deeds. John the Evangelist is said to have fled naked from a public bath when he saw Cerintus, the heretic, entering. He did not wish to remain under the same roof with one who taught false doctrine.

Delicacy, then, to a point. But uncompromising staunchness in matters of truth. Amen.

page 58 Unreachable Heights

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

One of Jesus' promises has surely remained unfulfilled. He said that if we have faith as large as a mustard seed, we will be able to move mountains. I don't expect so much. But again and again I have ordered a mere prison wall to move, and it has not. It is written, "This stone ... has heard" (JOS 24:27). Why then did it not move? Is my faith smaller than a mustard seed? But what about the faith of my fellow-sufferers? Around me are important saints and bishops. None of them can move even a wall, much less a mountain.

And if one promise of Jesus does not hold true, what should we think about all the others? I shout again and again in my folly, "Wall, move! Wall, move!" It does not move.

For a while I forgot where I was. I shouted loudly. The wardens heard and gathered around my door to ask what was happening. They mocked me when I explained.

I fell down on my bed in despair, overcome with the realization that I was still in prison. And - far worse - that my faith in His Word was gone.

But slowly I quieted down. A thought flashed through my mind. How is it that I could be so mad? Jesus had been very explicit. If we have only a little faith, the size of a mustard seed, then we will move mountains. But a

great God gives a great faith, not tiny coins. Just as the great steel demolition hammers used in industry to smash concrete walls are no good for cracking a nut, so our God-given faith, which is huge, cannot move mere mountains. The only requisite for removing mountains is mundane faith in engineering technology. Our God-given faith does greater things. We leap upon the mountains, we skip upon the hills (SOS 2:8).

Eventually we may tire of such things. For if I jump over a mountain, I only come upon another valley which lies in the shadow of death. Our great God provides power for more than this.

The woman in Revelation was given the wings of a great eagle (REV 12:14) and could soar over mountain peaks. Whitefield entered in his diary, "I prayed God this day that God might make me an extraordinary Christian." And his prayer was fulfilled.

Nothing of the ordinary Christian life fully satisfies us, not even the gift of snowy whiteness of soul or joy like that of a marriage feast. Whiteness and marriage belong to the created world. We are partakers of the divine nature, and nothing less than oneness with the Creator can satisfy us.

Remain, prison walls, where you are. We fly towards the Infinite.

We can do so because for this we were born.

A whole life's work will not enrich a proletarian. Neither will revolutions. With very few exceptions, only that man is rich who is born rich. Those who have acquired wealth are often too old or jaded to enjoy it. A good birth, therefore, is more advantageous than a

lifetime of hard work. As for us, everything is ours without working. For as the eagle takes its little ones on its wings, so does our God.

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Remain, Communist world and Christian world, where you are. I hate the first. I am sceptical about the second. The old story repeats itself. Men of one and the same generation were pagans under Diocletian, Christians under the emperor Constantine because it became the fashion, Arians under Constantius because the king, a tyrant, thus decreed, and apostates in Julian's time because the emperor willed it. Then they returned to Christianity in Jovinian's time.

In my generation, men of our province, Transylvania, started out as loyal subjects of the Hapsburgs but afterward became loyal subjects of the Romanian kings. All those who had sworn faith to King Charles II were forsworn when he was deposed. These same men became legionnaires, then anti-legionnaires when the former were overthrown by Antonescu.

Bishops who would have refused ordination of men who did not want to swear loyalty to King Michael swore loyalty to the Republic when the king was overthrown. A mass of Christians, headed by their bishops and denominational leaders, passed to the side of the Reds. The same patriarch who had called upon us to fight the Bolshevik dragon celebrated a thanksgiving liturgy for the advent of power of this dragon. Many have left their faith altogether.

Why should I remain in this world, in this Communist state, in this Christianity, in a prison cell or even at liberty? God has smuggled through the locked door of my cell the wings of a great eagle. I fly to the Infinite. Nothing less will do.

I consider myself as having attained nothing while anything remains unattained.

Can it be that when I have reached a certain height I will fall? The devil is a good hunter and hurls darts that travel far.

The Lord has told us that not a sparrow falls to the

ground without our Father (MTT 10:29). I have seen many sparrows that have fallen. I even saw one eaten by a cat. The Father willed that this sparrow should have a tragic end. I may fall, too. But if, in the future, sins destroy me after I "have tasted of the heavenly gift, and [been] made partaker of the Holy Ghost" (HEB 6:4), others will learn from my failure and will do better. So I will have served, notwithstanding.

I don't accept as my religion anything apart from union between bride and bridegroom. All other religion is fornication, idolatry. I will soar where the Truth, which sages on earth call by different names, is one.

It is not a certainty that I will fall, though many have. By His grace I may reach the height. Others have; why not I?

I am in the communion of saints. Welcome, St. Catherine, to my prison cell. You were very unlike me. At the age of six, when I had the first vision of what I know now to have been the devil, which shattered my life, you saw Christ blessing you from heaven and apostles standing around you. While I in my youth indulged in gross sins, you had a plank for a bed, a wooden log as a pillow, and you spent your time in prayer and mortification. And you arrived at a spiritual marriage. Christ placed a ring on your finger.

But you give the impression of not seeing any difference between you and me. Maybe I am wrong, but you seem to have even a touch of envy as you look at me. Jesus said, "To whom little is forgiven, the same loves little" (LUK 7:47). Except for original sin, there must have been almost nothing to be forgiven you. You have travelled another way, but you assure me - and must have assured Jesus - that, although God has preserved you from much actual sin, you still love Him passionately.

How beautiful it is to commune with you. You speak

my language. You were a prisoner too. I sit in a Communist cell. You spent almost all your life in the

inner cell of your soul. You were like all the brides of Jesus, "a garden enclosed ... a spring shut up, a fountain sealed" (SOS 4:12).

You too know actual prison life well. "Don't be surprised at my visit. I had the habit of visiting prisons from an early age," you said, reminding me how you attended barbarous executions when young in order to comfort the condemned and their relatives.

I know from the Bible that "we are compassed about" with a great "cloud of witnesses," men and women who have given their lives to Jesus, the real saints (HEB 12:1), but I imagine that, when they make themselves felt so clearly, they must have a certain precise intention. Before asking St. Catherine about it, I tried to find out something from her that interested me most:

"I have brought to Christ a Jew of over ninety. He told me once that in a dream he had asked Jesus to show him my place in heaven. He got no reply. It is said that you have an exceptional sensibility about the inner state of a man. You can 'smell' his integrity or corruption. I vacillate between states in which I feel myself a beloved child of God and other states in which I want to warn all men not to be at the last judgment as I am. Can you tell me the truth about me?"

She smiled and remained silent.

But I could remember clearly what I had read about her criticizing the luxuries of the church of her time. Still, I had not changed my style of life, which surely had been luxurious compared to that of many of my colleagues.

"Catherine, you have changed much. In times past, you did not mince words even when speaking to a pope. You wrote to Gregory XI, 'Don't be a boy, be a man. If

you are not willing to use your power for cauterizing the ills of the church, it would be better for you to resign.' You had called cardinals 'poor mean knights, afraid even of their own shadows, poisoned with self-love.' How is it that you don't give me a word of reproof, if you have come for this? Well, it is probably because I am neither a pope nor a cardinal.

"You have come just to remind me that a Christian can reach seemingly unattainable heights. You could write to Charles V, 'When will you fulfill the will of God and me to make peace?' Your will and God's had become identical. You could speak about the two in the same breath.

"Silently you have fulfilled the purpose of your coming. I receive the gift, and now I will soar on eagle's wings.

How beautiful is the communion of the saints. You enjoy it only when you accept its full silence, a silence like that of this prison cell, interrupted only from time to time by the agonized cry of someone who is suffering. I see something with my spiritual eyes. I wonder if I have seen. Perhaps there are drugs in my food. I see so many mad fancies. I had known a madman in an asylum, one of the best men I ever knew. He was a religious maniac. He often saw St. Birgit. He had painted her image on the wall of his cell. I asked him what she told him in their encounters. He smiled, forlorn. That was all. Well, he was mad.

But mad or not, what does it matter to me? I wish to arrive at the spiritual marriage at least in my fantasy. Madmen who dream of being Napoleon or some saint feel so happy. Marriage with Jesus must be glorious even if it is only in imagination.

An ancient sage sent his son to a Bible teacher. When the boy returned, the father asked him, "What did you

learn?" The son told him all the subject matter. "This is nothing," the father replied. "Go and learn more." The son returned one year later. This time he boasted of having learned other disciplines. The father sent him back a second time. When the son returned again, his face shone. The father embraced him. "You knew theology before. Now you know God."

If my marriage to Jesus is only imaginary, perhaps men around me will only imagine that my face shines, but this will make them seek God as if I had been truly glorified.

So for their sake, I love you, heights. I come! Amen.

page 65 Taking Hold of the Skirt of a Jew

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

Today a particularly offensive upstart gave me a beating with special mention that my being a Jew played a role in my torment. Heavy chains were put on my legs.

Sometimes I have slept off the beating. It is amazing how well one can sleep in spite of the pain. Sometimes I have whistled. Now I remember a Bible verse: "It shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (ZEC 8:23).

This is God's promise. But men take hold of the skirt of a Jew for different purposes. Mrs. Potiphar "caught [Joseph] by his garment, saying, Lie with me" (GEN 39:12). Many catch Jews by their garments to have them as business partners. Here in prison they catch you by your skirt and hold you fast during a beating. The Communists mistreat everybody, but Jewish prisoners always get a double beating.

Some of the officers of the Secret Police are turncoats, former members of anti-Semitic organizations, who give vent to their real feelings when they have a Jewish prisoner in their hands, to compensate for being compelled to stand at attention before the Red high

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officials of Jewish descent. The Jewish officers of the Secret Police also take pains to exhibit special harshness towards Jewish prisoners to avoid the suspicion that they are partial.

I am Jewish. I had to suffer under the Nazis for the double crime of being both a Jew and a Christian. Now it happens all over again. What is it with us Jews? Even when I was a child, teachers and pupils hit me for being Jewish. What is it with me?

Are we the withered boughs that have to be broken off, as Isaiah prophesied (ISA 27:11)? After the Nazi defeat, Christians felt themselves in bad company when accusing us and abandoned the charge that we sentenced Jesus to death. Many church leaders change their opinions as the political winds blow. Those who have cooperated most with the anti-Semitic killers to avenge our ancestors' crucifixion of Christ now assure everyone that Jews were no guiltier in this tragedy than the Romans. They ignore the fact that the Jews had prophecies about the coming of Christ, which the heathen did not have. Ezekiel says about the Jews, "When they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name" (EZE 36:20). St. Paul's rebuke is also justified: "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you" (ROM 2:24).

But I belong to another category of Jew. At Golgotha the Jewish people divided into two parts: those who had asked for His death, and those who wept for Him and eventually constituted the first church. I belong to those about whom Jesus said, "Salvation is of the Jews" (JHN 4:22).

Why do they take hold of my garment, too, only to beat me? What is it with the Jewish question?

Hegel said there was one thing his philosophy could

not explain and that was Israel. Should I then explain it with a reason confused through great suffering?

To fathom such a mystery, I would have to think logically. "Logic" comes from ~logos~. To be pleasant to Christ, the ~Logos~, you must think and act logically. In the original Greek we are asked in ROM 12:1 to bring to the Lord "a logical sacrifice." Clarity and accuracy in thought are expected of Christ's disciples. But for a long time I have lacked these qualities. Hunger, the remembrance of tortures, the fear of new ones as often as the cell is unlocked, the whole atmosphere of solitary confinement in a subterranean cell, all combine to make logical thinking impossible. Perhaps there are also drugs in my scanty food. I cannot tell you what it is exactly with the Jews.

You cannot become a Jew by practising the Jewish religion, just as you cannot become a lion by roaring or devouring raw flesh. I am sure that birth cannot make you a Jew any more than being born in a garage can make you an automobile. To be a Jew is more than belonging to a nation. It is a calling which you do not get by natural birth. Born a Jew, you must realize your calling.

What makes the Jew - the man who is essentially Jewish and really deserves this high appellation, the man who is loyal to the King of the Jews - dangerous for the world and difficult to bear even for the children of God from among the Gentiles, is that the Jewish Christian is a restless fighter.

He has learned from Abraham's experience. Abraham met Melchizedek only after his return from a slaughter in which he had bathed his sword in blood (GEN 14:17). He had not met him during prayer, nor when he brought sacrifices. He met him after a fight. Battlefields are our tabernacles. Captains of hosts are

our priests. Our liturgy is a clashing of swords. Our incense is the smoke of burning Sodoms. Jews and Christians have burned on stakes long enough. Our priestly cassocks are armor. Thus clothed we enter Jehu's chariot. We are Jonadabs, his fellow-warriors. Our icons are living soldiers to whom we pay our homage. Our God is a consuming fire.

This is the religion about which I am passionate. This is how I feel my role as a Jewish Christian. If there is no place for me in such a tabernacle, I would like to live at least in its shadow, but the churches of the Gentiles are too well-ordered, calm, settled, boring for me.

A Jewish Christian loves his nation as Esther did. Therefore Pharaohs and Hamans, as well as cowards among the believers, tremble at our approach.

So many genial Jews have missed the mark in serving foreign masters. Joseph served Egypt, Daniel Babylon, Marx the world proletariat, Disraeli the British empire, Leon Blum social democracy and France. Some of these were children of God, others the opposite, but in either

case their earthly benefactors soon forgot their services. Those who embody what is essential in the appellation Hebrew-Christian would never serve any other cause than that of the people of God.

In their relationship with God, they are not satisfied with forgiveness of sins. They want their lives changed.

Our responsibility is entirely different from that of other believers. St. Paul writes "Unto them [the Jews] were committed the oracles of God." Every line in the Bible was written by a Jew. That St. Luke might have been a Greek is an invention. If he were not a Jew he could not have been a Biblical author. This thought outdoes all guesses about his origin. Luther contested the authority of the ecumenical councils because they were not constituted of Jews. Once they were composed

of Gentiles, their decisions could not be considered the oracles of God, compulsory for Christians. Jewish Christians are called to evoke the truth as it was in its nakedness, before being clothed in parables.

Today many parables have become obsolete.

Outside, farming has been collectivized. No man possesses a hundred sheep any more. Who cares if one is lost? It is state property. Fathers don't have inheritances to impart to profligate sons. When they get into trouble, there is nobody who possesses swine who might hire them. They have to be state employees, and they would not be free to leave their job to return to the father. Kings cannot arrange marriage feasts for their sons any more. They have been dethroned. Beggars can no longer hope for alms at the door of rich men. The capitalists have been expropriated, deported to some slave labor camps. They would be willing to beg for a piece of bread themselves, but for a situation epitomized in a little joke:

What is the difference between a pessimist and an optimist? The optimist says, "With this regime, we will all become beggars," to which the pessimist replies, "But from whom will we beg?"

Jesus' parables presented eternal truth clad in

episodes taken from social life, which has changed completely. The Hebrew-Christian divests truth of its temporary clothing and sees it as it is.

The real Hebrew-Christian does not remain satisfied with what he is told about Jesus, even by the saintliest of teachers. St. Luke writes in his Gospel (LUK 1:2) about some who had been eyewitnesses of the events. Who had been an eyewitness of Mary's virgin birth, of the pre-existence of Jesus, of His solitary nights of prayer? The Greek does not have the word "eyewitness" but ~autoptes~, a word composed of ~auto~ (self) and ~optes~ (those who have seen).

Luke speaks about men who have seen things themselves or (LUK 1:3) who "have had perfect understanding of all things ~anothen~," which means literally "being looked upon from above."

There are men who are seated in heavenly places, outside of time and space. They see what is happening in heaven and look down upon what has happened and is happening on earth. They also see things which normally remain hidden. Luke was such a man; so were the other Evangelists. Do you really believe that there are no more seers in Israel?

They see, and when given even by Jesus the choice of having Himself or the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who does not come unless Jesus departs from us (JHN 16:7), they do not fall into the trap: they do not ask for more fullness and more gifts of the Spirit. For them the Spirit is no Comforter. There can be no comfort for the absence of Jesus.

Rachel, when her children were slain, wept for them and would not be comforted (MTT 2:18). What unnatural mother a woman must be to accept comfort when what she needs is her child returned to her.

The Hebrew Christian has all due respect for the Spirit but desires Jesus. Without Him, honey tastes like gall. The Spirit is a spirit of truth which testifies about Jesus. But they do not desire even a true testimony about an absent Jesus, not even one of divine origin. They wish Jesus Himself.

Having the Spirit, we could rightly solve many problems. But we do not wish to solve problems. Mary Magdalene did not seek solutions. Rather, she sat quietly at His feet. Time somehow solves problems without our intervention. We just wish to see His sunny face and hear His melodious voice.

The real Hebrew Christian is a man apart, even

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within the church. The time when people will take hold of his skirt in order to be taught the Word of God may be far away, but he will never compromise, he will never lower the standard in order to win popularity.

Tomorrow I might be confronted with something entirely different: "Take off your shirt in order to be beaten with a whip." I will comply. A paper containing a statement that I renounce my faith and denounce my brethren could free me. What really separates me from my beloved ones, then, is a paper wall, not these heavy quarries which I see. So for many centuries a book has separated the Jews from other peoples.

I will remain, by the grace of God, on this side of the paper wall. But I am thankful for the high calling of being a Jewish Christian, and I will not capitulate. Amen.

page 72 The Beloved Communists

BELOVED FLOCK OF CHRIST

I would poison myself if I thought of Communists only with malice.

Once while beating me the captain amused himself by singing tango music. I would have been simply unfair to writhe under the beating without appreciating the other aspect of reality. He had a beautiful voice and the tune was pleasant to the ear. If I resented the beating, I had to be thankful for the music. It is a rare treat for a prisoner to hear somebody singing beautifully.

If only we could always appreciate the dual aspects of reality, the fact that it takes both sides to make a whole! When I feel a pain, there is always the joy of being a living "I" who feels. The "I" may feel pain now, but

these same nerves are capable of feeling caresses too. It is admirable to have sensitive nerves. It is wise to appreciate the joy of possessing them even while suffering pain.

The Jews are a chosen people. It is also a chosen thing to have a Jew as a torturer. He accompanies his wickedness with such splendid jokes. At a certain moment, when I could bear no more, I cried, "Leave me, leave me!" I had difficulty breathing.

My torturers consulted with each other. The Jew among them told a joke: "Two men entered a tram. One held onto the strap. The second was small and kept his

stability by holding onto the beard of another man. The man protested. 'Let go of my beard!' The Jew asked, 'Why should I? Are you getting off at the next station?'

Why should we leave Wurmbrand alone? Will he die?"

I hear their songs, their jokes. I enjoy them. I owe them gratitude.

But most of all, I owe them pity.

The Communists have never pondered Shakespeare's words, "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown." They took the crown from legitimate authority, King Michael. They hoped to become happier through this. They have only become busier. Now they have to scheme day and night how to maintain and consolidate their positions.

Actually, I have it better than they. Discharged of all responsibilities, I can lie quietly in my cell and be happy as much as I decide to. For a time, I disturbed my own happiness by spying on myself and tore myself to pieces for every false thought. But to spy upon yourself is as wrong and impolite as spying upon someone else. I have given it up.

Now I listen attentively when Communists speak to me during my interrogation sessions. I am learning an art which I should have learned long ago, the art of allowing the adversary to say everything on his heart,

even when he is wrong.

Once back in my cell, I make the Communists the subject of my meditation and prayer. I also think about the many others around me who are oppressed by the Communists because they believe in God. I think about what this does to God.

In the Hebrew original it is written, "The Lord's soul was shortened for the misery of Israel" (JDG 10:16). A God whose children are persecuted is an amputated God. Look at North Africa, which was originally one of

the foremost centres of Christianity. The Moslems conquered the provinces, and for centuries millions have passed through this earthly life without coming to a knowledge of salvation. Could He not bring the Gospel to them without the church? He could not.

He is a handicapped God and needs help like any other amputee. Deborah sang, "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because ~they came not to the help of the Lord.~" And as if these words were not enough, the angel repeated, "to the help of the Lord against the mighty" (JDG 5:23).

The Lord needs help. Yes, He needs help. He will never succeed without our help. And we sit in chains. How can I decide to be happy, knowing this? If this is the situation, I have to be concerned. I have to give up what I had decided a few minutes before, that is, to whistle joyfully and to dance around in my cell.

My minds gets confused again. How do I know? Because again I made the mistake of spying on myself to find out how my mind is. I'll leave it as it is, and I will think about the Communists whom I love.

Long ago the Lord had predicted "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity:... Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (LUK 21:25,26).

These words have had a multiple fulfillment: at the destruction of the Jewish state in AD 71, at the close of the sixth century when hordes of heathen warriors swept

down upon what was left of the decaying civilization of the Roman Empire, during the Moslem invasion, and at the end of the eighteenth century in the French Revolution. Now it happens again.

The actual catastrophes could have been averted. Unsolved social questions have brought upon us the great crises of our day. One could very well deduce that

the Christian's response should be activism, militant participation in the struggle against evil. Popes, Orthodox priests, and Protestants have warned against what might happen if Christians defaulted.

Arnold Toynbee once told a meeting of working men, "We Christians have neglected you. Instead of justice, we have offered you hard and unreal advice. But I think we are changing. If you would only believe it and trust us! There are many of us who would spend our lives in your service." The audience jeered and yelled, "Nobody wants you to." Toynbee was stung to the heart, went home, and died.

The Orthodox priest Gapon had been the first to organize a demonstration of St. Petersburg's proletariat. With ikons in their hands they marched towards the palace of the Czar to assure him of their loyalty and to ask for the improvement of their life. The police shot at the demonstrators. Then the Communists took over the movement. They hanged the Orthodox priest.

The church has lost the opportunity to win the proletariat to its side. We have given them into the hands of the Communists, because we preferred a comfortable life. We were not ready to fight in order to win souls.

The story is old. When Gideon told an army of 32,000 Jewish warriors, "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart," two-thirds of the army took advantage of the proposal (JDG 7:3). We want to be Christians without being involved in battle.

But it is written about Jesus that He will lead captivity captive, which means that His love will captivate those who are now Satan's captives.

I don't know how. The Vulgate adds to the Hebrew of JDG 5:8: "The Lord chose a new species of war and Himself subverted the gates of the enemy. Ten thousand

men, scarcely armed and led by a woman, defeated a strong and well-equipped army." When the Lord willed, He sent an angel to take a peasant, Gideon, from the threshing floor and make him a general. Many centuries later, a peasant girl, St. Joan of Arc, who had never ridden a horse nor held a sword in her hand, led the French army to victory. God chooses the most unlikely instruments.

Dear brothers and sisters, He might have chosen the most unqualified of you to bring to Christ a multitude of Communists. We must be as intent on attaining our purposes as they are on attaining theirs.

In the free world, it is customary during a strike for men to picket the entrance to a factory. They often use violence to keep from entering workers who choose not to join their actions. Likewise we Christians must decide to boycott hell, picketing the entrance with determination.

When I was a boy of fourteen, a friend took me for the first time into a bordello. I was so ashamed and frightened that I fled. But why were there no priests, pastors, or Christian laymen picketing the entrance to such houses of perdition, stopping every teenager and telling him the risks he will incur to his soul?

We must learn to picket. We must surround hell with a cordon and simply not allow the Communists to enter in. If they insist, they can enter the abyss only by stepping over our dead bodies. Our opposition should be that strong.

God will not abolish hell if we think like this. If He had none, His laws would not be authoritative. But perhaps it will remain empty.

Following His dire predictions for our day, Jesus added, "When these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draws

nigh" (LUK 21:28). From these words one might conclude that the Christian is to shun activism and lead a contemplative life. Therefore, don't try to stop the onward rush of events; don't look around wondering whom you might save. Whatever these dreadful events may bring to others, to you they bring eternal salvation. Keep this joyful expectation in the midst of calamity. "Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand" (LUK 21:29, 30).

The Lord compares these awe-inspiring events, these political and social cataclysms, with the budding of soft green leaves in spring. You can enjoy them and lead a quiet life. It is not up to you to change God's decree if He has decided to punish this world.

I cannot take this attitude recommended only to some. There are different characters, different callings. Some are called to battle, some to still waters. I could not tell you which of these two ways is more legitimate. But for myself, I cannot help choosing the first.

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

As a pastor I used to make daily house calls. I was much impressed by a story told by Bishop Latimer to his clergy during the Reformation:

> It would be too much to ask you to be pastors such as Jesus was. I would propose another model of a good pastor: Lucifer. He visits his whole parish daily, every house, rich and poor. And when he enters a house, he does not speak only to the adults. He has a story or fairy tale prepared for every child, suitable for just his age. Before leaving, he also enters the kitchen and says something nice to the maid. Learn from him how to perform your pastoral duties.

So preaching and writing books or articles were not my principal tasks. A pastor is not a maker of sermons but a maker of saints. Only the people I visited know how frequently I have been in their homes.

Brother X is now in the same row of cells with me. He recently reminded me on our "wireless" how he had backslidden at one time.

When I rang the bell at his house (it was on a cold winter's day), he opened the door and told me, "I won't receive you any more. I don't want to have anything to do with pastors." With this he slammed the door.

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I shouted loudly, "Well, I'll wait outside until you change your mind." So I waited, standing in the snow. He observed me from behind the window curtain. After a time he came out to the gate and shouted, "Go away! I won't receive you. You'll catch pneumonia."

"What I have to tell you is very important," I replied. "It is worth the risk. I can wait."

In the end, he allowed me in and gave me a cup of hot tea. Now he is probably happy to be on the way of the cross.

As a pastor I also visited with God several times a day. A Christian can have fellowship with Him. With boldness he can "enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (HEB 10:19).

God also has a habit of visiting people. He walked and talked with the first couple in the Garden of Eden. He visited Abraham and Jacob, Moses and Joshua.

Though I had visited with men and God, there was one person in my parish whom I had neglected completely. I had never visited myself. It is written about the prodigal son that "he came to himself." How rarely this happens! Men travel the world over to visit other cultures and meet new people but never knock at the gate of their own person and say, "Good morning, dear sir Myself. I have come to talk to you a little while." For the prodigal son, coming to himself meant a return to true thinking. One visit with himself was enough to send him back to his father. How many times I had read this story without coming to this conclusion.

Richard III had visited himself before the fatal battle of Bosworth. He discovered much of himself (in words

given to him by Shakespeare):

Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am:

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Then fly. What? From myself? Great reason: why?
Lest I revenge. What? myself upon myself?
Alack! I love myself. Wherefore? For any good
That I myself have done unto myself?
O no: alas! I rather hate myself
For hateful deeds committed by myself.
I am a villain. Yet I lie; I am not.
Fool, of thyself speak well. Fool, do not flatter.
My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.

And so, like the prodigal son and Richard III, I decide to visit myself.

"Hello, Me, how are you doing? I wish to have a chat with you. We don't speak the same language. In my language I tell you I wish to speak with you. You would interpret it as me wishing to speak with me. But let us not lose ourselves in semantics. Here am I and here are you, the 'me.' Let us visit for a while."

"What would you like to know from me?"

"First of all, what is your real name? In Hebrew your name is Reuben; in Romanian, Richard. You have written under the pseudonym Radu Valentin. The jailors changed your name to Vasile Georgescu. You have had so many nicknames. And then this common name 'Richard' sounds so different when pronounced by different persons. Since you were thrown in this cell, you have heard a voice giving you a new name. After a long time the same voice gave you another name. You are more distinguished than the conquerors in the book of Revelation, who are promised ~one~ new name (REV 2:17). You are far from being a conqueror, and heaven has already given you two."

"Don't be so harsh. Araunah (2SM 24) is called in

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God's Word by several names. Also, one and the same king is called Uzziah and Azariah in 2 Kings 15, and he is called Ozias in Matthew 1. God Himself has many names. But as to your main question, I cannot answer it. Once I told the Lord in prayer that since I was alone, without Bible or other religious books, without sermons, without brethren, He should speak to me directly. If He could speak to Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, He could speak to me, too, even if I were the last of evildoers. Then I heard His voice (His sheep normally hear it) asking me the same question you ask: 'What is your name?' Now that you mention it, I wonder if I was wrong in attributing the voice to the Lord. Perhaps it was just you. I do not seem to realize yet how split I am. I might interpret as external voices, as revelations from God or whispers from the devil, what are just internal dialogues of a personality divided in two."

"What did you answer the Lord?"

"Stop being hypocritical! You know the answer to that. I can't be fooled any more. It was you who put the question, and it was 'me' who gave the answer. But as you wish to play this game, I'll tell you the story. I did not know the answer. I can introduce myself to everybody as Richard. But how do I tell Jesus that my name is Richard? Am I worthy of this name?

"St. Richard was an English peasant who, in a time of fierce persecution, was ordered to be imprisoned for his faith. When the arresting constable mounted his horse to ride to him, the animal went berserk, throwing his rider and injuring him fatally. So now Richard was charged with murder. The prosecution had a clear case. If he had not been a believer, the constable would not have mounted the horse to pick him up and so would not have fallen and died. As you see, Communist justice has had its predecessors.

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"And now Richard was on the gallows. The hangman had difficulty fixing the noose of the rope. Richard, who was so good he could not bear to trouble anyone, bowed to the executioner and asked, 'May I help you? I am a peasant skilled in these things.' Allowed to do so, he fixed the noose, thanked the hangman graciously for his kind permission, and passed away. For this loving

attitude toward the executioner and for his gentleness in all things he was given the name St. Richard. How could I dare to tell Jesus that I bear the same name as this man?

"Should I tell Him that I am a Christian? With the proud words ~Christianus sum~, 'I am a Christian,' the first disciples fearlessly entered the arena to be devoured by lions. I have often stood before a cage of lions at the zoo and asked myself honestly, 'Could I do that?' My answer is always, 'No, I would rather recant.'

"Well, to finish my story, I bowed to Jesus and told Him, 'Lord, I have no name. Allow me to take Yours and to say like Paul that it is not I who live, but You in me.' So He allowed it. At least, that is what I thought at the time. Now I know that it was all a mistake. You allowed it; that is, I gave myself the kind permission to be called by the name of Christ. I am unsurpassed in humility, it seems."

"Keep to the rules of the game. We are two different persons. I am I and you are you. If you say that you are no longer you, but that Christ lives in you, let us draw the ultimate conclusion. Perhaps you have no individual soul any more. Buddhists deny its existence. Salvation consists in being freed from the illusion of having a soul. Would you agree now? Ha, ha. I caught you there. If you answer, you live still. And if you don't answer, I have triumphed in this discussion. I could do this only because I am. And as you and I are one and the

same person, we continued to live - unlike Paul, who asserted that he had ceased to be."

"I have nothing to answer. I cannot tell you in words anything about myself, not even whether I exist. A man described in words is not the real man, any more than a God described in words is the real God. It is useless to continue along these lines."

"Then may I ask you another question? Do you have the Holy Spirit?"

"I surely have Him, but He does not have me. The union is an unhappy one. But you are comical. You are a

prisoner. So am I. And here we sit discussing metaphysics when my mind is obsessed with just one thought: I am terribly hungry. I would eat acorns, grass, mice - anything. My wife must also be in some cell. Her predominant obsession must also be hunger."

His talking about hunger reminded me of my stomach. The visit ceased without even a polite word of parting. I simply was alone again. As usual, the physiological was victorious. I am hungry, and I am indignant against the churches of the West, about whose riches I have heard, some of which spend on chandeliers what could feed us all for a whole month. And I am angry with those who keep us hungry. Love, like every other spiritual energy, is food transformed and sublimated. When you are very hungry, how can you love the one who starves you?

I am sorry I could not finish the discussion I had when I visited myself. I would have liked to ask myself just one more question: "Do you approve of violence against atheist tyrants?"

You have eaten. Visit God, visit your brethren, but never forget to visit yourself too. The prodigal son "came to himself." Amen.

page 84 New Year

HAPPY NEW YEAR, MY BELOVED FRIENDS

Outside, the wardens interrupt the silence. They wish one another a happy new year. It is midnight. The year 1948 has passed. I cannot congratulate Jesus. It has been 1915 years since He was crucified. The 1916th nail will now be driven into His cross.

I know that every doubt of mine causes Him more pain, as if a new dart were piercing His heart. But He has asked us to go further than that, if necessary, in order to have life. He invites us to eat His flesh and drink His blood, as lions devour an innocent victim, as if it were only by disembowelling the Godhead that we can find out what it is. He wishes to be known more than He wishes to be caressed. Excessive desire to know the truth is not a vice. I cannot live without knowing God. I don't consider modesty in questioning Him a virtue.

There was a time when Jesus "had no fault, or I no fault could spy, when He was all beauty or all blindness I."

But now, since I have nothing left in this whole world but my wit to live by, it has begun to value itself very highly. All else seems of little importance. My wit has questions to ask and I cannot stop it.

I have liked very much the story of St. Christopher. He was branded with red-hot irons, roasted over a fire, and cooked in boiling oil, but suffered no pain and was

not bothered by this kind of treatment. Observing this, almost fifty thousand persons were converted. A drop of the saint's blood healed someone who was accidentally injured while watching Christopher's execution.

I like a God who does miracles of such magnitude.

I realize now that the New Testament had never satisfied me really, because I found the miracles recounted there much too small for the Son of God. Three people were resurrected, but millions of corpses remained dead. Only three families had the comfort of seeing their beloved ones restored to life. Many widows whose only sons died remained without consolation. Jesus stilled a storm, but on so small a lake as Galilee. Tempests on the ocean sank countless ships, and men drowned. He did not help them. On one occasion 4,000 and on another 5,000 (plus women and children) had a good dinner through miracles performed by Him. What about the next day when they were hungry again? And what about the millions who have starved throughout the ensuing centuries?

He sent an angel to free Peter from prison. The incident stands alone. James was beheaded, and since then thousands have been martyred. Why?

How can the world go on? It is New Year's Eve. Everywhere people speak to each other, trying to spread joy among themselves.

Solomon sacrificed in Gibeon, a place forbidden by law because the tabernacle was not there (1KI 3:4).

You did not mind but spoke words of goodness and blessing in that place to the man who, even after he had a vision of You, continued to do many wicked things. I might be wicked, too, but have pity on a lonely man. I know You do only small miracles. Do just a very little thing more. Speak to one single prisoner out of thousands.

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I don't understand You. Don't You have power enough? Don't You have the will to wipe away all tears? Could You make only a couple of big saints like Christopher? Why did he not suffer pain when he was burned? Why did St. Lawrence engage in pleasantries while roasted on a gridiron, whereas I feel intensely even the pain of a slap or a kick? Over 45,000 were converted at Christopher's death. Even this does not satisfy me, as I always decried the boasting of evangelists about how many decided for Christ at their meetings. I compared their figures with those who had decided on the same night for pubs, gambling houses, places of perdition, and heathen religions.

Love is compared with death in SOS 8:6. Death is satisfied with nothing less than absolutely all men. Till now only two have escaped death: Enoch and Elijah. But some say they will come back to earth and will be the prophets that are slain, about whom we are told in Revelation 11. If so, they will have to pay their tribute to death, too.

As death wants everyone, so I want all men for the Kingdom.

I made a crucifix out of bread, an ugly crucifix. I had never modelled anything before. And the bread was darker than most bread.

I look to You hanging on the cross. You are silent. Again I have to guess what Your answer may be.

If I were in the pulpit today dressed in a beautiful cassock, I would speak about the one great miracle, that a lonely Galilean who hung upon a horrible cross became the subject of thousands of confident songs, that the painful execution of a Man deemed a criminal proved to be the means of salvation for the

whole world.

But inwardly I would be dissatisfied. What you have

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done is beautiful, but too little for an almighty God who could make the whole drama cease at once. Why are You silent?

Perhaps it is not good for me to know or to escape suffering. Perhaps suffering is the way to the other shore. But are You not almighty? Could you not have made an easier way, so that men might get to heaven by passing through valleys in which roses and lilies grow?

Probably ~I~ am too small - not Your miracles. I am a disciple of Yours. But Christianity is the only profession in the world in which men remain disciples for life and never become independent workers. As for the few workers, they don't strive to become master builders (1CO 3:10), as were Paul, Peter, Thomas, Catherine of Siena, Calvin, and Luther. How could an architect explain his designs to a disciple? Only a master builder could understand him.

If I grow, I will know. You are like Gulliver among dwarfs. Even You cannot bow so low that we may be able to understand something. We have to take the word of Augustine: "Whatever right reason suggests to you as more perfect, you may be sure that God has already made it, for He is the creator of all things good." I suppose that all the beautiful things I crave exist, but I cannot see them yet.

We must also reject the mistaken notion that a whole can be perfect only if each of its parts is perfect.

Iago is vicious, an intrigue-maker and a liar, but he is a necessary part in a perfect work of art, Othello. For my part, I am in a small cell. We are all confined to too small a world. Imperfections seen by me can be a useful part of a perfect reality.

Thank You for one more year. I will try to use it well for growth. Perhaps I will question You less next New Year's Eve.

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Happy and enlightened New Year to you, my former congregation.

page 89 Before Suicide

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

After producing many beautiful compositions, Robert Schumann began to hear bizarre noises in his head. He spoke about "a splendid music, played by instruments which give more beautiful tunes than those existing on earth." He tried to write them down. The result was cacophony. But he desired only that music. One day he threw himself into the Rhine. Fishermen saved him, but his mind was gone. He died in an asylum.

Suicide or madness will probably be my end too, because I have also heard strange music. I can't even try to notate it, not being skilled at composing music, so I will try to explain it in words. Pray while listening. But be careful it is music that invites you to leave this world.

A Russian brother related to us how he once explained the Gospel to a young girl. He told her about the Paradise that awaits the believer. She put her trust in Jesus. One stormy winter day she left the house. The next morning she was found frozen to death, with bared breast. Did she undress herself in order to die and go more quickly to Paradise? We shall never know. But strange things happen in mysterious, holy Russia. We had given Bibles to Russian soldiers. Later, one of them entered a church and slaughtered a lamb before the image of Jesus. This was the little he had understood from the Bible, and he acted upon it without hesitancy.

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The music I hear is an invitation not to wait for a paradise after death but to come to it immediately. If you want to see this music in an image, look at a statue of Krishna dancing and playing a flute to invite girls to come to his temple. But don't think you have seen an idol. Rather, it is an archetype of the collective unconscious. It is music that invites you to do the most foolish and unacceptable things because that is how it impresses you. The explanation for what you felt you

had to do comes later. It was the music that caused the Jews to say at Mount Sinai, "Naase venishma" - "We will do and we will hear" (EXO 24:7). The doing comes before the hearing - not the contrary.

But there is also something else in this music, something terrifying, that drives you mad.

For a long time I have made it a habit to be awake only during the night. Great spiritual battles are usually fought at night. You sense in the darkness the occult forces that inspire murderers and thieves, who also perform their works of iniquity during the night. Stalin worked during the whole night.

I pray for a time and then just listen. From immeasurable Satanic depths, fiery darts are thrown at the soul. St. Marguerite Alacoque once saw the virgin Mary, who told her, "I wish to put in your heart a few of the darts which hurt me and my Son." The devil also wishes to make you share his pain. Once his dart enters your heart, even manna becomes tasteless to you. You prefer to remain hungry rather than eat something that comes from God.

During the war a badly wounded SS officer fell prisoner to the British. He urgently needed a blood transfusion. He asked, "What kind of blood will it be?" He was told, "British." His reply was, "I prefer to die rather than have non-German blood introduced into

my veins." He stuck to his convictions till death overtook him.

This tune is the counterpoint to God's music. You can never hear the latter without Satan's accompaniment to it, which is even more attractive to our hearts than the angelic choir.

"Commit Suicide," this music commands. "You are called to be great. Why do you need Jesus as your Messiah? What if you are the Messiah? Or, if you consider the place of the Messiah already occupied, the role of Antichrist is still free. He will rule the world. People once described you as a fascinating preacher Thus your fascination could be increased. Just try."

And then you hear serene, calm, angelic playing on harps. It is so beautiful you remain in ecstasies before it, but it does not convince. It does not satisfy desire like the first.

Once I had the experience of speaking with a messenger of a Satanist conventicle. I had never seen him before. Even now I could not explain how it happened that one day I found myself sitting before him. What he told me and what he proposed to me was so terrible that I never told it to anyone except saintly Bishop Muller, who I knew would take the secret to his grave. Does this conventicle have the means of pursuing me by telepathy even in my subterranean cell? But it is those with a persecution complex who feel themselves pursued by inimical forces. So perhaps I am already a madman. On the other hand, I cannot see how one can be as badly persecuted as I am without being paranoid.

How about my beginning to persecute them? If they can influence men to evil from afar, I could pursue them with good on condition that I become a great center of spiritual energy. Here you have megalomania following the mania of persecution. Where can I find the answers?

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With God? Then isn't it best to commit suicide and go ask Him directly, since here on earth He leaves my mind blurred?

Here or in some other world I want to spread good far away. To love my neighbor is too little for me. Jesus promised that the righteous will shine like suns in the kingdom of the Father. A sun gives life to billions of beings. He has promised this, and I will not accept less. I have become righteous through faith in Jesus. He did not say that the righteous will have to wait decades until they die and then become suns. I have to become a sun immediately, to fill the world with light and goodness, to bring whole nations to Christ.

Theologians would tell me that it is not my responsibility to do this, but it must be done by the church universal, of which I am only a small part. But theology ceases at the threshold of this prison and on the threshold of madness.

I wish to be a Christ in miniature. The words "a miniature" are a concession on my part. This call, too, is in the music I hear. I cannot put it in words, even as Schumann could not put it into notes. He went mad and threw himself into the river. After hearing this music, you tell Jesus, "Give Yourself to me wholly, or leave me wholly." Amen.

page 93 My Greatness

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

Preachers in the pulpit should be very careful about what they say and how they say it. They must be selective. I must not. Why? King Abimelech and Phichol, the chief captain of his host, said to Abraham "God is with thee in ~all~ that thou doest" (GEN 21:22). I can say all I think. I am blessed in everything.

A fly once sat quietly on the horn of a bull. After a while, overcome by scruples, it said, "Mr. Bull, it may be that my presence here displeases you. If so, I apologize and will leave."

"Don't feel bad," the bull answered. "You can bring your whole family to live on my horn. It really does not matter to me."

Peter was called a rock (MTT 16:18). It is a matter of indifference to a rock from which side the wind blows.

I have become hard like a horn. Therefore, come, thoughts of whatever kind; better plague me instead of plaguing someone else. I can bear you.

I can even bear the proud feeling that I am important. Not only can I bear it, I have to evoke it, because pride is an essential part of megalomania. I have decided to be mad. I have not yet chosen my specific kind of madness. But I incline towards this.

There are two extremes. King Lear prayed, "O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven. Keep me in

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temper, I would not be mad." His prayer was not answered. He became mad. Rimbaud, on the contrary,

had made it his aim to practise a long, tremendous, and reasoned derangement of all his senses in order to reach the unknown. If reason proved itself unable to reach the unknown, he concluded, how else could it be reached than through disordering reason intentionally? He never became mad, though he did become very vicious.

Jesus, St. Paul, and the apostles must have worked upon their characters in a certain way in order to convince so many men that they were mad or drunk.

The Beghards in the thirteenth century must have done something, similar to what some Pentecostals do nowadays, to help spread the rumor about them that they made wolfish howlings in their fits of religious raving.

In a sense, everybody is mad. Some are mad for money, others for sexual partners. The Communists are mad for power. I wish definitely to be mad for God. Just as one has to work oneself up to the other kinds of madness, one has to work oneself up for this, too. It seems that it is human destiny to become mad. If it is our fate to be drowned, then rather in a sea of perfume than in a ditch of mud.

There exists also a mad loyalty. One of Shakespeare's fools said:

> That, sir, which serves and seeks for gain
> And follows but for form,
> Will pack when it begins to rain
> And leave thee in the storm.
> But I will tarry, the fool will stay
> And let the wise man fly.

If I remain reasonable, there is a good chance that I will

end by betraying the underground Church. Only fools can remain loyal when they are so terribly hungry.

I am quite determined to become mad. My madness will be to believe that I have the Godhead living in me. Whoever thinks like this is called by others a

megalomaniac. And the accusation is not even false. Such a man really considers himself great.

The commandments on Moses' tablets are given in the singular form. Not "ye" but "thou" shalt not do this or that. God tells ~me~ how to behave. Christ says, "Blessed art ~thou~" (MTT 16:17) to the man to whom it is revealed that Jesus is the Son of God. ~My~ defects are criticized in the Bible. So I must be important. The Bible is God's dialogue with ~me~.

The renowned Jewish philosopher Spinoza once wrote, "There is no foe to progress like self-conceit and the laziness which self-conceit begets." But prison life is not favorable to the development of humility.

Just because we are continually abused, dressed in what looks like zebra-skins, beaten, insulted daily with obscene words, an over-compensation takes place in our minds. I must be very important if such a powerful movement as Communism, which rules unchallenged one third of the world, considers it absolutely necessary to keep me in an isolated, subterranean cell and endeavors to break my body and mind. If they did not do so, my life in liberty could endanger their existence.

I am unspeakably hungry. I think sometimes about those who survived the Nobile expedition to the North Pole and were suspected of having eaten the corpse of one of their comrades who had frozen to death. I wonder if I would not have done the same thing.

There is mould on my bread. It is green. As often as I get it - once a week - it reminds me of PSA 23: "He makes me to lie down in ~green~ pastures." My whole

body has tremblings which I cannot control.

I cannot speak well any more. I have not spoken for years. I stutter when I report in a few words a need to a warden. One of them told me, "You're an idiot. Don't you see that you can't even formulate a sentence?" He said this to one who remembered being considered a good preacher in times past.

I could easily yield to the strong impulse to become a

madman in the full sense of the word, if I did not know that I am surrounded by the love of a multitude of Christians, by a real wall of prayers, as many other Christians are not. What makes me so important in their eyes?

What in my preaching and in myself is so great that the Communists have to warn men against my influence and seek to break me?

Am I really great?

I believe I am. I vaguely remember the name of Bernhard de Palissy as the inventor of porcelain. He was a Protestant, and the French King Henry III, a Catholic, to whom he had endeared himself, said to him one day, "I will be compelled to give you up to your enemies unless you change your religion."

Palissy answered, "I pity you for having given utterance to the words 'I shall be compelled.' What unkingly words! No power in the world can compel me, a manufacturer of earthenware, to change my convictions because a mob wills it."

All my torturers are compelled to torture me. They know that if they refuse they will share my fate. I am beyond compulsion. So are all my brethren in faith. Therefore we are the only ones who really exist. I ~am~, because I am myself. And I am great, because I am ~I~.

There is a hymn "How Great ~Thou~ Art." In the maddening circumstances of the solitary cell, I could

almost compose a hymn, "How Great ~I~ Am," I, the Bible's only concern.

The Bible tells me about my salvation, about God's being amazingly eager to have me in His Heaven.

Scripture does not solve national problems. A scrap of newspaper found in the toilet informed us that the state of Israel was founded. Judaism will not have solved its worries through this event. The new state will have its trouble, just as Romanians who were never scattered have had theirs, going from one distress to another.

Empires have passed away without ever having their problems solved.

The Bible does not solve the problem of the division of mankind into social classes. "The poor always ye have with you" (JHN 12:8).

The Bible does not solve religious problems. Two thousand years after Christ there are still hundreds of religions. Christianity itself is divided.

The Bible speaks about me.

I must be important if my captors strive so hard to break me and God strives so hard to uplift me.

The Bible speaks about me as being a god (JHN 10:34), a sinner (ROM 3:23), a seed (1CO 15:42), and the ground (MTT 13:8). The Kingdom of God is within me (LUK 17:21). Would you like to know where Christ lives? I can give you His exact address: "Christ lives in me" (GAL 2:20), within ~me~, the abused prisoner kept in prison cell No. 7. I am dust (GEN 3:19), but a dust apart, which will live eternally (JHN 11:25).

If a man renounces everything for Christ's sake, everything becomes full of Him. How can one be humble when he fills the universe? How can one be humble when he can speak the seemingly blasphemous words which put him on an equal footing with God, "I can do all things" (PHP 4:13)? Let the addition be

"through Christ who strengthens me." Whatever the circumstances that make me so powerful, it still remains that I am great. "I can do all things."

In modern languages "God of Abraham" or "God of Isaac" are three words. In Hebrew the corresponding expression ~Elohei-Abraham~, united by the orthographical sign called ~mappekh~, makes "God of Abraham" a single word. God can leave me only if He takes me with Him, so united have we become. The Kabbala says, "God with Israel is God. God without Israel is not God."

I pace up and down my small cell. It has room for three steps. I do not allow my captors to dictate how

many steps I should walk; I always walk just two steps. This limited space I occupy falsely tempts me to consider myself small and insignificant. We all live in too-small inner universes. We are great. When Jesus arranged the miraculous draught of fish, He allowed only ~great~ fish to enter the net (JHN 21:11).

We are one with God through Christ. God is one. He is so much one that in giving birth to a Son, in emanating the Spirit, in uniting with millions of men, He never abandons His absolute oneness. Schiller complained, "Two souls live within my breast." He should have thrown them both out and allowed himself the privilege of an indestructible oneness with God. Then he would have been great without ever having written a poem or drama. There would be no need of a pedestal any more in order to seem great.

I sit hungry, with chains on my legs, in a subterranean cell. I stutter when I speak some banality and I am great.

As children of God we are so great that we do not have to fear the supernatural world. It fears us. St. James wrote, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The devil did not flee from the archangel Michael but battled courageously against him (REV 12:7). From me

he simply flees. The disciples of the Lord can drive out demons with a few simple words.

The Indian Christian mystic Sadhu Sundar Singh once found himself in the Himalayas and entered a cave to rest. But as soon as he lay down, he observed in the depths of the cave the glimmering eyes of a tiger. Sadhu begged God to save him and walked out softly. He succeeded. The beast had not moved. But once outside he was filled with remorse. He was a child of God. He should not have walked out. The tiger should have yielded to him. So he prayed for this, re-entered the cave, and this time the tiger walked out leaving Sadhu alone.

But the marvel is that we have power over not only evil forces, but also over good angels. Jacob fought with a good angel and prevailed (GEN 32:24, HOS 12:4). Our heavenly Bridegroom Himself says to the faithful soul,

"Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me" (SOS 6:5). The faithful soul is of such irresistible beauty in God's sight that He is conquered the moment He hears our voice. Jesus promises, "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (JHN 15:7), which means that we will have the victory in every conversation with God.

I believe in God. I have this power. I am something. And here in my prison cell, which might as well be a psychiatric ward since to a certain extent I have long since gone mad, knowing what the grace of Christ has made of me, I will dare to sing the song that expresses what every Christian thinks in the depths of his heart but does not dare to say in so many words: "Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee? 'How great I am, how great I am.'"

That I feel unworthy and weak does not count. When Zacharias, the father of St. John the Baptist, hesitated to

believe the promise of God saying, "I am an old man" (LUK 1:18), he received this reply from the divine messenger: "I am Gabriel." In Hebrew the word "I" has two forms, ~Ani~ and the amplified ~Anohi~. Somewhere there might be a little "I" named "Richard." But it has been amplified by angels and by Christ Himself, and now it is great.

Mock me as much as you like, torturers. Your abuses have had just the opposite effect from what you expected. You have not humiliated me. You have shown me my greatness.

"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (PSA 139:14), says David, uniting words of self-admiration with words of gratitude towards the One to whom we owe our greatness.

I thank you, God, that I am great. Amen.

page 101 Beware of Narcissism

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

My blurred reason swings like a pendulum from one

extreme to the other. I know that my sermons are not well balanced. Yesterday I was full of admiration for my great "I." Such a sermon I would never have delivered from a pulpit. If it reaches you from my prison cell, take it with reservations. Not all sermons are the expression of objective truth. Sometimes they just reflect a transitory mood of the preacher. Just as a song is not a succession of single notes or chords but is heard in between, unwritten, so God's revelation is not in any one sermon, but runs as a theme between sermons.

Now I feel just the opposite of the way I felt yesterday. How could I admire myself?

If there were a human being with the right to self-admiration it was the Virgin Mary. She was of a purity which all the lilies on earth and all the stars in the sky could envy. She was filled with passionate love for God. I do not know any human being who might have been as God-like as Mary.

She had the dual honor of being a princess and a virgin, not only in body but also in spirit. She was a great poet. Her song is outstanding. Referring to her words, "Henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" (LUK 1:48), Spurgeon said, "I suppose Protestant generations are among the 'all' who ought to call her

blessed" (Charles Spurgeon, ~Christ's Names and Titles~).

Legend says that it was St. Luke's hobby to paint pictures of Mary. One is supposedly in Italy. This legend might not be true. But it is certain that Luke painted a beautiful picture of her in his Gospel. To contemplate this picture is ennobling.

An angel spoke directly to her, but she never said the foolish words which I said yesterday, "How great I am!" While Gabriel showed her his respect, she called herself a "handmaid of the Lord" and was humble in her dealing with the divine messenger. She responded, "Be it unto me according to thy word" (LUK 1:38). Luther writes "Mary, after the annunciation, does not boast does not shout, 'I have become the mother of God,' she asks for no honor, but works in the house like before, milks the cows, cooks, washes dishes, sweeps and is busy with little, despised things, as a maid or housewife

should do and as if she would disdain the great gifts and graces. Women and neighbors don't consider her as something higher than before. Neither did she ask for it but she remained a poor woman among the little people."

She had understood the full depth of his words, "The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (LUK 1:35). When God intervenes in the life of a man, he begins to love the shadow. The bride in SOS 2:3 says about her beloved, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight."

"In the shadow of his hand has he hid me," says Isaiah (ISA 49:2).

Self-admiration is false. How the wardens and officers take pride in their uniforms. They are as sure that they prepare the future happiness of mankind as their enemies are sure that the Communists are devils. Every nation, religion, party and caste sees only ideal qualities

in itself and chops off the heads of others in order to appear taller.

How horribly wrong were my feelings yesterday. I was enamored of myself. It was only after I delivered the sermon that I remembered ROM 15:3, "Christ pleased not himself." He would not allow a young man to call Him "good." Neither did He have a bias for the religion of His childhood. He called the temple a den of thieves. I do not think He is much in love with what is commonly called the Christian Church either, although it bears His name. He sees His picture painted on walls and stained glass windows. Inside, a priest or pastor fulfils the role of a businessman, and even this he does not do well. Proof of it is the fact that the "grocers" who attempt to sell spiritual commodities increasingly lose customers.

Jesus did not please Himself. The virgin Mary did not. Should I congratulate myself because I did the Lord the kindness of repenting of my sins and receiving His forgiveness?

Did I even really repent? The Bible speaks of

sackcloth and ashes as the outward evidence of true repentance. I try in vain to remember even one acquaintance who ever repented like this. What man is there who, in order to think uprightly, to believe only what is based on fact, to have faith and not credulity, to avoid any uncontrolled thoughts, to judge dispassionately, in a disinterested manner, resisting any pressure, hatred, preference, fear or illusion, even if this meant being stripped of everything - what man chooses to be clothed in nondescript rags and to have, instead of a warm fireside, only the ashes of a fire quenched long before?

Where is the man who has repented so deeply that he is willing to renounce even eternity if he thought it a

hindrance to the fulfillment of the Kingdom? Who has repented so whole-heartedly that Jesus and only Jesus counts?

We repent of our sins and then commit the sin of admiring our repentance, instead of repenting of it as of a trespass because it is superficial.

Yesterday my torturers secured my legs with a rope. Then they wedged a stick between the bonds. The stick was turned until the rope, tightened to the breaking point, bit deeply into the flesh. Their torture prejudices us against them so that we cannot concede that they are right in their thinking. Holiness is the same thing as ideal Communism. Holiness means to have nothing of your own, no material goods, no sin, no righteousness of your own, not even repentance of your own. Holiness is perfect communion or sharing with Jesus and the saints. Our lives should have been Jesus and only Jesus. Then the Communists would have become Christians.

An artist sang ~Rigoletto~ badly. People booed her. Indignant, she said to her colleagues, "What an uneducated audience! They dare to jeer Verdi!" They did not jeer the composer but the performer. I believe that those who beat us opposed not Christ but us Christians who admired ourselves without reason.

Every man's energy budget is fixed. The more he spends on one activity the less remains for something else. It is vain to spend energy on self and self-admiration

when we need all our energy for things of eternal value. I know that today's sermon is just the opposite of yesterday's. A pastor would never dare contradict himself so obviously in the pulpit. He is under compulsion to be consistent in order to be respected. But I am free simply because I am in a solitary cell. Contradictory thoughts and sentiments pass through

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my mind just as they do through yours. I give you all of me.

The whole philosophy of the Christian mystics is contained in the following parable. Once there were three beautiful birds in the same tree. The one in the topmost branches was serene, enthroned in majesty, immersed in its own glory. In the lower branches, the second was agitated because the fruit it tasted was bitter, while the third found the fruit tasty, but the sweetness lasted only as long as the food was on its little tongue. In their common disappointment, the two latter birds hopped higher and higher on the branches until they approached the serene bird. Losing themselves in its glory, they discovered that there had never been three birds but only one - the majestic one.

I told you in one sermon my feeling of being exalted, in another my humiliation. While composing the first I felt well, but alas, for such a short moment. Humiliation on the other hand is bitter. With my false glory and worthless humility I came to the divine bird that wishes to gather her little ones under her wings. Here both states of heart disappeared. There is none other than the one Jesus. All the rest is illusion, not worth mentioning. Amen.

page 106 The Shadow Has Been Brought Backward

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

King Hezekiah of the Jews was sick. The prophet Isaiah had promised him that he would recover and, yielding to his request, promised him a sign that this would happen. Now, Hezekiah had a sundial. Isaiah prayed, and the Lord "brought the shadow ten degrees backward" (2KI 20:11).

Many find it difficult to believe that the shadow

went backward ten hours, but the Bible does not claim this. It is written "ten degrees," not "ten hours." The degrees could have been minutes, or even less.

Neither must we suppose that, for the performance of this miracle, the earth would have had to turn backward on its axis, contrary to its natural course. The phenomenon could have occurred by means of refraction. A ray of light is refracted from a straight line by passing through a medium of another density. Because of the refracting power of the atmosphere, the sun, when rising or setting, seems to be higher above the horizon than it really is. The miracle could have been performed by means of refraction.

The Jewish sundial had a unique form. In 2KI 9:13 it is written that the friends of Jehu, when he was proclaimed king, "took every man his garment, and put

it under him on the top of the stairs." The Targum of Rabbi Joseph (a Targum is an Aramaic translation of a book) here used the words ~lidrag sheaiya~, meaning the hour-steps. The division of time was shown by a shadow projected on stone steps, gradually ascending to a certain height.

This also gives meaning to the title of Psalms 120 through 134, "Songs of Degrees." They are Psalms through whose meditation you can advance in time, but also return to former times on certain occasions.

Try to understand what a gift Hezekiah received. Not only did the shadow on the sundial return but also the time indicated by the shadow. He was younger. A few minutes or hours were as if they had not passed yet. All hours and days belong to God, and He can let you relive today an hour from thirty years ago.

At Cana, Jesus changed the water into "good wine" (JHN 2:10). Good wine is old wine. So Jesus changed water not into a liquid which immediately became wine, but a liquid which had become wine long before. When a man is converted, not only are his present and future transformed, but also his past. He is changed into a man who has always been elect and righteous in God's eyes.

The shadow has gone backward on my sundial, too. I am a child again. Life is before me as if I had not lived it yet, and now I am free to change decisions that I think were wrong. Hindsight is always better than foresight. At my present age I know better what I should have done in childhood and in youth. Now I can go back and do it. Time is reversible for the faithful. We sing the songs of degrees and ascend and descend freely on the steps of time.

I am eight years old again. Until then I had never heard about Christ. On this particular occasion I came

from school with another child. He stopped before a Catholic church and asked me to wait while he delivered a message to the priest. I preferred to enter with him and so found myself in a Christian church for the first time.

I understood absolutely nothing of what I observed. I saw someone hanging on a cross and wondered what horrible deeds He must have committed to be punished like that. I saw a beautiful lady with a child in her arms. You will say that I saw only the statues. It might be. I remember seeing the Crucified and a Lady. Now that the shadow has gone back on the sundial, I see that my memory is correct. Only blind men see crosses and statues in churches. There was the lady and a multitude of other beings looking benign, calm, loving (as people never look ordinarily). I wondered who these were and why they stood in this half-dark house in complete silence.

The boy spoke with the priest. I had not the slightest idea what a priest was. But this then came to me and caressed me on my head. Why don't priests do this more often? We bring our children to pastors that they might teach them. Children were brought to Jesus that He might touch them. The right touch of a man who knows how to bless is worth a thousand teachings.

He asked me, "What can I do for you, little fellow?" I answered, "Nothing. I just entered with my comrade." Then this priest (I found out after almost fifty years that his name was Giuseppe Cavane) told me, "I am the

disciple of One who has taught me never to allow anybody to pass near me without doing him at least a little bit of good. It is hot outside. Would you allow me to bring you a cup of cold water?" I have drunk many beverages since then, but none tasted like this water.

I was stupid then. I left the priest without questioning

him further. But now I am again a boy of eight. And I sit down near the priest and ask him more and more about this mysterious One who does good to everybody and teaches people to do the same. I would have heard that He is the One crucified for His goodness, that the beautiful lady was His mother, and that the beings with wings are his angelic host. Today I can become a disciple of Jesus from the age of eight.

I don't think that I would have listened to the priest very long. He probably would not have spoken much. It is so wrong to interrupt the silence of churches even with sermons and splendid music. Often nothing more is needed than just looking to Jesus. If he had explained to me that it was for my sins He suffered, it would have been enough.

And now I stand near the sad mother at the foot of the cross.

When I first saw her standing there, a scene flashed through my mind. I had been sick with typhus at a very early age. The doctor, who could not possibly imagine that I knew French, said to my mother in this language, "There is no hope. The child will die." I asked my mother, "What is death?" and she began to weep. She did not tell me. She did not know herself that it means a return to God. But Mary knows. She is sad, but confident. She looks much younger than He.

A sword pierces her heart. I will take it out of her heart. But how? I am so small and weak. Oh, if the shadow could advance faster on the sundial. I wish to grow, just enough to be able to do what I wish. Then I would ask her how we could help Jesus not to hang on the cross.

Mary, speak now and tell me that the whole dreadful

scene has passed, that He is resurrected. How strange that I should have grown up as a Jew among Christian

children and yet no one ever told me this until now. But He did suffer, and she, too.

I can make decisions anew. I will never again leave this building. How wrong it was to start Christian activities, to become a missionary, to accomplish rituals. One thing is needed: to sit quietly in this hushed place and to live the oneness.

A Russian soldier told us about an atheist lecturer who had come to an underground meeting. The Christian preacher asked him at the exit, "How many do you think were here?" He answered, "A hundred." The preacher replied, "This is what you saw. Actually, we were one, one soul and one heart. We are one person who bears the name 'hundred.' We are one who soars towards heaven, and heaven inclines towards us with all its beauties. If you could feel for one moment the rapture of this oneness, not only with our fellowmen but with the whole creation and with God, you would leave everything in the world for it."

No more is needed than to be just one. I can start life again. It will no longer lead an active but a contemplative life: the quiet enjoyment of oneness.

But no, it seems I am not made for this.

The priest in the church teaches me the who and the what of life. I grow up in the Church. The shadow on the sundial advances again, but slowly. I have time. The Church, a loving mother and teacher, also shows me how to lead the Christian fight. In my other life I had to guess at it and made many mistakes.

We know from the episodes of Gethsemane that the disciples of Jesus were armed. It is natural to have defensive weapons when you are threatened. Peter carried a sword but had no idea how to handle it. He cut off the right ear of the high priest's servant. What was the good of that? A policeman with a cut ear can still

arrest your beloved. Don't fight - but if you have decided to fight, hit your adversary right on the head. Jesus then points out that the sword is not a toy, that you can perish from it. Whoever has inhibitions about the enemies of the Church and cuts off only ears had better keep his sword in its sheath.

God said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise thy (the serpent's) head." Instead of this, we sometimes tickle the serpent on the belly and make him laugh. It is all because we have not learned the "how." But I am young again and learn to handle the sword of the Spirit.

I have terrible pain. I seem to bear an aching skull, not a head. But this is from my other life. Now the sundial has gone back. It has reversed itself only for me. A whole generation of Christian fighters can arise. Those who have neglected their duty or have fulfilled it wrongly can make things right as of forty, fifty, or sixty years ago.

David was a man in whom God was pleased. But listen to his last words before he died. They were about Shimei, a man who had cursed God's anointed. David said to Solomon, "His hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood. So David slept with his fathers" (1KI 2:9, 10). From the beginning of the Christian life to its last breath, the enemies of God have to be destroyed. Every man meeting you is given the dramatic alternative: either he will be saved or he will perish - if not by your hand, then through the faithful word which you told him and which he did not receive.

I had so many quarrels in my other life, even with brethren. I pace through my cell humming in Hebrew from memory the Psalms of Degrees. Now "I am for peace" (PSA 120:7), "My soul is even as a weaned child" (PSA 131:2).

In a democracy you must win the majority of people

or of a congregation to see your will fulfilled. Not so with God. It is enough that two should agree on earth as touching anything, and it shall be done for them by the Heavenly Father (MTT 18:19).

But if couples disagree about contrary matters, don't they have to argue with each other? Now, by hindsight I can see that it is not necessary. The Father has unlimited time. He can move the shadow on the sundial forward and backward as many times as He likes. He also has a multitude of worlds. All couples will see their will fulfilled even if they differ.

Last night I dreamt that a monk complained to me that his superior was wicked, a kind of Torquemada. He told me this with joy, explaining that his superior, through making him suffer innocently, had accomplished something similar to opening a large bank account for him. All the cheques he draws are covered because God looks on the credit side. He has suffered.

In my former life I had shunned many sufferings. I had preferred to prevaricate rather than endure pain. A new opportunity has been given to me. Here you have my body and soul, all those who wish to hurt me. Do me a favor. I have a new life before me. It will be one of suffering, of renunciation.

I am free here of the necessity of being consistent in my preaching. This need causes preachers to leave great potentialities unused. No one is all of a piece. The part that you repress is also valuable and could also praise God.

In his autobiography, Charles Darwin notes that, as his interests became increasingly absorbed in science, he lost the pleasure in poetry and the plays of Shakespeare which had formerly been a prominent feature of his life. He might have done better in these than in biology. In freedom I, too, had given up parts of my interests in life.

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Here everything is aflame.

How should I continue this sermon and how should I end it coming back to its main subject, the sundial? But why must the end of a sermon correspond to its beginning? Why must it have a logical conclusion?

I am tired now of preaching. Life will go on even

without a continuation of my sermon. Good night, dear brethren. Amen.

page 114 A Religion Without God

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

There are many things we know that we don't know we know. The Lord said to His disciples, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know," to which Thomas replied, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" (JHN 14:4,5). Thomas knew but did not know that he knew. Jesus said of John the Baptist that he was Elias, the prophet of old, who was to come. John, when asked, said that he was not Elias. This man did not know the essence of his own being. How could he have known what his being knew?

It is only in the narrow limits of the circumstances in which I now find myself- alone for years in a solitary cell without any book or any impression from the outside, dependent upon my own inner resources to occupy myself - that I find a large unexplored field existing in my mind to which I have access.

Without any material to read, without anything happening to stimulate my mind, I think new and strange thoughts. I am conscious of knowing more than I knew before. From whence did I acquire this new knowledge? It is not through drawing further conclusions from what I knew before, through a process of reasoning. Who can reason when hungry and beaten? No, I had known these things for a long time. But one thing was missing: I had not ~known~ that I knew them.

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Plato was right: "To know is to recognize."

Being alone is the prerequisite for plumbing your own depths. I would be much alone, aloof from you, the most dearly beloved, even if I were not in prison. Jesus said, "That the world may know that I love the Father," I leave the world and go to the Father (JHN 14:28,31). How would the villagers know that the bridegroom loved the bride if he amused himself with his friends while she was kept waiting for him? Jesus has to leave all his friends so that they may know He loves the Father.

Loving Him, He reveals to you His mysteries.

Do not believe the pastors who are constantly busy around you. Believe those who declare, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you" (JHN 14:30), as they contemplate their own depths. They might very well discover ultimate truths. You may not be aware of the fact. Their faces will not shine, because they will veil them as did Moses. They do not speak of these hidden experiences.

I am on my way to this contemplative state.

Last night I dreamt that an Orthodox Jew with a beard and curls asked me, "What is the other world?"

I answered, "It is where one has the answer. This world is the world of asking questions."

But I am already at the border of the other world. I begin to have the replies.

We have our first reply in the Bible. But scholars know that the Bible is like reality as defined by Planck and Heisenberg in modern physics, a wave of probabilities. You can never say what and where an elementary particle is and what it will do. You handle it by working on probabilities.

As for the Bible, we do not have such a book. There are countless manuscripts with many variations among them. The Hebrew language itself is very imprecise. It

has no tenses. The same form of the verb can be used as a curse or only as a declaration that something bad may happen.

For example, in PSA 83:15 one and the same word can be translated as an imprecatory prayer, "Persecute them with thy tempest," or as a prediction, "Thou wilt persecute them with thy tempest."

A single Hebrew word sometimes has contrary meanings. ~Baruh~ means "blessed" and "cursed." ~Kedoshim~ means "saints" and "Sodomites." Much is left to the arbitrary decision of the translator.

There are parallel texts in many parts of the Hebrew: the ~Ketub~, the writing, and the ~Keri~ the rule of reading, which might differ greatly from the former. In 2KI 20:4, for example, is the ~hatser~, which means "yard." But the masoretic rule is to read ~hair~, which means "the town." The difference is great. In the first case, the prophet Isaiah is very near King Hezekiah, in the latter he is far away. The ~Ketub~ plus the ~Keri~ form the Hebrew Bible.

The situation is similar in the Greek. We can translate the word ~afes~ so that the Biblical text reads, "Forgive us our trespasses," or "Leave us our trespasses," in which case we would have a prayer to continue in our favorite sin.

Most of us read the Bible in translation. Every translation is a treason, even the translation of sentiments into words, but especially the translation of Hebrew or Greek words into another language or another mentality.

For the Nunggubaya in Australia the expression "Holy Spirit" could not be translated. They have nothing similar. So the translators have used instead "the pretty witch doctor in the sky." Consequently, in their Bible they read that when Jesus was baptized, a

pretty witch doctor descended upon Him from the sky, and that those who believe and are baptized will have this pretty witch doctor on their side, which seems very curious to us.

But even the English is faulty. The words "Holy Spirit" are as curious and as inadequate as the words "pretty witch doctor," because "holy" comes from a word meaning "whole" and "spirit" comes from the Latin ~spirare~ meaning "to breathe"; therefore, "Holy Spirit" means to breathe deeply involving the whole lung.

In MRK 16:16, Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." For the Nunggubaya the expression "saved" was translated ~aniladi-in~, which means in their language "to receive a hard job." So

whosoever believes will receive a hard job. The missionaries wondered why they preached and preached about being saved and had no converts!

Even in the original, the answers of the Bible are like the answers of science: every answer raises new problems.

But I am bound to this world only by a thin umbilical cord. My thoughts belong to the world of answers. I have always had them in me. I had not known that I had known them.

There exists a world in which man has no God because the separation has ceased. The Godhead exists. It created man. And man had a God. But when man returns to his Source there is union. In this context, you see that the holiest book in the Bible is Esther, in which the world "God" never occurs. For the obvious, no words or names are needed. Here you understand the Lord's prayer, "Hallowed be thy name." The original Greek is "Aghiatheto to onoma su," which, literally translated, means, "May thy name be taken away from

the earth," so that instead of many names we would have the unnamed reality. (In Greek "a" = "un," "ghea" = "earth").

The Bible mentions a multitude of holy books inspired to proclaim the name of God. They have been lost. We no longer have them. They disappeared to indicate that there is a higher reality than a mere book: the ultimate reality about which it can only babble.

In Esther the word "God" is never mentioned. Not even in EST 4:3, in which we read that there was fasting, weeping, wailing, but no prayer to God. His help was taken for granted. Not many words are needed in intercourse between the "me" and "me." Jesus promises conquerors that they will sit with Him on His throne, just as He has conquered and now sits on His Father's throne. What God does a being have who sits on the throne of God from which worlds are created and ruled?

God's name is blasphemed because of our sins. His

reality is beyond attack. In Him everyone lives and moves. There is no one to attack Him. The Communists rebel against His name, against what they fancy Him to be, against the manner in which we have represented Him. But there exists no real rebellion against Him. The Communists are not worse than Satan. Yet Satan himself could not touch Job without asking humble permission from God.

There also exists this sphere of the one reality, without an "I" and a "He." The book of Esther is its best expression.

I know only that this last reality is terribly, unbearably harsh. I know it, therefore I cannot live with it.

I prefer the first day of faith, when I knew that God is the "God of pardons" (NEH 9:17, in the original). But

how can one receive forgiveness when he lives on the knowledge of unity with Godhead?

Having a God, you can reduce your obligations. The law of Moses prescribed that every Jew should give half a shekel to the temple annually. We read in the book of Nehemiah that the Jews were allowed to give only a third, contrary to the law. They had become poor after long years of slavery in Babylon. The laws of God are not implacable. The laws of reality, on the contrary, know no bargaining. When you fall from a height, you smash your head and that is that. When the clock runs out, you die.

So I prefer to turn off the knowledge of what I know and say like Luther, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God. I will not try to study Him as God. I know that I cannot look at the sun. I must have a tinted glass to look through. I must have the person of the God-man to take away the blinding glory of the invisible God, invisible because too bright for my eyes to gaze upon. I must have God in Christ. I will not try to study anything else."

But perhaps we are unjust towards the book of Esther. Is the notion of God really absent from it? It is written in the Talmud, "In every place where you find the imprint

of men's feet, there am I." Mordecai and his cousin Esther have left deep imprints in history. God is in the book. Amen.

page 120 Should I Pray to be Freed?

MY GOD

I know how to say "Our Father" but do not know what to add. Should I ask you for freedom? If so, why?

Once a businessman from Boston told Mark Twain, "I have attained much in life, but one great desire has remained unfulfilled, that is, to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land."

"What will you do there?" asked Twain.

"I would like to ascend Mount Sinai and there read the Ten Commandments in Hebrew as they were given by God."

Mark Twain replied, "That's too complicated. Would it not be much more comfortable to remain in Boston and fulfill the Ten Commandments?"

It is not necessary to go to holy places in order to be pleasing to Thee. But neither is it necessary to be at liberty. Which commandment could I keep better in freedom than in a prison cell? Why should I move around? The lily stays in the same place and exhales its perfume.

What does it count that I am alone? I had this problem when I was pastor of the church. I had inherited from my predecessor a church with a small attendance. In the beginning I was sad about it. But then I quieted my heart and told the brethren, "Instead

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of worrying about those who are absent, let each of us multiply his zeal and fervor and love. It is for these that God looks out. If He finds one man with as much love as only a hundred men would normally have, He is satisfied."

In my solitary cell I am undisturbed. I can work on my character to develop the virtues of thousands.

I will not pray to be freed.

The apostles were afraid during a storm and wanted to be rescued. Jesus fulfilled their pleasure, and so they escaped drowning. In exchange they were later martyred. In this world rescue from temporary troubles cannot have any other result.

I will not pray for peace of heart. I have some kind of peace.

Conscience is like a triangle of metal in my heart. If I am good, it stands still and does not bother me. If I am bad it begins to circle and the angles hurt. If I am very bad, the angles lose their sharpness through much circling, and again I am not bothered. At this moment I am not troubled. What peace I have I cannot judge for myself. Neither do I have anyone with whom I can consult.

But either way I know that I am loved, because I suffer, and it is written, "He that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin" (1PE 4:1).

In his book about the Virgin Mary's song, Luther tells of a vision. Three virgins knelt before an altar. During the service a beautiful young man appeared and hugged the first girl and kissed her. He did not kiss the second, but smiled at her with great friendliness. As for the third, he hit her and pulled her hair. With this the young man disappeared.

Later the vision was explained. The first virgin symbolizes the selfish, unregenerate souls. God must do

much good to them. He must fulfill their will towards them, not His own. They cannot live without receiving many blessings from God.

The second virgin represents those who have started to serve God but still need, at least from time to time, a friendly gesture from Him. They cannot simply love Him without expecting anything in return. They

cannot simply love Him, whatever He does and however He behaves.

The third virgin, the Cinderella, represents the saintly soul who loves God without any ulterior motive. She simply loves. She is happy if He does good to others. Mary would have sung the same beautiful Magnificat if she had been told that another girl, yes, one who despised her, had been chosen by God to be the mother of the Lord. Such do not need the caresses of the Lord. They are happy to bear their cross for Him and pass through a dark night of the soul. If He wishes to abandon them while they undergo suffering, they do not complain. Everything is right only if it is His good pleasure. For these souls God multiplies the chastisings. "Whom the Lord loves he chastises, and scourges every son whom he receives" (HEB 12:6).

A great Master like You would not scourge someone personally. Therefore, the Communists might be Your tools for this purpose. If one were to judge by the number of beatings I have received, I must be very much beloved.

That would be good, but if I knew it and took undue satisfaction in it, I would not be like the third virgin. In the end, atheists also pass through suffering. The whole matter is too complicated for my poor reason.

The simplest thing is just to leave it and remain in peace, not trying to distinguish with my blurred mind if it is the right kind of peace or not.

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I will sit still in this my hidden cell and look to You, the hidden God, without bothering You with any request.

I have given up the popularization of religion as contained in the creed, which speaks about God only as a creator. You are also the preserver and the destroyer. If it is not You who destroys, who does? You are not simply the Creator who left creation to develop as it would; You are the Creator of all things, including the angel called the Destroyer (EXO 12:23). You also created the microbes that kill. You are described as destroyer in Lamentations 2. You continually destroy lives that You have created. "The Lord kills and makes alive. He

brings down to the grave, and brings up" (1SM 2:6). Both these activities bring You honor. I love You whatever You choose to do.

In Maramuresh there is a place called "the humorous cemetery," which expresses even today what the Dacians of history (the ancestors of Romanians) believed about death. They dressed in white and rejoiced when someone died. On every cross in this cemetery is carved some joyful scene from the life of the buried man. They knew that You destroyed this life in order to create another one.

I owe you the happiness which I had in my family and church. From Your hand I also receive the destruction of this happiness, which was necessary in order to replace it with the happiness of sitting in a subterranean cell, completely free of everything that disturbs, and of looking to the hidden God; the happiness of having passed from the holy place of the temple to the most holy place.

When Gehazi asked the Shunammite woman after her son had died, "Is it well with the child?" she answered, "It is well" (2KI 4:26). She would have

said the same words on the day of the child's birth.

If I get tired looking at You and my mind is distraught, it does not matter. You never slumber nor sleep. You look at me.

When my son was small he asked me, "Father, what should I do? I am bored."

I told him, "Think about God."

His reply was, "Why should I think about Him with this little head of mine? Let Him think about me with His big head."

The apparatus at the great observatory of Mount Palomar is so sensitive that the heartbeat of the astronomer disturbs it. The simplest thing is to efface oneself completely, not to be bothered about what happens. I think it is never reality which bothers us; we

are bothering reality. I will stop doing so. I have You as Father in Heaven. I lovingly called You "Father." This is all. No other prayer is needed, and no request.

I will not ask to be freed. Amen.

page 125 Mankind Is Innocent

GOD

Mankind is innocent, if looked upon from a certain perspective. An X-ray of a pretty girl's cranium doesn't look any better than that of a gorilla.

The Bible is full of good news, including Paul's declaration, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (ROM 3:23).

If this is true, then before I ever sinned I was a man much sinned against. "There is none righteous, no, not one" (ROM 3:10). Thousands of ancestors have transmitted their heredity to me through the genes, programming almost all of my future characteristics. And not one of these ancestors was righteous. Then all my heredity must be terribly bad. I have been educated by grandparents, parents, teachers. Of what quality were they? The same apostle says, "There is none that does good, no, not one" (ROM 3:12). I did not have one to give me the right instruction.

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity," says the Psalmist (PSA 51:5). Since when does any reasonable person hold it against a statue for being ugly? Only the sculptor is responsible. "All have sinned." Absolutely every man with whom I have come in contact since early childhood has sinned against me. I was buffeted to and fro long before I said or did the first wrong thing. So, God, looks upon me not so much as a sinner but as a man sinned

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against, who, under continual provocation and surrounded only by bad examples, commits some iniquitous deed. Even a human court acquits in such a case.

I used to ask people who confessed some sin, "Tell me something about your parents and grandparents."

Often enough it was to give them some relief. One had quarrelled. His parents had been choleric, quarrelsome. A preacher had fallen repeatedly into adultery and justified it on the basis that Abraham, too, had been a polygamist. He had not realized the connection between this and the fact that his father had been jailed for a sexual crime. It helped one who fought against the impulse of gambling to know that his father had been a compulsive gambler.

It is worthwhile trying to learn the beginnings of a man's sin. There is always some seducer, some bad book, some tendentious movie. A mountain of sin has fallen upon us and crushed us morally before we ever sin.

"All have sinned" - this is the comforting news that You give us. It is not that I alone happen to be a wicked evil-doer or that I alone, though living in a pure paradise and surrounded only by angels and saints, have started to sin out of pleasure or perversity.

Nor is it only the influence of other men that has made me sin. I belong to nature, a nature that is not morally neutral. "The creature was made subject to vanity" (ROM 8:20). It is in the "bondage of corruption" (ROM 8:21). There is something in my body, in my very nerves, that compels me to sin.

I will remind You of an extreme case.

Robert Ledrue, who had been in his youth one of the foremost detectives of France, was given the assignment to investigate a murder that occurred in Le Havre. A man who bathed in the sea at night was shot when he came out of the water. Nobody knew the motive for the

murder. But the murderer had left prints in the sand and a bullet in the victim.

Ledrue investigated, went to the head of the police and asked to be arrested. He had found out that he himself had been the murderer. It was a unique case. The bullet had been shot from a special kind of revolver possessed by only four men. He was one of them. The imprints in the sand showed that the murderer lacked the big toe on the right foot. Ledrue's had been

amputated. The detective was sure that he was the murderer but did not remember having killed anyone and knew no motive for doing so.

He asked to be kept permanently under surveillance by police. They discovered that he was a somnambulist. Later he shot at another person while wandering around at night, completely unconscious of what he was doing. Fortunately, the police had filled his revolver with harmless bullets. After shooting, he returned quietly to his home and went to bed, with no idea of what he had done.

For murder while in a state of somnambulism, Ledrue was sentenced to lifelong isolation on a solitary farm under police surveillance.

What is our state when we commit crimes? Jesus said of His executioners, "They know not what they do." St. Peter said, "Ye killed the Prince of life ... I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" (ACT 3:15,17).

How much is a man responsible for what he does? St. Paul wrote, "The evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me" (ROM 7:19,20). In this passage sin appears as a foreign intruder against whom I am helpless, just as I am helpless against a massive attack of tuberculosis microbes. It is not something I have courted

deliberately with my reason and will.

Benjamin was found with a stolen cup in his sack, put there not by himself but by Joseph's servants (GEN 44:2). So what appears as my sin, the stolen cup in my character, is the result of innumerable actions of men, all sinners, who shaped my life, all abetted by what has become disorderly in nature. The apostle continues: "I find then a law [who has established it?], that, when I would do good, evil is present with me ... I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind" (ROM 7:21,23).

Sin and guilt are not the same things. I can commit a sin without being guilty of it, as for example under

extreme coercion, inner irresistible impulse, complete ignorance, etc. You have told us, "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed" (LUK 12:2). This is a fact of everyday experience. In our dreams when rightly analyzed, in daydreams, in slips of the tongue and under hypnosis, hidden things become manifest. They will also become manifest in the other world. All the ugly deeds will be known there. But we don't have to be afraid. There they will be known by beings who are no longer as we are now. Everybody will be full of understanding, insight, compassion, and power to repair wrongs. Sometimes a child weeps over a catastrophe that has happened to him. Father observes. However, to him it is not a catastrophe, and so he makes the broken toy work again.

Jesus referred to sinners as sick men who need a physician instead of a judge. He heals sin with a medicine, His own blood shed for us.

I was in the same cell with a man sentenced to death for numerous sadistic murders. He confessed to me and answered my questions. His father had been an alcoholic. The only remembrance he had of him was

that he came home drunk, beat him and his mother, stole all the money that his mother had earned by sewing, and left home to drink again. When the child was hungry, his mother would beat him for crying.

At the age of fourteen, attracted by the uniform and by songs that seemed to make sense, he joined a Fascist anti-Semitic organization. For this, the royal government put him in prison. Since there were no separate juvenile facilities, he mingled with all sorts of criminals, who thenceforth were his educators. Though the royal regime was later overturned, the Communists never forgave anyone. And so for the crime of being a Fascist at the age of fourteen, he was imprisoned again and beaten. Then he was offered the chance of being freed if he would torture other prisoners to death. He accepted the offer. It was his only chance for survival. After he had served as henchman for a long time, the same Communist masters sentenced him to death.

If you were to ask me today, "What is the sum of your experience with mankind?" my immediate reply would

be, "Father, they are not guilty; they don't know what they do." I would include my torturers in this appreciation. We are meant to be the defenders of men, not their accusers. We even have to defend desperate cases. To accuse is the devil's business.

Every fibre of my heart believes in strict determinism. Omar Khayyam wrote:

'Tis all a chequer board of nights and days
Where destiny with men for pieces plays,
Hither and thither moves and mates and slays,
And one by one back in the closet lays.

Luther once said that whoever erased the words "free will" from the human dictionary would render the

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greatest service to mankind. Everything has been predestined, even Lucifer's and Adam's falls. God had willed that it should be so. Judas was a traitor because God had designated him as such. Spinoza, one of the profoundest souls which the Jewish people has ever produced, was also the first to apply to all human thought and sentiment and action the determinist constraint. Einstein believed like him. As for the Bible, it is clear "God works in you both the will and the fulfilling" (PHP 2:13).

Among those things I am determined to do is to make decisions of my own free will. I am determined to have a sentiment of responsibility. I am determined to feel the dread of the judgment, even though I don't believe we are free to do otherwise than we do. I can see constraint in every sin, and I cannot do otherwise than defend the sinner. May someone else defend me if I am mistaken.

Your thoughts are not like mine. When I speak, I have to express my thoughts. My plea with you is that man, while surely responsible for all he does, is not responsible for being responsible. Therefore, I plead, "Acquit!" Amen.

page 131 The Encounter With Lucifer

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

To know God is not enough. We must know the enemy, too.

Even Jesus did not avoid a face-to-face discussion with the devil. If we don't bring to the bar of reason the temptations of Satan, they will enter the depths of the subconscious, where the great decisions are made, and ravage the soul.

I would not recommend this to everyone, but I have studied the tenets of the Satanist sects. One must have special grace to tackle this subject and not be overcome. Satan's words seemed good and were convincing to Eve, though she lived in God's paradise. How much more do they lure us, her fallen progeny. Our sinful nature responds all too readily to the great claims of Satan and his followers. They can be studied only with a constant struggle to resist their baleful influence on one's character.

I remember the chill that went down my spine when I read the secret formula disclosed only to initiates during the introduction to the third degree: "Let my will happen in all things." The formula was not new to me. It tapped into the huge drive for self-assertion which we all have in us. It is just the contrary of the teaching of our Lord: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself" (MRK 8:34).

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Human nature says "no" to this command of Jesus. But if the grace of God comes and you are inclined to fulfill it, be aware that Satan can disguise himself and make of conversion to Christ an initiation into the Satanic rite. If you were to express in clear words what happens in such a case, it would be as follows: "I must be a man with a very strong 'I' to be able to decide even the rejection of the 'I,' the only great treasure I possess. So let ~my~ will happen in religion, too. My will is to deny myself."

Afterwards you can go to great lengths of self-denial. You can go even as far as giving away all your possessions and being burned at the stake for your ideals. It is the "I" that will have chosen poverty or martyrdom. Without knowing it, you will have been faithful to the formula of initiation: "Let my will happen

in all things - even in matters regarding my relationship with Christ."

"Deny yourself" is one of the many laws of Scripture. They have not been given to be fulfilled. As a man born in sin, you cannot fulfill them. You can only take cognizance of them, seeing in them, as in a mirror, how far away you are from what is beautiful and right. You then acknowledge your sinfulness, at which point Christ can work in you. He changes you from glory to glory. But every human work you engage in by yourself, even a very holy one, is extremely dangerous.

Every day I have to decide whether to yield to torture or not, whether to deny Christ or not. It might be not a consecrated attitude but a devilish one to say, "Let my will he done, and my will is that I should be a hero of the faith."

The Lord wants some to be such heroes but he also allowed Peter to pass through moments of cowardice and then return with repentance, thus giving an

example throughout the centuries to Christians who might fall in times of persecution that they can rise again.

I decide nothing about what I will do tomorrow at the interrogation.

A rabbi once stood at the window of his study and called to the first Jew who went by. He asked him, "Suppose you find a wallet containing much money but also the card of the man who lost it - what would you do?"

The Jew answered, "You know, rabbi, that I have many children and am very poor. I would consider it as a gift from God. I would throw away the card and keep the money."

The rabbi said, "You are a thief. Sit there."

He then called a second Jew and put to him the same question. The reply was, "I would return the money immediately to its legitimate owner."

The rabbi said, "You are stupid. Sit near that other man."

He called a third Jew: "What would you do in such a case?"

The reply was, "I don't know. Everything depends upon the grace I will have from God at that moment."

The rabbi embraced him. "This is the right answer."

The devil is often with me in my cell. His first proposal was that I should decide to deny and be freed. When I refused, he appeared again in the guise of an angel of light: "Decide to die rather than yield to the Communists. Stick to this holy decision. May it happen as you decide." It was necessary to refuse this second subtle injunction too. Jesus had said in Gethsemane, "Not my will, but thine be done."

In the eighth degree of one of these occult initiations, you have to accept as a rule of life the sentences, "Believe

nothing and dare everything," or its variation, "Nothing is true; everything is permitted."

When Marx was asked what maxim he preferred, he replied, "Doubt everything." I know it is not easy to believe something. Every religious, political or moral attitude has arguments for and against. I have spent long hours over the books of Zen, the Upanishads, Buddha, Zoroaster, the Talmud, the Kabbala, the Koran, as well as atheist philosophers. There are so many interesting thoughts and persuasive proofs scattered throughout all of them. The sinner must choose with a limited, biased, unreliable mind that is only partially informed. But if a lost sinner has perforce a mind which cannot think rightly, he also cannot then believe that we are all lost sinners who cannot choose as we should.

If everything is only relatively true, the assertion about relativity is also only relatively true. There must be in relativity somewhere a kernel of the absolute. Life obliges you to dare, though what you do can produce

enormous harm or good to someone else. I know a man who had taken in an orphan and given him a warm home. When this orphan grew up and married, he adopted another orphan child who was happy in new surroundings. So it is also with evil deeds. They reproduce endlessly.

In order to dare, I must have a standard of what is right and true.

Many religions offer ways of life. Jesus is not one of the ways. He says, "I ~am~ the way." The definite article is one of mankind's greatest devices. I am sorry for nations like China and Denmark that lack it.

Well, devil, you ask me to believe nothing. So I will turn this weapon against you and I will not believe that nothing should be believed. You say, "Nothing is true."

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So the assertion that "nothing is true" is not true. You wish me to believe that "everything is permitted." All right, I will believe that it is also permitted not to believe that all things are permitted.

There were plenty of reasonable arguments for Romeo not to give his life for Juliet. Verona had many beautiful girls. He himself had been enamored first of Rosaline. But a lover does not make his love the subject of arguments and counter-arguments. I hate your logic, devil. I love Jesus. I love His will. Let it be accomplished in my life. I love His laws and am always sorry whenever I break them because of my human weakness.

With me you have lost. The discussion with you has become boring. Goodbye. I prefer to go to sleep.

page 136 Non-Person

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

On the first day of my arrest I had been told, "You are no more Richard Wurmbrand, but Vasile Georgescu. You are never allowed to mention to anyone your former name." I had been kidnapped from the street, and the simple fact that I still exist somewhere is a state secret. A warden might disclose it if he knew the name.

Today I protested against the mistreatment, saying, "Even if I don't belong to you, I am still a person, a man, and have the right to be respected."

They answered in a laugh: "What conceit! You are no longer a person. You simply are not. One thing exists: the proletarian state. Men belong to it. They are each a little wheel or a screw in its complex machinery. Whoever does not support the state simply is not. We don't even shoot him. There is nobody to shoot. We allow nothingness to rot away in a cell."

"I am not." "I am a nothing." Some philosophers say that the nothing exists somehow. If it does not exist, whose existence are we denying?

I remember the famous resume of Buddha's doctrine from Vissudhimagga:

> There exists only the suffering, not the sufferer.
> There exists action, not its author.
> The nirvana exists, but not the one who pursues it.
> There is the way, but not the traveller.

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I have had the shock of being told that I am a non-person. Now the non-person, no longer able even to wish to be a person, resigns itself to its new phase of existence. There is no more a man of sorrows in the cell; only the old, old sorrow is here, impersonal. My cell is old. Many generations of prisoners have experienced its sorrow before me, and many more will consider it their own after me. But suffering grants no one a monopoly. It wishes to be shared by everyone. Who has escaped its embrace?

Murder has existed since the time of Cain, but most murderers are unchronicled. Adultery has thrived down through the ages, but the Gospel does not even give the name of the woman caught in the act. What difference does her identity make? Lying affected the human situation in Paradise, before the Fall. Whoever utters a lie only adds his poison to the well.

Heaven also exists. If you pursue it, you do not have it. There should be no "you" and no "I." If these

disappear, the pursuit ceases and heaven is within. It has always been there. The barrier has been "you" and the condition put by the "you," that your highest desires must be fulfilled. Heaven is the fulfilling of One's desires, the unique God. It might be His desire - it might be my heaven - that I lead the most annoying life in a solitary cell.

A heaven in which I do not rejoice? The Bible has told me to deny myself. I have neglected to do so. Now the Communists tell me that I have become a non-person. So who is the "I" that has the claim of rejoicing in heaven? Heaven is a place without distinction between the subject that enjoys, the object enjoyed, and the sentiment of joy. It simply exists. You are seated in

"heavenly places" without striving for something beyond. For the first time a place where you really sit without any remorse for not doing something, without any need to move or fill your time with something else. It is rest, perfect rest.

When I was declared a non-person this morning, I told the captain, "Christ will be the victor through the patience that He gave us. A man with patience can do everything."

He laughed, "Can patience help you carry water in a sieve?"

I was disconcerted for a fraction of a second. Then I answered quietly, "For a certainty, if only you wait patiently for the water to freeze."

There is hope that they will make even living water freeze. It is terribly cold in the cell, though outside it must be the beginning of spring already. How I would like to be in the country and pick flowers, wild ones, hawthorns and violets and forget-me-nots. It is written, "Every one that loves is born of God" (1JN 4:7). But does anyone love if he does not include flowers in his love? Is it enough to love men?

I remember reading about an American black revolutionary, John Brown, who fought against slavery. His whole mature life was spent on riots. When he was

led to the gallows in a cart, he said to the soldiers surrounding him, "How beautiful is this land." He had had no eyes for trees and flowers before. If I were free now, I would leave men alone and walk among foxgloves and daisies and dedicate myself to the good deed of loving flowers.

Flowers exist for us en masse. We don't attribute personality to them. Except for the florist when he sells them, we don't even give them a number. They don't worry about being non-persons. But they are loved by

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Jesus. He compares Himself to them: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys" (SOS 2:1).

If you wish to pluck them, they don't flee. If you trample them under your feet, they reward you by giving you their perfume. Jesus teaches us to learn from flowers. If I had been like one of them, I would not have cared about being appreciated.

I remember Feinstein, the man who played a big role in bringing me to Christ and who died a martyr's death under the Nazis. I asked him once, "What is the pride of life mentioned in 1JN 2:16?"

He replied, "Stop asking silly questions, you idiot."

I shouted, "How do you dare to speak to me like that?"

His answer: "Now you know what is the pride of life."

I believe that it is still a remnant of the pride of life that made me resent so vividly the words which I was told today - that I am a non-person.

I will accept my new status. Amen.

page 140 Does God Avenge Himself?

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

We Christians speak to our torturers about love. They speak only about hatred and revenge.

You can never understand any Communist if you don't see his wickedness as the result of intense suffering. No one becomes a trouble-maker unless he is greatly troubled himself. He takes revenge ultimately against being. He is without the desire for life itself. An absurd existence has been imposed upon him. He believes that a man is nothing more nor less than a random agglomeration of molecules. Among these molecules are those that constitute nerves, which sometimes produce feelings of joy (always transitory) and at other times transmit pain.

Communists cannot account for the fact that they have to endure suffering nor that eventually they will be eaten by worms. Therefore, they must make haste to enjoy life, power, and material advantages. In opposition their presumed felicity are other agglomerations of molecules called class-enemies, which must be destroyed. Marx's favorite verse was, "There is no greater joy than to bite your enemy."

Our torturers see us as obstacles to their squeezing out of a senseless life the maximum of pleasant moments. Their conscience is not bothered by the fact that they beat human beings. When we ask why, they answer:

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"Did you have any remorse when you hammered a nail into the wall or when you cut wood? We all handle matter at pleasure. Man too is only matter. You can't make an omelette without breaking eggshells. You can't cut wood without producing chips. You cannot make revolution without handling the class-enemy roughly. We know no forgiveness. We take revenge on our enemies."

Revenge sometimes arises from great depths. Marx once wrote to Engels, "If Titus had not destroyed my fatherland 1800 years ago, I would not be an enemy of all fatherlands."

When I am left alone in my cell, Bible verses come to my mind, but now they are different. A voice whispers, " Don't mind your sufferings. They don't pass unnoticed. The Lord will take revenge."

Again revenge? I cannot suffer the word any more.

Should You, the Good, stoop to the same level as the Communists? Should heaven be reduced to the state of mind of a Communist torturer? I cannot believe these words about revenge, even if a St. Paul states them.

Should You, like Hitler, have burning ovens with unquenchable flames - no, even worse than Hitler, because his flames consumed the victims in a moment, whereas yours burn but never consume? Forgive us, but those in hell cannot accept the justice of hell. It is acceptable only to the man who sits in church after a good breakfast.

It might be that hell causes joy among saints. Saints are men, and nothing evil in men surprises me any more. But You are goodness personified. You can know happiness only through loving everybody, providing salvation, understanding, forgiving. If there is a hell, surely You must have the desire to quench its fire.

There certainly is a hell. You discharged in Yourself

the lightning of wrath when, torn by grief, You bruised Your Son and burdened Him with all the evil ever committed.

Yes, vengeance is Yours. As the sea absorbs the mighty rivers, You absorbed our rivers of wickedness and expiated them Yourself. This revenge is terrible. Because the death of Jesus on the cross burns the elect. This is the burning bush which is never consumed. It finishes with sin.

We know You to be love. You are our Father; Your Son, our Brother. Those who were once cold now burn with an eternal fire. It is the fire of love which has lit them.

I would believe You to be a God of love even if it were not reality. You are as I will You to be, not as You are. Love covers sin, and if I knew that You were vengeful, I would hide this fact from men. But no, You are forgiveness.

How torn I am. I began by not believing what St. Paul writes. Now I don't believe what I preach. The

Word of God cannot be contradicted. It speaks clearly about an eternal hell. What kind of heaven would it be with Hitler and Stalin in it, with all the robbers and seducers and liars who have remained unregenerate to the end? One serpent in the Garden - and mankind lost Paradise. How will heaven remain unsullied if men who are not born again invade its precincts?

The idea that men will be tormented forever is unbearable to me. But are the unrepentant sinners men? I have no remorse about killing tuberculosis microbes. I am happy that DDT wiped out vermin. A sinner, yes, even a criminal, has something human in him until the last moment of his death, after which he ceases to be human. His wickedness alone remains, self-conscious utter wickedness. We cannot imagine this, but the whole

of reality is unimaginable. The atom is unimaginable. It is not in vain that God told us not to make ourselves images of things. God considered it proper that strange beings like this, for whom we will feel no affinity at all, should burn eternally.

And then, hell might not be as unbearable and terrible as we think. St. Paul said, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren" (ROM 9:3). This means that perfect saints can renounce heaven. In Buddhism, the perfect, the Boddhisatvas, refuse to enter Nirvana before drawing all men with them. Likewise saints who have experienced the rich love of God can bear hell. Saints around me bear the hell of Communist prison. Some of them bear it joyfully. I think that hell accepted with love ceases to be hell. St. Paul would not have feared to be accursed. He would have taken the doom with passionate love in order that it might profit others.

Christ Himself was damned and abandoned more than all the saints. So for the children of God there can be a heaven in hell. The terribleness of hell is only for the others. God for forgives everyone His fit place - water for fish, air for birds, jail for criminals. Hell is the fit place for unrepentant sinners.

We will never be able to accept it until all our fixed ideas about God and eternal things are broken up and

discarded, even the notion that God is good, a notion that is false if God's goodness is separated from His many other attributes that qualify it, as, for example, His righteousness. "The kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field" (MTT 13:44). "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (COL 3:3).

There exists the unintelligible in Godhead. We must believe His Word even if it contradicts our notions of what we consider right for God to do. The virgin Mary

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was told that her Son would be given the throne of His father David, and this she doubtless accepted at face value. Instead, He was mocked and He descended into hell. St. Augustine, contrary to the prayerful expectations of his mother Monica, descended deeper and deeper into sin before God not only answered her prayers for his conversion but made of him a great Christian teacher.

We cannot understand God's ways. We must believe in His revelation. I cannot understand hell. I would send nobody to an eternal hell. But happily God is not like me. If He were, He would not give me paradise. I have to sacrifice the intellect. I believe in eternal hell. I believe that God avenges Himself. "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence," "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (DEU 32:35; ROM 12:19).

May God keep me from being the object of His revenge. Amen.

page 145 My Unfinished Requiem

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS

As usual, I start my night-vigil by singing softly Mozart's Requiem:

On that great, that awful day,
This vain world shall pass away.
Thus the sibyl sang of old,
Thus has holy David told;
There shall be a deadly fear
When the Avenger shall appear,
And unveiled before His eye,
All the works of men shall lie.

Hark! to the great trumpet's tones
Pealing o'er the place of bones;
Hark! it waketh from their bed
All the nations of the dead,
In a countless throng to meet
At the eternal judgment seat.
Nature sickens with dismay;
Death may not retain his prey,
And before the Maker stand
All the creatures of His hand.
The great book shall be unfurled,
Whereby God shall judge the world:
What was distant, shall be near,
What was hidden, shall be clear.

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To what shelter shall I fly?
To what guardian shall I cry?
O, in that destroying hour,
Source of goodness, source of power,
Show Thou, of Thine own free grace,
Help unto a helpless race!
Tho' I plead not at Thy throne,
Aught that I for Thee have done,
Do not Thou unmindful be,
Of what Thou hast borne for me;
Of the wandering, of the scorn,
Of the scourge, and of the thorn.
Jesus, hast Thou borne the pain,
And hath all been borne in vain?
Shall Thy vengeance smite the head
For whose ransom Thou hast bled?
Thou? whose dying blessing gave
Glory to a guilty slave:
Thou, who from the crew unclean
Did'st release the Magdalene:
Shall not mercy, vast and free,
Evermore be found in Thee?
Father, turn on me Thine eyes,
See my blushes, hear my cries;
Faint tho' be the cries I make,
Save me, for Thy mercy's sake,
From the worm, and from the fire,
From the torments of Thine ire.
Fold me with the sheep that stand
Pure and safe at Thy right hand.
Hear Thy guilty child implore Thee,

Rolling in the dust before Thee.
O, the horrors of that day!
When this frame of sinful clay?
Starting from its burial place,

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Must behold Thee face to face.
Hear and pity, hear and aid,
Spare the creatures Thou hast made.
Mercy, mercy, save, forgive:
O who shall look on Thee and live?

(English translation by Thomas Macaulay; in
~Seed Thoughts for Public Speakers~)

Though the ~Requiem~ had been commissioned, Mozart composed it for himself. During that time he was already very sick, as I am now.

I could say about myself what Mozart wrote when he created this music:

In my soul I have chaos. I can gather my thoughts only with difficulty. I see unceasingly the face of one unknown. He insists. He asks me to work. I continue to do so, because to compose music wearies me less than inactivity. I feel my hour has come. I must die. The end comes before I can show fully my talent. How beautiful is life! But I must finish my burial-song. I would not do right to leave it unfinished.

I also try to put into these sermons declaimed in a solitary cell my deepest, perhaps my ultimate, dying thoughts. Such thoughts I could not propound from the pulpit, because there one has to preach according to dogma and the taste of the audience, with the goal of attracting new souls into the church. Here I have absolutely no aim, no purpose. I preach only because it is in my character to do so, as it is in the nature of nightingales to sing.

Mozart did not finish his ~Requiem~. I might die or, perhaps, be freed before finishing my task. The worst, I think, would be to regain freedom and resume

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preaching conventional sermons.

While lying on his deathbed, Mozart could ask his friend Sussmeyer to finish the ~Requiem~. Sussmeyer was able to transcribe some of the tunes from the lips of the dying man. I am absolutely alone. I can convey to no one my thoughts. Jesus left this world without having delivered all His message. On the last evening spent with His closest friends, He said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (JHN 16:12).

While Mozart lay on his deathbed, he was afforded the consolation of having his unfinished ~Requiem~ completed by a couple of friends. I will probably never see anyone feeding on these my sermons. At his burial, the burial of a beggar, there was no organ music, no ceremony, no money even for a grave-marker, much less a tombstone. Unmarked, too, are the graves of prisoners.

There were rumors that Mozart had been poisoned. He himself suspected it. But in his ~Requiem~ there is no complaint. He thinks only about his own sins and the judgment that lies before him, to which he will answer. There are probably drugs in my food. I become weaker and weaker. But I will not think badly about my enemies. I will not think about them at all.

In the Philippines, people have been found still living in the stone age. It pleases me that they have no words for "enemy" and "war." They can't be taught to love their foes. They have none.

I will sing my requiem while lying on planks that might later be used for my coffin. My soul is far from my body. There is no doubt that the soul lives after death. I am the proof. My body has long since been dead. But I live.

Rather, it is not the "I" which lives, but a huge regret

for what I have been, with tears running from the eyes of a corpse. The Orthodox believe in some weeping icons of the Virgin. Others say that it is a priestly trick, with

some tubes and a pump hidden behind the icon. But why should wood not weep when a corpse can?

Oscar Wilde had been in my state when he composed "The Ballad of Reading Gaol." I begin my requiem with music to the words of his first stanzas:

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!

Some kill their love when they are young,
And some when they are old;
Some strangle with the hands of Lust,
Some with the hands of Gold:
The kindest use a knife, because
The dead so soon grow cold.

Some love too little, some too long,
Some sell, and others buy;
Some do the deed with many tears,
And some without a sigh:
For each man kills the thing he loves,
Yet each man does not die.

I also love men. Since my youth I have loved on sight every man I ever met. But I loved with a deadly love, because all my beloved have died or at least suffered much because of me. I don't believe like Wilde that each man kills the thing he loves. But I have. My one joy now is to have the world isolated from me so that I can no

longer harm anyone.

Am I now being punished by God for my sins? The answer to this question is contained in the Persian poem ~Rabbia~, which I remember. Set to melody, it is the second theme of my requiem:

Rabbia, sick and abed,
Was visited by two saints:
The pious Malik, the sage Hassan,

Men venerated in Islam.
One said, "You'll be able to bear
The chastising God sends you
If your prayer is pure." The other,
Profounder gave his opinion:
"If it is accepted with love,
You rejoice about the punishment."
Rabbia discerned traces
Of egotism in these maxims.
"Good men," he replied,
"When one sees the face of the Master
In his prayer, he cannot
Remember that he is punished."

Before the Lord I simply am what I am, without any why. Why was I born? Why was I born a sinner? Why did I suffer? Why did I produce suffering? Why do I die? Why have I the gift of composing a kind of requiem? What is the good of composing it while alone in a prison cell? My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Whys are futile. There is never any answer.

I am not being punished. Neither am I a martyr. How can I know what counts more in the depths of my heart: fanatical devotion to the anti-Communist fight or love for Christ? And even if it were martyrdom, what would be its value if it is based on a love which kills - a

sentiment unworthy the name of love? Calvin said that where this love is wanting, "the beauty of all virtue is mere tinsel, is empty sound, is not worth a straw, nay more, is offensive and disgusting." Martyrdom minus genuine love equals zero.

Punished criminal or martyr, my last song is about Jesus, except that in my requiem, unlike Mozart's, it is not a song of fear and trembling. It bespeaks confidence.

When asked to descend from the cross, Jesus did not move. Were nails more powerful than the hands of the Son of God? On several occasions when large crowds had sought to molest Him, He escaped. Yet alone, armed only with a whip, He had challenged the unholy practices of a courtyard full of merchants guarded by the temple police - and escaped unharmed. He said "I AM" in Gethsemane, and a company of soldiers fell to

the ground.

No, it was not nails that kept Jesus on the cross, but His love for me. For me, a non-person. Jesus loves the Father and He loves me. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (LUK 19:10). I prefer to be a lost sinner rather than a martyr, because it is lost sinners He came to save.

Listen to me. The one who calls is one who always killed those he loved, who made people shed tears and blood. You who give life to those who hate, save one who spreads death even upon the most beloved.

The power fails me to continue. I am hungry. I have a high fever. My mind goes blank. I cannot put in song Jesus' answer to my cry.

This will remain my unfinished requiem. Amen.

page 152 EPILOGUE

These sermons have had one subject: God as reflected in deep human suffering. Only God is the subject. Narrowness of scope is the only way to ensure critical focus in spiritual matters. The waters of human nature run deep, but if they are spread over a wide area, of necessity they become shallow. With too many subjects to cover, a man disperses his energy and dissipates his vitality.

It is better to do one little thing well than to do many things badly. Therefore I have striven to do just one thing, to say what God is like when observed from the perspective of an isolated subterranean prison cell and to focus on the rapport that existed between Him and a creature abandoned to hunger and torture. I hope this might be helpful to others who pass through pain and sorrow and who encounter problems of another kind.

I meant also to awaken in believers and men of good will outside Christian circles the desire to do something for the many thousands who are still imprisoned for their faith.

What could you do?

I once told Isaac Feinstein, who died a martyr's death

under the Nazis, "The words of the Lord that He is 'the way' are not of much practical use. After reading them, you still don't know the next step. Now tell me plainly, what is 'the way'?" He answered, "Go away." The

words would have sounded insulting were it not for his unequalled smile. His face and gestures gave to his words the meaning, "There is no answer to the question 'What is the way?' Jesus intended us to walk in it, not to inquire into it."

Before Jesus said "I am the way," He had already said, "The way ye know" (JHN 14:4). He is not a way we have to learn but one with which we are acquainted. We might not know the whole of it. We surely know the next few steps.

I will not tell you what to do in order to show compassion to those who today pass through the outer and inner tempests I have known. The simple fact that you have the desire to be helpful indicates that you need no guide. Your own compassionate nature will guide you.

Every step in this direction will also become a restraint not to act. From an eternal point of view, all activity, even holy activity, is counted among the vanities. How can someone do something without mixing into his purely idealistic endeavors some egotism, some calculation, some desire to impress? Busy yourself with good works, and you may suddenly stop walking in the way in order to sit like Mary at the feet of Jesus, choosing "that good part, which shall not be taken away" rather than the busy work of Martha. You then become a passionate lover of God, seeking to adore Him even if He allows you to pass through terrible circumstances, such as I have known.

The next step? You have stopped walking, and there will be no more steps. Adoring Him, you will realize in time that you have become more than a mere believer, because a believer is not satisfied with worship. A young man will not simply adore a girl lifelong. He will be satisfied with nothing less than possessing her, uniting

with her. So you will pass from adoring God to being one in spirit with Christ and, through Him, with the Father. It will be God who suffers in you for His creation, but through Him you will be at last triumphant.

With this the aim of my book will have been achieved. God has kept these sermons in my memory in spite of brainwashing and doping with drugs. In jail I lost all my knowledge of music and mathematics. I forgot even the Bible. But I remembered these sermons, because God willed you to read them and be changed from glory to glory in the likeness of His Son. Praise be to Him!

The words "Praise the Lord" occur in the Bible 366 times, once for every day of the year, including leap year. The Lord had to be praised in cells infested with rats and vermin, in days when we were badly beaten. The Lord should be praised daily by you, too, amid the troubles through which you pass.

~Praised be the Lord!~ When you say it, you will realize you knew the next step in "the way."

The End of "ALONE WITH GOD"

Answer to Half a Million Letters

Richard Wurmbrand
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"I am content that my book be deficient in acuteness, if only it be pious. Let it not train men for the discussions of Sorbonne, provided it train them for Christian peace. Let it be unserviceable for theological debates, provided it be used for religious living."

Erasmus of Rotterdam

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"...We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is founded with a sleep."
(Shakespeare "The Tempest")

p001 Questions People Ask Me

I have been in the free world for ten years. During this time I have received at least half a million letters as a result of my sermons, lectures, and the books which I have published.

Most of these letters show enthusiastic support for the cause of the Underground Church in Communist countries, the cause that constitutes my life. But many contain questions not related to Marxism, the persecution of Christians, and the methods of aiding these victims: they are from people who have entirely other concerns.

A man who has been a pastor for decades asks me, "What is the destiny of life? Do we go to a completed heaven of heavens, with no work to do and no creative abilities needed? Are our mansions above furnished, arranged beforehand, and will we not have to give them a personal touch? Why does God allow evil to tempt young

men? He knows we are weak and frail. Who can stand against Satan except Christ? What is this school of life and suffering for? Why does the Revelation consist only of general statements, without specific explanations?"

This pastor had to dispel the doubts of many for long years. He first had to listen to the doubts, and while trying to heal others, he himself was contaminated.

A soldier writes that he will commit suicide unless he gets answers to the things that trouble him. "What is it that makes me torn between two emotions - hate and love? What is it that makes me afraid of my fellow man because he may be of a different color or social standing?

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"If the Bible is the truth and the whole truth then what about all the Jews, Buddhists, Moslems, Hindus, etc? Will they automatically be excluded from the kingdom of God, whatever that consists of? What about the millions of people who were born and who died before the time of Christ, such as the Romans, Greeks and Babylonians? They could not have been all bad. What about the pygmies and the primitive people in South America and various parts of the world who have never heard of Christ and most likely never will?

"If the Bible is the truth, then I am in deed in need of forgiveness, for while I have never killed anyone or committed other such crimes, I have, in my heart, hated others, have lusted and have been jealous, have nurtured false pride, lied, cheated, and more. That being the case, I have much to atone for, yet still I remain a paradox. I could become a Christian (if that's what I am supposed to become), and tomorrow if I were sent into battle somewhere, which could well happen, I probably would kill not once, but many times over. Yet I would feel disgust at myself and would probably go insane. Christ wouldn't strike back; in fact he went meekly to the cross. The Fifth Commandment says, 'Thou shalt not kill.' Then what should I do if faced with an armed enemy? Stand still and let him kill me?"

This letter is a proof that in spiritual matters analysis often leads to paralysis. Here it could have led almost to suicide.

Another man asks: "How can we, how dare we (the United States, Britain, France, Germany, etc.) send missionaries to Africa to convert the so-called heathen

while in Europe these Christian nations spilled each other's blood in two world wars with a cruelty that would make an animal disgusted with the human race? Who is the heathen and who is the Christian? What about people who are supposedly insane and confined to asylums? What happens to them? Are not years in an asylum a living hell here on earth?

"What happens if I become a Christian and then am tempted by a woman and once more fall into sin? Do I pick myself up and start over again? And if that is the case, then why tell people that only by obeying God's Commandments will we share in his kingdom? Would it not be more sensible to say that by trying to keep God's Commandments we shall share in his kingdom? I believe that love is not merely an illusion, that it is real and therefore in that sense God must be real, but it still disturbs me - who is God? I have been told to pray for understanding, to approach the Bible in prayer, etc. But I can't accept that. Before I pray I want to know who I'm praying to. I can ask a woman for the next dance, but I know who I'm talking to. She takes shape and form. My eyes tell my brain, 'This is a cute girl'; my brain then replies, 'Well, don't just stand there - ask her to dance.' I hope you see what I'm trying to get at."

From a third letter: "A thing that has always disturbed me is the constant ~don'ts~ I hear from Christians. Don't do this, it's a sin; don't do that, it's a sin; don't look at a pretty girl too hard as she passes by, it's a sin; don't go to a Rock-'n'-roll concert, it is a sin - until my head reels with don'ts. What about sex? It's supposed to be a sin outside marriage, yet it's the same act in marriage

or out. Does an ordained minister have to declare them married? Can it not be just another human being? And who ordained him? And if that is so, why cannot I and some girl just declare ourselves married? Why all this ceremony with a pretty dress and a white cake?

"And if I come to believe that Christ is our Saviour and know who God is, then what must I do to be saved? Go to Romania and allow myself to be put in prison and be tortured like Reverend Wurmbrand? I couldn't do that; the very thought of it chills my blood. Then should I go to Africa and heal the sick? (I can't even take care of a simple cold when I catch one myself!) And besides, many blacks today are aware that much of our so-called Western civilization has been built at their expense, by their sweat and blood. Many of them hate white people,and I can well understand why. I don't relish the idea of ending up mutilated like some white nurses in the Congo.

"If neither of these two, then should I stand on a street corner with my Bible and scream at passersby to repent and preach to them? (I personally feel that most people are turned off by street-corner preachers; however, I can only speak for myself here.) Should I, if nothing more, have a minister pour water over my head and, mumbling a few words, baptize me, making me feel good (physically speaking), much as an Englishman who, upon winning a tennis match,is congratulated by the Queen?"

Mormons, Seventh-day Adventists, Ahmedian Muslims, and adherents of different trends of the Evangelical faith write, putting tears and the blood of

their hearts into their letters, to convince me that I must receive that true revelation which only they have. I can discard none of these religions as stupid or unbiblical and be done with them. Different religions could never have arisen if they did not correspond to some specific disposition, some fundamental psychological experience.

As for the variations within Christianity, I remember that once when Rabbi Shammai quarrelled with Rabbi Hillel about the sense of some Scripture, a voice from heaven said, "Both are words of the living God." There exists within Christianity a place for variations in non-essentials.

I side with Jesus. I could never make up my mind with which religion to side.

Nominally I am Lutheran, but this religion is not old enough for me. It was founded by a former monk in 1517. There are trees in California much older than that. Anglicanism exists because a pope would not allow King Henry VIII to get a divorce. Presbyterians and Congregationalists are denominations approximately the same age as Lutherans. Methodism arose in the eighteenth century. Mormons, Seventh-day Adventists, the Salvation Army, Christian Scientists, Pentecostals, and Jehovah's Witnesses are all like little girls. A religion not much older than a hundred years has not yet passed the test of time. Why should I be a Mohammedan? Where was the truth before the appearance of Mohammed in the seventh century A. D., or before the appearance of Buddha in the sixth century B.C.?

I have decided to believe in the Holy Trinity which exists outside of time and to share the faith which Adam

had before the Fall, the faith of righteous Abel and of all generations who have adored God in spirit and in truth. Letters trying to convert me to another religion find no echo in me.

A beautiful girl of nineteen sends me her picture. She has fallen in love with me through reading my books. She is worth a million. Would I not marry her? She knows I have a wife, but after thirty-five years of marriage I might have become tired of her. For fairness' sake, I must say that my wife has received a similar letter from a student, except that he had no million to offer. An old British lady writes, "I gather from your books that you must be a very good man. Help me. I am seventy-one and seek a husband. I would accept even a non-Anglican. You know many people. Recommend somebody." I have long since forgotten to laugh about such letters. They express the suffering of a creature of God as much as any other letter.

"Now, when the visit to the museum is almost finished, I ask for questions," a guide said.

"I have a question." A lady lifted her hand.

"Please."

"I would like to know what you use to clean the floor."

Questions like these are sometimes asked of me, too, after people read my books or hear my sermons about God, Christ, the persecution of Christians in the Communist camp, and the heroism of the persecuted.

Let us not fool ourselves. In many parts of Africa, blacks listened to missionaries and might even have asked questions about religion. But for them it was a

pastime. What they liked about the missionaries was that they mended guns and brought beads. In the New Hebrides, all the population was converted when the missionaries had successfully completed the first well and provided good drinking water. With this all the questions in their minds about whether they should believe in the spirits and witch doctors, or in one God in three Persons, revealed in the Book they could not read, were solved.

We are not better than they. In thousands of cases friendship with a nice girl or a handsome boy leads to conversion. The religion of the beloved is accepted and later propagated with zeal.

When someone is over-zealous in trying to attract me to his faith, I ask him, how he happened to hold to his beliefs and discover that he needs my approval for beliefs with which he has become connected only as a result of some biological accident.

A spiritually ignorant Russian from outer Siberia heard a Russian broadcast from Manila which the organization "Jesus to the Communist World" had sponsored for a long time. "You said over the radio that God has come to this earth," he writes. "Could I have a picture of him? I would very much like to see the living God. What is his address?" Such a letter, if written by a Westerner, would be a mockery. From Russia it is genuine.

A Catholic nun writes, "After having read about the martyrs in the Communist camp, I regret for first time my vow of poverty. I would like to have much

money to give. But I say like Peter, 'Gold and silver I have

not; what I have I give.' I promise prayer and penance for them." She had read about Baptists killed in Communist prisons. A Baptist minister writes, "Why do you worry so much? Let God take care of the martyred Baptists. They are not my concern. I have other tasks from God."

A letter from a child in Russia says, "Father returns from prison after four months. Both of his feet are gangrenous. I am so small. Why is my life so dark?" A letter from Ghana says, "Can you tell me the reason why God allows Christians to suffer in Communist lands?" An American lady whose first husband had been a drunkard and whose second husband has been paralyzed for twenty-six years asks, "Why am I singled out for sorrows?" A child who has given up candy to help Christian prisoners writes, "Does it always hurt to do something good?"

A Jewess in Israel read about me in a French newspaper. She had heard me preach once in a shelter thirty years ago during a raid over Bucharest. She had witnessed my arrest by the Fascist police for this crime and thought me to be dead. She had innumerable questions about me and wanted to know why a Jew should believe in Christ. Why don't the Christians defend the state of Israel?

A letter from New York asks, "Why should a good God torment any of His creatures forever when you know that ~you~ would not do anything like that yourself?"

"I am seventeen years old and was a member of the Communist Youth organization." This is a letter from a South American country in which Communism is against the law. "Now my eyes have been opened and I am born again. I promise to defend the faith against my former

comrades. To enable me to do it, please answer the following questions." Following were some thirty questions about Marx, Communism, and atheism.

A Russian living in the United States writes, "There is so much suffering in your books and in your life. Would

you not like to laugh a little bit? Why not tell you a joke? You will surely enjoy the following one:

"A soldier was on duty before the monument of Lenin in a small Soviet town. At midnight he heard Lenin's voice: 'Tell Brezhnev and Kosygin they should send me a horse. I am tired of standing. I wish to be shown on the statue riding a horse, like Peter the Great and Napoleon. I have achieved more than they. I shook the foundations of the whole world. Tell them to bring me a horse.' With this, Lenin turned and ascended the pedestal again.

"The half-dead soldier reported to his officer. The officer did not believe, but decided notwithstanding to be with the soldier at the statue the very next night at midnight. Lenin again appeared alive asking for a horse. So eventually the request reached the top leadership. Brezhnev and Kosygin arrived at midnight before the statue, together with the officer. Lenin descended from the pedestal and shouted in anger at the officer, 'I asked you for a horse and you brought me two asses.'"

I laughed at the joke, but I must have associations of ideas apart. While laughing, I remembered Kundry's words in Wagner's ~Parsifal~, "Are animals not sacred here?" I understand why there are jokes about the Russian Prime-minister, but why should asses be made a subject of mockery in this joke? Jacob, when praising his

son Issachar, called him an ass, a being which carries heavy burdens for others.

A lady writes from Colorado, "I read in your books about children taken from Christian parents by the Communists and brought up in godlessness. How could I keep myself in such a case from killing my children in a merciful fashion rather than risking their going to hell? (In my book ~The Soviet Saints~ I documented the fact that Ana Nevelinaia and other mothers did this.) Would it be right? What if I had to prove under torture how strong is my faith in Christ? I worry very much about where my breaking point would be.

A woman from Ohio asks "a few brief questions": "If the Communists should come over here to the United

States, or before they come bomb us, would a Christian be justified in taking his life? I could not help thinking of all those other people who have turned the gas on and willingly taken the lives of their whole families because they could not bear religious persecution and torture. Will they go to heaven? I could not bear to face the torture you speak of; I have no courage to stand up for my faith under insurmountable situations such as those you describe. Would I go to heaven if I took my life because of this? I want to live very much, and it would certainly be a death forced on me by the Communist enemy.

"How does a human being start to develop the Christian fortitude and courage needed to go through - willingly - such inhumane, indescribable torture? How? And how can a Christian here on earth, seeing what he sees from day to day, believe in God so completely - even though he has never seen Him or had a spiritual

experience?

"I know I am a coward. There is no courage in me or strength to fight for Christ in the face of torture. I am shy, afraid, scared, and I know I could never face what you have faced. Is there no salvation for people like me? I hear all the time about your kind, but what about my kind - the kind who never die for their faith, who do not have the courage even to suffer a little bit for it? Is heaven made only for those who are willing to face these hardships? If so, I will never go to heaven. Please help ease my troubled mind about these questions."

A Christian from another country asks, "Should I continue to give tithe to my church, which is rich? Would it be better to give the money to families of martyrs who hunger?"

I wrote him that it is much more important to realize that no sin is rebuked in the New Testament so often as that of ~pleonexia~, more "having." The rich man in the parable went to hell. Lazarus, while poor, had a much greater chance to reach Abraham's bosom. Therefore, don't have many things; don't have many questions either; and don't take on more work than you can quietly do. Don't load your head with superfluous knowledge. Be rich in the only sensible way. Rich indeed is the one who

enjoys the state in which he happens to be.

A letter from Australia says, "Why do you react with such apprehension to any rapprochement between China and the Western world, be it on a political, social, or economic level? Why not cultivate it? A comparison between your publications and the anti-Capitalist invective that one picks up at Chinese and Russian

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information services is unavoidable." A similar letter from Britain says, "The Communists are bad guys. Yet why not try a policy of great patience which, one day, after many disenchantments, may finally be rewarded?" Then in a letter from the United States we read, "St. Peter taught one to be obedient even to a Nero who oppressed terribly. Should we not do the same?"

On the other hand, the Romanian exile magazine ~Vatra~ writes just the contrary. "Pastor Wurmbrand has an undeserved generosity with the enemies of the human race. The love shown by him surpasses even that shown by God, who, instead of sharing His bread with Lucifer, chased him from heaven with a fiery sword. He was not gentler with Adam and Eve when they trespassed, but showed them the door by which they should leave paradise. Jesus, when he met the merchants, took the whip."

A Swiss Christian wishes to get advice: "With the many Red pastors, we have the same experience which we had in Nazi times with the German Christians. The betrayal starts with the World Council of Churches and with the beautiful flats of pastors. Should I protest by leaving the church, or would I render a better service by remaining in the church and protesting from within?"

I have been arrested many times, by the Nazis and by the Communists. I have been interrogated up to vivisection. "To be questioned" has a sadic connotion, when it happens under a totalitarian regime. Inquiry and inquisition have arrived to be ominous words. When I came to the West, I was sure that now I have escaped questioning. The contrary happened. I am questioned more than ever before.

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What should I do about so many varied letters which swamp my desk daily? I cannot answer everyone individually. I would not even if I could.

Questions about facts in the material and intellectual world have to be answered with facts or their explanations.

Regarding spiritual questions, the choice is not between a right and a wrong answer. There is danger in answering at all. You can destroy a soul by making him listen to you.

Yajnadatta, of an Indian legend, was handsome, and he knew it. He would spend much time admiring himself in the mirror. One morning his image was not reflected in the mirror which he had before him. He thought his head was missing and went around asking himself, "Where could I have put my head"? How could he have found it? The head for which he was searching was the head which did the searching. Through carelessness he looked at the back side of the mirror. After this he used his head to look for his head. The more he sought it, the less chance he had of finding it.

Never seek the answer to spiritual questions from somebody else. Look into the right side of the mirror and you will find it existing in yourself. "The kingdom of God is within you," says Jesus, but every kingdom has a king. If I should answer your letters, I would have to put words next to each other. But the Hebrews, through whom the Word of God was given to mankind, had no distinct word in their language for "word." They used for it the expression ~davar~ which means "thing." The introduction to the Gospel of John in Hebrew reads, "In the beginning was

the real thing, and the real thing was with God, and God is the real thing."

Words cease at the limits of life. Only substance remain. The last words of a man who died near me in prison were, "So it is true." What was true? If he had been able to speak, he could not have put in words what he experienced. He had experienced the ~davar~, the reality, in the deepest sense of the word. Here words cease.

We are happy about every man who has ultimate things as the object of his thoughts. But how many think about thinking? How much is it worth? How reliable is the thinker? What are his limitations? Is he competent enough to think about the ~davar~? Would it not be better to live the reality? We are not called to mediate upon eternal life, but to enter it. When my son was five he once told me, "Father, I am bored. What should I do" I answered, "Think about God," to which he replied, "Why should I think about the big God with my little head? Let Him who has a big head think about me."

When you think about your thinking process, you despise it. It is bound in the straitjacket of what happens on a minuscule speck of dust called Earth during a limited period of time. (Astronomers are the privileged ones who think about many bigger specks of dust.)

Don't you realize that it is wrong from the start to confine yourself to time? Tuiavii, chief of a tribe on the island of Upolu in the Southern Ocean, was brought to Europe for a visit. When he returned, he mocked the whites, the Papalagi, as they were called. He said, "They cut the day into small pieces which they call seconds, minutes, and hours. They all have some tick-tocks with

which they observe how many pieces of time they have lost. Why did they not keep them better? When a greater piece of time has passed, a finger on something which they wear on their left wrist shows them how wrong they are. Sometimes a bell rings to alarm them, 'You have done wrong to cut the time in pieces.' It dies away. They walk on wheels and fly like birds to make the pieces of time not pass so quickly. If only they had not divided the time, it would never have passed away. They would not have had to worry." (Saemann, 9/73)

There are as many answers to philosophical, theological, religious, and spiritual questions as there are strawberries. But it is wrong for me to give answers. You can pick some berries yourself.

St. John writes, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and Ye know all things." (1JN 2:20)

The Talmud says that Rabbi Joshua ben Levi came

upon the prophet Elijah and asked him, "When will the Messiah come?" The prophet's answer was, "Go and ask Him yourself." The Lord Jesus, after having healed a leper, straightly charged him (in Greek ~embrimesthe~, which means "sternly enjoined" him), "See thou say nothing to any man." Jesus begs, "Don't make Me the subject of vain words. Become a reality which puts men in touch with Myself. If you speak beautifully and wisely about Me, people may remain for life enjoying your enticing talk and never reach the Saviour."

If the enemy cannot turn us from Christ by means of vain thoughts and sinful ideas, then he brings back into our minds good things we have been taught and fills us with beautiful ideas so that one way or another he may

lure us away from Christ, whom he cannot bear. It is called "a theft from the right-hand side," and in it the soul, putting aside its communion with God, turns to find satisfaction in communion with the good in himself or with created things. Do not admit during times of prayer even the most lofty of spiritual thoughts. If you see that in the course of the day time has been spent more in improving thought and talk than in the actual hidden prayer of the heart, then think of it as the loss of a sense of proportion, or a sign of spiritual greed. This is above all true in the case of beginners, for whom it is most needful that much more time be given to prayer than to the other facets of the devout life.

My answer to the spiritual questions would be, "Don't ask questions." Who is the questioner, the questioned, the One about whom you ask questions? The thinker, the thought, and the one thought about are one. Tauler wrote, "The eye by which I see God is the same eye by which God sees me. My eye and God's eye is one eye and one seeing and one knowing and one feeling."

Jesus' first request of a disciple is, "Deny yourself." You must deny everything, including the tendency to ask questions. Give life a "let go." Give reality, the ~Davar~, "the Word," a chance to operate in you freely. Does a surgeon stop every other moment to present his diploma and to explain what he is doing? To deny yourself means to have times not only of inaction but also of non-thought. One of the highest signs of faith in God is to

rest, thinking about nothing in particular. If you have to think all things out, what do you leave for Him to do?
Count Zinzendorf said, "We should die completely

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to reason, reflection and spiritualization in matters of truth belonging to the heart, and should achieve the blessed simplicity. We should know nothing except what we hear from Him."

Even the wisest words of the best teacher are only fingers which point toward heaven. Gazing at the finger, you may miss heavenly glory. The father image of a pastor, upon whom you are childishly dependent, storming him with questions, can keep you forever away from the Father.

Jesus teaches us to become like children. Like how big a child? Luther says, "Like a child yet unborn." He is right. But I will yield. Be like a sleeping babe. He does not think about past, present, future. He does not fancy. He is like Chief Tuiavii. His spirit is in the natural state. Jesus was surrounded by children. They never asked Him questions, though children usually do. But why should they ask Him questions? He was the answer. Do not analyze. I repeat, analysis is the beginning of paralysis.

My answer to your questions is that you have the answer; the head is right on your shoulders. Don't go around looking for it. And even allow your own head to rest.

Many wish to attain different aims in life and ask my advice. I even had an inquiry from a burglar who repented of having chosen such an ugly, dangerous profession. A burglar could be shot if he gets caught. He asked me if it would not be preferable to start a new life as a pickpocket. It is a cleaner job. Since I had spent so many years in prison, he would rely on my words. Others who write to me have higher aims. They would like to do well

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in politics or in the ministry. They have thousands of questions. I can tell all of them, "Whatever aim you choose might end in disillusion, even if your aim is to become a big saint." Don't worry and be troubled.

Mary Magdalene, when Jesus entered her house, sat at His feet and heard His words. After having listened for an hour, she did not rush to fulfill them. She sat another hour to hear more. Heaven is to hear His melodious voice. So begin your eternity in heaven now. She did not pursue aims She had even forgotten about her existence separate from Him. He was her all. She had chosen that good part, which was never to be taken away from her.

Sitting still, you will need no more answers about becoming a pickpocket or a missionary. People will put their money at your feet as they put it at the feet the apostles (ACT 4:35) and souls will flock to you without your having to run after them.

Many moral questions are asked of me. I wonder what good they will do. Nobody becomes more moral by asking moral questions. The Talmud tells us about a category of Pharisees nicknamed ~Mah hovati?~- "which is my duty?" Instead of fulfilling what they knew to be right, they would go from teacher to teacher asking questions about the right moral and religious attitude, with the hope that they would find one who would make the way easier for them. The rich young man who came to Jesus asking him, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" might have belonged to this category.

Jesus told his disciples before they even asked any question,"Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." (JHN 14:4) Nobody would ever ask a moral question if he

were not bothered about the fact that he has the sure answer but does not wish, or does not have the power, to do what is right.

An elderly Christian lady had the habit of drinking a little glass of whisky every evening, just to warm her up a little. She had doubts about whether this should be the last act of a child of God before falling asleep. But she said to herself, "What is wrong with it? We old people feel cold. I do it in my bedroom and take just a little bit. I don't get drunk. I do harm to no one. I don't lose my mind. It is just for warming up my stiff bones." But then she doubted again if it was right. One evening she smashed the bottle and the glass. From that moment on she knew

that she had been wrong.

If you have doubts about moral matters, smash the bottle.

In these problems, as also in religious and spiritual matters, it is always important to know how to doubt. Everyone who debates a question within himself is already divided, and he should not be. There is in him the questioner and the questioned. If you are in this predicament, doubt on the right side. You can believe in God and sometimes doubt His existence, or disbelieve God and wonder sometimes, if He does exist in reality. Doubt being a believer. You might practice pre-marital sex and doubt if you do not sin. You might keep yourself chaste and doubt if sex should not be allowed. Doubt on the right side. Smash the bottle with the glass and you will have the answer. You don't need me as an adviser.

I don't discourage anyone from asking questions. On the contrary, I am happy to have received so many

letters. I am happy to know that most of the writers have asked not only me, but surely also many others. When he was young, Jesus asked questions. (LUK 2:46) My position will be made clear by the following age-old story:

A man asked a sage for the path of truth. The sage answered, "You need truth; I need a carpet. "Bring me a carpet and I will give you what you need." The man had no money. He went to a carpet shop and explained his predicament - that he badly needed a carpet in order to obtain truth. The shop owner said, "You can get it from me if you bring me a bundle of threads for weaving carpets." So he begged a spinner woman to give him threads so that he might obtain a carpet in exchange for which he would be taught truth. The woman did not care about truth. She said, "Bring me some goat hair from which to make thread, then I will serve you."

When he asked a goatherd for hair, the goatherd said, "Bring me a goat. Without a goat, whence should I get hair for you?" He found a man ready to give him a goat but with a problem in that he did not have a place to keep his animals at night. "You seek truth. I'm not interested in it. You provide me with a pen; you'll have

goat hair of which thread will be spun, of which carpets are made, and for the carpet you will get the truth. So we will both be served." The man found a carpenter able to make a pen, but not very willing to work at that time. He was sad because he wished to marry and nobody would accept him because he was too ugly. "Find me a wife and I will build the pen." The man inquired and found a woman who told him, " I know a girl who would like a husband who is a manual worker just like the one you

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described. I'll give you her name if you give me what I want, knowledge." "This is fine," the man answered, "but knowledge you can get only in exchange for a carpet made out of threads spun from goat hair. I was promised such hair in exchange for finding a carpenter who would make a stable, but it so happens that that carpenter will not work until he finds a wife." "Stupid," the woman answered. "I wish knowledge and not your foolish stories." The man left her in despair.

One evening, he slept in a foreigner's home. His daughter was sick. In her delirium she spoke about a carpenter whom she loved. It was just the carpenter of our story. So he told her the carpenter would be happy to marry her. Our man got the goat hair and threads were spun. Finally, he took the finished carpet to the sage in the hope of receiving the truth. The sage told him, "I have no truth to give you. You have had it the whole time. It was the giving up of all selfish aims in order to have the one precious jewel."

What higher truth do you wish than the continual digging after truth? You want answers. But most of the revelation of God consists of questions.

There are so many competing religions. Some souls desire ardently to know which is the bride of Christ. The question is asked in the Bible. Solomon asks, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?" (SOS 3:6) The answer is only a question mark. In the original Hebrew even this is missing. Every believing soul would like to have an authority on whom he can rely as being the leader of the

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church ordained by God, obedience to whom would surely be the right way. We ask what Jesus asked, too: "Who is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?" (LUK 12:42) The answer is again only a question mark.

The kingdom of God is within you. Where you don't have the answers, be content with questions. God does not owe you anything, not even answers. The Archangel Michael's name is an unanswered question. Michael in Hebrew means "Who is like God?" Perhaps God's revelation to you and His will for you in a certain matter is that you still remain in the questioning stage. On the cross Jesus passed through this stage for a time. The revelation of God to Him and through Him was a "Why?" with a question mark at the end. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The answer was a new wave of mockery from men, with no response from His Father. Do you wish to be greater than your Master?

There are situations in which it would be a disaster for a soul to have answers to his questions. He would be obliged, because he knows the answers, to do deeds for which he was not at all prepared. Teenagers ask me to tell them the secret of happiness. But they should first ask themselves if they are entitled to happiness. There should be no happiness without righteousness, and even the righteous have to wait. Are you prepared to be a saint?

What about accepting heavy suffering as the norm for you instead of happiness? St. Afra, the first female Christian martyr of Germany, had been a loose woman.

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When she was threatened with flogging and burning she told the governor, "My body deserves to be tortured. May the flames cleanse my soul." Accept your handicaps and sufferings in this spirit.

For most of us the best thing is not to have answers. The Lord says, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin." (JHN 9:41) God in His grace, keeps us in blindness in many matters. You wish answers. Are you prepared to accept them?

A man sought a lamp shop, having been told that there he would find a device which enables a person to read in the dark. Somebody told him, "There is a prerequisite. In order to read by means of a lamp you must first be able to read." The man answered scomfully, "I was not told this by my first informant." And he spent his money for a lamp which proved to be of no use to him in reading. Answers to your questions might prove useless to you, too. Have you fulfilled the prerequisites?

Instead of clarifying matters, every answer might raise new questions. I would rather tell you some things about me, the person questioned. Perhaps I will have my wife's good fortune. She told some things from her life in a book called ~The Pastor's Wife~. Nobody asked her anything after having read her book. She received a letter from a Christian lady: "I found in your life the answer to all questions which I have asked myself for twelve years."

There are many questions. My son Michael was five years old when he asked, "Who created the devil?" The story of Lucifer's fall did not satisfy him. He had a second question. "Why doesn't God kill the devil?" The moment you interrogate God, you take the place of a superior in

relationship to Him. What kind of God would He be if He did not do things which are strange in men's eyes?

Reason will never find answers to its many inquiries. Love rests because it never questions what the beloved does.

Be quiet, worship, and love. This is all.

WURMBRAND _ THE QUESTIONED

I have had a message from God to tell the free world about the sufferings and the heroism of the Underground Church, its needs, its longing for liberty. This message has gone out to all continents, and missions in fifty countries work continually to spread it and to organize relief.

I feel that I have essentially fulfilled my duty and

that now it is time for me to withdraw into a shadow and anonymity.

Years have passed since my first appearance in the West. They have not come to be counted, but to count. Every year has been marked by the formation of missions to the Communist world in a few more countries. It has been marked by articles, new books, big rallies. It was natural for men to ask themselves, "Who is Wurmbrand?"

To answer would mean to embed him in words, to compare him with other persons of the Christian world, to show the similarities and differences, to categorize Wurmbrand. This is not possible.

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My early life was such that I could not emerge polished, kind, and open-minded, or without great self-confidence.

Without the latter characteristic, I would not have been able to create our fellowship of missions. I am atypical.

I was atypical in my activities as a pastor in Romania. I would go from one house to another to tell people about Christ. Some would not receive me. Then I would stand in front of the house for hours in the snow, in bitter winter, praying for those inside and waiting in case they might change their minds. The owners would see me through the window. They would come out from time to time and tell me, "Go away. You'll freeze to death. I am not interested in what you have to say." I would answer, "But I love you, and I know that you will be lost eternally if you don't accept my message. I will not leave." In the end, they would pity me, call me in, and give me some hot tea. Not many pastors proceed this way.

But I have been atypical in my sins, too. They have amounted to crimes. Many would be interested in knowing their details. We know that St. Paul beat the Christians and cast his vote for them to be sentenced to death. These were the first martyrs of Christianity. How much we would like to know their stories, their names. There must have been beautiful episodes of faithfulness to Christ unto the end. Why are their stories not told? Why

don't we have their precious names? We only know that their torturer was later converted.

It took many Sabeans to be robbers so that Job would shine in righteousness. What made them into robbers?

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What happened to them after they enabled Job to become a saint? You have your head right on your shoulders. So don't seek the answers from me. But the same reasons which made the authors of the Bible silent in these matters keep me from recounting what has been recorded on the videotape of my life. Furthermore, my sins have been erased by the blood of Jesus. Jesus has forgiven. If I don't die a sudden death, my last word will be addressed to men - "Forgive."

I have told the story of glorious saints and martyrs who are suffering or dying for Christ today in Communist prisons. This created a kind of halo around my head, too. Many identify me with the beautiful souls about whom I write. The praise which I have received is undeserved.

I was permitted to be put in prison because God considered that to be my place. He hoped that others would pastor my church better than I had. I had a chance to flee from Romania but remained there knowing that I would go to prison. But it is not true that I stayed only because of faithfulness to my duty as a pastor. Pride played a big role in my decision. At that time I could not have foreseen how much and how terrible was the suffering that awaited me. If I had known, I probably would not have remained.

I did not suffer as much as others did. Think only about the fact that when I was released I was greeted by a loving wife and son who had waited for me. The Orthodox priest Popescu found his wife re-married. His daughter, whom he had left behind as a girl of ten, had also married in the meantime and had become a Communist.

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When her father knocked on her door after having sought her much, she received him with curses, slapping him and driving him out of the house. He spent his first

night in the waiting room of a railway station.

From the day that I left Romania, I knew I had to fulfill an exceptional calling. I knew that it was my calling and nobody else's. At a presidential nominating convention Truman said, "During the next four years there will be a Democrat in the White House, and you are looking at him." I had this self-confidence. I had the gift from God of finding great men of God in many countries who had confidence in the message which I brought.

God has used them to build up the International Fellowship of Missions to the Communist World. I personally did not do much for its creation. God says, "I will raise up a prophet." (DEU 18:18) False prophets rise through their own endeavours. Those who know the history of our mission realize that its leadership has reached its position on the crest of the wave of enthusiasm of believers, in whom God dwells, from the whole world.

I had to write a multitude of books. But my English was poor. God brought into my path a journalist of exquisite style, Mr. Charles Foley. We met in London. I had to go to Devon the next day. He said, "I'll go with you to Devon." I replied. "You had better come with me to heaven." He edited my books and my wife's. The books spread. One followed another. So I became known.

My books were generally very well received. ~Christianity Today~, USA, of October 2, 1972, said about them: "Wurmbrand is rapidly writing an appendix 20th-century

style to Fox's ~Book of the Martyrs~."

Huge crowds listened with intense emotion to the story of the Underground Church told at rallies in America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia.

The average reader or listener had no difficulty in believing what I told. After me the Soviet Communist Mrs. Ghinzburg, who had spent eighteen years in Stalin's jails herself; Roy Medvedev, a member of the Party, in his book ~Let History Judge~; and more recently Solzhenitsyn, the Nobel-prize winner, told exactly the same facts of horror which I had related: salt water sprinkled in

the throats of prisoners, pepper applied to the raw skin of men who had been flayed, female officers of the Secret Police beating men over their sex organs, and all the other "beauties" of the Red paradise. Former Romanian prisoners confirmed my report about prisoners being compelled to eat their feces and drink urine.

In my book ~In God's Underground~ I recounted the fact that, when a delegation of Western ladies visited the prison of Gherla, a lunch was prepared for us in the Hilton Hotel. Solzhenitsyn had not read my book, but it was as if he had plagiarized me. He told the story of Mrs. Roosevelt visiting a Soviet prison and seeing inmates neatly dressed, enjoying libraries, attending religious services, eating dainties - everything an ~ad hoc~ comedy.

My sermons and books were received with enthusiasm by the masses of Christians and many church leaders. Some of the latter were put in an embarrassing situation. The rank-and-file believers asked them why they had not been told these things before, why decades had passed without even a prayer being offered for the persecuted

brethren in the Soviet camps. So they had to belittle my sayings. They attacked me.

Though many bad words were said, they amounted to almost nothing compared to what bishops had said in times past about Therese of Avila or Joan of Arc. The latter were canonized. The names of the bishops who insulted them are no longer remembered. Livingstone was accused of no less than raping black women, killing his co-workers, enriching himself through his book, and being ruthless to his own family, along with a whole catalogue of other crimes. Today his body lies in Westminster Abbey. And who remembers the names of the leaders of the Baptist Union of Britain who opposed Spurgeon?

I have considered it best not to answer accusations in any other way than through deeds: unceasingly helping the persecuted church and unceasingly showing the corruption or naivete of church leaders who compromise with Communism.

We had to try to drag some out of the ditch.

Whoever does this must get dirty. Brooms can sweep out dirt only by becoming soiled.

I have overcome these things, too. But a sadness has remained. I show more mirth than I am master of.

I have also received some, though very few, letters expressing doubts about what I have written. There were people who could not take it. ~Vanterland~, Luzern, of April 22, 1972, reminded its readers how difficult it was to get men to believe the Nazi atrocities. This was the first newspaper to tell them.
Some of my readers pointed to discrepancies in my

books which could have arisen only if not everything that I said in them was factual.

I myself have contributed to these doubts. In my books I have said that I find it legitimate to lie to Communist interrogators who would like to know these secrets of the Underground Church. And I have enlarged upon this problem and have disapproved of persons who are so sincere that they would tell a hostess who had worked hard in preparation of a meal that her dinner was a disaster. About some of the things I wrote I can say with Shakespeare, "I moralize two meanings in one word." (Richard III) A Christian broadcaster wrote to me, "Once you state your belief in stretching the truth under such circumstances, I find myself wondering how much of your book you also stretched for what you consider good and just purposes. Would you, please, respond and let me have your thinking on this?"

My answer is simple:

The Gospels contradict each other. There are sometimes contradictions within the same Gospel. proves to me their truth. Perfectly consistent stories are usually made up.

But what would be wrong if I had not been factual in everything I told in my books? Goethe published his biography under the title ~From My Life - Truth and Poetry~. I believe that every autobiography is like this. I have listened to many people telling the story of their conversion. A grain of idealization or dramatization

could easily be perceived. We have the parable of the prodigal son as told by Jesus. If the prodigal himself had told the story, he would not have been as blunt as to say,

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"I returned to the father because the food cooked in his kitchen was good." There is nobody who does not repress some material, who does not avoid certain issues, who does not express in age-old symbols the reality which he cannot bring himself to say. The drive for symbols is as powerful in us as hunger, sex, or the desire to be a somebody.

I don't believe that anybody has the right to ask from me the videotapes of what I have done and spoken without allowing me any modifications. Where I had to erase something, I have filled the empty place with music. The truthfulness of the books is seen in the fact that they contain music and that this music is so beautiful that it has brought souls to conversion.

But because the very few who question are so insistent, I will do more than satisfy their curiosity. I will tell them the most intimate side of the life of a man: my dreams. In them those who inquire about many matters will find perhaps the reply they seek. If not, they might find the way to discover the reply within themselves.

I personally see no reason why dreams should be considered less real than impressions received when one is awake. On the contrary, dreams often affect one much more than the humdrum events of daily life. They can be more significant than ordinary perceptions.

The New Testament begins by telling us a series of dreams and finishes with a vision. So they must be important. God often speaks through dreams.

In 1902, a rascal in Italy, Alessandro Serenelli forced a girl of eleven, Maria Goretti, to submit to him or be killed. He held a knife to her throat. She answered, "I

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cannot yield, because the deed is evil. You would go to hell." He stabbed her several times. Before dying, she forgave him and said, "I would like to have my murderer

near me in heaven." After his sentencing, he displayed the most obstinate hardness and cynicism, until he had a dream: "I thought that I was in a garden full of flowers and the whitest lilies. And there I saw Maria Goretti, radiant and clad in white, gathering them and making them into a garland. She offered them to me, saying, 'Take them!' I took them, and then very gradually I saw them change into little flames in my arms...flames that glowed like candles."

In 1910, he was won over to a lasting and sincere repentance. In a letter to the priest who visited him, he wrote: "I weep over my misdeed...for I have taken the life of an innocent girl whose one aim was to save her purity, shedding her blood rather than give in to my sinful desires. I publicly retract the evil I have done and beg pardon of God and of the stricken family. I dare to hope that I may obtain that pardon as so many others have done on this earth."

On Christmas Eve, 1937, and on the following Christmas morning a scene took place such as we find only in the annals of Christianity, and perhaps we would have to turn back many a page to find its parallel.

Alessandro had become truly penitent and had served his sentence. On his release he had taken up honest work and tried to live as a good Christian. But since that July afternoon in 1902, the mother and the murderer of the child had never met.

Assunta was now the housekeeper of the Archpriest

of Corinaldo. Accompanied by him, Alessandro sought her out. He cast himself at her feet and humbly begged her forgiveness.

The old mother's voice broke as she fought back the tears.

"Maria forgave you, Alessandro," she answered, "so how could I possibly refuse?"

The following morning, Christmas Day, the parish church at Corinaldo was filled to overflowing as Assunta and Alessandro entered side by side. Together they

received Holy Communion, and at the express wish of Assunta, as well as that of the Archpriest, Alessandro spent his Christmas in the rectory.

Maria had won his soul, a victory that could come only from heaven. Heaven knew the facts that history is somehow inclined to pass over, in its horror at the enormity of his crime, and the innocence of his little victim. Heaven must have understood that Alessandro had never known a mother's love and that he had received but little love from a worthless father; that he had led a roving life in his boyhood, with no religious or moral training worth speaking of, and that bad companions from the start and then obscene and pornographic reading material did the rest, and made him what he became.

But the gentle Maria, the sweet child of only eleven years, eight months and twenty days, obtained from God the grace to thaw his frozen soul. He ended his days quietly, prayerfully, in a monastery in Italy, employed as a gardener. Surely the final story of Alessandro is one of the most inspiring aspects of the beautiful story of Maria

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Goretti.

Dreams can radically change a man.

Sometimes they are relatively clear as in the case above. Sometimes they are obscure. The Bible tells us twenty-one dreams, many of them with their interpretation, which, thus, is also considered important. We know nothing about the dream life of most of the personalities of the Bible. We know no dream of Jesus. As a rule, dreams don't occur for the purpose of being remembered. Such dreams are a rare exception. Ordinary dreams create the mood for the next day or two. The dreams of Jesus were such as to enable Him to live as truth and Beauty incarnate in a Man of Sorrows.

I am attentive to my dreams. All those who have spent many years in prison are. It was part of the ritual of prison life for us to tell each other our dreams every morning and then some experts would interpret them. Their unanimous explanation was always that we would soon be free. But some of us had our own thoughts about

their meaning.

If you have no self-knowledge your knowledge will be blind...No useful, deep self-knowledge is possible without the knowledge of your dreams.

I will tell mine not only because some of my questioners would like to know the intimacies of my life, but also for another reason. Over the years a certain woman asked me all kinds of deep theological questions. I knew that someday she would tell me what was really bothering her. It was apparent to me that she had difficulty in expressing her real need. But I could wait. One evening she told me of the tragedy which obsessed her. After that

her need to have answers to theological problems ended. They had been a pretense.

I would like to put what I have to say in the language of dreams. Dreams hide nothing. They have no moral implications. They are the vacation of the soul, of the organism. What is an illusion or a fear for my conscious mind becomes a happy or grim reality for the unconscious which expresses itself in dreams.

I had a series of interesting dreams while planning this book. When I finished the first draft, they ceased.

So, in the chapters to come, we will communicate on the subliminal, subconscious level. You will find out here that you had the answers you seek. Your head is right on your shoulders

"For the past twenty years," Rabbi Israel H. Leventhal pointed out in 1929, "students of psychology, influenced by Freud, gave all their time to searching the subconscious realms. It is true that the subconscious reveals much of the mystery that can explain human actions, but not all of our actions. It can explain the abnormal, but not deeds that are above the normal. The latest psychology, sponsored by the French schools, has discovered a new region in man, which it terms the superconscious. In contrast to the subconscious which represents the submerged currents of our nature, it reveals the heights to which our nature can reach. Man represents a triple, not a double, personality; our

conscious and subconscious being is crowned by a superconsciousness. Many years ago the English psychologist, F. W. H. Myers, suggested that 'hidden in the deep of our being is a rubbish heap as well as a treasure house.' In

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contrast to the psychology that centers all its researches on the subconscious in man's nature, this new psychology of the superconscious focuses its attention upon the treasure house, the region that alone can explain the great, unselfish, heroic deeds of men."

Before telling my dreams, I have one other thing to do, and that is to tell you the methods I use to impress upon you my ideas. We will communicate on the subconscious and superconscious levels which express themselves in dreams, too.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE

I receive criticisms; I receive compliments. The most frequent compliment is that I am a powerful preacher. A Christian magazine calls me "the most dramatic preacher known today." A young pastor who would like to proclaim the Gospel well, asks me, "What makes big crowds flock to you, while our churches stand empty?" A prison warden writes, "How can I find the words and understand so that I can convert a non-believer?"

I don't consider it important to be what men call "a good preacher." Livingstone, who opened the center of Africa for Christ, had been a poor one. On the other hand, many golden-tongued spellbinders have done much harm. People swallow without discernment their false teachings.

But I consider it important for every man to be able to tell others what he thinks, so as to bring home to them the truth he holds. The art of earnest preaching is none

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other than earnest witnessing for your faith, or the art of communicating with other men so as to influence them. I do not write the present book for the pleasure of writing

but because I wish you to accept my thoughts. I will tell you how I learned to preach and to write so as to influence souls. My experiences might be helpful to any man in any profession. The following thoughts concern not only pastors, but also those who must choose from which pastor, political leader, or educator they wish to learn. They might help you to teach others, at least your children, what you know.

Most of what is learned in seminaries – Latin, Greek, Hebrew, church history, dogma, hermeneutics – unfortunately does not serve the supreme purpose. Sometimes it may even go so far as to cripple future pastors in their task of winning souls for Christ. Something else is needed.

When I was a very young pastor, a renowned Romanian actress attended our Sunday services. After three or four weeks she gave me a call: "Please, come and have a dinner in my home. But I would prefer that you come without your wife." I wondered about this condition but accepted it.

She received me considerably dressed and considerably undressed. On the table there were all sorts of imaginable dainties. We two were alone. Together we enjoyed the food, talking banalities. After the meal she told me:

"You are wondering why I invited you. It was for a definite purpose. There is a story which I would like you to know.

"In the time of the Reformation in Germany, thousands

came to listen to Jacob Bohme, a self-styled Christian philosopher, I believe a shoemaker by profession. He preached the newly-discovered Gospel with such power that thousands wept and laughed at his command. The rumour spread: ~A great man from God has risen among us.~ Bohme got used to being highly appreciated by his audience.

"One Sunday, he observed in church a man who looked like Jesus as shown in holy images. Bohme could read on the face of this young man that the sermon did not satisfy him, but rather grieved him. The next Sunday

and the Sunday after, the same thing happened. Bohme could not bear it. He stopped this man at the end of the service and asked him.

'You seem dissatisfied with my sermon - is it so? What do you dislike?'

'Your sermons are much too beautiful to be true,' was the reply. 'Two and two are four. This sentence is not beautiful, but it is absolutely true. You wish to win souls. Your purpose is good. But in your enthusiasm, you launch yourself further and further. Two and two become four and a half and five, then six, eight, and ten. Truth is simple, prosaic. How simple are the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes! God is truth. He does not agree with your sermons. Neither do I.'

"These words made a great impression on Bohme. He could not forget them. And as often as he got worked up in his peroration, he would feel as if somebody were whispering to him, 'Is what you say really so? Do you speak the truth?' He would begin to stammer, to lose his train of thought. People wondered what had happened to

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the eloquent preacher of times past. He must have lost his gift. Fewer and fewer people attended his sermons.

"Finally, the one who had been beloved of thousands came to church one Sunday to find only a few old women and this one Jesus-like person. At the exit, the latter told Bohme, 'Now for the first time you have preached the naked truth. Your future task is not to allow it to remain naked and to tremble. Clothe the truth in beauty. No ornament is too costly for truth. Clad it in jewels.'

"And Bohme again preached beautifully. But now he preached the ~truth~ beautifully."

"I have heard you preach several times," the actress continued. "You are young and you preach beautifully. So I thought it would do you good to know this story. I called you without your wife, thinking you might feel ashamed to be criticized for your sermons in her presence."

I had believed her to have other intentions.

After my many years of prison, she visited me in the hospital. She also had suffered persecution. From her I learned much about preaching and writing, but above all, how to communicate with my fellowmen simply and effectively.

The directives for a good sermon are: Read yourself full, think yourself clear, pray yourself hot, and then you will have the truth. Once you possess it, do not have the slightest scruple about dramatizing and ornamenting it. Know that you fulfill your duty to truth by covering it with the most costly jewels. Tell as beautifully as you can one illustration after another to embellish it.

Another important aspect about preaching and speaking to men regarding earnest things I learned from

Garrick, the former century's renowned actor, interpreter of Shakespearean characters.

I read his correspondence with a young pastor who had questioned him. "You are a master of the spoken word. People vibrate at every word and gesture of yours. Teach us as pastors how to handle the word. Supposing you had to play on stage the role of a priest who preaches, how would you do it? What would be the modulations of your voice, the expressions of your face, your movements?"

Garrick answered by saying that he lives his roles. When he plays Othello he is jealous, when he plays Hamlet he is torn by doubts, when he plays Romeo he is enamored. He transposes himself into the state of heart of the personalities he has to reveal. "So," he continued, "if I had to preach on stage, I would transpose myself into the following state of mind: I am a young physician. Before me lies, deathly sick, my beloved bride. She may have a chance to recover, but only if she takes a drug which I have specially prepared for her. She is in a bad mood and does not wish to take it. I plead with her, 'Take this medicine, otherwise you will die, and with you my happiness too. Life without you means nothing to me. If you take it, you will live and we will both enjoy unspeakable felicity.'"

Garrick wrote to the young pastor, "Think like this

when you preach, and you will not have to care about the right intonation, gesticulation, expression."

Hundreds of books and courses about the art of preaching have not played such a decisive role in my manner or delivering the Word as this letter of Garrick's.

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At the start of my career as a pastor, I was usually only the preacher. The liturgical part was taken by someone else. I used the time when others sang or said their prayers to project in my mind a definite image: ~Those before me are eternal souls, all born in sin, all doomed to perish, unless they agree to take the medicine I offer them.~ I loved every one of them. If it were a small congregation, my look would pass from one man to the other, and I would pray for each one: "Save this man. If not, he is lost, and I cannot be happy without his being in the Kingdom." When I spoke before thousands, I would pray for the right side of the gallery, then for the left side, then for those in the rear, those in the front rows, those who stood. I would love them with the feelings of Rachel, who said to Jacob, "Give me children or I die."

A third episode.

When I was a young pastor, I was very proud. I was considered a handsome young man and the cassock suited me well. I was tall. When I entered the church, I saw people looking toward me with love, admiration, and great expectation. I am Jewish. A Jewish Christian pastor is a rarity. Christians make the mistake of spoiling Jewish Christians, showing them an affection apart.

An Orthodox monk, a friend of mine, who had heard me preach observed how things were. At a dinner he told me a story, saying that I could use it as an illustration in a sermon:

"On Palm Sunday, when the Lord entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, he was received with shouts of 'Hosannah, son of David!' and with the waving of palm branches. On that evening, the donkey told his fellow

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donkeys in the stable, 'If only you could have seen with

what honours I was acclaimed in Jerusalem!' They called me "Son of David, King of the Jews." I had never before known the name of the ass who was my father. I was very pleased to find out that he was called David. And the crowd seemed very determined. They wished to make me king. They threw their clothes before me on the pavement, that I might walk on softness. I suppose they will come tomorrow to enthrone me. I imagine that when an ass becomes king, he gets plenty of hay and is not made to carry burdens any more!"

The monk finished, "Poor donkey, he did not know that the fuss had been about Jesus, not about him." He looked at me significantly. "There are quite a few such donkeys. Young pastors are prone to believe that the honour they receive is for them."

A preacher has to be humble.

If he has natural abilities, it is surely a great asset. But you can do without. Neither the sermons of St. Peter or St. Paul nor the speech delivered before his death by St. Stephen showed rhetorical abilities. They also have shortcomings as regards scholarship. My examiner in hermeneutics gave me a bad mark. He was sure that I would never do as a preacher. Perhaps the apostles would have failed his tests. St. John Vianney, the curate of Ars, was a man with a low I.Q. Notwithstanding, he was a very effective preacher, because he was humble and never pretended to have what he lacked.

My son delivered his first sermon as a seminarian with the words, "From this pulpit many great preachers have spoken. One of them sealed his sermons with a

martyr's death. Don't expect much from me. I cannot preach like them. I cannot give you deep teachings. But I point toward One who will satisfy all the needs of your soul and your intellectual demands. This is all I dare to do. I enter the shadow and let Him speak to you." The audience listened to him attentively because he had been modest.

I knew a preacher who was greatly loved because he would say in the midst of his sermon, "Wait a little - I have forgotten what I had to say further. I remember it

was something important. Just be patient a little bit."

With most preachers such a thing would not happen. They would fill a gap in their memory with empty words. Humility wins. Everyone has enough trouble with his own price. He will not swallow yours.

Goethe said, "Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration." I believe the same. In order to be a good preacher, a man has to work hard. The sermon must be the result of the labour of a whole Christian life, not of a few minutes or even a few hours of preparation.

The worst ink is better than the best memory. I write down every significant dream, every significant word I hear in a sermon or private conversation or read in the Bible or a newspaper, every episode from my life or that of others which can be used as an illustration. For every idea, I have one sheet of paper. I put on top the Bible verse with which I believe it could best be used. And then I classify them from Genesis to Revelation. A man who makes ten notes a day will have 30,000 notes after ten years. I once had hundreds of thousands. Some were confiscated by the Communist Police. Some escaped.

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When I have to deliver a sermon on a given subject, I go to the respective drawer and usually find far too many illustrations, plus linguistic and theological explanations. I have plenty of choice. People wonder afterwards about the richness of thought in the sermons. Well, it is not the thoughts of this week, but those I have gathered across the years.

What I have said in this chapter applies not only to pastors, but also to every man who wishes to witness effectively for Christ, to everyone who wishes to communicate on a spiritual level.

Pastors should not preach only on Sundays. Bishop Latimer recommended the devil to his clergy as an example of a good pastor. He visits his whole parish every day. He speaks not only with the chief of the household, but also with the wife and with each individual child and then he enters the kitchen to say a word to the maid who might be there, too. Do the same when you pay a visit as a Christian. Have a story prepared for every child according

to his age. Prepare yourself for a private conversation as you would prepare yourself for a sermon before thousands. I was won for Christ in a private conversation. Since that time, thousands have been influenced for Christ through me. Who knows the value of the one man or child to whom you dedicate your time? He might be a future Spurgeon or a great saint in process.

Consider that every sermon or simple conversation may be your last one or the last one heard by the man before you. It is a sin to give less than the best of which you are capable. Never care what your bishop, your board of elders, or the audience will think about your sermon or

what the world will think about your talk. Simply deliver the message which you have from God, always adjusting it to the level of understanding of the people to whom you speak.

DO WE HAVE TO FEAR A COMMUNIST TAKEOVER?

And now I will tell you a couple of dreams, along with some interpretations.

All men are partially illiterate. Not everyone knows how to read musical notes, symbols used by atomic scientists, or chemical formulas. Very rare are those who can read the subliminal language of dreams.

But perhaps you will find in their symbols peace for what troubles you and makes you ask me questions.

All men when awake are in a common world but when asleep are in a world of their own. Dreams are the most personal episodes of our lives. And when communicated and explained they awaken what is the most personal in the reader. Within each person is an unlimited reservoir of energy and creative intelligence which can be tapped to fulfill the potential of the individual. In order to reach this reservoir, however, the mind must be able to transcend thought. There are different means to achieve this, such as the repeating without concentration of prayer of the heart in Orthodoxy, "Jesus, Son of God, pity me a sinner." But communication of dreams and attempts to understand their symbolism might have the same liberating effect.

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First Dream

~I am with Gerald Ford, then Vice President of the United States. He prays with a loud voice. (The day before, I had watched his swearing-in on TV) I intend to propose that a regular hour of prayer be organized in the Senate. At once an army storms the place. It is Russian Cossacks with their swords drawn. They arrest all those who have no money, among them Ford and me. I don't even have a shirt on. I laugh about the new situation on which I am placed.~

This dream is indicative of my continual concern about a possible take-over of the United States and the whole free world by the Communists. In the year 1973 alone, revolutionist groups stole from the United States military barracks 628,488 guns and revolvers, enough to start a small guerrilla army. In the last five years, leftist organizations have been involved in some five thousand armed attacks, robberies for political reasons, and blasts.

Why should I be so concerned about a Communist takeover?

It is not because they are atheists. In a certain sense, Christians are the same. Justin Martyr wrote, "We confess that we are atheists as far as gods of demonic sort are concerned, but not with respect to the true God, the Father of temperance and other virtues." Many who call themselves atheists are such only with respect to the false image of God which has been presented to them. But Communism denies any possibility of God. Lenin wrote, "Marxism is materialism. It is relentlessly hostile to religion."

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Now, in fair competition it would be very easy for us to defeat materialism.

A Communist lecturer once explained that man is matter, only matter. No spirit, no soul, no angel, no eternal life! We are matter and we decay when we die. A Christian stood up and, as if in anger, threw his stool on

the floor. He straightened it, then stormed onto the platform and slapped the atheist. The atheist began to shout, "You have insulted the Party which I represent here! Police, arrest him!"

The Christian very quietly replied, "There must be a misunderstanding, comrade. Did you not say that we are matter just like the wood of the lectern before you? You saw me throwing the stool to the floor. Stool, are you angry at me? Stool, do you wish to retaliate? Comrade, matter has no emotions, it does not love, it does not hate. It does not know wrath, it does not avenge itself. The fact that you call the police shows that you yourself are more than matter. You have a soul. See that it is saved."

Tragically, the story does not end here, because in Communist countries one is liable to go to prison for contradicting a materialist lecturer. The Communists oblige all to think alike, which means that practically nobody dares to think at all.

When I consider the Communist danger, I see before me more than the prisons, which are almost as numerous in Russia as motels in the United States; I see more than cells with moldy walls in which Christians, Jews, Moslems, and Buddhists, reduced to simple numbers, sit in abject despair, more than the spiked box in which they sometimes are forced to stand, lacking not

only food but even air. I see more than the mockeries.

I see the sufferings of the Communists themselves. An officer of the Communist Secret Police told me, "You are a pastor. Wherever you go, you leave behind you comfort. When I enter a house, children ask me, 'Why do you leave us without a father?'" I think about poor Trotsky, the founder of the Red Army. He had promoted permanent revolution. During this unceasing revolution, two of his children were killed by Stalin; his brother, his sister-in-law, and his niece were deported to Siberia; and he himself was killed with an axe by the order of his own comrades.

Zinoviev was the president of the third International. Under Stalin's tortures he confessed to having been a counter revolutionist and spy. He and his

interrogator who had squeezed his confession out of him wept together when Zinoviev signed it. His last words before being shot were, "Listen, Israel, your God is the only God." He said the words in Hebrew, as he had been taught in childhood.

I was in prison with officers of the Communist Secret Police who had fallen afoul of the Party during a purge. They told us how during their training in ruthlessness they were made to shoot, using consecrated wafers for targets. They had an Orthodox or Catholic background. Some of them felt they had actually aimed their revolvers at Christ.

Solzhenitsyn writes in ~Gulag Archipelago~ that it was the habit of Iagoda, former head of the Soviet Secret Police, and his friends to shoot at ikons.

I think about whole peoples wiped off the face of the

Soviet Union: the Chechen, the Kalmik, the Tatar, the Tinu-Tawus. It is like deporting all the Welsh to some island in the channel and allowing them to starve there.

I see the triumph of hatred.

In ~Message to the Tricontinentals~ Che Guevara wrote, "Hatred is an element of struggle; a relentless hatred of the enemy, impelling us over and beyond the natural limitations that man is heir to, and transforming him into an effective, violent, selective, and cold killing machine. Our soldiers must be thus; a people without hatred cannot vanquish a brutal enemy." Lenin in 1922 wrote, "The time has come to put an end to opposition, to put a lid on it. We have had enough opposition." In ~State and Revolution~ he quotes Engels as saying, "If the victorious party does not want to have fought in vain, it must maintain this rule by means of the terror its arms inspire in reactionaries."

I am serious when I say that all the Bible's lurid descriptions of hell are a picnic compared to Communist hell.

My utter concern for a Communist takeover of the West, expressed in this dream, was one of the motives for

the creation of the International Fellowship of Missions to the Communist World. In 732 A.D. Charles Martel, king of the Francs, turned the tide and threw Islam out of Western Europe. I suppose that "The Christian Mission to the Communist World" has been created by God for a purpose like this.

You have many nagging questions? Give them up and do your share so that Christian civilization may not be swallowed up by the Red dragon.

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In my dream, the Communists arrested only those who had no money. I didn't have even a shirt.

First of all, it is a fact that almost all those who filled Red prisons were poor. Millionaires, as a rule, had fled the country or were used by the Communists as skilled professionals.

But the dream expresses my belief that Christians should be poor. In the dream I laughed heartily when I saw myself without even a shirt. What is best in me would like me to be so. The image comes from Romanian folklore, according to which a rich man who was sick was told that he would be cured only if he could put on the shirt of a perfectly happy being. He sent his servants to find such a person, but everyone questioned lacked something. In the end they found a wood-cutter who sang heartily. They promised him much money for his shirt. He had to tell them that, unfortunately, he had none to give them.

St. John Chrysostom preached, "Every rich man is a criminal or the son of a criminal. You say to me, 'When will you cease to speak against the rich?' I answer, 'When you cease to oppress the poor."

Under Savonarola's rule, Christians burned all articles of luxury in Florence. Then Pope Alexander Borgia ordered that Savonarola be burned. But Savonarola had been right as far as Christianity is concerned.

The Jewish law commanded that a woman who had given birth to a child should bring a lamb into the temple for a burnt offering. If she was not able to bring a lamb,

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then she should bring two "turtles" (or "turtle-doves," see LEV 12:8), which Mary the mother of the Lord did. She was poor. She could not afford a lamb except her Son, who was the Lamb of God. Why should we be rich?

Jesus was crowned with a crown of thorns. Should Christians wear gold, pearls, and jewels?

Do we wish the Communists to be God's tools in fulfilling a prophecy given to Isaiah? Just listen: "In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings, and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the vails. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty." (ISA 3:18-24)

Rabbi Akiba said that poverty suits the daughters of Jacob as a red harness suits a white horse.

Not only is the wearing of jewels wrong. Whoever overeats denies to somebody else the necessities of life. Every kind of comfortableness is an enemy of Christianity. Children of God make their lives more difficult through ease and comfort. Jesus could not stretch His limbs on the cross. For us no armchair is relaxing enough.

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Westerners are persecuted with the easy life. It is a terrible persecution. It kills the Christian life much more readily than the truncheons and pincers used by the Communist torturers. It is so easy to follow a life of apathy and ease and refuse to take up one's cross and follow Jesus by getting involved.

It would be better for us not to exist than to

renounce sacred poverty. We would renounce a blessing. Jesus said, "Blessed be ye poor." (LUK 6:20) We must be radical in this regard. The poor must be our teachers. We should abhor the disgusting ownership of things. We should despise money. We should seek the lowest position and happy to be despised.

The Christian life without at least some measure of ascetic practices is false. Simone Weil renounced sugar for six years in order to give it to the soldiers on the front. Tens of millions are hungry in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. We should at least be willing to give up ice cream.

It is a shame that even some American missionaries live pretentiously, loudly with ostentation.

The mother of Ludovic of Thuringia complained to him that his wife, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, had made a leper sleep in his bed in his absence. Ludovic looked and saw Jesus in bed. He thanked Elizabeth.

This is how I think. Such examples inspire me, and because I don't live up to my ideal, I appear to myself happy at least in my dream when I am poor, without a shirt, under arrest.

The selfishness of life under Capitalism prepares the way for atheistic Communism.

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Many ask if this or that in which they indulge is permissible. My answer is, "Be very poor. Never use money for drugs, alcohol, clothing which excites." Jesus uses for "poor" the Greek word ~ptohois~, which means abject poverty. Choose this and sinners will not accept you in their company.

The "Pateric" tells us that a young monk came to a father of the desert and asked him what he should do against the temptation of the flesh. The father answered, "I don't know the temptation and therefore can give you no advice. Ask somebody else." So the monk went to another elder and told him the negative reply he got. This elder said to him, "Return to the one who sent you to me and ask him why he does not know the temptation." He received the explanation, "Because I eat little."

Prison was a place of terrible sexual obsessions and fantasies. These disappeared in times when our food was very, very scarce.

Twenty percent of mankind eats eighty percent of the food which is produced. And then they spend money on postage asking about their moral problems. They will never get a satisfactory answer. After Jesus had fasted forty days, the devil could tempt him only from afar, as it were, and found not the slightest echo in Jesus.

To thousands of letters asking complicated sexual, marital, and moral questions of all kinds, my answer might seem to be a foolish one, "Eat less."

The priest in Cronin's ~The Keys of the Kingdom~ tells a rich lady who bored him endlessly in the confessional to lose weight if she wishes to enter the Kingdom of God. Its gate is narrow.

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SHOULD WE ALWAYS SPEAK THE TRUTH

Second Dream

~I am in the office of an organization which leads a secret work behind the Iron Curtain, but whose methods of promotion I consider unfair. Its director shows me the picture of a Hebrew Christian lady, a friend of mine. She has a terrible wound. Her breast has been cut off. I ask, "Who has done this?" He replies, "Her husband." "He has been dead a long time. I say, "You can't publish this as a proof of Communist atrocity. They have not done it." He replies, "I will publish the picture without saying expressly that the crime has been committed by the Reds. People will draw their own conclusions. So I will not have lied." I tell him, "Lying is not what you say, but what you make others think. When Abraham told Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister, this was true. She was his half-sister. But he suggested that she was an unmarried girl."~

In my dream life I always object strenuously to lying. This is because I had to say much untruth in the

underground work under Nazism and Communism in Romania. I cannot see how you can lead this work without lying.

Churchill was right: "In war truth must have an escort of lies." The church wages a war: "Onward, Christian Soldiers, Marching as to War." How can you lead a war telling an enemy where, when, and how you will

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attack him? So much the more in the underground fight.

I believe that everyone who asserts that he leads a secret work without lying is telling the biggest of lies.

I had to use lies during interrogations. I had to lie in prison. Many prisoners would have died of despair if we had not supported their hope. To support it with the hope of paradise was not enough. They would not have survived if I had not assured them again and again that Americans were coming to free them, that as a matter of fact they were already on their way to Romania.

There exist white lies. A father and son were in prison near me. The father always lied that he did not feel well and could not eat so as to increase the starvation ration of the son. The father died and saved the son. There exist saving pretences. In prison a mother almost went mad after hearing the truth that her daughter had died. A Christian lady recently arrested told her the white lie that she had seen her daughter alive. Thus she saved the mother's sanity.

In ISA 32:5, after the promise that once "a king shall reign in righteousness," it is said that then "the vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful," which implies that under unrighteous rulers it is acceptable to give good names to bad people in order to keep your life. Jacob gives Esau the impression that he has seen the face of God in order to make Esau afraid.

To preach the Gospel as you would teach a scientific truth in the university is also impossible. When the professor writes popularized science, he draws a picture of the atom or of the universe which my imagination can

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seize. He knows that matter is not picturable. St. Paul writes, "To the Greek I have become as a Greek, to the Jew as a Jew, so that by all means I might save some." He spoke what was efficient, not unadulterated truth. But God desires ~truth in the innermost parts~. (PSA 51:6) This creates a tension in the soul of everyone which expresses itself in dreams like this. In the dream self-reproach takes the form of reproaches addressed to others.

The acknowledgment of the state of tension as normal will free you from many questions.

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CHRISTIANS AND THEIR PASTORS

Third Dream

An artist friend of ours presents me with two paintings, telling me - so I remembered vaguely - that they are works of Goya. I tell this in her presence to a brother in Christ. She does not contradict me, but when she leaves, he accompanies her a bit. When he returns, he tells me that I have heard falsely. The paintings are not Goya's. He adds, "You must speak only what you know exactly." I object to the principle. There are legitimate ways of speaking other than what one knows with certainty, I say. There is exploratory talk, in which one makes all kinds of suppositions. Jesus spoke sometimes about things he did not know. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (LUK 18:8)

At once, the man who is before me is my son Mihai. He tells me that the Biblical book Ecclesiastes predisposes the reader toward skepticism. We read in it, "Who knows if the soul of man ascends at death and that of the animal descends?" I answer that these words are not an expression of skepticism, but of assurance that there is Somebody who has the answer to the greatest questions. But Solomon did not know who this was. This is Jesus. The Kabbala tells us that in Divinity there exists the sphere of the Mah (what) and that of the Mi (Who). Many see what happens but don't know the Who, the

Person who makes things happen and therefore has also

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all explanations.

Now I am in the presence of one of the greatest preachers of Romania. He is dead. Knowing in 1947 that I was threatened with arrest by the Communists, I had consulted him as to whether I should leave the country. He urged me to go. So had all the other pastors from whom I sought advice. I now saw again in a dream the discussion with him. I come home and tell my wife, "If all the pastors had told me that a good shepherd does not leave his flock when the wolf comes, we could have fled, knowing that we were leaving our congregation in good hands. But if they all advise me to flee, they show what they would do if they could. So I consider it my duty to remain."~

With this last dream I have reached the problem of the relationship between Christians and their pastors.

A multitude of the letters which I receive complain about things happening in churches, about pastors and priests, about the World Council of Churches and the Vatican. Some of my correspondents have changed denominations, as a man would change a shirt, in the hope of finding satisfaction for their souls, and they are still unhappy. "My church is as empty of spirit as the Communists would like it to be," a Christian writes.

What is wrong with the churches? Just nothing.

Jesus said to his disciples, which constituted the first church, "You are the light of the world," not "you should be," or "you should strive to become the light of the world." He also said that the church is ~the~ light, not one of many lights. Those who seek a church which should be

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the light of the world are again like the man who vainly sought his head when it was upon his shoulders.

The church is Christ prolonged in time, passing through history. Innumerable men had lived in the nearness of Christ, had seen Him eating, studying Scriptures, boiling glue, bargaining when He bought and sold (there

is no trade without bargaining in the Orient). Sometimes it was apparent to every onlooker that He was tempted to sin. People would not know if He yielded to the temptation or not. He was known to get angry and said the harshest word, "Satan," even to somebody who would later die for Him. He trembled in Gethsemane, He despaired in suffering. But He did not have to strive to be the eternal Son of God. This is what He was. It was not easy to recognize it.

Neither is it easy to recognize the church, with its many human weaknesses which sometimes amount to terrible crimes, as being the light of the world. But this it is. That Jesus is the Son of God is an article of our creed and therefore indisputable. It is an axiom. If we step down to arguments, we will be swamped by counter-arguments which Jews and Moslems and infidels bring. The same creed says, "I believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church." We have a faith given by God. We keep it as it has been given to us.

And we, members of this church, don't cease to belong to it because of something foolish we think or do. Thoughts or acts don't exclude from the body. We are what we are ontologically, not psychologically. We are members of the body even in moments of disbelief.

During His earthly life, Jesus passed through many

stages of evolution: an embryo, a babe, a child, an adult. He passed through many situations: greatly beloved, respected, humiliated, transfigured, crucified, risen. He had different moods. With the church, Christ prolonged in history, it is the same.

Just now she is passing through a spiritual ice-age. Jesus must have suffered from cold. You shiver for cold sometimes even in churches situated under the warm California sun. The weather outside is warmer than the sermons. But look only on the good side. You will see snow flowers breaking the icy shell and gladdening souls with beauty.

There are microbes in the baptismal water and on the cup of Holy Communion, billions of them, more than the sins in the church members. Does this lessen the

value of the sacraments?

If all the church members were all righteous, why would they need a church? Is not the church a school for sinners?

It is a school apart. Its teachers are also pupils. They also have to learn what is the subject of the church's teaching: to become like Jesus in miniature. Without this, no sermon or ritual will help.

As pupils in school are punished by their teachers with reproof and bad marks, so church teachers have to be reproved and given bad marks by other teachers who know better.

Diotrephes mentioned in III John [3JN] had probably been a bishop. Otherwise he could not have done all the evil for which he received the apostle's rebuke. But he had behaved so badly that St. John does not even give his

title. He was not worthy of it any more. Some very harsh epithets have been used against men with high functions in the church. A crook must be called a crook, whatever his position in religion. There exist people whose correct title is His Eminence the Crook, His Grace the Infidel. Faithfulness to the church demands opposition to the renegade leaders.

St. Peter Damianus called Pope Gregory VII, founder of the world position of the Curia, "Saint Satan," " wolf," "tiger." He spoke about the "Sodom and Gomorrah of the clergy."

On the other hand, it would be wrong to expect them to be perfect. They are human.

They are themselves victims of a false system. They are Christians because they are descendants of men who became Christians because of a royal edict. Prince Vladimir gave an order and the whole of Russia was baptized. Emperor Theodosius of Byzantium commanded: "All people over whom our rule extends shall live in that religion which was revealed to St. Peter. We give orders that all these should adopt the name 'Catholic Christian.' The rest we shall let pass for fools, and they will have to

bear the reproach of being called heretics. They must ~come first under the wrath of God and then ours~." (Codex Theodosianus XVI) Many bishops, priests, and pastors have never had a personal encounter with Jesus.

How has Latin America become Christian? Indians who knew only their primitive language were gathered and "the Requeriniento" devised by the navigator Fernandez de Enciso in 1513 was read to them solemnly in

Spanish or Latin. This set forth a history of the world since its creation, followed by an account of the institution of the papacy, and concluding with the grant of the territory by Pope Alexander VI to the kings of Spain. The Indians were then required to recognize the church, as sovereign and mistress of the whole world, the high priest called the Pope, and the King; and to allow themselves to be taught the Christian religion in Latin. If the Indians did not submit, their masters had the right to reduce them to slavery as idolaters, to take away their property, and to treat them as badly as possible - it would all be their own fault. This frightful theology was enforced with ships and weapons.

Today's Latin Americans know how they have been Christianized. Therefore the church is passing through a terrible crisis.

In Brazil recently forty percent of the decreasing number of priests were foreigners. On the whole continent there's a steady rise in the number of priests abandoning their mission. In four years the number of newly-ordained priests declined by a half. The number of nuns also dropped. Only twenty percent of Catholics practice their faith. The number of Catholic baptisms has not changed though the yearly population increase is seven percent. The number of confirmations dropped in four years from 1,500,000 to 500,000. (New York Times, Feb. 2, 1973)

This situation is typical for many Christian countries. The times when St. Patrick brought Christianity to Ireland, St. Boniface to Germany, and St. Willebrord to Holland, from which it went to Sweden, the days of the

Pilgrims who had come with the Mayflower, or of the Cambridge seven who scattered to different lands to bring Christ to the world, are no more.

Neither do we have any more an institution bearing the name of church which is the pillar of truth. It has been replaced by "my-views" churches which I can change when I dislike them. We no longer think, "Thus the church teaches, and I have to submit, even if it is difficult for me to understand." We do not accept the Scriptures any more, as did St. Augustine, simply because the authority of the church enjoins us to do so.

Montmartre (in French "mount of martyrs," so called because there saints suffered a martyr's death) is now a favourite place of Parisian debauchery.

In the apocryphal "Acts of John" we read that the apostles encircled Jesus and danced, singing Psalms. This is what we expected. He called religion a marriage feast. Now it is cold in the churches. And when persecution comes, many leave. Millions of laymen, but also many priests, left the church when the Communists seized power in different countries. Under the Nazis, the majority of Christians and their pastors cried, "Heil Hitler."

I was counselled by all pastors from whom I sought advice to leave my flock when the wolf came. (It is unfortunate that I sought advice only from the wrong ones. Among the others were many bishops and pastors who died for Christ.) This taught me that radical changes have to take place among the clergy.

I would say that the one necessary change is to have pastors who are more stupid. The Hebrew word for

"righteous" is "tamim,"a superlative of "foolish." In my eyes, the clergy are much too wise. They know far too many things.

The story is told that St. John Chrysostom, lacking a priest for a village church, ordained an uncultured peasant who had received very superficial instruction.

Returning to his bishopric in Byzantium, John feared that he might have committed a big mistake.

He arranged, therefore, to visit that church on a Sunday morning. Entering it unobserved, he hid behind a column, wishing to see if this new priest were worth his salt.

But he was overtaken by emotion. The prayers were said from the very depths of the heart. The song was like that of the angels. The reading of Scripture was reverent. The sermon was simple but inspiring. It was the service of a priest on fire.

When it was finished, the bishop went to the altar, knelt before the priest, and asked his blessing. The poor priest was afraid and said, "You must bless me, not I you." The bishop insisted, "I have never seen a priest serve God as whole-heartedly as you do," to which the stupid and uncultured priest replied, "But, your Eminence, does anybody serve God otherwise?"

We need such ignorant priests.

Most of what is taught in seminaries as theology, the hours lost on Greek and Hebrew, which most pastors forget once they have passed the exams, are more than useless if the primary aim of pastors is other than the conversion of souls.

Some do not ever learn to read the scriptures well in

church. I know a pastor who read from the pulpit GEN 12:1 - "The Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country," - with such conviction that several in the audience decided to leave the church - this before hearing the end of the sentence let alone the rest of the sermon. Why don't all pastors read the Scriptures like this from the pulpits?

Of all doctors of divinity, I prefer Dwight L. Moody, the salesman who spoke such ungrammatical English that the undergraduates in Cambridge set fire to a pile of chairs to protest his speech. Afterwards many were converted. Some of them became great men of God.

When Rembrandt was in his first phase as an artist, he was a master in every detail. Once his reputation was established, he became neglectful. Some pastors are like that.

A good pastor is so rare that many have to say with Savonarola, "You, Jesus, are my superior, pastor, bishop, and pope."

In his "To Christian nobility of the German nation" Luther writes: "If a number of devout Christian laymen would be arrested and banish to a desert, not having with them a priest consecrated by a bishop, and they would agree to choose one of them – if he be an honest man or not – and would entrust him with the office to baptize, to say mass, to absolve and preach, he would be as truly a priest as if all popes and bishops had ordained him. Through Cannon Law, they have deprived us and made unknown to us this great grace and power of baptism and of the state of a Christian... Whoever has been baptized can boast that he is already consecrated

priest, bishop, and pope, though not everyone is called to this office."

When I have quoted this to individuals, they have reproached me saying that I contradict myself. I state that there is nothing wrong with the church that she simply is the light of the world and does not have to strive to be something better. I also state that some things are wrong with the priests and pastors.

I am 76 years old. I have had the rare privilege of doing nothing but think during years of solitary confinement. I could never find out what is wrong with contradicting oneself. All the prophets have said contradictory things. I will put some in two columns:

HOS 14;6 [Israel's] branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree.	HOS 9:16 Ephraim ... shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb.

AMO 5:2
The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall be no more rise.

AMO 9:11
I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins.

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HAB 1:2
O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!

HAB 3:13
Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people.

Beware of every man who does not contradict himself. A rectilinear position is always cant.

But where is the contradiction in this case? The church is substantially Christ prolonged in history. But is there any substance which throws no shadow? Jesus threw a shadow when he walked on earth, a shadow without colour, without beauty, sometimes grotesquely small or huge, according to the position of the sun. There exists even a shadow cast by the Almighty (PSA 91:1). This makes atheists of many. I believe that every man or institution which does not have a dark side is not whole. The wrongs of the church belong to its shadow, not to its essence which is without stain.

As for what happens in the shadow, you mention it casually and are not worried about it.

What is the right thing to do in view of these evils in the church? Should one step out of the large denominations involved in ecumenism?

I like the grave wisdom contained in some jokes. A man went to the doctor every month, whether he was healthy or sick. He explained, "The doctor has to make a living." Then he would order from the pharmacy the drug prescribed. "The pharmacist has to live." He never

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took the medicine, because he also wished to live.

The churches have to exist. So they will get my attendance. "To whosoever asks you, give," says the Lord. So I will pay my church contributions. I will listen to the sermons. The priests and pastors have to have an audience. I will take care about following what they say, because I have to live eternally. Therefore, I will check everything with the Scriptures. I will remember that not all men who have the title "right reverend" are right. Not all eminences are eminent.

I need teachers. They are not hard to find. St. Polycarp is a good one. When at a late age he was asked by the Roman pro-consul to worship the emperor and blaspheme Christ, he said, "Eighty-six years I have served Christ and He has never done me harm. How then shall I blaspheme my King Who has redeemed me? I am a Christian. If you would learn the basis of my faith, set a day on which I may instruct you." As he was led away to be burned at the stake, he prayed, "Lord God, Almighty Father of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, through Whom we have received grace to confess Thee, God of the angels and of all powers, all creatures and all believers who live as before Thy presence, I praise Thee for having counted me worthy to share in the cup of Thy Son Jesus Christ. Take me up before Thy presence as a pleasing sacrifice which Thou hast prepared for Thyself."

I can choose as teachers St. Timothy and Maura.

Timothy, so the story goes was young, son of the priest Peekolpos. His wife was seventeen when he married her. Twenty years later they were brought before Arian, governor of the bloody Emperor Diocletian.

Timothy told him courageously, "I am a Christian."

"Don't you see these instruments of torture which we will use against you if you don't sacrifice to the gods?"

"How about you? Don't you see the angels of God surrounding and strengthening me?" Timothy answered.

They blinded him, so he saw the beautiful, eternal kingdom of God and praised Him. They hanged him

head down, with a heavy stone attached to his body. His father, the priest, was in the crowd and prayed for him.

The governor asked for Maura to make her husband yield, promising her much gold for doing this.

She said to her husband, "Beloved Timothy, why do you bring upon me such sorrow? I cannot see you suffering. I cannot look upon your ordeal. I weep. My heart aches. You leave me a young widow."

Timothy replied, "O Maura, make with me this beautiful adventure. Let us die together for our Lord, and He will give us crowns in His Kingdom."

Maura answered, "When I came to you, I still loved this transitory life. But now I love what you love. I desire what you desire."

"If so, go and tell it to the governor."

Supported by the prayers of her husband, she went to the governor and said, "You dishonest ruler! - You promised me gold if I convinced my husband to sacrifice to the gods. You wished to destroy my soul. Now I don't fear your sentence. I hope that my heavenly Bridegroom will help me bear the torture."

They tore out her hair, they cut her fingers. The saint said, "Let my hands, which I used to ornament with

useless rings, suffer." She did not feel the pain. Then she was thrown into a kettle of boiling water. Before this she said, "I thank the Lord that He washes me from my sins, that I may come to Him with a clean heart." From the kettle she told the governor, "How cold is the water in which you throw me! I don't feel any heat." The ruler, angry because they put her into cold water contrary to his command, ordered that some of this water be shed on his hand. When a little bit of that water was sprinkled upon him, he jumped because of the pain.

For a moment Arian was impressed and exclaimed, "Blessed be the Lord God of Maura, and there is no God beside Him." He wished to release her, but the devil got the upper hand and the order came to throw her in

boiling tar. St. Maura answered, "Fire is for me like the morning dew descending from heaven to earth."

So the ruler changed his mind and ordered both to be crucified. While they were on their way to death, the mother of Maura encountered her and said, "My daughter, I have sought you everywhere. Don't leave me alone. Who will wear all your jewels, your beautiful garments? To whom will I give your gold?" Maura replied, "My gold will pass away, my garments will be eaten by moths, my young face will be full of wrinkles, but the crown which I receive from my Lord is eternal and unfading. I wish to die on the cross as did my Lord."

Timothy and Maura, it is said were crucified one opposite the other. They hung on the cross nine days and encouraged each other. St. Timothy taught her during the day. During the night, she would speak words of comfort. One night the enemy showed himself to St. Maura in the

shape of an angel of light and led her in the spirit to a river flowing with milk and honey, enjoining her to drink. The saint recognized that it was the enemy and answered, "I will not drink water, milk, or honey, or any earthly beverage until I finish the cup of my suffering, the cup of death for my Lord Jesus Christ." When she had said these words the enemy and the river disappeared, and she had a heavenly vision.

She saw before her an angel indeed with shining face. He showed her a throne on which lay a garment white as snow and a crown. He told her, "This is your reward." Then he showed her another throne situated higher in heaven. "This is prepared for your husband." She asked, "Why are the thrones not together?" He answered, "There is a big difference between you and your husband. He convinced you to suffer for Christ. Thanks to him you received the martyr's crown. In the morning other angels will come and bring you here."

The last words of St. Maura were addressed to the crowd, "My brethren and sisters, the Lord gives us, His servants, eternal crowns. Serve the Lord and He will crown you, too." And so they both passed away.

Such teachers of Christianity live outside of time.

The church is never without good teachers. We can learn from Polycarp, Timothy, Maura, and thousands of others like them.

We can learn from the martyrs of our own century.

Ivan Moiseev, a Soviet soldier, was a Christian who brought his comrades to conversion. The Communists forced him to stand for two weeks on the ice, clothed only in a summer uniform, in order to make him deny his

faith. He refused. They put him in an inflatable rubber suit, then inflated it so much that he could scarcely breathe. His faith resisted. Under torture he wrote to his mother, "They will kill me. I might not see you again on earth. But I am unafraid. I have seen angels and they have shown me the heavenly city." Angels are transparent. When you have an angel before you and somebody else stands behind him, the presence of the angel does not keep you from seeing the other man. On the contrary, looking at him through the angel, you see him beautiful, radiant. Afterward, they stabbed him six times in the region of his heart and then drowned him.

Here you have another good teacher in Christianity. From him we can learn to look at our fellowmen through the angel.

And if you will look well you might find some good teachers among the pastors around you. It might not be the one you have in your parish. But if it is true that not all those called "Eminence" are eminent, it is also true that not all "Eminences" are by definition not eminent.

In any case, I being a pastor myself must be modest in criticizing other pastors.

Fourth Dream

~I dreamt once that the French magazine Literary Life (which means a magazine dedicated to fiction) had praised me. The subconscious told me thus that praises heaped upon me are based on a myth. In the dream, I kept a poor actor from playing his part. The subconscious criticized me because I, who also am acting, hindered less

gifted pastors who have no greater guilt than mine. The dream ended with the fact that I lost the magazines praising me. I sought for them, but they remained lost.~

Beware of "know-better pastors" who criticize their colleagues. You might find a good pastor among the humble ones.

But beware also of being a pastor or having as pastor a man who never gets indignant about sin nor fervent about God, who is neither very good nor very bad.

And don't accept as pastor somebody who does not share the sufferings of persecuted brethren.

Fifth Dream

~I dreamt one night that I reproached Billy Graham with tears for not sharing the sorrows of Communist prisoners. I told him, "You do not love them." He then asked a guard to bind him and put him into a straight cell where he could scarcely stretch his body. There he fell asleep. When I visited him, I observed that his chains gave him freedom enough to stretch himself. I told him, "How privileged you are. The brethren are tied with their hands behind their back and cannot stretch themselves."~

I awoke. It had been a vain dream. Evangelists of renown usually don't submit themselves to being in bonds, though HEB 13:3 would oblige them to do so: "Remember those that are in bonds as bound with them."

True teachers are not only those who die for Christ,

but all those who love Him so much that they would be ready to die for Him if occasion demanded. Look well around you. You might be able to find a true teacher and true brethren for fellowship. If not, then you must become the nucleus of such a fellowship.

This is how I have solved the problem for myself.

You tell me in your letters that my answers are not specific enough and don't give a clear indication about what you should do. Why should I give you clear indications? Why do you seek your head on me? It is right on your own shoulders.

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LOVE PARDONS THE ENEMY

Sixth Dream

~I attended a patriotic meeting in the United States and complained to a person near me that military matters are not kept secret. He told me that he works in a top secret military institution, which he invited me to visit. I refused, expressing my wonder that such institutions can be visited by foreigners. The patriot to whom I spoke at the meeting answered, "We are an open society. We are not used to secrecy."

I left the meeting with a Jewish doctor. He reproached me for being a Lutheran. He said, "Luther forced Jews into slave labour." I replied, "He was an anti-Semite, but he did not personally commit acts of violence against the Jews. He was a product of the spirit of his time. Every man is blinded through his main concern. Luther, always busy to disclosing what was wrong with the Papacy, simply could not see that anti-Semitism is also wrong."~

I awoke from this dream afraid. I asked myself if I am not in this position. I write and speak constantly about the evils of Communism. But there are so many other evils. God, keep me from being blind regarding them.

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Seventh Dream

~I dreamt I saw Lucretiu Patrashcanu, the Communist leader who brought the Reds to power in Romania and who was afterwards shot by his comrades. But he was

before me alive and honored. I asked him if he had had some religious experience in prison. He replied, "I put to myself the religious problem, but I did not reach any conclusion." Then I read a memorandum written by him while in prison in which he asked for my release for the good of the cause of Christ.~

A Communist asked that a Christian be released for the good of the cause of Christ!!

I love my enemies. Do I love the whole of my enemy? Do I love also what makes him my enemy, which is an essential part of his personality? If I don't love this part, I don't love him, the whole man. For humanitarian reasons, I have protested publicly against the anti-Communist terror in Indonesia and Chile. Would I ever have asked for the release of an imprisoned Communist for the good of the Marxist cause? The dream left me thinking. Would Christ have died for sinners so that they, knowing their present, past, and future sins would be forgiven, might sin without being disturbed by remorse?

St. Peter preached to the Jews, "Ye killed the Prince of life." (ACT 3:15) He finishes the same speech with the words, "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you..."

God blesses first those who killed his son - a preference for the worst of enemies. This shows us that we

should treat our enemies as if they were our best friends.

I cannot forget Bishop Hirta, a Greek-Catholic with whom I was in prison. He had been very pleased that I had taken the defense of the Virgin Mary against a Protestant pastor who had belittled her. He told me, "As a reward, I wish to serve you with a powerful anti-Catholic argument. I wonder why Protestants never use it. Jesus taught that if a person has sinned, he should say, 'Our Father who art in heaven,...forgive us our trespasses.' He did not say 'Go and obtain absolution from the priest."

He had loved my whole person, including its anti-Catholicism.

The principle is that love for one's enemy must be total. This means that the satisfaction and security of any other person, including that of my enemy, must become as significant to me as my own satisfaction and security. It is only then that the state of love exists.

One of the oldest sermon illustrations, in the catacombs of Rome, is the following:

A rich man with hundreds of slaves had one by the name of Paulus, whom he trusted fully, making him steward over his whole household. One day he went with Paulus to the slave market to buy some new men. Before bargaining, they examined the human merchandise, observing their musculature to see if they were worth their price. At once, Paulus saw exposed for sale a weak, old man. He implored his owner to buy this slave. The rich man, Proculus, answered mockingly, "But he is good for nothing."

"Buy him. He is cheap. And I promise that the work

in your household will go as never before."

So the owner yielded. And it really was true that all the work went better than ever. But Proculus observed that Paulus now worked for three men. The old slave did nothing. Paulus tended him, gave him the best food, and made him rest the whole time.

Proculus asked Paulus, "You know I value you. I don't mind your protecting this old man. Tell me only who he is. Is it perhaps your father who has fallen into slavery?"

Paulus answered, "It is one to whom I owe more than to my father."

"Is it your teacher?"

"No. Somebody to whom I owe more."

"Who is it, then?"

"This is my enemy. He is the man who killed my father and sold us, the children, as slaves. As for me, I am

a disciple of Christ, Who has taught us to love our enemies and to reward evil with good."

This is what a Christian feels in his heart. Nobody is accepted unless the very worst in him is accepted.

I had in my congregation in Bucharest a blind Jewess married to a blind man. They had never seen each other. After a time he chose another woman as the object of his love. She suffered much because of this and decided to commit suicide. She gathered together a great quantity of sleeping pills and diluted them in water. But when she brought the glass to her lips, she, the blind Jewess, saw Jesus in a vision.

"What you do is sin," He told her. "I will show you a better way. Love the mistress of your husband. Love her as she is, as the woman who destroys your happiness.

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Bring her into your home. Let them embrace each other in your home, and you serve them with meals and with tea. Wash for them. Be their servant."

She, the Jewess, obeyed this strange injunction as few Christians would have done. She loved like the Communist leader in my dream. She loved the adulteress in such a manner as to make her feel freer in her relationship to the man. This love conquered. The husband abandoned the other woman and was again hers. The other woman remained her friend.

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LOVE TOWARD RUSSIA

Eighth Dream

~On April 1, 1973, I had a dream in Fort Wayne, Indiana. In this dream I prayed, "God, if you don't save Russia, you are not my God."~

I had never before known that I was so bound to

Russia. I knew I had a preferential love for Romania, my country of origin, the United States, my actual home, and Israel.

The dream made me realize what a big role Russia played in my life.

I love it because it is the country which in this century has given the greatest number of martyrs, just as Rome was the most honoured place for Christians of the first centuries. When love fears to bleed, it ceases to bless. Russia has given and still gives rivers of blood. There is an appearance of atheism in the population but only because the atheists rule with an iron fist. When the armies of the Axis invaded Russia and reopened the churches, 100 percent of the population attended religious services. The people streamed to baptism, confession, religious marriage, and religious instruction.

In a Siberian camp, the Commander Naploef calls imprisoned nuns "bitches" and tears down the ikons which they put on the walls of their cells. Their fellow prisoners had given them names like "the angels of heaven, the holy Ukrainian virgins." They had baptized a

hundred adults in the camp. On a winter's day, when the thermometer registered 50ø below zero Celsius, the commander presented them with a declaration to sign: "We, the following nuns, renounce our orders, our religious propaganda, and our activity among other prisoners," and they were told that if they refused, they would be put in frozen isolation cells for a week, receiving for food only one slice of bread and a cup of hot water. "If this does not suffice, you'll be exposed for three hours to the Siberian frost, dressed only in your shirts, all the inhabitants of the camp being present. We will see who is more powerful: God or winter."

The nuns resisted the ordeal of the isolation cells. They were made to stand barefoot and naked on the ice with 2000 criminals looking at them.

"Sign, or you'll become an ice block in a couple of minutes."

The nuns knelt in the snow and said the rosary with

loud voices.

"If you don't sign in five minutes, we'll unleash the dogs against you. They'll tear you in pieces."

Then the nuns loudly recited the creed. The dogs were unleashed and ran as directed. At two yards from them, they stopped and sat down quietly like sheep in the snow. There was no more barking. The criminals began to shout, "Miracle! Glory to the heroic sisters! Shame to the henchmen!" Naploef ordered the criminals and the sisters back into their respective barracks.

It is because of such nuns that I love Russia.

The Mennonite Pastor Klaassen has been in prison for six years. He has seen many miracles in his time.

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Criminals incited by the Communists prepared a big kettle of boiling water in which to throw him. They ordered him to undress while they put more wood on the fire. Klaassen undressed himself, but the kettle exploded and killed the murderers.

On another day a warden entered his cell with a big dog trained to jump at prisoners and bite them. The guard removed the muzzle, but, surprisingly, the dog jumped at the guard, not at the prisoner. The keeper succeeded in shooting the dog and for some mysterious reason – perhaps remorse at seeing this miracle of God – shot himself, too.

After passing through all these years of starvation, torture, and such traumatic experiences, Klaassen can still write: "First I counted the years, now I count the days until my liberation. And then...we can prepare ourselves for new tempests, because these have not ceased. Yesterday we received the news that three other brethren have been sentenced to four and five years. I remembered the story when Paul took leave of the brethren in Ephesus, telling them that he knew about persecutions and bonds awaiting him in Jerusalem. But he was ready not only to bear chains, but even to go to death for Christ's sake. Thinking about this, I began to sing. The way is red because of the blood of martyrs, and should I walk on roses? Others passed through the sea; should I stand on

the shore? He who wishes to triumph must fight. My Saviour, give me the strength to fight, to suffer in silence as a true soldier. My cell is for me a garden of roses full of fragrance. Here I meet my Saviour and hear His voice."

It is for men like Klaassen that I love Russia.

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Sasha is only six years of age. He wires his first poem:

I have a father,
He prays for me;
Christ will not forget
Though Papa is in prison.

Children who live far away from Sunday Schools and go by train to other villages are attacked by gangs of Communist hooligans and badly beaten up when they return. Next Sunday they go again to Sunday School.

It is for children like these that I love Russia.

Some parents walk hundreds of miles to find a priest who will baptize their child. These parents know that if they bring up their children in the Christian faith, these same children might become martyrs. They don't educate them to become lawyers, engineers, or doctors, but rather chained prisoners.

It is for them that I love Russia.

I love Russia for its youth who, though ignorant in matters of religion, inscribe their prayers and their seeking after God on funeral stones, hoping that the dead will intercede for them.

A Russian mother was dying when her son was arrested. Relatives wished to hide the news from her. But she guessed the sense of his absence and thanked God for his faithfulness. Dr. Olga Skrebetz quit the Communist Party because of religious convictions and in protest against the rape of Czechoslovakia. As a result, she was interned in a psychiatric asylum.

Because of women like this I love Russia.

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I love Russia for men like Wiebe. His last letter from the prison in which he died says:

I love Russia, the country in which Christians kiss the locked doors and walls of closed churches because Christ once dwelt in them.

I believe Russia to be the most spiritual country of the Christian world, and even while attending services in a Western church, I share in spirit the religious service held by a pastor in some mine in a Russian concentration camp. The lamps of the miners are the candles. They sing with soft voices. The electricity does not function. Short circuits happen at just the right time. This liturgy is much more solemn than the mass at St. Peter's.

I love Russia because the Christians tortured in it are patriots.

~Vestnik Spasenia~, the secret magazine of the Soviet Baptists (February 1968) published a poem composed in a slave labour camp:

My love and my song are Russia.
For your happiness, I am ready to give my whole life, my young forces.
Saying with joy while dying,
My love and my song are Russia.

I feel much nearer to the author of these primitive verses than to the renowned Mme. Guylon, who wrote in prison:

To me remains no place or time,
My country is in every clime.
I can be calm and free from care.
On any shore since you are there.

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RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

But is it right to speak to God shameless!y like this, "If you don't save Russia, you are not my God"? I would

never have said such words consciously. The subconscious mind has its own conceptions.

The conscious mind understands and speculates too much. Luther warned against this: "Living, nay, dying and being damned you become a theologian, not understanding, reading and speculating."

The song "How Great Thou Art" addressed to God is very popular. But nobody gave the answer to it telling us how great God is. I would like rather to compose a hymn on the subject "How Unknown Thou Art."

Sanomdes, when asked who is God, pleaded a day's time for meditation, then one more, then one more. "The more I think about God, the more unclear my notions become," he said. God is a mystery.

When I first saw Heisenberg's formula of the world, I shuddered:

[Hebrew characters in the book cannot be printed]

(quoted from "Biblische Verkuendigung in der Zeitwende," Don Basco Verlag, Munich.)

Multitudes of particles in combination with each other but their sum is 0. The particles are no more than observational positions. They are intellectual fiction. If this is all we can say about the world, what could we say about the Godhead?

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We call him Father, Lord, King. But these are kindergarten pictures. Kings and fathers are mortal. We have to take away these names to behold the splendor of God. Justin Martyr writes in his ~Second Apology~, "To the Father of all that is unbegotten, there is no name given, for by whatever name He be called, He has as His elder the person who gives Him the name. These words, 'Father,' 'God,' 'Creator,' 'Lord,' and 'Master,' are not names, but appellations derived from His good deeds and functions." God is not a name.

Origen writes, "If I can confess the precise truth, God is unintelligible and cannot be known." St. Cyprian writes, "God cannot be seen - His light blinds the eye;

He cannot be understood - He being too pure for our reason: neither can we measure Him - He surpassing our possibility of comprehension. Therefore we say something right about Him only when we confess that we don't understand Him." Gregor of Nazianz taught, " Let us worship the truth of the Divine being only through silence. It is inexpressible, above every thought..."

The Indian name for God, ~Brahman~, comes from a Sanskrit word which means prayer. God is a longing, more than a knowledge. Meister Eckhardt says, "Whoever wishes to see God must be blind." The Indians call him ~Neti, neti~ - "no, no." The Kabbala calls Him ~Ein~, the nonexistent, because He is nothing of what we attribute to Him. The God whom we imagine is unexisting. ~Tantiryakka-Upanishad~ calls Him "the one from which words and thoughts return without finding him."

We laugh about what Luther wrote 400 years ago,

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"One of the masterpieces of God is that nine-tenths of men die as children and have no occasion for dangerous temptations." After 400 years others will laugh about the thoughts we connect with God.

I believe that Simone Weil came closest to expressing it when she said that God cannot be present in His creation other than through His absence. Tauler did not wish to think about God: he wished to think in a divine manner. It is not true that the one who knows God knows something more than other men. He knows things differently. No conversation of his is prosaic any more. When he speaks about cabbage or hay, these objects have a new significance for him. He has a godly manner of giving a cup of water and of working in a factory.

There exists this hidden God about Whom the mystics knew. The only thing you can say is that He is. With Him we communicate through silence. It is important to meditate - more important than to brush our teeth. But about Him we meditate only in the intervals between our meditations.

Never seek to obtain anything from Him. The pupil of the eye receives light only because of itself it is dark.

Dance for joy as often as He takes something away from you. It was surely a barrier between you and Him. You prove your love toward the Godhead by defending Him against yourself, against your insistent demands and pettiness.

You reach this God only by denying all false gods. You search for the little which can be obtained by searching and adore the Unsearchable. You reach Him by denying yourself, which means to realize that there exists

no "I," but only God. Reality transcends dualistic intellectual analysis, the differentiation between an I and a Him.

To Him the words of Sophocles' Oedipus apply; "No man in the world can make gods do more than gods will."

I cannot say to the Godhead, "Save Russia or you are not my God." He is my God, if I wish Him or not. He is God whether or not He saves Russia. Many countries have no testimony of the Gospel; many generations have passed away without knowing Christ. He owes us no answer. He is good, of a goodness apart. If a human father behaved like Him toward his children, leaving them without essential knowledge, we would not have called him good. God belongs in a category apart.

But Luther teaches, "We must leave God unsearched as He is in His majesty and essence. With Him we have nothing to do. Neither does He wish us to have ought to do with Him. The hidden God in His majesty does not mourn and does not take away death. He causes life and death and all in all. Here God has not limited himself in His word, but has kept Himself in liberty over all."

He recommends that we distinguish between the hidden God and God as revealed, i.e., between the Word of God and God himself. "We have to go after His Word, not after His inscrutable will... We should not strive to discover the high mysteries of the Majesty Who dwells in an impenetrable light."

The hidden God and the revealed God? But is God not one? It is very important to uphold the oneness of God, the oneness of the source of truth. Whoever

believes in many gods will get different inspirations and

have a confused mind.

But when I say that God is one, it means that He has the qualities of the figure one, within which is also divisibility. If God is conscious He is already multiple; His oneness is no more simple. There exist His reality and His self-reflection, the subject and the object of this knowledge. The Father is the known, the Son the knower. He says, "Nobody knows the Father except Me." If God loves Himself, there exist again the loved, the lover, and the love which unites them, the Holy Trinity.

The one mysterious Godhead has revealed itself through the Son who works within us through the Holy Spirit.

God has revealed Himself. We can find Him. If we open in our hearts a door for Him as big as the point of a needle, He will enter with cartloads of blessings. He makes us strong personalities on our own. He gives us back our "I," which we had denied. He returns it to us as a reality. Therefore, the creed starts with the words "I believe." I believe this, whatever others may believe. St. Athanasius quarrelled with a council of bishops and the whole world about one "i" in the creed. He allowed himself to be excommunicated under slanderous accusations. He knew the sense of the words "I believe." Nobody can dictate to me what to believe.

This "I" can come daringly to God, though knowing that He is almighty. It is He who has made the amoebas. They can be seen only under mighty microscopes. Everyone is constituted of 100 quadrillions of atoms, of which the principal ones are carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen. This number of atoms could not have met

together accidentally in a correct ratio. Each amoeba contains millions of genes with genetic information. If written out, it would fill a thousand volumes.

I can believe about such a God that He can make everything happen. To this God I can cry, "Father," until

He becomes a Father to me.

One day some thirty years ago, a girl of thirteen, pale poorly dressed, thin, entered my office and told me, "I have heard about you that you are good. I have no father. My mother is a drunkard who beats me. I am hospitalized for spinal tuberculosis. I have nobody. You will be my father henceforth." I called my wife and introduced her to her daughter. And that was it. In the same manner I came to God and declared Him to be my Father.

This Father of mine can blow adversaries away like a heap of dust. He can also give me the strength to do it. Hugo writes in ~Les Miserables~ that Napoleon was defeated not because of Wellington, but because he embarrassed God.

God said to Abraham, "After a year I will return, and Sarah will have a son." He seemingly did not return, but Sarah gave birth to a son, Isaac. Later on in the Bible God is called "the God of Isaac." This is in our English Bibles, not in the original. The Hebrew and the Greek have "God Abraham, God Isaac, God Jacob." God had returned in the sense that He had identified himself with the new-born babe.

He identifies Himself with me and with all believers. He will save Russia through our fight, our prayers, our activity, and He will be my God.

Against whom do the Russian Communists fight if

there is no God? A Russian farmer was asked if he believes in God. "How come?" they mocked him. "Have you ever seen him?"

"No," he replied, " but neither have I ever seen a Japanese. I only know that in the last war Russia fought the Japanese, so they must exist. And you, the Communists, have been fighting God for half a century. You are not mad. You surely don't fight someone who does not exist."

A country in which farmers can give such answers and which sheds so much blood for the cause of God will be saved.

As for ourselves, let us not allow science to shake our belief in God. Men in times past had the key to a lock whose structure they did not know. Now scientists minutely describe the lock but have not the key - which is faith in God. They are like men who would deny the existence of a painter because he is not on the canvas. The canvas could show nothing without the artist.

Believe in God. Communicate with Him. If only ten percent of mankind were to meditate on His Word and pray to Him, the greatest threat hanging over us all would cease to exist. Global peace would permanently ensue. God can be adored. But He is also the greatest Power we can use in our service.

You can use Him first as a power to start a new life.

A pastor rode in a train, in a packed compartment. A teenager disturbed all the passengers by continually leaving and re-entering the compartment. The pastor asked him, "Don't you see that there is no place for so much going to and fro? Why don't you stay in one place like

everybody else?"

The teenager answered, "I am the prodigal son of the Bible. I have heaped shame on my family by going to jail for theft. Today I was released. From jail I had written to mother asking her to intervene with father to forgive me. I told her that if he does, she should tie a white handkerchief to the cherry tree in front of our house. Our train passes the house. If I see the handkerchief - I wrote - I will return and try to make restitution for my past evil. If not, no other way remains open for me than to rejoin the gang. Our train will soon approach the house, and I am nervous. I don't even have the courage to look through the window. What if there is no handkerchief on the tree?"

The pastor told the young man to stay in the corridor. He would look out on his behalf and tell him. After a few minutes, the pastor, who had gotten the necessary explanations about the house, cried to the youngster, "Sorry, my friend, there is no white handkerchief on the tree - but instead the tree is full of big white sheets! So

much does your father wait for you."

Our heavenly Father loves us even more. As a token of His love, He sent His only Son, Jesus, to die for us on the cross. Through believing in Him we can have forgiveness of all our sins.

Use this goodness of God. Get all the forgiveness for all your trespasses. Squeeze from God the maximum of forgiveness. What is less then the maximum is not from Him.

As for persistence in our relationship with God, it sometimes works. Jesus encourages us to use it in the

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parable about the widow who by persistently troubling an evil judge got what she required. (LUK 18:1-8)

Now, when I think about this dream, I say that a God who would save Russia would be my God, whom I love. A God who does not save Russia would also be my God, a God whom I would have to accept, before whom I would bow as before an ineluctable fact and a mystery. And I still must love Him.

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THE HEAVENLY MOTHER

Christians always speak about their heavenly Father. But is there not also a heavenly mother? Jung says that the belief in it constitutes one of the essential parts of the collective unconscious. The Hindus call her ~Kali~ and have an amazing devotion for her. I saw her adored in Asia under the name of Kun-Yin.

Catholics and Orthodox would call Mary their heavenly mother. Jesus had said to John from the cross, referring to her, "Behold, thy mother." Pope John XXIII, when visited by Adzubei, son-in-law of Khrushchev, and his wife, presented to the latter a rosary. He told her, "I don't expect you to use it for saying prayers. But it should remind you about a perfect mother." Mrs. Adzubei wept.

Protestants would do well to remember that the Scriptures speak not only about a heavenly Father. St. Paul writes in GAL 4:26, "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."

The Mormons are not mad when they sing:
In the heavens are parents single?
No, the thought makes reason stare.
Truth is reason, truth eternal
Tells me I've a mother there.

The Bible compares God's sentiments toward Israel with motherly love: "Can a woman forget her sucking child...?" (ISA 49:15) The church in its sermons has also referred to this similitude.

There is a story, often told in churches, about a poor

woman who brought her only daughter into town so that she might find a position as a maid. From what she could earn, they would be able to buy in time a field and some cattle. The girl was very beautiful and intelligent. She found out quickly that a person with her attributes could earn more money by not working than by working. So she passed from one set of arms to another and eventually gained luxury, cars, furs, rings. In the process, she forgot her mother.

After ten years, the moment of great awakening came. "How could I have been so hardhearted as to leave mother without even news about me?" She took a train and arrived at her village late at night. Approaching the gate of her mother's home, she found that it was open, a very unusual thing. She knew her mother was very careful about locking it up in the evening. Looking up, she saw a light burning in her mother's bedroom. Mother usually did not keep the light on when asleep. As she stepped over the threshold, her mother's voice called, "Jeane, is it you?"

"Yes, mother. But how is it that your gate is not locked?"

The mother's reply was gentle. "For ten years, ever since you left, the gate has always remained wide open."

"And why is your light burning?" the daughter questioned.

"Since you left, the light has never been turned off. The loving heart of a mother waited for you."

The simple fact that Christians call God the Father, and not the Author or Creator, identifies him with a sex. How can there be a father without a mother?

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Some explanation to this problem is found in Jesus' words: "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." (MTT 12:50)

It is easy to understand that we are called brothers and sisters of Jesus. But how could I be Jesus' mother through doing the will of God? Mother's love is the highest form of love. The love of a child toward his parents has a mixture of self-interest. Father gives pocket money and mother candies. Wives love their husbands. They also have his protection and his caresses. Husbands love their wives. They also enjoy her attentions, her cooking, and her care. Only a mother's love is completely disinterested. Mother loves even after her child had gravely sinned against her.

We can have such love, the highest type of love, for Jesus. Mary was granted the privilege of such love. Jesus had lived in her womb, as He is meant to live in our hearts. She had taken care of all His needs, as we could do, too. Christians with such a love are called His mother by Jesus Himself. If you have found such a mother of Jesus, honour her. Be such a mother yourself.

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JESUS

Ninth Dream

~When I was in the prison of Tirgul-Ocna, I dreamt a short poem in Romanian. In English translation it would be:

Speak about nobody but Him
And caress Him day and night.
May laughter and weeping be indifferent to you:
Endeavour only not to lose Him.~

I will tell very little in answer to questions about Jesus. But this book of mine is purposely written on a subliminal level. It appeals not to the conscious. It has the subconscious as its target. The more it has reached the subconscious, the less conscious you will be of the answer you receive. "The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness." (1KI 8:12) In this darkness, which is so dark that you are not even aware when light penetrates it, your questions about Jesus will have been answered. The proof will be that you will stop asking questions.

A man came to a Zen-master and demanded, "Purify my heart." The master answered, "Give it to me. I'll do it." The man replied, "I cannot give it." "Then it is pure." A heart which cannot be handled by anyone, not even by its owner, could not have been polluted by anybody. Where there is no self there is nothing to be purified.

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Unfortunately, life is not as easy as this. We have selves and they are defiled. We need a saviour. He is Jesus Christ. The Chinese ideogram for him is Tsi Tu, meaning "supreme foundation." [In the book, Chinese characters appear here.]

When St. Jerome, living in Bethlehem, first translated the Bible into Latin, Jesus appeared to him in a vision in the form of a child. Jerome felt such a love for Him that he said, "You give to my heart great sweetness. I would like to present You with a gift. What would make You happy?"

The child smiled. "What can you give Me? Heaven and earth belong to Me."

Jerome insisted, "I must make You a present. Should I give You all my money?"

The child, still smiling, replied, "If you have spare money, give it to the poor. I don't need silver and gold."

"I will not allow You to pass by without accepting at least some little thing from me. Tell me what You would like most to have from me."

Now the child became earnest and said, "If you really wish to gladden Me, give Me all your sins, passions, and lusts, and I will die for them on the cross. There is no more pleasant gift that anyone can give Me."

Jesus died for us on the cross.

We in the Christian world have become so accustomed to this sentence that it no longer touches us as it should. I once overheard a Russian praying before a crucifix. He had not seen many churches before. "Poor Jesus," he prayed, "how the arms must ache. And You

cannot walk anymore. I feel the pain of Your hands, Your feet, Your head. How ashamed You must have felt hanging naked. What a grief to see Your mother weeping. And this all for my sins."

I have always wondered why the commandment that we should not make ourselves images is considered so important that it comes before "Don't kill" and "Don't steal." When I heard the Russian, I understood. Holy images are transparent and they show so much innocent suffering that life would be simply impossible for the true believer if he had them around. We know we are guilty of Christ's death. What murderer can bear to have constantly before his eyes the pictures of his victim?

Many thousands were crucified in Jesus' time. What makes His crucifixion so important is that He is God.

Through the Virgin Mary, God allowed His creation, the mineral, vegetable, and human spheres, to participate in the eternal birth of His Son. And what happened in eternity, what happened in the stable in Bethlehem, can happen in you. Bohme writes, "The Father brings forth His only-begotten Son in the soul as truly as He brings Him forth in eternity, neither less nor more."

And once He has been born in us, we recognize Him. He had never been entirely foreign. The beauties of

this world had been Christ's gentle smile passing through matter.

When we have Him, we have the truth. The Jews have preserved a legend about Him. When He was a boy His teacher taught Him the ~Aleph~, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. When he wished to teach Him the

second letter, the ~Beth~, the child refused. "I have not yet learned everything about the ~Aleph~. I cannot go on to the next step." He was a thorough learner. He grew in wisdom. And He was a thorough teacher.

He taught from simple things. "Look at the lilies," He said. And the disciples watched Him looking at lilies. He smiled silently, gazing at them. This was discovery enough. Some understood.

He taught men a simple prayer, the "Our Father." "Give us this day our daily bread." In Greek the word for daily is ~epiouson~. Jerome translated it, ~Panem nostrum crastinum~ ("our bread for tomorrow"), the bread for life which follows. We have to ask it from the Heavenly Father.

"Forgive us our trespasses." The Greek word ~afes~ is deep. It expresses exactly the contradictory currents in the soul while we pray. It means on the one hand "forgive, remit" and on the other hand "leave us our sins," "suffer them to be." Is not the complexity of both the real prayer? Who does not desire to remain with his sin while praying for its forgiveness?

And then the deeply human wish not to suffer. "Lead us not into ~peirasmos~," that is, temptation, test, persecution.

Jesus also performed miracles. They are confirmed by the Talmud, the holy book of the Pharisees, Jesus' worst enemies.

He went from place to place doing good, though always under stress because of His consciousness at being the Son of God while at the same time acknowledging the self-limitations of His human nature. Sometimes He felt

embarrassed about His grandness. In His human nature, He did not know everything. He confessed this Himself. It was because God did not want Him to miss one of the great joys: surprise.

Then came the last Passover. All the Jews rejoiced, remembering the deliverance from Egyptian bondage. He could not rejoice like the others.

As the Midrash tells the story, when the Jews had passed miraculously through the Red Sea and the Egyptians had been drowned, angels joined the song of the liberated slaves. God chided them for this. He said, "It is understandable that Jews who had been under such terrible bondage should be jubilant now. But I expected better from you. The Egyptians are also My creatures, and My heart aches for their sufferings as much as for those of Israel." Jesus remembered the innocent Egyptian children killed on that night, as well as the children killed in Bethlehem at His birth. Innocent people have to die. He knew that He would be next.

He had already been betrayed by Judas. Judases are human characters encountered very frequently. After World War II, 100,000 Frenchmen were executed summarily, and another 100,000 after legal proceedings, for collaboration with the enemies. One tenth of the population was arrested under this accusation. The percentage was the same in Italy. In Holland it was even more. Four hundred thousand men were sentenced for treacherous acts. In Belgium 200,000 were sentenced. In the Korean War thirty percent of the United States prisoners under the Communists joined the side of the enemy. We too betray our wives, our employers, our friendships. There

is a Judas within every one of us.

Jesus was brought before the High Court. He was asked, "Are you the son of the living God?" His life or death depended upon the answer He gave. He said, "Yes, I am." So He was crucified and mocked by men. On the cross, He also endured the pain of knowing Himself forsaken by God. But whoever knows Himself to be forsaken is not forsaken. Those who are forsaken more

often imagine themselves to be God's favourites.

And He died on the cross - one of the most beautiful moments of human history. It is the tragic which gives us most movingly the feeling of beauty: Rigoletto, Aida, Romeo and Juliet, and above all, Golgotha.

Something great had happened on Golgotha. Jesus, the Son of God, was made perfect by His Father through suffering. (Golgotha was an inter-trinitarian event, a dealing between the Father and Son. The Son had loved a bride, as Radames had loved Aida. Radames betrayed his fatherland for her. This could not be said about Jesus. But He left His heavenly kingdom for the bride He loved. He had to suffer for this. He bought her with a price - His own blood. And ever since, He has passed through the permanent tragedy of having as a bride only souls whom He has bought, for whom He paid a price, which He has to cover again and again with gifts. His bride would not love Him without His gifts. This was foreshadowed when God said to the prophet Hosea, "Go... love...an adulteress... So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley." (HOS 3:1,2)

We can, however, outgrow this low type of relationship

with Jesus and have what the New Testament calls ~agape~ - unmotivated love, love for love's sake.

Jesus died. This did not make the world better. It had not been Jesus' intention to improve it. Rather, He came to save those who truly believe in Him. He warned that the chances of a man's salvation are slim: He said, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (MTT 7:14) Jesus' death on the cross does not give us a smooth entrance into heaven. Even after putting your faith in it you are like a man who takes hold of a branch by his teeth while his body hangs suspended above a precipice. Don't ask a Christian many questions. He is in no position to reply, except as you take his holding the branch by the teeth as an answer. When the Christian has passed this stage and is safe in the arms of Jesus, he receives His ardent kiss. A mouth cannot speak when the lover's lips press it. So don't ask questions of real Christians; rather, imitate

them.

The death of Jesus has an effect on all those who believe. We are by nature fallen creatures. Bohme writes, "In the essence of my soul and body, when I was not yet the I, but Adam's essence, I was indeed there. I have forfeited myself, my felicity in Adam. This fallen nature has committed sins and crimes. But washed in Jesus' blood, the most heinous things become blessed mistakes, which brought me to the Saviour."

When Luther translated the Bible and worked at the Reformation, Satan appeared to him in a visible manner and mocked him: "You scum of the earth, who have committed the gravest sins, you translate the Bible?"

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Luther took a long sheet of paper and said to Satan, "Tell me my sins and I will write them down." Satan began to dictate until the sheet was filled. Then Luther wrote in red ink over the whole paper, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sins," and threw the inkwell at Satan's head.

This is what Jesus did for me, too. He freely forgave everything without asking anything in exchange. Grace which is not gratuitous is not grace. The gate is narrow and faith is bound with many difficulties simply because we cannot accustom our minds to the idea of free grace. We are used to purchasing things.

Jesus puts Himself over our sinful lives and makes us appear righteous in the eyes of God. And when this happens we do not simply become righteous from the moment we believe: He makes us appear to have been righteous always.

At the marriage feast in Cana He changed water into good wine. Good wine is old wine. He did not change water into a liquid which should be wine henceforth. He made it to have been wine always. At creation, He made trees and the first animals and Adam. But the trees must have had rings indicating a certain age. How old was Adam when he was created, and did he have in his chromosomes genes containing hereditary information? If not, the procreation of his children would have been miraculous and not natural. Therefore, as creator He did

not make a universe which should be henceforth, but one with a "past."

We meet Jesus today and become men who have always been righteous. And He also changes our character

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to fulfill henceforth their true role.

Plato said in ~Timaeus~, "God placed the soul of the universe crosswise (as a ~chiasma~) in the universe." Jesus is the soul of the universe revealed to us. His cross has been erected at the crossroads of life. And He makes us resemble the love which He revealed on the cross. From the species "man" we pass into the species "children of God."

And now we embrace with love everybody and everything. Two disciples on their way to Emmaus after the resurrection of Jesus told Him about the things which had come to pass in those days in Jerusalem. He asked, "What things?" He was interested in all things, in some new ball or doll which a child may have acquired, in the meal prepared with love by a lady, in the earnings of some carpenter, in the difficulties in some marriage, in the oppression of an innocent person, in the health of a Roman oppressor. All things belong to Him and belong now to you, too. He was interested in knowing what had happened to the corpses of the two thieves crucified with Him. He wondered why Joseph of Arimathea had not asked Pilate to give them, too, a decent burial. Had any one of His disciples thought to comfort their mothers? But they, poor creatures, when He asked "What things?" show that their minds were preoccupied, as they should not have been, with only one thing: the fate of Jesus.

This Jesus we love because He is lovable, not because He can answer our questions. It is His privilege to remain silent. I do not agree with those who have not yet clearly formulated questions when they proclaim, "Jesus is the answer." He is not.

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When Annas, the high priest, asked Him a very reasonable question, He, the One called in the Bible "Wonderful, Counsellor" (ISA 9:6), gave the reply,

"Why askest thou Me?" This is also my reply to your many questions.

Stop a bit to analyze your motives for questioning me. Annas' life was very bad, Jewish sources tell us. How is yours? Might it not be that you wish to stifle your conscience through discussions about other men and about doctrines, or through letters on such subjects? If such be the case, what answer of mine could help you? You have to help yourself.

Jesus said to Annas, "Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them." (JHN 18:21) Tragically, His hearers had understood almost nothing; not even the disciples understood. And furthermore, just at that moment they were not available for answers. The mob was thus easily incited and quick to shout, "Crucify Him!" The disciples had fled. One denied him. The other had sold him.

Jesus does not give you the answer. Men, even Christians, do not have it. You have only one solution: stop asking questions, come to yourself, be born again, have Christ living in your own heart, and life will become luminous. The impulse to ask questions of other people and in your own mind will have disappeared.

When the disciples had drunk the wine of Cana they simply believed on Him. (JHN 2:11) It is this wine which gives inner and outer quietness. We wish to drink of it.

There was an atheist meeting in Russia. Attendance was compulsory. The lecturer, who had before him a

white vase full of water, told the people, "In times of old, people were ignorant and easily believed in miracles. But look here, I have some powder in my hand. I put it in the water. Do you see how it has become ruby-red like wine? This is what Jesus did. He must have had a powder like this hidden in His sleeve. I can do even better than He. Here is another powder. I pour it into the wine. It has become water again. And now a third powder. I have changed it again into wine. So this is the explanation of the miracle in Cana."

A Christian stood up. "Comrade lecturer, you have amazed us with your skill and almost convinced us. We

ask of you just one more little thing: Please drink a glass of this water you have changed into wine."

"Unfortunately, that would be impossible" the lecturer responded. "The powder which I have used is poisonous."

"Well," said the Christian, "this is the whole difference between you and Jesus. He gave us a wine which gladdens us and brings.us to full rest. Your wine troubles the mind and soul and makes millions weep."

The Greek New Testament uses in many places instead of the personal name Jesus the generic name "the Jesus," showing that it speaks not only about a historical being, but also about a type of man. We have to be men of Jesus type, men who follow Him implicitly.

I did not wish to tell you too much about Jesus. My subconscious mind whispered in a dream its view:

Speak about nobody but Him,
And caress Him day and night.

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May laughter and weeping be indifferent to you.
Endeavor only not to lose Him.

I find this view attractive. Many contemplative souls whom I admire have gone this beautiful way. But my conscious mind tells me that Jesus is interested in all things happening in the universe. I should not speak only about Him. I should not be caressing only Him. Speaking about all things and caressing everyone I meet with at least a look, I may allow the light of Jesus to shine through my speech and behaviour, as He intends.

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Tenth Dream

~I saw Pope Paul VI very sick on a hospital bed in prison. They had just shaved him. I wished to gladden him by telling a joke. But then I observed that he was wearing an oxygen mask. These were his last moments. So instead I spoke to him about heaven, about Jesus and

Mary. He told me that he believed.

A second afterward, he was on his feet. There was no more oxygen mask. Suddenly he was on the balcony of the Vatican from which he gave the blessing "Urbi et orbi" and he told me, "There are verbal angels. As often as you tell somebody a word which honours him, even if you call him only by an honourable title, like Sir or Pastor, you send him a verbal angel." I turned to my wife who was also there and said to her, "Communists fear nobody. They let the Pope die in prison."~

The last part of the dream is certainly true. In Romania, my homeland, almost all Catholic bishops died in prison. The Communists hastened their death through hunger and torture. This would be the Pope's fate, too, if Italy were taken over by the Reds.

But the words about "verbal angels" gave me much food for thought. Christ was "the Word." Could not "words" be angels? Of what are angles made? Do my words create angels or devils? Or are they just worthless chatter?

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A sense of urgency as if I had very little time left often pervades my dreams.

Eleventh Dream

~I dreamed I was in a prison dining room. Judges sitting with me at a table told about a Nazi serving as waiter who overheard these words about himself: "He has committed a crime. He has shot someone. He'll get fifteen to twenty years of prison." I took his defense. "He is not the sort of man who shoots people." The Nazi was thankful that I defended him. He went with me toward the station. There I saw my wife, but I observed also that I had left my jacket and hat in the dining room. It was eight minutes past three. The schedule showed that the only train would leave at nine minutes past the hour. The Nazi ran to bring the things I forgot, but the dining room was far away. Fortunately for me, the train did not leave on time.~

It is quite normal for me to take the defense of a Nazi. They don't represent any actual danger any more. To punish them today is only retaliation. I would not have taken the defense of a Communist who was in power.

One of the characteristics of the Gospel according to St. Mark is the frequency with which he uses the Greek word ~euthus~, which means straightway.

The supposition is that he had been the rich young ruler who asked Jesus what he should do in order to inherit eternal life and went away sadly when required to

impart everything to the poor. Later in his life he regretted not having obeyed. Many years had been lost. The regret for this made him constantly repeat the word ~euthus~, straightway.

Every moment of hesitation in fulfilling your duty is sin. When Jesus called some fishermen to become apostles, they were so concerned about the fate of their fellowmen that they immediately left their occupation. They had no promise of financial support.

Work with a spirit of urgency. Death comes all too soon.

The Communists have been able to jail and kill many preachers. But nobody can forbid the greatest preacher to deliver his message, the message of death. What first brought me to think about things eternal was lonely walks through cemeteries. I said to myself, "Some day you will lie in a grave. Snow will fall over it. People will pass near your grave site, most of them not casting even a glance to decipher the name on the stone. What will all the affairs of the world mean to you then?"

A nurse was arrested in the Soviet Union. The interrogator reproached her; "You propagate these old ideas about God and eternal life at a time when we fly to the moon and build socialism."

The nurse replied, "I serve in a ward where people die of cancer. Around their death beds are their beloved

ones. How should I comfort them? Should I say to them, don't let it bother you that your son or husband is dying, because man has walked on the moon and Socialism will reign after a couple of generations? Don't you see that you have no word of comfort? I have. I can speak to the

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mourning about a living God and a resurrection from the dead."

Use your seconds well. You will be responsible for every one of them.

Once while riding on a train in Romania, I found myself thinking about the shortness of life. Intrigued, I took out a notebook and pencil to calculate how many seconds I had lived and would have to account for before God. There were some sixty million. A poor peasant seated near me was wide-eyed. Finally he asked me, "What is your business that you have to make your accounts with so many figures? As for us, everything has been taken away. We work for a small salary. Do millions pass through your hands?" I explained to him my accounts. He begged me, "Please write down everything you told me. I wish to show your accounts to our pastor so that he might warn everybody to guard his time. You are the first man to speak to me about this."

We are all mortal, but after the age of fifty men become consciously mortal. The older they get, the more they realize the value of seconds.

One evening a man was walking along a river. It was dark. He hit his foot against a bag filled with stones. He picked it up and amused himself from time to time by throwing a stone into the water. When he arrived home, he had only two stones left. Then he saw that they had been precious stones. In similar fashion we all carelessly throw away the pearls called "seconds." Some realize only on their death beds how much they have lost.

I thought about this when I received a letter from a member of the Salvation Army. "I am after a sleepless

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night searching the Scriptures to find out if the devil is

omnipresent like God. If he were so, there would be no need of demons. What do you think about JOB 1:7 where it is said that Satan goes to and fro in the earth? Does this not mean that there are places and instances when you don't have to worry because the devil is in some other place?"

I answered, "While you pondered about these things and sent me the letter, other Salvationists went around in pubs saving the lost. Your brethren made words 'verbal angels.' You make annoying speculations of your words. You could have spent your time better."

Christianity is not a business of knowing all the answers but of spreading the light we have. Could you not have used your time better than to ask me many questions in letters?

Strangely, three days after my dream about the Pope with the oxygen mask on his face, I had a heart attack. An ambulance drove me to a hospital and the first thing they gave me was oxygen. I put to myself the questions which I had asked of the Pope: whether I believed in God, in Jesus, and in the Virgin Mary. Like the Pope, I answered affirmatively. Then I waited for death. I was very calm.

Later a relative asked me how I could have been so calm. "Did you not realize the danger you were in?" I answered, "I was in no special danger. If God wishes to take me away he needs no heart attack for it. Every second is potentially the second of death. Let us therefore try to make our words 'verbal angels.'"

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Twelfth Dream

~In front of the Lutheran Church of Bucharest was a table with books for sale. Someone expressed a doubt if my son Mihai's book should be sold because it spoke about goodness. This man was of the opinion that the wicked must be destroyed. I sat down with him, desiring to tell him examples of goodness which I had encountered, but I could not remember them. I intended to tell him that if the wicked were destroyed, I would be among them. Mihai said to me, "He has doubts. If you present

arguments for goodness, they will have the counter-effect of strengthening him in his convictions."

We entered into the church. The pastor, with a bottle in his hand, recited a parody in a Saxon dialect I did not understand. I stood up and asked him to speak plain German. "How will I be saved if I don't understand?" He tried to question me. I insisted, "Tell me in German how to be saved." A multitude of women whom I met in the yard told me that they would never come to this church again. Mihai was in the courtyard, indifferent to what had happened.~

Thirteenth Dream

~I dreamt that I was in Solomon's town, which means in Hebrew the town of peace - my ideal world - but I found no way to reach Jerusalem (the realization of the

ideal). l did not even think to ask somebody in the hotel, which I guess symbolized the church, because they would not know. But I wished to reach my brothers who live in Israel. I met S., a deacon of the Orthodox church, with whom I had been in prison. He told me about his fight for the rights of former prisoners. But I discovered that his fight was a farce. His real aim was selfish, to get a job with a higher salary. He wished to be employed as a librarian, though he failed to attain his desire. I realized that he did not serve either his own true interest or that of others. As I wandered around, a beggar stopped me. I gave him nothing (which was wrong). l awoke with the clear conviction that to give to those who ask would have been a means of going from the ideal to its realization.

I was in a prison cell with an ugly woman. I had the desire to possess her. I justified myself by saying that this was a subconscious drive and the subconscious is not moral. At once my wife Sabina was also there. She gave me a sad kiss. Wardens called her out of the cell, as if for an interrogation. I told her, "You'll return. " She answered, "You know how it is here. It is questionable if I will return." I asked myself, "Is it like this that we are taken to the eternal prison?"~

I have received tens of thousands of letters regarding moral questions. I wonder why they are asked of me. I don't feel prepared to give the right answer. It is a fallacy to believe that you are qualified to answer all questions because people ask you so many. Should not anyone who inquires about morality first find out how moral is the man from whom he asks advice? Are you sure that the

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one whom you ask has no running abscess? Is he fit to perform a surgical operation? His words might cut deep into your heart. Is he the right man for this?

Because I do not consider myself either an example or an authority in matters of morals, I will make just a few remarks on this subject.

I have addressed this book to your conscious mind. The subconscious is not moral. And my conscious level approves of its not being moral.

The endeavour to be moral springs from the idea that we have gone astray and that there exist rules of conduct for returning. We compare ourselves with the prodigal son of the parable, who took his journey to a country far from where his father lived. This can happen in our relationship with an earthly father. But what country is far from our heavenly Father, who is omnipresent? Christians are the light of the world, and not only when they are on the mountain peaks, but also when they pass through very deep valleys. They are in the paradoxical situation of being called to enter a place which they have never left.

Christians do not have to work at being moral, saintly, Christlike. Whoever tries to become Christlike has a great chance of becoming Devil-like. Christians are men who have denied their "I," who have no "I" to become good or holy. The moral problems do not exist for them. They are Christlike by believing in Christ.

The eighth century Zen-master Huai Jang ground bricks in the yard of a monastery. When asked what he was doing, he replied, "I make mirrors." The monks mocked him, "How can you make mirrors by grinding

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bricks?" To this he retorted, "How can one become a Buddha by practicing meditation? Whoever is not a Buddha will never become one." It is as vain to become a Christlike being through striving, as to strive to become an elephant. Goethe once said, "You are already everything you become."

The first ~koan~ (riddle) which is usually given to the Zen disciple to solve is, "Show me the face you had before your parents were born." Some disciples spend years in meditation seeking the right answer. During this period they are allowed to sleep only four hours a day. Then the moment of illumination comes: "There is no before and after for the enlightened. There exists no other man to whom I can show something and me the one who shows. Our worst enemy is the intellect which discriminates subject from object, aims from being. There is no being who can resolve to show something to the master. You simply are what you are and don't have to worry about the absurd demands of the Zen-master."

Christians are moral through simply believing. St. Paul advises a group of men who came from the degraded heathen world, "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin." (ROM 6:11) Once you reckon this to be an accomplished fact - and only in this case - you will be able to oppose sin and to fulfill the commandment, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." (ROM 6:12) So you will be "made free from sin." (ROM 6:22)

But in order to be dead unto sin, free from it, must I not have a fixed, absolute, detailed, generally accepted code of things which belong unto righteousness and of things which are opposed to it? Such a code does not

exist.

The Bible tells us about a general by the name of Sisera who had fought against the people of God. He was defeated and fled. A woman by the name of Jael went out to meet him and said to him, "Turn in, my Lord, turn in to me; fear not." She gave him milk to drink, covered him, and he fell asleep. Then Jael "took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples...So he died."

(JDG 4:18-21)

Now Jael acted exactly like Lady Macbeth, yet the Bible says, "Blessed above women shall Jael be." (JDG 5:24) The motives were the same. Her act was in accord with the will of God. The prophetess Deborah in blessing Jael knew what is more, than the interest God's chosen nation. Because this was what Jael had in mind, a stratagem and a murder in cold blood were approved. Jael had represented the cause of God.

It is not true that meekness is always good and violence always condemned. A prophet told Jehu, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel. And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master." (2KI 9:6-7) Jehu was very thorough in uprooting this wicked dynasty. "And the Lord said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." (2KI 10:30)

God is above all things. He is not tied to any moral rules. He has placed in us the subconscious which also is

not moral.

To kill your son can be right if God commands it. God said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac,...and offer him there for a burnt offering." God orders men to go to battle, he orders them to kill those who entice men to serve other gods. (DEU 13:6-9)

Christianity as a whole has accepted with enthusiasm a book by Brother Andrew called ~God's Smuggler~. There exist God's smugglers who smuggle Bibles into Communist countries. There exist God's spies, like those whom Moses sent to find out the secrets of Canaan, or the Soviet Colonel Penkovsky who gave his life to avert a nuclear war at the time of the Cuban crisis. There exist the devil's spies who try to subvert the free world. There exist white lies, which I have spoken about already. There exist red lies.

The Bible makes a distinction between sins of

different colours, which seems to our conscious minds as senseless as fruits of different melody. But sins have a colour. We read in ISA 1:18, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they (the sins, not the sinner) shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool,"

Christianity has no fixed rules of conduct. Christians live in communion with God, who tells them what to do sometimes things which a moral man would normally do, sometimes things contrary to the general opinion even of good men.

It is not a matter of indifference how a man lives. Solomon concluded that everything which happens

under the sun is vanity, including good or bad conduct. He was not a skeptic, a nihilist. He wished to destroy the false world that is under the sun, in which not even the sun is included, in order to prepare us for a new world. In this world, the decisions I make are of the utmost importance, because I am all-important.

Morals are a poor thing. They tell a man what he should do. His actions should correspond to an inner necessity. But they do not. Jesus does better than moralize. He gives a man a sense of value. The consciousness of his worth makes him grand in his attitudes without waiting for "shoulds" and "musts."

A prostitute told a pastor who preached a sermon on morality, "Your rope is not long enough to save me." Christ tells the prostitute drowning in sin, "You are a purchased being, beloved by God just as you are, intended to sit some day with God on his throne, ruling the universes." As a result she refuses ropes which will take her to the shore of a morality as repugnant to one who realizes his eternity as the raging sea of immorality. She simply is safe. She has always been safe. She will ever be so. The awareness of what she really is will change her life.

Once I realize who I am, I no longer judge myself harshly. I belong to eternity. Fifty or seventy years of sin have been less than one second of going astray in my eternal existence. During this eternal existence, I have

come to stay for much less than a second in a life in which men have no choice other than between grosser or subtler sins, between the sins of an adulterer or those of a religious man. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy

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rags." (ISA 64:6) I have sinned much. Thanks be to God that it was not worse. I was born in sin, and nothing better could have been expected of me.

The sexual drive is almost irresistible. If we apply Jesus' standard that "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (MTT 5:28), nobody is chaste, except perhaps cloistered monks and nuns. But it seem that even they have sinful fantasies.

All marriages would break down if each partner could read all the thoughts of the other.

Truthfulness should be one of the foremost of moral duties. The journalist Brooks said in 1910 (~Corruption in American Politics and Life~): "If anyone of us would have the inspiration to write the truth, he would be unemployed the next day." This also applies to pastors. If we were to fulfill the duty of truthfulness and not hide our insufficiencies, who could keep his position? I personally have had to hide continually from my co-workers my insufficiency for the task of general director of the Misssion to the Communist World.

Accept the fact of your sinfulness. External and internal circumstances deprive you of the choice of being other than a sinner in this world.

The Bible contains rules. It also tells us their purpose, "that we may live by them," not in order that our whole life might become a burden. Let life live. Don't try to control everything.

A Russian farmer who had spent five years in prison for his faith once prayed after his release, "God, help me fulfill your one request, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father

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in heaven is perfect." He heard an inner voice asking

him, "Are you ready to go back to prison for Me?" The Christian shrank back, "Lord, ask of me anything but this. I could not bear it again. The chains, beatings, hunger - ...not to be able to see my family...the endless years...Lord, ask of me anything but this." The voice replied, "Give up the hope of becoming perfect. Spiritual perfection consists of unconditional surrender to My will." A fight started in the heart of this man. After a few days, he yielded: "Lord, Thy will be done. Send me wherever You like, only make me perfect."

Soon after this, he was imprisoned the second time for having taught children about Christ.

While detained in solitary confinement, he corresponded with his fellow inmates by tapping in Morse code on the walls. One day, a new prisoner told him that his name was Grigoriev, which was his own name.

"Your baptismal name?"

"Alexander."

It was his oldest son who, encouraged by the heroic example of his father followed in his footsteps, worked in the Underground church and also came to be a prisoner of the Communists.

Later, when the father was in a common cell, he succeeded in smuggling out a letter in which he told how happy he was that his son was a confessor of Christ.

Morality cannot be an achievement in this life: it can only be a tendency. We work at our own characters, saying "no" to Satan's "All things are permitted." We oppose this pernicious doctrine with God's "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not."

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But we don't set our aims too high. The Bible says, "Be men." Not every biped is a man. Many men are more like animals than men. Kant wrote, "I wished to teach what you should do to be a man."

But does not the Bible also demand, "Be ye perfect"? Well, it does, but those who have this calling don't seek advice from me. Mozart was asked by a musician, "Teach

me how to write a symphony."

"If you don't know," came the rejoinder, "why don't you try to compose just a simple song?"

"Should I be satisfied with a song? You compose symphonies."

"Yes," replied Mozart, "but I ask nobody."

The present book is written only for those who ask questions. For them it is enough to strive for the time being to be men.

At a given point in time, a man can do only the things for which his character has been prepared. Do therefore the little moral duties which you can fulfil, instead of asking advice about great achievements which are beyond your capacity.

Work with the moral material you have. If you wish to learn how to advance, learn from thieves. I have been with them in prison for many years. I learned from them some simple lessons which have helped me considerably.

Thieves do much of their work during the night. Jesus used His nights for prayer. He instituted holy communion late at night. It is still called the Last Supper - not the last breakfast. Gamblers play more during the night. Drunkards stay awake till late at night. Use your quiet nights for good reading, meditation,

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self-analysis the sort of thinking which will produce in you some little improvements.

If a thief does not succeed in making his break-in one night, he will try again some other time. Never be discouraged. Be persistent. Be like the thief whose failure impels him to try again.

Thieves unite in a gang to get what they want. Gather with like-minded people, men who desire to become more loving and truthful, who have the same problems you have. In unity there is strength.

Thieves risk their lives to gain a few thousand

dollars. Gamblers put at stake even the bread of their children. Decide what you wish to achieve. But don't set your goals too high. Calculate how much you are willing to risk to attain your goals. Then invest straightway the capital of energy, money, time, or renunciation which you feel is needed.

Curiously, even Jesus compared Himself to a thief: "Lo, I come as a thief in the night." There is something to be admired in thieves too. In a Romanian prison, a thief was brought back from interrogation. He had been badly beaten. As soon as the guard had locked the door, he said to me, "It is in vain that they beat me. I love stealing. I will never give it up." It was a lesson for me.

Just as we should be straightforward in doing what is right, so we should be hesitant in doing what is wrong. When you don't know what to do, do nothing. When you are not sure, delay. Herod hesitated to accept the preaching of John the Baptist. But later, he showed no such procrastination. When Herodias counselled her daughter to ask for John the Baptist's head she wanted it to be

brought immediately. And Herod yielded immediately. He did something wrong which he might not have done if he had thought things over. Bergson is correct when he says, "Think like a man of action; act like a man of thought."

Sometimes it is easier for us to do His will, sometimes more difficult. We are not sheltered from the moral climate which surrounds us. It is surely harder to heat a house in winter. But we are called to do His will. We are not wolves and do not have to howl with them.

He may call us to a normal, moral life. This is what He usually does. We then perform moral actions, not because they are moral but because they are His will. He may call us, in exceptional circumstances to acts considered immoral. In both cases difficulties will attend us. We know that there is a hardship in doing His will, because though ideas influence conduct, it takes much time and repetition for them to do so. A person is not apt to give up something wrong all of a sudden just because he discovers it is unreasonable or unbiblical. And criticism rarely helps.

So it is that much more can be obtained through prayer than through human effort. God's children can get much from Him. St. Augustine used to pray, "God, give what Thou commandest and command what Thou wilt." He also taught: "God does not ask the impossible. Do what you can and pray what you cannot do."

Bring your impulses consciously to the bar of reason. Think for a long time before doing. We often desire things inordinately when we haven't thought through the outcome or alternatives.

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We all know the myth of Prometheus, the god who stole fire from heaven and gave it to men. ~Pro-methee~ means in Greek the one who thinks before. Most of us are ~Epimethees~, men who think after we have acted. Then we realize that we have acted badly, and our minds, which should serve as a light to illuminate our paths, are instead like a stepmother nagging us about things which can no longer be changed.

Sit down and think before you act. Consider a range of choices. Don't be the captive of a single point of view or assume that spontaneous reactions are the right ones. Consider that security may be your greatest enemy. A Biblical personality, Sisera, felt secure in the bed of a women named Jael. She graciously offered him milk to drink. When he had fallen sound asleep, she cut off his head. I believe there is validity to the expression "you lose your head" when you give free rein to your emotions. Your head is too precious to lose.

Enrich your knowledge; learn to apply with precision the rules of logical and dialectic thinking. Passions can distort the workings of the mind. Therefore work at your character. Whoever wishes to have a bed of lilies must do a lot of spadework. Take into consideration the possible consequences of your actions. Remember that you will be judged by your own conscience, by your fellowmen, and eventually by God according to your deeds.

Religiosity will not help you then, any more faith which did not prove its genuineness by deeds.

When Jerusalem was besieged by the Roman hosts in 71 A. D. and starvation had driven despairing people

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to acts of cannibalism, Rabbi Jokhananben Zakkai succeeded in sneaking out of the city and reaching the tent of the Roman General Titus. He begged him, "Master, have pity upon the city, inhabited by so many innocent women and children."

Titus replied, "You lie, rabbi; your first word was a lie. You called me master. If I am the master, why don't you open the gates of the city for me? Why have you not prepared an arch of triumph for me? If I am the master, where is your obedience?"

When we call Jesus "Lord, Lord," might we not receive the same rebuke?

In order to think rightly, put some distance between you and your thinking. Think about yourself as about a third person.

St. Paul asks, "Who is Paul?" not "Who am I?" By phrasing the question this way he had a better chance of getting the right answer. Jesus very often speaks about Himself as about a third person, as little children speak. He says, "The Son of man" instead of "I." If I think about what a certain Wurmbrand has done or has to do, I come to an entirely different conclusion than when I think about ~my~ achievements, mistakes, or duties.

In this short span of life you have far to go. Watch and be careful.

You would not think of giving your body to just anyone to be handled at will. Why then do you allow other men to manipulate your mind and injure your soul? Choose carefully the people with whom you are disposed to speak or correspond. Select with care your topics of discussion and the movies and TV programmes you

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watch. Read only newspaper articles and books which will enable you to pass your "final exam." A student does not waste his time on cheap novels before his finals.

What you read and hear should be to your soul what the exquisite perfumes and spices were to Esther, who thus prepared herself for a whole year to win the love of King Ahasuerus.

Doing good is not the first step in achieving morality. This is difficult. Start with avoiding what is obviously evil, remembering that you strike God as often as you hit a fellow man. The fact that the fellow man is bad is no excuse. In Dostoievsky's ~Crime and Punishment~ Raskolnikoff wished to kill only a parasite, a usurer. But circumstances obliged him to kill her lovely sister also, because she happened to enter the room at the wrong time and could have been a witness against him. Can you kill a guilty man without making an innocent mother weep and wronging his children?

How would you feel if the evil you do to others were done to you?

Beware of doing evil, and always remember, "In the beginning was the word." Judas said a word of denunciation. This was all there was at the beginning: a word. An arrest and murder resulted, and Judas himself committed suicide.

For every word written in Hitler's ~Mein Kampf~ 125 men were killed; 4700 for every page; 2,200,000 for every chapter.

Jesus was tempted in all things like us. But He mastered His passions. So can you if you follow in His footsteps.

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I don't see how a human being can live without doing some evil, but he must never seek to justify it. The man who does indecent things is not necessarily indecent, but the man who enjoys doing them is.

From fighting evil within, you will progress toward the good which is love. Heaven and earth endure only because they don't exist for themselves. The excellency of water is that it benefits all men and seeks the lowest places. There is a great need for unselfish love. I have known children who have never been kissed. Be a lover. Be among those ready to die for the beloved.

Tolstoy once told a little story. In a time of drought a child went to bring a jug of water to her mother. But she could not find any water and fell asleep in the field. When she awoke, the jug was full of water. The girl was tempted to taste it, but she remembered her mother and decided not to. Running with the jar toward home, she fell over a little dog and overturned the jug, but the water did not spill. Then she gave some to the dog, but the jar remained full - except that the vessel was no longer earthen, but silver.

When she brought the water home to her mother, the mother said. "I die anyway; you drink it." At once the jar turned to gold. The girl was just about to drink when a thirsty traveller entered and like a king demanded the water. The girl gave it. Then seven diamonds came out of the vessel and brooks issued from every one of them. The diamonds ascended higher and higher and became the seven stars - the great bear.

Love does not seek to prefer one above another. A Jewish merchant once supported a rabbi, and the more he

gave to the rabbi, the more he earned. One day when he came to bring his gift, he was told that the teacher was not at home.

"Where is he?"

"He has gone to the Rabbi of Meseritch, who is the one from whom he learned the law."

The merchant then said to himself, "If by helping a little rabbi I was enriched, how much more will God bless me if I support the great Rabbi of Meseritch." So henceforth he brought his tithe to the latter. But the more he gave, the less he gained, until he was on the threshold of bankruptcy. He went back to his rabbi and asked him how this happened. The rabbi answered, "As long as you did not choose but gave to your first teacher of religion, God did not choose either. But when you began to make distinctions, God began to make them too. Why should He give good profits to you? Cannot He find somebody worthier than you to whom to impart His favours?"

Christians should love everybody without making distinctions.

As for Jesus, they reserve the best for Him.

The emperor of Japan, upon hearing that one of his samurai bred splendid orchids in his garden, told him that he wished to see them.

On the appointed day, the emperor arrived. The samurai took him directly to the garden.The earth was plowed. Not one flower was left. The emperor said nothing. The samurai invited him into the tea room. Here in a vase on the table was one orchid of indescribable splendour. The samurai said, "I have kept the most beautiful flower for the worthiest of emperors. The other

flowers had no right to live."

Bring to Jesus the most beautiful flower.

This most beautiful flower need not be some great deed. We can love men in an exquisite manner in small deeds.

In Burma men made a shrine to an American lady who taught old people to put a handle on their brooms. Until then they had swept with bent backs, which ached as a result. Do some small thing profitable to men. For example, instead of pointing an accusing finger, cover somebody's sin. The ~Pateric~ has a story.

Father Amnon was told that a monk was hiding a woman in his cell. When the guilty monk saw the brethren coming to search his cell, he hid the woman under an overturned tub. Upon entering, Father Amnon observed some movements under it. He sat on the tub and ordered the brethren to seek. They found nothing. He told them, "May God forgive you your suspicions." They left. When the two were alone, he told the sinner, "Beware, and sin no more. Now send the woman away."

Show yourself meek even toward a murderer, remembering that you are worse than he. You are guilty of the blood of the Saviour. St. Paul, referring to holy communion, writes, "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and

drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." (1CO 11:27)
Did you ever take communion unworthily? If so, how can you look down on a man guilty of shedding the blood of mere man?

Jesus taught, "Love your neighbour," not only those far away. We praise missionaries who go to distant lands.

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We praise those who show an unusual love for their enemies. Start with loving your fatherland. Patriotism is a high Christian virtue.

A nation is not simply a historico-geographical entity. It exists by the will of God and will exist in eternity. In the heavenly Jerusalem there is provision for "the healing of the nations." (REV 22:2) But be thoughtful about your patriotism, which is a virtue that has often been misused. Caiaphas said, "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people." (JHN 11:50) Since that time, other rulers have concluded that it is expedient for them that tens of millions should die for the people. The nations have not profited thereby.

Your moral life will have the privilege of sowing seed. The life of others around you will thus be improved.

It is only the saint who is moral in the absolute sense of the word. The saint denies self, knowing the simple truth that it is only the empty part of a vessel or room which can be used. Therefore he divests himself of "I" and entrusts to God his naked soul. He serves God as if he were His only servant.

He does not despair about the weakness of the flesh. It will be saved too. "If flesh were not in a position to be saved, the Word of God would not have become flesh," says St. Irenaeus.

Bear with your weakness. Keep it to yourself, remembering that by confessing your sins to others you might destroy confidence in men.

In the last part of the dream in which I saw my wife departing, I asked myself, "Is it like this that we are taken to eternal prison?" Great thinkers of the church, Origen,

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Maxim the martyr, St. Ambrose of Mediolan, St. Gregory of Nyssa, believed that eventually all reasonable beings will be saved. This teaching shows their loving heart but proves nothing.

The doctrine of hell as taught by the church is not only Biblical, but also of great practical value. Only men who believe that a sinner will go to everlasting destruction feels real pity for him. In ~The Brothers Karamazov~ the abbot Zosima bowed before Smerdiakov the parricide, explaining that he bowed before the endless sufferings which awaited him.

I read recently a highly interesting study about the subliminal method used in American advertising. It is a form of advertising which does not appeal to the conscious part of the mind.

A film projector with a high-speed shutter flashes messages every five seconds at 1/3000th of a second. These flash messages are super-imposed over motion pictures in theaters and on television. The high-speed messages are invisible to the conscious mind, but plant an order such as "Eat popcorn" in the viewer's subconscious mind. As a result, the sale of popcorn in the foyer of the respective theaters increased in six weeks by fifty-seven percent.

Fourteenth Dream

~During the night I dreamt that I was reading the foregoing study and asking myself if this subliminal method could be used for preaching the Gospel. The Bible opened to Matthew 1. I said to myself, 'How

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unappealing to the mind the beginning of the New Testament is. No writer would have started a book like this, with a dull genealogy. "A thought flashed through my mind: But does it not appeal to the subliminal?

I think about it in my dream. A casual reader would just pass over the genealogy with a glance. It is meant not

to be studied but just to be looked at superficially.~

The glance is enough to entice the subconscious mind of an unbeliever: "son of Abraham, a polygamist; son of David, a known adulterer and murderer; son of Solomon, the husband of one thousand wives." There will be plenty of sex and crime in this book. It is worth reading.

I never doubt the authenticity of the Bible. If it had been a late invention, why should the readers be taught to greet each other in the Aramaean language with "Maranatha" the Lord comes? None of them knew this extinct language. The Bible does not consciously set out to prove its authenticity. Two or three Aramaic words in the text are sufficient to assure the subliminal that it is on firm historic ground.

The Bible is open to misuse. The Gospels, for instance, were not intended to be the biography of Jesus. His features are never described. Thirty years of his life are passed over in silence. The Evangelists say themselves (LUK 18:34) that they spoke about a subject they did not comprehend. They certainly failed to understand the necessity of the cross of Jesus. What appeals to people, therefore, is not always "the merchandise" in the Bible, but rather its "advertising" that stimulates the appetite to want the "merchandise."

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The Bible makes a perfect appeal to the subliminal by arousing its curiosity. Why should the accepted manuscripts contain so many orthographic mistakes, and why have these been perpetuated for hundreds of years? Why have they never been corrected? Day after day even now, Jewish writers of the Law copy with fidelity these obvious mistakes. Why?

And why should the Bible have a text with such a confused meaning? Its great assertion, the creed of the Jewish faith, ~Shema Israel, Jehovah Eloheinu, Jehovah echad~ ("Listen, Israel, Jehovah our God is one single God") can be translated correctly in at least three ways. And which, precisely, is the "Lord's Prayer"? The texts in the Gospels which mention it are not identical. God choose for His first revelation the Hebrew language, in which the verbs "to be" and "to have" are not used, in

which there exist no clear past, present, and future tenses. Much, therefore, remains open to the imagination of the reader.

It is said twice in [2CH 21] that King Jehoram died at the age of forty. Then how could his son Ahaziah have been forty-two when he succeeded him to the throne? (2CH 22:2) In II Kings 8:26 [2KI 8:26] this same story is told again. But according to this author King Ahaziah was twenty-two years of age when he began to reign. Which is true?

In this case, there is a good explanation for the apparent contradiction. In the Hebrew Bible the literal translation of 2CH 22:2 reads, "Forty-two years of old Ahaziah in the kingdom." Many commentators feel that the forty-two refers to the age of the godless

reign of the house of Omri in Israel. Ahaziah's father was Jehoram, who had taken to wife the daughter of King Ahab in Israel and therefore introduced the godless idolatry of Ahab to Judah. The short reign of the house of Omri was forty-two years: Omri six, Ahab twenty-two, Ahaziah two, and Joram, the last one, twelve years. This totals forty-two years. Ahaziah was really twenty-two years old but became king in the forty-second year of the house of Omri.

There probably exists a satisfactory explanation for every puzzle of the Bible. But in order to find it, one must be a scholar and must know the Hebrew language and ancient history.

The above-average reader who compares one passage with the other but is not thus equipped finds himself in a state of confusion. His conscious mind is paralyzed. Then the subconscious enters into its work. This is just what is intended. The Bible appeals to the subliminal, through which much more can be achieved.

The Hebrew in which God gave His first revelation was a very poor language. One and the same word often had the most diverse meanings. It was a tool which made precise thinking impossible. God wished the subconscious to be powerfully at work. If someone were to tell his fellowmen that Jesus was born in a stable, he had to use

for stable the word ~naveh~. His listener could understand it in two ways: either that Jesus has been born in despicable surroundings among animals, or that He had been born in pleasant circumstances, because ~naveh~ means also what is pleasant. The aim was to leave the listener's conscious mind perplexed. The Almighty, the One who

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could provide for His son better than we earthly parents can prepared for Him a pleasant place of birth - a stable.

The Bible through its very language gives wide scope to the natural tendency of the human mind to create myths and legends, which are useful to express veneration for a founder of religion. Religion is a subject which lends itself readily to the use of metaphor.

The Bible begins in Hebrew. From time to time it reverts to Chaldean, then returns to Hebrew. In the thick book of Jeremiah, all in Hebrew, just one verse, [JER 10:11], is in Aramaean, and for good reason. Even in this verse the last word is in Hebrew again. Then in the New Testament the Bible passes to Greek, but the Lord spoke Aramaean. From the beginning we have His words in a Greek translation, with great variations among the Evangelists and variations of texts in the manuscripts.

The change of language is intelligible. Rainer Maria Rilke composed his poems in German. Toward the end of his life he felt that he had exhausted the possibilities of the German language to carry his feelings, and he changed to French. Thus one can also explain the changes in the Bible. But do not expect scientific accuracy in these circumstances. There is none. The name of the king in Judah is spelled in four different ways: Hezekiah, Hizkiah, Hizkijah, and Ezekias.

The contents of the Bible are often puzzling. Reason is sometimes shocked.

The Lord states that the very hairs of our head are all numbered. (MTT 10:30) But in Communist and Nazi and Moslem prisons unnumbered Christians have had their hair pulled out. The Bible tells us to honour father

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and mother. The Bible also tells us to hate them for Christ's sake. Would you like to know something about the prophet Hosea? He prophesied for forty years: Were his prophesies valuable? How is it then that only a few pages of them were preserved? And why did God command him to take to wife an adulteress, thus diminishing his influence? Why should God put His prophet in such a difficult position?

Why could God not bear to see Abraham offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice, and yet was pleased to see the crucifixion of His own Son? It is written in Isaiah 53, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." What kind of God is this? The conscious mind is bankrupt before such thoughts. One cannot form any image of this God. And that was the purpose of the authors of the Bible.

Sir James Jeans contests our right to expect that the real universe be picturable. If we compose mental pictures to illustrate quantum physics, we are moving further away from reality, not closer to it. By the same token, neither are spiritual realities picturable, or even explicable. Sinclair Lewis points out rightly that Biblical expressions such as "we died in Adam," "we live in Christ" imply that man as he really is differs a good deal from man as our categories of thought and our three-dimensional imaginations represent him. The separateness which we discern between individuals is balanced in reality by some "interanimation" of which we have no conception.

Every Bible verse understood is a Bible verse misunderstood, because only to a small extent does it appeal to the understanding. And even this is conveyed

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not simply by reading the Bible, but by the teaching ministry instituted by God.

Reduced to essentials, the Bible has one aim: to drive you to Jesus, who will not give you the answer, but who is the answer, because when you have met Him, you cease to ask questions. Why should you care about them when you gaze in adoration at Beauty incarnate, when you are taken into His embrace and receive His holy kiss?

For our reason, it is enough to know that He loves

us, as we read in REV 1:5. This word was spoken to unloved slaves. He loves us to the depths of our soul. Religious life is a marriage night between bride and bridegroom. Reason has to remain outside. She is not received into this intimacy.

If reason is sanctified, she knows that she has another role. EXO 19:1 in the original sounds, "In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, ~on this day~ came they into the wilderness of Sinai." In DEU 26:16 it is written, "~This day~ the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgements." The Bible says "in this day," not "on that day." Reason must not think about Biblical events as pertaining to history. They have to become actuality in the conscious life.

For this purpose, the English Bible has seven mono-syllables in one sentence (LEV 18:3), "You shall not do as they do," and again in MTT 6:8 an even shorter sequence of monosyllables, "Do not be like them."

In the practical side of life, by warning against heathen practices and directing one to follow the statutes of God, reason fulfils its role in religion. All the rest is for

the subconscious, sometimes called in the Bible the heart. It pleases the Lord to sit in thick darkness.

The Bride of Christ meditates, not so much about the text of the Bible as about what is missing from it. She ponders the words of Jesus, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." [JHN 16:12] She wishes to strengthen herself to be able to carry heavy burdens and to hear the words which Jesus could not tell the apostles on that last evening. She wonders what St. Paul had in mind when he wrote, "The time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets." (HEB 11:32) She wishes to learn from Paul what he would have taught if time had not failed him. Jude (JUD 3) tells of his intention to write about the subject of common salvation, but there is no record of his having done so. These are the things we wish to know.

We get to know them through personal communication

with Jesus, who impresses them on our heart, or as we would say today, on our subliminal mind.

He impresses us through His words. He also impresses us by showing us the uselessness of words.

The two Bible verses that I find most beautiful are verses whose beauty consists in their absence from the Bible.

The first verse: Never did Jesus ask anybody what sins he had committed, how many, of what gravity, under what circumstances. Rather, He said again and again, "Be of good cheer, son or daughter. Your sins are forgiven." I appreciate the fact that there exists no such questioning in the Bible.

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The second verse: Never during His earthly life did anybody say to Jesus, "Please forgive me. I am sorry. I apologize." When disciples met the risen Lord after having deserted and denied Him in His crucial hour, none of them as far as we know ever apologized. It was not necessary. Whoever looked upon Him could see on His face so much goodness and love that His forgiveness was self-evident.

Learn from Bible verses. But learn too from the beautiful absence of certain verses.

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Fifteenth Dream

~I have just come back from prison. I meet Pastor Solheim, with whom I had worked in times past in the Norwegian Mission to Israel in Bucharest, and also my fellow prisoner Pastor Milan Haimovici. I tell them that I need a salary. They tell me, "Voluntary workers are much more effective." I answer, "Pastors with a salary are always eager to have voluntary workers and voluntary workers eager to get a salary."

I see myself with Marcel Pauker (an important Romanian Communist leader shot by Stalin) and his wife Anna (Romanian foreign minister, later dismissed in a Party purge and arrested). They ask me to act as a

translator at an upcoming large congress of salesmen. I am still very young. I tell Marcel Pauker,

"I fear that there exists a social heredity just as there exists a biological heredity. The Socialist society is born of the Capitalist. Will it not inherit its injustices? Even when the state disappears, someone will always have to lead the textile or the metallurgical industries. will he not misuse his position? Kamenev was a top Bolshevik leader. He was dismissed by Stalin because of his oppositionist views and given a low assignment. When brought before the court for Trotskyite activities, he was asked by the judge, 'Why did you not confine yourself to the modest job given you instead of meddling in big things

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which were no more your concern?' He answered, 'He who has once been in a high position cannot become a small man again.'

How then will dictators ever willingly give up being dictators? Socialism has inherited from Capitalism. You and I, we have been in both Capitalist and Communist prisons. The latter were the worst." He nodded sadly.

He tells me that the girl in the home in which we stay adores me for having such distinguished friends as Marcel and Ana Pauker. But she does not know their real identity.

I wonder that Pauker does not offer me salary for translating. I could not leave my present job without this.

I have been imprisoned recently and am worried because I left my family with debts. I would have a chance to escape from prison, but it would be difficult to find somebody to hide me. He would be discovered. At the headquarters of the police in Bucharest, an officer said he would free me if I gave him 10,000 lei (the Romanian currency) as a bribe. I think that this would make my financial position even worse. He tells me to deny everything and even gives me a written document to this effect. Several are implicated in my trial, including women, among whom is one by the name of Niculina (I don't remember ever having known anyone by that name). I hear someone in the crowd shouting, "Merchants, unite! Merchants, unite!"

I am in prison. Somebody from another cell has come to visit me. One of my cellmates asks me who it is. I say, "A former high judge," though I did not know what position he had had. When I remain with this man, he

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asks me to lend him some money, since he is very poor. I promise to bring the money to his cell. When I am on the way, a priest who is also a prisoner reproaches me for being a miser. I understand the respective Romanian word which he did not pronounce correctly as "slanderer." He corrects himself, "You rather commit blackmail." I ask him for proof. I argue with him. When I go to bring the money to the other prisoner, his door is barred. The whole prison is almost empty. It seems I have come too late. In the end I find him and can give him 100 lei. I return immediately to find out what the priest can prove against me. I find him with many other priests who sing together, "We are the inventors of God." I am reminded of Luther's words, ~Fides est creatrix dei~ - "Faith is the creator of God."~

You will have observed that almost all my dreams are about prison or prisoners. My dreams are in black. I see myself writing on dark indigo paper. I am imprisoned almost every night. While in reality I have left jail, jail never has left me. Almost all my reading, conversation, writing, and preaching is about suffering.

Though today I am free, in my dreams I am almost every night in prison. While in jail I always dream that I was free. I lived enchanting nights. Now my nights are dreadful, restless. We live on two planes - the night life being the compensation for what is missing during the day to make one a whole person.

But those who know me consider me a happy man.

The Talmud says, "The glory of God rests only in the man who fulfils a commandment in a joyful spirit."

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Savonarola preached, "The first sign of repentance is jubilating joy. The truly penitent is joyful and patient in all things."

I once knew a Christian who lived up to this. He was Surbianu, an Orthodox priest. He had been arrested at the age of seventy. One of his sons died in prison. Another son, his daughter, and his sons-in-law were sentenced to fifteen and twenty years. His whole family was destroyed. Yet he always had a smile on his face. His greeting was " Always rejoice!"

But he felt no great physical pain. I consider it out of the question that Savonarola had jubilating joy when he was tortured. There are always some who are being tortured. Therefore Christians never laugh unreservedly. While I laugh, some of many brethren in Cuban prisons might be in what they call "the incubator," an upright coffin with a 400-watt light bulb reflected from mirrors above, and refrigerated pipes to freeze the feet beneath.

What is the sense of this and so much other suffering? This is a question I am often asked.

When the ~Titanic~ sank, some people chose to put women and children on a lifeboat at the cost of their own lives. For these men the values of honour and chivalry meant more than life without them. The sense of suffering might indicate the same values.

Chains are used in prison for despicable purposes. But in Communist prisons, we used chains as musical instruments to accompany our songs of praise. Thus they became sacred treasures. This might be another clue to the sense of suffering.

It is the self which suffers. But we are made sit

with Him on His throne. The self is too simple a throne for a personality like myself. Therefore I have to be made to leave myself, even if it is through suffering.

Those who have suffered are best able to differentiate what is true from what usurps the appearance of truth. This is how the church in Rome, the city which provided the largest number of martyrs during the first centuries, became predominant in Christianity. This is why the Underground church of Communist countries will soon have a more decisive voice in the church

universal.

Don't be afraid of suffering. On the cathedral in Chartres (France) there is an inscription, "God created man with great awe." He handles us respectfully. He never inflicts unnecessary pain.

Don't be sad about your sufferings. An Orthodox priest with whom I was in prison under terrible conditions said, when I asked if he were sad, "I know only one sadness; that of not being a saint."

"To Him be glory both now and for ever," says St. Peter (2PE 3:18). The times when we glorify Him should not alternate with times of complaint and dissatisfaction.

The father of the Soviet Christian David Klaassen, who was in Soviet jails for ten years, wrote: "I cannot thank God enough for all His grace toward us." When the Czech Salvation Army officer Korbel received the coffin containing the body of his twenty-year-old son who had been shot in the army because he had witnessed for Christ, the family began to sing, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

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Count your suffering of no great importance. St. Augustine wrote, "Two loves have made two cities: self-love in contempt of God made an earthly city; love of God in contempt of self the heavenly city." Show contempt for yourself with its sorrows.

The question arises, will we have the power to suffer? Many who have read my books ask me how they can get the power to endure if called upon to suffer. My answer is that the ability to endure is not specifically Christian. Everyone is capable of suffering much for what he loves much. In Singapore at the Hindu festival of ~Taipusam~ the image of the god Subramaniam is pulled through the city on a silver cart, followed by penitents who have hooks biting into their skin and a small spear piercing through their lips and tongues. Others are burdened with a large and heavy ~kavadi~ - a metal framework with peacock feathers which holds darts and needles against the skin. Every moment is torture. They love the god Subramaniam. If you love Christ, you will

surely be able to endure everything for Him.

If you choose to be one of Jesus' disciples, see that you become a beloved disciple, for such a one has many privileges, according to Scripture. He lies on the bosom of Jesus. He knows beforehand the names of traitors and cannot be easily deceived. He stands faithfully near Christ's cross when others flee. He has the mother of the Lord entrusted to him. He is the first to arrive at the tomb of Jesus to see that it is empty, but he also yields to another by allowing him to be the first to enter the empty tomb. Being a beloved disciple will make it easier for you to suffer.

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I am asked many Biblical questions. For instance, people ask me if I believe that all the miracles which the Scriptures report are literal.

This reminds me of a Salvation Army officer who rode in a train. She was young and attractive. A man sitting opposite wanted to have a chat with her but could not because she read the Bible for a long time. Finally he exploded:

"I have been watching you for an hour. You are bent over this silly book. You have such an intelligent look. How can you believe all these fairy tales? Do you really accept the fact Jonah was swallowed by a sea monster, arranged himself comfortably within its belly, and was then able to compose a prayer in beautiful literary style? Then the monster or fish or whatever it was travelled in three days the whole distance from the Mediterranean around Africa to what is Iraq today and spat him out just on the right shore? After such an adventure Jonah did not go to a clinic to be examined, he took no pills for his headache, and he received no injections. He felt just fine and could preach without a loudspeaker to the many thousands of inhabitants of eh, and they were all converted. Can you buy this?"

The Salvation Army officer answered, "To tell you the truth, I myself find if difficult to accept the story. I will have to wait till I get to heaven. There I will surely seek out Jonah and ask him for more details."

The man got mad. "What kind of an answer is this?

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How do you that Jonah is in heaven? We know he was obedient to God that one day of his life. Who knows what wicked things he might have committed afterwards? Perhaps he is in hell." The Salvation Army officer was undisturbed. "Don't worry," she said, "If he is in heaven, I will inquire of him. If he has gone to hell, you will have the opportunity to ask him all these questions yourself."

Biblical problems should not give us headaches. The rich man from hell had the opportunity of asking Abraham all the details of his life. Those who go to heaven will have this privilege many times over.

Let us not make the Bible a subject of vain questioning. It is a book which shows us the Saviour and offers us a chance to get rid of our sins so that we may become citizens of Paradise.

The world goes toward destruction. Every day erodes my life. I am in the body, as in a sinking vessel which will inescapably go down. When water has already half filled the ship, should I analyze its chemical composition or seek a means of escape?

Others ask me political questions. All the problems of our century have come from men who believed they knew the answers: Marx, Lenin, Hitler, Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt, Nasser, Ben-Gurion. They have all proven to be wrong. Some have not only been wrong, but have committed great crimes against humanity under the conviction that they thus assure the future felicity of mankind. How wonderful it would be if political leaders would simply acknowledge the fact that the problems of the world have become much too complicated for

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solution.

Jesus Himself predicted that there would be "distress of nations, with perplexity." (LUK 21:25) Let us pray together that God may guide in the affairs of nations. One common night of prayer on the part of Prime Ministers and Presidents of respective Nations do

more for the peace of the world than hundreds of parleys at the U.N. My answer to all political problems is that I have no answer. Let God fulfill His plans.

The range of questions which I get is very broad. I have even been asked to name a lucky lottery number. Just for fun I indicated a number. It won. The incident became known and now I am in demand. People now ask the size of my collar, shoes, hat, my height, weight and so on, so that they can compose numbers from these. I am told that they are lucky.

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WHAT ABOUT THE CHURCH UNITY?

I am asked much about church unity. We all assert when we recite the creed that we believe in one church, but ~contra factum non valet argumentum~ - against facts no arguments are valid. The church is divided.

It has been divided from the very beginning. At Pentecost cloven tongues appeared (ACT 2:3). They were cloven, but from one root. Everyone heard the apostles speaking in his own tongue. But tongues are so different, their possibilities vary so much, that they cannot all have understood the same thing. Those present said, "We hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." For "wonderful" the Jew heard the word ~pala~, which evokes the meaning "hidden." (It is used in this sense in DEU 30:11). In Greek they heard ~megaleia~. which means "great." For "works" the Jews heard ~melakha~, which is akin to "angelic," "royal." Greeks heard ~energeia~ (energy), ~logos~ (word), or ~poiema~, which would have evoked in their minds the idea of a wonderful poetry of God. And so on and on. As for the Parthians, Medes, Asians, what would they have heard? Only professional translators can tell you how difficult it is to put a word or an idea into another language.

But the different messages had something in common. The proof of this is that three thousand of all different nations were baptized on that day. They were of one soul and one heart, though surely not of one understanding. One understanding is impossible among men

belonging to different races, cultures, and levels of education, and having different ages, temperaments, languages, and experiences of life. A cultured British Catholic approaches holy images with sentiments different from those of an African Catholic in the jungle for whom the ikon is only a new fetish.

The first Christians had a unity in diversity. The diversity has grown since then, first, because such a great mystery can never be discovered by following only one avenue of research, and second, because different churches passed through very different situations and were exposed to different influences. If the church is to influence the world, she cannot do so without exposing herself to the influences of the world, which vary very much.

There is nothing wrong with the increasing diversity within the church. It was unavoidable, but it displeases Christians that unity and mutual love did not grow along with this diversity.

Unity is necessary. Christians are weak as reeds. It is easy to break a reed. But you cannot break a bunch of reeds well tied. These considerations created the ecumenical movement. They provided the starting point of the World Council of Churches, as well as the ecumenical tendencies among Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestants. But I believe that the wrong method has been chosen.

I have no high esteem for ecumenism, and I don't believe that it will achieve anything. Cardinal Bea said that the door leading toward church unity is so low that it can be entered only on your knees. The way to unity is not through mergers, conferences (always accompanied by

countless luncheons), and theological debates, but through uniting to spend hours kneeling in adoration before the Holy Trinity. When we are outwardly and inwardly silent, we all agree. The differences arise when we talk. Then what good are the talks?

I am against ecumenism for the following reasons:

1) The heretic Marcion met the future martyr Polycarp. He asked Polycarp, "Do you know me?" Polycarp's answer was, 'Yes, I know the first-born of the devil."

Saints have always made a distinction between Christians and heretics. Being a heretic is as grave a matter as being a murderer. It is said about both that they will not inherit the kingdom of heaven (GAL 5:19-21).

Who unites with whom in ecumenism? Can it be that Christians unite with heretics? I must have the real treasure and not be deceived by what only seems to be gold.

Many theologians are at work in the ecumenical movement. But there is not necessarily a close connection between theology and Christianity. In fact, there are Christian theologians who are not Christian. They lack the one thing by which you recognize a Christian. You don't feel that they marvel at the wonderful works of God. Their books are more often cold. The Gospel has not made them either glad or sad or mad. What does it profit the church if such theologians of different denominations come to an agreement? They will agree never to rejoice and never to weep, since they have never done so before.

Their talks might result in some kind of unity. But

unity around whom or what? What a soul needs is an infallible rule of faith. St. Ambrose wrote, "Adversus regulum nihil scire omnia scire est" - To know nothing which is against the rule means to know everything. Can a reliable rule of faith be obtained through bargaining, the one party yielding in one point, the other party in another?

~Didache~, the first Christian book written after the New Testament, enjoins us to receive the legitimate envoys of the church as the Lord Himself. Who will be the legitimate envoy after all the parleys? Who will accredit him as legitimate?

2) The ecumenical movement tends to modernize the church, which means to howl with the wolves. "Be not conformed to this world," says St. Paul (ROM 12:2).

The world changes its fashions. We have an unchangeable truth.

The church is a living organism which needs renewal, as renewals take place continually in our bodies. This renewal is effected not by adaptation to the requests of the world, but by a change in hearts and lives, according to the pattern of apostolic times.

The ecumenical movement cannot change hearts; only the Gospel can do that. The Good News about eternal salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ is replaced in the World Council of Churches with the so-called Social Gospel, which puts the cart before the horse. It asks a renewal of social institutions on the part of men who have not become children of God through the new birth. These strivings are doomed to failure. They are useful, though. They might remind the real saints not to forget

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that the oxen were meant to drive a cart. Christians must get involved in fighting social injustice.

3) The ecumenical movement has opened the door to Communist influences in all denominations.

An Australian newspaper reported that a black American nun arriving at the Brisbane airport gave the black power salute and declared that violence is justified. (~Courier Mail~, February 17,1973)

A Soviet diplomat was invited to lecture in a Baptist church in Washington about the (non-existent) religious liberty in his country.

The Cuban government forbade the feasting of Christmas. Soon after that the papal nuncio declared that the relationship between the Vatican and the government of Castro was good. (~Replica~, January 1973)

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Since I have been in the West, many articles and books about me have appeared - some highly favourable,

some unfavourable.

I will not comment on them. As I spoke so much about my dreams, I will rather tell some interesting visions and dreams about me.

A Mrs. Nina Schwarzkopf from West Germany, 717 Schwabisch Hall, Sulmeisterweg 27, wrote to tell me that before I had appeared in the West or she had ever heard about me, a voice told her while she was cleaning the bathroom, "Pray for Wurmbrand." It was a name unknown to her. After a while she heard about my meetings and books in Germany.

A Romanian sister, mother of six children, writes, "I dreamt that you were with us. You were on one shore of a river and we on the other. It was an unusual river. Its whole bed was of white marble. One block was put above the other, so you had the impression of stairs. The water was crystal clear. You bowed again and again, took water from the river and then let it fall back from your hands, which gave you visible pleasure. In the meantime, you repeated without interruption, 'Complete your work before everything is finished. It is very important to do so.' You never explained what we have to complete. My mother said, 'The brother is right, because so it is written in the book of the prophet Joel,' but neither did she say what was written."

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After a fortnight she had another dream: "You had come again. It was like winter and I was sick. While I lay in bed, I heard your voice in the courtyard. I said to myself, 'It is his voice. But how is it that he came? Perhaps I am in error. But no, it is his voice. I know it too well.' Then you entered the rooms with a great bouquet of chrysanthemums in your arms. The flowers were exceptionally big and of all colors. When I realized it was you, I jumped from bed, embraced and kissed you, asking again and again, 'Did you really come?'

"Then I told you the dream which I had had two weeks before. You listened to me attentively and asked me if I knew its meaning. I kept silent. Then you explained, 'The blocks of white marble which form the riverbed represent us, the believers. The flowing water

represents the Word of God. The water remain pure only if the stones amidst which it flows are clean. If they are dirty, the water gets polluted.' You said that however much we would call men to God by telling them the Word, it would be of less value than the fact of being clean and of keeping the Word of God undefiled. This will have the greatest effect. You said that the stones are clean because of the water and the water because of the stones. I rejoiced very much in my dream about the explanation."

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EPILOGUE

With this I have finished my book.

I know you will say that the most important questions have remained unanswered. It is like the complaints of many that their prayers remain unanswered. Every prayer is answered by God. With many of them the answer is No.

No question of yours has remained unanswered. To most of your questions my answer is, "You have asked plenty. You will remain without reply." Why? Angelus Silesius finishes his book ~The Cherubic Wanderer~ with the words, "Friends, it is enough now. If you wish to read more, go and become yourself the writing and the essence." That is why you have your head on your own shoulders. It makes no sense to go around seeking for it.

Enlightenment is like the bottom of the tub falling out. Jesus offers you not the solution to problems, but freedom from your problems. These problems belong to the self, which Christians transcend.

The human mind is an inexhaustible source of questions, but it has very few answers.

Instead of seeking answers, you should seek the right questions. The formulation of a question is its solution.

Somebody asked me once the meaning of the words of the Bible, "The Lord comes from Paran." It reminded me of the story of the Monk Hong Chou, who asked the Zen master Ma Tsu, "What is the meaning of Boddhi-Dharma

(founder of Zen) coming from the West?" Ma

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Tsu answered, "Bow down to me." When Hong Chou did so, Ma Tsu gave him a kick in the chest. Hong Chou asked, "Why did you hit me?" to which Ma Tsu replied, "So this is your real question!"

Who is interested in knowing why a verse in Deuteronomy is written as it is? People ask this question and busy themselves with many intellectual problems, while actually they are bothered the whole time by one thing: Why did life hurt them so much? What is the sense of all the trauma they suffer? If you must formulate questions, be willing to forego any answers, just as Jesus asked a tragic "Why?" on the cross and died without reply. The answer was the resurrection. This will be the answer for you, too.

But must I not have clarity now in order to have reasonable attitudes? My reply is, "No." Great decisions in life have more to do with instincts and other subconscious factors. You will try in vain to apply to them the criterion of reason. The hours in which the mind can function intelligibly are few.

Don't try to attain clarity now. To feel that you have all the answers now is the surest sign of having gone astray.

The king of Nineveh, when told by a prophet that his city would be destroyed, said, "who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" (JNH 3:9) With only a "Who can tell?" he and his people changed their hearts, fasted, and obtained forgiveness. Why do you need more than questions?

You consider yourself blind if you don't have all the

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answers. Jesus met a men born blind and added to his blindness by covering his eyes with clay. You add to your problems the willingness to forego solutions. Predigested spiritual advice might be harmful. The day will come when the clay will be washed away and you will

discover that the eyes beneath it have regained sight.

What more could I give you as answer than these poor words? What can words explain or define?

Hindenburg once asked a philosopher, "What is a brush? Would you say that a piece of wood with five hundred threads of swine's hair would rightly be called a brush?"

"Yes, and a big one."

"What about a piece of wood with only twenty threads. Would it also be a brush?"

"Well, a small one"

"And if it had only ten?"

"This would be no brush."

"So a brush would be a piece of wood with at least eleven threads?"

This whole book was not written in order to impress you with words. I wrote it on the subliminal level.

I have a special veneration for the Joseph of the New Testament, whose name appears fourteen times in the Bible. Not one single word of his is recorded. He worked as a carpenter, knowing that human work is the continuation of creation, its perfection. He was good and honest and a saint. He had been so righteous that angels guided him at every step. But he was absolutely taciturn.

Knowing that the intellect has no answer to the biggest questions, the ancient sages of India evolved

Yoga as the technique to get rid of them. We propose Joseph's Yoga: quiet, modest work and silence.

I wrote this book in the hope of leading you to the great silence where questions get no answers. Their foolishness becomes so apparent that you give up asking them. I have passed through such silence during my years of solitary confinement.

And after death will come the great thank you to God, who has suffered so much from us. With Him we will have light.

The End "Answer to Half a Million Letters"

Christ On The Jewish Road

Richard Wurmbrand.10011320 Copyright 1970

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To:
The memory of Isac Feinstein and others who gave their lives under the Nazis and Communists for being Jews and Christians

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PREFACE

Looking back on my life, I, too, am astonished how much I have been through.

For a Christian, life is not retrospective: he wastes no time writing obituaries about what is past; instead, he writes, in the hearts of men, with the pen of the Holy Spirit, the preface to a bright and eternal future. As a rule, memoirs are written by people who no longer have a satisfactory, rich present.

But I have a different reason for recording my memories.

A quarter of a century has passed since I started the work of preaching the Christian message to Jews under particularly difficult circumstances - Fascist terror, war, and later on the Communist regime in Rumania. I have endured the heat of battle in a most important part of the battlefield, where the eternal struggle between light and darkness is waged.

"Thou hast chosen us from amongst the peoples," the Jews declare daily in their synagogues. "Salvation is of the Jews," said Jesus (JHN 4:22). "The dirty Jews are the cause of all our troubles," say the anti-Semites. The "international" Jew has been copiously depicted in literature.

Some people find in Christianity their true happiness: others hate Christianity and would like to see it destroyed. It is a Jew, Jesus, who is the cause of their happiness or their fury.

Some people benefit from capitalism; others feel they are exploited by the capitalist system, and would like to see it overthrown. No one would deny that the Jews were instrumental at an early point in time in founding this system, and that they still play a highly important role in economic and financial life, out of all proportion to their numbers. Whether you feel attracted

or repelled by capitalism, your attitude will to a large extent be determined by Jews, whom you will probably never have seen face to face, as the people who have the final say in the

capitalist world are almost always anonymous.

Communism may be to you a source of joy or suffering; it derives from the Jew Marx and a host of Jewish champions of this idea, without whom the revolution in the East would have been impossible. The fate of a farmer in Vietnam, who has never seen a Jew in his life, will, in the last resort, depend on whether he reads the book about the Jew Jesus or the book about the Jew Marx. Whichever triumphs, either the Christian civilization or the Marxist world, both are closely bound up with a Jewish name.

Some people place their confidence in modern science, whose peak achievement is in atomic physics, a science capable of enabling mankind to live in a Utopia. Others wait, in fear and terror, for the destructive atomic war which they believe will be the final result of this science. In both the West and the East, atomic science is to a large extent in the hands of the Jews. Einstein gave the United States a start in atomic weapons. The Jew Teller is the father of the nuclear bomb. The Rosenbergs, Jews, gave atomic secrets to Russia. In scientific books the universe is named after a Jew: we speak of Einstein's universe, as though we lived in this universe as the guests of a Jew.

And this is really so, for we are in very fact the guests of a Jew; only his name is not Einstein, but Jesus Christ. He is a human being and a Jew, but also God – a marvelous God, of whom we read in His holy book, in Paul's Epistle to the Romans: "... of whom [the Jews] as conquering the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (ROM 9:5). A people from whom God came!

Mine has not been ordinary missionary work; I have worked among those people who in the holy book of the Christians are called "a chosen people," a people from whom a God has come, but who nevertheless are ignorant of this God, a nation which is either blessed or cursed by millions of people – as the source of their happiness or their misery – a race whose fate has determined

and will determine, more than any other nation, the fate of the entire world.

The Jewish people have given to the world the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, a book written by Jews, but which is at the same time the Word of God – the only book

capable of satisfying the spiritual needs of the world. And it will satisfy these needs when it is once again in the hands of those who have written it, and when they gather round Him who is the chief subject of the book, Jesus, the Messiah of the Jews and the Saviour of nations.

The overwhelming majority of mankind lives in dire sin, bereft of the true faith. Murder, exploitation, oppression, fornication, defeat, envy, debauchery and slander are widespread. Mankind is bound to suffer speedy destruction unless it is converted and rouses itself from the spiritual death in which it now lies. But the Scriptures tell us that the conversion of Israel will be life from the dead (ROM 11:15).

Jesus and the Jews are indissolubly linked to one another. "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" the Magi enquired when He came into this world (MTT 2:2). "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews," was the inscription on the Cross (MTT 27:37).

The Old Testament prophecies have the same message. Moses told the Jews: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, ~of thy brethren~" (DEU 18:15). Isaiah, who prophesied the birth of Jesus eight hundred years before it took place, declared: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given" (ISA 9:6) - "us" meaning the Jews. When he foretold the new covenant which Jesus would establish by shedding His blood on the Cross, Jeremiah declared: "Behold ... I will make a new covenant with the ~house of Israel~, and with the ~house of Judah~" (JER 31:31).

Jesus himself said: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (MTT 15:24). He also declared that he was the Saviour of the world, but in the passage above and in similar statements he established his special relationship with the Jewish people.

The intention of my entire missionary work, of which I

give an account in this book, was to make Israel conscious of this relationship, a relationship which can never be broken, however much we may oppose it. The Jew today is no longer what he was two thousand years ago; he is not even the Jew who lived in the ghettos of medieval Europe, from which the French

Revolution liberated us. We have made progress in science, art, literature, and in social life: only in religion there is stagnation, or, at least, the progress is not so rapid as in other spheres.

Those Jews may perhaps have had good commonsense reasons for rejecting a carpenter who declared that He was the Saviour of the world. But we are in a much better position than they were to realize who Jesus was. Had He been an ordinary child born outside the bonds of matrimony, an enthusiastic dilettante - as some people believed He was - He would not have conquered as indeed He did.

People of brilliant intellectual powers have paid homage to Him.

The Jew Spinoza declared: "Jesus is the highest symbol of Jewish wisdom."

Rousseau wrote: "If the death of Socrates was the death of a sage, then the death of Jesus was the death of a God."

Strauss, who wrote several works in order to prove that Jesus is not God, nevertheless declares that He is the highest goal to which we can aspire in our thoughts."

Ernest Renan, who caused a great many people to doubt the divinity of Jesus, says that His beauty is eternal and that His kingdom will never come to an end."

Some find it difficult to believe what His disciples said of Him, but let us at any rate believe His enemies, such as the Pharisees who declared: "Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teaches the way of God in truth" (MRK 12:14). Judas confessed: "I have betrayed innocent blood" (MTT 27:4). Pilate said: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person" (MTT 27:24). The captain of the guard, in charge of the crucifixion, declared: "Truly this was the Son of God" (MTT 27:54).

Belief in Jesus gives the believer confidence. True belief in

Jesus turns stubborn minds into hearts burning with love. True

belief of Jesus breaks down barriers between races and nations.

The Court of the Gentiles in the Temple of Jerusalem was separated from the Holy of Holies by a fence, on which was written in three languages: "He who is not a Jew and passes further will be punished by death." The Christian religion breaks down national boundaries, and makes God's house a place where all peoples meet in prayer.

But someone will raise the objection: If belief in Jesus transforms us into love, how are we to explain the violent conflicts that take place within a Christian congregation, and the disputes between the various confessions? And if Christianity makes the people of every nation brothers, how are we to explain the murderous wars that are waged between Christian nations? Do not the naked facts refute the claims of Christianity?

The answer is that we are still living in prehistoric times, as far as the Christian Church is concerned. The various confessions are merely parts of the framework of the proud and magnificent building which will one day arise.

The task to which those Jews are called who have been converted to belief in Jesus, is to give the world life out of spiritual death. The Scriptures declare that the purpose of saving the Gentiles - who have given what they could - was to make the Jews jealous for their God. The Jews have been called, and specially equipped by God, to give a real inner meaning to the Christian Church. Don't look at the church as she is, but as she will be when the Jews whom she expects will have become Christians, and will give her an unequalled beauty. Then she will be one and burning with love.

God has called me to brings Jews to Christ. When He calls, He always gives a man the capacity and the facilities to obey His call. Every human being possesses spiritual powers of which he himself is ignorant. When he pledges himself in love to Jesus, he discovers what powers are latent within him. Even I, at the beginning of my Christian life, had no idea for how many works I would be used.

For these were not ~my~ acts: the Christian believer is like a child who is allowed by the driver to hold the steering-wheel

of a car, while the driver himself keeps his hands over the child's. The child is delighted to be driving a car – without being able to make a single mistake – because there is someone who is in charge, and knows everything. Even while we are carrying our burdens, we ourselves are borne aloft on eagles' wings.

He who works through His children is the same God who scattered the stars in the firmament of heaven. Within us we have His power enabling us to sacrifice ourselves, that same power which was in the Son when He was crucified for our sakes. Through us the sanctifying power of the Spirit is at work. In us it moves like a mighty storm, and through us this storm arouses others to passionate zeal, because God dwells within us. It is as though the fulness of His grace all but shatters the vessel which is too narrow for Him.

When I look back on these past years, I can seldom discover any logic between what happened and the attitude I adopted at the time. "The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know." The birth of a man's deepest conviction is not the result of a process of thought; the subconscious cannot be trained, and does not behave in a logical way. It does not think in conformity with the ordinary laws of reason. It is in some dreams that one can see the magnitude of man's hidden values. This subconscious is the darkness where God likes to dwell: here He has openly done things through me that even I cannot understand. Beyond the world of phenomena perceived through the senses, lies the real, invisible world, the essential world. This is where the divine works; and what is seen in our nature is governed from it.

I do not understand everything that has happened to me, but I believe that my whole life, and the life of all His children, has been planned by God, down to the smallest detail. Our lives are planned in eternity; our lives serve God's purpose. I can be confident, even when I understand nothing.

When I first became a follower of Jesus, I did not want to have quarrels with anyone, I merely wanted to rest from all that had gone before. Religion must put an end to striving, it must bring calm. But a calm life, lived only in love and in the interpretation of the truth, raises new storms; one's religion is

attacked, one must defend it, and so, without having wished it, one is at war again. We have to actively put into practise faith and love, and only God knows why, as sons of peace, we do not bring peace, but a sword.

I have come into conflict with many of the Jewish people of whom I am a part. Jews often call Christian Jews traitors to their people. I shall not dwell on this terrible term. It could be said more simply, and with greater love, that the Christian Jews use a different scale of values.

But is it really one's own people who constitute the supreme value? Both the Old and the New Testament depict as holy a priestess of a Canaanite temple, where religious prostitution was practised. Her name was Rahab. At a point of time when the Jews were going to war, with a view to the complete destruction of the Canaanites, Rahab concluded a pact with the Jews, against the interests of her own people. Was she a traitor? Was she thereby degraded? No, she was a woman who put the new religion - represented by the Jews - above the interests of the people to whom she belonged. In this way she became one of the ancestors of Jesus. She is also honoured by the Mosaic Jews.

We love our people wholeheartedly; but we consider the glory of Christ of more value than our own people. And, faced with the alternative of choosing between Jesus and our people, if they demand that we should renounce Him, we choose Jesus because we know fully that those who do not in truth serve Him, cannot serve their own people best.

When my wife and I became Christians, we found beloved brothers and sisters in all confessions; but no single one of these possesses the unadulterated truth, nor a truly burning love. Many Christian pastors are not what a pastor should be; a person in whom Christ is present, an ardent soul who sees the truth, declares it, and carries it out, a man through whom God himself speaks. The sheep are not listened to. The gifts of grace possessed by members of the Church are not sufficiently utilized. They stand unemployed in the marketplace, or else their strength and their ability are not given full scope. The

work of the Church lacks the co-ordinated action in which all

God's children should take part.

We are the most poorly organized army. Jesus's melancholy remark, that the children of this world are wiser than the sons of light (LUK 16:8) has not inspired us to change things. In the old days a Christian army was recruited in order to win an empty tomb. Why do we not organize an army to win living souls?

When we, who were new to the Christian faith, raised these problems, Christian leaders became angry with us.

There is a club for dwarfs. Membership is open only to persons who are not more than four feet tall. Dwarfs say that they are closest to human perfection, because the first men were taller than those of today; hand in hand with progress, the human form has become smaller. We could in fact set up a club for Christian dwarfs, with a great many members. It is the dwarfs of Christianity who are regarded as the standard, while the giants are considered to be fanatics. The dwarfs, the cold and indifferent, are considered the ones who are wise. I find myself in opposition to people who think along these lines.

Even more, I was opposed to the atheist world. The bodies and souls of many Hebrew Christians bear the scars of wounds received in this struggle. But only the soldier who risks his life is a true soldier, and scars are a soldier's badge of honour.

For twenty-five years I have had one single task, because I knew that it is only the man who concentrates on one goal who can accomplish great things. Amateurs do not make great athletes; nor are those clergymen the best pastors who, apart from being clergymen, are also devoted philatelists, football players, chess players, musicians, politicians, and a great many other things. You may have many gifts, but they must be all subject to the same aim.

I have done only one thing. I have worked for Christ. I am not satisfied with what I have accomplished. If I were, I should not be able to make any progress. But I know that Jesus will forgive me if I have erred in my thought and sinned in my life. He has not abandoned me, and He will help me to do better in future.

And because this is not the work of an individual - the true Christian belongs to the assembly of God's children - I have

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written this book, in order that what has been right and what has been wrong in what I have accomplished, may serve as a lesson to the Church and to the Jewish people, in order that others may do better.

page 16 CHRIST ON THE JEWISH ROAD

I SET OUT ON THE ROAD

~A German carpenter shows a Jew the way to Christ~

It was 1937. Hitler was in power.

In a small village in Rumania, a German carpenter was spending the remaining years of his old age. His name was Christian W”lfkes.

During a revivalist campaign in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, conducted by Pastor Scherg, he had been converted to Christianity. Later on, he joined a congregation of brethren who called themselves "Christians according to the Gospel."

W”lfkes realized that a Christian who is not a missionary, even if on a very small scale, is not fulfilling his duty, which is to be a light for the world. One night when he was seriously ill, a Christian Jews watched by his bedside. In gratitude, from the depths of his heart, he now longed to be used to bring Jews to Christ.

His daily prayer was: "O Lord, I have served Thee on earth, and on earth I desire my reward. I pray that I may not die before I have converted a Jew to the faith. But there are no Jews in this neighbourhood, and I am old, sick and poor. I am not able to go and look for them elsewhere. Thou are all-powerful. Bring a Jew here to me in my village, and I promise I will do my utmost to convert him to the faith."

The first Jew who came to the village that spring was myself. I do not know if there was ever a girl so passionately wooed by her lover as I was wooed by this old man, who saw in me the answer to his prayer.

He gave me the Bible to read.

I had read it before, but it had not made any impression on

me. But the Bible I now held in my hand was not like any other Bible: later I discovered its secret. W”lfkes and his wife were spending many hours daily praying for the conversion of myself and my wife. Actually, I couldn't really read it; rather, I wept over it. My tears always started to flow whenever I compared my selfish and wretched life with the life of Him who went around going good.

W”lfkes allowed the Bible and his own prayer to work in my heart. He hardly talked to me at all. Instinctively he knew, what so many trained missionaries do not know, that the most effective missionary method lies in reticence, silence, concentrated meditation, so as to give peace to the soul you wish to win; so as not to arouse love precociously; to pray ceaselessly, to be content to scatter a little seed, and allow it to take root and grow in its own time.

A long time passed. One evening the old man asked me: "What do you think of the Bible?"

I answered: "I was left an orphan while I was still a child, and we were very poor. Sometimes I would stand for hours on end in ecstasy outside a baker's shop, gazing with burning desire at the cakes. I would say to myself, 'These are not for me. I shall never be able to eat anything like this.' The Bible brings back these memories. Once again I can see wonderful things, but I know that they are not for me, because I am a Jew. I know that there are Jews who have been converted to Christianity, in order to marry Rumanian girls, or in order to escape anti-Semitic persecution. But I have not yet met a Jew who believes in Jesus."

From that moment W”lfkes became God's instrument to tear the veil from my eyes. He spoke to me in simple words, words that came from the heart, about things that a Jew should have known, but that I did not know: about the fulfillment of the messianic promise in Jesus; of Jesus's tender summons with which he called his people; of the love which God still has for the

Jews, for the sake of their forefathers who were bearers of the faith ...

God opened my heart, so that I was able to believe the gospel.

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W”lfkes introduced me to a number of Christian Jews, who were so full of purity - even in their very looks - that I could never till then have believed in the existence of such people.

This humble carpenter provided the first impetus for my conversion. Later, my wife also joined the faith. She brought with her other souls, who in turn brought others, and so on, until a Christian Jewish congregation was formed in Bucharest, which flourished actively for many years.

The existence of this congregation, which was the fruit of his soul's work, was the carpenter's great source of comfort in his last years.

He died during the war. I had to fight on, and later I spent many years in prison. Meanwhile, practically all the Rumanian Christian Jews emigrated, and they have formed congregations in several towns in Israel.

After my release from prison I attended a large meeting of Christians in a village where hundreds of brothers and sisters had come together. I was not strong enough to be able to preach, but I was asked to tell in a few words the story of my conversion. While I was describing it, I noticed that a very old man was weeping. After the meeting was over, I started to talk to him. He told me that his name was Pitter, that he was a wheelwright, and that it was he who had brought W”lfkes to the faith. Up to then he had believed that all he had ever accomplished in life was to convert a carpenter. Now he realized that he had contributed greatly to the struggle of the Christian Jews for Jesus in Israel, and that he was a great-grandfather in the faith to many souls.

Hitler killed the Jews. German Christians worked so save the Jews. Here were two different worlds. When I think of these humble Germans, who gave me spiritual birth, I am reminded of what Martin Luther wrote to a Jew by the name of Jesel:

"Would it not be right for you to believe that because Gentiles and Jews have always been mortal enemies, we should not even bend the knee to the best of your kings? So much the less to such a Jew, crucified and cursed, unless this revealed the power and work of God, He who with His strength implanted them in our proud Gentile hearts? You Jews would never worship

as Lord a dead Gentile who had been crucified or suffered some other shameful death. For this reason you must not consider us Christians to be fools or geese, but you must one day realize that God will lead you out of the misery which you have endured for more than fifteen hundred years - but this he will not do unless you, together with us Gentiles, accept the beloved Jesus, the crucified."

It is a miracle, with no logical explanation, that even amid the fierce anti-Semitism of Hitler's oppression, there were Germans who believed with all their hearts in the crucified Jew as their Saviour, some of them suffering profoundly because the Jews remained indifferent to Him who is the glory of His people Israel.

~Rabbis help to dispel my doubts~

Though the rabbis are the shepherds of the Jewish people, I had reached my twenty-seventh year without experiencing their leadership. They did not lead me into green pastures, nor by still waters. I do not know what other business they had; but they did not come to find the lost sheep. It might have been just my misfortune. There probably are rabbis who fulfill their duty.

Sometimes I would go to the synagogue, but I understood nothing of what was chanted there. Nor did the other Jews. The cantors realized that we could not understand Hebrew, but still they sang for hours on end in that language. It was obvious that they cared little if we knew anything about God. Indeed I wonder whether they themselves were "in God." Reformed Judaism was unknown in Rumania.

But I must not be unfair: Christian priests and pastors made just as little effort to seek me out. Priests and pastors

generally have other things to do than to look for lost souls where they are to be found, in pubs, in brothels, in gambling dens and among the atheist organizations. I was found by a carpenter, a man whom priests and pastors of the official denominations would have called a "sectarian."

The rabbis did not begin to take an interest in me until their opportunity was past, and I had been sought and found by Israel's great shepherd, Jesus of Nazareth, of whom the Jewish prophets had prophesied.

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I was sitting in the house of a rabbi who was one of the outstanding personalities of Rumanian Judaism. I had come to tell him why I believed in Jesus as the Messiah.

Rabbi H. officiated at my marriage: I was married in the synagogue, for the family's sake. He knew then that I was a militant atheist and an anarchic element. Yet he made not the slightest attempt to tell me anything about God. He carried out the ceremony, and that was all.

Now that I had come to God by way of Jesus, he was displeased. He asked me: "What makes you believe in Christ?"

I told him that the prophecy of Isaiah, about eight hundred years before Jesus, had particularly struck me. Reading this prophecy, in the fifty-third chapter, I had the impression that, centuries before the birth of the Saviour, the prophet had foreseen His entire life, and had depicted it in outline, so that the Jews should recognize Him when he came.

The rabbi stroked his beard, and said to us (my wife was also present): "You should not have read that. That chapter is forbidden to you."

I have subsequently verified this ban in the calendars issued by Orthodox Jewish congregations, which give the texts from the prophets to be read at public services in the synagogue (the so-called ~Haftorahs~). After the part of the Law of Moses called ~Shophtim~, Isaiah Chapters 51 and 52 are to be read. On the next Sabbath there follows Chapter 54. Chapter 53 has been omitted. The prophecy about Jesus contained in this chapter is too revealing.

The rabbi urged us: "My children, leave these things alone!"

I answered: "I should like to do so, but the prophecies will not leave me in peace. What other interpretation of this part of the Bible can you give me?"

The rabbi shook his head sadly, and dismissed us without trying to give an explanation. I don't know why.

Several years passed. In 1940, in the course of a pogrom, the Fascists killed two of his sons before his very eyes. They also fired at him, but failed to hit him.

Rabbi H. personally conducted his sons' burial services. It

greatly moved all those present to see him place his hands on both coffins, and to hear him begin his sermon with the words of the psalmist: "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works" (PSA 145:17).

Thousands of Bucharest Jews were present in the cemetery: I was also there, though I was ostracized because of my Christian faith. I stood by myself at the entrance to the chapel. After the ceremony was over, as the rabbi was leaving, supported by two Jews, he caught sight of me, and called to me from a distance: "Richard!" He embraced me in the sight of all who were present. Among the thousands of Jews he had chosen me to whom to pour out his sorrow.

I have met him several times since then, and he has always listened to me lovingly when I have told him about my faith. I have never tried to force myself upon him. The man who had organized the murder of over a hundred Jews in the Jilava Forest, and hanged about forty others in the municipal slaughterhouse under a sign "Kosher Meat," had been a Greek Orthodox priest. It is difficult to bring a Jew to Christianity.

The other rabbi with whom I spoke about Jesus at the beginning of my belief, while I was still doubting and suffering intellectual scruples, was Rabbi R. from Satu-Mare.

I met him one evening in a synagogue. When I mentioned

the Saviour to him, he answered: "If you are prepared to listen quietly to me for half an hour, I will free you from this delusion."

I answered: "I am prepared to listen to you, not for half an hour, but for many days."

He came home with me, and we agreed to read the New Testament together, so that he should have an opportunity of interrupting me from time to time, and of pointing out anything that was incorrect. We read together from eight in the evening until one o'clock next morning. He listened attentively, interrupting me from time to time, always with the same exclamation: "~Oi, vi shein, oi vi shein! Dus hob ich nich gewist~." (Ah, how beautiful! How beautiful! I never knew that.) Not once did he contradict. That night he slept at my house. Next day, as we left the house together, he asked me: "Please don't tell anyone in

the synagogue what has taken place." I agreed, but added: "I think it should be a point of honour for you to tell the Jews that you consider the New Testament a wonderfully beautiful book."

Rabbi R. did not do that. Later, he moved to Cernauti. A year later I visited him, and found him sitting among his pupils. When I mentioned Jesus to him, he reviled Him with ugly jokes.

During the war he was killed by the Nazis.

When he heard that I was a lost sheep, Rabbi G., who was the successor of a well-known dynasty of miracle-working rabbis, called me to him.

He was an impressive figure, an old man with a white beard and white hair and a lofty forehead. His face shone with goodness. He apologized for having asked me to come to his house; had it not been for his advanced years, he would have come to mine. He asked me what it was that attracted me to Christianity.

I told him briefly the story of my life in sin, and of the peace I had achieved in my conscience through the certainty

that my sins are forgiven through Jesus. "Jesus gives me peace in my soul, and joy. I know that He has given peace to millions of people. I know of no evil that He has done. Tell me, Rabbi, why should I abandon Him?"

The rabbi answered: "Jesus did no evil. On the contrary, through Him many people have been saved from the worship of idols and made to know the true God. But you are a Jew. It is your duty to remain in the Jewish religion."

"No," I replied vehemently. "The Jewish religion is false because it is Jewish. Religion must provide men with an exact knowledge of God, and of how man can achieve unity with Him. Just as there can never be a Rumanian theory of physics or a German theory of mathematics, so there can never be a Jewish religion. There is only religion or non-religion. Religion is either true for everyone, or else wrong for everyone.

"In religion we must apply the same principle as in justice. No form of justice to which we give a prefix such as race, caste, class, military, emergency, can be true justice. Justice stands by itself, without any prefix. And for the same reason I accept no prefixes in my belief. I am seeking for contact with God and

union with Him. Any religion which has a prefix may prove an obstacle in this search for a union. The Jewish religion binds me to Judaism, the Orthodox and Roman Catholic religions to certain traditions, the Protestant religions to the ideas of their reformers. All these are horizontal unions, not vertical unions with God. It is this vertical union that I seek."

In amazement the rabbi asked me: "I must say with great regret and profound sympathy - not with scorn and malice - that in you I see a person uprooted from his people. Do you not hear within you the voices of your forefathers, calling you back?"

I replied: "Yes, every Jew with sidecurls, the music of a synagogue, the mere sight of the letters in the Hebrew Bible - all these remind me of my forefathers. It is almost like the sight of Abraham with his family, coming to Canaan on his camel. I see before me the scenes from the Bible. I feel myself experiencing the departure of the Jews from Egypt, all their difficulties in the desert, the miraculous event when the Jews

received the tablets of the law through Moses. I experience the whole shattering history of my people. But personal biographies and history are one thing, objective truth another.

"The most profound philosophers, politicians and religious thinkers have always offered as objective thinking a system which was nothing but the result of the tragedy of their own personal lives, and they themselves sometimes admit this. Marx wrote in a letter to Engels: 'If Titus had not destroyed my fatherland, I would not have been the enemy of all fatherlands.' One must not allow oneself to be guided by a criterion of this kind in deciding whether to be a patriot or an anti-patriot. And so, even in the religious sphere we must not allow ourselves to be guided by feelings, but we must seek the true religion. That is what I want."

The rabbi shook his head sceptically. "Which 'is' the true religion?"

My reply was: "I don't know yet. But I think I have made a long step towards discovering it, in so far as I have discovered the religion which is certainly incomplete. That is the religion to which I belong by birth. In my opinion it is absurd that religious convictions should depend on the results of sexual association. A man of the Mosaic faith enters into a union with a woman of

the same faith. The child born of this union is regarded as an apostate if he does not believe in Moses. One of his neighbours is a man who is the child of a marriage between a Catholic man and a Catholic woman: he believes that he is compelled to abide by all Catholic dogma. The same applies to a Protestant, or a Mohammedan, or a Buddhist, and the result of this is incomparable confusion. This kind of religion is obviously not the true one, and I do not intend to abide by it."

The rabbi answered: "Jesus did not do what you are doing. He followed in the paths of His forefathers, He kept the sabbath the laws pertaining to food, and the other laws. He worshipped God in the synagogue. Why do you not do the same?"

I replied: "Jesus was a unique person with a unique vocation. The revelation He made was new; He presented a new and eternally valid truth. In order to win the good will of those

who heard Him, He did what every sensible creature does, He clothed His teaching in a form that was acceptable and attractive to His listeners. This is how we can understand His conformism. But through Him the prophecy of Jeremiah, in Chapter 31, is fulfilled: 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.'

"We are no longer governed by an old covenant, but by a new revelation, which I can characterize in a few words: freedom in our daily life, and love. One of the renowned Christian teachers, Augustine, declared that the Christian norm in the conduct of his life is: 'Love, and do what you will!' I no longer find Jewish customs imperative or necessary."

To my amazement, the rabbi answered: "I cannot recall such a passage in Jeremiah."

I asked him to take the book from his shelf, and I showed him the reference.

page 25 CHRIST ON THE JEWISH ROAD

Some rabbis in truth neglect the prophecies because they are continually concerned with the Talmud, the Kabbala and numerous commentaries. As a rule, the Books of Moses are the only parts of the Bible they know well.

Among Christian clergy, some of whom have doctors' degrees in theology, it is even worse. I have often come across a profound ignorance of even the simplest Bible texts. If they are Catholics, they are well acquainted with Thomas Aquinas, and if they are Protestants with the works of Karl Barth or Bultmann. They are as a rule ignorant of the theological writings of the great Christian mystics, nor do they know the Holy Scriptures.

The rabbi tried to put an end to our discussion: "I realize that there is no point in arguing. I shall never be able to convince you that you should return to Judaism."

"You do not possess the truth, and therefore you have no confidence either," I replied before I left him. "You have given up all hope of bringing me back to the Mosaic faith, to which I never subscribed. But I shall never give up the hope that one day you will become a disciple of Jesus."

The rabbi shook hands with me hurriedly, and dismissed me.

As a result of what Christians had told me about Jesus, I was still in doubt as to whether He really was the Saviour. The rabbis removed the last shred of doubt on this score, thanks to the complete inability they showed in contradicting the Christian arguments.

~The path of belief from reason to the heart~

The Jews have an ancient story, so old that Jesus as a boy may have heard it, perhaps from His mother.

One day, a taxidermist caught a beautiful bird, which he intended to kill and stuff. But when he raised his knife to plunge it into its body, a miracle occurred. The bird began to talk to him in human language, saying: "Spare my life, as I have young in my nest. If you will do so, I shall give you three simple pieces of advice, which will prove of great use to you."

The taxidermist thought to himself: "There are many other birds in the woods which I can stuff. But what I am now experiencing is a miracle from God. Who knows what advice I may

get?" And so he promised to liberate the bird, if the advice he received was good.

The little bird pronounced three words of wisdom: "If anyone tells you anything absurd, don't believe him, whoever he may be. If you do someone a good turn, you must not regret it afterwards, but rejoice that you have acted benevolently. Do not attempt to reach what is too high for you."

The taxidermist recognized the value of this advice. He had often made the mistake of listening to the counsel of people merely because they were well known. He had often regretted spending money on charity, and he had wasted a great deal of time and energy trying to attain what he could not reach. He released the bird, saying: "Go with God, little bird, because your words were clever."

The bird flew off, to perch on the nearest branch. Then she called out to the man: "Fool! Why did you release me? I have a large diamond in my belly; if you had killed me, you would have found it, and you would have been rich for the rest of your life."

When the taxidermist heard this, he regretted freeing the bird, and began to climb the tree to catch her again. But it is no easy job to catch a bird with bare hands! When he reached the lowest branch, the bird flew off to another. When he reached the second, the bird was yet higher up, and in this way he went on climbing up the tree, until he missed his footing, fell down and broke both his legs.

As he lay groaning at the foot of the tree, the bird hopped down on to the lowest branch and called out to him: "Fool! Did I not give you three good pieces of advice, which you knew in your mind were correct, and admitted with your mouth were good? The first was that you should not believe anything absurd, whoever told you to believe it. How, then, could you be so foolish as to believe that a bird had a diamond in its belly? The second was that you should never regret doing a good turn. You acted charitably by sparing my life. Why did you regret this afterwards? And the third piece of advice was that you should not try to reach something that was too high for you. You know very well that it is impossible to catch a bird with your bare hands. But there is always too great a gap between the human

head and the human heart, between the human mouth and the human ear. You saw that my advice was good, but you did not listen to your own words, and you did not believe in the value of your thoughts. A few minutes after approving of my advice, you did the exact opposite of what I had taught you."

Today, we can hear what people are saying and singing on

the other side of the world, but our own words are lost, and we live as though we had never pronounced them. Our understanding is one thing, our feelings something quite different. I was to experience the truth contained in this little story.

With my understanding I knew that Jesus is the Saviour; but my life, instead of conforming more and more to His teaching, became, if anything, worse. To my horror, I discovered that I possessed the will to do good, but not the power to carry it out.

"For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do...

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me...

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man ... But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members..." (ROM 7:19-23)

There were two aspects to my inner conflict. On the one hand I knew - or rather I felt - instinctively that conversion would mean that I should have to live a life of suffering and conflict. I should have to take my stand against some of my own people, against their customs and ideas which had survived for thousands of years. I knew that - while it was my duty to remain patient and mild - I should have to suffer abuse and condemnation, and yet remain unbowed in every storm.

I should have to be prepared to oppose my people, the people in which I was rooted with all my soul. I heard a voice inside me saying: "Are you, you alone, wiser than all your people? The Jewish nation has fostered so many geniuses, so many mystics, so many men of action, and countless martyrs for the faith of their forefathers! Are all these people wrong, and only you - a small group of Jesus's disciples among the Jewish people - right?" It was not until later that I was compelled

to realize that the multitude and the famous men who support a cause are of no argument against God's unequivocal word.

And then, what prospects were in store for me when this conflict had been resolved? Assuming that the Jews were prepared

to be converted, where should they go? Later on, I shall relate some of the disappointments I experienced with the various Christian confessions. Very soon I realized that in this world there was no house of the Father to which Israel, the Prodigal Son, could return.

All these thoughts compelled me to compare myself to some Don Quixote going forth to a meaningless battle. The sin in me exploited the difficulties, preventing me from being born anew. "Eat, drink and enjoy yourself, for youth is fleeting," it always whispered.

It was in this period of conflict that I experienced the presence of Jesus for the first time. I cannot say that I saw Him: He had no outward appearance, but He was present. This phenomenon was repeated for several days running. It was at midday; I had cast myself down on a sofa. The tears ran down my cheeks: it was as though I heard a voice calling me - not with words - but if I were to describe what I felt, it would be something like this: "Come! I will give you happiness. All your sins will be forgiven. Unspeakable joys await you." My wife was at my side, saddened by the conflict within me, which she shared with all her heart. But I answered: "No, no, I shall not come. You are calling me to tread a heavy path. Too much renunciation, too many sufferings await me. I do not want them. Depart from me!"

May God forgive me if, without wanting to do so, I appear to blaspheme: I had the impression that Jesus, the Lord of Heaven, was kneeling before me, a sinner, instead of the other way round. And He begged me to turn to God. I felt that my heart would burst with the weight of His sorrow, but I could not. My answer was always "No."

I did not accept, because I was evil. Nevertheless, I believe that some sermons and Christian books on which I fed my soul at that time were in part responsible for the answer I gave. In these sermons and books the picture of Jesus was falsified: He

was shown as a police officer, demanding rigid obedience to hundreds of laws. These laws started by insisting that one should renounce smoking and the wearing of jewelry, and ended by insisting that one should sacrifice one's life for Him. The

emphasis was on all these "don'ts," and on our duty to give to God, instead of depicting Him as the giver of gifts of immeasurable worth - forgiveness of sins, peace of heart, communion with God, truth, life in the Light, the Spirit which gives power and holiness, the joy in fighting the good fight - with the angels fighting on your side - an eternal life of glory, and so much more - and all these gifts bestowed without any conditions.

In one of the Talmudic writings, we read that any love which depends on a thing ceases when that thing ceases to be; but a love which is not dependent on a thing, never ceases. If the salvation which Jesus gives us depended on a state of soul, it would not endure because the state of our soul varies. The salvation bestowed by Jesus is free, unconditional; it does not depend on what is in us, or on what we do. It springs from His loving character, and for this reason it is eternal.

Christian preaching is often bound up with "don'ts" and demands, and this gave me a false idea of Jesus. But what restrained me, more than anything else, was the fact that I was in bondage to sin: love of money, love of illicit pleasures, hatred, evil, dishonesty, and much besides. I continued to commit grave and gross sins, even after I was intellectually convinced that Jesus is the Saviour.

But what Luther said happened in my life: "Sins do not destroy the saints,* but they stifle only those who are without God." There are two reasons for this. The first is that the saints believe in Christ, in whom they are completely absorbed, and through whom they rise again (even though in their ignorance they do many things for which, without God, they would be condemned), and in whom they are preserved. They do not fall into mischief, as Solomon says (PRO 24:16). For those who have never experienced it, it is inconceivable how great is the power

[Footnote]
*The word "saint" is not used here in the sense that the Roman Catholics use it to describe a person who has been canonized, but is a title which, according to the New Testament, all believers bear.

that faith will give, especially where sin is concerned. Those who are without God sin, even if they were to do the deeds of all

the saints. The other reason is that the saints, through faith realize that they depend only on God's mercy: yet they recognize in the depths of their hearts that their deeds are sinful and futile. This humility and this testimony prevents them from being destroyed by their sin, ignorance or evil, because God cannot abandon such humble people. The mercy he shows to those who confess their guilt is all the greater. This was true of Bernard of Clairvaux, when he exclaimed in his grief: "I have wasted my time, for I have lived a life which deserves condemnation!" It was true of Augustine when he said: "Woe to the lives of all men, however holy they may be, should they be judged without mercy!"

~Isac Feinstein and my rebirth~

The man who was to play a very special role in all this was Isac Feinstein, one of the most glorious triumphs the grace of Jesus has won among the Jewish people.

At the time of his conversion he was a minor business executive. One evening, in a Christian gathering, he heard the message of Jesus. Immediately he believed. When he came home, he ran up to the bedroom of his parents, who had already retired for the night, woke them up and exclaimed: "I have found the Messiah!"

From that evening he never wavered in his faith, although he encountered great resistance from his family.

His father, a pious Jew, tried to persuade him to deny Jesus. When this proved unsuccessful, he arranged for the ceremony to be carried out which is prescribed by rabbis in cases of this kind. He declared that his son was dead, carried out a symbolic burial with a coffin in which the branch of a tree was placed, tore his clothes, and wept for his son together with his family, sitting on the floor for seven whole days.

All this time the "dead man" rejoiced in a life which was richer than ever, and he grew in grace and knowledge of God.

After he had been a Christian for some time, he prepared to work heart and soul to spread the gospel among the Jews of Rumania. He took a missionary training in Poland, and on his return to Rumania he entered the service of the Norwegian Israel Mission in Galatz.

This man had an unlimited capacity for work. He published a periodical for adults and one for children, as well as countless Christian pamphlets. He preached all over the country, and wrote numerous letters. He became an outstanding personality among the disciples of Jesus in Rumania, a pillar of God's temple.

But in order to assess a man's real value, one must consider the conclusion of his career. Napoleon wrote: "Great men are meteors which are extinguished in order to give light to the universe." But Napoleon gave no light to the universe; on the contrary, he caused the world to bleed and weep, by creating a science without which the world would have been a better place - the science of warfare.

Meteors do not bring light to the universe: even the biggest meteor merely leaves behind briefly a transient stream of light which the vast universe does not even notice. The people who are the light of the world are those who add sacrifice to sacrifice - just as islands are formed of coral, one tiny body upon the other. They are the people who are seldom known, who generally remain anonymous, who play a humble role in raising children, running a household, in art, in political, economic and academic life; these are the people who shine with truth, love and faith, shedding a light on those around them. Feinstein was such a burning light.

Feinstein was still a young man when war broke out. He was thirty-seven years old, a pastor in a Jewish-Christian congregation he had formed in Jassy, and from here his benevolent activity spread over the whole country.

The atmosphere in Jassy was infected with anti-Semitism, with the ever-present overhanging threat of a pogrom. Feinstein was on a short visit to Bucharest, staying in my flat. I suggested that he should not return to Jassy, where death lay in wait for him. "We could send a Rumanian brother to bring your wife and your six small children back to Bucharest."

He answered: "The shepherd's duty is to die together with his flock. I know they will kill me, but I cannot abandon my brethren. I am returning to Jassy."

A few days after his return, on June 28th, 1941, the pogrom broke loose. The number of Jews killed was eleven thousand. Rumanians, too, were killed if they looked like Jews. Christian Jews were also killed by the Fascist authorities and by the incensed populace, who maintained that the country was waging a holy crusade.

Feinstein was among those arrested. He was taken at first to the police prison. Criminals who were in prison at that time have recounted since their release that Feinstein told the Jews not to have any illusions. He knew that they would be killed, and he exhorted them to be converted in order that they might prepare to meet their God.

Thousand of Jews were crammed together in sealed cattle-trucks, and sent off beneath the scorching sun, without a drop of water, with the result that most of them were suffocated. Among these was Feinstein. The few survivors were interned in a concentration camp.

Some of these related how, when Feinstein realized that death was at hand, he turned to a rabbi who was standing near him and said: "It is time for us to sing the psalms!"

He died while the rabbi was reciting the psalms aloud, and Feinstein was explaining what they foretold about Jesus. When death came with suffocation, his head was resting on the rabbi's shoulder. The rabbi himself died only a few minutes later - a Mosaic Jew and a Christian Jew were the victims of the same hatred, the hatred which in Rumania was doubly vile because it masqueraded behind the name of "Christian."

Not a single man from the Jewish-Christian congregation in Jassy survived; all were killed in the pogrom. Only a few girls escaped with their lives.

I have described Feinstein's death - a martyr of the Christian faith who was of the Jewish race.

This outstanding man, who had a shepherd's heart such as I have seldom come across since, played an important role in the spiritual crisis through which I passed.

He used to visit our home and I would talk to him about my sin, and how impossible it was for me to rid myself of it. He explained that Jesus's words, "Judge not," referred not only to other people, but also to myself. "In spiritual matters any form of self-diagnosis is wrong. When you raise your right hand in front of a mirror, the mirror will show you that you are raising your left hand, and when you stand in front of a mirror with your face towards the south, it will show you standing with your face towards the north. Your conscience mirrors your spiritual condition, and for that reason your conscience will distort reality unless it is illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

"The Gospels tell us of two men who went up to the temple to pray: one was a Pharisee, the other a publican. The first man diagnosed himself, and was sincere when he came to the conclusion that he was good because he fasted often, and gave generously to the temple. The other man did the same thing, but he discovered that he was sinful because he lived on ill-gotten gains. The self-diagnosis of both men was wrong. God does not take account of what is seen on the surface, but of what is hidden in the hearts of men. In the depths of his heart the first man was a proud person, condemning others, while the publican was humble, and confessed his sin."

"Don't judge yourself," was the advice Feinstein always gave me. "Don't distress yourself, don't worry yourself about your sin. It is written, 'Take no thought for your soul' [MTT 6:25, in the original Greek version]. The care of the soul is Jesus's concern. Just tell Him quite simply about your sin, and from that moment it will be His concern to deal with it.

"Our own understanding is the hypocrite whom Jesus reproaches for observing the mote in his brother's eye, which is the sin of brother flesh, a result of our heredity, a faulty upbringing, the pressure of social circumstances, the influence of the devil, and a large number of imponderable factors. But the hypocrisy of the understanding lies in the fact that it does not come down from the lofty pinnacle from which it judges all things and all men, in order to observe the beam in its own eye - its false criteria of truth, its selfishness, its passion, its ignorance of condemning oneself, the fact it is not to be trusted. The proof that the

beam is in the eye of reason, is that reason cannot remove the mote from its brother's eye, but is merely content to reproach him for it, and make life intolerable for him.

"Try to conquer sin by making an indirect attack on it. In the heart, Satan is strong, because he provides the heart with pleasures. Here it is difficult to overcome him. In the reason he is weak, because here he creates only difficulties. 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of your ~mind~,' says Paul (ROM 12:2). Jesus fought His battle at Golgotha, which in Aramaic means 'The Place of the Skull.' This is where you, too, must fight your battle. Make every thought a captive, in obedience to Christ. Accept Him as the criterion of truth. Superficial truth, which is easily grasped, will not change men's hearts. The daily truth which you ponder deeply, which you constantly chew over until it is transformed within you, will undoubtedly change your life.

"The Talmud tells the story of the rabbi Akiba, who as a young man was both ignorant and profane, and whose intelligence was not fully developed. But he had a wife who had great faith in God and who asked her husband to sanctify himself and become teacher of the law. Akiba used to object: 'But I have no talent for this.' She took him to a well, on the parapet of which the rope had worn away the stonework, so that there was a small depression. 'Can you see this groove in the stone?' she said to him. 'The rope is much softer than the stone, yet for many years it has worn away at the hard stone, and formed a depression. Be like the rope - up and down, up and down, always the same motion: the Scriptures and prayer, the Scriptures and prayer. Even if the heart and mind are as hard as stone, they will eventually be penetrated by the Word of God.'

"Akiba listened to the words of his wife, and became one of the great lights of Judaism; he was finally crowned with a martyr's death. Do as he did! Be zealous in thinking what is right and Christian, and you will not need to run away from sin, for sin will run away from you."

It was thanks to Feinstein, who had a beautiful singing voice that I was for the first time in my life introduced to Bach's hymn "O sacred Heart." The song went straight to my heart.

One afternoon in 1937, the day before Yom-Kippur, the

great

Jewish day of repentance and fasting, I was in Feinstein's office. My soul was greatly troubled, as indeed it had been from my earliest childhood years. I said to Feinstein: "The demands of Christianity are too extreme, they are impossible to fulfil. It is written in the Bible that he who says that he is Christ's must also live as Jesus lived. But is that possible? It's like asking a wolf to live like a lamb, and then condemning it for not succeeding. Since I have not been Christ through all eternity, since I was not born of a virgin, since I have not had Jesus's especially chose and holy upbringing, since I have no clear perception of spiritual realities, nor do I have His mind, since God's angels are not continually ascending and descending upon me, since I do not live in celibacy, nor am I carpenter - how, then, should I be able to live as He did? Must the snail run like the hare? From the little I have seen of Christians so far, conversion for some means merely making Jesus an interesting subject of conversion; it does not mean that they are converted to be a Jesus in miniature. At any rate I have not seen people of Jesus's type."

Feinstein answered with his inimitable smile: "Don't allow yourself to be guided by what you see, because it is possible that you do not see very well. The Jews who lived two thousand years ago didn't see in Jesus anything that made Him worthy of honour, despite the fact that He was the incarnation of God. Unless a man is born anew he cannot see God's kingdom, even though it is perfectly incarnate in the man who is standing face to face with him.

"But is it not expected of us that we should be like Jesus, that we should live like Him? The verse in St. John's Epistle to which you referred - 'He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also to walk' (1JN 2:6) - does not make our belief absurd, it is merely a warning to those who go round proudly declaring: 'I am in Christ.'

"There was once a country in which there were two great painters. The country was divided into two: one half of the population preferred one painter, the other part preferred the other. The king of that country was asked to pronounce his verdict. He had the marble hall in his palace divided into two by a curtain; then he summoned the first painter, and ordered

him to paint anything he liked on one wall of the hall. He summoned the

other painter and ordered him to paint on the opposite wall. The first painter, who was just as talented as he was conceited, immediately set to work and painted a great many beautiful things assisted by his pupils. The painter on the other side was a humble man. He said to his pupils: 'It is foolish for me to try to compete with my excellent rival. I cannot paint as he can. But I shall ask you to do something else. Stay here from morning to evening and polish the marble until it shines.' And so it was done. On one side of the curtain they painted, and on the other side they polished the wall. On the appointed day, the king came to see the work of the two painters. He admired the work of the first, and declared that he had never seen more beautiful pictures. Then he ordered the curtain to be pulled to one side, so that he might see what the other painter had done. He stepped back in amazement. The pictures painted by the first artist were reflected in the marble which had been polished by the other, and their beauty was dazzling. The second painter received the prize.

"The moral of this story is very simple. Only a very proud person could imagine himself capable of living like Jesus. The commandment to live like Jesus did, like all the other commandments in the Bible, was not given to us so that we should fulfill it but merely so that we should understand - as a result of our constantly unsuccessful attempts - that it is impossible for us to accomplish it, and so that it should reveal to us the depth of our sinfulness. We should not attempt to live like Jesus, but we should daily 'polish' our hearts by concentrated meditation and by faith, and then the beauty of Jesus will be reflected in us - it will give a still more beautiful picture than the picture of his own life, because the living Christ, incarnate in a human being who had been broken and had gone astray, is more beautiful than the Christ incarnate born of a virgin."

"No, no!" I cried, with tears in my eyes. "I do not want a Jesus who has been calculated, explained, and believed in, but a real Jesus. And the hope of ever having this Jesus seems to me to be an impossible ideal." So saying, I ran out of Feinstein's office, without taking leave of him.

He ran after me; I could not escape from him. I went into a shop - he followed me inside. He was so insistent that he

persuaded me to accompany him that very evening to a prayer meeting which was being held by a small group of Christians in Bucharest, in the hall of the Anglican Mission to the Jews.

There, after most of the congregation had offered up prayers, I was involuntarily lifted up by the Spirit. I was astonished to hear myself for the first time praying aloud in a public gathering. I heard my own words, but they did not seem to be words that I had formulated. They sprang from the depths of my soul, to which as a rule my ego cannot gain access. Proof that the depths had been stirred was the fact that I prayed in Yiddish - the centuries-old language of my people in their suffering, a language which in other circumstances I never spoke.

I consider the eve of Yom-Kippur 1937 as the day of my rebirth, because - this is obvious - the teaching of Jesus cannot be written clearly on a page which already bears some other writing. What is required is a complete break with the past, and a completely new beginning, the starting point of which is a constant and uncompromising siege of one's thinking.

The person who was most astonished at this change, a man who had once been a militant atheist and an active participant in the worst anarchic disturbance, was myself. My will was not free when this change occurred. My hand was forced. Everything is of the grace of God.

I believe that just as there is in nature a biological timetable which governs the time when a young bird has to emerge from its egg and when it has to migrate to another country, and to return at a definite date, and just as there is a biological timetable in man's physical life, so there is a spiritual timetable which is also determined in the same way. For every person who is chosen by God, there is a particular foreordained hour when he discovers the Son of God, who has always been in him but who has waited patiently for the moment when He is to reveal Himself. In that particular hour, internal and external factors, which have been prepared a long time ago, come together in order to produce this rebirth.

~Difficulties with some Christian traditions~

I had determined to be faithful to Jesus. But the man who has

made this decision must discover the true face of Jesus among the countless forgeries that have accumulated in the course of time; he must decide for himself on one version of this face, in order to be able to serve Him wholly and entirely, and without doubting that he has chosen the right confession. I was very interested in the difference between the confessions: I was anxious to be well-informed before I commenced my life as a Christian.

But it was not easy to make a choice.

Throughout Church history there has been much vexation of spirit, and striving for riches. In Jassy there is a Greek Orthodox church which is so crammed with golden ikons, candlesticks, and vessels that the only way they have discovered of guarding all this wealth has been not to open the church for services. In this way the words of St. Augustine have been fulfilled when he says that religion has produced riches and fortunes, but the daughters have consumed their mother.

There was striving for fame; there was the blind rage felt by a theologian when he was contradicted or eclipsed by one who was more attractive than himself; there was a storing up of feuds and hatreds which lasted a whole lifetime – even several centuries – without any respect for the beautiful proverb from the Babylonian Talmud: "The sun has sent and the day is clear." The teaching of God has been made into a "crown to glorify oneself with, and a spade to dig with," as the Talmud says. The word of God has been used to promote transient political interests, and to stifle the truth with misdeeds.

The different ways of thinking, which could have led to a very fruitful competition in the study of the word of God if only the royal law, the law of love, had been kept, combined with repulsive sins to replace the Church, the one Church, with many confessions, some of which allow themselves to be guided by the arrogant slogan formulated by Hitler: "Where we are, there is no room for others."

Between the various confessions flow the rivers of blood shed during religious persecutions, not only in the past but also in own generation. During the last war the Rumanian Orthodox Church violently persecuted not only Jews, at the killing of whom priests assisted, but also what they call "sectarians,"

that is to say, Baptists, Brethren, Adventists and the like, thousands of whom were imprisoned.

The convert seeks in vain for the "the House of the Father," the Church that was founded by Jesus. In its place he finds many other churches with barbarian names, which the one-time carpenter, Jesus, would not even have understood: Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Baptist, and many others.

As far back as the fourth century St. Epiphanius, when he spoke about the Audians - members of a sect, founded by a certain Audius, who insisted that God has a body like that of a man - declared: "It is a terrible thing that a member of the Church should change the name of the Christians while the Church only rejoices when Christians bear the name of Christ and reject all other designations. But instead of bearing the name of Christ, they bear the name of the founder of their sect, and as a sign they have the name of a human being. This is inadmissible."

This warning went unheeded: we still have confessions that bear strange names, and the soul of the bride wanders around like one who has lost her way, while she seeks her bridegroom.

One wonders whether the astronauts would have ventured into space if twenty scientists had submitted their calculations, all with divergent results, and had told them contradictory things from the world of physics. They were launched into space relying on the accurate data of science and mathematics. But how should we fly to the Throne of God, when the trumpets of the different confessions produce such discordant noises, and each one destroys confidence in everything that the others have said?

It was in this labyrinth that I had to find my way.

Let me describe a few episodes. I trust that the reader will forgive me if, in doing so, I cite some examples of human frailty. One of Melanchthon's biographers wrote: "Anyone who

considers it shameful to discover anything worth criticizing in great and famous men, entertains too high an opinion of human beings, since God alone is privileged to be faultless. Human nature is incapable of this." As the reader will soon discover, I find a great deal of good, too, in the various confessions and their leaders, just as my experience with rabbis was not always unfavourable.

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I was once in Sinaia, with one of my brothers-in-law, who was later converted. We were visiting the Orthodox monasteries in the town. It was the day after Easter Monday. We knocked at one of the gates, and an old monk admitted us.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"Father, we have come to ask what we must do to be saved."

"You are unlucky, because today of all days I have drunk too much."

"It is Easter, Father. Have you not found a worthier way of celebrating Easter than by getting drunk?" I asked, no longer concerned with my original errand, which was to seek enlightenment from him.

"Young man," the monk answered, with a merry laugh, "I have drunk according to the commandment of the Scriptures, since I have not drunk alone but in company with two or three other brethren. For it is written that 'where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,' as the Saviour said."

I had come to learn, but I was now compelled to assume the role of teacher, and to teach him the most elementary things.

"Father, I believe that when Jesus said that He would be together with His people, where two or three were gathered, He was referring to a gathering of people who had come to do good deeds or to pray, not to get drunk."

With a humility which impressed me, he answered: "Do you know, young man, you are right?" and he invited us into his cell, as we had been standing talking on the threshold.

This monk was a man accustomed to drinking. The wine had not gone to his head, and it was possible to talk to him.

I repeated my question: "What should I do to be saved?"

"Are you rich?"

"I am neither rich nor poor. I have what I need. But why do you ask?"

"The rich man is easily saved. He gives money to the Church and to the needy, and he goes to Heaven. But it is difficult for a poor man to be saved, since he has nothing to give."

The man to whom I had gone in order to learn the way of Jesus was saying the very opposite of what Jesus had taught.

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I asked him: "But what role does Jesus play in our salvation?"

He answered: "I know nothing about that."

Once again I asked: "But Father, do you not say in the liturgy: 'This is my blood, the blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins'? Is it not true that the blood the Saviour shed on the Cross cleanses us of our sins?"

The old monk started up and exclaimed: "Do you know, young man, you are very enlightened?"

There was obviously no point in asking him to guide me. A Christian Jew, who was still trying to find the way, had helped the old monk to take the first steps along this very road.

I was in the office of Bishop X. At his side were two of his advisers, priests. I told him who I was, and of my wish to be guided in the labyrinth of the many different confessions.

When he heard that I was a Jew, the bishop burst out laughing: "Ha, ha, ha. Dumb Jew! Have you ever heard a more presumptuous dirty Jew, wanting to be a Christian?" The two

priests at his side joined deferentially in his laughter.

I was prepared for a reception of this kind. Feinstein had told me of another bishop who raised his crozier to strike him when he heard that he was a Christian Jew.

This was not surprising. Bishops and priests had been nourished on the so-called holy tradition, on the writings of the Church fathers; that is, if they had ever read them. But many of the "holy Church fathers," often so-called quite fraudulently, were rabid anti-Semites.

St. Cyril personally conducted a pogrom against the Jews. The houses of Jews were destroyed, and their inhabitants driven out of Alexandria. As an excuse for this "holy" bishop, it may be mentioned that he did not persecute only Jews: he behaved just as outrageously against his own colleagues in his see. He was also involved in the murder of the philosopher Hypatia in a church.

St. John Chrysostom declared: "I know that a great many Christians have a certain reverence for the Jews and their ceremonies. For this reason I consider it my duty to root out

opinions of this kind, which are fraught with danger. I have previously declared that the synagogue is worth no more than a theatre." He then proceeds to call the synagogue "a whorehouse," "a den of thieves," and so on, and concludes: "In their shamelessness and greed the Jews exceed even the pigs and the goats ... The Jews are possessed of demons and delivered into the hands of unclean spirits. Instead of greeting them and doing them the honour of addressing a few words to them, you must turn your backs on them, and avoid them like the pestilence and a plague to humanity."

St. Ambrose insisted that the Jews, as the enemies of Christ, cannot claim just treatment - they are not under the protection of the law. Ambrose threatened to excommunicate the Emperor if he sided with some Jews who had been unjustly treated. The mild Bernard of Clairvaux was furious, and lodged an official protest, when Anacletus II was elected Pope, because one of his grandparents had been a Jew. The doctrine held by another Church father is briefly set out in the Abb, Gayragand's book on ~The Antisemitism of St. Thomas Aquinas~: "The Jew is the enemy of

Jesus. In a Christian country Jews must be treated as a foreign and hostile race, and must be deprived of every political right accorded to the citizens. They must, however, be allowed to practise their religion without being punished for it, since they are living testimonies to our Lord's suffering. For this reason they are scattered about in all the countries of the world, suffering just punishment for their terrible crime, so that they can witness to our redemption." Until recently, every Good Friday worshippers in the Catholic Church prayed for the "perfidious Jews." This formula has now been omitted from Roman Catholic services, but in the anti-Semitic writings of their Church fathers future priests continue to imbibe this doctrine.

It was normal for the disciples of the "holy" father to laugh at me. In so doing they were following in the footsteps of their teachers.

I rose from the chair in which I was sitting, strode over to the bishop's desk, and struck it with my clenched fist. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself? You are a Christian bishop, and yet you

laugh at a Jew because he believes in Jesus. What nationality was Jesus? And His Mother? And the Apostles? You fill your churches with pictures of 'dirty' Jews, yet you laugh at Jews. Do you not fear God?"

The bishop was a little man, and I am very tall. When his advisers saw me gesticulating violently, they were afraid that I might strike him, and they got ready to restrain me. But the bishop waved them aside, and called out: "Stop! Let him be! There is good in this young man. I wish to speak with him."

The conversation which then ensued was calm. He congratulated me on the new path on which I had set my feet. He was also anxious that I should win over other Jews to Christ. But there would have been no point in asking him in any detail about this path.

The Orthodox priest in the parish to which I belonged was sitting in the yard in front of his house. When I told him I was a Jew who believed in Jesus, he set his dogs on me.

I could describe numerous encounters of this kind with

Orthodox priests, but it would be pointless. Such men have no right to the title of shepherd, instituted by Jesus to lead the Church of Christ. Anyway, I am convinced that Jesus never instituted a separate clergy. All disciples of Jesus are priests.

I have studied the dogma taught by the Greek Orthodox Church, and have found that it contains a great many falsehoods. Personally, it would never have occurred to me to join this Church. Its ritual used at the baptism of a Jew compels the convert to spit three times and declare: "I deny, curse and spit on Jews," in other words on his own parents, brothers and sisters and all his family. I know of cases where the person who was being baptized fainted during the ceremony when compelled to pronounce this curse. One Jewish man was quite incapable of uttering a word.

Furthermore, as soon as the Fascist regime had been established in Rumania, the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church declared that no Jew should be received into the Church. What wretched person can have placed this barrier in the way of the Jews, to prevent them entering the Church of Jesus? He,

after all, once said: "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (MTT 15:24). In fairness, I must say that I have since met Orthodox priests who were saints, but my early experiences were bad.

In my search for the right Church the facts which proved to my satisfaction which was not the true Church proved an important step in the right direction.

People call me a Lutheran. The Lutheran Church is a remarkable one, a Church which exists against the wishes of the man who founded it.

This is what Luther wrote: "To establish and to follow many sects and multitudes in the faith is tantamount to dividing God into many gods, and to giving Him many names. A sect is nothing but a schism, which is forbidden by God, from the true, universal, invisible Church, an act committed by an earthly being. I do not approve of the doctrine and the people that are called Lutheran, and yet I must suffer that God's word should be mocked in this way by my name. I pray that my name may not be

mentioned, and that men should call themselves not Lutherans but Christians. Why should I, a putrid bag filled with maggots, deserve that the Children of Christ should bear my wretched name? No one must say: 'I am a Lutheran' or 'I am a Papist,' for neither Luther nor the Pope died for us, and neither of them was our teacher, but Christ alone was our teacher. For this reason we should call ourselves Christians."

In his table talks he said: "Let the Devil take Luther, if he can. Christ shall live."

Nevertheless, the Lutheran Church exists, and from Luther it has inherited anti-Semitic doctrines which come to light as soon as appropriate conditions exist.

You cannot ask a Jew to be pro-Hitler. How can you expect him to be a Lutheran, when Luther wrote in a letter to his wife, who also despised the Jews profoundly: "I must now deal with the expulsion of the Jews. Count Albrecht is their enemy, and he has also opposed them, but as yet no one is dealing with them. If it is God's will, I shall assist Count Albrecht from the pulpit, and I too shall oppose them. I am drinking Naumburger beer ... and I like it very much."

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I have selected a mild passage; there are others in which he openly incites his readers to kill Jews - just as he had incited them to kill Catholics, peasants and Anabaptists. He criticized the Inquisition because it had not subjected his former friend Thomas Mnzer, to sufficient torture.

When I was converted, the bishop of the Lutheran Church in Rumania was a pro-Hitler man the name of St„del, who preached a combination of Christianity, racialism and National Socialism. Anyone who entered the vestry of a Lutheran church was greeted with a "Heil Hitler" - "Heil to the murderer of millions of Jews."

In truth, this Church did not represent Christ either.

The Lutheran churches in Scandinavia and Holland rose gallantly to the occasion during the difficult years experienced by the Jews, and this is to their credit. But in doing so they were obeying another Luther.

Luther was something of a split personality. He also wrote some very beautiful things about the Jews: "We should not treat the Jews so badly, because among them are future Christians. If we were to live in a Christian manner and bring them to Christ with goodness, this would be the right thing to do. Who will become a Christian when he sees Christians acting in such an unchristian manner towards men? Not so, dear Christians. Let us tell them the truth with goodness. If they do not want it, give them peace. We give peace to so many Christians who do not care about Christ and do not listen to His words ... If I had been a Jew and had seen such fools and idiots leading and teaching the Christian faith, I would rather have become a pig than a Christian. If the apostles, who also were Jews, had treated us, the Gentiles, as we treat the Jews, no Gentile would ever become a Christian."

I will not tell of my experiences with Catholicism, which is changing so much just now, even beyond what Luther would have hoped. The Second Vatican Council has absolved the Jews of the guilt of killing Jesus. The Crucified had absolved them long before with the words, "No man taketh [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10.18). The fathers of the Vatican

Council would have done better to have apologized for killing the Jews over the centuries. To be fair, I should add that it is not only Christians who have hated and killed Jews. It has also sometimes been the other way round. Jews such as Trotsky in Russia, Rakosi in Hungary and Ana Pauker in Rumania killed many Christians, though not from religious motives. And in any case, hatred on one side is no excuse for hatred on the other.

As time went on, all the great Christian confessions seemed to me to be a Babel. They bore no resemblance to the Church that Jesus left behind, as described in the Acts of the Apostles: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands and houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need" (ACT 4:32-35).

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles ... And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (ACT 2:42-43, 46-47).

The great confessions are not the historical successors of the first Church. But the glorious beams from the light of Jesus penetrate even the densest cloud. The gospel breaks through the obstacles which these confessions have set up, and brings salvation to men and women, even to those who follow an erroneous religious system. But the great church congregations cannot prove effective instruments for the salvation of Israel. Israel will never come to Christ through them.

I felt, and still feel, at home in pietistic circles. Even before I was familiar with the Protestant doctrine of the invisible Church,

I felt a sense of brotherhood with every child of God who had been born anew.

I found brothers and sisters of this kind in "The Army of the Lord," a religious movement within the Orthodox Church. I have met brethren in the faith among Roman Catholic priests and laymen who loved Christ with all their heart, and who did things which I considered wrong, merely because they thought Jesus had prescribed them. In the same way I have met many brethren in the Lutheran Church, and in other Protestant denominations.

Could I ever forget the Greek Orthodox Archimandrite Scriban, who throughout the most violent anti-Semitic persecutions was ready day and night to help us, intervening on our behalf on countless occasions? This man, who had been head of the theological seminary, and most of whose former students were now priests in Bucharest, rebuked those at the head of the Ministry of Culture whenever they made life difficult for us, dismissing us as "dirty Jews." "Is this what I taught you?" he would ask. "Was not Jesus, too, a 'dirty Jew'? And was not the Mother of our Lord a 'dirty Jewess'?"

Among the Lutherans, could I ever forget Bishop Friedrich Mller, the staunch friend of Christian Jews? Or the Norwegian Lutheran clergyman Magne Solheim, head of the Norwegian Israel Mission in Rumania, whose life consisted of nothing but preaching the Word of Christ to the Jews from morning till night, and exerting every effort to help them in their hour of misery?

I have no space to mention the many who acted as these did.

God's children, no matter to what denominations they belonged, were close to me. But I have felt most at my ease among those who have left the great denominations. The hard facts I discovered in the big denominations destroyed the picture of Christ which I had in my heart: I rediscovered this picture in the small Christian groups.

That they were not numerous was no disadvantage as far as I was concerned. I knew that God looks at the heart of man, and not at the number of men. Gregory of Nazianzus declared: "God hath no delight in the majority. Men may be counted by

their thousands, but God counts those who accept salvation. Men count insignificant dust, He the instruments of grace."

The pietistic circles which exist within the large denominations and in the sects are the only Christian groups in Rumania whose hands are not soiled with Jewish blood. During the persecutions they assisted, sheltered and rescued Jews. With them it is easiest and best to preach the gospel of Christ to the Jews.

But even among them there were disputes. People of profound faith disagreed among themselves on trivial interpretations of Bible texts.

Believers quarrel over things about which they really know nothing. I have heard that in the Middle Ages there were two believers who were condemned by the Inquisition to be burnt at the stake. They asked to be bound back to back, so that they should not look one another in the eye, as each of them regarded the other as a heretic.

When I heard this story, I thought it was an exaggerated legend. Later on, in prison, I saw people who gave their lives for the same gentle Jesus, but who would not even say "Good morning" to one another, because they belonged to different confessions, or to two different groups within the same confession. We all allow such things to be done, without realizing how difficult it will be for us to give an account of the sin we have committed, the sin of making it difficult for those who seek the truth to find it.

I, and the other Jews with me, were almost in despair when we tried to find our way through the chaos of religious differences.

So far I have not discovered a single Christian organization which is qualified to tackle the task of preparing the world for the Kingdom of God, and making disciples of all nations. Not a single one of them takes this task seriously, striving towards it according to a definite strategic plan. Many of their efforts are wasted in trivial everyday affairs.

The grace of God helped us to overcome these difficulties, prevented us from losing our way in petty things, and helped us to understand the most important passages in the New Testament, which are so clear, and which alone by their teaching and the practice of this teaching, can bring the Jews to Christ:

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"Love is the fulfilling of the law" (ROM 13:10).

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (GAL 5:14).

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (MTT 7:12).

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (MTT 22:37-40).

Despite the fact that the Bible contains numerous

passages which state that God commanded circumcision, we know that Paul rejected these holy words, declared the commandment null and void, and wrote: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (GAL 6:15).

Should not we, too, be in a position to maintain that the various doctrines which separate us, although they are based on important passages in the Bible, really mean nothing? Instead, we must become "new creatures," people who rebuild their lives on the principle of love, the principle which Jesus gave us an example to follow. If Luther was able to write as much as four centuries ago: "Jesus did not command us to confess, but gave us all liberty, so that he who so desired could avail himself of confession ... You will not be condemned by God if you do not confess ... All sacraments must be free; he who does not desire to take the Holy Communion, is entitled by God not to do so," how much more should we in the twentieth century be able to distinguish what is most important in the doctrine of the Bible - love - from what is less important!

The spiritual condition of most Jews, especially young people, may be described as religious indifference. Our theological discussions will surely not help to stir up enthusiasm in them. Our sermons leave them indifferent. Dogmas do not move their hearts.

But it is not in these dogmas that Christianity if to be found.

The divine teacher declared that love was the sign by which

His disciples should be recognized. Love leaves no normal person indifferent. The Jews, more than any other people, are thirsting for love. If love were our religion, then their indifference would melt away.

For my own part, after seeking long, to right and left, I have found what I am seeking: my confession is love. My brothers and sisters are all those who love one another, no matter to what denomination they belong. My Lord is Jesus, because He is the incarnation of love. "God is love" and "every one that loveth is born of God" (1JN 4:8,7).

The Cross of Christ demonstrates the catastrophic results of violating the law of love. Hate crucified truth and the Deity. But at the same time the Cross of Christ is an expression of God's love. Because He loves, Christ takes upon Himself the sins of His murderers, and gives them opportunity of starting life afresh. This truth, of which I have been allowed to partake, has given me freedom with regard to Christian confessions. I can decide as I like whether I wish or do not wish to join any one of them. They provide the background against which I can exercise the religion of Christ, the religion of love. I am now in a position to worship in churches and assemblies belonging to all confessions. On one and the same day I have preached to Orthodox, Catholics, Lutherans and Pentecostals.

If you want the truth, you must renounce attitudes and opinions, for every attitude and opinion is also a blind spot which makes you quite incapable of understanding other views and opinions apart from your own. Reality knows itself, because their is spirit in it. Christ is the truth, He is the reality, as it knows itself, without being distorted by being looked at through prisms or from different angles.

Most of the Christian Jews who have subsequently comprised our congregation, have adopted the same interdenominational attitude, despite the fact that our church was formally Lutheran. It was known as "The Church of Love." Pastor Solheim's greeting was "Love." We were the only church in Rumania which - long before the modern ecumenical trend - had men of all denominations kneeling together at the Communion rail.

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~I am baptized and my wife is won for the Lord~

In my wife I have truly found what the Bible describes as "a helper who is his like." There is a certain value in celibacy, but I have also noticed that the competence of many labourers in God's vineyard has been to a large extent due to the fact that they had found an excellent helpmeet in their wives.

St. John Chrysostom cannot have known our wives, otherwise this holy father could never have recorded the monstrous statement that "woman is a necessary evil and a deadly fascination."

It is obvious that a woman is a worthy helpmeet if her husband does not browbeat her. We could all take Adam as an example of a good husband. Because of Eve, he lost a paradise, but he did not say a word of reproach to her - whereas we abuse our wives for the merest trifle.

At first, I had difficulties with my wife. When I left home to be baptized, she wanted to commit suicide. My mother fainted when she heard of my decision. Thus I grievously offended two beloved persons when I went to receive my baptism.

At that time I thought it right; I should not advise anyone now to behave in the same way. If one is to witness and to suffer for Christ, it is not right to renounce this for the sake of another person. But some Jews are not so prejudiced against Jesus as they are against baptism. They have too many painful memories of the time when the Inquisition dragged the Jews by their beards to baptism, under the threat of death. They remember so often that their forefathers cut the throats of their own children, after pronouncing a blessing, in order to save them in this way from forced baptism. All to many Jews allowed themselves to be baptized in order to deny their people. This resulted in an emotional antipathy which can be easily understood. I once knew an old Jewess, who was a faithful follower of Jesus, but who had a strong antipathy against pronouncing the word "baptism." She used to say: "I still have to fulfill this matter."

Complexes of this kind must be carefully dealt with. The duty to love is greater than the duty to be baptized. A person should never be in a hurry to be baptized, before his family is familiar with the idea, and realizes what it involves and means. The baptism should not be given unnecessary publicity. We should

witness not for the sign of baptism, but for Him who gave it to us. It is wrong for a missionary to make it a point of honour to baptize as many Jews as possible.

But at that time I was of a different mind. I went to my baptism, leaving behind a weeping wife and a sorrowing mother.

I cannot say into what confession I was baptized. My baptism took place in the chapel of the Lutheran Norwegian Israel Mission, the head of which was a Free Church Christian, Feinstein. The act of baptism was carried out by Brother Ellison, who had been an Anglican priest, but had left that Church after being baptized a second time as an adult. He continued nevertheless to conduct services in the Anglican mission. Chaos has become a commonplace in Christianity, as Jesus's last plea is ignored: "I pray ... that they all may be one" (JHN 17:21).

It was sufficient for me to know that Ellison was a true-hearted disciple of Jesus, as were the others who assisted at my baptism.

Two other Jews were baptized with me. One of them, Blitzstein, was a former Communist. The other was a much abused man. He was small of stature, and was married to a wife twice his size, who would assault him every Sunday on his return from the service. The wretched man continued to attend our meetings, and was regularly beaten up. After his baptism I saw to it that his hair was thoroughly dried in front of the stove, so that she should not realize that he had been baptized. Had she guessed, she would almost certainly have killed him.

One Sunday, late at night after he had gone to bed, Feinstein heard a knock at his door, and when he opened it he was this brother standing there, as pale as a ghost. He asked what had happened. The man answered, completely heartbroken: "I have forfeited my salvation. Today my wife beat me more than ever before. I could stand it no longer, and I slapped her face." With a twinkle in his eye, Feinstein replied: "Well, seeing you have forfeited your salvation, why didn't you at least give her a proper beating, so that she would have something to remember you by?" Later on, this Xantippe was also baptized, but she did not remain steadfast in the faith.

Our baptism took place in a very cordial atmosphere. Ellison, who was of a high spirituality, warned us: "You have now

received robes of white, and it is your duty to keep them pure." Feinstein, who was more down-to-earth in his approach, also preached: "You are human beings, and you will still sin like all

human beings. You will not keep your robes white, but when you do sin, go immediately to Jesus so that He can cleanse you of your stains."

After the ceremony was over, late that evening when everyone had gone to bed, I was unable to sleep. That night I read "The Mysteries of the Cross" by Tohoyiko Kagawa, a Japanese Christian who had devoted not only his entire fortune, but [also] his life and all his knowledge, to help the poor of Japan.

The house where my baptism took place is no longer a chapel. The Communist State now uses it for an entirely different purpose. I am sad to think that I have not been able to see it for many years. Saint Louis, King of France, used to make an annual pilgrimage to the village church at Poissy, where he had been baptized. He used to say: "In this place I received the Crown of Life, while in Rheims I received the royal crown - which has only occasioned me much labour and many cares."

When I returned home after my baptism, I found that my wife had altered. During my absence she had carefully examined her life, and had now taken a big step forward. I still took her with me to secular gatherings, whenever she wanted to go, but she felt more and more out of place there. Late one evening, on our return from a party of this kind, she said to me: "I should like to wake the pastor, so that he can baptize me, and cleanse me of all my impurity."

Not long after this, Ellison baptized her, too. She has been compelled to suffer a great deal since that time. She spent some years in prison; she was separated from her husband for as many years as Jacob served for Rachel. All the sufferings and sorrows of the Christians were hers, too, but she considered that all her worries had been of a few days' duration, because she loved.

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2 JEWS WHO WITNESSED FOR CHRIST

~Clarutza~

At the time of my conversion there were small groups of Christian Jews in Bucharest, Galatz, Jassy and other towns. Among them were souls who had reached a very high spiritual level.

In Bucharest, the Anglican Church Mission was active under the guidance of the Reverend J. Adeney, a clergyman with a rare depth of faith and spirit of sacrifice.

Gradually the number of Christian Jews grew. The first soul I won for the Lord was Clarutza, a young girl of about sixteen. Her great-grandfather had been a Greek Orthodox priest, who had been converted to Mosaic Judaism during a movement of Judaizers which originated in the Ukraine at the beginning of the last century. (A similar movement exists to this day in Rumania among peasants who originally belonged to a branch of the Adventists. Native Rumanian peasants are circumcised and worship in the synagogues with a more burning zeal than the Jews, many of whom, truth to say, show no particular enthusiasm in carrying out their religious duties.)

This girl had been chosen by God to make good her great-grandfather's error, by becoming a Christian. As soon as she started attending our meetings, her parents began to persecute her. They forbade her to meet with us. Then she decided to start a hunger strike. She refused to eat until she was allowed to go and visit her brethren in the faith. She fasted for three days; on the fourth day, when her parents saw how weak she had become, they told her she was free to go. "Not at all," she

answered. "I shall continue my hunger strike, and I shall not go until you come with me." After she had fasted for another day, her parents yielded on this point too, and from then on they regularly accompanied her to our meetings.

Clarutza was young in the faith; but I, her spiritual father, was also young in the faith. I, who had not yet been cured myself, began to cure others. It was bound to have consequences.

One day, while she was having a meal at our house, she suddenly asked: "Brother, do you take a ticket in the lottery?" I had a ticket in my pocket, but for a long time I had been engaged in a spiritual struggle, because an inner voice had told

me that God's children are not allowed to indulge in a game of chance - while at the same time the prospect of winning a large sum tempted me considerably. My conscience had not been appeased. Before I had time to consider, the answer came from my lips: "No," when I should have said "Yes." This was not the only lie I told at this time. Lying had become second nature to me, and even after I had been converted it played many tricks on me.

How I wished I could unsay the lie that had escaped my lips, but it was no longer possible. Never in my life have I regretted things I have not said, but I have often regretted words I have said. It is a good thing to keep the door locked, and not to let a word slip out. The man who does not take care to reduce the volume of his spoken words, has not been converted.

Pride, and maybe fear too, fear of undermining the confidence which this young girl had in me, prevented me from putting things right immediately. For a week afterwards I found it impossible to pray. When I knelt down to recite "Our Father," I seemed to hear a voice answering: "Liar."

It is said that when Roman general Titus, who afterwards became Emperor, was besieging Jerusalem in the year A.D. 71, and starvation and plague broke out in the city, the rabbi Johanan ben Zacai, one of the Jewish leaders, broke through the lines and made his way to Titus's tent, where he knelt before the general and said: "Lord, spare this city, where there are so many women and innocent children!" Titus answered: "You are lying, old rabbi!" - "But what lie have I told?" the old man

asked in astonishment. "The lie," answered Titus, "is the first word you said. You called me 'Lord.' If I am Lord, why do you not open the gates of the city and receive me with triumphal arches and flowers? If I am Lord, why do you not obey me?"

In the same way, the first word we offer in our prayers is a lie. We say "Father" to Him whose commandments we do not fulfil. We lie, although the Father offers us the truth.

In the anguish of my soul, I went to Tudor Popescu, who at that time as the "senior" believer among us in Rumania. He had once been an Orthodox priest, but like Luther he had had the courage to oppose his Church's hierarchy, and to preach the true gospel. For this reason he had been expelled from the Church.

But thousands of believers followed him, and he was now a leading personality in Christian circles in Rumania. He was a sincere friend of Christian Jews, and he preached to the Jews with great blessing.

I told this old brother of my affliction, and asked him what I should do. I told him of my fear that if I confessed to the girl that I had lied to her - I who had planted the seed of the love of Christ in her - then perhaps she would lose her faith.

Tudor Popescu answered: "You are right to be afraid. The least sin a man commits may prove a stumbling-block to another soul, and condemn that soul to perdition. For this reason you must be more vigilant another time. Nevertheless, my advice is that you should simply confess to her that you have lied. If, as a consequence of this, the girl loses her faith, then this will show that she was not one of the chosen ones of the Lord. You, on the other hand, will continue in the way of the Lord, fulfilling His commandments."

This experience revealed to me how profitable it is for believers to confess their sins not only to God, but also to a wise brother, who can give them advice. The biblical word for confession is ~exomologeo~, which means "to confess outwardly." It is not wise for us to wallow in our own sin, and allow it to remain within us until it chokes our spiritual life.

I called Clarutza to me; I placed her in a comfortable chair facing me, told her what had happened, and asked her humbly

to forgive me. She listened earnestly, and said: "This time I shall forgive you, but you must not do it again."

Full of joy that the burden had fallen from me, I related this to all who were present at the meeting the following Sunday. Immediately, one after the other, Christian Jews stood up and confessed various lies, dishonesties, and thefts, and this confession proved a great blessing to us all.

If a believer from another nation had been present and heard all these confessions, he would have received a very poor impression of the moral standard of the Christian Jews - and he would have been right.

In judging the moral condition of Christian Jews, one should first consider what is its cause. The great Christian church communities, with their many faults, have one indisputable good - they educate men and women in the belief that Christ is the Saviour. If a longing for God is aroused in the average Rumanian, Frenchman or German, he should have no problem in finding the road that leads to God. It is quite natural for him to turn to Christ as the Saviour. It would not occur to him to have to make a choice between Christ, Krishna or Mohammed.

Those who have not had the advantage of being born of Christian parents are in an entirely different situation. When a longing for God is aroused in them, they are offered the way of their own religious tradition - Mosaic, Mohammedan, Buddhist or Hindu. If they hear the gospel, a large proportion of their spiritual energy must be employed in overcoming the old prejudices against Christianity and the love of the religion into which they were born. They must overcome great intellectual difficulties before they can accept what must appear sheer madness to the human mind and logic - that my sins have been atoned for by the death of a carpenter on a cross two thousand years ago; because this carpenter, who made glue and doors, and sold his goods, just as all carpenters do, was really God, incarnate in man. And what is more, those who believe in Him are regarded by God not as sinners who have been forgiven, but as though they had never sinned. In the sight of God they are regarded as though they had been as obedient to His

commandments as Jesus Christ himself, says the Heidelberg Catechism.

Still more spiritual energy is wasted when a Jew becomes a Protestant, because no one Protestant speaks with sufficient authority, and you cannot therefore simply follow in his footsteps. From the pulpit and in their writings Protestants fight against other Protestants. What one says is contradicted by others. Thus a Jew inevitably wastes a great deal of his spiritual energy before he discovers the truth. People who are Christian by birth are saved a great deal of this trouble.

No man, however, has unlimited stores of spiritual energy. The more energy he spends on one thing, the less he has left for anything else. The consumption of spiritual energy

which is required to liberate him from traditional emotions derived from the religion of his people, and to solve the intellectual difficulties that face him, is so great that little is left for the struggle on the moral front.

Anyone who reads the Epistles of Paul carefully will note that this was the situation among the converts in the first congregations. Even Paul himself, a great believer, complained about his thorn in the flesh. [2CO 12:7 Dido]

The low moral standards of Christian Jews, of converts from other non-Christian religions and from atheism must be understood and accepted as an inevitable reality. The strong souls, those who have reached a high moral level - some because they have centuries of Christian influence behind them - must patiently and lovingly welcome the weaker brethren who are making their first steps on the new road of love. They belong to a race which for two thousand years has been separated from its Lord. Older Christians must not be frightened by the many and grievous lapses which the Jewish Christians suffer, nor by any relapse.

Clarutza gave us great joy.

Once she went with us to the summer resort of Sinaia. I went to call on the abbot of the monastery, and asked for permission to sell gospels and other Christian literature outside the church on Sunday morning. He was far too lazy to investigate whether our literature was Orthodox or not. The Greek Orthodox

Church compared to the Roman Catholic Church, is like a village without any dogs. Its priests have fallen asleep. This allows great scope for evangelical work within its walls - occasionally, too, under the protection of its leaders, who take no interest in what is going on under their roof. So we set up a stall with Protestant literature right in front of the church entrance, where those who came to worship at this time of year belonged to the ,lite of Rumania, since Sinaia was the King's summer residence.

Our stall was surrounded by a great crowd. They were astonished, having never seen a gospel, because the Greek Orthodox Church does not place these books in the hands of believers. I had copies of St. John's Gospel, beautifully bound. Churchgoers, even monks, asked whether it had been

written by John the Baptist, of whom they had heard. Clarutza stood by my side, and our books sold like hot cakes; we could hardly satisfy the demand.

On several occasions a police constable patrolled the fringe of the crowd. We looked like suspicious characters. It is a highly debatable point whether all criminals have typical characteristics, but at that time in Rumania one was justified in assuming that faces so typically Jewish obviously suggested that a crime was in the offing; and the two of us looked decidedly Jewish.

The police constable came nearer, and asked me politely what my name was. I answered him pointedly: "Richard Wurmbrand." He was somewhat taken aback, as it sounded German. It was a name I might well have borne in common with any of Hitler's supporters. He retired, with a salute.

A little further off he paused, and looked back at us. Our faces were hardly what he would have described as typically Aryan. He approached once again, and asked us to produce our identity cards. This was our undoing. At that time our identity cards specified our ethnic origins; and we were guilty of having the same ethnic origins as Jesus, whom the policeman, too, worshipped.

It is hard to describe the uproar that followed. He started to shout at the top of his voice: "These dirty Jews have desecrated

our church and our gospel!" A crowd soon gathered. When the people inside the church heard the noise, they came out, and when they heard that the gospel had been desecrated by Jews they demanded their money back, as they refused to read anything written by a Jew. The hubbub increased. One Orthodox lady who knew us, had the courage to stand up in public and call out aloud to those who were standing on the church steps: "You should be ashamed of yourselves! Instead of rejoicing with Jews who belong to the same people as Jesus, who love Him, and give us His gospel, which our priests have not given us, you are picking a quarrel with these innocent people!" The others refused to listen to her; the abbot, to whom we had appealed, excused himself and vanished. The result was that we were arrested, and accused of the serious offence of daring to sell Christian

literature, that is, gospels written by Jews, despite the fact that we were Jews.

We were taken to the police station. As it was Sunday morning there was only one officer there, and we were left in his charge. He told us that the police inspector would arrive and determine our fate, and handed us over to a third person, omitting to tell him that we were under arrest. The telephone rang, summoning him to the scene of a traffic accident, which left only Clarutza and myself, and a junior constable who did not know why we were there. I asked Clarutza: "Are you frightened?" – "Far from it," she replied. "I am enjoying myself. It is lovely to have an experience of this kind with Jesus." Calmly we awaited the arrival of the police inspector.

When he arrived, without asking the permission of the constable, I went up to him. I introduced myself, without mentioning that I was a Jew, or that I had been arrested. I told him: "I've come to sell religious literature in your town, and the I want to ask your permission first." "Have you a permit from the Ministry of Culture?" he asked me. "No," I answered. "Then I'm afraid you cannot sell your literature," the inspector declared. I said: "Then I'll take my literature with me and go." "Very good," he said, instructing the constable accordingly.

Without waiting for him to say any more, we disappeared. We stopped the first taxi and left Sinaia. Later on, we had many

a good laugh when we thought of the face the inspector must have made when he discovered that we had already sold our literature and had been under arrest.

Clarutza was baptized. Shortly after her baptism she emigrated with her parents to the Soviet Union, to escape from Fascism, which was then flourishing in Rumania. She wrote to us from Russia. Not long afterwards, the Fascists penetrated deep into Russian territory. The Rumanian brethren, who were of one mind and heart with us, went to look for her in the ghettoes that were set up by the Hitlerites. In answer to our prayer the Greek Orthodox Bishop Antim Nica and other monks went through the ghettoes, giving help to the Jews, an act of mercy that might well have cost their lives. They found no trace of Clarutza.

~Alba~

Life had dragged Alba into the mire of sin. But Christ saved her while she was still a young girl, perhaps about twenty years old. Seldom have I met such an ardent soul as this daughter of Israel.

One day she came to see me, and said: "Brother, you cannot guess where I have been." I knew that she did unusual things, and I was prepared for anything. "Brother, I've been to see the renowned Rabbi X."

"What should you want of him?"

"I told him I was a great sinner, and asked him what I should do to be saved. He was not used to questions of this kind, but looked at me in astonishment over his glasses, and said: 'If up till now you have done many evil things, then from now on you must do good things.' I said: 'For the simple reason that God has given me this day as a gift, I owe it to Him to do as many good deeds as possible. But how can the good that I do today atone for the evil I did yesterday? This will not appease my conscience. What can I do?' The rabbi answered: 'The only thing I can tell you to do is to do good.' I then put this question to him: 'Is it not true that the blood shed by Jesus on the Cross cleanses me of my former sin?' The rabbi, who had grown suspicious, answered with another question: 'Is it not true that you have come from Wurmbrand?' 'Yes,' I answered, 'I have

come from him. He preaches that the sacrifice which Jesus made on the Cross purifies us from all our sins, and I have come to ask you whether what he preaches is true.' Shaking his head, the rabbi replied: 'Beliefs differ. Some believe in Moses, others in Jesus, others in the Buddha or Mohammed. Everyone according to his wish.' 'No,' I answered, 'Jesus cannot be compared with any of the founders of other religions. It is written of Jesus in the Song of Solomon: "My beloved is the chiefest among ten thousand" (SOS 5:10). All honour to all the founders of the great religions: they are not Jesus's competitors. Jesus cannot be rivalled. The Scriptures call them the Saviour's companions, as in the SOS 1:7, but Jesus is unique among them.'"

Such was Alba.

She was always present at the street meetings which we held at that time, and which in Rumania were an entirely new and unusual phenomenon. She was tireless in the work of distributing gospels to Russian soldiers, and in front of the synagogues.

One of the pamphlets we distributed caused a considerable stir. It was called ~The Meaning of the Easter Ritual~. On the Jewish Easter Eve a ritual is carried out by the master of the house in every household; this ritual is called ~Aifkoimen~. An evening meal is prepared, and everyone in the house, including guests, partakes of it. The meal is called ~Seder~. During this meal the master of the house takes a dish containing three pieces of ~matza~ or unleavened bread, which up till then have been covered with a towel. A special prayer is said; the first piece of ~matza~ is placed to one side. The second piece is broken (in Poland it was customary to pierce it). The children are sent out of the room, and then the broken piece is hidden. The children return. All the grown-ups taking part in the meal have to drink three goblets of wine, but before the third goblet is drunk, the children are told to look for the hidden pieces of bread. When they find them, they are given presents, and cries of delight are uttered.

The pamphlet we distributed commented on this custom, and gave the explanation which we knew: the three pieces of

bread represent the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; thus the second piece represents the second person of the Deity. The breaking of bread signifies the body of our Saviour broken on the Cross, the hiding signifies the burial. The three goblets represent the three days he had to spend in the tomb, and the rediscovery of the bread and the shouts of delight represent the joy of the Resurrection.

It was then explained that Israel had received prophecies foretelling the Messiah, both in writings and in symbolical acts. ~Aifkoimen~ is a symbolical act which has survived from the pre-Christian era. Owing to their religious conservatism, the religious Jews continue to practise it, but it is now an empty husk, stripped of its contents. The Jews carry out this ritual act without realizing that it symbolises the sufferings and resurrection of the Saviour. The pamphlet concluded with a request to anyone who had a better explanation to let us have it.

Our pamphlets had a very attractive appearance. On the outside was printed: ~Jewish Religious Library~. If we had put ~Christian Library~, no Jew would have read them. The cover was in the national colours of the Jews, white and blue, with the Star of David.

Alba and the other brethren and sisters sold great quantities of this pamphlet on the Eve of the Passover in front of the synagogues.

The Jewish community and the Zionist papers, which reviled me in practically every edition, fumed with rage, but in a way that was very gratifying to us, for under the heading "A New Lie from Pastor Wurmbrand" they repeated the essential points of our arguments, and in this way those Jews who had not read our booklets learned what it contained. After the text had been reproduced, there followed such words of abuse as "traitor," "mercenary lackey," "disgusting" and so on, words which also convinced us of the need to examine ourselves spiritually, and provided a serious warning from God that we should beware of treading the slippery path to which these terms of abuse might lead.

Alba could not bear the thought that her elder brother should be insulted. Without a word to us, she went to the

editor of the newspaper and asked to speak to the author of the article attacking me.

She told him: "I have read your article, and I should like to know what is the real interpretation of the Aifkoimen ritual."

"It is not the interpretation given by that traitor Wurmbrand"

"So I understand from your article. I should now like to ask you respectfully if you could give me the true interpretation."

"It is quite different from the one which that disgusting Wurmbrand has given."

"Would you be so kind as to tell me what it is?"

"Mr. Wurmbrand is a man who has sold himself."

"That may be so, but what is the true interpretation of the ritual?"

Neither he nor anyone else could disprove our statements, neither in this respect nor in any others. All that remained was their abuse.

At night Alba and the others fixed posters on the walls of houses and on fences, calling on the Jews to be converted. During the cold winter nights placards were posted, bearing the title: "Christmas - the National Holiday of the Jews." The text underneath stated that every nation gladly celebrates the birthday of its great men, of whom they are proud. It was at Christmas that the greatest man, He who is celebrated and worshipped by all peoples, was born to the Jewish people. Everyone honours the greatest Jew, only the Jews remain indifferent to Him who is called in the Bible "The glory of His people Israel." The posters advised the Jews once again to relent, and to rejoice with other peoples at the Christmas festival.

We were now the target of a new and furious attack.

A Zionist paper wrote: "Mr. Wurmbrand wishes to introduce Christmas and other Christian customs among the Jews. As he is very importunate, it is possible that he might finally convince us. We shall adopt the various customs, including that of ~coliva~ (a cake which is distributed at funerals in the Greek Orthodox Church). And the first coliva we shall eat will be at Mr. Wurmbrand's funeral."

This was a threat of death.

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Alba lived by our side: she shared with us in all our struggles, all our dangers, and in all our battles she was in the front line.

A poor alcoholic, a profoundly religious man, asked me to heal him of his affliction. At that time I was still ignorant of the technique of healing alcoholics by faith, which is very

simple. I was unsuccessful. But Alba would not give up. She went to visit him in the tavern, where he was sitting in a drunken stupor, and talked to him until he was converted and was healed. He has since converted other souls to the faith, and these again have converted others.

Let me at this point make a few general observations.

People with a burning desire to carry out missionary work are apt to hurt the feelings of Jews, often causing a violent reaction. It has been questioned whether this kind of missionary work can be right. Even Jesus warned against proselytising when He said: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves" (MTT 23:15).

But all these considerations, both for and against, cannot prevent people like Alba from being what they are at a particular stage in their development. Lamartine wrote:

> ~Je chantais, mes amis, comme l'homme respire,
> comme l'oiseau g,mit, comme le vent soupire
> comme l'eau murmure en coulant.~
> I sang, my friends, as a man breathes
> As the bird laments, as the wind sighs,
> As the water murmurs when it flows.

The many Albas of this world speak about Jesus because it is their nature to do so; no argument can make me stop breathing; no argument can prevent those who love Jesus from witnessing for Him, just as no argument can prevent some people reacting violently to their witness instead of taking it calmly.

There are many different psychological types among human beings; the extrovert, when he is converted, becomes a

missionary, the introvert becomes a contemplative. God's law is one: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (MTT 7:12). With all my heart I long that any man who is convinced that he possesses a truth which can make me blessed here and in eternity should spare no effort to tell it to me. We consider as normal compulsory schooling, compulsory vaccination, forcing a child to eat

something good, even though he may not appreciate it. Why then should we consider missionary activity as morally unjustified? I am grateful to old W”lfkes because he showed me the way, and it is my conviction that the children of God ought to exercise their missionary activity likewise.

We, too, say to Jesus the words which Abner, the captain of the host, once said to David: "I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth" (2SM 3:21).

The memory of Alba reminds me of something else: we must have patience with a soul. Alba grew in grace from day to day.

In Leviticus we read whoever touches the carcass of an unclean animal shall wash his clothes - and be unclean until the evening (LEV 11:25). Even after you have washed your clothes, you are still unclean for a while. The salvation which Jesus gives is like medicine: one must wait a little while after taking it before feeling its effect. With some people it is necessary to wait longer than with others. The seed that falls on good ground brings forth good fruit; but we sow in spring and gather the fruit in autumn. However good the soil may be, it is impossible to harvest as soon as we have sown. Some trees produce fruit only after several years.

During the period of growth we must be grateful for the small fruits these souls produce, or for the future fruit that is still developing. The whole intention of Leviticus Chapter 5 is to teach us that, if we cannot offer the Lord as much as we should like to, we must offer whatever we can, at every stage of our development. All categories of believers have the same chances of finding favour with God.

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New-born babies are usually ugly. A new-born soul who appears beautiful is probably striking a pose.

Alba not only overcame against sin, but in time she also wore the garment of great virtue. Those who were like her learned to understand a legend about Jesus which I often made use of in my sermons.

It is said that Jesus sent a message to one of his

disciples, telling him that He would visit him together with His apostles. The man who received the message was very glad, and said to his son, who also loved the Saviour: "I shall make my house ready, and you must tidy the garden, so that the Lord will find it clean and swept."

The boy set to work energetically, sweeping and watering the garden. When everything was ready, his father came to see how his son had carried out his orders. He said to him: "Well done, my dear son. I can see that you have worked with great zeal. You have made the garden beautiful and tidy, but it is not tidy enough for the Lord. Work at it a little more."

The boy, who felt that this was a reproach, tidied up the garden once more. This time he gathered up every withered leaf, spruced up every drooping flower, and did all he possibly could to remove the least traces of disorder.

Once again his father inspected his work, and this time he said: "Very good; now it is really tidy, but it is still not tidy enough for the Lord."

The boy, who did not know what else he could do, asked: "But how does one make a garden neat for the Lord?"

His father's answer was: "If you work for His sake, it is not sufficient that you should remove all untidiness from the garden - you must also decorate it with everything that is beautiful, and which has not been grown in it so far. Go to the neighbours, and see if you can find some new plants that you can put in the ground; hang up beautiful carpets, and light lanterns. That is the way to make everything pleasant for the Lord."

This is precisely what Alba did.

It was her privilege to trace me to the prison where I was being secretly held under an assumed name, and she was the first to tell my family that I was still alive.

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I did not see her for many years. Before I was released from prison, she left for Israel. But after coming to the West, I met her again, the same faithful, loving woman.

~Mircea Petrescu~

One day, Alba was sitting on a bus; opposite her was a man who, judging by his appearance, was an Orthodox Jew. She was filled with the desire to speak to him of Jesus.

We never missed an opportunity on the bus, in the marketplace, on the street, wherever occasion offered.

The thought that all people could become like Jesus, but that they do not know this and die in affliction; the thought that man is second in rank after God Himself (angels are the ministering spirits of mankind), and that he nevertheless lives without being aware of the truth, made us weep. Our prayer meetings were harrowing, and many tears were shed.

My suffering became unbearable; when I walked in the streets it was like a stab in my heart every time someone passed by and the question arose: "I wonder if he has been saved?" One of our sisters in the faith, who is now dead, always had tears in her eyes when she thought of the eternal fate that awaited the people she met in the street. I prayed God to take this suffering from me, or I should not be able to live, and the Lord heard my prayer.

Alba did not weep; she always smiled her winning smile, a smile which had the same source as my suffering. She said to herself: "Since bad girls attract men with their smiles, why should I not use my smile to convert men to good?"

But however would she be able to get into conversation with this Orthodox Jew? These men are serious, sober citizens, not in the habit of opening up a conversation with an unknown woman. It is written in the ~Pirkei Abot~, the Teachings of the Parents, in the Babylonian Talmud: "Do not speak to a woman." The rabbis say: "This refers to one's own woman – how much more to another's woman!" For this reason the wise men said: "As often as a man speaks to a woman, it shall be his misfortune."

Alba therefore decided to sing in the crowded bus.

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The message of her song, she hoped, would go straight to the

heart of the Jew.

To her amazement the man asked her: "What sort of song is that?" She answered his question, and told him about the Saviour who had given His life on the Cross. He listened to her with the closest attention, and finally expressed a wish to hear more about our faith. She asked him to leave the bus with her, and to accompany her to my house.

And so it came about that they both walked in through my door.

When the Jew introduced himself, I expected to hear a Jewish name, but instead I heard a rattling good Rumanian one. And the story he told me was a strange one.

Despite his highly Jewish appearance, he was not a Jew, but a Rumanian who had been converted to Judaism and had adopted Jewish dress and all Jewish customs.

This man, who was a talented painter, told me how it had happened. While he was still a small boy, he was incensed when he saw Christian children hitting Jewish children. He defended the Jews, and his reward was that he was persecuted together with them.

When the war broke out and he realized that it was not a question of defending his fatherland only, but of committing crimes and sacrilege by murdering innocent Jews who were killed in their [sic] hundreds of thousands together with their women and children, he deserted from the front, at the risk of his life. He would rather die than be a murderer. He loved the victims of this cruel and senseless persecution, and he asked himself: "If Jesus were in Rumania now, whose side would He be on: on the side of the Jews or of the Christians who kill Jews?" There could only be one answer to this question: on the side of the victims.

The Pharisees, who hated Jesus with a violent and profound hatred, remembered vividly His burning love for Israel, how He once said: "Salvation is of the Jews" (JHN 4:22). This clearly emerges in a fantastic and unattractive, but highly significant story in the Talmud, the holy book of the Pharisees.

In the ~Gittim~ we read of Onkelos bar Kalinikos, a grandchild

of the Roman Emperor Titus, the man who destroyed Jerusalem. This young man wished to adopt the Jewish religion. But before he did so he summoned the spirit of Titus, and asked him: "Which people is most highly thought of in the other world?" "Israel," answered Titus. "Shall I join them?" Titus replied that they had too many rules and regulations, which cannot be fulfilled. "It would be better if you persecuted them, for then you would be great. For it is written in the Book of Lamentations that 'her [Israel's] children are gone into captivity before the enemy'" (LAM 1:5). Titus was then asked what his punishment was, and he said that he had brought his punishment down upon his own head: every day his ashes were gathered together, he was brought to life, he was condemned, he was burned again, and his ashes spread over the seven seas.

After this Onkelos summoned Balaam, the false prophet, and asked him: "Which people is most highly thought of in the other world?" "Israel," answered Balaam. "Shall I join them?" Balaam answered: "You must not seek their fortune or their prosperity eternally all your days." Then Onkelos asked him what his punishment was, and Balaam replied that he had boiling filth poured over him. (As Balaam had failed to carry out the command of Balak, King of the Moabites, to curse the Jews, he advised the Midianites, who were the neighbours of the Moabites, to send their daughters into the Jewish camp, in order to lead the Jews into sin, and in that way bring down the wrath of the Lord upon them. Hence this punishment.)

Then Onkelos summoned the spirit of Jesus (this name occurs only in the old editions of the Talmud, which were not censored by the Inquisition. The censored editions, instead of using the name Jesus, have inserted the phrase ~Poshe Israel~, the Sinner of Israel) and asked Him: "Which people is most highly thought of in the other world?" Jesus answered: "Israel." "Shall I join them?" Jesus answered: "You must seek to promote the best interests of Israel and not its destruction. To destroy Israel is to destroy the light of God's eyes."

Even Jesus's bitterest enemies repeat the undeniable fact that Jesus loved Israel.

Petrescu loved Jesus: for this reason it was natural for him to side with the Jews, against anti-Semitic Christians.

Only that human soul who receives no help from the grace of God cannot abide by the golden mean, but lapses into extremes. Petrescu was right to deny a false Christianity, a Christianity full of hatred. But in denying it, we must also realize the secret of the great decline of the Church, the Church that Jesus had promised He would be with all its days.

In Matthew's Gospel, after the account of the healing of many who were sick and possessed of devils, we are told that in this way Jesus "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (MTT 8:17). (The literal translation is: He assumed our weaknesses.)

When Christ was made man, He subjected Himself to all the circumstance of life; He could exert his influence through the Word, but He was also able to be moved by others. He healed thousands of their sins, and destroyed the hatred with which thousands of others were consumed. But the sin and hatred which He took away from others fell on Him. All the weaknesses which people have taken with them into church, all the sins which Christians have committed for two thousand years, have become His weaknesses, His powerlessness. A refusal on His part to accept the weak would mean lack of love; to receive them would mean that He assumed the shame of their weaknesses and sin - it meant in fact allowing the crimes of Christians to fall upon His head.

Leviticus contains the phrase "all these abominations" (LEV 18:27). The word for "these" is ~Eleh~; but the text actually contains what no translator has dared to translate, ~toevot ha-El~, which means nothing less than - ~horribile dictu~ - which means "God's abominations." The serious thing about any abomination committed by someone who worships God, is precisely that it redounds to the Holy Name, and in the eyes of men it passes for an abomination of God. And is it not so that people judge God unjustly for the injustices which they, who pass for His worshippers, commit?

A Latin proverb says: ~Qui bene distinguet, bene docet~, which means, "He who distinguishes well, teaches well."

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Sins are only reflected back on Jesus - they are

associated with His name. He bears them, but He is innocent. Nobody should reject Christ because of crimes committed by Christians.

In this respect the Jews created confusion in the sentimental heart of our artist friend. A Kabbalistic rabbi caught him in his net, and persuaded him to abandon the Christian faith, and adopt the Mosaic. We endeavour to turn Jews into Christians; he had been converted from Christianity to Judaism.

The struggle was a difficult one, because we were dealing with an idealist, and a person with high moral standards. It is always difficult to convert someone who knows himself to be a decent person. Step by step, I showed him the prayers of the synagogue, and asked him if he accepted them, because - credulous as he had been - he had been made to say them while at the same time he had failed to realize that in entering the synagogue he had made a clean break with the Jesus who had taught him to be good and to love.

Every morning the Jews say: "Blessed art Thou, Jehovah, King of the World, because Thou hast not made me a 'goy' (gentile), a slave or a woman." I asked him: "Do you accept the belief that you are an inferior creature, lower than every Jew, merely because you were born a Rumanian? What else is this but racial prejudice? At the Feast of the Passover the Jews stand up to pray to God: ~Shfoh hamotha al hagoim asher lo iediuha~, that is to say, 'Pour out Thy wrath over the peoples that do not know Thee!' Do you agree with a prayer of this kind? Is not Jesus's advice to His apostles superior, to go to all people and preach the gospel, and in this way teach them how to escape the wrath of God and to start a new life in love?"

.....

I also showed him the inconsistencies of the Jewish prayer book. There were prayers used in the ritual of the great Day of Atonement which had been inserted by Jews who believed secretly in Jesus. They ask God that these prayers may be received ~al-iad Jeshu Metatron~ - through Jesus standing before the Throne. ~Metatron~ is the Kabbalistic name for the Messiah.

On the same day another prayer is offered up, which has

not yet been translated in any of the vernacular editions of the Hebrew prayer books. This starts with the words ~Az milifnei beresit~. The rabbis have good grounds for leaving this prayer untranslated, because it says: "The Messiah, our justification, has forsaken us. We are defeated, and there is no one to bring us justice. He has been killed and pierced for our sins. We have been healed by His wounds. The time for the victory of the new creation is at hand. He ascendeth on high in a chariot. He shines forth from Seir to hear us for a second time on the mountains of Lebanon."

It is obvious that He who has been pierced for our sins, in order that we should have forgiveness, can be none other than Jesus. The synagogue sins hymns of adoration to Him, although it rejects Him, in the same way as some priests, while singing of repentance in every liturgy, are furious if anyone mentions repentance to them.

Gradually a light dawned in Petrescu's heart. He realized that the Mosaic religion is of necessity a false religion, because it is an autosoteric religion, that is to say, a religion in which one's salvation depends on one's own exertions. Autosoterism is lack of humility; neither sin nor salvation comes from us. Men's fates have been determined a long time ago, and from a long way away, and eternal life is a gift of God, just as sin comes from Satan and is not an act of free will.

One Christmas Eve, when the candles were lit, Petrescu said calmly: "Today, Jesus has been born in me, too."

Petrescu is unique: he is a pure Rumanian, and at the same time a Christian Jew, seeing that he has come to Christianity from Judaism. Later he also became chairman of the board of trustees in our church. He is still a steadfast brother and a faithful friend. He is married to a Christian Jewess.

One day I was preparing my sermon in a park; I was reading the Bible, and a young girl beside me was also reading a book. I tried to see what it was. It was a novel by a Rumanian author. I said to her: "I have read your book, but do you know my book?" Thus started a conversation which ended with the young lady's conversion - and subsequently that of her mother. I baptized the mother at the height of a violent bombing

attack. The girl is now married to Petrescu, and they are living happily together.

Spurgeon says that when God closed the gates of Paradise, He did not entirely close them; He left a small corner of it, a truly Christian marriage. Their home is a corner of Paradise just like that.

~Holy Moishe~

Let others praise their intellectuals: I should like to praise the fool whom God chose to shame the wise.

Our brother Moishe was by trade a pall-bearer at funerals; he suffered from a gentle form of madness, which was not dangerous to others. At our meetings he would weep copiously, and make an awful din when the preacher spoke of our Saviour's sufferings, and laughed aloud when he spoke of His victory.

The other believers in the congregation considered Moishe a disturbing element. One of them promised him - he was very poor - that if he would only keep quiet during the services, he could come and dine at his house every Sunday, and enjoy roast meat, cakes and fruit.

For one whole Sunday Moishe kept comparatively calm; but the following week, when the preacher spoke of the Resurrection, he stood up in the middle of the sermon and shouted: "Roast or no roast, hallelujah!"

In 1939 an anti-Semite fired a shot at the Chief Rabbi Niemerover. The intended victim was not hurt, the bullet passing through his overcoat, but the excitement made him ill, and he was forced to stay in bed. A great many Jews called to congratulate him on his lucky escape. Among these was Moishe. He said to the rabbi: "Don't you see, Your Eminence, that God does not want sinners to die, but He wants them to be converted and saved?"

He came to our house to dinner, and as we were about to start he said to my wife: "Sister, will you please remove my knife. I know that I am mad, and I have promised God never to

touch a knife, lest in an unguarded moment I should injure someone. After all, Adam and Eve ate without using knives."

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I reflected that a great many wise men had a lot to learn from this madman.

In January 1940, a revolt took place in Bucharest led by the Legion of the Archangel Michael, a Fascist organization. A great many Jews were killed; some of them were flayed, and suspended on hooks in the slaughterhouse under the inscription "Kosher Meat."

Moishe was sitting in a cheap teahouse when a gang of Fascists burst in. Their leader shouted: "All dirty Jews clear out!" The Jews went outside, where they were herded into lorries, to be driven to the woods and shot. Moishe, who was easily recognisable as a Jew, sat quietly drinking his tea. The leader of the greenshirts shouted at him: "You dirty Jew, didn't you hear me? I told you to get out!" Moishe answered calmly: "Dear brother, dirty Jews are those who do what Judas did - they sell Jesus. I am an Israelite who loves Him." One of the leaders of the gang exclaimed: "Leave him alone. You can see that he is a preacher." And they left him in peace.

But Moishe, instead of departing, said to the man: "I can see that you are good and merciful. God will reward you for this. But don't stop at half measures; let the other Jews in the lorry go home, too." Mad people often possess tremendous powers of suggestion, and I believe that Moishe had this power, but from another source. At any rate, the greenshirt ordered the other Jews out of the lorry, and allowed them to go home.

Now Moishe was thoroughly scared; he went home and remained in hiding throughout the time that the pogrom lasted.

All the Jews he had saved told this story of Moishe to everyone they met, and because he had vanished, and was believed to be dead, he was referred to as "Holy Moishe."

He later suffered a tragic fate, dying of jaundice in a concentration camp.

~Bertha~

Christian missions have often been reproached for giving material help to poor Jews, and in this way buying souls.

This is a difficult problem.

Many of the Jews lived in poverty, and our work was directed especially to assisting these needy persons. How could we avoid helping them materially? How could we avoid helping Jewish refugees out of Hitler's Germany? It is written that Jesus had compassion on the multitude. This compassion is also a characteristic of His true followers. Jesus had compassion on men and women because they were hungry, not only because they were not saved. He was concerned with the problem of feeding them. If we help a person and at the same time preach the gospel to him, these two things will be associated in the minds of onlookers, and of those who obtain relief. Jesus encountered the same difficulty. He preached the new teaching, but at the same time He gave bread to the poor and hungry. The result of this was that many people came to Him only to receive loaves and fishes, which He also gave them.

There is a very old Jewish legend about Abraham. One day he invited a beggar into his tent. H wished to show him hospitality and prepared a meal for him. But when he said grace, the beggar began to curse God, declaring that he could not bear to hear His name. The pious Abraham drove the beggar away; he could not stand hearing anyone cursing his heavenly Friend in his own tent. But God appeared to him, and said: "This man has cursed me and reviled me for fifty years, and yet I give him food every day, and could you not show him hospitality for one single day? You might at any rate have waited to drive him out until after he had eaten."

If we must feed those who curse God, how much more those who pretend they are worshipping Him! Also, it is very difficult to be certain whether a man is pretending, or whether he is really a believer.

In Jesus's well-known parable the prodigal son returned to his father for material reasons, and yet he was received with

the greatest love.

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Truth is weak; it has never triumphed unless it has been able to offer material advantages, unless it has dressed itself in beautiful apparel, and unless it has been able to make an appeal to the emotions.

Old Simeon said of Jesus: "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel" (LUK 2:34), in other words not only for raising up but also for a fall.

Some Jews who were shown Christian charity in the form of material assistance, were thereby raised to unexpected heights of belief. Such was Bertha.

One might say of Bertha what Disraeli once said when he was reproached for having married for money: "Yes, when I married I knew so little about my wife that I would not have taken her without money. But now that I know her so well, I would be willing to marry her even if she were poor."

Other Jews, on the other hand, have suffered a disastrous fall as a result of material help, which brought a corruption to their souls from which they have never been able to recover.

A certain sculptor who was profoundly moved by stories of the first Christian martyrs had made up his mind to create works of art which would immortalise the Christians who had been thrown to the wild beasts. He sculpted a young man and a young woman - the man holding a cross in his hand - and then started to work on a lion, crouched ready to hurl himself at the two figures.

One day he called his friends to his studio to show them his work. The lion was still only an unshaped lump of clay.

One of his friends said: "You are a poor man. How can you see this work? There are many artists who make sculptures like this, and no Jew would buy a work of art with a cross in it. Remove the cross, and replace it with a key. The key is a holy symbol in many religions. It might remind you of the keys of St. Peter, but it is also a holy symbol for spiritualists and other occultists. This will make it easier for you to find a buyer."

And so the sculptor changed the cross into a key.

Then a wealthy American walked into his studio and exclaimed: "What a magnificent work of art! It symbolises

thrift. The little lump of clay might represent a money-safe and the young man with the key teaches people to be thrifty in spending their money. I will give you a thousand dollars for this work."

In this way a sculpture which was originally intended to extol martyrdom was transformed into a work in honour of money.

There are many souls who are inspired at first with the love of Jesus, but as they are poor and receive material aid, the picture of the Master is gradually blotted out. What really concerns them is how much help they can get, and where they can get it, and above all, whether anyone else has received more than they have.

But this only happens to some.

Bertha openly confessed that, to start with, she came to us because she was attracted by the rumour that we helped poor Jews. But after she believed in Jesus with all her heart, she never again appealed to us for help, although she was very poor.

She was married to a German citizen, who was half-Jewish. He was not converted. They had three sons. In 1943 the German legation in Rumania published an order to the effect that all German citizens were to be repatriated. She stayed behind in Rumania. He and three children, who according to the racial thinking at that time suffered the great tragedy of being three-quarters Jewish, made their way to Germany.

In Germany an informer revealed that the husband was not only half-Jewish, but was even married to a Jewess, and that his children therefore had mostly Jewish blood in their veins, and only a drop of Siegfried's blood.

They were all imprisoned by the Gestapo, and over their head hung the threat of the death camp. In order to save his life, the man told a lie, declaring that his wife was Rumanian. The German police offered him the chance of writing home to ask the authorities to forward documents to show that his wife was of

Aryan extraction. If this could be proved, the children would be three-quarters Aryan, and they would be saved.

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In those days in Rumania, everything could be arranged with the help of money. Bertha's family obtained papers showing she was of pure Aryan blood - more Aryan than Hitler, whose origins, according to rumour, were a little mixed.

I was in her home when her relatives brought her the false documents which would save her husband and three children from the gas chambers of Auschwitz, and I witnessed a scene which I shall remember to my dying day. She tore the false documents to pieces and declared: "Abraham was willing to sacrifice one child to God; I shall sacrifice three children and a husband, but I refuse to tell a lie!"

She had no further news of her husband and children.

Meister Eckhardt wrote that he who leaves behind things in the form in which they exist - empty, haphazard - will receive them back in their pure essence, in the eternal essence. He who leaves things in the lowest form, in which they are mortal, will receive them back from God in their true form. Bertha will have her family restored to her in glory.

Bertha will never know how magnificent was her gesture: she is a humble sister. The brethren do not know of her sacrifice, because she has not breathed a word of it to them. And, what is more, when she discussed with the brethren the case of someone who had obtained false documents in order to escape persecution, she declared: "Let us not judge him! Every man must follow his own conscience."

Did Bertha do right or wrong? She judges no one, and in this way she is raised above the judgment of men.

This raises the question of whether we should always speak the truth.

Christian writings from the fourth century record the lives and meditations of the first generation of monks. These monks lived in the desert of Thebaid, where they had fled from the corruption which entered the Church when Christianity became the recognized religion. In this book we read that one day

Father Agathon asked Father Alonie: "How shall I contrive to keep my tongue from telling lies?" The answer was: "If you do not lie you will commit many sins." "How is this possible?" And he

answered: "Lo, two men have committed a murder before your eyes, and one of them has taken refuge in your cell. Then comes the judge, seeking him, and he asks you: "Was a murder committed before your eyes?" If you do not lie you will condemn a man to death. It is better that you should let him be judged by God, since He knows everything."

Luther says that to lie to protect someone else or in jest is not a lie. For myself, I believe that there is a confusion between the concept of a lie and an untruth. ~Faust~, ~Othello~ and ~Parsifal~ are not the truth, but neither are they lies; they are art. The fairy stories we tell our children, or the jokes we tell grown-ups to amuse them, are not lies. They belong to an entirely different sphere, the realm of fantasy and play. Is it a lie to tell an untruth in order to save the life, honour or property of an innocent person who is being hounded by an executioner who persecutes truth and purity? Should we give such an unpleasant name to an action which springs from love?

A lie is the untruth I speak in order to injure my neighbour. "Love and do what you will," says Augustine. Is good better than truth; and an untruth that saves a life is better than a truth that destroys it. In the dictatorial, anti-Christian countries, this is an everyday and acute problem for believers.

But what about Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac? There is a sphere of sanctity where our practical judgements lose their power.

I wonder if truth could have survived in the many labyrinths of life if, here and there, there had not live anonymous heroes of the calibre of Bertha, who sacrificed all they held dear for the sake of truth? I have often heard superficial sermons, in which the preacher asked: "What would you lose if you became a Christian? Only the brandy bottle, your clothes, the stick with which you beat your wife, your name and reputation, your bad conscience, or the hell that exists in your home!" No, there are people who for the sake of their Christian

conviction are prepared to lose their fortune, their freedom, their health, and even the persons they love most on earth!

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~A witness in our family~

My wife comes from an orthodox Jewish family. After she was converted, she was unable to sleep at night for the thought of her parents, who were pious Jews. We travelled to Cernauti in order to talk to them, and we arrived on Friday evening, the start of the Jewish Sabbath.

The table was set for the ritual feast; the candles had been lit. The three sisters, who were younger than my wife, and my little brother-in-law who was only eight years old, looked at us respectfully. The parents' delight was unbounded; after all, I was the husband of their eldest daughter.

My father-in-law rose to his feet and recited the ~Kidush~, the blessing of the wine. He was very surprised when he noticed me - whom he knew to be an atheist - joining in the singing the old prayer based on GEN 2:1-3: "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. Bless art Thou, Jehovah, King of the World, that hast created the fruit of the vine."

After this, the bread was blessed, and the meal started. When it was over, and only the candles cast their shadows on the walls, I began to say: "It is written that God completed His work on the seventh day; and it is written again that on the seventh day God rested. What was it that was not perfect in all that had been created in the six days? What did God complete on the seventh? How did He complete it while He was resting?

"What He created in six days was not complete. Man still needed one thing: rest. God created this on the seventh day, and in this way He filled His world with His own rest.

"The Law of Moses may be compared to the first six days of the Creation. The Law contains six hundred and thirteen commandments, which do not give us rest, but

which torment our conscience. We are constantly transgressing the Law. Who can maintain that he has kept at least two commandments: to love God with all his heart and all his soul and all his might and to love his neighbour as himself? The Law cannot be kept. It is only a mirror in which we see our own sinfulness, and how impossible it is for us as human beings to live apart from God, the God whose laws are just and holy and which have become a burden which we, sinners, cannot bear.

"In the old days the Jews could not be saved by keeping the Law - all the great men in the Bible describe how they themselves have often transgressed it - but by the sacrifice of atonement which was made in the temple. There was no forgiveness of sins without bloodshed. Sin was transferred, by the laying on of hands, to an innocent animal which symbolically represented the sacrifice which the future Messiah would make by His death for the sins of man. By slaughtering the animal the Jews appeased their conscience; it was brought as a sacrifice for their transgressions of the Law. But now we have neither a temple nor a sacrifice. How, then, can we be saved?"

My father-in-law answered: "The rabbis have taught us that if we recite daily a chapter of the Law of Moses dealing with sacrifice, God will count this as though we ourselves had made the sacrifice."

I answered: "I know that. One day a Christian walked into the shop of a very orthodox Jew, and started to talk to him on the subject we have just been discussing, the sacrifice, and he got the same answer as you have given me. This man did not continue the argument, but said: 'Every man should hold to his own convictions. I have not come here to discuss religion, but to buy goods.' And he asked for three shirts, six pairs of socks, a dozen handkerchiefs, and various other articles. Finally he asked the shopkeeper to give him a bill specifying all that he had purchased. The shopkeeper, who was delighted to have done such good business, wrote out a bill, and wrapped the purchase. The Christian read the bill aloud, took the parcel in his hand, and walked out of the shop.

The shopkeeper called after him: 'You have forgotten to pay!' The customer answered: 'Didn't I read the bill to you? 'Yes, but you never paid.' To which the customer replied: 'Isn't reading the bill the same as paying it?'

"If we reduce this to its purely practical meaning, we may say that the merchant was not satisfied with precisely the same approach as he used in his religion. The sacrifice must be made; reading about it is not enough."

I spoke with my father-in-law about the Messianic prophecies, which were fulfilled in Jesus. But acts speak more eloquently than verses in the Bible. The Jews are God's chosen people, chosen to bring the Light of God into the world. Millions of people who in ancient times worshipped Zeus, Jupiter, Wotan or other idols, today worship the true God, and regard the books written by our great prophets as their holy book. Who has raised the nations out of polytheism, and converted them to the worship of the only just, good God, the God of Israel, who demands a moral life? Jesus! Through Him the Messianic vocation with which our people had been entrusted was fulfilled. Through Jesus's sufferings, life and death as a servant of God, through His existence as a man of suffering, as Isaiah had foretold, He has caused mankind to give their hearts to our God, and caused those who believed in a Saviour who died and rose again, whether they called him Adonis, Osiris, Dionysus or Heracles, to know the fulfillment in history of these ancient myths.

Jesus is the King of the Jews, the Messiah of Israel.

I told the children a great many other stories, and they listened to me with the deepest respect. My father-in-law became pensive. That evening my mother-in-law knelt in prayer with us.

The children began attending Christian meetings regularly; not long afterwards they embraced the truth. The old man was ashamed of being seen at a meeting, but as the time to go came nearer, he would call out in a loud voice that re-echoed through the house: "Hurry, hurry! Everyone gets there in time; my daughters are the only ones who are late!"

My little brother-in-law, who was receiving religious instruction from a great rabbi, resisted stubbornly. I have often been forced to wonder at the independence of thought and action shown by Jewish children when they are small. They are living examples of Blaise Pascal's remark: "Man is born as an original, and dies as a copy."

~Converting anti-Semites~

The community of Christian Jews was the very place where a great many anti-Semite persons found Christ, during the period when Nazism reigned.

One anti-Semite who attended our church took part in the ill-treatment of a number of Jews on his way to a meeting; he had not been told by the person who had invited him that a Jew was going to preach. He became converted that very Sunday. He has never since that day struck a Jew.

Once, when a Rumanian sister brought another anti-Semite to our meeting, I preached a sermon based on Jesus's saying: "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (MTT 15:24). It was a sermon meant to call the Jews to conversion; so I quoted biblical texts which aimed to prove that the gospel is first and foremost a message addressed to the Jews: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (MTT 10.5-6). "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (LUK 24:47). "The gospel of Christ ... is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (ROM 1:16).

When the meeting was over, the sister reproached me bitterly: "You know very well that we often bring to our meetings people who are not Jews, and who usually hate you. Why do you preach like that? The Rumanians would be offended by your sermons, which are too pro-Jewish."

Our anti-Semitic friend went home after the meeting, and argued to himself as follows: "Did you hear what the Bible says? The Jew first, and then the other nations. But where

does the hater of the Jews come in? Nowhere." He gave up his anti-Semitism, as well as his other sins, and was converted. He became an enthusiastic fisher of men, and a true friend of Jews and Hebrew Christians.

The Jews were often offended at the warmth and love with which we treated those who hated Jews; they were shocked, and often left our meetings when they heard us praying openly for the anti-Jewish authorities. They were angry because we maintained good relations with anti-Semitic clergymen and laymen.

Pope Gregory VII once said: "Just as a spiritual thing cannot be seen except through its earthly being, and just as the soul cannot function without a body, so religion cannot work without a Church. But if the Church has a body, then it also has its sins and weaknesses." Anti-Semitism is one of the many weaknesses suffered by the body of the Church; but it is not an isolated phenomenon. It has its diametric opposite: Jewish chauvinism and contempt for Christian people and for Christian Jews.

We must tolerate the weaknesses of the weak, and endeavour to cure them with love. In some cases we have succeeded in doing this. We believe that love can triumph over hatred.

Confucius wrote: "I have seen a man trying to put out a great fire with a cup of water. He failed, and concluded that water does not extinguish fire. The fool! A cup of water cannot extinguish a fire, but a great deal of water can."

The drop of love which we possess cannot extinguish evil in this world, but a great deal of love will do so. In any case, we do not believe that there is any sense in being angry with the stick from which you receive your blows. Be indignant with the man who wields the stick. Your enemy is driven by hatred; hatred must be hated, but not the man.

There are reasons why people turn against the Jews; one of these reasons is to be found in the sins of which Jews, like other nations, are guilty. There are undoubtedly many more reasons, which have their source in the evils of the anti-Semite's heart. We need understanding, and must try as

far as possible to remove the causes, but we must not hate the anti-Semites.

In many cases I have seen that it is sufficient for a number of Jew-haters to encounter Jews who are devout Christians, for their anti-Semitism to disappear as though it had never existed.

How many of us are personally prepared to subscribe to the old saying that an enemy is a treasure that has fallen from heaven? We must care for him as a means to aid our own spiritual progress. Without anti-Semitism, the state of Israel would never have come into being; Theodore Herzl, the founder of Zionism, was aware of this. Without anti-Semitism, the Jewish Christians would never have had an opportunity of practising the valuable virtues of patience and love of one's enemies. Our enemies are our benefactors. They are in truth only their own enemies, because they are preparing their own hell.

As far as the slaughtered and tortured members of our people are concerned, we are every bit as distressed at losing them as other Jews are; but our sorrow is appeased by the hope of resurrection and the hope that in the Kingdom of God all injustices will be made good.

~Christ's martyrs among the Jewish people~

I have said something about Feinstein, who in his death testified to his faith. I believe that in the better world to which he went, he is still interested in me and in the work which he set on foot. How else am I to explain the remarkable coincidence that on two occasions before I was sentenced to protracted terms of imprisonment, I preached on the Sunday prior to my arrest in Jassy of all places, from the pulpit where he had preached; and I lived in the house which was still permeated by his spirit, and received strength from his example? I must now mention other Jews who in their love of Jesus set little store by their lives.

The first of these was Vladimir Davidmann. He was the son of a rabbi in Balti. It was intended that he should follow

in his father's footsteps, and become a teacher in Israel.

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Being indifferent, as are most Christian Jews, about the conflicts between the various Christian confessions - which arose at the time when the Jews were not yet incorporated in the Church, and which they consider they would be better advised not to participate in, unless they can bring about conciliation - he joined the Greek Orthodox Church, at the time the dominant one in Rumania. Such was the nature of his soul that he would have felt equally at home in the Lutheran Church, or among the Baptists, because he was attracted by the essence of Christianity, and not by its conditioned history. He regarded the principles separating the various confessions as a disguise to conceal pride, material and political interests, and personal ambitions, which are the real sources of schism.

From his earliest years he had been taught to read aloud the long and daily prayers of the Jews, in which the thirteen articles of faith of the Mosaic belief are pronounced. One of them runs: "I believe in perfect faith that all the words of the prophets are true." But he noticed that some of these words, which according to this pronouncement were supposed to be true, were concealed from him, for instance the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. Vladimir's teachers ignored this passage, but Vladimir himself read it, realizing that the prophecies concealed a mystery.

One day, out of curiosity, he entered the Greek Orthodox cathedral in town. The magnificent service made a deep impression on him, and he repeated his visit. First of all he pondered these things, and later on he realized that there was a connection between the service he had witnessed in the church and the fact that the Jews suppressed some of the texts in the Scripture, and he was convinced that the promised Messiah had come. Jesus was that Messiah.

Not surprisingly, the rumour spread in the town that the young Jew with ringlets and a kaftan was often to be seen in the Greek Orthodox church. When he refused to obey his family's demand that he should put an end to this "aberration," his father kept him locked up in the house for six months. As soon as he was released, he sought contact

with the priests, left home with nothing but the clothes he was wearing, and made his way to the monastery at Dobrovft. Here he was baptized. On the day he was to be baptized, he was lying in bed suffering from pneumonia. Nevertheless, he went through with the ceremony, and emerged from the cold baptismal water completely restored.

His parents, who had made great efforts to locate him, discovered his hiding-place. They abducted him from the monastery, and brought him back home. Several orthodox rabbis were gathered in the house, and they decided to punish the "traitor" with death. But that very night thieves broke into the house of the Rabbi Davidmann. In the ensuing confusion, Vladimir managed to escape. He made his way to the monastery of Neamtul in Moldavia.

One day, as he was walking near the monastery, his young brother, a fanatic, who had tracked him down, attacked and wounded him.

When he had recovered, he made his way to Bucharest, so that his family should be unable to trace him. Here he was admitted to a school where he was to learn church music, subsequently continuing his studies in Cernauti.

In 1937 he was on his way to this town to take his final exam. In the train he was reading a book of prayers, while his travelling companions were discussing various worldly matters. They noticed that he was reading a prayer book, and occasionally making the sign of the Cross, and they began to mock him. Thereupon Vladimir knelt down, and started to read the prayer book from the first page, this time aloud. The mockers were silenced. When he had finished, they apologised for their behaviour, and asked him, as a sign that he had forgiven them, to read the whole prayer again.

The night after his arrival in Cernauti he had a dream, in which he saw a desolate landscape filled with repulsive animals. He was riding on the back of one of these animals. In the face of another monster he recognized an uncle, who bit him with all his might. Suddenly he saw a saint, dressed in shining ecclesiastical robes, descending a luminous ladder. He recognized him as St. Seraphim, whose ikon he had seen

in the monastery. In his hand the saint held a chalice, on which were the words "Consuming Fire," inscribed in Yiddish. Flames poured out of the chalice, filling the air. Then the vision vanished, and Vladimir saw nothing but a beautiful green meadow. When he awoke, he wrote a letter to an acquaintance in Bucharest, in which he recounted what had happened on his journey, and described his dream.

The next day, Vladimir was shot and mortally wounded by his uncle who was inflamed by religious fanaticism. He lived for only a few hours. The matter was widely reported in the newspapers. But the system of "hush money" was firmly established in Rumania in those days: the authorities and the press were bribed, and no one was punished.

The death of Vladimir Davidmann was not without its fruits: as he lay dying he was nursed by his sister, a girl of about seventeen. She was converted when she saw her brother's steadfastness in the faith, while dying the death of a martyr. She, too, was baptized into the Greek Orthodox Church.

She figured in an unusual episode which deserves to be mentioned.

When the Germana-Rumanian troops occupied Cernauti in 1941, this girl, together with thousands of other Jews, was deported to Kamentz-Podolsk in the Ukraine. Suddenly, SS troops arrived on the scene and set about massacring the whole camp. But killing ten thousand people is no easy task: graves had to be dug, and the bodies of the murdered Jews had to be buried by those who were awaiting their turn to be killed. This took two or three days, and Maria Davidmann, with the others, was awaiting her turn. Unexpectedly, a German officer came up to her, and without any preamble asked her: "Are you a Christian?" Astonished, she answered that she was. The officer then told her: "You are not going to die. Follow me." At the risk of his own life, this officer took her back to Cernauti, thus saving her from an almost certain death.

It is possible that a German soldier, a Christian, who was on duty at the time, heard her talking about Jesus to

the other Jews who were waiting to be slaughtered. As she was speaking in Yiddish – a language which is akin to German, and which Germans can understand – he would have realized that she was a disciple of Jesus. He must have reported this secretly to his commanding officer, whom he knew to be a Christian (I also have met a Gestapo officer who was a child of God), and this man made up his mind to save her, even at the risk of his own life.

From Cernauti Maria was taken to Bucharest – far from the theatre of war – where she was safe.

I have often talked to her. She was a simple Christian, not remarkable for any special gift of grace or virtue. Most clergymen would have regarded her as one of the weaker vessels. I have often wondered why God performed this miracle for her. Could it have been for the sake of her brother? The apostle Paul writes that in his day the Jews, who were not even weak Christians but the enemies of the gospel, were loved for the sake of their forefathers, who had lived two thousand years before their time – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Is it possible that today, too, there are those who are loved and predestined by God to fulfill a special purpose, for the sake of a relative or a close friend who was strong in the faith? In the gospel we read that Jesus healed a man sick of the palsy, not for his own sake, but for the sake of the faith of his friends, who had carried him on a bed and placed him before the Saviour. Should we not learn to believe and love greatly for those who cannot do so? Theirs would be a great blessing.

But Feinstein and Davidmann were not the only ones: the Christian Jews had several martyrs. In Chishinau there lived a group who were very active. Their leaders, the engineer Tarlev, Trachtmann and Schmil Ordienski, were deported to Siberia because of their faith when the Russians arrived in Bessarabia in 1940, and there they were killed. In the hope that it may serve as a lesson to others, I will mention that this group lived in a state of acute conflict with the Baptist Church in the same town, a conflict which

was based on purely personal grounds. The passions aroused in the leaders acerbated the conflict to the extent that members of the two groups would cut one another in the street. But in Siberia, leaders of the Jewish Christian died side by side with

the pastor of the Baptist congregation in Chishinau, Bushilf, for their faith. Why do we have to wait for the enemy to make us see reason?

I remember young Friedmann, a Christian Jew from Jassy, who was killed in the pogrom. The Jews were herded into a cattle truck, which was bursting at the seams. Friedmann peeped out through a little window, and someone on the platform who happened to catch sight of him told us later that his face shone like an angel's. A German soldier fired at him, and mortally wounded him.

During the war, Jews were forbidden to travel. It was not until later that I was allowed to make my way to Jassy to reorganize the Christian Jewish community there, which after the pogrom consisted only of women. On this occasion I visited Friedmann's mother. I tried to comfort her, and to tell her of Jesus. It proved impossible. Her husband and all her four sons had been killed on one and the same day by people who called themselves Christians. Her heart was like a stone.

God, who inspired the author of Exodus to write: "And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage" (EXO 6:9), and also inspired Job to exclaim: "Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea" (JOB 6:2-3), would also find an excuse for this woman, whose heart had been completely hardened. She had but one answer to everything: "If God existed, then he would have restored at least one of my five dear ones to me."

I could not persist, but withdrew, in deference to this unspeakable sorrow.

Shall I tell the story of Marica? When the Kallai government

ordered the deportation of Hungarian Jews to the death camps of Auschwitz, Treblinka and elsewhere, exceptions were made of Christian Jews who had been born to baptized parents. Marica, who had studied theology at the Reformed Faculty, was one of these. But she withheld the secret of her birth, which would have given her this privilege, and voluntarily reported at the

assembly point from which the Jews were to be deported. She wished to accompany the others to the death camp, so that right to the end she could bear witness of her faith to the victims of anti-Semitic persecution, and then die with other members of her race. Marica was one of the few who survived Auschwitz. Together with other women survivors she made her way through Bucharest en route for Israel. They called her "Saint Marica." In Israel, the unavoidable psychological reaction after the strain of such a heroic deed followed. The Bible does not tell us what happened to the three young men after they left the fiery furnace. It is better so. But God is not unjust, and has not forgotten her sacrifice. A simple understanding of the laws of psychology would have saved her from much depression.

Christian peasants from Cetatea Alba, who were forced to stand by and watch, helpless and in tears, while SS troops executed Jews from this town, have described how a young Jewess, hitherto unknown to them, called out to other Jews as they faced the firing-squad: "We are expiating the sin of not receiving Jesus, the true Messiah of our race. But believe in Him and you will awake happy in His paradise."

There are many Christian Jews who suffered imprisonment for their faith. Pastor Milan Haimovici was imprisoned for many years under the Communist regime because of his faith, and those who were imprisoned with him, including anti-Semites, had only words of praise for him, calling him a hero. When he was released he was met with indifference, and even hatred, by his colleagues, for whose sake he had even suffered the torture of having his feet placed on glowing

coals, but without informing against them. His martyrdom was disparaged even by those who preferred not to suffer for Jesus, but this only makes his suffering all the more glorious.

It would of course be impossible for me to mention everyone. Suzana Golder was arrested when she was only seventeen because she preached the Word of God to some Fascists, who promptly took her off to their headquarters. The commanding officer started his interrogation by giving her a violent blow across the face. She immediately turned her other cheek, and

asked: "Won't you hit me again?" - "What sort of question is that?" the officer asked. She replied: "Jesus, whom you say you worship, commanded that when a man strikes you on one cheek, you shall turn the other." The man who had struck her was so astonished that he immediately ordered her to be set free.

This is not the only incident of this nature. Another Christian Jew, Bianca, was forced to undergo great suffering because she distributed the gospel to some Russian soldiers. It would be unjust not to remember Rumanian brothers and sisters, who names cannot for obvious reasons be mentioned at the present time, who spent years in prison because they had faithfully helped the Christian Mission to the Jews. Countless young Christian Jews were ill-treated by their parents on account of their Christian faith.

Generally speaking, Christian Jews are forced to suffer a great deal. They suffer at the hands of some of their own people, who do not understand them. They are forced to suffer at the hands of the "Christian" anti-Semites, in whose eyes they are, and will always remain, "dirty Jews"; and they suffer at the hands of the atheists.

Hebrew Christians are often humiliated by their co-nationals, but this should not surprise us in view of the attitude that so-called Christians, with their disgusting anti-Semitism, have stirred up in the souls of the Jews. The most important anti-Semitic organizations in Rumania were named

the Legion of the Archangel Michael (despite the fact that in the Bible the Archangel is referred to, in Daniel, Chapter 12, as the protector of the children of Jewish people) and the National Christian Defence League.

I asked one of the leaders of an organization of this kind what he meant by the word Christian. His definition was: "Being a Christian means being against the dirty Jews." And this man was against the Jews not only in word but also in deeds, with his stick. It is not surprising, therefore, that at the opposite pole, the idea has arisen that being a Jew means being opposed to Christianity.

The human mind is perverted by noxious complexes of many

kinds, and we Christian Jews, who stand at the crossroads where many a violent storm rages, are compelled to suffer at the hands of many people.

But is this suffering not for our own good?

St. Gregory of Nazianzus wrote of the Christian Church in the fourth century, which was liberated by Constantine the Great: "We have lost the greatness and the strength we had during our persecution and troubles."

Jerome wrote in similar terms: "From the time of the coming of the Saviour until now, that is to say, from the time of the Apostles up to the present, the congregation of Christ, after being born and growing, became great during its persecutions and was crowned with martyrdom. But since the Christians have become strong, this congregation has in truth increased because of its tradition and wealth, but has decreased in virtue."

I am convinced that the humble position of the Christian Jews is ordained by God. Through many tribulations they are prepared, not only to enter into God's kingdom, but also to play a leading role in the work of establishing it. The Apostle Paul tells us that the receiving of the Jews, their conversion to Jesus, will be life from the dead (ROM 11:15). If carrying a heavy cross today did not mean preparation for future glory, our good Lord would not allow us to endure so much suffering.

Might it not be true that many Christians in the western

world are no longer persecuted because they no longer frighten Satan, because they are unfaithful to Jesus? The Christian Jews should be grateful to God for persecution and for the martyrs they have fostered in so many parts of the world.

One Christian Jew, the well-known professor of theology, Neander, has written: "Oh, what soft-minded and weak witnesses, with what cold feelings, we are, who nevertheless still call ourselves Christians! We must feel ashamed when we remember the days of Ignatius and Polycarp [Christian martyrs of the second century who were devoured by lions] and others, and we shall wish that we had died a thousand times for Christ. Most of us, even the greatest theologians, are very different from the martyrs. We do not like to be looked at askance, we push aside any

difficulty we may have with regard to the truth, and yet we are people of reputation and great theologians, but only in words - not in deed."

God grant that both the Christian Jews and the Gentile Christians will take these reproaches to heart, and openly condemn the crimes of this world, at the risk of having to suffer the martyr's death!

We are proud that among the Jews, too, the blood of martyrs has been shed for the sake of Jesus. Let us learn from these our noble pioneers to carry our cross, and to carry it with joy!

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3 ARGUMENTS FOR THE RESURRECTION

~Encounter on a Train~

The year was 1939. I was travelling by train from Cernauti to Bucharest, and on the seat opposite sat a renowned rabbi from Cernauti. When he saw me reading the Bible, he asked me who I was.

"A Christian Jew," I told him.

He was highly astonished. "If you are a Jew, why did you become a Christian?"

"Because I believe that Jesus is the Saviour."

"But, young man, how can you maintain anything of the kind? What makes you believe that Jesus was our Messiah?"

"In this Bible there are many proofs, and I can't read them all off at once for you in the train. But there is one proof above all others: His resurrection. If Jesus had been a deceiver, or a man who deluded himself, God would not have performed the miracle of raising Him from the dead."

"I should like to see that happening, a young man convincing a rabbi that Jesus rose from the dead. Go ahead, young man, I'll give you twenty minutes."

Here are some of the main arguments I quoted to the rabbi.

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"What is the source of our knowledge of ancient history? The historians of their age, among them men like Homer, Herodotus and Julius Caesar. What is the source of our knowledge of the doings of Jesus? Contemporary historians: their names are Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul and so on. Why should we believe some historians and not others?

"Our intelligence should behave like an impartial court of witnesses. In evaluating evidence we must consider not only what the witness says, but also his character and his trustworthiness. The credibility of the historians who described the life of Jesus is undoubtedly much greater than that of other historians. For who were the latter? Generally, they were paid to write by a royal personage, and their aim was not to make known the truth. They desired to flatter their master, their people, or the social class to which they belonged. By contrast, the historians who wrote the Gospels are of an entirely different stature. They risked loss of liberty and death for what they wrote. Matthew died as a martyr in Abyssinia, John was condemned to slave labour on the island of Patmos, and Paul was beheaded in Rome. Peter was crucified head downwards. No impartial court would lightly dismiss the evidence of witnesses ready to suffer much hardships for what they assert. All of them declare unanimously that they were convinced by seeing, hearing and touching, of the reality of Jesus's resurrection from the dead."

The rabbi attempted to interrupt. I reminded him that he had promised to let me have my say.

"I know that this argument can be contradicted. What the other historians relate are things that can easily be understood and believed. They write about wars, court intrigues, kings' favourites, plots, murder, things that happen even today, whereas the writers of the Gospels tell us of things that run counter to our human experience. Among other things, they write about a virgin birth, of the healing of lepers by a simple touch, of walking on the water, of the feeding of a great multitude with a few loaves, of men rising

from the dead, and finally of Jesus' own resurrection, which was followed by His ascension into heaven. All these things come into the category of miracles, whereas we are modern people who no longer believe in miracles."

Tradition tells us that Jesus spoke from the time of His birth. This has been regarded by rationalists as pure fantasy. Had this conversation taken place thirty years later, I could have told the rabbi that in the 1960s, papers all over the world reported that a child had been born in Yugoslavia which spoke and answered questions from the day it was born. The evangelists were cautious men, and anxious not to make the gospel difficult to understand, and they did not record whether Jesus spoke from His birth. How people would have mocked the Gospels if they had written this! But today an event that is so unusual in the natural order of things has taken place before our very eyes.

In 1963 the newspapers reported that a French boy of about sixteen, when his abdomen was opened up, was found to be "pregnant." What should have been his twin had developed inside his body. How the rationalists would have laughed if the evangelists had written that a man had been pregnant!

"As to the miracles that Jesus performed," I told the rabbi, "they occurred in the sphere of the exceptional, whose existence cannot be denied. In everyday life it is not only ordinary things that occur. A man who does not believe in miracles is not a realist.

"Furthermore, men consider as miracles things which a person with greater than average intelligence or muscular power can do, and which a weak person with an ordinary intelligence is incapable of doing. Missionaries who have worked among primitive tribes record that the savages regard them as miracle-workers; and this is not surprising, since primitive people spend hours rubbing two pieces of wood together in order to produce a spark, whereas the missionary knows how to produce fire from a box of matches. He can even make stinking water burn. How is the savage to know that this stinking water is petrol? The writer Pearl Buck

tells us that when she told peasant women in backward parts of China that in England there were houses built on top of one another, and that carriages moved through the streets without being drawn by horses, one of the women whispered: 'What a lie! That sort of thing is impossible.' With sixty Spaniards under his command, Cortez conquered the powerful Aztec kingdom, because he appeared to the people he conquered to be a miracle-maker. In the first place, the very appearance of the Spaniards was miraculous. Never before had the Aztecs seen white men. Secondly, the newcomers possessed miraculous firearms. And so a huge kingdom fell into the hands of a few adventurers without a struggle.

"Jesus had a spiritual force such as no other person has ever possessed. It is not surprising that He was capable of performing miracles. Being exceptional, He could do unique things, which would have been impossible for ordinary men.

"It is foolish to be prejudiced, and declare that miracles are impossible, and to reject them without carefully examining the evidence of people as trustworthy as the apostles. Rabbi, you cannot avoid miracles. Either you can believe in Jesus's miraculous resurrection from the dead, or you have to believe in another miracle which is still greater - namely, that an effect exists without a cause, because if Jesus did not rise from the dead, the existence of the universal Church would be such a miraculous happening.

"Let us see how things stand: Jesus wrote no book, nor, while He lived on earth, did He establish anything but a very insignificant sect within Judaism, a sect consisting of a few people who were unlearned, and who were not considered reputable citizens - sinful men, publicans and fallen women. Finally, one of his closest followers betrayed Him, another denied Him, and the others deserted Him. He died on a cross, abandoned, and apparently despairing, because as He hung on the cross He cried out: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' After His death He was buried, a large stone was placed in front of His sepulchre, and guards

were posted. Meanwhile, His former disciples remained in hiding, behind locked doors, and their only concern was to escape a death similar to that of their Master. This was how Jesus's life on earth ended. If Jesus did not rise, how has the Christian Church

come into being?

"We have an explanation. On the third day, Jesus came back to life from the dead, and appeared on numerous occasions to His apostles, assuring them that it was really Himself they saw. They came together again; the risen Jesus worked with them, guiding them and giving them power to do signs and wonders. The very same cowardly Peter who had previously denied any knowledge of Jesus with curses and oaths, stood up in the marketplace in Jerusalem, courageously testifying that he had seen the risen Jesus. The other apostles did so, too. Risking death, they travelled from one country to another, sealing with a martyr's death their conviction that Jesus had risen. In this way, the universal Church was born, it has grown, and it has survived, despite persecution and the unworthiness of its members. If you are not prepared to admit that Jesus has risen from the dead, then this tremendous effect, which the Christian Church represents - a Church that has survived for two thousand years, and has millions of members - is an effect without a cause. It takes a greater naivety to accept the existence of such an effect without cause than to admit that Christ has really risen.

"When a man enters a tall building, it might be a good idea, before climbing the stairs to the tenth floor, to go down first into the cellar and make sure that the foundations are sound. But why should it be necessary to do this? The fact that the building is standing is proof of the strength of the foundations. The foundation stone on which the Christian Church was built is the resurrection of Jesus. The large, well-known building founded on this stone has stood for two thousand years, and has resisted tremendous earthquakes. After all, in every sphere of life, it is common practice to draw conclusions from effect to cause. The existence of the Church is a proof that Christ has risen.

"Let us proceed to another argument with regard to the

resurrection of Jesus. Nowhere do we find that the enemies of the primitive Church at any time denied that the sepulchre of Jesus was found to be empty on Easter morning. It would have been quite natural for an investigation to have been set on foot, to discover whether the body had been stolen or desecrated. The reaction of the Jewish priests does not contradict the assertion that the grave was empty; they merely told the soldiers who had

guarded the sepulchre to spread the rumour that His disciples had come during the night, while they were asleep, and stolen the body. Now, if they were asleep, then how could they have identified the thieves? Augustine rightly asks: 'Does the synagogue introduce us to witnesses who were asleep when this deed was carried out?' If the Jewish priests really believed that Jesus's disciples had stolen the body, why were they not arrested, interrogated, and punished?

"A strong movement must be carried forward by a strong impetus. The strong movement that has lasted for two thousand years, and which has had a world-wide effect, based on the belief in the resurrection of Jesus, cannot have been the product of hallucination, as none of Jesus's disciples were men who suffered from hallucinations, certain not Doubting Thomas and the practical businessman Matthew, nor such men of the sea as Andrew, nor the cautious Nathaniel, nor Peter with his weak character. Only an event as tremendous as a real resurrection could have produced an impetus capable of starting a movement of this kind. Nor must we forget that during the first thirty years after this event, most of Jesus's disciples suffered a violent death, and many of them were condemned to death precisely because they maintained that Jesus had risen from the dead. These things cannot have been invented.

"Under the very noses of the Jewish priests, Jesus's apostles start to preach to the Jewish people, and in this way they come into conflict with the authorities, as they declare that Jesus is the Messiah, a fact which was proved by His resurrection. Any sensible person may ask: 'Would it be possible to launch a movement of this kind, and recruit thousands

of supporters in a single day, if the dead body of Jesus had really existed?' Peter preached his first sermon only a few hundred yards from Jesus's sepulchre. If Jesus's enemies had been in a position to prove that His body was still there, the sermon would have been a failure, and would never have persuaded thousands of people to be baptized. But their enemies were powerless: Jesus was not in the tomb.

"The apostles did not visit the tomb of Jesus, because it had no significance as far as they were concerned, and because they would not be interested in it. (Saul of Tarsus, after he was converted, came to Jerusalem and met the apostles, but was

not concerned with visiting the tomb, not even out of mere respect.) Nor did His enemies investigate the tomb, to convince themselves and convince others that Jesus was still there. This is yet another proof that Jesus really rose from the dead. A great many people undertake pilgrimages to the tombs of minor saints. Even though the first apostles knew of this custom in Israel (MTT 23:29), they were not interested in visiting Jesus's tomb, because they knew that it was empty.

"All this was so universally accepted that the disciples started preaching, not in a provincial town, where it would be difficult to check their statements, but in Jerusalem itself, arousing the enthusiasm of thousands of people and - what was still more remarkable - facing enemies who were powerless, because they were not in a position to deny that Jesus's tomb was empty. When the priests maintained that the body of Jesus had been stolen by the apostles, anyone could have answered them: 'Why don't you arrest and sentence the men who have carried out this theft?'

"The suggestion that Jesus did not die on the cross, but merely fell into a deep swoon, and recovered consciousness in the cool tomb, is still more ridiculous. How could He have pushed aside the stone, and overpowered the guards, after so much suffering? Could He have gone anywhere, naked as He was? He could have sought shelter only with one or other of His disciples. Had He done this, however, His disciples would have realized that He had not risen from the dead.

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Would they have really given their lives for a lie which they themselves had hatched?

"We are compelled to believe what the Gospel writers say, because they reveal such naivety when relating terrible things about themselves. What induced the apostles to spread abroad by word of mouth and in their writings that their leader, Peter, was a man whom Jesus had called Satan, and that he had denied Him on the night that He was betrayed? The only motive I can discover is that they showed an uncompromising regard for the truth. The band of apostles is a collection of men who are guided by the truth. We can trust their evidence.

"The remarkable thing is that when the apostles affirm the resurrection of Jesus to an audience of doubters (even in

those days people were sceptical about stories of angels, resurrections and so on, as we can see in Matthew, Chapter 22, verse 23, and Acts, Chapter 17, verse 32), they merely affirm, without producing a single confirmatory piece of evidence. This was possible because what they maintained was well-known and undisputed fact among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The risen Jesus, after all, had at one time appeared to five hundred persons, and these must have had about twenty thousand relatives and friends whom they told about it.

"The resurrection of Jesus can also be proved by two very famous conversions which could not be explained in any other way.

"The first was the conversion of James, the brother of Jesus, to a faith in Him as the Messiah. While Jesus lived on earth, James did not believe in Him, but considered Him to be mad. Josephus Flavius describes James as a very upright man. How was it possible that he became an apostle and martyr after the death of Jesus? Anyone reading James's letter (the Straw Epistle, as Luther calls it) will note that this is a Jewish letter, without any Christian characteristics. This leads us to realize that it was not the teaching of Jesus that made impression on James, and brought about his conversion. What was the cause? It can only have been what we are told in the New Testament, that Jesus after His resurrection

appeared to His brother, and that the latter admitted his mistake, and in remorse wrote the chapter in which he condemns his own former sin of judging and speaking about his brother.

"The second conversion was that of the rabbi Saul of Tarsus. This man had a vision on the road to Damascus, in which Jesus appeared to him and spoke to him, whereupon Saul immediately became a disciple. Would this have been possible on purely psychological grounds? Even though Mohammed were to appear to me ten times, I should tell myself that I was suffering from hallucinations, and I certainly should not become a Mohammedan. Why should things have turned out so differently for the man who was to become the future apostle Paul? He knew that Jesus's tomb was empty, without being able to find a plausible explanation for this fact, unless he admitted to himself that Jesus had risen. This was the crux of the matter: when he saw Jesus, the last shred of doubt disappeared. He was converted. He later made his way to Jerusalem, but he had not the slightest intention of going to the tomb in order to shed tears of remorse

there. He knew it was empty. He discussed with the apostles how to preach the resurrection. It would have been a psychological impossibility for the apostles, being the sort of men they were, to discuss how best to preach a lie.

"And here is another argument: millions of sinners in the history of mankind have changed their mind and become holy people. This miracle is happening daily in the Church. If you ask these people how this miracle of rebirth happened, their answer is always that Jesus did it. It is certain that it is a living Jesus, not a dead one, who has brought about these new births. I am one of these people.

"The cumulative force of these arguments compels me to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. But let me turn to an argument from a person of real authority. Professor Theodor Mommsen, the great historian of the Roman Empire, wrote: 'The resurrection of Jesus is the event in ancient history which has been more conclusively proved than any other event.' That is all I need to tell you.

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"There is something more. If a woman's husband is missing in a war and believed to be dead, and then one, two, three, four people, in fact countless people, come and tell her that they have seen him in a prisoner-of-war camp, then the wife will trust those people. We are in the same situation. Those who believed that Christ was dead, heard the witness of the women, of the apostles, of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, of five hundred people who had seen Him on the same day. After this it was only normal for them to believe that Jesus was no longer dead, but alive."

After I had finished speaking, the rabbi was silent for several minutes. Then he got up, opened the door, and said to me: "Even if He has risen, what has that to do with me?" And he walked out. When he returned to the compartment, neither he nor I spoke a word still we reached Bucharest.

During the tragic events of the war, this rabbi was killed by the Fascists.

Many years passed. One evening, during a week of evangelistic mission, the church was full to bursting. Instead of preaching a sermon, I told my listeners of my conversation

with the rabbi. When I had finished, a young Jewish woman student came up to me and said: "You have convinced me, too, that Jesus is risen, but for me it means a great deal."

The same arguments affected two persons quite differently.

Returning for a moment to the rabbi, I must add that, generally speaking, I have found many rabbis very ill-prepared to answer our arguments. I once talked to one of the Berlin rabbis, who had fled to Rumania. I showed him the text in the ninth chapter of Isaiah, which foretells the coming into the world of the Messiah, declaring: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end ..." (ISA 9:6-7). This passage contains an orthographical curiosity. In Hebrew, the letter M is written at the beginning and in the middle of a word with the sign ["character"], and only at the end of a word as a

closed square. This orthography is rigidly adhered to throughout the Old Testament, except in one particular case. In this verse, in the word ~lemarbe~ (increase), a final M, [ ], appears in the middle of the word. This orthographical mistake has never been corrected. A final M, [ ], which should occur only at the end of the word is written in the middle of one.

I asked the rabbi if he could explain this, but he could give me no answer. I then told him of the Kabbalistic tradition, that Isaiah put a [ ] in the middle of the word, in order to show the reader who was destined to understand it that the Divine Child of whom this prophecy speaks would be born of the closed womb of a virgin.

Many other arguments, which I personally consider more conclusive, would have made a far smaller impression on the rabbi than this one. He had no further counter-argument when I told him that the Messiah is the man who was born of the Virgin Mary, and when I explained that because the Messiah bears our sins, which according to the prophet Isaiah results in His being bruised, every person who recognizes that the Messiah is killed for our sins will no more bear his own guilt.

Among other rabbis I have even come across sympathy for Jesus. When I told an old rabbi that Jesus is the Messiah whose coming Isaiah had prophesied, he shook his head and said: "No! Jesus does not need to be accredited by Isaiah. Compared to Him, Isaiah is small. It is not because of Isaiah that the world believes in Jesus, but the other way round; because of Jesus, millions of people also appreciate Isaiah. Jesus is the sun[?]."

Then there are other rabbis, who are rabbis merely by profession, as are many Christian priests and pastors.

I once spoke to a rabbi who was a liberal, and tried to convince him that Jesus was the Son of God. After listening politely, he answered: "You wish me to believe in the Son, but I don't even believe in the Father. If God existed, He would not have allowed my family to be killed in Auschwitz."

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~We discover modern theology~

The moment came for our first encounter with English books of modern theology. We had not even known that modernists existed: the Bible was dear to us because it contained the message of Jesus. We accepted it, and regarded it as the word of God. We did not dissect it, or criticize it, but rather we allowed it to criticize us.

Now we heard and read about various human sources of the Bible which even contradicted one another, and that the Bible contained some things that were later additions. It was denied that Jesus had done wonderful things, or else His miracles were interpreted in such a way that in the end there was nothing left.

I was profoundly shocked. I know of a former preacher who, after reading a book by a Christian modernist, completely lost his faith, and even went so far as to write anti-Christian, atheistic book himself. This man was separated from God for years. Other people, including myself after I had been released from prison, were able subsequently to help him to recover his faith.

Marx began as a Christian. Two liberal theologians, Bruno Bauer and Strauss, destroyed his faith.

Rumanian Christians are fundamentalists. I do not know a single modernist, nor do I know what benefits we could derive from modernism.

It is true that the Bible exhorts us to "sing unto the Lord a new song" (PSA 96:1). Every century must compose its own song of praise to God in its own particular style. It is written in Leviticus, Chapter 19, verse 3, [LEV 19:3] that the animal which is brought to the temple for sacrifice must be a ~benshana~, "of the first year." I do not live in the first century nor in the Middle Ages, and it would not be normal for me to have religious ideas belonging to those times. There must be progress in our thinking about God, too.

So modernism is not modern: it is very ancient. The Syrian Codex Sinaiticus, a New Testament manuscript from the second century, refers to Jesus simply as "the son of

Joseph," and omits the story of the virgin birth, about which the man who wrote it probably knew nothing. Augustine considered it blasphemous to believe in the first three chapters of the Bible as the literal truth. Origen stated that the story of the Creation, as it stands, is absurd and contradictory. Luther said that he did not believe that God created man "~in einem Hui~," all at once.

There are, of course, passages in the Bible which are very primitive. Who would condone the methods used to diagnose and cure leprosy as described in Leviticus Chapter 13? Even the fundamentalists permit themselves their own modernism.

The fault of the real modernists is that they go too far: all of a sudden the liberties they take can no longer be distinguished from others merely quantitatively; they are different in quality.

Modernists deny miracles. In the twentieth century, when the word "impossible" no longer exists, they declare that miracles are impossible! The virgin birth, the miraculous healings, the feeding of the five thousand, the physical

resurrection from the dead; are these so impossible? In nature, it is not only the usual that exists: Mozart, after all, was composing music at the age of four.

Christ belongs to the sphere where the unusual is natural.

The American biologist L”bhas fertilized sea urchins, and produced live specimens by chemical means, without the use of male semen. Would it not be possible for God to create out of man what the biologist can create out of a lower form of life?

At the beginning of this century there lived in the Ukraine a rabbi by the name of Hofetz Haim. When the first world war broke out, one of his disciples was arrested as a result of anti-Semitism, on the false charge that he was spying for Germany. The rabbi was summoned as a defence witness. He was ordered to take the oath, but he refused, saying: "I can never remember having told a lie in my life, but I refuse to take the oath, as I do not want to bring God's holy name into a testimony, as an untruth might slip in against my will."

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The prosecutor was delighted to be rid of an awkward witness. But the defence needed him badly, and so the lawyer, a Russian, asked that the rabbi should be listened to as a source of information, and he declared: "Your honour, allow me to relate one episode from the life of this rabbi, so that you may understand that he is an outstanding man who can be believed, even without taking the oath."

The president gave his assent, and the lawyer continued: "One day the rabbi went from one Jewish shop to another, collecting gifts for poor Jews. A thief lay in wait for him. That evening, when his collecting-box was full, the thief approached the rabbi and said to him: 'Perhaps you could change ten rubles?' The rabbi, who was glad to be rid of so much small change, opened his box, but with a swift movement the thief seized it, and ran off with it.

"The rabbi was horrified, not because he had lost the money - he immediately made up his mind to make good the loss from his own pocket - but because of the serious sin the thief had committed by stealing the money that belonged to the poor. He ran after the thief as fast as his old legs could carry him,

and cried out: 'You have not stolen this money, it is yours. I have given it to you as a gift. I have got the poor people's money at home.'"

In amazement the president of the court interrupted the lawyer and asked him: "Do you really believe this story?" The lawyer answered: "No, I don't." The judge interrupted him angrily: "Why do you tell us stories that you do not believe yourself? You are quite out of order."

The lawyer answered: "Your honour, please do not be angry. Has a story of this kind ever been told about yourself, about the prosecuting counsel, or about me? Several stories are told about us, but these are in tune with our characters and our habits. It may be said of me that I have chased a lot of women, that I have often been drunk, and that I have cheated at cards, more than I have really done. What a just and holy man this rabbi must be, for such legends to circulate about him!"

The significance of this story is clear enough: no medical

commission has ever established Mary's virginity; there is no written evidence, submitted by scientists, to support the miracles performed by Jesus. But this does not mean that we can reject the stories in the Gospels.

One day, when my son was so small that he could not possibly know anything about sex, or what a virgin is, he asked me: "Daddy, how was Jesus born?" I answered: "But I've told you many times – he was born in a stable, and laid in a manger." "That's not what I want to know," the child answered. "You always say: like father, like son. If Jesus was born just like us, then He would have been bad, like us. So He must have been born in quite a different way."

The men and women who knew Jesus had precisely the same feeling as my son. Those who believed in Him were convinced of His virgin birth.

If He was so good and innocent and pure, if He was such a unique person, why, then, should He not also have been born in a unique manner? Why should he not also have risen from the dead?

One day a distinguished personality in the Lutheran Church came to see me on an administrative matter. After we had settled the financial problems, I asked him if he believed in Jesus. He was horrified that I should have asked him, one of the country's leading laymen in the Church, a question of this kind. I asked him to overlook his annoyance, and answer my question. Finally he said: "There is no valid juridical proof of Jesus's resurrection." I submitted the same evidence to him which I had submitted to the rabbi from Cernauti. I asked him to assume the role of judge, and to evaluate the juridicial quality of the arguments I had submitted. He confessed that he now believed in the resurrection, was converted and also brought his wife into the faith. Later he reproved the bishop for having nominated him to such a high church office before making sure that he was a true child of God.

If you, too, analyze the evidence, you will realize the truthfulness of what the Gospels tell. The Bible in itself contains proof that it is telling the truth. Modernism sins by reducing

Jesus to a human personality who was nothing more than a great leader, a martyr to the truth, but about whom we know really very little, since the Gospels are not to be trusted. Modernism is negative: it takes away people's faith, and gives them nothing in return.

Of course, criticism of biblical texts is necessary, but not in the sense understood by the liberal school of theology.

It is assumed that the Old Testament text has been violated by rabbis.

For instance the martyr Justin, the Christian philosopher from the second century, maintained that the original of Psalm 96, verse 10, is: "The Lord has become King on the tree," but that the text was subsequently modified by the Jews. And after Ezra, Chapter 6, verse 22, there should have been a passage which ran as follows: "And Ezra said unto the people: this Passover is your Saviour and your refuge. And if you believe, then it shall come into your hearts, that they shall humiliate Him in spite of the signs that He has done, and that afterwards we shall hope in Him again, and this place shall never be laid desolate, saith the Lord God of Hosts. But if you do not believe, and do not hear

these words that are spoke of Him, you shall be despised of the heathen." It is hard to believe that Justin should have invented this passage.

The Talmud also relates that the seventy rabbis who produced the Greek translation called the Septuagint, although they all worked in separate places, were inspired by the Holy Spirit to alter certain passages, all in the same way, in order not to offend other nations and races. In this legend, as in all others, there is undoubtedly a grain of truth: the texts of the Old Testament have undergone various modifications with a view to concealing certain facts. Strangely enough, the Septuagint still exerts a strong influence on practically all the translators of the Bible, who are thus translating the texts wrongly, as the rabbis had intended in days gone by.

Anyone comparing the manuscripts of the New Testament from the various centuries will note that here, too, there has been a gradual tendency to discard more and more of

the various revolutionary and social characteristics of the primitive church.

But we possess the most important texts dealing with the life, miracles, suffering and resurrection of the Saviour, the texts dealing with the way to salvation. The efforts of some people to undermine the faith of millions are merely to be deplored.

But the honesty of the modernists is useful, even if their teachings are not well received; they stimulate others to seek the truth elsewhere.

We sought it in Christian mysticism.

The Bible is in part only a handful of notes of discussions which God entered into with Abraham, Moses, the prophets and Jesus, and of conversations which Jesus had with the apostles, when He lived on earth and after His glorification, and of the thoughts with which the Holy Spirit inspired them.

But has God become dumb? Is it not possible for us to hear His voice today also? Perhaps we, too, can become pure in heart, so that we can see Him?

I had already read a great many other theological books, but now I also read the modernistic ones, and I got the impression that their ideas were superficial. There is a great deal of vanity in these, as in any other profane books. Theologians quote one another, instead of purging their spirits of all that is unessential in this qualified history which has accumulated in the course of centuries, and going back to the original source of power.

In the second place, I got the impression that this Christian theology at best stops at Jesus. But Jesus Himself said: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (JHN 14:5). He declares that it is not He Himself, but the Father, who is the goal. If we have come to the Father, whom the Mosaic Jews also seek, we should be able to give them a helping hand. We should be able to prove to them that Jesus is the way they must follow to reach their desired goal. If we get no further than Jesus, whom they contest, then our witness is of little interest to them.

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Up till now, the Scriptures had been windows through which we could see the reality of God; now we had opened the windows, so that we could look on the God of reality.

Some of us called the new experience the Baptism of the Holy Spirit; others called it the second blessing, or any other name. Suddenly our eyes were opened, and we saw the nature of things, instead of knowing merely by logic and intelligent conception. We now saw many of the things which normally are invisible. This meant that like butterflies or angels we fluttered from one flower to another. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth" (JHN 3:8). For this reason we were often misunderstood.

As it is with God, our thoughts became reality. In Hebrew ~davar~ means both "word" and "thing." The words of the Bible became more and more a reality in which we lived.

We broke away from the cycle of sin - forgiveness - fresh sin, in which many believers pass their whole lives. Like Paul, we forgot what lay behind us. Paul never forgot that he had been a persecutor of the Church, and he regretted it. But the power

of the past to influence his present life became less and less. And in the measure in which he became a new creature, the old sins seemed less to have belonged to him, but to somebody else, to the old Saul of Tarsus who was dead. In the same way, we "forgot" the past, with its ugly sin. We lived a present with God.

When Jesus washed His disciples' feet, He also wiped them with a towel, because wet feet always indicate that they were once dirty and needed to be washed. But once they have been dried, feet are clean. The Bible tells us that in Canaan Jesus turned water into the best wine; but old wine is the best. Jesus transformed water not into new wine, but into wine that was already old, that had been in existence for a long time. We were not justified by being converted, but in our conversion our eyes were opened, so that we could see a purity which we had already possessed long ago: we saw that we had always been pure in His eyes.

Our ideas took a new turn: we realized that we now partook

of eternal life, not by believing in Jesus, but that we had always had a special form of life, eternal life, because we were destined from eternity to be God's children. It is impossible to distinguish, at an early age, the embryo of an ape from that of a man. At a certain moment the difference becomes visible, but it has always been there. Mary Magdalene, during her life of sin, was indistinguishable from any other courtesan, but she had always been one of God's elect. Her conversion was the moment when the difference was seen. We suddenly recognized, when the veil was taken from our eyes, our elder brother, Jesus, whom we had known long ago. "To know is to recognize," said Plato. We had proof of this.

We all live without remembering anything of our very early childhood, of our dreams or even of seventy-five per cent of what we do when we are awake. Why then should we nurture only the remembrance of our past sins?

Just as Jesus never made any mention of His early life before He was thirty years old, so we, too, did not stop at what had been, but every day we entered rejoicing into the holy of holies.

In me this release was caused by a very simple event, which I now recount for the first time. I was sitting writing in my study. In the room was all I held dear on earth: my wife, my children, my books. Suddenly the light went out; there had been a fuse. I could see nothing, and a great fear came over me. "One day," it flashed through my mind, "everything will be dark, I shall die, and my eyes will be closed. I shall be lost to all I now love." It is difficult to explain rationally the feeling of fear that flooded over me for a split second. But at once I realized the great store of riches I could enjoy in the darkness as well as in the light - the consciousness of I, the blessing of thought. Feverishly I examined myself. God, Christ, the angels, hope of eternal life, faith, all remained, even in the dark. They would be with me, too, at the moment when my eyes closed in death.

Like lightning, the thought struck me that things in this life are like the fabric of a dream; they are very easily dissolved.

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It was then that I realized that the true nature of things is this quality of not being.

King Lisimachus surrendered when he was surrounded by the Scythians, forced to do so by hunger and thirst. After eating, he exclaimed: "How brief was the pleasure for which I sacrificed life and freedom!" So, in that fraction of a second, I realized that the soul tends to be attracted by the body, and neglects its great partner, God, who loves us with eternal love.

At that moment I passed over to the state where I lived the truth about the relative value of things, instead of merely knowing it. What I love in my human existence is transient, and one day it will have to be left behind. But the Divine Being, in which I have received a part through Jesus, is eternal. I experienced the reality of this myself, and for me the light would never be extinguished.

The words of the Scriptures: "Ye are gods (PSA 82:6), became a reality to me.

Light also represents a certain mass: when light falls on a plate, it brings a certain amount of power to bear on it.

Sunbeams bring with them the mass of the sun: light is not an insubstantial messenger of the sun, but a part of the sun itself which comes to us. In many ways, likewise, we are not merely heralds of God's light, but God Himself; in a humble form we are divine sparks scattered about the world to bring light.

This conviction of the majesty of God's child has never since left me. I thought, as did the first Christians, from whom we have received the expression: "He who sees a brother, sees God."

When I thought of Jesus, I no longer thought of Him from the verses of the Bible. I entered into a reality where His majesty was visible. As long as there are Jews, Jesus will be their king, whether they recognize Him or not.

This experience had a different starting-point in the case of other brothers and sisters; but many were raised by the Spirit to new faith.

A Catholic priest, who was present at one of our meetings, said: "I have spent an evening among the first Christians."

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The talks we had together in our gatherings took a new turn. We no longer talked about God, but from God.

Jesus now appeared to me in a new light. The sacrifice in the Jewish temple were consumed with fire. The sacrifice of Jesus, too, was consumed with the fire of love, which made us one with Him. Fire transforms all things into flames. In this way His sacrifice ceased to be a sacrifice made by one person for another. We are in Christ Jesus. As His elect, we were in Him also when He hung on the Cross.

When we looked at His Cross, we no longer thought of the use our souls could make of His suffering, for then we should have been like the soldiers who divided His garments among them. With such a good Saviour, salvation follows of itself. We asked ourselves another question: What are the reasons for which He allowed Himself to be crucified, so that we also may sacrifice ourselves for them and "fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh" (COL 1:24)? In other words, how can we recruit for His service a host of loving followers,

who are prepared to suffer?

From now on a fire burned within us, as it did in the disciples on the road to Emmaus. "Snowflakes cannot fall on a hot stove," says an Indian proverb. The coldness of this world could no longer harm us, although we had to pass through bitter times.

We tried not to let love be frittered away in sentimentality, endeavouring rather to manifest it in what St. Francis de Sales so beautifully described as "the ecstasy of acts."

Religious meditation now received still greater emphasis. We knew that the time spent in meditation was not wasted. It is, after all, better to think for a whole day than to work in vain for a whole week.

In the supreme moment of bliss the object of meditation, the meditation itself, and the person meditating, became one in such a way that meditation no longer became a conscious act. God was working in the unfathomable depths of the soul, which never reach to the surface of our consciousness.

Those who have had an experience of this kind are often asked: "But do you no longer sin?"

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In our congregation great sins were still committed; I, too, committed great sins, even after I had had various mystical experiences. I shall not explain this, as I am much too small a person, but instead I shall let Meister Eckhardt speak: "Sin which is committed is not sin if we repent of it ... He who has truly subjected himself to the will of God need not even wish not to have encountered the sin into which he fell. Not of course to the extent to which the sin is directed against God, but because through it you are in bondage to a still greater love, and you are cast down and humiliated ... But if a man arise and entirely abandon his sins, faithful God will ensure that that man will be as though he had never fallen into sin, and He will not for a moment punish him for his sins. Even though his sins should be so numerous as those the whole of mankind might have committed, God will never punish him, and his relationship with God will be as intimate as God has ever entered into with any man. If man is prepared to do that now, God will not consider what has been.

God is the God of the present. He is prepared to accept you as you are today. In this way He receives you not as the person you have been, but as the person you are now."

There is no danger in this doctrine, provided we do not draw Luther's conclusion from it, "~Peccator fortiter~" - Sin greatly!

The Holy Spirit of God, on the other hand, reminded me that at a time when I had been a high official in a certain company, I had often acted incorrectly. But the Devil prevented me from making a clean breast of things. When I went to see my former boss, in order to confess, I found him in a despondent mood. He greeted me with the words: "You were the only honest employee I had. Today I have been told that one of my confidential clerks has stolen a large sum of money from me." This man had suffered a great blow, and this was obviously not the right moment to speak to him about my former dishonesty. But I was anxious not to have it weighing on my conscience. After a few days I wrote a confession, and offered to return what I had appropriated dishonestly, bit by bit.

Not only did he refuse to accept the money, but he told the big-time Jewish millionaires with whom he was on friendly

terms, of my conversion. He became a Christian, together with his wife and son. Throughout the whole war I was able to devote my energies to preaching the gospel, because he, as well as a number of others, had arranged for me to receive a small monthly allowance.

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4 THE FASCIST PERIOD

The beginning of the persecution

When old Pastor Adeney left us, he was replaced by a young man, Pastor Stevens. Both he and his wife were Christians who led very pure lives, and wished to spread the light around them. Their way of life testified to that correct Christianity which was common in England, but unknown in our part of the world, where even people who had been converted permitted themselves to do things which in the West would have been considered unworthy of a Christian. Their fairness and sincerity gave us much food for thought. We keep thankfulness to them. They left for what was meant to be a short vacation. But they could not return any more. Rumania had been taken over by a gang of anti-Semitic fanatics, whose hands were stained with a great deal of Jewish blood. They called themselves the Legionaires.

At that time the head of the Anglican Jewish Mission was a young priest called Roger Allison, a man we all remembered for his great humility. The humble man is strong in the Lord: by reducing himself to nothing, the humble man, joined with God, makes not two beings but one.

During the time he was our shepherd, our little community increased greatly. But we were also in great danger. If we went into town, we never knew whether we should come back. The Legionaires were hunting the Jews in the streets, and arresting them on all sorts of trumped-up charges. On many occasions I was only a hand's breadth from death.

I should like to relate two episodes.

One Sunday afternoon I was sitting in my flat. A meeting

young people was taking place in the church. Suddenly a breathless young man burst into my room, shouting: "Come down to the church at once! There is a terrible disturbation going on!"

As I entered the church, I saw two young men. One of them whom I immediately recognized as a Jew, was shouting "Jewish brethren! Let us make our way to Russia! There we shall find happiness and freedom! With the victorious Soviet Army we shall return and overthrow the Fascists!"

Bessarabia, a province which up till then had been Rumanian territory, had been occupied by the Russians, and the

Jews were fleeing ~en masse~ because of the anti-Semitic persecution. But the government of Rumania at the time was Fascist; such talk in our church might lead to arrests. It might even result in a great many people being killed.

I tried to stop the two young men, but it was impossible. They attacked me, shouting: "You are a traitor to the Jews! You are on the side of the Fascists!" It was impossible for me to call in the police to put an end to the commotion, as that would have meant informing on the two young men, and condemning them to a certain death. So I broke up the meeting, and asked everyone to leave the premises and go home, speaking to no one on the way. They obeyed me.

Next Sunday this scene was repeated. I did not know what to do. I thought of closing the church.

During those days a Legionaire was killed in the capital. No one knew who had killed him, but the Jews were afraid that they would be accused, and that there would be reprisals.

One evening, as I was sitting at home, the two young men who had caused the disturbance in the church, came to see me. "we have something on our conscience we should like to confess to you."

"Go ahead," I said.

Then they told me that it was they who had killed the Legionaire. Involuntarily I exclaimed: "How could you commit a crime like that? Did it not occur to you that this man had a mother or a wife?" They replied: "He deserved to be killed, because he was a Fascist." I said to them: "I can understand you

coming to seek advice from me if you feel oppressed by the crime you have committed. If you are proud of it, then there is nothing I can do for you. But now that you have told me what you have done, I repeat: You have committed a crime. A Fascist, too, is a man, and must be respected as such. If he is our enemy, we must repay his hatred with love, and not kill him."

Thereupon they went away.

After the Legionaires had been overthrown by General

Antonescu, one of the young men, the one with the Jewish face, came again to see me.

"I must tell you how you escaped certain death," he said. "I am a young Communist who was captured by the Legion police while I was distributing illegal pamphlets. I was tortured, and to escape further ordeal I agreed to act as an ~agent provocateur~ for the Legionaires. The other man who was with me was one of their commissars. The idea was that he would pretend to be a Jew, and I was to go round with him, and enter the synagogues, Zionist organizations or wherever Jews were gathered together, and start pro-Communist discussions, insulting the Legionaires as much as I could. Anyone who fell for this trick, and agreed with me, would then be arrested by the Legion police and beaten. As an ~agent provocateur~ I came into your congregation, too, and I visited you in your home to confess to a murder which we had not committed. When I left your house, the Legion commissar exclaimed: 'I never thought I should hear a Jew say that Legionaires should be loved!"

An answer based on Jesus's teaching that we should love our enemies had saved me from certain death. This was not the only time.

We were faced with the problem of how to get our community recognized by the Legion state authorities, because they did not respect the old authorisations. But how were we to get a new one? It was dangerous for a Jew merely to try to enter a public building in order to apply for it.

Finally, Mr. Allison and I decided to visit a priest who was a member of the Legion, and had been appointed an inspector in the Ministry of Cults. We went to his home, but did not

find him there. His wife asked us to wait for him. All the time, Legionaires were coming in and out of the house, with their greeting, "Long live the Legion and its Captain!" If they had known who we were, they would have torn us to pieces.

At last the priest turned up. When he heard my name, which sounds German, he was very pleasant, and asked us with a great show of kindness what we wanted. Great was his surprise when I told him: "I am a Jew who believes in Jesus, and represent a congregation of similar Jews. We have come to make two

requests. In the first place, we do not want any exception to be made of us when anti-Semitic measures are set on foot, whether this involves confiscation of property, deportation or death. I don't want our Christian faith to bring us any material advantage. The second is this: the synagogues are operating freely, and we too would like to have the right to exercise our form of worship without interference."

The priest, who was known for his violent nature - on one occasion, at the head of a group of Fascists, he had demolished with an axe a Baptist church in his district - burst out laughing, shaking all over with mirth. "There are no such things as Christian Jews," he said. "The old Metropolitan Pimen once baptized a Jew in the Bahlui river in winter. A hole had to be cut in the ice, and when the Metropolitan dipped the Jew for the third time in the water" (this is Greek Orthodox practice) "he slipped out of his hands, slid under the ice, and vanished. The Metropolitan exclaimed: 'This is the only Jew who has been baptized and died a Christian!' Other Jews baptize only their skins, and lead an un-Christian life. I do not believe that you are Christians, either."

I answered: "You have every right to reproach us. It is presumptuous of a man to declare that he is a Christian when it is written that whoever says that he is in Christ Jesus must live as Jesus lived. We have tried to do this, but as yet we have not made a great deal of progress. So we are not angry when other real Christians, who are Jesuses in miniature, reproach us for the mistakes we make in our lives. But we beg you to give us a chance, and we shall do our very best."

He continued for a long time to insult and mock us, but

we answered by confessing our sinfulness humbly, and not defending ourselves. Our answer was always the same: "Yes, we are wicked, despicable hypocrites as you say we are. But we have a faith which will save us from sin. We are liars, but our faith is the true faith. Give us an opportunity to prove it!"

I remembered one of the beautiful incidents related in the Patristic writings. It was said of Father Agathon that a great many people came to see him, as he enjoyed the reputation of being a good man. Some of them tried to make him angry, saying: "Are you Avva Agathon? We have heard of you, that you

are an adulterer and a man of great pride." And he answered: "That is true, that is so." And they said to him: "Are you the Agathon who speaks ill of others?" And he said: "I am." And they said again: "Are you Agathon the heretic?" And he answered: "I am not a heretic." So they begged him: "Tell us, why did you admit everything we said to you, but refuse to admit that you were a heretic?" He answered: "I admitted the first charges, as this is useful to my soul. But the word 'heretic' means separation from God, and I do not wish to be separated from Him." When they heard this, they were amazed at his integrity, and they left his presence uplifted.

Defending oneself when faced with accusations is not worthy of a Christian. Neither Joseph in the Old Testament, nor the Virgin Mary, defended themselves when they were accused of things they had not done. Hold your peace, and God will defend you! You will be defended by the future development of events.

As the priest continued to rain down insults upon us, we answered his accusations against Christian Jews by admitting that they might be true, but we defended our faith. The result was that the priest suddenly changed his threatening tone: "I have been deliberately testing you, and I have discovered that you are worthier of bearing the name of Christian than we are. I shall expect you early tomorrow morning at the Ministry, and you will get the licence to continue your work."

The next day I was received by him in his office like a brother, and was given the authorisation that I had never dreamed I should obtain.

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Soon after this we lived through the bloody days when the Legionaires quarrelled with their friend General Antonescu and the Jews had to pay the bill for this.

Some people wonder whether the Devil really exists: the terrible chapters in the history of mankind are the best proof of his existence. Where a doctor diagnoses debility, subnormal temperatures, coughing, spitting, and strange noises in the lungs, he is no longer in doubt. This illness is caused by an invisible agent, the Koch microbe. And when I see misery spreading all over this world that has been blessed by God with all His good gifts, I assume the presence of an invisible agent, the Devil.

Jewish blood was a commodity of no value. Jews were collected wherever they were to be found, and taken to the woods or to the slaughterhouse and killed.

But anyhow the Legionary government was toppled, and now it was their turn to be arrested and killed. Our little Christian Jewish community was now in a position to help the families of the arrested anti-Semites. One family, in great distress, was just about to commit suicide when we managed to come to their rescue.

The Jews have often reproached us for extending our love to include the enemies of the Jews. We shall answer them with another story taken from the life of the Jews.

When the rabbi Susia from Anipole was still unknown, a Jew from the country used to visit him, bringing gifts. This Jew's prosperity grew from year to year.

On one occasion, when he returned Anipole, he found the rabbi away from home. On enquiring where he was, he was told: "He has gone to Meserici, to visit his great master."

The Jew thought to himself: "The best thing for me to do would be to visit the famous teacher myself. Then I could receive a blessing from a greater authority than the rabbi Susia." So he made his way to Meserici, gave a gift to the teacher, and received his blessing. But from that day good luck deserted him and his house: his fortune gradually decreased, his business affairs went from bad to worse, and finally stark poverty started him in the face.

In his distress, he went to see the rabbi Susia and told him everything. The rabbi answered: "Our wise men have said that God requites on the same scale that we offer to him. You must know that as long as you made no choice, and gave help to poor Susia, God did the same to you, and He gave you riches. But as soon as you started to have preferences, and took a gift to a great man, then God too worked by preferences, and gave His help to someone who was more worthy than you."

We must not be selective in our good deeds. The enemy we have conquered must also have our help. But any help given to an

enemy while he is in power is wrong, because it makes us his accomplices.

Of course we owe Christian love to everyone: as Christian Jews we must learn to show humanitarianism also to suffering and defeated anti-Semites, and to do this in deeds and not merely in empty words.

"~What shall I do to be saved?~"

Now, under Antonescu, another anti-Semite government was in power. Our permit to worship, given by the Legionaires, was no longer valid. When Britain broke off diplomatic relations with Rumania, the English pastor and all the teachers had to leave. The English Church Mission was dissolved. The buildings which had belonged to the Mission had been administered by a German. He closed down the assembly hall, and ejected us from our flat.

Our little congregation, which now consisted of about one hundred adult members, was left without a shepherd who cared for a small flock of converted Jews.

The leader of the Lutheran Church was a Nazi bishop who had acquired a certain notoriety as a result of a sermon in which he declared that mankind had three great models - Jesus, Beethoven and Hitler, but that Jesus was greater than Hitler. In keeping with the ideas of his own idiotic sermon, instead of using the old greeting, "Praised be Jesus," he stuck to "Heil Hitler."

Baptists, Pentecostalists and Adventists were also persecuted.

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The Greek Orthodox priests had persuaded General Antonescu to dissolve their congregations and confiscate their meeting houses, many of which were converted into dance halls and cinemas. Hundreds of brethren who belonged to these confessions were sentenced to as much as twenty years' imprisonment, and this at a time when we were told that the country was waging a holy crusade against Bolshevik atheism. The main accusation against all these

religious groups was that they had become Judaised. The leaders of the Baptist congregation implored us: "Please don't come to us! If we receive a large group of Jews, we shall be still more bitterly persecuted."

Among the Greek Orthodox priests and hierarchy there were some who were my faithful friends. One priest published my articles at a time when anti-Semitism was at its peak. The Patriarch Nicodim himself intervened on our behalf. The old Archimandrite Scriban was tireless in our defence, and the same was true of others. But the bulk of the Orthodox priests were anti-Semitic. In their churches sermons were preached whose aim was to stir up the people against the Jews.

The Wandering Jew has no resting-place on earth; nor did the Christian Jews have anywhere to rest their heads within the Christian Churches. As time passed we were forced to accept this situation, and to regard anti-Semitism as a cross that would have to be borne patiently, gladly and without a murmur.

Nothing glorifies God more than the Bible does. Thomas Mnzer says that through the Cross you also learn the bitter Christ, and not only the sweet.

We could not decide what confession we should belong to. We were forced to accept the hospitality that was offered. Besides, we were not interested in denominational conflict. The Swedish and Norwegian missions to Israel, which were Lutheran, gave us their protection and their name. We were grateful for this.

And now we had to solve the problem of obtaining permission to hold meetings in our church.

I sent my visiting card to Mr. Sandu, a cabinet minister and head of the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs. Thanks to

my German name, I was admitted, and I started with the same approach as I had used a few months previously in my interview with the Legion priest: I expressed the hope that no exception would be made in our favour when anti-Semitic measures were set on foot, but said that until then we wanted to be allowed to practise our religion, in the same way as the Mosaic Jews were allowed to.

The Minister tried to brush me aside, suggesting that I should speak to the Director for Minority Groups, the Reverend Zenovie. I told him that I had just been to see Zenovie, but that I had not spoken to him. I had waited in his ante-room for a chance to talk to him, and I heard him send his servant to the devil because he had bought a different brand of cigarette from the one he had asked for. "He sends people to the devil, I bring them to God," I continued. "We two cannot understand one another. I do not wish to have an interview with him."

The Minister answered: "The Germans are in our country. We cannot give a permit of this kind to Jews."

I told him: "Mr. Minister, then I shall withdraw my application. We shall nevertheless continue to meet, at our own risk. But before I go I should like to tell you something. Priests of all denominations come to see you, to obtain assistance in the administrative problems. I wonder if a single one of them has spoken to you about your soul. A day will come when we shall no longer be ministers of state, clergymen, or anything else; we shall all stand naked and trembling before the Throne of God. We shall then have to answer for our deeds. Consider then what you may have to answer for, because you refused to help Christians to assemble peaceably in order to worship Jesus."

At that moment God had taken from me all my powers of reasoning, so that I completely forgot that I was a Jew, without any rights, in an anti-Semitic atmosphere, in the office of a minister of state. All he had to do would be to ring his bell, and I should have been arrested and should have vanished without a trace.

But the Lord invested my feeble words with authority. The Minister was not furious; on the contrary, I witnessed a scene

which might be compared with something from the Bible. The Minister rose, and face to face with a Jew, he asked: "But what shall I do to be saved?"

I was not able to talk to him about Jesus.

From then on he was our friend and our protector. A Jew who believed in Jesus had removed a thorn of anti-Semitism from the flesh of a minister of state in an anti-Semite government.

The famous Christian-Jewish poet, Franz Werfel, relates that in 1938 in an Austrian village the German troops collected all the Jews for deportation. With them went a Christian chaplain, who was unwilling to desert them. On the way an officer of the Brownshirts had a diabolical inspiration. He stole a cross from a churchyard and made a swastika out of it. He placed the swastika in the hands of an old rabbi, and ordered him to kiss the blasphemous symbol. The rabbi took the spurs from the cross, and gave it to the chaplain. A bullet struck the Jew who had restored the cross to its true shape.

On many occasions God used Jews for such purposes.

Now once again we had our permit; but this, too, was of short duration. Soon afterwards, together with my wife and a group of Christian Jews, I was arrested. A Rumanian woman reported to the police officer on duty, and demanded to be arrested together with the brethren of Israel. This request was granted.

When we were released, the Minister had been replaced by another, and our permit was annulled.

Underground religious activity

Within every man who has been born again there is a desire to retire from the cares and worries of external things, to calm the storm which sometimes disturbs even meditation, to achieve peace, to pass beyond the ego and to rest undisturbed on the breast of the Saviour. He desires only to remain poor, without knowing or desiring anything but his hidden God.

But we were not to be yet allowed contemplative lives of this kind: it was not until later that I could savour such joys, when I spend many years in prison.

We were now buffeted about in a tempestuous existence, without much time to strengthen the inner man. Our meetings were prohibited; we met illegally in various home, thereby running the risk of up to twenty years' imprisonment. On occasions as many as a hundred of us gathered together in this way. We had developed the technique of secrecy.

Only on one occasion were we surprised during a meeting. The police had made the mistake of not surrounding the house, but walking through the yard and knocking at the door. We let them wait for a while before we opened up. After we had opened the door, we delayed them in the entrance, asking them who they were, what they wanted, and insisting that they identified themselves. When they finally entered they discovered that the report they had received of an illegal meeting was false. The household consisted merely of the family. The flat was on the ground floor, and all those present had in the meantime jumped out of the window.

The police were furious: they were sure that we held our meetings, but they had no proof. But in the end they were lucky, and obtained the proof they were after.

Towards the end, our meetings, which had aroused some interest even among a number of Rumanians, were attended by a Greek Orthodox man who lived by selling poultry, which he brought from the Soviet territories occupied by our troops. His frequent journeys to this part of the country aroused the suspicion of the police, who summoned him to their headquarters one day, in order to ask him what was the purpose of his travels.

He answered: "I assume that you suspect me of espionage. But you forget the proof I have that I am engaged in trade. This is the sole purpose of my journeys. Besides, you ought to know that converted Christians do not stoop to spying. I am a convert: you have only to ask the Reverend Richard Wurmbrand, and he will confirm that I attend the meetings he holds at various houses."

The police no longer suspected espionage; but they now questioned him about our religious meetings. Our brother had let the cat out of the bag, and he was now trapped. The police cunningly concealed their real purpose, and pretended that

they wanted the names of those who took part in the meetings merely to convince themselves that the trader was really a convert, and above all that he was now no longer suspected of spying. In this way they secured a great many names.

At about eleven o'clock one night, I had gone to bed and was making notes for a sermon against the war, which was then raging at its fiercest. Suddenly my wife walked into the room, with a smile on her face as usual, and said: "The police have surrounded the house!" I just had time to throw my sermon down among the pile of papers on the table by the bed. A group of policemen pushed their way into the house, and declared that I was once again under arrest.

I hastened to get dressed and leave the house, as one of our three rooms was full to the ceiling of crates containing food which was to be distributed the next day in the women's prison, where about two hundred women believers - Baptists, Pentecostalists and Adventists - were interned. (We had taken upon ourselves the task of taking aid to the imprisoned brethren, as some of the heads of the different denominations had not sufficient courage to do so, while others had not the necessary initiative to set about it. When we had approached them with the suggestion that aid of this kind should be organized, they had backed out.) If the police had found these crates, how could we have explained the situation? Helping prisoners was a serious offence. Besides, we should have had to tell them where we had obtained the money. If we had refused to say for whom the food was intended, we might have been accused of economic sabotaged by hoarding food. In either case, we should have been punished. But God closed the eyes of the policemen, and they never entered the room where the food was stored. They merely collected the papers on the table, and bundled them together. They took me with them. The same evening they arrested ten other believers, including a young girl of only sixteen, who was not yet converted, but who attended our gatherings.

When we reached the police station, we met the brother who was responsible for our arrest. The thought that he was the cause of our going to prison for many years made him

quite desperate. The first thing we did was to console him, and try to dispel his gloom. We succeeded, and to this very day he is one of the brethren. We told no one of his mistake. Later, I

was to officiate at his marriage.

The young girl was struck by a police commissar because, when asked what her religion was, she answered: "I love the Lord Jesus, but what this religion is called, I don't know." She could not possibly have given a better answer.

The situation might have ended tragically, had not God sent a man to intervene on our behalf - the Swedish ambassador in Rumania, Patrick von Reutersw„rde. He was a deeply religious man, who was always doing good. His door was always open to anyone who is in need or who was persecuted, no matter to what nation, race, class or denomination he belonged. He helped Jews who had been unjustly treated, just as he afterwards helped Germans who suffered when the situation underwent a complete change.

The Swedish Israel Mission had taken us under its protection, and in this way we had made his acquaintance. As soon as he heard that we had been arrested, he intervened on our behalf, although this meant a breach of diplomatic rules, because we were Rumanian citizens, and he really had no right to interfere. Nevertheless, his intervention proved successful.

We were also fortunate in being able to quench the policemen's thirst for bribes. We decided not to worry with pangs of conscience, because we were giving our money to bandits and blackmailers. We could not distinguish between a bandit and a policeman persecuting us for our faith and presenting us with the choice: "Money or several years in prison." Out of love of money, too, the police gave me back my papers without looking through them.

On this occasion we spent only about fourteen days in prison.

While the war was at its height, when I was being persecuted both as a Jew and as a preacher of the gospel, I was able to publish several religious books under the pseudonym of Radu Valentin. It was under this name, too, that I became known among Rumanian believers. I had stumbled on a censor who

was so addicted to drink that he was even prepared to allow the publication of a book condemning alcohol, provided he received a

barrel of wine for his services.

Pastor Magne Solheim and his wife

Pastor Solheim, who was head of the Norwegian Israel Mission in Galatz, was constantly being molested. The authorities would come at night and search his house. He was tireless in visiting Jews in their shops, in their homes and in their camps, preaching the gospel at the same time as he gave them consolation and physical help. Finally, the authorities closed his church.

In his zeal he was a model missionary, never losing heart because of the cool reception he received from the Jews and the lack of understanding from the Christians. His wife Cilgia, a Swiss teacher, proved a faithful helpmeet.

An army captain once said to him: "What is the point of going to the Jews to preach the gospel? They only laugh at you." Solheim answered: "When you receive an order, what do you do? Do you discuss it or do you carry it out?" - "I carry it out." - "So do I. The leader of the Christian Army, Jesus, has ordered us to preach the gospel to all mankind. I am carrying out His order. The results are not my business, but His."

His devotion made a great impression where one might have least expected it. Here, the saying of the Christian martyr Ignatius became a reality: "Christianity is not a matter of persuasion, but of greatness." Out of the clay vessel of a devoted man shines a treasure in all its beauty, and this treasure attracts others.

When Feinstein was arrested (at the time we did not know that he had been killed), we wondered how we could intervene on his behalf. Finally, we decided that we should go to the murderers to plead on behalf of their innocent victim. We would go to the German Legation. Hitler's gang ruled in Rumania, constantly inciting the people to slaughter the Jews. It was in this situation that a Christian missionary and a Jew made their way to the German Embassy to help another Jew. We were received by a certain Herr Dietrich. When he talked

to Solheim, he was astonished and said: "You need a large dose of idealism to leave your ideal country of Norway and make your way to Rumania to preach to Jewish shopkeepers who are only interested in money and pleasure." It was obvious that Solheim's plea had aroused his sincere admiration. And a miracle occurred: Hitler's faithful servant promised to do everything possible to save Feinstein's life. We were subsequently convinced at the police station in Jassy that the German Embassy had in fact phoned repeatedly with this aim. But it was too late. Feinstein was dead.

The burden placed on the shoulders of the missionary who is not himself a Jew is a heavy one. As a rule, the Jews are indifferent, or even hostile. Anti-Semites mock them; the Christian clergy are often indifferent, too. In addition, there is the deep disappointment experienced when dealing with some Christian Jews.

There were some Jews who were baptized in the vain hope that in this way they would escape persecution; these people were excellent actors but had no really deep faith. I remember a Rumanian brother once asking me to go with him to visit a number of converted Jews whom I did not know. We were very well received, and for a whole hour we talked with enthusiasm. We knelt down and we all prayed. I was extremely happy. Then the Rumanian brother, who had some business to do, rose and left us. After he had gone, they began to laugh: "The ~goy~, the fool, he really believes we are Christians!" They were convinced that I, too, was merely acting, and so they revealed their real feelings.

Faced with people like this, one tends to lose courage, even though one understands people who consider baptism a mere formality and a means of defending themselves against anti-Semitism.

Missionaries who work among Jews constantly come across people who have been baptized out of fear, or in order to marry a Christian, or to remove from their consciousness the fact that they are Jews. We tried to counteract this tendency by constantly maintaining the Jewish character of our community, and not allowing our members to change their names.

There are also difficulties with serious converts from Judaism. The Bible declares that our people are a peculiar people: and there is something peculiar about the Jew, which leaps to the eye, and he finds it difficult to assimilate himself into another environment. He takes this special trait with him into the Church.

The message of Jesus is universal and has eternal validity. The apostle Paul says that in order to win them, he will make himself a Jew for the Jews and a Gentile for the Gentiles, but he only "makes himself" the one or the other. In actual fact he has passed into the sphere of pure truth, where there is neither Jew nor Greek. Just as mathematics is the same all over the world, so is the true religion. The difference is only in language and method. It would be impossible to instruct the child of a Bushman in the same way as a Scandinavian child.

But merely because of the fact that Jesus was born a Jew, some Christian Jews assume that they are closer to Him than their Gentile brethren, and tend to look down on other Christians and patronise them. The belief in the Jew Jesus becomes just another kind of Jewish chauvinism, which is as intolerable as all chauvinism. This often results in conflicts, hidden or open, between the Gentile missionary and certain Christian Jews. A carpenter is not nearer to Jesus than a tailor because Jesus was a carpenter, nor is a man nearer to Him than a woman because He was a male. Neither has a Jewish Christian any superiority over a Gentile, though he often claims it.

Missionary work among Jews offers little spiritual satisfaction, and quickly wears missionaries out. Nevertheless, Solheim worked at his task for thirty years, assisted by his splendid wife, and many others.

A Norwegian deaconess, Olga Olaussen, worked unobtrusively but under great difficulty in Jassy during the war. Her father, who had been a fisherman, was once thrown out of his boat during a storm. For hours he wrestled with the waves. In his distress he promised God that, if he were saved, he would dedicate his children to missionary work, and this he did. "Schwester Olga" devoted all her life to the Jews, selflessly

tending the sick and bringing up orphaned children. After the

murder of Feinstein she worked alone with a group of Christian girls, as all the men in the congregation had been killed. She brought up these souls in the spirit of faith.

On one single occasion during the war I was given a permit to visit her congregation on a Sunday. Here I found a small group hungry for the Word of God. Knowing that I had only a day to spend there, I preached for eleven hours, from eight in the morning till eight in the evening, with an hour's break for dinner. Throughout these eleven hours the entire congregation kept their eyes and their attention riveted on the preacher.

Having written something about Pastor Solheim and Scwester Olga, who belong to the Norwegian Israel Mission, it might of interest to describe how this Mission came into being.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Norwegian Lutheran Church made great efforts to spread the gospel among the heathen. One day a Christian lady asked her pastor: "Do you not think the time is now ripe to start the special task of spreading the gospel among the Jews?" The pastor replied: "No. According to the Bible it is now the time of the heathen. Israel has been rejected." The answer brought the lady to the verge of tears, but she held her peace, and bided her time.

A few months later she approached the pastor once again. "I would like to have your advice. A relation of mine had an only son. But he behaved so badly that finally the parents had no option but to send him away from home. To console them in the unhappy old age, they adopted a boy, giving him everything their own child had enjoyed, and making him heir to their possessions, even though blood is undoubtedly thicker than water. They treasured a picture of the child who had been born to them, constantly remembering him and shedding tears at night in their longing for him. The adopted child grew bold, and as time went on he started to abuse his foster-parents: "I don't want to see the picture of the other boy on the wall! How dare you mention his name? I don't want to hear you pining for him!"

At this juncture the indignant clergyman interrupted the good lady's story: "He is an impudent boy, and does not deserve to stay in the house. They should send him away!"

Then the woman said: "Is not Israel the genuine son of

the Heavenly Father? He was driven from home because he had been disobedient, and we, the other peoples, were adopted in his place. But God's heart is still fixed on Israel. Heaven, too, sighs for him. Is it right that we, the branches, should consider ourselves greater than the trunk, and refuse the Jews salvation?"

The clergyman now admitted his sin, and became the founder of the Norwegian Israel Mission.

For many decades now this mission has carried out work of great blessing in several Rumanian towns.

~Difficulties of our position~

The Jews suffered so greatly during the war, that had we followed our feeling only, we should have done nothing but embrace them and console them. God helped us to do something to assist the Mosaic Jews who were deported to Transnistria. Through our Rumanian brothers we sometimes succeeded in abducting some of the Jewish children from the ghettoes, and restoring them to their parents.

But we could not be satisfied with this. The prophet Jeremiah lived during the violent attacks of the Babylonians which marked the beginning of the destruction of the Jewish state, and at that time he blamed the Jews for their sins. Jesus, called by some a new Jeremiah, did the same at a time when the Jews were suffering under the unjust rule of the Romans. Both were considered by their contemporaries to be traitors to their people.

In the writing known as ~Baba Metzia~, the Babylonian Talmud accuses the prophets of sinning in their reproaches of Israel. The ~Shir Raba~ states that Moses, Isaiah and Elijah were punished by God for accusing Israel before the face of the Lord. Christians think the prophets were right.

We were in the same situation as the prophets of old. Despair, cruel servility and their terrible sufferings turned the hearts

of the Jews to stone. Constantly the cry went up: "Let God choose another people. We are tired of being His nation!" On the other hand, the small group of Christian Jews was convinced of the truth of Jesus's saying that salvation must come from the Jews, that the Jews have a task to fulfill and that they are obliged to fulfill it.

The Jews could not understand why we should make them, the victims of the Fascists, co-responsible for all the evil that was taking place in the world, in this way apparently joining forces with their accusers and persecutors.

Our reasoning was simple. As far back as four thousand years ago the Jews were given the Ten Commandments, the basis of morality. It was revealed to them that God is One, and that God demanded from mankind a brotherhood of free men and women, a community guided by love and truth. He also promised a Messiah who would ultimately establish such a kingdom. The Jews were the people chosen by God to bring this revelation to all peoples. God endowed them with the qualities necessary to carry out their mission.

Almost two thousand years after Moses, the world still had not heard of this revelation. Julius Caesar wrote in his ~De Bello Gallico~ that the Gauls, the ancestors of the modern Frenchmen, still drank wine from the skulls of their conquered enemies. The Teutons and the Slavs, too, were savages at that time.

Today, the Jews form only 0.33 percent of the world's population, yet they hold key positions in the economic, political, scientific and cultural life of a great many countries. The position of the Jews in these fields of influence is out of all proportion to their actual numbers.

This is a heavy responsibility for the Jews.

If the teacher fails to carry out his duty, and his pupils are hooligans, even going so far as to ill-treat their own teacher, who then is responsible - the pupils or the teacher? On countless occasions I have seen both Rumanians and Germans open up their hearts when Jews talked to them of the love of Jesus. Often, this has quite disarmed their anti-Semitism. When a Jew accepts the solemn task that God has given him, of being

a light and of bringing this light to the nations, this generally produces a profound effect.

But Jews are not assuming this task: on the contrary, I know from my own experience how often Jews have done their best to undermine the Christian faith. When the man who has lost his faith in Christ and His teaching of love strikes a Jew, we are sorry for the victim, but we cannot absolve him from his guilt.

We had converted a Greenshirt, an anti-Semite, who was a chauffeur by trade. This man, overjoyed at the treasure he had found in Jesus, went to the great Jewish industrialist, Goldenberg, by whom he was employed, and told him of his experience, and about the Saviour, and asked Goldenberg to accept Him. Goldenberg made fun of him: "How silly you are, Augustin! All this is nonsense. The important thing is to live, to have money, to drink, to enjoy life with women, because on the other side there is nothing."

Goldenberg was a shrewd man, who had succeeded in life. Augustin was a simple country lad. The result was that Goldenberg's words plucked the tender plant from Augustin's soul. Many Goldenbergs have worked in the same way, through the medium of newspapers, magazines, books, lectures, and through their influence in political and economic life. Is it surprising, then, that men like Augustin should return to the tavern and, inspired by the example Goldenberg has given them, try to lay their hands on money? And how are they to get hold of money, except by knocking Goldenberg on the head?

And when Goldenberg suffered, like anyone who suffers greatly, he was not prepared to listen to sermons of reproach, but we were forced to show him his guilt.

It was a divine miracle that among those who were struck down by the anti-Semitic tyranny and who were in great distress, there were some who received faith in Christ. To all outward appearance they were wretched, degraded, reduced to depths of squalor, yet they were people who had discovered the great mission of the Jews. They had accepted Jesus as the King of the Jews, King of the people whose mission in life

it was to spread the Light of God through the world. These Jews regretted the years they had wasted by failing to do their duty, and now joyfully witnessed to their new faith, together with their brethren - Rumanians, Hungarians and Germans - who with them had become the spiritual Israel.

The Jewish people are not the only chosen people. God has given many people special vocations. The Indian people have given the world the highest metaphysics, whose influence can be recognized even in the Bible. The Roman people were chosen to give justice to the whole world. Even today, the leading minds in matters of law, such as Lombroso, Enrico Ferri and Pendi are Italians. All over the world, wherever justice reigns, Roman law is supreme. Wherever Roman law does not exist, injustice rears its head. The Greeks were chosen to give the world philosophy. It is said that since the death of the great Greek thinkers no new ideas have emerged in philosophy, but instead men have ruminated, again and again, on the wisdom of the ancient Greeks. The Germans and Italians have given the world great music; the Germans and Anglo-Saxons have given us modern technology. The Swiss have been chosen by God to show the world how different nations, who are enemies in other parts of the world, can live together in harmony. The British were chosen to begin all the big missionary enterprises and to give the Bible to all nations.

It is the duty of every nation to discover its special mission.

But the Jews have not remained faithful to their vocation. They have rejected, and still reject, their Messiah, who has been proved by history to be the person who has fulfilled to perfection the mission entrusted to the Jews, to be a light to lighten the world.

The Jews having failed in their spiritual mission, the task they should have fulfilled has been left to others. According to the prophecies of Jesus, the vineyard has been handed over to another people. From every nation, those who walk in the footsteps of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, the prophets and Jesus, constitute the spiritual Israel. They have taken over our neglected inheritance, and are now spreading the light throughout the world. In this chosen band, this royal

priesthood, this international brotherhood of love, there are also a number of followers of Jesus from among the Jewish people.

During the bitter war years we could not make many converts. Nor were we surprised that the Jews, who were oppressed, hounded, starved and dogged by death at every step, should not have opened their hearts to the gospel, just as we are not surprised that the lame man cannot dance and the dead man cannot move. We thanked God silently whenever He occasionally performed a miracle and a Jew, overcoming all inner and outward impediments, embraced the faith.

We did not ask too much of the new converts: we did not ask that they should walk in a new way, and deny all they had believed in up till then. After all, the Jewish religion has values which cannot be rejected; and we did not expect them to become model Christians overnight. The fish in lakes needed thousands of years to effec the transformation from salt-water to fresh-water creatures. A human being is equally incapable of changing in a few weeks, even in a few years. We had to be patient with our new converts. We were not afraid when we saw what a small grain of faith some of them had, provided this faith clung to the Great Saviour, because we knew that He who had planted the good seed would make it grow until His coming.

The converts did not come from celebrated circles of Judaism; but nor did Jesus gather His apostles from among the highest in the land. Mary Magdalene was a prostitute. We too had women of this kind. Matthew and Zacchaeus were embezzlers and traitors to their people. Saul of Tarsus had committed murder. Most of the apostles were unlettered artisans.

We did not consider that a person's past, however degraded it might have been, had any significance. God judges a man as he is at this particular moment. The only important thing to us was whether a man believed in Jesus's blood and suffering, whether he loved Him, whether he wished to be saved through Him, whether from now on he would follow Him.

It was not only Jesus's right hand, the one He stretched

out to the relatively good, pure, people which was pierced, but also His left hand, the one He stretched out to all those who were degraded, the pariahs.

We recalled one of the sayings of Meister Eckhardt:

"Everyone is most concerned to remove what disgusts him most. The greater and more hideous our sins are, the more quickly and with the greater love does God forgive them, because he is greatly repelled." Many people who were burdened with great crimes received consolation, and we set their feet on the right path with thoughts such as these.

We did not as a rule have long conversations with people. We proclaimed the truth, we did not discuss it. We revealed a truth which fundamentally all of us carry inside us without knowing it, because the human soul is Christian by nature. We spoke to the conscience, not to the understanding. Those who had been chosen from the beginning to be saved, came to us. What was obvious to everyone was that they had been anointed with the oil of joy, above all other Jews.

I remember the day when the decision to confiscate Jewish house property was published. In the Mosaic families affected by this order there was great sorrow. Our brethren in the faith sang and rejoiced, for they knew that in heaven they had a better treasure which no one could take from them.

~Two old people~

One day my wife and I went for a walk. Hardly had we gone a few steps before my wife noticed an old Jew on the other side of the street. An Orthodox Jew by outward appearance, he shuffled along, walking with difficulty. My wife said to me: "That man has not long to live. Go and speak to him about the Saviour! I shall return home. We can go for a walk later."

I crossed over to the other pavement, and approached the old man with the request: "Would you please tell me what portion of the Law of Moses will be read in the synagogue next Saturday?" He told me, and then asked: "Do you believe in Jesus?" I answered, a little surprised: "Yes. Why do you ask?" - "Because I realize that you were looking for an opportunity of speaking to me. Young Jews don't stop people to put

questions of that sort. How old are you?" - "About thirty," I told him. "You are young. I have believed in Jesus for forty

years, and I have spent just as many years in Satan's prison."

His answer left me speechless. We exchanged addresses, and I promised to go to visit the old man. And what was the story I subsequently heard?

This man, a tinsmith, had heard the gospel preached forty years ago in the Anglican Mission, and he had believed in Jesus. Ever since that day he had pored over his Bible, which he knew better than I did, and had led a regular life of prayer. But he had not confessed his faith to anyone, nor had he been baptized, for fear that he might lose his customers, most of whom were Jews.

The years went by, and he stubbornly refused to heed the advice of those who urged him to side openly with Jesus, in whom he believed in secret.

The devil rewarded him, as only the devil can: to secure his livelihood he had refused to be baptized, and in his old age he was reduced to beggary. Once again he was unable to bear witness to his faith, lest he should be forbidden to ask for alms from his fellow Jews outside the synagogue.

That was the position when I ran into him. For many months I struggled with this man, who believed that the Bible was the inspired word of God, and I asked him to bear in mind the words of the Epistle to the Romans: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus ... thou shalt be saved." (Rom. 10.9). He knelt with me, we prayed together, but he always had the same reply on his lips: "Where shall I get my food if the Jews discover that I believe in Jesus?" All around us were Christian Jews who had publicly confessed their faith, and he realized that we all made a living, but the devil had persuaded him that baptism for him would mean starving to death.

I never ceased insisting that he should allow himself to be baptized. Finally he came to see me, and said: "I have made up my mind. Next week the great autumn festival starts, the new, and the Festival of Atonement. The synagogue will be visited by a great many rich people who otherwise never

come near it. I shall get a great deal of money. And then I can be baptized."

I asked him how much money he expected to get, and he told me about five hundred lei, which was a lot of money for a beggar.

I continued to question him: "Do you believe that God created heaven and earth?" - "I do." - "Do you believe that God gave the Jews in the wilderness manna from heaven and water from the rock?" - "I do." - "Do you believe that Jesus fed thousands of people with a few loaves and fishes?" - "I do." - " Do you believe that Jesus can give you five hundred lei, so that you no longer need to postpone the fulfillment of God's commandment?" - "How can Jesus get the money for me? I must put off being baptized until after the religious festivals."

Without thinking, I said something which caught me unawares: "God will not receive you after the festivals are over. For forty years now you have bargained with Him, and now you let Him wait for a mere five hundred lei. God is a great God, and He will not allow Himself to be mocked. You will be received by Him today, or never."

When he left me the old man was angry, because he thought I had spoken harshly to him.

The day after the Day of Atonement, the old man's daughter came to ask me to go to him immediately at his house. He had been standing outside the synagogue in the cold autumn rain, and was stricken with double pneumonia. I ran as fast as I could, but it was too late: when I arrived he was already at the point of death. I went to find a doctor and asked him to restore the old man to consciousness, if only for a few seconds, so that he could express the wish to be baptized. But it was impossible. He died without receiving baptism.

It was my fault, too. At that time I did not know that in such a case as this, the dying man could have been baptized, on the assumption that he was a believer. The mere fact that he had sent for me in his last hour was significant.

I knew another case involving a Jew who in his younger days had heard the Word in Jerusalem, and had accepted the faith. Later he came to Rumania. Every time the question of

baptism was broached he postponed the idea, declaring that he wished to be baptized in the Jordan. Several decades passed before he was able to make the journey. In his old age he finally set off on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He died on the way, in Istanbul, before his wish could be fulfilled. His daughter, who was also a believer, told me this with tears in her eyes, but she did just what her father had done. She was converted thirty years ago, but has still not been baptized. The young learn nothing from the old.

Horshani was the direct opposite of the old man whose story I related above. Horshani had served the synagogue all his life. He was now ninety-one, and had been pensioned off. Once a month he used to visit the members of his former congregation, and all of them would give him small gifts.

One day he went to see a man who had a young daughter, who was a fervent believer. She gave him a New Testament. His joy was indescribable. Despite his advanced age his mind was perfectly clear. He recognized in Jesus, of whom he read in the book, the Messiah for whose coming he had prayed all his life.

I went to visit him, but there was little for us to talk about: with all his heart he believed simply through reading the book.

Not long afterwards, he started dreaming dreams in which, night after night, he saw two people clad in white who advised him to make haste, because his days were numbered.

One day, during the bitter winter of 1941, he made his way with great difficulty to my home. I was surprised to see him. "What brings you here, Grandfather?" - "I've come to be baptized."

Neither the girl nor I had ever spoken to him about this. The decision was his alone.

At his age, prolonged baptismal instruction was out of the question. Nevertheless, I wanted to know what was passing in his heart, and so I asked him: "Why do you wish to be baptized?" - "Because Jesus commanded it," was his prompt reply. In order to test him, I asked again: "And why do you

feel compelled to fulfill the commandments of Jesus?" He was very angry: "Fiddlesticks! Jesus is the Son of God and we must all obey Him."

I continued to question him: "Have you told your family that you are going to be baptized?" (His children were dead, and he was cared for by his grandchildren.) "Yes," he replied. "And what does your granddaughter say?" - "She said she would throw me out of the house." - "What would you do at your age?" If she really throws you out of the house, you will not be able to fend for yourself." - "I shall stand out in the snow in the street with Jesus, but all the same I shall fulfill His commandment."

The old man had passed his examination with flying colours. I at once made all necessary preparations for the ceremony. A young Christian Jewess, who up till now had hesitated to take the step, happened to be in our house at the time. She also decided to be baptized when she heard old Horshani's answer, and I baptized both of them.

Thanks to the intervention of neighbours, his granddaughter did not throw her old grandfather out that very evening, but the next day he had to leave. He did not sleep on the street for a single night. God, who had given manna to the Jews in the desert, also took care of Horshani.

I procured him a Bible with large print, so that he could continue his reading. Whenever I went to see him, I would find him with either the Bible or a hymn book in his hand. As he could only walk a short distance, he was unable to attend our services, and so he did not know our hymn tunes. But this did not bother him. He sang the hymns to tunes he knew from the synagogue.

Horshani was an enthusiastic witness for his Lord, and was constantly telling others of his belief. He lived for another two years. In the end, his granddaughter took him back into her house, out of respect for the neighbours, but she treated him badly. He did not care. He often used to tell us how he saw heaven in his dreams.

One evening a neighbour came to tell us that Horshani was dying. Sister Olga and I immediately went to the house.

In a corner of the room where the dying man lay stood a cantor, who had been hired by the family, saying in his name the ~Vidui~, a special formula of recantation of faith for Hebrew Christians. But Horshani's last words were: "The Lord Jesus is good; I am going to the Lord Jesus."

Antonescu's government had decreed that all Jews, even those who were Christians, should be buried in the Mosaic cemeteries, presumably in order to prevent the dead being racially corrupted. And in the Mosaic cemetery the administration would not allow Christian funeral services to be held, out of deference to the finer feelings of the Mosaic dead. During this period we were allowed to bury neither Horshani nor any other Christian Jews. Cantors sang beside their graves, but their souls were already with the Saviour, whom the cantors did not know.

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5 ADDING TO THE CHURCH

~The gambler and the police informer~

When he was in prison, Oscar Wilde wrote that if Jesus had said nothing but "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much" (LUK 7:47) and "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone" (JHN 8:7), then this would have been sufficient for us to believe that He was God, for these words express thoughts so lofty that no human spirit could have conceived them.

Another of Jesus's outstanding sayings is: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (LUK 19:10).

Wherever we came across a repellent sin, we did not sit in judgement. We considered how we might cure the disease. A good tailor never throws away a scrap of cloth. Society must not reject people merely because they have fallen. It might be society's fault, too.

One day a young girl who was a Christian came to me in tears to tell me that her father, an inveterate card-player, had stolen her mother's money, which she had scraped together by working long hours as a dressmaker, and had gone out to gamble the money away in some inn, which one she did not know. We

systematically visited all the inns in our part of town. At last, very late, we ran him to earth in a tavern which was also involved in a smuggling racket. He was absorbed in a game, and after he had lost, I tapped him on the shoulder and told him I wanted a word with him. We went into an adjoining room, and sat down at a table, the three of us - the gambler, the girl and myself. I spoke amicably, I spoke harshly; every approach was fruitless. I talked about humanity, I talked about religion.

There was one single thought in his head: he would go on gambling, to try to win back the money he had lost. In vain I argued that in these games the only person who came out the winner was the innkeeper. I told him I was resolved not to leave the inn until he agreed to come with me. He now grew insolent, and started to shout: "What rights have you over me? I am a Jew. Let the chief rabbi come to fetch me. I am not a member of your congregation, and I must ask you not to interfere in my life." He shouted so loudly that all the other cardplayers heard it, and they too began to threaten me.

I said: "Do you want the chief rabbi? I'll go and fetch him."

His daughter and I stopped the first taxi we could find and drove to the home of the chief rabbi, but he was not in town. So we went to the house of another leading rabbi, and rang the bell. After a long wait a sleepy servant opened the door. I said to him: "Please wake the rabbi, as a great misfortune has befallen Israel."

This took place at a time when anti-Semitism was raging. The servant imagined that I had come with news of some new law against the Jews. I assured him that the matter was very important.

A few moments later we were ushered into the rabbi's bedroom. He was sitting up in bed, waiting anxiously to hear what had happened. I told him of the great tragedy, that a sheep from the chosen flock of Israel was losing money, as well as endangering the sacred prestige of the Jewish race in the inn, and that he had demanded that a rabbi should come and fetch him. "There's a car waiting outside. Please come with me."

The rabbi looked at me as though I were mad. "Have you

woken me up only for this? Tell the gambler that he can come and see me tomorrow, and I will talk to him." I answered: "It is not for the lost sheep to come to the shepherd. The shepherd must seek out the lost sheep. The gambling dens, the taverns and the brothels are full not only of Rumanians, but also of Jews. I visit these places to look for lost souls, but I never meet any rabbis there. Nor for that matter do I find any Christian clergymen. Do your duty as a shepherd and

come with me!" He muttered a few derisory words, and rolled over in bed to go to sleep.

The girl and I returned to the inn, which was in the Jewish quarter, and told the gamblers, many of them Jews, what had happened. This gave me an opportunity of speaking to them of the Saviour, who left the ninety-nine sheep in the fold in order to look for the one which was lost. I pleaded with them to cross the gulf which a heedless priesthood of all religions had placed between Jewry and Jesus.

The gambler went back to his family. And the news of what had happened that night was talked of in all the inns.

On my wanderings into the world of the outcasts I ran into Farcash. He was a Hungarian Jew, whose name means "wolf," and he was a wolf by profession, a paid informer. He went round among the Jews, worming out of them how much foreign currency, gold or other valuables they had hidden away. With this information he went to the police commissioner, with whom he had an arrangement. The police would arrest the guilty man, and extort his gold from him by threats and torture. He would then be released, and Farcash and the policeman would split the loot between them.

Farcash's wife was a believer, and she was stricken with grief at her husband's misdeeds. At her request several of the brothers spoke with him, but he merely listened without responding.

But the seed was not lost. One day Farcash said to his wife: "Get a bath ready for me. I want to clean myself outwardly and inwardly, and become a new man."

He took a bath, and then he went to the police commissioner, and told him: "I have been born anew. I deeply regret the wrong we have done together, and I have decided to have nothing more to do with it." The result was that the police commissioner had him interned in a concentration camp at Tirgul-Jiu, for fear that he himself would be exposed.

Every third month a commission visited the camp in order to interview the internees. Farcash was one of those brought before the commission. He reported with a Bible in his hand,

told them of his former life, and confessed his new faith. One police inspector grabbed the Bible and flung it to the ground. Farcash told him: "You have brought misfortune on yourself by mocking this book. Now all the curses mentioned in it will fall upon you." His fate was now apparently sealed. He had forfeited any chance of release.

But that evening the commandant, touring the camp, chanced to peep into Farcash's cell, and saw him kneeling in prayer. Out of curiosity he opened the door, and asked him who he was. Farcash told his whole story, concealing nothing. The commandant was so impressed that he promised to intervene on his behalf, and shortly afterwards he was set free.

The policeman who had torn the Bible from his hand later suffered many years of imprisonment under the Communists. Farcash was baptized. Soon afterwards he made his way to Hungary, where he was probably killed by the Nazis.

~The struggle for a soul~

Mrs. S. had decided for Christ, but her husband was violently opposed to her conversion. Finally, he forced her to accompany him to a rabbi, so that she could be shown the error of her ways.

She told me the time of her appointment, and I walked up and down in front of the synagogue, praying. I was afraid that the joint exertions of the rabbi and the husband would weaken her decision.

I kept it up for a while: finally I could stand it no longer, and burst into the rabbi's office. I told him who I was, and insisted that the interview with the lady should take place in my presence.

I am tall and of an athletic build; the rabbi was small and thin. He was clearly nervous. He offered me a chair, and then went on to address the lady: "Christianity is the opposite of the great message of the revelation 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God.' If God is one, the Father, where do we get the other gods, Christ and the Holy Spirit?"

I intervened in the discussion: "Rabbi, this assertion that

God is one is part of the mystique of numbers. It contradicts the assertions of the dualists that God is two, and of the polytheists that there are many gods. If God is identical with the number one, He must have qualities in common with this number. This shows how useful mathematics is to an understanding of the divine truths. All the philosophers, from Plato and Pythagoras to Augustine and Boethius, have maintained that no man who is ignorant of mathematics is capable of understanding divine things.

"You persist in maintaining that God is one, without realizing what the term 'one' involves. There is no such thing as absolute one. 'One' simply represents a synthesis of conflicting forces. Man is one because he is a synthesis of body, soul and spirit. These again are syntheses of other entities. An atom is a synthesis of conflicting elementary particles.

"You talk about the oneness of God. But the Mosaic faith is based on a misunderstanding of the Bible meaning. The Hebrew language has two expressions for the word 'one': ~iahid~, which means 'absolute unity'; and ~ehad~, which means composite unity, as in the book of Genesis, Chapter I; '~vaihi erev vaihi boker, iom ehad~ - and it was evening, and it was morning, the first day, one day.'

"In the Bible, God is called ~Ehad~, a composite unit. In his thirteen articles of faith, Maimonides jumped from ~Ehad~

to ~Iahid~ without any support from the Bible. It is in his work that for the first time we find God portrayed as an absolute unit, which is absurd from both a mathematical and a philosophical point of view.

"We might say that the confession of faith which thousands of Jewish martyrs had on their lips at the moment of their death should, correctly translated, run as follows: 'Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our gods' - ~Eloheinu~ is a plural word - 'I am Jehovah of a composite unity.' Can you deny this, Rabbi?"

The rabbi was downright astounded. Although he was a very well-read man, he had no acquaintance with Christian apologetics, applied to the Mosaic faith. At this moment his intellectual curiosity gained the upper hand: "What you are saying is new and very interesting to me. Please go on!"

Mrs. S. glanced in triumph at her confused and shamefaced husband.

I continued: "If I maintain that God is one, I maintain that He is divisible, because the number one is divisible. He can be the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Even the words of Jesus which he addressed to men and women, quoting from the Psalms, 'Ye are gods' (John 10.34), are plausible. All God's children share His divine nature. The number one is also capable of being multiplied. But it is unlike all other numbers because, however much one multiplies it by itself, it always remains one. We men and women, too, are made gods, but God remains one. Likewise, the number one is the only number whose square root is equal to itself. That is why Jesus, a man, was able to say: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (JHN 14:9). That is why we have retained the saying used by the early Christians: 'Every time you look at a brother, you look at God.'

"God has been called one because every number is a quantity related to one. In this way the whole creation is related to God. At any rate, you cannot use the fact that God is one as an argument against the Christian faith."

In the rabbi's office there was only one picture - a reproduction of "The Last Supper" by Leonardo da Vinci. Why precisely ~this~ work of art? I put the question straight to the rabbi.

Somewhat shamefacedly, he answered: "I admire Jesus because He was a great Jew, just as I admire Plato, the great Greek. They were both important thinkers and good men. I also believe that we should bring back Jesus to the ancestral heritage of the Jewish nation. But if Jesus had been asked what His religion was, He would have answered: 'The Mosaic faith.' Jesus was a Jew, not a Christian. I have nothing against this lady loving Jesus, but that love should be an extra stimulus to help her to remain wholeheartedly what Jesus was too, a Mosaic Jew."

I answered: "Since you have mentioned Plato, I think we had better remain in the pure sphere of philosophy. In heathen religions, divinity could not be worshipped in any

other way than according to concepts which people hold about its very nature. But the Christian and the Mosaic cults, too, are in danger of degenerating into idolatry if we attribute to the divine an image that springs from our own understanding. So let us move from cult to philosophy, from images to the final realities!

"As a rule, we do not draw conclusions from what we say ourselves. You tell me that you admire Plato, probably for his teaching. But if you consider this teaching correct, why do you not adopt it?

"Platonism had many of the ideas of Christianity before the time of Christ. Plato demonstrated the philosophical necessity for a logos as an intermediary between God and man. He called it ~Nus~. No cause can produce an effect which is not related to it. The Invisible God could not simply produce the visible world. What first emanated from Him was the invisible idea which, because it contained within itself, in an ideal manner, everything that can exist as a reality, and because it was essentially active, created the universe."

The rabbi answered: "The idea of a logos is acceptable to us also; it is not especially Christian. We have it from Philo of Alexandria. But the ~logos~ is not God. You say that it was born of the Father; if it was born, then it cannot have existed before its birth. It is not eternal, therefore it is not God. God is only one. Perhaps Jesus will come to be appreciated and recognized as one of the great prophets of Israel. Perhaps our

judgement of Him will be revised. But we shall never accept the Trinity."

I explained our position to him: "The Word was born logically, not chronologically, from the Father. He is eternal. And the word 'Trinity' ought not to shock you. When we talk of divinity, our words are inadequate. Human language is the result of men's need to understand one another in their working, family and social lives. How could we have words for the metaphysical realities? Even Christians use the word 'Trinity' with a certain amount of reserve. As Augustine said, when you start to count the Trinity, you abandon the truth. And Luther, who constantly used the expression 'The Holy

Trinity,' wrote: 'The name "The Holy Trinity" is not to be found anywhere in the Scriptures, but has been invented by men. For that reason it has a cold ring about it, and it would be better to say God than Trinity . . . There exists a Being of divine nature; the strongest union between body and soul is not as united as God is united . . . Not only do we believe in and learn about a unique God, but a God of the simplest simplicity and the most united unity.'

"On the other hand, even the Old Testament has been unable to avoid the figure three, which is the measure of everything. Here, too, we read of the Son, for example in PSA 2: 'Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way,' or in ISA 9, where we read of a child who is to be born, whose name is to be the Mighty God. And there are countless passages which speak of the Spirit of God. Virgil wrote: 'the unpaired delights the Divinity.' In God we must look for the source of everything, for the means by which He receives again what He has created, and for His purpose, which is sanctification and perfection. In order to describe God in human words we need the term 'Trinity.'"

The rabbi cut me short: "Holiness means being faithful to the past, to a treasure which was entrusted to Israel several thousands of years ago. God appeared to Moses as one; everything else is human speculation.

"Madam," he went on, turning to the lady, "I cannot recommend that you should follow the adventurous road of the Christians. Remain on the ancient rock of Mosaic belief!"

Mrs. S. and her husband, both of them intelligent people, had attentively followed the discussion without speaking. Now that she had an opportunity to speak, the woman gave the conversation an entirely different twist, as she said to the rabbi: "You are speaking against the Christian faith. You advise me not to embrace it. Rabbi, do you wish Christianity to disappear? Do you realize what a catastrophe would overwhelm the world if it were to contain nothing but Hitlerism, Communism, and terrible suffering? What would be left of the world, what would become of Jewry without the thousands of converted people among the Gentiles who, out of love for

Christ, spread love around, and spread what the Jews neglect to spread - the Jewish Bible, the Revelation given to us by God so that we in turn might give it to other nations? There is no alternative to Christianity, because the Mosaic faith is nationally isolated. In fact, it is passive within the Jewish race also. The Mosaic faith cannot give light. Moses was made known in the world because of Jesus. I ask you once again, Rabbi, do you want Christianity to disappear?"

The rabbi made a deprecatory gesture, and exclaimed: "God forbid!"

"Well," continued the woman, "if you want it to survive, and if you want it to survive as the religion of perfect love, then you must want Jews to be converted to it. Because the Church of Christ needs Jews, just as lungs need air. And we, the Jews, need Jesus, our King. Just as a swarm of bees, separated from the queen, loses its sense of direction, so we have lost our sense of direction without Him. I wish to become a Christian."

The rabbi turned to her husband: "Let her have her way! I can do no more."

As we left, I said to the rabbi: "What you and I said about God might seem contradictory, but any statement about God is fraught with danger, because we attribute to Him human concepts. We find God only on the ~via negationis~, the way of negation, by denying what the human imagination has woven around Him. We are on opposite sides, but let us both know God as the place where opposites meet. In Him, in Him alone, because He is eternal, the difference between a straight line, a triangle and a

circle vanishes. In infinity all geometrical shapes are alike, and religious differences disappear. Only love unites the lover with the beloved. The more men love and understand one another, the more they acquire of the Divine Being. When we reach the heights where love dwells, we find that the King in the kingdom of love, He who showed us this road in the most sublime way, and who Himself suffered death for love of His creatures, is Jesus."

The rabbi was friendliness itself when he shook hands with us and we departed, leaving him alone in his office to gaze at the picture of the Last Supper. Shortly afterwards, the woman was baptized.

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~A soul lost and a soul found~

A gentleman came to see me, introducing himself by a Rumanian name. He said he was on the verge of suicide: I was the last person whose advice he was seeking before taking his life.

He told me his sad story. He was a Jew, who had been baptized twenty years previously, without a shred of belief. He had merely wished to escape the sorry fate of being a Jew. He had joined the Greek Orthodox Church, had adopted a Rumanian name and married a Rumanian lady. He had been lucky up to now.

The anti-Semitic government now in power was not interested in a man's religion, but in his race. When they discovered that our friend was born a Jew, his house was confiscated, and he was expelled from the Law Association of which he was a member. When he lost his source of livelihood, his wife and his Rumanian friends abandoned him. He had long been a stranger to the Jews. Now he was desperate and unhappy.

I told him that I had a very influential friend whom we could consult immediately. I was certain that this friend would help him. He thanked me warmly, and assured me that he would repay me handsomely. Great was his disappointment when I told him that my friend was Jesus Christ, and suggested that we should kneel together and speak with Him.

"But how can anyone talk to Jesus? He died two thousand years ago."

"Don't you believe that He has risen from the dead?" - "No." - "Don't you greet your friends every Easter, as is the Greek Orthodox custom, with the words 'Christ is risen'?" - "Yes." - "Then if Christ is not risen, you are a dishonest man, because every year, when in answer to this greeting you declare, 'He is risen indeed,' you are telling a gross lie. You must decide: either He is in truth risen, or you are a patent liar. If you believe neither the gospel nor the Church, then at any rate believe in what you have so many times declared.

Choose: either Christ is risen, or you are a base liar, a man without honour." - "Christ is risen." - "Did He die again after His resurrection?" - "No." - "Then He is alive, and we can talk to Him." - "How can He be alive?"

Three times our argument went round in a circle. Again and again he was faced with the alternative which must be faced by all who confess the Christian faith without believing: either Christ is risen, or you have been living a lie. But I could not get him to believe in Jesus Christ as a living Saviour and counsellor.

He did not commit suicide: he did something much worse.

He had done his national service as a wireless operator, and now he volunteered for the army. Although Jews were not normally accepted, his application was successful because he had been a member of the Orthodox Church for a long time, and also because he was a much-needed specialist. At the front he distinguished himself by committing atrocities against Jews and raping Jewish girls. After the fall of the Nazis, he was sentenced as a war criminal.

This should not surprise us. There were other Jews who took part in the Rumanian anti-Jewish atrocities. Mrs. Marin, who was sentenced to death after the revolt of the Legionaires, during which more than a hundred Jews were killed, was a Jewess. Every nation has its traitors. The Jews are no exception. Marx was an anti-Semitic Jew, so are some of the Communist Jews who are leaders of Rumania today, such as Leonte Rautu and Cornel Manescu.

An old Christian Jew had a shrew of a wife who hated

Christian Jews with all her heart. When her husband, a poor man, wished to attend our meetings, she hid his only pair of trousers. When he left the house, she would call out through the window: "I hope you break your leg, you renegade!" Whenever he brought home a Jewish friend and testified to him of his Lord, she would interrupt: "Don't believe my husband. He has sold himself!" For years the old man had to put up with this treatment. Meanwhile, his children grew up. One of them did very well for himself, and had an important

job with a foreign oil company. He loved his father, and invited him to stay for two months' holiday.

When I heard of this, I had an idea. No one had been able to talk to his wife. Several of the brethren had tried, but she would seize the first thing that came to hand and throw it at them. Now I saw an opportunity of reaching her. I asked her husband to entrust me with the task of collecting his monthly wages and taking them to his wife, who would be informed of this plan. She was in such need of money that she would have to receive me.

On the first day of the following month, I turned up. She expected me to hand over the money at the door. But I was in no hurry. I told her I was thirsty, and asked for a glass of water. In this way I managed to get into the house, where I sat down on a chair. She waited for me to hand over the money. I started to talk about the hot, dry weather we were having. I asked for another glass of water. Then I told her that I had heard of her aversion to the Christian Jews, and I quite understood her attitude. I had been one of them for several years, and I realized what a collection of sinners I had joined. She pricked up her ears. I launched into a long speech about the number of hypocrites and renegades among them, how inconsistent they were, and how their words and their deeds were poles apart. We were now on common ground. I had touched on a subject which found an echo in her heart.

She too expatiated on the sins of the Christian Jews she knew. I joined her in condemning their transgressions. We got on very well. I gave her the money. I now had access to her house, because she recognized in me a kindred spirit.

I returned several times. The first time, I merely

talked to her about the wickedness of Christian Jews. The same thing happened on the second occasion. Then I added, almost as an afterthought: "Of course, we are all sinners. Have not you and I also sinned?" At each visit she had a little more opportunity of thinking about ~our~ sins and a little less about other people's.

After a while, I had made such good progress that I managed to persuade her to attend one of our meetings. She was very

embarrassed, because she knew her reputation. But I had carefully prepared the brethren, and told then how to receive her. One of them was to give her a hymn book; another was to see that she got a seat near the window. One of the sisters would ask after her rheumatism, and would tell her that the seat near the window was no good, as there was a draught. All the young people were to greet her with great respect. She was enthusiastic when the meeting was over. Soon she was converted.

Her husband knew nothing about this. When he returned, she asked him, with tears in her eyes, for forgiveness. As he had suffered patiently for twenty years, when he heard this and knew that there was no longer any need for him to hold his peace, he gave her the scolding which he had not dared to give her in the past.

She was not dismayed; she became a loving and believing sister, and in many ways surpassed her husband.

God chooses people by whom the world does not set great store - simple souls who have stumbled, and who in their ignorance have become a prey to wickedness. Our congregation consisted mostly of simple men.

Jesus said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." (MTT 11:25). Why should this be? I believe that God is anxious that His message should not be perverted, this message which is destined to play such a great role in these days. Intellectuals are seldom capable of conveying a message just as they have received it, without giving it a personal twist; whereas the simple, ignorant people transmit it faithfully. But although there were not many

intellectuals in our ranks, that does not mean that there were none at all.

~Practical action~

In the conditions under which we lived, our mission embraced a wide range of activities apart from our main task which was to preach the gospel to the Jews.

When the German army occupied Rumania, we considered

it our duty, out of love for our enemy, to print a special edition of St. John's Gospel, and distribute it free to German soldiers. When they received these handouts on the streets, they admitted to our brethren that they had been prepared for quite a lot in Rumania, but they never expected to find Jews giving them the Word of God as a free gift!

When Bucharest was bombed, I started systematically preaching in air-raid shelters, thus reaching both Jews and Rumanians with the Word of God.

When the first Russian air raids took place, I and six other brethren were under arrest. We were just being interrogated when the alert sounded. We were taken to the shelter under escort of armed guards, and the judges, lawyers and members of the public joined us. When the first bombs began to fall, I suggested: "Let us all kneel, and I shall say a prayer." They all knelt, including the officers and guards. They crossed themselves as I prayed aloud. Then I preached a sermon on the necessity of being prepared to meet God. They all listened reverently.

When the all-clear sounded, the guards seized us by the collar and escorted us back to the court. Once again I stood in front of the judge who only a quarter of an hour before had knelt at my command, and answered his questions.

After we had been released, every time we heard the air-raid warnings we would run as quickly as we could to a large shelter, and preach. Once we ran with Sister Olga to a shelter

in a large block of flats. Though it was forbidden to be in the streets once the warning had sounded, I was seized with a sudden impulse to leave the building and we made our way to another shelter. The house we had left was destroyed by bombs, burying a great many people in its ruins.

During another raid a sister and myself were arrested on a charge of spreading anti-war propaganda under the pretext of preaching. We were released after once again having to pay a considerable bribe.

Our activities were many-sided. One of them was to help our brothers whom the Greek Orthodox Church called

sectarians. Because they were Adventists or Baptists, they were sent to prison and sometimes suffered terrible tortures. We managed to procure the intervention on their behalf of the Swedish Ambassador.

Much of our time was spent helping the Mosaic and Christian Jews who were forced to do heavy manual labour without being paid a cent. Occasionally some of them were able to scrape a bare pittance during the hours of the night. I also had to ease the conscience of our brethren in connection with this work. One of them had an illegal workshop, where he produced crates for fruit. All day long he worked, without any form of remuneration, for the state, which did not even provide him with food. How was he to provide for his five children?

One could not help admiring some of the brethren who, in these circumstances, carried out their civic duties and were unwilling to break a single one of the rules imposed by the Fascist government. But I had to explain to them that according to the Scriptures the authorities were instituted to punish evil and reward good. If they did the very opposite, then we were absolved from our duty to obey them.

Besides, all this time we were busy doing things which according to the law carried the death penalty, such as helping a number of Jews from Hungary to cross the frontier illegally, and rescuing children from ghettos.

Towards the end of the war our little community in Jassy was in danger. We were afraid that the Germans, as they

retreated, would start a new pogrom. The trains were crammed with Rumanians fleeing before the approaching Russian army. Jews were not allowed to travel. An acquaintance of mine, a high-ranking military officer, arrested all the members of the community on a fictitious charge. One brother, who was a soldier and armed with a rifle, was ordered to escort the "traitors to the state" in a carriage especially reserved for them. At the railway station in Bucharest the order of arrest was torn up, and the arrested persons were handed over to the charge of my wife. Many Rumanian brethren risked their lives to help us on this occasion.

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As far as courage is concerned, the Babylonian Talmud says: "The words of the Torah [the Divine Law] are only in the keeping of him who is prepared to die for their sake. For it is written in the Book of Numbers: 'This is the law, when a man dies . . .'" (NUM 19:14).

~In-fighting~

Jesus taught the people in the synagogues. He expects His disciples to do the same, and He warns them: "They will scourge you in their synagogues" (MTT 10.17). This presupposes that we shall speak to the people, and annoy our listeners with sermons which intentionally attack their prejudices and superstitions.

This is precisely what we did.

It was a Friday evening: the Jews were assembling early in their synagogues to read from the Holy Book or to debate among themselves before the start of the service.

I sat down next to the rabbi and asked him, loudly so that those who were sitting near us could also hear: "Rabbi, I have been told that there is a book written by a Jewish prophet called, so far as I can remember, Isaiah. Is it a good book, worth reading?"

"What a question!" he answered. "If only you would read it! It contains nothing but pure gold."

"Rabbi, I have read a great many books where I imagined I would find valuable things, only to discover that I had been fooled. Won't that also be the case with Isaiah?"

"Young man, the very thought is a sin. In fact, it was not Isaiah but God Himself who wrote it. Isaiah was merely the pen."

"Rabbi, where can I find the Book of Isaiah?"

He fetched it down from a shelf and gave it to me. Before opening the book, I asked him again to assure me that it contained God's own words.

Then I opened it at Chapter 53, and asked him: "Rabbi, to whom does this refer?" and I read out aloud the passage describing the Suffering Servant. "This description tallies exactly with Jesus," I said. '"He must be the Messiah."

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The rabbi exclaimed: "You should not read that passage. You ought rather to read Chapter 11."

I turned to the Jews. "Dear friends! You have heard the rabbi confirm that every word in this book is God's own word. Then this description of Jesus's sufferings must also have been inspired by God."

The rabbi angrily left the synagogue, banging the door behind him. He thought I would be polite enough to leave too; but I let him go, and stayed behind with the Jews, explaining Isaiah's prophecy to them.

Another Friday several of our Rumanian brethren came with us to the synagogue where another celebrated rabbi was going to preach. When the service was over, one of them asked aloud: "Please tell me what the inscription on your synagogue means. I am a Rumanian, and I do not understand it." The rabbi answered: "It is a verse from the prophecies: 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.'" Our brother asked in a puzzled voice: "But if your synagogue is intended to be a house of prayer for all nations, why did you mumble in Hebrew all this evening - a language which not even the Jews can understand? Perhaps you are concealing truths which you should be giving us,

too." The rabbi left the synagogue.

Then another Rumanian stood up and preached the good news of Jesus. I mingled with the Orthodox Jews, whose knowledge of Rumanian was not very good, and translated the sermon into Yiddish. We were well received, and listened to attentively.

The Bible tells us that if we behave like this we shall be scourged in the synagogues. This did not happen to us. Instead, a number of our enemies among the Jews got together and planned to scourge us in our own church.

Pastor Solheim came to Bucharest, where the Norwegian Israel Mission established a station. We had taken over and decorated the building that had formerly belonged to the Anglican Mission to the Jews, and we were now going to dedicate the church. We invited one of the leading pianists of Bucharest to play to us, and we had posters put up all over

the city, inviting the Jews to come to our inaugural ceremony.

On the Sunday morning, the church, which could accommodate up to five hundred people, was crammed with Jews. One could sense that some of them had come with evil intentions, and were even organized.

Solheim preached in his usual calm way, and was listened to attentively. I seized the bull by the horns, and told the Jews what God meant when He declared through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah: "Why should ye be stricken any more?" (ISA 1:5). Our old people had been gassed, our children burned in the furnaces. This could not happen to a people chosen by God, of whom it is written that whoever touches him, touches the apple of His eye, unless a serious conflict had arisen between him and his Creator. "In the prayer book of the synagogue the worshippers constantly repeat that sufferings have overwhelmed our people because of our sins. Turn then from the great sin of rejecting the Messiah, given to us by God in order that we might turn God's wrath from us. Listen to what is written in the Law of Moses: 'The Lord [not the Nazis] shall send upon thee cursing, vexation and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me.' (DEU 28:20).

"The Torah tells us that the disaster which strikes us down is because of 'our wicked doings,' and not the wickedness of our persecutors. Surely our refusal of Jesus, the incarnation of God, is the greatest sign of our being in error?"

The Good Samaritan bathed the wounded man's injuries with oil and wine. Solheim's task was to apply oil, to soothe pain. Mine was to bathe wounds with alcohol. One is no good without the other, but it hurts to apply wine to open wounds.

At a pre-arranged signal, shouting, whistling and a general hubbub broke out, reminding us of the passage in the Bible describing how Stephen's accusers, when they heard his witness, "gnashed on him with their teeth" (ACT 7:54). The din was terrific. A group of Jews rushed across to strike me. But my wife, having foreseen what would happen, had organized a

solid phalanx beside the pulpit. They could not reach me. Pastor Solheim whispered to me delightedly. "It is good that this should happen, that the word of God has moved them. It is far worse when the audience is indifferent."

It was not the first time in the history of our mission that this sort of thing had occurred. In the days of Pastor Adeney, young Jews had smashed the windows during a service, and danced in the church. We were used to this kind of incident, and we did not lose our heads. When our brethren tried to calm them, the troublemakers leaped at them. But the brethren were not prepared to give in. One sister, a stout woman, removed her shoe and laid about her with might and main. The result was a regular rough house, which lasted for nearly two hours.

In the afternoon we had a repeat performance, and this went on for the next few Sundays, until we were forced to enlist the aid of the police, who restored order.

While all this was going on, I realized why, when the Jews stoned Stephen, someone had to look after the clothes of the murderers. It is true that they were zealous of the Law of Moses, but they would not stop at stealing a colleague's clothes, if they could. During the fighting, various articles disappeared belonging to our attackers, who came back to look for them; but in vain, as their own people had taken them.

When we were at last left to ourselves, I reproached the brethren for their violence, and reminded them of Jesus's teaching about turning the other cheek when anyone strikes you. They replied: "When anyone strikes you, yes, but when anyone strikes your pastor, then you must teach them a lesson they won't forget!"

The use of force is the touchstone which proves whether a man is in truth determined to fight for justice. On one occasion I gave two slaps to someone who was disturbing our meeting. St. Nicholas gave Arius a slap on the ear, too, and he was not angry. Now and again one must use violence for the sake of one's faith.

One Sunday I took hold of a Jew, who had long been attending our meetings but who refused to be converted, and

forced him to his knees. I told him: "You won't be allowed to stand up until you have surrendered to the Lord!" He said a prayer. Twenty years have passed since this happened, and he and all his family are believers. What gave us strength during this period of in-fighting was that at this time we were in the habit of fasting often and spending whole nights in communal prayer. In prayer, something like an echo takes place. When you strike a note on the piano, corresponding strings in all the other pianos in the room start to vibrate. It is just the same when we express a pure wish in our ardent prayers: all around us we mobilise angels who are inspired by the same wish.

~Unusual phenomena~

The so-called parapsychic phenomena, such as telepathy, clairvoyance, visions of various kinds, spiritualism and so on, are today objects of scientific investigation in several university faculties. It is accepted that there are means of perception other than through the senses. Through what sense did the learned Russian Lomonosov perceive, at a distance of thousands of miles, that his father had drowned, and that his body had been washed up on an island where, in fact, it was subsequently discovered?

The fact that extra-sensory perception exists explains how it is possible for the soul to survive after separation from the body. If the soul can transmit only by the physical senses, then after separation from the body it must enter a state of suspension, without pleasure and without pain, without perception, without any possibility of growth. Investigations into parapsychic phenomena have shown that this is not so, that the soul has its own sources of perception and information, since it has joys and sorrows which are not conditioned by the state of the body. After death, the soul can live an independent life.

Christians live in the world of miracles. I should like to recount some of the remarkable things that have happened to us. I know that to people who do not inhabit the same world as us, these experiences will seem impossible, but we should

remember Hamlet's words: "There are more things in heaven and earth . . . than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

One winter's night I was walking home with my wife. The stars were shining with extraordinary brightness. I said: "On a night like this, when the stars are shining in the sky just as they are now, God took Abraham out of his tent and said to him: 'Look up at the sky and count the stars! I shall make your seed as numerous as the stars in heaven and the sand on the seashore.'"

We were both seized by the Spirit of God. Dumb with wonder, we ran home as fast as we could. The splendour of the promise given to our ancestor Abraham was almost more than we could bear.

We lived on the ground floor, with the windows facing the street. One night, at about two o'clock, we were both awakened by something. We both thought we had heard someone knocking on the window and shouting, and we whispered: "It sounds like Anutza," who was one of our sisters in God. But at the same time we were frightened that it might be the police. We listened. All was quiet. We went to sleep again. After a while we were awakened once again, with the same strange feeling. Once again we went to sleep. We were awakened a third time, and we both distinctly heard the words: "I love you with an eternal love."

One morning I was lying on my sofa. It was after my

first imprisonment. I suffered from tuberculosis of the lungs and spine, and had to spend a great deal of time lying down. I had a terrible feeling of the presence of an invisible evil power. In my terror, I cried: "Out, out, and as a sign that you, Evil One, have been here, you shall bang the door behind you!" The door opened, and closed again slowly, untouched by human hand. I was free!

One day I was walking through one of the narrow streets of Bucharest, at about eleven in the morning, a time when the streets are crowded. Suddenly I felt an irresistible urge to take out my fountain pen and writing pad. I leaned against a post, and started to write, as though I were taking dictation. I was amazed at what I wrote. After half an hour I had completed

the draft of a book, which was excellently received and ran through three editions in Rumanian. It is called ~The Mirror of the Human Soul~, and deals with Christian psychology, a branch of science which held no special interest for me at that time.

An article of mine which was most favourably commented on was ~The Shepherd on the Rock of Error~, which I dreamed. All I had to do was to write down my dream.

One night I dreamed a complete sermon on the subject of contention among Christians. This dream proved prophetic, as shortly afterwards our congregation was rent by a conflict.

One day, several Christians belonging to different confessions were gathered together. My son, then about four years old, was playing in the room. The brethren started a lively discussion on confession, contradicting one another violently. At the height of the discussion my son, who was still playing, called out: "~Kardia kai psyche mia~" (a phrase in ancient Greek from the Acts of the Apostles, where the first Christians are described as being of "one heart and one soul"). The brethren cut short their argument and asked me what the words meant. I explained, and the quarrel ended. The words had come just at the right time.

I can think of only one explanation of the incident. I had read the New Testament in Greek, and as I liked this expression, I had read it to my wife and explained it to her. This explanation lay hidden in the subconscious of my child, who was very interested in religion from his earliest years, and who

must have been present in the room at the time. The amazing thing is that he should have used these words at precisely the right moment.

On one occasion I had a vision. I saw myself walking along the street, full of joy. In front of me walked an old man, carrying two full buckets with difficulty. A voice inside me said: "Take one of the buckets from that old man." I did so. The bucket was very heavy. My joy grew less. Then the voice said: "Take the other bucket, too." I took it. I was now perspiring under my burden. My spiritual exaltation was at an end, whereas the old man was now overjoyed.

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In Bucharest there lived an Indian hypnotist, who was married to a half-Jewish lady. He had adopted a Jewish girl, his wife's daughter by her first marriage.

The girl had not been baptized. When the Fascist regime came to power, he asked us to baptize her, as he imagined this to be a mere formality. When he realized that we insisted on conversion before baptism, he gave up the idea. He no longer came to visit us, nor did the girl, although she felt attracted to Christ.

She went to see a Greek Orthodox priest, and asked him: "What shall I do to be saved?" (This was in the time of the Nazis, when the baptism of Jews was forbidden.) The priest answered: "As you are a Jewess, it is difficult. But send an application to the Patriarchy. It is possible that they will authorize it." The girl did not send in her application, but she poured water over her own head, saying: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, I baptize myself." With that she was easy in her mind.

The years went by. One Sunday morning, before going to church, I knelt down to ask God's blessing on the sermon I had prepared. As I did so, I heard a voice saying clearly: "The sermon you have prepared is not suitable for today. You must preach about Christianity and hypnosis." I argued with the voice, insisting that I was not prepared to talk on such an exacting subject. There was only a quarter of an hour to go before the service was due to start. And when all was said and done, to whom would I talk about this subject? I could think of no one in our church who was interested in it. But I obeyed the

voice. On my way to church I hastily gathered together a few ideas.

After the service, a young lady approached me, whom I failed to recognize. It was the daughter of the hypnotist, now grown up. She asked me: "How did you know that I was going to come here today, and what made you prepare a sermon with a subject especially designed for me, who grew up in the aura of hypnosis?" The girl had been ill for a week, and had promised God that if she recovered she would come to our church. I baptized

her. She took her mother with her to our services and she, too, was converted and became a celebrated Christian poetess, publishing two collections of poems in honour of Jesus.

She became a valiant worker in God's vineyard. Unexpectedly one day she was given permission to preach the gospel in the women's prison in Bucharest. She also provided material assistance to the prisoners, who suffered terribly from lack of nourishment. She frequently visited the prison.

In the prison, which I often visited in her company, I had an interesting encounter.

Some years previously, walking through the streets one day with a Jewish brother, I had seen the sign of a fortune-teller, who boasted that she could tell anything about a person's past, present and future. Judging by her name, she might have been a Jewess.

Both of us went into her office. She asked us what we wanted. I told her that I, too, was a fortune-teller, and that I had come to see her, not as a client, but as a colleague. She was delighted, and told her maid to fetch us coffee. She used cards for telling fortunes. I told her that I used a book, the Bible. I read her a passage from DEU 18:10: "There shall not be found among you any one ... that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch." I interpreted the passage to her, and concluded: "Unless you are converted, you will perish. Now I have told your fortune, and it is a prophecy promised by God."

Two days later I read in the paper that the

fortune-teller and her sister had been murdered by the maid, for her money. Years later, I met the maid again, in prison. She was converted, and became our sister.

Now let me recount some more examples of unusual spiritual phenomena.

A Mosaic Jewess, who was blind, married a Rumanian who was likewise blind. They had married without ever setting eyes on one another. But another woman came between them. The blind man left his wife, and set up house with her rival. The blind woman, poor and desperate, decided to take her own life. She gradually built up a small stock of sleeping

tablets. One afternoon she dissolved them in a glass of water, but – as she later told us – just as she was about to drain the glass she clearly saw Jesus in the room. He said: "What you are doing is evil. I will show you a much better way." "Which way?" she asked. "Life has passed me by. I no longer have anything to hope for." Jesus answered: "Do as I say and you will be happy. Go to the other woman and tell her to come and stay with your husband in your house, and be her serving- maid. Serve them with all your love, without a spark of jealousy, and I shall make you happy!"

She followed this advice, and the other two moved in. She tended and cared for them in every possible way.

After her vision, she became interested in Jesus. She was converted, and I baptized her. (It is interesting to note that I baptized Jews, a thing that was forbidden by law at that time, in the house of a converted anti- Semite.) She obtained a Bible in braille, and found consolation in the Saviour, so that all grief vanished from her soul. Later, her husband quarrelled with the other woman, and life returned to normal.

All went well until a doctor, who was a member of our congregation, started treating her, in an attempt to restore her sight. As soon as she could see a little, she was attracted by the things of this world. She forgot her vision and the redemption she had enjoyed.

A man who had held a high position under the Communist regime in Rumania, lost it when he was falsely informed against.

In despair, he plunged a knife into his stomach, and collapsed in a pool of blood. One of our brethren, who lived opposite, was just sitting down to his dinner when an inexplicable impulse compelled him to leave the table and hurry to the man's flat. In a flash he saw what had happened, and called out: "Do you wish to fall into the hands of Satan?" As he helped the man, he told him of the Saviour. His life was saved. But who had told the brother to walk into the flat? This question, and the warning he had been given about Satan, started him thinking. Today he is our brother in the faith, and is witnessing for Jesus in Israel.

For us, such experiences as these were accepted as a part

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of normal life for a Christian. Both my wife and my son have seen Jesus in our house. My son saw Him when he was about five or six years old. He chanced to tell us about it a long time afterwards. He was not amazed at seeing Jesus, and did not consider it necessary to mention it to anyone. Just as a visitor from a distant place brings a gift to the one he loves, so I have tried to give my readers a faint impression of our encounters with the Invisible World, without necessarily placing these experiences on a high plane. God works in man in various ways and without his knowledge. He has spread His love over all creatures and all events, even the most ordinary, and in this way He can be seen in every lowly beggar and in every beautiful flower. We see God aright when we see Him everywhere. But I would certainly not claim that experience of these unusual phenomena is a necessity for the Christian life.

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6 CONVERSATIONS WITH ZIONISTS AND OTHER JEWS

The sins of the Jews

During the war, the International Red Cross had organized the immigration of Jews into Palestine. When the question arose of sending a group of Christian Jews, a Zionist leader vigorously

opposed this move: "We do not want renegades. We shall throw them into the sea."

We encountered this kind of hostility in conversations with leading Zionists. We could understand their point of view, but we, too, had our national feelings.

In the Gospels Galilee is called Jesus's fatherland and Nazareth His town. Jesus did not consider Himself to be a citizen of the world, as did the Stoics, but a Jew, and He loved His people. There is a sort of nationalism which is an integral part of Christianity: the desire to work together for the greatest spiritual, economic, political and cultural benefit of one's own people. If you do not love your own people, how can you love foreigners?

The Christian Jews, each in his profession, have fulfilled their obligations to their people, and they do so in Israel too, playing their full part in developing and defending the country.

Christian Jews have served their people in a very special manner by opposing anti-Semitism, in a way of which other Jews were incapable.

During the Fascist regime, I was travelling by train from Galatz. The only other occupants of my compartment were Jewish businessmen. I talked to them about Jesus, but they

were quite indifferent. At Ploesti, a burly Fascist entered the compartment. He seemed almost to smell that we were Jews. No sooner had he taken his seat than he began to be offensive, addressing us as "circumcised," "sidelocks," and by other similar names.

The others endured it in silence. I gave him time to calm down, and then I opened my Bible and showed him a number of passages which proved that Jesus was a Jew. I told him that the gospel mentions Jesus's circumcision. Christians believe that the Song of Solomon is a prophetic book about Jesus. In this book it is written: "My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night" (SOS 5:2). So Jesus, too, must have had sidelocks. "If you make fun of Jews," I told him, "you are making fun of Jesus, too."

I went on: "I suppose that, like every Christian, you expect the return of Christ. The first time He came, He came as a Jew with sidelocks in Palestine. If He should choose to come a second time as a Jew with sidelocks to Rumania, you would mock Him and beat Him. What sort of a Christian are you?" He apologised, and admitted that up till then no one had ever spoken to him about these things.

In ways like these we also serve our people.

But we realized that we had another duty: it is not enough merely to show the anti-Semites their sins. The Jews, too, have their national failings, which must be made clear to them.

We could not agree with Dubnow or Gr„tz in their view of the history of the Jews. According to these writers, in all their conflicts with other nations, and at all times in history, the Jews have been in the right. We have always been innocent victims, and other people hate us without reason.

Historians often tend to write in precisely the same manner about other nations, and this is not right. I have no time for those who assert that the negroes, the whites, the Americans or the Russians are always right. Every social group has its sins. We Jews, too, have our sins, and Jewish sin has many aspects.

Economically, we exploit the countries in which we live, by appropriating a larger proportion of a country's wealth

than is due to us in relation to our numbers. This is a general characteristic which does not mean that all Jews are exploiters. Many of them are terribly poor, some even live in slums. Most Jews lead an honest, productive life.

There is an explanation for our share in the national income. Jews live mainly in towns, and for this reason they enjoy the high standard of living that exists there. In the second place, they were excluded from the guilds of craftsmen in the Middle Ages, and as a result a great many Jews devoted themselves to business and banking. To this day they play an important role in the commercial and financial life of many

countries, and often amass great wealth.

A Gentile exploiter, be he Rumanian, German or French, proceeds in exactly the same way as a Jew. "Anti-Semitism is the Socialism of the foolish," Engels once said, because it attacks only Jewish exploiters, and leaves the others alone. This is true, but there are a great many fools. When the exploiter belongs to a different race, the social problem becomes a national one.

Not all Jews are blameless for being hated. There is something else which arouses the animosity of other people. Compared with other races, Jews enjoy great intellectual superiority. As I have already mentioned, over sixty per cent of the Nobel prize winners have been Jews, and nuclear science, the great scientific achievement of the twentieth century, is to a very great extent in Jewish hands. A Jew, Sternfeld, was the chairman of the Committee for Russian Astronautical Coordination. Jews hold key positions in political, economic and cultural life.

If all these were used for the purpose of establishing the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of justice, peace and joy on earth - which is the special task of the Jewish people - then the nightmare in which mankind lives today would come to an end. As the Apostle Paul said, if the world is reconciled to God by the rejection of the Jews, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (ROM 11:15).

The other nations feel that there is a great deal the Jews could do for them, which they are not doing. A member of

an anti-Semitic organization was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment. We met in a prison cell. He was in despair. He clasped my hand, and said: "Do something for the world, you Jews! Only you can do it."

What is the use of a knife that will not cut, a pen that will not write, a watch that will not show the time? What is the use of a Jewish race which does not conscientiously, systematically and thoroughly fulfill its role as the people chosen to bring light to nations and to turn their steps towards God?

Jesus said to the Jews: "Ye are the salt of the earth;

but if the salt has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (MTT 5:13).
Anti-Semitism has given us more than enough of this tragic fate. Crimes have been committed against us which cannot be defended. But are we all entirely innocent? I would not assert it about myself.

~Discussion in a prison cell~

When, in solitary confinement, I heard from a new prisoner, by means of our system of tapping in code on the walls, about the creation of the new state of Israel, I was overjoyed. Afterwards, in a common cell, I spoke to an extreme right-winger of the Zionist movement. He had avoided me for a long time because, as he put it, we were both hard nuts, and he could see no point in our meeting. But an explanation was necessary, so God arranged for us to meet in a prison cell. He was a strong personality who made a great impression on his fellow men. Torture, and the deprivation of all creature comforts in his old age, never made him feel sorry for himself, but proved an opportunity for him to summon his strength and energy to continue the fight.

I had preached in the cell about the crucifixion of Jesus, and this was followed by a discussion, in which he openly expressed hls opinion.

"Your continual dwelling on the sufferings of Jesus is a sign of masochism, and your constant glorification of the virgin birth merely stimulates the libido. A normal person doesn't continually think about a girl's virginity. It shows

how your subconscious must be working. Christianity is a religion of neurotics. It can still satisfy the religious needs of some of its converts. But Judaism is the religion of life, normal life in all its fulness; it has nothing to do with a crucified Saviour. Our sins were expiated by the sacrifice of Isaac, which Abraham intended to make, but which was not carried out."

I asked him: "If Christianity is a false religion, and the Jewish people, as God's chosen people, are in the right, how can you explain the deep cleft between God and the Jewish people? Why are we punished by God and scattered among the nations?"

He replied: "We are not punished by God. The dispersion is our mission. The ghetto prepares us for the fulfillment of our ancient belief that the day will come when Israel will spread among all lands. In order that this ideal shall be fulfilled, we are scattered over the world; but we are not under any curse."

I pointed out that this is a contradiction of the Jewish prayer book, which repeatedly maintains: "For our sins' sake we are driven from our land." It also contradicts what is written in the Old Testament: "If thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God ... ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all peoples, from the one end of the earth even unto the other" (DEU 28:15,63, 64).

He stuck to his point of view: "In the dispersion God is just as close to us as He was at the foot of Mount Sinai. The rabbis who wrote the prayer book admit their guilt because they are humble. And the curses that Moses pronounced are a blot on an otherwise great character."

"Did Moses pronounce these curses?" I asked. "He maintained that it was God."

He answered categorically: "They were only the words of Moses, and we are not guilty. We are Jehovah's favourite children, and we are fulfilling the mission He gave us. You have joined the ranks of the anti-Semites." I thought it best to ignore this jibe, and went on: "Apparently

what you are trying to say is that it is the mission of Israel to spread the Law of Moses, with which you yourself are only partly in agreement, and belief in the God of Israel. Quite certainly this mission still exists. But you must be half blind if you fail to see that it is only realized through Jesus. Wherever in the world a Gentile prays to the God of Israel, and recognizes the divine authority of the Jewish Bible, and the Jewish prophets as authorities, this is due to the Church that was founded by Jesus, and in no way to the merit of a Mosaic Jew. If the Mosaic

Jews had committed no other sin - and in that case they would have surpassed the angels in heaven - they have at least committed the sin of not fulfilling their mission, but only talking about it and leaving it to others, thus increasing their guilt."

My opponent suddenly abandoned the theme of divine mission and contradicted what he had already said by declaring mockingly: "You will not be able to complain much longer about us. Our aim as Zionists is to go back to the land that was ours, a great deal of which is still wrongfully occupied by the Arabs. Then we shall leave you all in peace. Christian Jews will have to choose between being Jews and being Christians. If they choose the former, they must join us; if the latter, they must stay with their co-religionists."

"We want to come with you," I assured him, "though I admit that this will create difficulties, as we wish to come and yet to retain our Christian convictions."

"We do not want to interfere in your private affairs," he declared. "After all, you may believe, or not believe, whichever you wish."

"That is precisely where difficulties will arise," I said. "Our Christian faith will not remain bottled up inside us, nor will it be satisfied with the assurance of our own eternal salvation. It manifests its nature in true thinking, and in an impartiality which is certain to make things difficult for you. Take the Arab problem, which you mentioned. The Arabs have been in Palestine for centuries; it would be wrong to say that they have seized the country unlawfully. You might as well insist that the Americans should be driven out of

the United States, so that the country could be returned to the Red Indians. If we went to Palestine, we should feel differently from some of you. The Arabs would be our brothers. We are opposed to chauvinism. The whole of Jerusalem and Israel belong rightfully to the Jews, but the utmost must be done that the Arabs should feel at home with us."

He shouted: "If you do that, you will be severely dealt with. The Christian countries have not behaved in a Christian way towards us, and we shall not allow anyone to start

experimenting with Christian love towards our enemies in Palestine, of all places, where our national interests are at stake."

I could not allow him to condemn the whole of Christianity. "Many Christians have behaved in a Christian way towards the Jews. All the pietiests have done so, and the Scandinavian Lutherans and a great many Catholics, both laymen and clergy. So have some members of the Greek Orthodox Church. You are quick to notice the bad characteristics of Christians, but you close your eyes to the good ones. Where the spirit of their faith is missing, where their Christianity is a mere formality, it might go hand in hand with anti-Semitism. But beyond doubt there have been innumerable believing Christians who have loved you. In any case, your chauvinism is not at all representative of Jewish feelings. Most of our people would agree rather with a policy of love and understanding. Real Zionism is ethically Christian because, while fighting for the Jewish cause, it has feelings of friendship toward Arabs."

A well-known anti-Semite, who up till now had listened in silence, interrupted us: "Mr. Wurmbrand, you as both a Jew and a Christian would best be able to explain something to us Rumanians: is there or is there not a Jewish plot against the Gentiles, led by a clandestine Jewish government called Kahal?"

I replied, "There is no plot engineered by the Jews. Non-Jewish people, if they follow their true instincts, do both good and evil, without entering into any prior agreement. The Jews behave in the same way, without the existence of a Kahal. There are enormous differences among the Jews, between parties and denominations. Communist Jews imprison Zionist Jews, as you

have an excellent opportunity of seeing. Nevertheless the Jews are united, not by a Kahal, but by their national characteristics, and this is true also of other nations. The special Jewish characteristics sometimes produce positive results of enormous value, sometimes negative results, like their attitude to Christ. This attitude we consider to be a real curse to the nations of the world, who are aware of it without understanding it, because it postpones the only possible solution of the world crisis, which is the establishment of the Kingdom of God, based on justice and happiness, of which only Christ can be the head. This curse must be changed into a blessing, by

converting the Jews to a belief in Jesus, because they are called to be God's main tool in establishing His kingdom. Anti-Semitism, too, is a curse, because it prevents the conversion of the Jews."

The anti-Semite answered: "You will never wipe out hostility towards the Jews. They are incapable of being assimilated; they remain an alien element in every country. Every organism has a natural tendency to eliminate foreign bodies."

I admitted: "The Jews are quite different from other people. Their unique history proves this. They cannot be assimilated. But in His parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus taught us, not that we should absorb people from other nations, but that we should behave justly and kindly to them, whoever they are. There is no justification for anti-Semitism."

The anti-Semite, who refused to let me resume my conversation with the Zionist, maintained his conviction: "A nation must defend itself: Not only are the Jews incapable of being assimilated, but they would like to assimilate us to their own mentality. They undermine our national institutions."

I replied: "So far as that is concerned, you have already been defeated: you are all living in a state of perfect Judaism. If you want to get rid of Judaic influence, you must renounce Christianity, capitalism and Communism; you must give up Singer sewing machines, Waxmann's streptomycin, much of the realm of microphysics, Einstein's theory of the universe,

everything that sets is seal on twentieth-century man, and return to the primitive state of a pastoral tribe. After all, it is a fact that man rules nature, and that the white races are at present the most advanced. It is also a fact that, for better or worse, the Jewish mentality is the dominant one. The Jews have an unsurpassed knack of imposing their ideas on others, and in this respect they are invincible, though this is not necessarily always to their credit. But neither is it always to their discredit. People like you are trying to get rid of the Jews while at the same time you worship Jesus, who was Himself born a member of our race."

I turned to the Zionist and added: "We Christian Jews, too, have this quality of invincibility. What is more, we are

the most perfect incarnation of the belief in humanitarianism which contains the core of Judaism. We are the true bearers of Judaic values."

He answered: "You are heretics of the Jewish faith. As a Protestant, you are also a heretic of the Christian faith. Double heretic! We may be friends, but it is impossible to reconcile our principles. Your words really conceal a seething hatred of everything that is dear to us, just as the Red Flag is a cover for hatred. Marx wrote an anti-Semitic book, ~The Jewish Question~. The Communist International, too, has published its thesis on the Jewish problem in a book by Heller called ~The End of Judaism~. We are hated everywhere, utterly hated."

Mere words are powerless to help people who have suffered greatly, and have reached the stage when they see enmity in people who are not their enemies.

For this reason I decided to change the subject, so I said: "In a book which you published in 1934, you wrote that Jewish immigration to the part of Palestine which was placed at your disposal would reach a critical point when Palestine cannot absorb any more Jews. An overwhelming majority of Jews will have to remain scattered among the other nations, and you must stop imagining that you are surrounded only by enemies. A new adjustment will be necessary, but your anti-Christian attitude would make this adjustment difficult.

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Besides, the falling away from the Mosaic religion goes on more rapidly in Palestine than in the dispersion. Only a small percentage of Jews in Palestine go to the synagogues or keep the Jewish traditions. What do you say to this?"

He answered: "We are back in our own land. At last we shall be able to strip off the expensive and deadly garments of the Chosen Race. We shall be just like any other nation."

"You are contradicting yourself," I reminded him. "A few minutes ago you were talking about the holy mission of Israel, Jehovah's favourite child."

He laughed. "Now we are in Palestine we shall complete our mission, by sending apostles to foreign nations. But on a material plane we shall live like them. We shall have our own

army, and it will give us victory. We shall have tractors, and they will be our Messiah."

I pointed out: "And one day we shall die, leaving behind us our torturers and our victims, because in the countries where we have lived we have not only been killed, but we have also killed. Consider the millions who were killed by Trotsky, Bela Kun, Tibor Szamuely, Rakosi, Ana Pauker, Jews who were rulers in Communist countries. We shall also leave behind our tractors, and we shall stand before the judgement of God. We shall have to answer for all we have done, and even more for what we have left undone, because we have not been obedient bearers of light. Judaism has shone like a beacon. Salvation has come, and still comes, from the Jews, as Jesus said. But it comes only from the Judaism that was incarnate in Jesus. The spirit that unites all nations does not come from the Jews, who refused to allow other nations to enter the temple, but from Jesus. The sense of supreme justice does not come from the Jews, whose ultimate revelation is the Old Testament (a very valuable book, but one which contains commands to utterly destroy innocent people). It comes from Jesus. Jesus was the first to preach a just and impartial God, who reveals Himself through love to every nation that seeks Him."

The Zionist was content to answer: "We are prepared to make a gift of Christianity to the nations, and we shall see how they make it come true. Let them endure being struck

on the face, and let them turn the other cheek! We have put up with blows all too long. We no longer want the religion of meekness."

In prison, serious discussions cannot last long. The anti-Semite seized this moment to make a joke: "We shall receive Christianity as a present from you, minus the commandment about committing adultery. Jewesses are very beautiful. We are against the Jews, but not against Jewesses!"

In the unclean atmosphere produced by a joke of this kind the Spirit no longer vibrates. I held my peace. What our feeble words are incapable of doing, God can do. He will fulfill his plans of peace, even that of peace between Jews and Arabs. He has made the miracle of giving the Jews the victory in the Six-Day War. We hope for an even bigger miracle, lasting peace

between Israel and Arabs, with a Jewish Jerusalem serving as lighthouse for the Moslem world. Jews and Arabs can become friends at the foot of the cross of Jesus.

~"I shall stick to our old religion"~

I spoke to another Zionist leader, and asked him: "I realize that you are compelled to attack us. But why do you do it in such a vulgar manner?"

He answered: "We choose our method according to public taste. An academic style would not be very convincing."

"Let us forget it," I replied. "In Paul's Epistle to the Romans, the Christian Church is compared to a branch grafted on to the olive tree of Jewry. Do you realize what this means? An organization embracing more than a thousand million people, and which plays an enormous role in history, is described in the sacred book of this religion as the lawful property of the Jews. Surely we are not so strong, wealthy and self-confident that we can forego a position of this kind? In the sacred book of a thousand million people Jesus is referred to as the Glory of Israel (LUK 2:32). Can we who are so despised afford to renounce this glory?"

He retorted: "We decline it; we refuse to have anything to do with Jesus and Christianity."

I asked him: "In whose name do you decline? Whom do

you represent? Does the intellectual elite speak on behalf of the nation? Because almost without exception the intellectual elite of the Jewish people in the twentieth century have supported Jesus."

I quoted from ~As I See the World~ by Albert Einstein, where he said that if we cleanse the Judaism of the prophets, and Christianity, as Jesus preached it, from all its later additions, especially from priestcraft, we shall have a doctrine which will be able to heal mankind of all its social ills. It is the duty of all good people, he said, to strive earnestly to introduce

into their milieu this really humane teaching, as far as lies in their power.

I continued: "The synagogue refused to bury Henry Bergson, because he had openly avowed that he was a disciple of Jesus. Franz Werfel, the great Jewish poet, wrote in praise of St. Bernadette. Scholem Asch, the great Jewish novelist, was a Christian. Nils Bohr and Piccard are Christian Jews, and there are many like them. Emil Ludwig wrote ~The Son of Man~, a book full of admiration for his subject. This is also true of Max Brod. Not to mention Martin Buber, who called Jesus his elder brother.

"These, after all, are representative leaders of the Jewish race. 'This is the first time in history that the intellectual leaders of Judaism have rallied to Jesus. In this way, a biblical prophecy is being fulfilled, just as the return of the Jews to Palestine, and the fact that Jews fill leading positions in so many countries, fulfill other biblical prophecies."

The Zionist leader laughed: "All the people you mention were converted to Christianity in their old age, when people tend to suffer from a hardening of the arteries. I don't bother my head with religion, but if we must have one, I shall stick to our old religion."

It was impossible to get him to see reason. He did not know that the old religion familiar to Abraham was salvation by faith, which the Christians preach; and that the new religion is really the Mosaic religion, where salvation is the fruit of obedience to commandments that were not written down until four hundred years after the death of Abraham.

Another factor that distinguished us from the Zionists was

that for them the national question was of supreme importance. We were certainly not blind to it, but for us it was of minor significance.

We are at one with the Zionists in one thing. We are in favour of Israel. The rights of the Jews to Palestine are unchallengeable. God, the creator of the universe, gave them

this country.

As for the Arabs, it is simply nonsense for them to be afraid of the Jews. What can three million Jews do to three hundred million Arabs? The Arabs should rather profit and learn from the intellectual and financial superiority of their new neighbours. I should also expect the Vatican and the World Council of Churches to take a clear stand on the side of Israel.

We made our position clear.

The Jews enjoy intellectual and material advantages which the Arabs do not possess. The Jews must show understanding, kindness, indulgence, and a willingness to help the Arab world. Difficulties can be overcome by showing them love.

How effective it would be to bombard the impoverished Egyptians with bread, medicine and words of peace! Christian nations could proceed in the same manner. Attacked, the Jewish people must defend themselves with military weapons. But the basic attitude of the heart must be love. The Arabs are loved by every true Jew. They deserve love as much as every other human being.

~All things to all men~

The doctrine which the Zionists found it particularly hard to swallow was the commandment that men should love their enemies.

Would any Zionist have done what we did? After Rumania had severed its alliance with Nazi Germany, it was decreed that any person concealing members of the German army would be liable to the death penalty, as all Germans were to be handed over as prisoners of war. A number of girls serving in the German army, the so-called ~Blitzm„dchen~, appealed to us to shelter them, to save them from being deported to Russia. Naturally, we did so.

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Some person or other informed on us, and the police surrounded the house. A police commissar entered, and asked me: "Are you sheltering German girls?" I answered: "Do you know what

my nationality is?" He said: "Richard Wurmbrand? You're German, of course." I showed him my identity card, issued during the Fascist regime, which stated that I was of Jewish race. "I am a Jew," I declared. "Half of my family have been murdered by the Nazis. Do you really imagine that I would shelter German girls?"

The officer apologised: "The whole thing is obviously a mistake," he admitted, and withdrew. The girls were in an adjoining room. We made no distinction, as God makes no distinction either, allowing the sun to shine and the rain to fall on good and evil alike.

On other occasions we intervened successfully on behalf of Germans who were threatened with deportation only because they were Germans. It was a crime similar to persecuting men only because they were Jews.

In time, this activity became widely known. The Zionists could not forgive us for it, any more than they had forgiven Jesus for giving His love to Romans and Samaritans alike, even to publicans, who were traitors to their country. It was even insinuated that He was on their side, because people failed to realize that the love which He bestowed on sinners did not mean that He condoned their transgressions, but that this would heal their minds. Neither did we condone Nazism, but we healed some of the Nazis by deeds of love.

Our position as Christian Jews is always between the devil and the deep blue sea; as we tried to win everyone to the faith, to be all things to all men, we were almost like actors striving in different plays to interpret completely different characters.

By way of putting me to shame, someone once described me as a great actor. I took this as a compliment. I cannot see how it is possible to be a good missionary unless one has a certain artistic flair, and a knack of playing different roles.

One day I left my house to carry out my duty as a fisher of men. The first person I talked to was a noted anti-Semite.

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"I don't want to hear about Jesus, because he was a dirty Jew," he rebuffed me. I replied: "How do you know Jesus was a dirty Jew? He is the Son of God, and belongs to no one nation. In

driving the merchants from the temple He showed his repugnance for a quality which you condemn in Jews, the pursuit of money. The harshest words of condemnation ever written about Jews are to be found in the New Testament. Your place is at the side of Jesus, not with those who condemned Him to death."

I parted from him, and met a Jew, who told me that he did not believe in Jesus, because He was the Saviour only of the Gentiles. I asked him: "Where did you get that from? Jesus was a Jew. The New Testament opens with the words: 'Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham,' giving His entire genealogy and proving that He is of Jewish descent. In the Scriptures Jesus is called 'the Glory of His people Israel.' He loved His people passionately, and told a Samaritan woman: 'Salvation comes from the Jews' (JHN 4:22). Christianity is essentially a vast undertaking to Judaise the world, because it has been ordained that people of all races shall become 'Jews in their hearts.' Even after Jesus had been crucified, the apostles continued to call Jerusalem the Holy City, and the apostle Paul writes that the Jews are still loved by God for the sake of their forefathers, and that they will play a great role in the future. The chosen ones of heaven will consist of 144,000 people from the twelve tribes of Israel alone."

Shortly afterwards, I ran into a brother who was full of confidence in his own faith, but not conspicuous for his good deeds. As I was familiar with his way of life, I said to him: "Faith without good deeds is dead" (JMS 2:17), because men will be judged by what they do.

I then visited a believer who was on the brink of despair because of a sin he had committed. He could never forgive himself, and he doubted whether he was saved. I explained that man is regarded as true to his faith, even without good deeds, because God looks on the heart, and not on our actions; the opposite, in fact, of what I had just said to the last man I had met.

After these four conversations I sat down on a park bench.

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My head was spinning. I asked myself which of the four things I had said I believed myself. The answer I came to was that the different ways in which one speaks to people are nothing but bait with which to lure them to Him who is far above and beyond our

prejudices and ideas. But going from one category of human being to another involves the use of different arguments and different medicines for the soul. The anti-Semite and the Jew brought to conversion will meet in the same Christian love, but work of this kind is very exhausting.

~Anti-Klausner~

A professor at the university in Jerusalem, Josef Klausner, wrote a book called ~Jesus of Nazareth~, which has been translated into all the main world languages.

Every time I talked to a Jew about the Saviour, he would conclude his argument with: "The problem of Jesus has been explained by Klausner." Generally the learned Jew concerned had not taken the trouble to read Klausner, but he had the book unopened on his bookshelves, and this was enough. He did not need to bother his head any more with Jesus.

For this reason I considered it necessary to publish an answer to Klausner's book, which I called ~The Jews and Jesus of Nazareth~. ~Anti-Klausner~.

Klausner took an unfair advantage of his great name, which made him confident that his assertions would be accepted by the rank and file of Jews, and enabled him to make statements which were completely untrue but which would never be subject to any check.

He writes, for example, that in Paul we find no authentic historical proof of Jesus's life and work.

Any student familiar with the Scriptures could have corrected the professor on this point.

In Paul we find a great many details about the life of Jesus. He says, for example, that Jesus was betrayed, that He was killed by the Jews, and that the place of His crucifixion was just outside Jerusalem. Paul also tells us something about the mind of Jesus. He says that Christ "loved the church and gave himself for it" (EPH 5:25). He describes Jesus's humility, His

mildness and His power. Above all, he constantly reminds us of a "biographical detail" that Klausner has omitted, namely that Jesus rose from the dead.

Without any historical basis in fact, Klausner proceeds to make any statement that suits him. He says that Jesus was born in Nazareth. Where did he get this? Any mention of Bethlehem, which the Gospels describe as Jesus's birthplace, would be rather awkward, because it is David's town, and it was here that the prophets foretold that the Messiah would be born.

He claims the story of Salome is a legend. Professor Klausner merely decides that this is so and argument is superfluous.

"John the Baptist considered himself to be Elias." The Gospels state that when John was asked: "Are you Elias?," he answered: "I am not." (JHN 1:21). Professor Klausner possesses a source of information which is not available to other people.

He goes on to say that it is obvious that John the Baptist knew nothing of Jesus, and did not accept Him as the Messiah. The only historical sources, the Gospels, state that Jesus and John were related, and that the latter proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah. No one knows where Klausner obtained his information.

The only argument Klausner uses every time he submits a statement for which there is no proof is: "It is obvious that this is so."

He excuses Judas Iscariot, proclaiming him to be a learned Jew with a clear understanding. The account of Jesus being betrayed by a trick is only a legend.

Just as all the unsavoury details about Judas are dismissed, so all the lovable features attributed to Jesus are also put down as legend. Klausner refuses to believe that Jesus on the Cross would have said of His executioners: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (LUK 23:34). His argument is simply that Jesus could not have pronounced these words in such terrible circumstances. I have personally known men and women, disciples of Jesus, who have spoken the same words under cruel torture, and what is more, who took the first

opportunity of doing good to those who had tortured them. But Professor Klausner has simply made up his mind that love of this kind is non-existent.

He swiftly dismisses the gospel story of the resurrection of Jesus by declaring that it is obvious (a wonderful expression which relieves the author of the need to adduce any proof) that Joseph of Arimathea removed the body from the tomb.

He believes "a resurrection is incomprehensible." There are a great many things that are incomprehensible. Incomprehensible though it may appear, there actually exists a learned professor who, instead of starting off by analysing facts and documents, proceeds on the basis of certain prejudices as to what God can or cannot do.

After writing hundreds of pages without making any contribution to the problem of the life of Jesus, Klausner discusses the differences between Judaism and the teaching of Jesus. In this connection he states that a nation cannot survive by means of an abstract faith and by a universal human ethic. It needs a practical form of religion, involving forms capable of expressing religious ideas, and capable of penetrating everyday life with the sanctity of religion. "Jesus has not shown us new ways for our national life." By accepting the teaching of Jesus, "national life and the national state would entirely disappear." "His doctrine contains no elements which can maintain the state and regulate the community." "Jesus came to abolish culture."

What answer is one to give to this two thousand years after the coming of Jesus? Professor Klausner has obviously never heard of Christian culture, he knows nothing of the national states which still exist, which were established and maintained thanks to Christianity. How can he explain the fact that all the nations of Europe and America, as well as a great many African nations, have independent national states, despite the fact that they have accepted Christianity, which, according to Klausner, destroys state, nation and culture?

I might go on to ask: "What did the enemies of Jesus, Caiaphas, Annas and the others, do to the Jewish state?" They succeeded in removing the great danger that Jesus represented,

on the pretext that this was necessary if the Jewish national state was to be maintained. These were the very men who led the Jewish state to disaster. History has proved that Christianity establishes and maintains a state, while Pharisaism destroys it. How can one possibly ignore these obvious historical proofs?

Klausner says that Judaism cannot accept the term "The Son of God," or only "God," for the Messiah, even though the idea in itself is Jewish. But if the idea of the Son of God is Jewish, then it is obvious that only those who have renounced the inheritance of their people can refuse to accept it. According to Klausner, who defies any form of logic, it is the renegades who have accepted the Jewish idea.

Klausner dislikes Jesus's teaching that we should love those who wrong us. Human society, he says, would not survive if every injury remained unpunished. But why did the Jewish national state disappear two thousand years ago? The Jews rose in revolt against the injustice of the Roman Empire. The result was that the Jewish state vanished from off the face of the earth. One might have expected the professor to conclude from this event, and thousands like it, that human society cannot survive if we repay evil with evil, if we rise against injustice. For thousands of years states have vanished, bloodthirsty wars have been fought, and thousands of millions of people have been killed because one side has refused to tolerate the injustices of the other, and has failed to requite evil with love. This is a historical fact. There are grave issues when violence is justified, but the fundamental attitude should be love.

When Jesus teaches love toward enemies, he does not mean literal practice of non-violence whatever happens around us. He Himself used violence of language and also the whip. The world is not yet conveniently arranged for non-violence. Sadly, you have sometimes to exterminate enemies of your nation. But nothing compels me to hate them. God does not look at our deeds dictated by circumstances. Here the desire to kill must be removed. Here only love must reign. In the end it will triumph also over external circumstances.

It is not wrong for a nation to practise love toward those who wrong it. Professor Klausner's reproach against Jesus is

unjust. Nations do not as a rule vanish from off the face of the earth because they have practised love.

Klausner sums up his attitude neatly when he declares that Judaism is in its entirety of this world. It was for this reason that the Jews rejected Him whose kingdom is not of this world, but belongs to the sphere of purest truth. "He cannot be the Messiah of the Jewish people."

Now, if you want to decide whether a person is the Messiah or not, it would be scientifically correct if you first clearly defined what this term means, what methods exist for recognising the true Messiah, and, finally, investigate whether that person fulfils these conditions. Klausner did not carry out any studies of this nature. In my book I did it for him, pointing out that all the prophecies about the Messiah who expiates the sins of mankind by His suffering, and other biblical prophecies, were fulfilled by Jesus.

There are a great many of these prophecies, and a large body of literature exists about them. Without going into these in detail, it might be worth mentioning one, which is incapable of more than one interpretation, since it is based on mathematics.

The prophet Daniel, who lived about six hundred years B.C., foretold with astonishing accuracy the year in which the Messiah would be killed. This was the year when Jesus was crucified.

Anyone studying this prophecy with an open mind will realize that waiting for any other saviour is fruitless. The Talmud declares: "The time determined for the coming of the Messiah has passed, but the Messiah has not come." The Talmud, refusing Jesus as the Messiah had no other solution than to declare God to be a liar, because He did not keep His promise, and allowed the time foretold for the coming of the Messiah to go by without keeping His word.

Let us consider the biblical text: "Seventy weeks [of years] are determined upon thy people," the Archangel Gabriel declared to Daniel in about 600 B.C., "and upon thy holy city to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to

anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks [of years], and threescore and two weeks [of years]; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall the Messiah be cut off, but not for himself..." (DAN 9:24-26).

This would give us a total of sixty-nine weeks of years, in other words sixty-nine multiplied by seven, which is four hundred and eighty-three years, from the time when the order was given to rebuild Jerusalem to the death of the Messiah.

Let us check the events that actually occurred:

King Xerxes of Persia commenced his reign in the year 465 B.C. In the book of Nehemiah, Chapter 2, we read that in the twentieth year of his reign he permitted the rebuilding of Jerusalem. In other words, nineteen years had elapsed, which we must subtract. Consequently the order to rebuild Jerusalem was issued in the year 446 B.C.

Four hundred and eighty-three years after this event, the Messiah, according to the prophecy, would be killed. For the sake of accuracy, we should remember that Daniel calculated the year according to the old Jewish calendar, which consisted of three hundred and sixty days, unlike our calendar year which has three hundred and sixty-five and a quarter days.

This means that we must convert the Jewish calendar year to years based on our present reckoning:

483 years x 360 days (based on the Hebrew calendar)
= 173,880 days.

173,880 days:365¬ (the length of our present calendar year)
= 476 years.

This means that four hundred and seventy-six years would elapse from the year 446 B.C. to the death of the Messiah. In other words, this event would occur in the year A.D. 30 calculated according to our calendar.

And it was precisely in this year that Jesus was crucified. It is a well-established fact that in the sixth century A.D., when the pre-Christian and post-Christian eras were

divided, there was a mathematical mistake in the calculation. The birth

of Christ was assigned to a date four years later than it actually occurred. The year A.D. 30, by our modern calculations, is in fact the thirty-fourth year of Jesus's life. And in the thirty-fourth year of His life, in the year 30 of the Christian era, Jesus was crucified, precisely as prophesied by Daniel.

God's vengeance was not slow to strike. Daniel had foretold that after this unparalleled misdeed, "for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." (DAN 9:27) We know that, shortly afterwards, Palestine was ravaged by the army of Titus, that the land was utterly laid waste, the temple was burned, and sacrificed were no longer made.

Rashi, one of the leading biblical commentators, recognizes that Titus fulfilled these very prophecies. But in this case the Messiah must be a man who was killed before Titus enjoyed his great triumph. This man is Jesus; it cannot be anyone else.

Professor Klausner was one of the many intellectual leaders of the Jews who was misled. It is astonishing that a race which is so intelligent and so civilized can accept a book which sets such low standards. In the last chapter of his book, Klausner plumbs the depths of the ridiculous with the remark that "Jesus became a Christian." This is written by a university professor. He might as well have said that Mohammed became a Mohammedan.

Is Jesus God?

There are a great many Jews who are prepared to accept the Christian moral code, but refuse to accept the Christian teaching about the divinity of Jesus.

I was one day in the office of an intellectual who was in this position. I asked him: "Are you really able to make the Christian moral code a reality in your life? You say you accept this code, and in fact you have called it 'glorious.'"

He began to laugh. It is depressing how seldom one manages to start a really serious discussion with anyone. He said: "Yes, but one cannot demand that it should be put into practice."

I answered: "In my opinion it is just as ridiculous to give

mankind a moral code incapable of being carried out as it would be for a shoe manufacturer to make beautiful shoes that cannot be worn. The Christian moral code may appear incapable of being put into practice, but it is not so for everyone. The conditions necessary for keeping it must be fulfilled. Every businessman knows that income must cover expenditure. Christian morals involve certain expenses - loving, serving, helping. But where do you get the strength for this? From your faith, a treasure-house full of truths revealed by God."

"No, no," was his answer. "The Christian dogmas are absurd. How could I believe that a Jewish carpenter, who bought wood, boiled glue, sold his products and went about the everyday business of an ordinary man, could be God? The only form of Christianity the Jews could ever hope to approach would be Unitarianism. Jesus may be a great teacher, a great prophet, but never God."

I explained: "That possibility does not exist. Jesus assumed divine rights, and accepted worship that belongs only to God. If He is not God, He cannot have been a great teacher, but He must have been merely a fraud or a crazy fanatic. You would not dare to regard Him as such. The only alternative left, then, is to accept Him as God."

"We are in the sphere of words," he interrupted. "In ancient times a great many people were regarded as gods, and so were celestial bodies. Hercules, Romulus, and the emperors Julius and Augustus were regarded as gods. Even the mad Caligula was raised to the status of a divinity. The philosopher Epicurus was considered to be a god. Even among the

early Christian fathers there were some who insisted that Christians become gods. In human speech, the word god is not a name reserved only for the Creator. In this sense we might perhaps call Jesus divine, just as we could call Plato divine, or talk about Beethoven's divine music. But no more!"

The position of a Protestant, when he is debating with a Jew, is much easier than that of a Greek Orthodox or a Roman Catholic. Protestants delight in their freedom of thought, and need never be afraid of making a statement in an incautious moment which Catholics would consider heretical.

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My reply was: "As soon as we describe something or someone as divine, we are moving in a sphere where words have lost their power. In what way is Jesus divine? And in what way is the Heavenly Father divine? The French are right when they say: 'Un Dieu defini est un Dieu fini' (A God defined is a God who is finished). Lao-Tse said: 'Any Dao [god] who is named is not the true Dao.' In calling Jesus God, I mean that He cannot be compared with other human beings. His character is a miracle: He cannot be explained in terms of genetic laws, laws of environment and so on. In Him we have a fortunate combination of all the four human types: sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic and melancholic. The life of Jesus can only be explained by assuming that He comes from a higher sphere than the human.

"Brought up in a carpenter's workshop, without access to the wisdom of other nations and races, He gave the world, at the age of thirty, an unparalleled moral code. His death, side by side with two criminals, was followed by a miraculous spread of His religion. The best explanation of these facts is that Jesus is divine.

"We cannot judge on the basis of sympathy or antipathy, but only on the basis of proof. Let your understanding act like an impartial tribunal, which pronounces its verdict on the basis of proofs which are submitted to it. There are five highly convincing arguments in favour of the divine nature of Jesus.

"First, He overcame death, which no other human being has done.

"Second, He overcame physical laws which man cannot overcome (raising the dead, healing lepers, multiplying loaves

and fishes, and so on).

"Third, He overcame Judaism, which wanted Him to remain unknown. False Messiahs, who were accepted by the Jews such as Bar-Kochba and Sabetai Zvi, are unknown to the rest of the world, whereas Jesus, who was rejected by us, is worshipped by hundreds of millions of people.

"Fourth, He conquered the Roman Empire. The great persecutor of Christianity, Julian the Apostate, died with these words on his lips: 'Thou has conquered, O Galilean.' It is

the strongest who conquers: If Jesus has conquered kings, He is King of Kings.

"Fifth, by the madness of the Cross, He has overcome human wisdom. One after another, philosophical systems are destroyed. Who even remembers the anti-Christian philosopher Celsus, or of the Cult of Reason introduced by the French Revolution? Who still leads his life according to the Talmud? But the words of the carpenter, who is both man and God - 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away' (MTT 24:35) - are still valid. From the purely human point of view there was no chance whatever that Jesus's words would be fulfilled, nor was there any chance that His prophecy that His gospel would be spread to the ends of the earth would ever come true.

"In no possible way could Jesus be merely a human being and for that reason we accept that He is God in human guise.

"It is important to know this. The medical advice given by a doctor's assistant carries very little real weight, and is not decisive. But the advice given by a well-known doctor comes into an entirely different category. You can lead a Christian life when you know that these laws come not from another person, who is fallible like yourself, but from God. It is this that makes it possible for people to keep God's commandments."

The intellectual Jew had no answer to make. He grew thoughtful. I was tired of having the last word, it is wiser to leave it to your opponent. It ls difficult to win over to belief someone you have beaten in a debate, because in so doing you will have wounded his pride. In this case, I had the last word and I

did not win him.

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7 OUR ATTITUDE TO COMMUNISM

~Communism as part of God's plan~

The change in the political regime in Rumania presented new problems for us.

Marxism had been practically unknown among us. Now, all young people were being educated in its spirit, and a great many Marxist and atheist books were being published.

The Jews played an important role in spreading the Communist ideology in our country. We ran up against it at every step, and were forced to adopt a new approach.

We published a series of pamphlets dealing with the problems of the relationship between Protestant Christianity and Marxism: ~Conversation between a young Socialist and a Believer~, ~Jesus and Socialism~ (an answer to the book by the Socialist theorist Karl Kautsky, ~The Origins of Christianity~), ~Dialectic Materialism and Biblical Faith~ (an answer to Engels' book Anti-Dhring~) and ~Karl Marx and Belief~. We tried to make these booklets attractive to Communist readers. On the first page of ~Karl Marx and Belief~ there was a picture of Marx, and on the next page a picture of "Jesus the Working Proletarian," followed by other pictures, such as "Jesus driving the Capitalists out of the Temple." There followed an account of Jesus's sacrifice.

We were in no way frightened by the atheist offensive, which persuaded a number of other people that Christianity was finished in our country. Christianity has many times in the past been declared dead. In ~The History of the Popes~, Ranke describes the spread of heresy in Italy during the fifteenth and

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sixteenth centuries; at that time, too, it was believed that Christianity was at the end of its tether.

Nor were we terrified at the thought that a small group of real Christians were so feeble compared to the giant Goliath of atheism.

For myself, I clung to the biblical idea that the power of God is fulfilled only in weakness. The ~Tao-Te-King~, the sacred book of Taoism, rightly declares: "All creatures and plants are delicate and weak when they are born, but when they perish, they are strong and powerful. What is strong and powerful is destroyed, and what is weak and delicate begins to live. For this reason a strong army does not conquer, but is destroyed like a strong tree. That which is strong and powerful does not have the same advantage as that which is weak and delicate."

It was precisely our weakness which gave us immense strength in our struggle with the all-powerful Marxism, which many Jews also championed.

If Communism exists in God's world, it must surely be to fill a vacuum in God's economy. Capitalism makes a man an individualist. Emphasis on personal salvation and personal sanctification reflects man's conscience in the social conditions created by capitalism. The very instigation of the Socialist set-up made a profound difference to the thinking of a great many Christians. They were able to stand face to face with Communists simply by showing that everything that is beautiful and attractive in Communism has been derived from Christianity.

Today the churches are divided. The Church of the early Christian Jews in Jerusalem, organized according to the instructions of Jesus himself to His apostles, was a Church in which all shared their possessions. In the Acts of the Apostles we read of the first Christians: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common ... Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the

prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the

apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need" (ACT 4:32-35).

This was another kind of Communism, one based on love! It would be better not to use the same name for it, so different is it from what we experience under Communism today.

We could come to an understanding with many Communists, we could accept some of them as brothers, because not only did we preach the individual salvation of the soul through the blood of Jesus - which remained our main task - but we were also interested in social problems.

We believe that it is the duty of Christians to strive to ensure that men and women need not depart from the Christian standard; they should not be compelled to crawl, flatter, steal, kill in wars, or exploit other people, in order to enjoy material sufficiency.

We do not consider that sanctification is merely a personal matter; it is also a social vocation. Not only must I be glorified, but the social body must be glorified, by creating the kingdom of God on earth; in other words, a kingdom where justice, peace and joy reign. We must fight for just laws and institutions, as the first Christians created an ideal social institution, the Church, which has this characteristic too. We long for a social justice which springs from love, and is inspired by the wish to imitate God, who makes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on all alike.

We do not believe in all the saints canonized by the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches. Their legendary and unique deeds are enough to make us, ordinary people, despair. When Peter tried to walk on the water by himself, he sank. We want to walk in common with others along the road that leads to Jesus.

Jesus reproached whole towns for not being converted (MTT 11:21-23); in other words, He expects conversion to be a social phenomenon, embracing large numbers of people.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father is made to say: "Let us eat and be merry." There are no pleasures without food. We must make sure that everybody has food.

We must strive to convert not only a prostitute or a drunkard, but prostitution, alcoholism, the prisons, man's exploitation of other people, war - all these things must be abolished, and this can only be done if the Christian fights his battles in the social as well as the personal sphere. Evil has made great strides; there is a long line stretching from Cain, who killed a man with a staff, to the gas chambers of Auschwitz and the Communist extermination camps. The satanic powers have transferred their attack from the individual to an offensive on a large social front. The powers of good must do the same.

In the old days Paul could preach from the same pulpit as his enemies. We have a pulpit today, but our enemies have the schools, the press, large publishing concerns, the cinema, the radio, television. We, too, have a right to all these things, and if we are to achieve them, then we must strive to realize Daniel's prophecy that "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High" (DAN 7:27).

The apostle Jude writes of the common salvation; and something like this does exist, not only personal salvation. Jacob prophesied of Jesus that "nations will gather around Him" (GEN 49:10, according to the Hebrew). The nations, not an occasional individual here and there.

The conditions necessary for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth are now present; this was not possible when material conditions were so wretched. The advances of modern technology have made it possible for all people to have food and clothing. Modern medicine, freed from the shackles which still hamper it, could give us physically healthy men and women. Proper education and psychology could help us to give us people who are mentally healthy. Modern means of communication could ensure that a handful of people, filled with the spirit of God, could exercise a decisive influence for the benefit of all mankind. Modern scientific ways of thinking could eliminate all ancient superstitions, which have been unjustly attributed to religion, and religion could then shine forth in all its purity and glory. With mutual understanding

between nations, humanity could receive vigorous international and interdenominational impulses. Soon there will be only two religions - the religion of love and the religion of

ceremonial formalism.

The coming into power of Communism has meant prison, torture and death for thousands of Christians, but it has helped our thinking enormously: Communists think on a global plane, and in terms of future generations. The children of God, quite wrongly, have a reduced horizon: often their thinking is narrow, and they look only one step ahead. Was it for nothing that the leaders of the Church in the New Testament were called "presbyters," that is to say, people who see far ahead?

The Christian Jews, too, have learned to think on the universal plane, and to strive to achieve a distant goal. The Roman Empire threw Christians to the wild beasts, but it also taught them to think on an imperial scale. Christianity became the religion of the empire, instead of that of isolated individuals. Communism has played the same role for us.

The earth has plants which are used to heal individuals. The Bible tells us that Heavenly Jerusalem has leaves which serve to heal whole nations (REV 22:2). Christian Jews know the secret of finding their pharmaceutical remedies here.

Yet the evangelization of the individual still remains the priority. Only saints can sanctify society. A social gospel preached to unregenerate men is a fake. But men who have been born again must bring their new life into society.

~Christian revolutionism~

We Christians were not frightened by Communist revolutionism. After all, we ourselves are the descendants of revolutionary movement. Four hundred years ago, Calvin, in his commentary on the Book of Daniel, wrote: "The princes of this world set aside all their power when they rise against God, and are not worthy to be reckoned among mankind. We should rather spit in their faces than obey them when they are so bold as to try to deprive God of His rights ... If they rise against God, they must be humbled and regarded as valueless

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as a pair of worn shoes." Before him, St. John Chrysostom and St.

Ambrose had valiantly opposed emperors.

We do not reproach the Communists for their revolutionism, but for the fact that it has not gone far enough.

The Bible is much more revolutionary than the writings of Karl Marx and Lenin. On the very first page of the Bible we read that God says to the human beings He has just created: "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (GEN 1:28). Only notice this! Man is to have dominion over all nature, but not over another human being.

The Bible also tells us that God created only one couple: the English rebels at the time of the Peasants' Revolt understood this excellently when in one of their revolutionary songs they asked: "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?"

God has made "all nations of one blood," the Bible declares (ACT 17:26), thus putting under a question mark the value of all titles of nobility and rank - including those in Socialist countries, such as Party membership or working-class origins - and all racialist theories.

The first nationalisation of landed property which aimed at preventing the exploitation of the peasants by the rich landowners in times of famine was put into practice by Joseph, when he was prime minister of Egypt.

In the preamble to the Ten Commandments, God boasts not of creating Heaven and Earth, but of something quite different: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (EXO 20.2) We are permitted no other gods apart from the God who makes it His task to liberate mankind from every sort of serfdom.

What a revolution the world underwent when the Sabbath was introduced as an institution! In pagan countries slaves were part of the machinery of production; the Bible introduced the principle that a man should rest, and that his servant should be given an opportunity to do likewise. In the Socialist countries, where the fulfillment of the various state plans is

more important than Sunday rest, the fourth commandment, to keep the Sabbath, is a revolutionary imperative.

"Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him" (EXO 22:21) is what the Bible teaches men in an age when being black in America and white in Africa and a Jew in Europe involves discrimination.

God commanded Moses not to treat the poor unjustly (LEV 19:15). If the capitalist countries would respect this principle everywhere, they would have no need to fear the Communist threat.

We must remember that the sacred book of the apostles and the first Christians was the Old Testament, and not the New Testament, which was not written until several decades later. If Jesus had not intended to give His disciples a revolutionary training, what point was there in letting them read a book which was mainly an epic of revolutionary struggle?

The Lord raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, the Benjamite Ehud, the man who killed the tyrant Eglon (Judges 3). Jael was called "blessed above women" for slaying the oppressor Sisera by driving a tent peg through his temple (JDG 5:24); these were the very words that were later on used about the mother of our Lord. Jael was what today would be called a brave female partisan in the army of liberation in an oppressed country. Other biblical characters, such as Gideon and Jephthah, were also revolutionary champions.

The Bible ridicules absolute monarchy in Jotham's parable which compares tyrants with thorn bushes while the useful trees, such as the olive, the fig and the vine, refused to play this odious role. In his speech when the Jews wished to elect a king, the prophet Samuel also inveighed against absolute monarchy. In the second book of Kings we read of the bloody revolution raised by Jehu against the tyranny of the Ahab dynasty. The Bible tells us that this revolution was carried out on the express orders of God. Jehu slew the two unlawful kings, and Queen Jezebel was thrown out of the window. He destroyed those who supported the tyranny and the sons of tyrants, and slew without mercy all priests who had made

power an excuse for plunder. Not one was allowed to escape. After all this, the Lord said to Jehu: "Thou hast done well in

executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart" (2 Kings 10.30).

Later on, Jesus was to say: "Not everyone that saith unto me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (MTT 7:21). And the will of God, according to the book of Kings, in the story of the revolutionary Jehu, is the complete destruction of tyranny.

What revolutionary songs there are in the Bible! What is the ~International~ compared to Psalm 109, which is directed against the man who "persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart"?

The cry for social justice echoed by the prophets of Israel is well known; in the New Testament, too, there are numerous revolutionary passages. The mother of our Lord establishes a social programme for her Son, whom she had conceived by the Holy Ghost, with the words: "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; the rich he hath sent empty away" (LUK 1:52-53).

"Woe unto you that are rich!" said Jesus, "for ye have received your consolation! Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger" (LUK 6:24-25). "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (MTT 19:24).

"If a man does not work, he shall not eat," the fundamental principle in the legislation of Socialist states, is copied, almost word for word, from the Apostle Paul (2TH 3:10)

Christians know that God has a chosen people, the Jews, and a chosen group, the Church, but how many know that He has a chosen social class? The apostle James wrote about something that was very familiar to his readers at that time: "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world?" (JMS 2:5), and scourges the rich unmercifully.

"Christianity was formed as a religion for the poor, for

those who were xsploited and oppressed, for the slaves and freed bondmen," writes Amusin, the Soviet historian, in his book on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Within the Christian community there have always been those who have striven to return to the original teaching; but most have become hypnotised by details, controversies about baptism, speaking in tongues, and keeping the Sabbath, which might have been practised by the early Church but are not the essentials. But why should we not return to the revolutionism of the first Church, and the struggle to live according to the principles of social justice? When God chose a language in which to express His revelations in the Bible, He chose the Hebrew language, possibly the only language in which the verb "to have" does not exist. In this way He wished to show that the idea of property, of owning anything, is and must be completely alien to the people of God. It will always be true, as Jesus said, that the believer who wishes to attain perfection must "sell everything he has," and "leave all he has," and "leave home and family."

Proudhon's saying that "Property is theft" is one to which every believing Christian can subscribe; because as God has arranged things we are not meant to have property. All good things must be enjoyed in fellowship; individual ownership is an abomination. Only individual stewardship is admissible. Though private property is economically the best method of increasing riches, these should then be spent not for a selfish end, but for the glory of God and the good of one's fellow-men.

The Catholic Church, which faithfully recommends this teaching of Jesus, adopts the selfsame ideology today, even though it does not practise it. It declares that the man who wishes to be perfect must renounce private ownership, and only possess things in common, for example within the framework of a monastic order.

Today, at the threshold of a new historical era, Jews who believe in Jesus and faithfully follow His teaching are wholeheartedly on the side of the exploited and the oppressed. But we know of nobody more oppressed and more exploited than

the citizens of the Socialist states, which speak in the name of the poor.

We utterly oppose Communist dictatorship and terror. We abhor Communist atheism. But, as a Christian must be "a Jew to the Jews and a Greek to the Greeks," so, in dealing with Communists, in the same sense we must be Communists, if we wish to win them for Christ. It is just as impossible to win them if we adopt an anti-Communist approach as it would be impossible to win Jews by adopting anti-Semitism. Though we are opposed to Communism, we must show sympathy for the individual Communist, just as St. Paul, who detested Greek idolatry, would use words of praise for the Greeks in order to convert them.

The writings of Socialism always offered us a great many Christian arguments. Whenever I meet a Communist who makes fun of the Bible as a reactionary book, I counter him with a quotation from Marx: "When Luther translated the Bible, he placed in the people's hands a powerful weapon against princes, nobility and clergy."

Whenever a Communist calls the Bible absurd, I quote from Engels' work ~Bruno Bauer and Primitive Christianity~: "A religion which conquered the Roman world empire, and which has reigned for eighteen hundred years over the majority of civilized mankind, cannot be rejected merely by declaring that it consists of a series of absurdities, created by deceivers." In ~The Revelation~ he praises primitive Christianity as "a great revolutionary movement." It was, incidentally, Engels who wrote: "We live in God. One can understand that better when one travels on the sea."

Even the apostles took it for granted that the multitude would have to go away from Jesus to look for food; but Jesus showed that they could have food in plenty if they remained with Him.

No one need abandon Jesus in order to be a revolutionary. He can be a much better revolutionary by remaining with Him. Without Jesus, revolutions are destructive, and costly in blood. A revolution with Jesus is constructive, changing social conditions peacefully, after sanctifying hearts.

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We were always present at the great Communist rallies, where we handed out our tracts. These started with the subjects I have just outlined, and thanks to them we made contact with the

Communist soul, and preached the crucified Christ.

~Conflict with Communism~

Yet we had no illusions; we knew that our differences with the Communists were fundamental.

They are totalitarians; they do not permit the slightest deviation from the line pursued by the Party. Why should they allow us, who are just as totalitarian, and want all people to belong completely to God, to go free?

By practising the methods used by Jesus and His apostles we were able to win some Communists for Christ, but this resulted in increased opposition towards us by the Party. They did not want understanding, loyalty and love, they merely wanted us to identify ourselves with their plans, and to be transformed into willing tools. But our love for them would not allow us to be opportunists, to flatter them, or to be their willing slaves. Out of love towards them, we had to show them their crimes. They avoided us because we posed the problem of sin, and the madness of the Cross as the only way to solve this problem.

There are sins which are caused by social conditions, and which can be removed on the social plane, as were the sins of slavery and polygamy. But there is a limit to this. Lenin writes: "We can abolish the law that allows the capitalist to exploit the worker and the landowner to exploit the peasant, but no one in the world can prevent the cunning man exploiting the simple person, or the weak being exploited by the strong."

Communists, in the first case, would attain the limit of what is humanly possible by changing social conditions, but they cannot change human hearts. This only Jesus can do. He can give us new birth. Without using coercion, he turned cunning men like Matthew and Zacchaeus, and a terrorist like Saul of Tarsus, into good, just people. It is only the Cross of Jesus that can perform this miracle.

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With Communists, as with all other people, the attempt to lead a moral life and to allow the mind to soar upwards is

frustrated by sin which weighs down the soul with its enormous burden. They have committed injustices, they have made men weep, they have shed blood, they have been inconsistent and unfaithful to their own ideals, they have violated their own moral standards. This gives them a feeling of guilt, and of the need to be saved, but the more these are suppressed, the more they upset their mental state, resulting in all kinds of morbid and evil complexes.

And Communists do just what all other people do: they try to transfer their guilt to others, they look for a scapegoat. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. The Communists find their scapegoat in the bourgeoisie, the landowners, the Social Democrats, the Trotskyites, the clergy, the sectarians and their own Party members. They fight against everyone and everything.

No one can live in a constant mental attitude of "I am not worthy." Besides, the feeling of guilt is deaf to all argument. It is no good blaming our sins on bad heredity, or physical weakness; nor can we blame a bad social environment. Nor is it possible to blame Satan for our sin, as that would be admitting that we had listened to him. No madness can be healed by argument, certainly not the madness induced by guilt. There are mad people who believe that they have a watch ticking in their head. It is impossible to convince them that it is not so. In cases of this kind doctors anaesthetise the patient, make a small incision in his cranium, bandage him and, when he wakes up, show him parts of a watch stained with blood which, they tell him, have been extracted from his head. This is precisely the case with the madness of an evil conscience. The innermost heart cannot be persuaded that a sin is the result of atavistic or social causes. We feel responsible for our own evil doings. For this there is only one remedy, which is another form of madness - the madness of the Cross. "Yes, you are guilty, you are full of guilt, you are the only guilty person," the great healer Jesus tells us. "You need a scapegoat. You must transfer your sin to another. Do not

attempt to transfer it to an equal, because your equal will throw it back to you, heavier than it ever was. Transfer it to me! I represent the Creator. Like Him, I bear responsibility for the whole of Creation and everything that is done in it. It is right that I should take your sin upon myself. I have expiated your sin on the Cross." The liberating effect of this sacrificial

atonement of Jesus on the soul which trusts in Him is tremendous.

But there are sick people whose sickness has become the very substance of their lives. The blind who live by begging are horrified at the thought of being healed, as this will compel them to work. Jesus's healing Cross causes the same sort of panic. The Communists are in this plight; for them sin, especially hatred, has become the core and substance of life. What would they do without it? We preached a crucified Lord, and we knew that we would be hated.

Communists are atheists; we were committed to God. The conflict was unavoidable. We knew that many thousands of Christians had suffered in the Soviet Union. We prepared ourselves for the same fate.

There was another point of conflict. After the war, the great question was as to which city was to become the capital of the United World of the future - Moscow or Washington? The world divided into two camps, the revolutionary and the anti-revolutionary, and two blocs were formed. We openly declared our conviction that the efforts of Moscow and Washington would be equally in vain as the capital of the future united world, under the aegis of Jesus, would be Jerusalem, which He called the city of the great king. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," says the prophet Isaiah (ISA 2:3).

Some believe that salvation will come from Communism; others believe it will come from American democracy. We believe what Jesus says: "Salvation is of the Jews" (JHN 4:22), and the Jews will fulfill their role of salvation when they turn again to Jesus.

Noah prophesied that Japheth (from whom the Indo-European race is descended) "shall dwell in the tents of

Shem" (from whom the Jews are descended). In other words, the Indo-European race will live in the temporary social systems created by the Jews according to the words uttered by the prophet thousands of years ago (GEN 9:27). And Moses told Israel at a later date: "Thou shalt build a house, and thou shalt not live therein ... Thou shalt plant vineyards ... but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes" (DEU 28:30,39).

Let us see how these remarkable prophecies have been fulfilled!

The House of Christianity was built by Shem, by the Jews. In primitive Christianity, everything was derived from the Jews. It was from the Jews that "Christ came as concerning the flesh, who is over all God, blessed for ever," wrote the apostle Paul (ROM 9:5). The Bible is Jewish. Luther denied the validity of the ecumenical councils, using as his argument the fact that they were not constituted by Jews. "God's word was entrusted only to them," he said. The apostles were Jews. The psalms which are sung in the churches were written by David. For many centuries the whole of Europe has lived in the tent of Shem. The dominant influence exercised by the Christian civilization embraces the entire world in its sphere. Only the Jews remain outside the dwelling which they themselves erected. All races have rejoiced at the good grapes which the vine of Jesus has borne; the Jews alone have not tasted them.

The Renaissance, the flow of gold from the New World, and conflict within the Church shook the House of Christianity in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was then that Israel, in great haste, constructed a new house, the house of capitalism. In his book ~Jewry and Capitalism~, Werner Sombart described the decisive role the Jews have played and still play in the creation of capitalism. Japheth's descendants, the Indo-Europeans, have all entered into this new "tent of Shem" in the sphere of influence of capitalism.

When capitalism had triumphantly established itself, a Jew, Karl Marx, declared war on it. The Jews have benefited from capitalism, but Judaism finds no peace in it. Countless

young Jews have started on a crusade to create a new system, Communism. The role played by Jews in building this new house, in which Japheth was to live, is well known. Lenin's mother was a Jewess named Braun. This is recorded by Trotsky, who adds that Stalin forbade all mention of her origins, in order not to hurt the anti-Semitic feelings of the Russians. A great number of the leaders of the Russian Revolution were Jews - Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and others. In Hungary, Communism was led by Bela Kun and Tibor Szamuely, and later by Rakosi and Gero. In Rumania, too, the Jews played an important role when Communism was

introduced. A number of people from all races dwell in this new Socialist system, in the building of which Jews have played such an important role, though not an exclusive one. Many of the officers of the Communist Secret Police were Jews, but not as many as the anti-Semites like to assert. There were plenty of full-blood Rumanians who tortured their co-nationals. But the Jews are also the most active against the Soviet government. They have again built a house in which they cannot live. Russia's anti-Communist freedom-fighters Daniel, Litvinov, the priests Eshliman and Jakunin, Knasnov-Levitin are Jews. Having contributed in such large measure to the erection of the Communist regime in Rumania, a great number of the Jews then left the country to settle in Israel.

The Jews have always been God's chosen People, entrusted with the task of carrying out His plans in history, in creating social regimes which, step by step, would prepare the material, cultural and intellectual conditions for God's kingdom on earth.

Now they have been entrusted with a new role. Once they have returned, as a nation, to Jesus, their king, they will have a decisive role in building a fourth house, the Kingdom of God, where the Wandering Jew will at last find rest. This kingdom, with its center in Jerusalem, will constitute a rejection of capitalism as well as of Communism, or it might even embody the useful features of all past social systems.

The anti-Semites pay the Jews a great compliment when they insist that this nation, numerically so insignificant,

exercises so much influence all over the world, and is the root of all evil.

At one time the Niagara Falls were a nuisance to the United States and Canada, because they laid waste thousands of acres of fruitful soil. Wise men, however, realized that if Niagara was capable of wreaking such great destruction, then it should be capable of doing a great deal of good, once it was harnessed and made to drive turbines and similar devices. Today, these great falls are an important source of electric power to both countries. The Jews do a great deal of evil, contend the anti-Semites. This means that they are a source of energy, and that they are also capable of doing a great deal of good. But if they are to do this, they must be united with the source of all

good, Christ. Hence the tremendous importance of the Christian Mission to the Jews. Up till now, a mission of this kind has seemed utopian; but we have now reached a new phase in history, when the Jews are coming into their own.

Our working methods brought us into conflict with the Communist authorities. In 1948, they put me in prison.

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EPILOGUE

When I was released from prison, my enemies in the Church, those who had collaborated with the Communists, declared that I was a heretic. This aroused people's curiosity, and a great many people were anxious to hear me preach and to read my books. The doors of the old Lutheran churches were opened to me, and I preached from a pulpit where no Jew had ever stood. Nor had a Jew at any time preached in the Greek Orthodox cathedrals and other places to which I was now invited. The vast majority of those who came to hear me were non-Jews. But for anyone who has dedicated himself to preaching the gospel to the Jews, it is most important to win non-Jews for Christ, since every person, no matter what his race, who has been converted to Jesus by a Jew, becomes himself a missionary to the Jews. This indirect approach is every bit as important as the direct approach.

As their latest attack had proved fruitless, my enemies now adopted different tactics, spreading the rumour that I was mad. But they spoke of my madness without any signs of sympathy, thus rendering their motives suspect from the very start. I had long been used to hearing all sorts of things said about me.

I had been called a genius, an idiot; "Jesus Christ," "the Devil"; a highly cultured person, an ignoramus; a saint, a repulsive character; a man of exemplary honesty, a thief; a Nazi, a Communist, an anarchist, a Jesuit; the most lovable and the most despicable accusation was that they now said I was mad. In believing that they were undermining the value

of my message by calling me insane, my enemies revealed their own ignorance.

In the first place, there is a certain affinity between insanity and genius. Seneca wrote: "There is no great intellect that does not possess a touch of madness."

The Christian Jews had set themselves the task of building a road to Judaism and mankind. How could they carry out this task without a touch of madness? Some people reproached me for my madness but I asked, in the words of Nietzsche: "Where is the madness that you should be inoculated with?"

Christian Jews have a great vocation: they are expected to be grand, to attain to the stature of Christ, to do greater things than He did (JHN 14:12), to conquer the fortress of Israel, which He failed to conquer. If they attain to this greatness, they will also share the fate of all great men, one of whose characteristics is madness. In the prophetic Psalm 69 we hear of the madness of the Messiah. Paul confessed himself to be a fool. Without a touch of madness he would not have been a great apostle. Nervous disorders are commoner among people with a special vocation than among ordinary people. We were not in the least surprised when a young engineer, one of the most brilliant of our brethren, suddenly had a serious nervous breakdown, and had to go to hospital. This in no way lessened the value of his convictions.

The prejudice is widely held that a sound mind is valuable not only biologically but also socially. But history has not been moulded by normal people. Could Calvin and Luther have introduced the Reformation if they had been normal? Our object is to bring about a revolution within Christianity, within Judaism and in the world. Woe to the man with a vocation of this kind who is afraid of madness!

One of my enemies once said to me: "In Christianity everything must start from the beginning." When I answered: "Let us begin," he withdrew in fear, and to my great delight called me mad. When madness has reached a particular stage, it makes the intellect more sensitive, sharpening it and making it more perceptive to contrasts. This makes the mind more complicated, richer, more conscious of itself. Not for nothing

did Erasmus of Rotterdam write his book ~In Praise of Foolishness~. I thanked God that I had spent many years in prison in conditions which might well induce madness. My intellect had in many ways acquired new qualities, which I now used in serving Christ.

Besides, madness is close to love. Normal people bicker with their husbands or wives, and in some way or another have to put up with them. Romeo and Juliet were a bit mad, and so were the mystics. I like to call things by their right names. It is no secret to those who have read the lives of the great mystics that the mystic life is to a large extent nourished by unsatisfied sexual desires. Blessed is the man who can sublimate this desire to the spiritual world! In this respect, too, the years I spent in prison were of great help to me.

I had a mystical experience which ordinary people, living a normal sexual life and an abnormal family life of conflict and family quarrels, could never have had, and could never have understood. They would merely have dismissed it as madness or a farce. But my experiences were of great value because a Christian-Jewish pastor, if he were to fulfill our tremendous task, had to have - like the living creatures of the Revelation - four heads: the head of a mystic, the head of a man capable of scientific thought, the head of a strategist capable of organizing, and the head of a revolutionary.

How can a normal, modern clergyman, whose chief source of reading seems to be Dale Carnegie's ~How to Win Friends and Influence People~ rather than the evangelists' ~The Art of Discovering a Meaning in Allowing Oneself to be Crucified~, sublimate the tragedy of life, be filled with pathos, and weave his way through the infinite realms of metaphysics?

I accepted the label "mad." Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For Christ's sake I want to be a fool, and not a peaceful, vulgar, banal, run-of-the-mill member of society.

I can look back on twenty-five years of strife. I have received many blows, but I have also delivered my share. Christians must be the salt of the earth, and also the mustard. They must sting. The enemy must know that he is facing a soldier of Jesus who is well armed.

page 217 E P I L O G U E

I have known unspeakable joy and deep sorrow. The one thing I have never done is to be bored. Along the path that Jesus has prepared for us there is life in abundance.

Thanks to the grace of God I have met brethren of many nations who have given themselves entirely to the God of Israel. I have read that God has equipped them in this way in order to make the Jews envious. I envied them, and tried to be, like them, a faithful champion of the cause of Jehovah and of His chosen Son, Jesus. In my former days I had been an eager servant of Satan; now I wished to serve God in the same way.

I did this in an age of great spiritual indifference. Men eat, drink, marry and build houses without knowing the prophecies and without realizing what is happening in Israel and in the world - that mankind is approaching the end of time, and the clock now shows five minutes to twelve. Mankind must either be converted, or be destroyed in a nuclear catastrophe. We are striving to convert the world. We wish to bring the Jewish people to Christ, because not till then will there be new life in the Church, and not till then will the Christians be as they were described at the beginning of the second century by the Athenian orator Aristides:

"The Christians know God and trust in Him. They forgive those who oppress them, and make them their friends. They are good to their enemies. Their wives keep marriage pure; their daughters are chaste. They love one another. They do not refuse to help widows. When they see a stranger, they receive him in their house, and rejoice at him as at a brother. If any among them is poor or in need, they fast for two or three days in order to satisfy his needs. They obey conscientiously the commandments their Messiah has given them. Every morning and every hour they praise God and thank Him for His goodness. They are the source of all that is beautiful in the world. They do not speak publicly of their good deeds, but take good care not to be observed by any man. They are in truth a new people, and there is something divine in them."

The negative characteristics of the Christian Jews of today do not discourage us. These are not the result either of their

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Judaism or of their Christianity, but of the strong pressure which the world exerts on them. Circumstances will change when the whole of Israel is saved. But even today the Christian Jew, who in truth is a Jew and in truth a Christian, who does not claim to be a Rumanian or a German, a Lutheran or a Catholic,- is a source of great blessing to the nation. Many Christians, ecclesiastical as well as lay, have adopted an entirely new attitude to Christianity, and it was the Christian Jews who gave them the first impulse in this direction.

As yet, however, we have only taken the first steps. Those who wish to follow us will have to work in an entirely different way. We have only been able to work by winning a soul here and a soul there. We shall have to think strategically, and work on a national front, in fact we shall have to think in terms of universal perspectives, since new factors have arisen.

Every day, the Devil takes tens of thousands of people with him to hell. We do not bruise the serpent's head, but only tickle its stomach a little, if we are content merely to save one out of all these tens of thousands.

We must change the religious attitude of our people, and of the whole world. This is undoubtedly a difficult task, but everything is possible with God and with those who believe.

Jesus is not the Saviour whom the Jews seek. He wishes to save us from sin. We would like to keep sin, because it provides us with pleasures, and we only wish to be saved from the catastrophic consequence of sin. We want Him to speak to us about our economic and political problems, and to save Israel from oppression by other people, and enable her to triumph over them. But He speaks to us of lilies, of birds, and of an eternal kingdom of justice and light for all people.

But neither God nor the universe is as we would like it to be. It is not reality that must change into what we want, but we who must adapt ourselves to reality. The true prayer is "Thy will be done," and not "Lord, let my will be done."

By accepting Christ as He is, and showing Him our confidence, even when we do not understand Him, Israel will fulfill its sacred vocation, for which it has been chosen. We must receive Christ; and together with Him we shall in love

embrace all His disciples, from all nations, with all their faults and shortcomings. Even a flawed diamond is, after all, more valuable than a perfect grain of sand.

Our Gentile brethren surrounded us at all times with their love, and without their help our missionary work among the Jews would not have been possible.

When the Jews hunger after God, they will no longer take offence at the fact that the Christians possess in an earthen vessel the spiritual treasure they have received from Israel, that they have sins. The Talmud declares: "The man who blows on a glass of beer to remove the froth is not thirsty. And if anyone asks: 'What shall I eat with my bread?' thou shalt take the bread from him, because he is not hungry." We too received spiritual sustenance from the testimony of the weakest Christian.

What shall we do to conquer Israel?

In the first place we must not be dismayed at the magnitude of our task. Jesus said: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (LUK 12:32).

We shall not achieve our goal by analyzing the enthusiasm of our convictions, but by knowing Him in whom we believe, and whom we preach: God.

To what does Israel owe its miraculous history? Could it be to efficient propaganda? No, but to the fact that without anyone else knowing about it, one of our forefathers overcame an angel as he wrestled with him, and wrung from him an eternal blessing.

Step by step the discovery by one man of a new source of energy - steam, electricity, the atom - has changed the face of the world. An unknown source of power still exists: the power which we inherit from the good angels, and from the prophets and the saints, who have departed this life without having their longing fulfilled or witnessing what we are witnessing today - the time when Jesus will come again. This power is still latent today, and it can become effective. In one night an angel slew 180,000 Assyrians. Having an angel on your side is more valuable than having the support of crowds of big and important people.

In order to unite Christian Jews with angels I spent years in prison, isolated from the brethren. This road is full of secrets, but it is the road along which we must walk. When the time comes we shall be clad in surpassing majesty, and Israel will belong to Christ.

When will this happen? It depends on how quickly each one of us starts out on this road.

What is demanded is that each of us should dedicate our life to the truth that is in Christ, and then the miracle will take place.

But here are two practical pieces of advice: first, concentrate your missionary efforts on the key personalities among the Jewish people; second, include in the missionary programme of your church the one third of Jewry which lives in the Communist world and which is subjected to heavy persecution.

What would you think of somebody who pays a pastoral visit to a family where one member is deadly sick and converses with the healthy ones without even inquiring about the one who is in bed? Two thirds of the Jews live in the free world or in their own country where, though facing troubles, they enjoy independence. How can a mission to the Jews not give priority to the problem of the Jews in the Soviet Union who are terrorized, kept apart for mockery and blows, but not allowed to cultivate their specific Jewish values, language, art and religion?

How will it end? There is not much chance that they will be allowed to go to Israel. Even if allowed, how could Israel take in a short time over three million new inhabitants? And how will they rejudaize three million men and women who certainly hate Communism, but have been indoctrinated only with Marxism? They know no other teaching than that of fierce atheism, wherewith they have been brainwashed. For the time being in any case, these Jews are in the USSR and they are there to stay.

Any sensible man will tell you that there is not the slightest possibility of convincing them to become Orthodox Jews. Who will spread this religion to them? There exists no Orthodox mission even to the Jews in the free world. For a missionary

work in conditions of illegality Orthodox Judaism is completely unprepared. Neither would such a mission have the slightest probability of succeeding. Should liberal Judaism try the adventure? What will it propagate? The doubts of modernism? The criticism of the Bible? The religious problem will come to the forefront again, and in the spirit I already see Jewish synagogues, schools, newspapers and publishing houses, Jews in all the key positions in political, economic, cultural, scientific and artistic life, in every country in the world, rallying to the service of Christ. I see people of all colours and races turning to the Jews, so that these can show them the way to the Saviour (ZEC 8:23). I see Jerusalem as the capital of the Christian world. I see peace, love, justice and understanding triumphing. I see the lion lie down with the lamb. I see a kingdom to which Jesus has returned to rule. I see an earthly life which is consciously used as a preparatory stage for eternal life. I see Jews in Christian pulpits, showing the peoples of the world the perfect way to salvation. Faith sees all these things, and this is how it will be. For I do not believe the reality before my eyes, but the promises of God.

The dawn is appearing; soon it will be day; soon the sun will shine on Israel.

This was the hope that inspired Nollensen, the Batakians' apostle from Sumatra, and with his own eyes he saw the fulfillment of his dream. It was the hope of Skrefsrud for the Santalis, of Paton for the New Hebrides, and many others.

The Jews live on an entirely different level, and it is much more difficult to convert them. They are a race which has a great many outstanding personalities. But where God is there to help us, there is no difference between what is difficult and what is easy.

Up to the present the majority of the Jews have not believed in Jesus, not because they wanted it so, but because God has concealed the truth from them (MTT 11:25). And God has remained hidden from them, because He wished to retain them as His strategic reserve. They are the future hope of the Church. God has spared them from fifteen centuries of error and decline in the Church, because this would enable Him to

use the Jews, who were not tainted with these sins, to re-establish the Church at the decisive moment. That moment has come; and now Christ will be King of the Jews.

The End of "CHRIST ON THE JEWISH ROAD"

From Suffering To Triumph!

(The Dramatic and Extraordinary Sequel to ~Tortured for Christ~)
Richard Wurmbrand
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INTRODUCTION

A brother who had been terribly tortured by the Communist police shared the same prison cell with me and told the following incident:

> I once saw an impressive scene in a circus. A sharpshooter set out to demonstrate his skill. In the arena was his wife, with a burning candle on her head. From a distance he shot the candle so that it fell, leaving his wife unharmed.
>
> Later I asked her, "Were you afraid?" She replied, "Why should I be? He aimed at the candle not at me."
>
> I thought about this when I was under torture. Why should I be afraid of the torturers? They don't beat me. They beat my body. My "me," my real being, is Christ. I was seated with Him in the heavenly places. This - my real person - could not be touched by them.

I have lived through the years of enforced exile with the image of such heroes of faith in my heart. Now, on my return to my homeland, I again found this same spirit among the Christians I met.

My purpose in writing this book is to help you ascend to such heights.

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A PROPHET IN DISGUISE

After eight years in Romanian Communist jails, I was released, but only for a short period. I had failed to pass the test. The Communists considered my sermons after liberation as bad as those before my arrest. The brainwashing to which I had been subjected in prison had not been effective. My mind still harbored the same "wrong" religious ideas. There was only one solution: send me back to jail - this time for twenty-five years, though I eventually served only six. My total prison experience was fourteen years.

Captain Stanciu of the ~Securitate~ (Romanian Secret Police), who had to interrogate me when I was arrested for the second time, was an apostate Christian who had been brought up in the home of devout believers. Now he jailed God's children to convince them that they were wrong. For some unknown reason, he was nice to me. At the risk of losing his own liberty if overheard, he whispered to me on the first day, "My superiors have committed a terrible mistake in ordering your arrest. At first you were an unknown pastor in a small church. Then we imprisoned you for eight years and turned you into a national figure. Now all Romanian Christians know you, and you have become a hero in their eyes.

"Your rearrest will make you an international figure. That was the wrong thing to do."

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Though an enemy of the gospel, he uttered a prophecy, just like Caiaphas the high priest who sentenced Jesus to death (JHN 11:50).

When I was freed in 1964 after my stint of fourteen years in Communist dungeons, I was not allowed even to attend churches. Pastors of congregations where I tried to worship were threatened by the Communists: "Don't allow Wurmbrand to enter your building - or else!" I had no other choice but to leave the country, which I did with my wife Sabina and my son Mihai in December 1965.

For twenty-five years we have been forced exiles during which time the Romanian Communists have not ceased to denounce me in their press as their archenemy, principally because of my books exposing their activities and my involvement in the ~Christian Mission to the Communist World~. God used me to start this mission devoted to spreading the gospel in countries under atheist dictatorships and to helping the persecuted. I was able to write books that have been translated into over sixty languages. For more than two decades I have traveled and preached the world over in the service of this mission, which has expanded to all continents. I have indeed become internationally known. Captain

Stanciu's prophecy has been fulfilled.

RETURN TO ROMANIA

I value the fellowship of brothers and sisters of all nations and confessions, but my heart has never ceased to yearn for my Romanian fatherland, the country in which I had been born twice.

Patriotism is not very fashionable today. But since Jesus taught us to love even our enemies, how can

we do so if we don't love our own country first? And so wherever I traveled, the heart that beat in my breast was the bleeding heart of my country and the oppressed Romanian church. There seemed to be no hope of my ever seeing it again, except in heaven where the great reunion will take place. Although we felt no hope for this earth, my wife and I practiced hope against hope and saw it fulfilled. In a matter of a few days God overthrew Ceaushescu's bloody dictatorship. He and his wife were killed. I could finally return to my beloved country.

My lovely wife Sabina and I boarded the plane in Zurich. We were not sure if we would be allowed to enter the country. A few days before our departure, the Romanian King Michael I and Queen Anna had tried to return. Though much loved by the people, who of course were not consulted, they had been denied entry by the Communists. They had been stopped at Zurich airport. The new Romanian government, presumed to be democratic, forbade the King and Queen, pride of the Romanian nation, to visit their own land in which the Communists were intruders as puppets of the Soviet Union. (In January 1991, the Romanian government finally restored their citizenship.) The new government, with Iliescu as President, still consists almost entirely of Communists - "reformed" Communists to be sure, but still Communists. A tamed wolf is still a wolf.

A stewardess interrupted our reveries: "Will passenger Richard Wurmbrand please identify himself?" My heart sank. We thought we were sure to be asked to leave the plane.

To our great surprise and relief, unknown friends who had heard that we would be on this jet had sent

us a box of chocolates and a beautiful message of encouragement.

Some two hours later we heard the almost unbelievable words: "Please fasten your seatbelts and prepare to land in Bucharest."

My granddaughter Amely once gave this explanation of the city's name: "Romania is a Communist country. If they catch you there with a Christian BOOK, ARREST follows."

This explanation was no longer valid when we arrived in Romania, exactly a quarter of a century after we had left. The mission to which I belong, and many others, now cross the border with truckloads of Christian literature. Our organization has even created a large printing press in Bucharest itself where we hope very soon to produce Bibles and other books. The printing presses themselves would have cost us a fortune which we did not have. But the printing press of Germany's ruling Communist Party went broke, and their machines were sold at auction. We obtained first-class machinery for half the price. Moreover, Romanian Bibles will be printed on machines that had printed atheist literature!

We are also setting up the first Christian bookshop and video store.

SEEING ANGELS AND JESUS

At long last we were in Romania! Overcome by emotion, I kissed the soil.

Later, when I returned to western Europe and America, many people asked me about the situation in Romania. I cannot really comment on the situation in its totality. I can say only what I saw. The

observer is part of the reality observed. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. If one has a good eye (MTT 6:22), a dove's eye (SOS 1:15), he will see things differently from the one who looks with other eyes.

When Peter and John heard a rumor that Jesus had risen, they immediately ran to the tomb, entered, and saw linen and a handkerchief, nothing else. Then they left (JHN 20:7). Moments later, Mary Magdalene looked into the same tomb and saw two angels. How come the disciples didn't see them? But Mary Magdalene was not satisfied with seeing angels. She thought to herself "Where there are angels, there must be something even better." She did no more than turn her head, but she saw the risen One.

I went to Romania to see angels and Jesus. They are my first love. Why should I spend time with lesser beings? I saw angelic beings and Jesus dwelling in the lives of His saints.

ONLY ONE SADNESS - NOT TO BE A SAINT

Twenty-five years had passed since we left Romania. A voice whispered in our ears, "Why not give up hope? Perhaps no one will remember you."

We could hardly have anticipated the crowds that gathered from many cities far and near to welcome us. Our joy and astonishment knew no bounds. The first person I saw was my former cell-mate Nicolaie Moldovanu from the ~Army of the Lord~, a Romanian version of the Salvation Army, but without uniforms and bands. We had been in the same cell in the ancient prison in Gherla. The regime had been very harsh. From time to time, wardens would shout, "Everyone on the ground!" It was winter. We had no

sweaters, let alone overcoats. The floor was cold concrete with not even a bit of straw for warmth.

Prisoners cursed the brutality of the wardens. Not so Moldovanu. He believed that praising God was better than cursing Communists. With a beautiful

smile on his lips, he would say, "Let's forget our surroundings. I'll sing you the song I just composed while lying on my stomach." It was a hymn full of joy, hope and praise, sung now in many countries.

I remember the Orthodox priest Ghiush with whom I had been in the Jilava jail near Bucharest. The whole prison is underground. Cows graze over the subterranean cells.

I was then in the eighth year of my sentence, I had grown used to everything. But one day a whole group of newcomers, all Orthodox priests. were brought in. From time to time, the wardens would shout, "All priests out in the corridor!" and would beat them.

I sat down near the priest Ghiush, whom I had known when we were both still free. My intention was to comfort him. "Are you sad?" I asked. He lifted beautiful eyes to me and replied, "I know only one sadness: not to be a saint."

Moldovanu was the same type of man. What an honor it was for me to receive his brotherly kiss! I did not feel worthy to untie his shoelaces.

HOLY KISSES

Many were the kisses I received at the airport. I believe that kisses should have a much greater place in Christ's church. Paul wrote: "Greet one another with a holy kiss" (ROM 16:16), not with a cold handshake. Jesus Himself longs for our kisses.

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"Kiss the Son" wrote the psalmist (PSA 2:12). He is not satisfied with anything less.

One evening Jesus was at the house of a Pharisee named Simon who had invited Him to dinner. Doubtless, on the table were beautiful flowers, choice foods, and wine. Jesus looked at them and said with sadness, "I have come into your house, and you did not give me a kiss." This was what He really desired.

In the New Testament, the word for worship in the original Greek is ~proskuneo~, which means a reverential kiss. When Jesus was on earth, it was easy to kiss Him. His mother Mary must have kissed Him countless times. But how can we kiss Him now? My wife had more kisses from me when I was in jail than she has now. So often when I want to kiss her now, the phone rings or I have to hurry to a meeting. But kissing is not so much a touch between two pairs of lips as a coming together of two loving hearts.

UNSINGED BY FIRE

And so I was kissed by Constantin Caraman who had been one of the main contacts of our mission with the underground churches. It was through him that we had channeled much relief to the families of those who were being persecuted.

He, too, had been in prison three times. He had worked as a slave laborer, just like my wife, building a canal uniting the Danube with the Black Sea. What a place of cruelty that had been! A prisoner was caught stealing twenty onions which he intended to share with others to enable them to swallow the tasteless food: oats cooked in water, without salt, without fat. The guard gave the prisoner a choice: twenty-five

lashes on the soles of his feet or eating the onions without salt or bread. He chose the latter. Tears streamed from his eyes which swelled and made him look like a frog. In the end, he fell into convulsions.

Another time, a convoy of women prisoners were being driven from their barracks to their place of work. On the way, they saw a dog's corpse. One woman smashed its head with a stone, then others jumped on it to eat its brain, so great was the hunger for protein.

In the USSR horses were used to carry wagon loads of stone. Prisoners picked worms from their excrement and washed them. Again, valuable protein.

I looked at the shining face of Caraman, former slave laborer. He had a triumphant, loving smile on

his lips. Observing him, one would never guess what he had passed through.

In ancient Babylon, three Jewish youths who had been thrown into a fiery furnace because they refused to bow down to an idol emerged without even the smell of fire on them. So it was with Caraman and a host of other former prisoners I met.

A CONVICTED PICKPOCKET

There was Brother X. I would not have recognized him after twenty-five years, but he reminded me who he was: a former pickpocket with whom I had been in jail. He had been won for Christ when I preached in a cell full of common prisoners about Jesus' love for thieves.

Far from loathing them, Jesus went so far as to compare Himself with a thief who comes at night when the residents of the house would not expect him. Even more, He uses thieves as models for honest

men. He praised thieves in His Sermon on the Mount for being good to each other.

Now we laughed as we remembered the time I fell asleep in my cell with my shoes on, only to awaken as he tried to take them off! At the time, I was moved by his kindness, thinking his desire was to enable me to sleep better. On the contrary! He had played dice, and my shoes were the stake. After winning, he expressed surprise that I failed to recognize him as their legitimate owner.

There was Vasile Rascol whom I had known from childhood. He, too, had been in jail for the crime of distributing smuggled Bibles. Now he is working with us in establishing a press where Bibles and other books can be freely printed.

MY CHILDREN IN ROMANIA

l could not begin to describe everyone I knew in the crowd, but I must say at least a few words about my children.

All my friends in the West know that I have one son, Mihai. He was the only one about whom I spoke and wrote because he had emigrated with us. But he is not my only son. In the airport, Sandu was waiting. Since he had remained in Romania, I could never mention him as I didn't want to endanger him.

Many years ago I buried a Christian who had two small children. Since his widow was very poor, I took one child into my home, and he never left. He became Mihai's brother. Because he was adopted, the Communists would not allow him to leave with us. Today he is married, and I was able to meet him, his wife Sylvia, and their children.

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I could embrace my granddaughter Doina whom I had never seen. She is married and has given me my first great-grandchild. I also embraced my grandson Richard, named after me. Richard had been arrested in the final days of the Ceaushescu regime and expected to be shot. In his cell he thought, "Well, I belong to the Wurmbrand family. Prison and persecution are its fate." When he was taken out of his cell for what he thought would be execution, he received an incredible surprise.

"Ceaushescu has been shot," he was told. "You can go home."

There was also Lenutza. Once, as I sat in my office, a girl of thirteen entered. She was shy, poorly dressed, and very thin and pale.

"Are you Pastor Wurmbrand?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Then you are my father from now on. My own father is an alcoholic and has forsaken us. My mother is always bringing home some other man who beats and chases me. I heard that you are a good man, so I will be your daughter."

I called my wife from the kitchen

"Congratulations! You have given birth to a child without any birth pangs. Here she is."

She, too. remained in our home. Just after I was kidnapped by the Communists in 1948, my wife, instead of brooding about her misfortune, prepared a beautiful wedding for Lenutza.

She, too, was at the airport, with her husband Gheorghe and their daughter Comelia.

We had six other children, all war orphans whom we had taken for our own, though under Communism it was not possible to adopt them

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legally. There was plenty of joy and noise in our two-bedroom apartment. We never had to go to the circus or cinema for amusement. We had plenty at home.

All six of these children were killed on one day. To reveal the circumstances would mean accusing some whom I would not like to mention. Great sorrow has been my companion from childhood. God has taught me to rejoice in tribulation. He is with me in the free world too. My wife and I suffer here more than we ever suffered under the Nazis and Communists.

THE POLITICS OF KINDLY SMILES

At the airport we all joined in singing, accompanied by Moldovanu on the harmonica. I'm sure the angels participated in this joyous reunion. Police officers from the ~Securitate~ (the dreaded Communist organ of repression) stood by. They are still in power and wear the same uniforms, but they have been paralyzed by the uprising of December 1989 which overthrew their boss Ceaushescu.

After the singing, there were speeches. A video-tape was made by brothers Neureder and Wieser of our German mission, great friends of Romania who had come especially for this occasion. A number of individuals from the crowd went with us for an intimate meeting in a house on University Square. From the window we could see the many thousands who

demonstrated against the government day and night.

The University Square had been declared a non-Communist zone that refused to acknowledge the authorities. There were tents for some twenty hunger-strikers (one in the 36th day) who were calling for the demise of the government. Some of the

demonstrators, almost all young, sang a hymn, "Better to be a rascal and a scoundrel than a Communist." This hymn was in response to the prime minister who had characterized them in such terms. From a balcony, leaders of the opposition harangued the Communists.

The aversion to Communism was understandable, but it was not wise to turn it into a political platform. The Communist Party had four million members. Together with the membership of the Communist youth and their nearest relatives, they numbered ten million, the great majority of the voters in a country of only twenty million. Instead of trying to win the rank-and-file Communists to their side, the leaders of the opposition frightened them. The Communists thought, "We will all have to suffer if the opposition comes to power." Unwise anti-Communism assured the success of the Communists in the elections.

Jesus knows best what is right in the political sphere. Words of love for the enemy serve the cause better than expressions of hate. It would have been easy to win the hearts of Communists. They were shattered by the bankruptcy of their ideology in the Eastern European nations. They were depressed as well as disappointed. With a few good words, President Sadat of Egypt obtained great concessions from Israel, after five bitter wars had led to terrible loss of lives and territories for the Arabs.

I am for the politics of kind words and friendly smiles in all human relations.

The Hebrew word for "to tell" is ~lesaper~, which comes from ~saper~, meaning sapphire. "To tell" in Hebrew means "to give a jewel."

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We should only speak if we have a jewel to give. If you can enrich another, if you have a jewel to give, talk. If not, it is better to keep your mouth shut. If this simple Hebrew rule were respected, there would be no family strife, no divorce, no political splits, no feuds in churches or between individuals.

SUBVERTING COMMUNISM WITH THE GOSPEL

The Communists have done great evil in Romania, but most of them were unaware of it. They did not know about the satanic roots of Communism, which I have revealed in my book ~Marx - Prophet of Darkness~ (Marshall Pickering). Many only joined the Party for a better job or higher education. They should have found compassion, but instead they were hardened by evil attitudes.

Finally, the Communist President Iliescu had had enough of the demonstrators in University Square. One day he shot and wounded many of them. Over a thousand were arrested on one day.

How is it that Communism has crumbled, that, while it is far from losing the war (China, Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam - about one-fifth of mankind - are still under Communist one-party rule), it has lost some decisive battles?

For years politicians believed that Communism could only be defeated through nuclear deterrents. They spent billions and billions of dollars producing them and now have to spend billions more in dismantling them as useless. Others believed we should accept Communism as an unchangeable reality and come to terms with it. Their slogan was ~d,tente~.

The Romanian dictator Ceaushescu was a maverick. Like Tito, he had played the game of being a

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Communist apart, at odds with Moscow, but friendly with the West. He was even granted a title at the British court. But he was a Communist just like the

other dictators, only of a different stripe. There are several species of tyrants just as there are several species of wolves, but they all have the same primary characteristics.

Neither anti-Communist armaments nor courting the Communists helped.

In all my writings and speeches I advocated something else: "Communism infiltrates and subverts the free world. Let us subvert the Communist world with the gospel. Let us win them with love. Christ taught us to hate sin but love the sinner. Let us introduce, by secret means if necessary, the word of God. Let us raise an army of prayer warriors."

ALLIANCE WITH ANGELS

Furthermore, I said, we should ponder the secret of the Jewish people. Though small in number, they have had to fight powerful foes in order to exist. In the end, they have conquered all their enemies. Today Israel faces the enmity of hundreds of millions of Arabs who will succeed no more than the powerful Romans, the Inquisition, or the Nazis.

The Jews are 3% of the population of the United States. They are 25% of its millionaires, but also of its revolutionaries. They play an enormous role in science and the arts. A large percentage of Nobel prize-winners are Jewish. The nation of Israel, although among the smallest, is in the headlines every day. A third of the world now awakens from the nightmare in which a Jew - Marx - played the

principal role. The only one who can save it from this nightmare is another Jew - Jesus.

What is the secret of the uniqueness of the Jewish nation? One can say God willed it, and that is true. But there was one event in Jewish history through which this will was manifested.

Jacob, ancestor of my people (I am Jewish), fought with an angel and prevailed (GEN 32:28).

With one man on its side, a colony of ants is invincible in its fight against other ants. With a few steps the man can destroy the enemy. Likewise one man, one nation, one church with an angel on its side will prove in the end invincible.

Each of us has a guardian angel. How can two walk together if they do not agree (AMO 3:3)? It was one of the greatest events of my life to know my guardian angel. Many Christians worked together with their angels for the defeat of Communism. Learn from them and do the same! In some places angels are described as having wings. They are necessary for communication between men and a distant God. But if God is nearer, wings are not needed. In Jacob's vision, it was enough that angels had a ladder (GEN 28:12). For some, even a ladder is not needed. The angel of the Lord surrounds them (PSA 34:7). He is at their disposal.

Christian Mission to the Communist World and other similar organizations that followed its example have worked hard in the spiritual as well as practical realms. Angels were by our side. Our prayers were added to the prayers and sacrifices of numberless martyrs. And so it happened that Communist walls have come tumbling down.

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HOW THE REVOLUTION BEGAN

A Romanian bishop, one of the many who became stooges of the Communists, fired the Reformed Pastor Tokes of Timisoara for preaching faithfully. When he was to be evicted from his home and church, a crowd of Christians of all denominations and several nationalities surrounded his house and obstructed the police. The number of demonstrators grew. When they proceeded to march toward the center of town, the army was called out to stop them. The soldiers began shooting, and many were killed or wounded. Little children gathered on the steps of the cathedral and sang religious hymns. Again the troops fired, and some children died. The rest sought shelter in the cathedral, but heartless priests had locked the sanctuary.

Then an amazing thing happened. The entire crowd, instead of fighting the army, knelt and prayed. This was too much for the soldiers. They refused to shoot any more. Meanwhile, the whole town had gathered. Pastor Dugulescu seized the opportunity to address everyone from the balcony of the Opera House. A poem by Constantin Ioanid, "God Exists," was recited. The crowd shouted, "God exists!" Leaflets with the text had been distributed. Some who knew the music began to sing the song that had been composed for the words. Soon thousands joined in singing it again and again. It became the song of the revolution.

One day when my son Mihai, at about age five, was walking with us through the park, he stopped in front of a man sitting on a bench reading.

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"What are you reading?" he asked with childish simplicity.

"A novel."

"Better read the Bible," said Mihai, "because if you don't follow it, you will go to hell."

"What kind of words are those?" asked the stranger.

"Do you see the tall man with a little lady there behind me? They are my parents. Ask them and they will tell you everything. It's a very serious matter."

Curious by now, the man did ask. It turned out he had been a member of a virulent anti-Jewish organization. Through the witness of a little Jewish boy named Mihai, he was converted and became one of the best Christian poets of Romania. It was his song that became the hymn of the revolution.

When it became known elsewhere that innocent people had been killed in Timisoara (it was rumored they numbered thousands), other demonstration broke out spontaneously in different location Thirteen children, the oldest fourteen, made a barrier

with their bodies against the troops of the Secret Police who could advance only by murdering them. The children knelt and shouted, "Please don't kill us!" The police paid no attention. When the first fell. the others did not run away but remained kneeling with arms outstretched in love and childish confidence toward the murderers as they continued to beg, "Please don't kill us!"

A cross now stands where the children died.

A legend arose in Romania. It said that angels began the revolution. Coming down from heaven, they entered the children, giving them holy courage like that of the good angels who had defeated the

hosts of Satan in heaven. The martyrdom of these children gave victory to the unarmed against an army. Tanks and troops were called out against the populace, but in vain. The soldiers were as fed up with the dictator as the people. In Sibiu, two Orthodox priests who were lifted onto tanks asked everyone to kneel for prayer. The demonstrators, numbering thousands, as well as soldiers and officers, did so. An "Our Father" was said together by those who still remembered prayers. Soldiers and citizens embraced. It was no longer possible to repress the uprising.

COMMUNISTS HATE EACH OTHER

At the same time, another scenario was taking place in the capital.

Communists have a religion of hate. They hate not only capitalists, Christians, and Jews, but also each other. Almost all members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR had been killed by their comrade Stalin. In China, the president of the Communist republic, Liu-Shao-Chi, died under torture ordered by his comrade Mao-Tse-Tung. In Romania, Lucretiu Patrashcanu, the Communist who brought his party to power, was killed by his own secret police.

So it happened that Ceaushescu's comrades in evil deeds, Iliescu, Roman, and others, plotted to

overthrow him. For them the uprising in provincial towns was the spark they needed. They prepared to arrest Ceaushescu who had just returned from Iran and was scheduled to deliver a speech from a balcony in the center of Bucharest.

When he spoke, instead of receiving the usual cheers (which were compulsory), lliescu's men in the

secret police began to boo. No one else would have dared. But this signal was enough to stir up the crowd. They had long desired to boo. Nothing could stop them now. The shouts against Ceaushescu became louder and louder. Sensing the danger, he fled, but something was wrong with his car. He flagged down another. The security officer who was with him and his wife drew out a revolver and instructed the driver - who happened to be a Christian - where to go.

Pretending that the battery was low, he stopped right where men were ready to apprehend their leader. After being paraded on television, Ceaushescu and his wife Elena were killed. Several of his adherents were jailed. Romania now has a new government, but one which consists (at the time of writing) almost exclusively of former Communist leaders, schooled in Marxism from youth. They claim to have renounced Communism, but Communism does not abandon a Communist.

The Bible tells the story of the exodus of the Jews from slavery. They followed Moses for a while, but at the first opportunity they made a golden calf to bow down and worship, just as they had seen the Egyptians do. They had gone out of Egypt, but Egypt had not gone out of them. The idolatrous practices learned while they were slaves in a heathen country remained in the Jewish mind for centuries.

The new government of Romania, like the old, has also shot and jailed innocents. Ceaushescu can be happy about his successor.

A CHURCH I FOUNDED

On Sunday, I had my first service in the Baptist

church of Valaori Street in Bucharest.

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In a sense, I was its founder. The Communists were not the first to persecute evangelicals in Romania. By 1940, the right-wing Iron Guard, who were fanatically Orthodox, had come to power. The first thing they did was to forbid Baptist, Adventist, Pentecostal, and Brethren Churches to worship. Consequently, all their buildings were closed. Then Marshal Antonescu dispensed with the Iron Guard and established his own dictatorship, again banning religious freedom. Not one Romanian-language evangelical church remained open. Hundreds of evangelical Christians were sentenced for up to twenty years. The Orthodox Church stood solidly behind this persecution. There has been no Reformation in Romania. The Orthodox Church is still as authoritarian as the Catholic Church was before Vatican 2.

All Lutheran churches were free except mine because I was Jewish and so were the majority of my congregation (the government was fiercely anti-Jewish). The Lutheran bishop Stadel was not inclined to defend us. He gained renown through his sermon that proclaimed, "Mankind has had three geniuses: Christ, Beethoven and Hitler. I dare to assert that Christ is even greater than Hitler."

And so, like the Baptists and other evangelicals, we, too, gathered in the underground.

Toward the end of the war, a friend of ours, the Swedish ambassador van Reuterswarde, succeeded in obtaining the authorization for us to worship. In one day, we removed all the furniture from our apartment and turned it into a church. As soon as this was known, hundreds of brethren from all the forbidden denominations came to our services

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which we had to conduct five times a day. Thus we were the only Romanian-speaking evangelical church.

When the Nazis lost the war, my former church again enjoyed religious freedom and was given back its old building. Those who had gathered in our apartment formed a Baptist congregation. This has become the Valaori church. Thus, in a sense, its Baptist pastor Talosh is my successor.

Many who now gathered to hear me had known me personally before. The others knew about me, my books, and my life story. For them I was not a mere human but the incarnation of a legend that had grown more and more beautiful over the years, to the point of losing touch with reality. I had the problem of convincing them that I was not the legendary hero they imagined, but an ordinary man.

THE WURMBRAND LAND

A joke is told in Romania: the dictator Ceaushescu's car was forced to stop on a country road for a small repair. Nearby he saw an old peasant woman painfully shoveling dirt and asked about her life. She told him how hard it was and then asked, "Who are you?"

Amazed at not being recognized, he replied, "Read the newspaper. Watch TV. They tell who I am. I am 'the genial leader,' 'the lay god,' 'the genius of the Carpathians.' I am the one who brings truth, light and love to this country."

The woman, full of joy, shouted to her husband who was working at a distance, "Come quickly, John! Brother Wurmbrand has arrived!"

An American Christian has written a book about

Romania which he calls ~The Wurmbrand Land~. Dispelling the legend, and speaking as a simple man, I preached in church after church, my heart overflowing with love and joy.

HOW MUCH AM I?

One evening I was in the Popa-Rusu church, where I had been secretly ordained as deacon during

Nazi times, when it was inconceivable that a Jew should be given office in a church. But this was a German-speaking church, and the Romanian Fascists did not dare to close it.

The ordination took place in the greatest secrecy. Only the two who laid hands on me and two witnesses were present. The door was locked. The German brethren Fleischer and Strobel were not concerned about the anti-Jewish tempest raging outside.

It was in this same church that I later performed my first baptism - of a Jew who did not know one word of Romanian. During the services he would read his Russian New Testament and just let me talk. Before baptizing him I said, "I cannot just perform this ceremony. I bear a responsibility. I must find out what you have learned from Scripture. Read any verse you like and explain it to me."

He opened his Bible at 2 Corinthians [2CO 12:1] where Paul writes, "I am nothing," closed the book. and asked, "If Paul was nothing, how much are you?"

I thanked him. He knew Scripture better than I.

A HEROINE OF THE FAITH

After Bucharest, I traveled from town to town. We saw the miracles of socialism everywhere.

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Where there had once been cars and trucks, men now rode behind horses. The shop windows were empty. People stood in line for hours for tomatoes, cabbage, milk. There were ration cards for many articles. An individual was allotted one kilogram of meat every two months. The streets and houses were poorly lighted.

In every town I met the great and little heroes of faith, as well as cowards and outright traitors. One heroine who traveled with us to some places was Dr. Margareta Pescaru.

In 1950, I was close to death in the prison hospital

of Tirgul-Ocna. The Communists had inherited from the capitalists they despised the notion that every jail should have an infirmary and a physician. However, physicians were told, "You must practice veterinary medicine on these prisoners. Give them the sort of medicine and care you would give to oxen and horses in order that they might be able to work as slaves. If they can no longer recuperate, let them die."

In such prisons we knew two kinds of physicians. Some of them, among whom were young female doctors, would be present at the torture sessions and would joke with the savages. From time to time that doctor would take one's pulse and say, "Now let him rest for a while." During this time, he - or more likely she - would amuse herself with the police officer then say, "Now you can start again, but be careful not to beat him in the region of the heart. He might die too soon, and you won't get any more information out of him."

But there were others who took seriously their primary duty to save life. Preeminent among them was Margareta Pescaru. A Christian, she smuggled

medicine into the jail. Physicians, just like others, were frisked when they entered, but she succeeded time and time again. Many lives, including mine, were saved in this manner.

If a doctor was caught smuggling, he or she would be badly beaten, then imprisoned for many years. The risk was considerable.

Dr. Pescaru made contact with my family and friends. She also provided me, and others through me, with streptomycin, the miracle medicine for tuberculosis which was widespread in prison.

PREVENTING AN ORGY OF CRUELTY

But she did even more than that. In the prisons of Piteshti, Suceava, and the Canal, the Communists had begun the so-called "re-education" of prisoners. Some had been corrupted through promises of freedom if they would beat and torture their fellow

inmates to get them to reveal deeds against the state they had not divulged during the investigation. The prisoners also had to abjure all their convictions, political or religious, for which they had been sentenced. They had to promise full allegiance to Communism.

Any method that would produce results was permitted: severe beating on the soles of the feet and on the genitals; breaking teeth with gravel; forcing prisoners to ingest feces and urine; sleep deprivation; forbidding them to go to the toilet; and any other degrading measures.

Men had to be reduced to heaps of fear, nothing else. The Communists succeeded with most of them. When prisoners were forced to run up and down the stairs pursued by whips and sticks,

everyone ran for his life, which. though wretched, was at that time all that mattered to him. Some did not yield, but they were few. Some died under torture. The henchmen, not satisfied with mere killing, would urinate over the corpses.

Each prisoner was allowed to take one cup of water from the tap each day, but he first had to present it to the re-educator, who would spit in it. Then the prisoner could drink. Jesus used spittle for healing. I know one prisoner who at that time asked himself, "If Jesus' spittle could heal a blind man, can the spittle of such wicked men also heal if we accept it with quiet resignation and love for the evildoer?"

The authorities brought some of these re-educators to my prison hospital, designated for tuberculosis patients, to start their work of destruction. Re-education had been hell for the sane; what havoc would it wreak among the sick, many of them near to death? In a whisper, we communicated the danger to Dr. Margareta Pescaru. She did the unthinkable. She decided to go to the worst of beasts to plead the cause of lambs.

After traveling a whole night to the capital, she went to the top officials who had oversight of the

prisons - in simpler terms, to the chief butchers. God gave her grace in their eyes, as He did to Esther in the eyes of Ahasuerus. We have no idea what convinced them. Was it her physical beauty, or rather rays of God's power shining through her? But she pleaded with success. She appealed to pride. Tirgul-Ocna was the only large prison hospital; the prestige of the country was at stake, and so on. The fact is that, for the first time in the history of Romanian Communism, the torturing of innocents was stopped.

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CHRISTIAN BECOMES COMMUNIST POLICE OFFICER

Another hero was X. (It is not safe to reveal his name even now, since the ~Securitate~, the Communist Secret Police, is still in power.) During those dark years, some wore the prisoner's garb for Christ. But X brought a greater sacrifice. To destroy the church from the inside, the Communists infiltrated their numbers, placing men who had become priests and pastors for this purpose in positions of trust. Brother X thought, "Why not reverse the process?" David said, "There is none like the sword of Goliath" (1SM 21:9). Translators often believe they are wiser than the original authors and should correct them. This is true of Bible translators as well. In the original Greek in MTT 10:1, it is written that Jesus gave his twelve disciples the power of unclean spirits. The English says "over," which is something entirely different.

In time of war, the enemy's spying cannot be counteracted only by preaching the gospel. There must also be counterespionage. So young Brother X became an officer of the Secret Police to serve the underground church, and especially me. Brothers and sisters who had become prisoners wore a uniform that was highly honored by believers. X was loathed as a traitor who had passed to the ranks of the enemy. Believers might well have thought, "Who knows what he really does? Perhaps he has even become a torturer."

He bore the shame and did his job well. He was not the only one. Through men such as him we came to know beforehand about threats of arrest. I

was informed even after I had been exiled to the West about threats to my life.

I met this hero of the faith, Brother X. Romanian believers still don't know his story. What a privilege it was to embrace him!

Some brethren, instructed by their faithful pastors, accepted the role of becoming informers of the Secret Police when it was proposed to them (and it was proposed to almost all Christians). Police officers would meet with these "informers" in conspiratorial apartments, and we were thus able to learn the addresses. Then members of the underground church could spy on these apartments belonging to the police and learn the identity of the real traitors. These sham informers were very careful to tell the police only things that would lead them astray. It is wise to say little more, even today.

COLLABORATORS OF THE COMMUNISTS

I met with top leaders of different denominations. Some of them had been collaborators with the Communists. Feeling terribly guilty, they did not dare to lift up their eyes. They trembled for fear that the archives of the Secret Police and the Ministry of Cults would be opened, and the public would know all the details of what they had done. Some of them were elder]y men. Considering the fact that Communism had reigned in Romania for forty-five years, they probably asked themselves what they would do at such an age, deprived of their positions and probably of their pensions as well. I tried to ease their conscience by telling them, first of all, that a measure of collaboration had been legitimate.

I was not saying that it would be right to submit

to dictators, for Paul said in ROM 13:1: "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God." A God-hating government is not from God. If it were, God

would be like the Jewish king Saul, who asked an enemy, an Amalekite, to kill him (2SM 1:9). God would be advocating a kind of suicide.

I believe, with Saint Augustine, that "without justice, states are nothing more than robber-gangs." Our duty is to uproot them as gangs and try to save the souls of individuals in the gang.
Why, then, did Paul not write like Augustine?

I believe it is wise to say a few pleasant words to tyrants under whom you are obliged to live, as long as you cannot overthrow them. Daniel the prophet said some very pleasant things to King Nebuchadnezzar who was the Hitler of his day. Diplomatic talk belongs in the arsenal of Christians.

Commenting on the king's dream that foretold terrible sufferings for him, Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar, who not long before had thrown Daniel's three friends into the fire. "My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies1" (DAN 4:19). In his heart. Daniel might have thought, "All the punishments from God, O king, are only just, and I hope God will not change his mind."

WHAT SHOULD WE RENDER TO CAESAR?

Jesus said, "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's," a very c]ear teaching. The Jews were to render to the Roman emperor what was his. Now, what was legitimately his in Palestine? Simply - nothing. The Roman army had invaded Palestine by force and

ruled in a tyrannical way. The historian Flavius Josephus wrote that, when the Jews rose up claiming minimal human rights, the Romans crucified so many of them "that there remained no wood for more crosses and no place to put them." The Caesars had planted not one tree and built not one house in Palestine. "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's" means give him nothing, except a boot in the back.

Who are the governing authorities everywhere? They are the successful rebels of yesterday or their

successors. Cromwell and others fought against tyrants in Britain; therefore the democratic regime was God-willed. One royal house has been overthrown through violence by another; therefore the actual queen of Britain is a God-willed authority.

Americans broke an oath of allegiance to the king of England and made a successful revolution. The American authorities of today are therefore of God.

The conclusion? Overthrow Communist and other dictators. If you do not succeed, you are a rebel. If you are victorious, you will be a ruler appointed by God Who gave you victory.

Under Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Ceaushescu, as with many despots of old, Christians have been misled, by a false interpretation of this one verse from Romans 13, to become collaborators in evil deeds. They have failed to observe that these polite words, "Let every soul be subject to governing authorities," appear only towards the end of a book that teaches on all preceding pages that one should withstand and tear down injustice and tyranny. This is what Moses, Gideon, Barak, Samson, David and others did, all of whom are honored as heroes in the Holy Book.

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I did not consider the collaborators with the Communists personally guilty. One born in a heathen or animist environment naturally becomes heathen. He cannot be blamed. Likewise one brought up in a church in which everyone submits to rogues, considers the practice normal.

One of the top leaders of the official Soviet Baptist Church, now deceased, said, "We have to be submissive to the authorities, which does not mean only to the government, but also to the KGB (the murderous Soviet Secret Police), because it is also an authority and as such is willed by God." This means that if they asked me to spy on my brethren in the faith. to report on and denounce them, knowing murderous arrests will follow, I must do so. How can one ask Christians educated in such a faith to act otherwise? It is like wondering why a child educated

in English does not converse in Arabic.

I managed to have fellowship with the former collaborators who had caused much harm to individuals and churches. They had considered it right to inform the authorities about everything that happened in the church - every word spoken, every decision taken. As for the consequences of what they did? They thought, "Let the chips fall where they may."

I tried to show them understanding. I told them that for the Jews the Talmudic teaching is: when a persecutor of religion arises, the rabbis have to divide into two parties. One must stick to the inherited faith and not change even the Jewish manner of tying .shoelaces. The other, on the contrary, must be friendly to the oppressor, wine and dine with him, in order to obtain at least some alleviation of suffering. The merit before God of the suffering

first group is not greater than that of the second group who feast with the tyrant, provided they are prompted by good intentions. These words helped some to understand themselves better.

Some collaborated very wisely. By giving only a little verbal allegiance to Ceaushescu, they were able to receive many concessions. They would abstain totally from the deification of Ceaushescu who was called "the lay god," "the genius of the Carpathians," "the greatest thinker ever," and so forth. The Lutheran bishop Muller consented to be a member of the Communist parliament, though he never voted. But the little compromise of being there without ever flattering the Communist rulers had the result that the Lutheran church was among those that suffered the least.

THE TRAITORS

The church in Romania had others besides collaborators in its ranks. Some were outright traitors who sold the lives of innocents for money, though they never got more than a pittance, like Judas with his thirty pieces of silver. Even then, I am reminded that Jesus sat at the table with Judas even after he

had betrayed Him. All the many words of love spoken by Jesus to the disciples at the last meal included him, too.

Jesus said, "Let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me." This was meant for Judas, who was assured that in the Father's house there are many mansions, even one for a disciple who already had the price of betrayal in his pocket, if only he would repent. Jesus was saying, "There is still time to return" as He continued,

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"I will receive you to myself" (JHN 14:1-3). When Judas led the soldiers to arrest Jesus and gave Him a treacherous kiss, Jesus even then called him "friend," for His friendship is everlasting.

In the original, JHN 5:2 reads: "By the sheep there was a pool" (the word "gate" here is an interpolation of the translators). Near every sheep of Christ there is an opportunity to be washed from every sin. The great tragedy is that some of the traitors were recruited not only from among the worst Christians but sometimes from the best, even from those who had been heroes of faith, who had suffered torture and imprisonment for many years. There is a Latin saying: ~De hic historia silet~ - "about these history is silent." Not everything should be told. Some things are too sad.

PREACHING TO UNSEEN AUDIENCES

What were the highlights of our trip to Romania? Sabina and I stood before the gorgeous palace of Ceaushescu which dwarfs Buckingham Palace. It is said that even the taps in the bathroom are gold, but "the lay god" never once had the pleasure of using them. The palace is built over the spot on which the Uranus prison of the Securitate had stood. This prison was torn down to make way for the dictator's residence. I sat in that underground fortress. I even dare to assert that I ruled from my cell, though this may sound like boasting. Let me explain.

I was kept alone in a cell from which I never saw sun, moon, stars, birds, flowers, trees, or butterflies.

In time I forgot that nature exists, even that colors exist. In my dull gray world of dingy cement walls, tattered clothing, and ashen skin, I forgot

what blue, green, and violet look like. There was never a book nor a scrap of paper. In that deep subterranean prison, silence reigned. I heard never a word nor a whisper. This was sensory deprivation at its cruelest.

Every night in my dark cell I preached to an unseen audience. I was accustomed to this audience, even when I was free. In 1PE 1:12, it says that angels desire to look into the preaching of the gospel. Whenever I preached in churches, I was aware that angels were also present, not only men. (Where else would our guardian angels be when we are in church?) I always endeavored to say a kind word for them, too. But I made the mistake of thinking that only angels could be my unseen audience. It was not so.

After I came to the West, I published three books of sermons I had delivered in my solitary cell: Sermons in Solitary Confinement, If Prison Walls Could Speak, and Alone with God.
And then something very strange took place.

I received a letter from a man in Canada who wrote that he was from a good Christian family but had gone astray as a young man and wound up in jail. There he misbehaved and was put in a solitary punishment cell. In despair, he thought how sad his godly parents must be. He would have liked to return to God but did not know how. He prayed, "God, if there is somewhere in this world another lonely prisoner who knows You, bring me his thoughts." Then he heard an inner voice telling him, "God seeks you more assiduously than you seek Him. The desire of a cow to be sucked is greater than that of a calf to suck. He seeks you and He

knows how to find what He seeks. Sit quietly and confidently. He will reach you."

And then, evening after evening, he heard a kind of sermon from far away.

He repented. Mercifully, his prison term was short, and he was released. Years passed during which he married, had a family, and became a deacon in a church.

One day he entered a Christian bookshop and saw a strange title on a book cover: Sermons in Solitary Confinement. Having been in solitary confinement himself he wondered, "To whom does someone in solitary confinement preach?" He read the book and later wrote to me: "Mr. Wurmbrand, you did not preach to nobody. I was in solitary at the same time as you. I recognized the sermons. It was yours that I heard and that brought me back to Christ. Thank you for having delivered them."

I might not have paid too much attention to this letter if I had not received another from a lady in England who described the same sort of effect.

Then I met a French pastor. He told me he had been an unbeliever when he saw a vision of a pastor with a clerical collar who told him about Christ. He was converted and in time became a clergyman who won many souls to his Master. One day he too saw the same book, Sermons in Solitary Confinement. On the cover of the French edition is a picture of me wearing a clerical collar. He recognized me immediately as the man he had seen in his vision.

PREACHING BEYOND SPACE AND TIME

The Hebrews have three words for soul: ~nephesh~, ~ruach~ and ~neshamah~. ~Neshamah~ is its highest

stage. ~The Kabbalah~, principal book of Jewish mysticism, calls it "the supersoul."

At its highest level, the soul is beyond space and time. A man enclosed behind four walls can reach men thousands of miles away. When I received these letters, they shed new light on some strange assertions

of St. Paul: "The word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world" (COL 1:5-6, my italics); "Your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (ROM 1:8, my italics), and so on. These words seem such gross exaggerations that they could almost be called outright lies. Paul had no knowledge of Japan or America. The gospel was far from having reached even the known world. But the hidden man of the heart, the inner man, the neshamah, communicates beyond all boundaries. Things happen to the inner man of which the outward man, the conscious, knows nothing.

It is written that all the Jews who passed through the Red Sea at their exodus from Egypt "were baptized" (1CO 10:2). They numbered perhaps two or three million. Not one knew that this was happening to them. "All those who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death" (ROM 6:3). Ninety percent of those baptized, even at maturity, did not know this. My wife and I learned this only years later and wondered about it. Who of us knew that we were "buried with him" (ROM 6:4), or that our old man had been "crucified with him" (ROM 6:6). A man would remember if he had been crucified. None of us does. Things happen with our neshamah, things which the conscious, that very little part of our mind, does not experience.

Personally, I never had the experience of accepting

Christ as a novelty. When, at the age of twenty-seven, I heard the gospel from a village carpenter, I had rather the impression of recognizing something I had always desired, for which I had been searching. Plato wrote, "To know is to recognize."

A real sermon that flows from the inner castle of the heart, a sermon to which the preacher also listens in wonder, never having thought that he knew such things, is an existential event remembered by listeners even after decades. It reaches to the ends of the earth and produces an impalpable effect. In his book, The Peace Child, Richardson tells about many missionaries who have found tribes with a knowledge of tenets of the Christian faith that they

had no way of learning from other Christians. Sermons from far away have reached them.

As my wife and I stood before Ceaushescu's enormous palace, I remembered these things and meditated on them. In my subterranean cell I had more joy than he could ever have dreamed of, even when he was at the peak of his power. His work was in vain. In this palace, as in all others, one day there will not remain one stone on another. But souls won for Christ will remain for ever and ever and will ascend without end from glory to glory.

Sabina and I embraced each other and said a prayer of thanksgiving.

WINNING SOULS IN JAIL

From there we went to the former building of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. From its balcony, Ceaushescu had started to deliver his last speech when he was rudely interrupted with shouts of "Murderer! Criminal! Down with

Communism!" He fled in a helicopter that was on the roof and went to his death. This building is the former headquarters of the Secret Police and hosted another underground prison. There, too, I spent two years in solitude. Deep underground I had preached the gospel by tapping on the wall to prisoners in cells on either side. The inmates changed frequently.

The Norwegian pastor Fjeldstad, a missionary in Israel, told me he had met there a Jew who, when he started to tell him the gospel, replied with a smile, "You come too late. I heard the gospel years ago from a fellow inmate who tapped in Morse code when I was in a solitary cell in Romania. I believed it then and I still believe it."

I rejoiced every step I took in Romania. Each place brought back beautiful memories.

We stood before the actual police headquarters where my wife and I had often been detained in

Fascist and Communist times. In Bucharest, I saw again a sister who, with her father, a Baptist preacher, had been imprisoned by the Fascists in these police headquarters, along with me and several others. We had been denounced for organizing underground services in homes. We remembered how happily we had sung there.

Then there was the Malmezon prison in Bucharest. where r had been in both Fascist and Communist times (it was much worse under the latter), During the war, six brothers and sisters were there. It was a loose arrangement, with male and female prisoners together during the day. On one occasion the commander, a colonel, entered the room and shouted, "I heard that you sing your

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hymns here, which is forbidden. What kind of hymns are these? Let me hear one."

We sang "O sacred head, now wounded, with grief and shame bowed down." He turned around d left without saying a word. Many years later I heard from Filip Shmuilovici, an outstanding Hebrew Christian who had been my fellow prisoner on this occasion and now lives in Israel, that the colonel had become a brother in Christ. Our singing might have helped others to salvation as well.

THE CENTRAL PLACE OF MY LIFE

I found myself again on Olteni Street, where my church had been. On the same street there had also been an Orthodox church and a synagogue. Ceaushescu had no need of such buildings so they were all torn down. Olteni! What memories I had of this place. It was here, through many tears, that I had said my first public prayer of repentance. The service had been conducted by Pastor Adeney of the Anglican Church's Mission to the Jews. He had dedicated his life to the Jews and had preached some forty years with little visible fruit. But he did not abandon his mission. It became evident later that

had not worked in vain. He had brought to Christ Isac Feinstein, who became a well-known Hebrew

Christian preacher and died a martyr's death. Another was Asher Pitaru, who was with me later in Communist jail. Prisoners and Communist wardens alike called him "Mr. 1 Corinthians 13," [1CO 13] because this was his main subject when speaking to anyone, even to the guards, who treated him respectfully. When Pitaru was before court, an intimate Christian friend of his was the main prosecution

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witness against him. He never spoke about this man with anything but love: he never mentioned his sin. These and many others were the fruit of Adeney's service.

The main preacher was Pastor Ellison, himself also of Jewish descent. Olteni was the place of my conversion and later my pastorate. Everyone called the church "the church of love" because, though nominally Lutheran, it was really the only interdenominational place in Romania. Worshipers of all kinds - Orthodox, Baptists, Pentecostals, Nazarenes, Adventists - felt at home in this nest. When someone who believed in christening brought his child, we all rejoiced with him. When another asked for baptism at maturity, those who baptized children were present to celebrate. My colleague, Pastor Solheim, preached his belief that at Holy Communion we receive with bread and wine the real body and blood of Christ. I said that I believe in a symbolic presence. No one quarreled about it. Jesus had said, "Take, eat, drink." He had not said, "Squabble about which interpretation is correct." Communion is what it is, not what we think about it.

We took good care of the poor in this church and helped many other churches as well. It was here that we started the first secret mission to the Soviet and that had invaded our country. New Testaments an Gospels were printed for them.

The Olteni church is dear to my heart for another reason: it was here that we met secretly in the attic, which was my "parsonage," the Rev. Stuart Harris, now Chairman of the International Christian Mission to the Communist World, and his friend the Rev. Moseley from the USA. They were the firs

foreign visitors who did not allow themselves to be fooled by official church leaders. We met at night, and I told them the whole story of our suffering.

This meeting was really the foundation stone of our Mission to the Communist World, which has expanded to over forty countries, has introduced millions of Bibles, New Testaments, Gospels and other pieces of literature into Communist lands, and has mobilized hundreds of thousands in prayer for the persecuted. We also helped with radio broadcasts and financial support for families of prisoners.

ARE YOU READY TO ENTER A CHARIOT OF FIRE?

I delivered many sermons in Romania which I cannot reproduce here. But I would like to share a

few of my main thoughts connected with the special situation in that country.

I spoke about the ease with which one can be raptured to heaven. Anyone can be raptured today if he is willing to travel as Elijah did. This is how: "A chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire . . . and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (2KI 2:11).

"Is anyone here ready to enter such an uncomfortable chariot?" I asked. "Then he can be captured at once.

"Where would you like to be taken? Jesus has given us a great promise: 'To take him who overcomes I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne' (REV 3:21).

"Anyone can come to sit on this throne. Daniel gives us a description: 'His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire. A fiery stream

issues from it' (DAN 7:9). Are you ready to sit on

such a throne? Then you can have a place of honor on it.

"I come from the West where some preach easy salvation. Just believe, that is all. If you believe, you will not only have heaven in eternity but also health and prosperity here.

"You might escape totally from Communist persecution, but this false western teaching is around the corner to destroy your spiritual life much more than Communism could have done.

"To be a Christian means to believe in Him, which is to believe in His sacrifice on Golgotha and His teaching that we too must deny ourselves and follow Him. We are meant to be crucified and buried together with Him, not in a physical sense (though in southern Sudan Christians have been crucified even in 1990) but in fighting to the uttermost against sin, the world and the devil, and never giving up even if you lose many battles. About Britain, it is said that in war it loses all the battles but has the final victory. So must we too.

"Christian faith can bring healing. My wife, my son, and I have been healed repeatedly by faith. But it is also true that many fall sick because of their faith. Perfectly sane men became Christians. For this they were jailed, beaten, tortured; they lost their health because of Christ. He has made many prosper in business, but many with a good living lost everything. Their houses and property were confiscated, or they had to pay heavy fines again and again because they became Christians.

"Don't serve Christ for what you can get from Him. John and Mary Magdalene and others loved'

Christ when He could do nothing for them. He hung in pain and thirst on a rude cross and even shouted words that seemed to indicate despair.

"Mary Magdalene loved Jesus, period. Even if He could give nothing. She loved Him even when He was a corpse in a tomb, and she spent money on

spices to embalm Him.

"Where, then, is Christian joy? Paul says, 'I now rejoice in my sufferings for you.' A Christian weeps with all those who weep - not only for those who weep for a little while, but also for those who weep and gnash their teeth in hopeless pain in eternity. Not only Jesus, but also all His disciples share in everyone's pain.

"They fill up in their flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ. He was not satisfied with just being crucified for mankind. He descended into hell. Even if no one did Him any harm there, just being in such a place of horror, hearing the shrieks and the howling, sensing the fire and brimstone, must have been terrible. No sensitive man can read Dante's description of hell without shuddering.

UNION WITH GOD

"But this was not enough for Jesus. By His choice He i.s crucified again as often as spiritual Christians fall away in sin (HEB 6:6).

"This, too, is not enough for Him to reveal the abundance of His love toward us. He inhabits believers. He lives our life with us. He does it patiently, but He still sometimes asks, 'How long will I bear with you?' (MTT 17:17). Every fall, every sin. every weakness and doubt of ours tortures Him, because He has become one with us. In

us, He is not a separate 'I.' A symbiosis has taken place.

"In Hebrew, ISA 48:12 sounds like this: ~Ani-Hu-Ani rishon, af ani acharon~. Translated literally: "A me who is a me - he is the first; one who is only me is the last.' God and I have united in one person. There is no grief of mine He does not share, no doubt, no rebellion, no mistake. It is also His. Out of love, He takes it upon Himself.

"And we find our joy in the supreme priestly service of bringing ourselves as sacrifices. We suffer for

everyone, for Christ the sufferer lives in us. Christ is not only in glory now, but has also remained the Man of Sorrows acquainted with grief."

I gave an extreme example of this taken from life.

"BAPTIZE ME OR I'LL SHOOT YOU!"

Annmarie had been arrested for her underground work in the church. As is usually the case, she was beaten and tortured to make her betray the names of other brethren and sisters implicated in her work. The temptation to yield did not even occur to her. She was so preoccupied, I would say possessed, by one thought: how to bring salvation to the torturer. For her the question was not how to escape further pain, how to forego being sentenced to long years of prison, but how to make her torturer escape sin and hell.

She said to him, "You beat me in vain. You will never beat out of me my love. not only for God, but also for you."

The torturer laughed heartily. "What a foolish girl you are! I beat you, and you declare your love for me."

There were times when one could have lengthy

talks with the torturers. Occasionally, they got tired of beating.

One of them said to me, "You prisoners shout when you are beaten. Why? You feel pain, but what is your suffering compared with mine? You get beaten at most for half an hour. We have to beat so many. There is not time for more than that. Then you rest in your cell. But I have to beat eight hours a day. I have done this six days a week, twelve months a year, for ten years. The only music I hear is the noise of the whip and the cries of the tortured. It is maddening.

"In the evening I get drunk and then go home, where I beat my wife, too. This is my life. I am a greater sufferer than you."

Torturers took coffee breaks. They would also smoke cigarettes. If the prisoner smoked, they would offer him a cigarette as well. For a quarter of an hour, the torturer would be a jolly fellow, ready to converse and even joke with his victim.

And so this one torturer took the girl's declaration of love as a joke.

She continued: "I will now tell you words that under normal circumstances you would never hear from a girl. While you beat me, I looked at your hands. How beautiful they are! I imagine how your wife enjoys it when you caress her. I put to you a simple question: is caressing not better than beating? When you caress your wife, you and she have pleasure. You surely cannot enjoy torturing more than caressing.

"You have very attractive lips. How your wife must have rejoiced when you first kissed her. Is kissing not better than swearing at people and cursing with foul words?"

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He gave her a slap. "Stop this stupid talk! I am not interested in your idiotic lies. You'd better tell us with whom you worked in your underground activity. We are not in the business of love here, but in discovering counter-revolutionist activities."

She responded, "I have a boyfriend who not only loves me. He simply is love itself. From Him I have learned to love everyone heartily. I love those who do me good. I love those who hurt me."

He gave her a blow, and she fell to the concrete floor of the cell, hitting her temple, and fainted.

When she awoke, she saw the torturer sitting, deep in meditation. He asked her, "Who is this strange boyfriend of yours who taught you to love both the good and the bad without distinction?"

She told him, "It is Jesus," and spoke to the torturer about him.
"How can I become His friend too?" he asked.

"You must repent of your sins, put your faith in His dying for you on the cross, and be baptized."
"Then baptize me," he demanded.

She replied, "I cannot baptize you," which was not true. Anyone can baptize in such exceptional circumstances. But she did not know this.

He took out his revolver, pointed it at her, and said, "Baptize me or I'll shoot you!'

If this seems strange, it shouldn't. He fulfilled the words of Jesus, who said, "Some take the kingdom of God by violence" (MTT 11:12). "By violence" can mean threatening with a revolver.

He dragged her to a pool, threw her into the water, and she baptized him. It was a sincere conversion. The proof was that, at great risk to himself, he succeeded in freeing her.

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This Annmarie is an Ani-Hu-Ani, a symbiosis between Him and herself. Even under the worst of tortures, she had one thought: the salvation of the worst of men. She accepted an especially severe beating because of her missionary endeavor, but she also triumphed.

FORGIVING A TORTURER

Continuing my sermon, I insisted: "You have all suffered much at the hands of the Communists, in one way or another, physically or psychologically or socially.

"There is something lacking in the cross of Christ. All He did for mankind till now is not enough. You belong to His body, you are a new embodiment of His. Wherever you are, Christ is, as it was when the Virgin Mary was pregnant. If she went from the kitchen to the dining room, He was with her. He and His mother were one. You are part of His body, just as He was part of Mary's body.

"Take all tribulations upon yourself with

resignation and joy. They are Jesus' tribulations first. Thus you will fill up what is lacking in the cross of Christ. Apply this to all the hurts you receive in the family, in your job, in society.

"The Uniate priest Demeter had been a prison colleague of mine. When he was in jail, a warden amused himself by beating him again and again with a hammer on the backbone. As a result. Demeter was paralyzed and has lain unable to move for twenty years.

"Now there has been a revolution, and Ceaushescu has been overthrown. The Securitate officer who had destroyed his life came to

Demeter's door and said, 'I know I cannot be forgiven. What I did was too heinous. But only listen to my words of apology and I will go.'

"The priest replied, 'For twenty years I have prayed for you daily. I waited for you. You are forgiven.'

"This is the essence of Christianity. Any other attitude is not.

"When Jesus taught us the 'Our Father,' to make sure we understood the most important part of it He added immediately, "If you forgive men their trespasses. your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses' (MTT 6.14-15)."

COMMUNISTS BROADCAST MY SERMONS ON TELEVISION

Something very strange happened after I had delivered a few sermons in which I stressed our duty to love our enemies, including the Communists. My sermons were broadcast at state expense on TV.

For years the Communists had kept me in solitary confinement so that I could not tell my thoughts, considered poisonous, to even one fellow-prisoner. Now the Romanian government. still Communist,

took special care to ensure that the whole populace heard what I had to say.

Why?

The government well knows that the people hate its activities. The dictator Iliescu, wiser than his predecessor Ceaushescu, understands this. He considered it profitable for the oppressed to be taught to love their oppressors. The paradox was that my enemies

and Christ's were eager for people to listen to me. In fact, today Communist leaders actually beg Romanian pastors, "Please preach all you want, even in public squares, but stress love for one's enemies. Otherwise the people will tear us to pieces."

Did Jesus foresee that His teaching of love to the uttermost would be welcomed by His enemies when they were in danger and would help the spread of the gospel because it offered them protection?

We dare to walk our dangerous way, in which we seem to be fellow-travelers with the worst of men and to strengthen their hands (this is the case with almost all who do good to those who do evil), because we believe that the Word is God and in the end this Word will change the hearts even of God-haters.

Two thousand years ago, the Jews hated their Roman oppressors. Was it because Jesus taught love for one's enemies that Pontius Pilate, Roman governor of Israel, desired to free Him?

Love, just because it is love, exposes itself to all risks - even the risk of being misused by the wicked - in order to win all. We will not give up teaching love for one's enemies, even though for a time God-haters profit at our expense.

NOT INTERESTED IN MY SERMONS

We met Angela Cazacu.

She had been our coworker during the War, busy stealing Jewish children from the ghettoes and thus saving lives, smuggling food and clothing to

scores of female Christian prisoners in the Mislea jail, and so on. Then the Soviet army invaded our country. She gave out Russian Gospels and New Testaments in railway stations to trains full of

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Soviet soldiers. Some sisters were arrested for this, but started again as soon as they were released.

When I was in the Tirgul-Ocna jail in 1951, Romania had its heaviest snowfall ever, in some places five feet high. At the time I was seriously ill with pulmonary and spinal tuberculosis, as well as a couple of other illnesses. When the cold was most bitter, the prison commander gave the order that no prisoner was allowed to have more than one blanket. We shuddered endlessly with the cold. TœRnsport was at a standstill. The administration had no food to give us. No family members or friends could come to the jail with a parcel because of the snow. Only one prisoner of the hundreds who were in this jail received a parcel at that time. Angela, whose name in Romanian means "female angel," made her way to the jail through the mountains of snow and left a package for me. At that time I looked like a skeleton. I accepted the gifts that she had struggled to bring us, and we shared them, comforted that we were not alone.

Now she attended a service at which I preached. I asked her what she thought about the sermon. Her reply was not very complimentary: "I did not listen to it much. I was not very much interested in what you said. For me it is enough to see that, after all you have endured, you are well enough to preach. I see your radiant face. I feel the love that emanates from you both. If you had given only the blessing at the end of the service after someone else had preached, it would have been enough for me."

DO TODAY WHAT YOU NEGLECTED BEFORE

Many leaders from the World Council of Churches, Lutherans, Baptists, Reformed,

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Pentecostals, Adventists, World Federations, and

world-renowned evangelists now flock to Romania and the other freed Communist countries. None of them has apologized for having praised non-existent religious liberty in Romania under Communist rule. None has apologized that during the forty-five years of terror not one of these great bodies or any national denomination had done anything to give practical help to the families of Christian martyrs. Though my name was known abroad, my children never received one cent, one parcel, or one letter expressing concern during all my years of imprisonment. I could vouch for the fact that not one of the families of Christian prisoners of that time received anything until our Christian Mission to the Communist World was formed.

That is all in the past now, and I would not mention it if this hard-hearted attitude was not still present. I challenge anyone to ask the leaders of these denominations if they have in their budget at least œ50 ($100) a year for families of Christians jailed in Muslim countries. There are prisoners of faith in Egypt, Malaysia, and Iran. Christians are heavily persecuted in Muslim Turkey. Perhaps the universal church could make up now for what it neglected then. There are missions that now work effectively in this regard in Communist countries. Let the denominations do the same in Muslim countries.

THE LANGUAGE OF PASSION

When I started to tell in the West the story of persecution in the East, I was accused at the very least of gross exaggeration. Bishops and leading evangelists who had been to Russia, Romania, and

Hungary were quick to give the Communist rulers certificates of good behavior. I myself heard one of the most renowned evangelists in the USA say upon his return from Russia, 'There is more religious freedom there than in Britain." Such kind words were also spoken about my homeland.
Did I exaggerate?

First of all, what's wrong with exaggeration?

Why should anyone object to it, since it is the normal response of individuals speaking about a subject that they feel passionately about?

We read in MRK 1:4, "All the land of Judea and those from Jerusalem went out to John the Baptist and ~were all baptized~ by him." Is this an exaggeration or not? Those who place high hopes in the victory of the kingdom see in small beginnings the mighty events that will follow, just like a father with his son.

Have the descendants of Abraham become as numerous as the stars of heaven or the sand of the sea? These are beyond calculation. Yet the promise was such. Was God exaggerating?

Is the bride of Solomon's Song really the only beauty, beside whom other girls are ugly? If not, why does the bridegroom say, "As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters"?

I don't mind being accused of exaggeration when speaking passionately about the sufferings of the persecuted. When one tortured man cries, I hear more than one voice crying. All true believers suffer with the one who suffers. Jesus Himself suffers in them. Why do you hear only the cry of one insignificant man and not the cry of Jesus Who dwells within him?

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How many suffer? How great is the suffering? Do you have good ears? When Abel was killed by his brother, his cry was so loud it reached from the ground to highest heaven (GEN 4:10). Why then do you hold it against me that I hear one voice as the voice of a multitude?

I never exaggerate willingly, but neither am I a stickler for exact figures. Eichmann, the war criminal judged in Jerusalem for his participation in the Holocaust, gave as his defense: "Not six million but only one million Jews were killed by the Nazis." For me and my wife, who had family among the victims, the one million would never be only one million.

When all is said and done, anyone who now reads even Communist publications from the former USSR, Romania, and other Communist countries realizes that not only I, but also Solzhenitsyn, Bourdeaux and others are guilty of understatement.

Even now I have not told the whole story. Patrashcanu, the one who brought Communism to power in Romania, was later tortured by his own comrades in such a manner that I could never tell anyone! including my wife. No publisher would print such violent obscenities. It is strange that we can stand to see pictures of Jesus crucified, but we cannot stand to see the suffering of His saints.

Meanwhile, several newspapers and magazines in Europe have asked the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation to apologize to me. I absolve them of this obligation. But I would.be gratified if they would take a stand against the atrocities committed today where Communists are still in power and would expel from their leadership those

who have led people astray about non-existent religious liberty under the Reds unless they repent.

A BLEAK SITUATION

After speaking in many services, I was invited to meals in the homes of believers.

In one very poor house my wife and I were served chicken, but from the expression on the faces of the children I realized they had never had such a thing. In Romania there is a proverb: "If a poor family eats chicken, either the chicken or the family is sick." We said we were not hungry and each took only a wing.

In other homes we were given good food, but we soon realized that it had been purchased on the black market for exorbitant prices and that the families would eat minimally after our departure. My own children, knowing for a long time that we would be in Romania, had hoarded food by standing in line for hours day after day, for weeks.

The Talmud says, "Every meal where the conversation is about something other than the word of God is idolatrous." I try to abide by this. Families have so little time to converse that mealtime should be used for spiritual as well as physical nourishment. But there were also jokes. A former member of the Communist Party said, "In times past, you had to he recommended by two members of the Party to be accepted. Now. only a certificate from a psychiatric asylum that you are mad is sufficient.''

There was joy and happiness at meals in spite of the great poverty. But the situation was bleak, without any hope of improvement in the foreseeable future. I know the figures: in the first quarter of

1990, the productivity of workers and the gross national product had decreased by 42% compared to the year before. International trade had virtually come to a standstill. There was no new capital infusion into the economy. All socialist economic planning went out the window. With no raw material, many factories stand idle. Private enterprise is now permitted, but where does one begin when there is no capital? There are no goods for even the smallest venture.

The transition from capitalism to socialism is easy. You simply destroy what your predecessors nave accomplished. But the transition from Communism to capitalism and the free market system has never yet taken place. Will it succeed? To create or recreate a free market, capital is needed. Historically, capitalism began in Europe because of the huge amounts of gold discovered in America.

Where is Romania to obtain capital? The western capitalists have no confidence in the new government because it represents no real change. The leaders still feel free to slaughter innocents at whim, just as their predecessors did. Between the 13th and 15th of June, 1990, a multitude of corpses (no one knows how many) and countless wounded, many mutilated for life, lay on the streets of Bucharest. The killers were allegedly

miners, as reported in the western press, though the people know they were men of the old ~Securitate~ who wore miners' helmets as a disguise. These miners had been called by President Iliescu and were congratulated when they finished their bloody work, because they had shown "proletarian solidarity." Those were apocalyptic days. Hoards of

Communist police armed with iron sticks and axes roamed the streets killing people in the name of a government that called itself democratic. ~Demon~ocratic would be more accurate. The image of such scenes persists long after the streets are cleared. People still hear the wild howling of the killers and the moaning of the wounded.

A sane economy, a free market system, cannot be built on such a foundation. Romania receives no substantial help from the West, unlike all the other Eastern European countries, which were also Communist. This was decided at a conference of twenty-four industrial nations in Brussels.

CAPITALISM AND COMMUNISM

There were spiritual discussions at meals, along with songs and jokes, but no palpable hope for the immediate future of the country as far as living conditions are concerned. In view of all their bitter experiences with socialist economies, it is proper that Christians consider what their attitude should be in the conflict between capitalism and Communism. Wicked men cannot construct good social systems. Slavery. feudalism, capitalism, Communism - all are tainted with sin. However, the wise distinguish not only between good and bad, but also between good and better or between bad and worse.

Of all the social systems devised by men until now. Communism is surely the worst. One hundred and fifty years ago, Marx believed that capitalism would soon perish. Seventy years ago, Lenin believed in the near victory of the Communist revolution. In the United States, the great depression of the thirties was considered a sign that capitalism

was on its deathbed. It was not. Capitalism has great vitality. Communism is sick.

Capitalism has proved to be the only system of production that by its very nature assures the development of new techniques that in turn raise the standard of living of the multitudes. Under capitalism, periods of crisis are followed by periods of recovery. Technical developments assure this. New discoveries result in new branches in the economy. Competition assures that products will become cheaper with time. The number of consumers grows. New enterprises are created and with them more jobs. The great number of unemployed in capitalist countries is due to the fact that job-seekers have not qualified themselves. For those who do and who are willing to work, joblessness is not generally a long-term problem under capitalism. In other words, there is no permanent crisis under capitalism.

Under socialism, by way of contrast, there can be no long periods of progress. No one is interested in investing capital because all the profit goes to the state. A political organism, the state, decides what factories should be built and how the goods should be distributed. It takes no advanced degree to observe that as a result the shops are almost always empty. Politicians decide on salaries. Romania provides a bitter example. During the election campaign in June 1990, the government announced a salary increase of 50% in many industries. Since all enterprises belong to the state, this was simple. After the elections, the same government that had used this ruse to win declared that no one in industry would have a fixed salary but rather it would be determined by productivity. However,

since there is neither capital for productivity nor goods for even the most urgent repairs of machinery, industry is hobbled and workers are stymied.

Warning signals about the shape of the economy do not worry the planning commissions, who are the real bosses, because their members have no

profit motive for what they do. They receive a modest salary whether or not the plan is fulfilled. Capitalists, on the other hand, react quickly to economic indicators because their capital is at stake. They can become millionaires or go broke. The profit incentive tends to prevent economic catastrophes. Under Communism, antiquated enterprises continue to function even though they bring no profit. The breakdown of Communism came in many countries without revolution. Romania was the exception. In Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, and Russia, Communism died a natural death because it simply doesn't work.

Capitalism has grave weaknesses, but it is the best system mankind has produced. Of necessity, Christians must prefer it to something far worse - Marxist economics. Nations that have tasted Communism now show their aversion to the system. In Romania, as in neighboring Eastern European countries. people have torn down the statues of Marx. Stalin. and Lenin with strong ropes and multiple manpower. so strong is their revulsion to the "gods" that have been imposed on them. Some are offered for good money to western collectors.

"Lord, when you awake, you will despise their image' (PSA 73:20). Previously, pictures of Ceaushescu were seen everywhere. Now there is not one.

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THE SPECTER OF FAMINE

Christians in Romania, like the rest of its inhabitants, have little time nowadays to think about heavy social or spiritual problems. The mere earning of daily bread consumes more than a normal man's power. And there is even worse danger for all former European Communist countries, and especially for Romania, which is excluded from aid from the USA and the European Community. Romania is also shunned by those who could invest capital because of the brutality and instability of its government, consisting almost exclusively of Communists who so far give few signs of having changed.

There is rampant inflation. The price of necessary goods has increased. Income is lower. Widespread unemployment is inevitable, since unproductive, inefficient factories kept alive by unreasonable state planners will have to be shut down. There is no legislation providing for the unemployed. All Christian charitable institutions have long since been abolished.

Meanwhile, the specter of famine towers over Romania. In winter there is not enough heat in the houses. Babies nurtured in a warm womb are born into cold hospital rooms and fall sick. In neighboring Hungary, also formerly Communist, Mother Theresa of Calcutta was allowed to open soup kitchens - but not in Romania. Leading specialists in economics, finance and industry have been dismissed because the public simply abhors Communists. Furthermore, other Communists in government sacrificed their comrades to the fury of

the mob. with the result that the economy is ruled by ignoramuses.

The agricultural collectives are no longer productive. While no one really cares to work for them, who has the capital and machinery for individual farming'? Former peasants would refuse land even if it were given back to them because they do not trust the Communists. Romanian peasants once owned land, and it was stolen from them by the Communists. So agriculture was destroyed. What warrant do they have that the Communists in power now, after allowing them to become productive again, would not take everything away from them a second time?

Whoever can manage to do so flees from Romania, not only German, Hungarian, and Jewish minorities, but also ethnic Romanians. But what country is ready to accept the millions hoping to emerge from the former Eastern bloc? Except for Christians. no one really knows in Romania (or Hungary, or Bulgaria, or Poland, or Russia) what to do. The believers know exactly what to do even

under the worst circumstances: when one does not know what to do, it is imperative to do nothing, but with patience and trust to let God take over. He has known worse situations than these.

NOT EVERYTHING WAS TAKEN AWAY

When the Communists seized power, most of Romania was composed of small peasant holdings. The land was collectivized by the Communists who were inspired by Lenin's teaching: "We will introduce collectivization, not fearing coercion. Revolutions were never accomplished without coercion.

The proletariat also has the right to use it to obtain its purpose in order to assure that its will is fulfilled.'

Trotsky said, "Our peasantry is an ally of American millionaires. We cannot reach America, but we can suppress these with our cavalry, tanks and swords."

Bukharin. another leading Russian Communist theoretician, wrote, "Our party is the most militarily shaped organization."

In Romania, the Communists did indeed act militarily in taking away from the peasantry everything they owned: fields, sheep, cattle, implements, houses, furniture. Every small farmer became a slave of the state, working for a pittance on a field no longer his. Ceaushescu was one of the principal organizers of this collectivization. In Dobrogea province, he did it with the utmost simplicity. All the villagers were gathered together in a square and were asked to renounce their possessions of their own free will. "Who is for this?" No one raised his hand. So Ceaushescu personally shot ten people. Then the vote was taken a second time. All voted to renounce their possessions "voluntarily." There was military music. They were forced to dance. To add insult to injury, a film was made about their enthusiastic adherence to socialism.

With this, the agricultural sector of Romania was

destroyed. In a country that formerly could feed all of western Europe, farmers were forced to stand in line for bread and were unable to obtain it. Now I met once more a farmer who had come to see me immediately after collectivization. He reported at that time, "They thought they took everything. But

I told my family, 'They left something very important - our hymnals.' We sat down and sang praises to the Lord."

I was reminded of those who "accepted joyfully the plundering of their goods, knowing that they have a better and enduring possession for themselves in heaven" (HEB 10:34).

We embraced again. I, too, had known this joy several times in my life.

HEARING MY SERMONS AGAIN

One of the most striking aspects of this visit to Romania was the encounters with brethren who said they had heard me preach thirty, forty, even fifty years before.

When someone tells me he heard a sermon of mine years ago, I always ask, "What did I say?" I believe that listening to a sermon should be an existential event, something that changes life for better or worse. In a sermon the preacher should not only speak ~about~ Christ but should ~impersonate~ Him. An actor does not speak ~about~ Hamlet or Romeo; he ~is~ the person while on stage. During those several hours in the theater his personal life is put aside completely. He speaks exactly as Romeo would speak if he encountered Juliet. Just so the minister. Not only by his words, but also by his gestures, by the expression on his face, by his appearance, his tone of voice, by the light of the Spirit shining through him, he must convey the impression, "I had an encounter with Jesus today. He speaks through me." Fifty years ago I heard just such an existential sermon, and today I could reproduce even the gestures of the bishop who delivered it.

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When I became a preacher, I took seriously the words that we should "run so as to receive the prize" (1CO 9:24). This is possible only by outrunning all the others. So I read sermons by great preachers, listened to the best preachers of all denominations in Romania, and nurtured a desire to attain to their level and if possible surpass it.

I have not yet become the great preacher I intended to be (I still have hope - I am only eighty-two). but wanted to find out how much I had achieved. Therefore I asked those who said they had heard me half a century ago my usual question: "What did I say?" Some told me.

TELLING A LEGEND

One sermon had begun with the legend of Gorun, a very beloved disciple of the Master. "There is good stuff in you," Jesus said to him. "I want you to pitch a tent for yourself on Mount Carmel and stay there for a time in meditation and prayer." And so he did.

Soon the rumor spread to all the villages round about that a young saint had made his habitation in the region.

One day Gorun went to the nearest village and begged, "Please give me a blanket. Rats have gnawed on my old one and they leave a bad smell. [I know this from my prison life.] Because of this I am unable to sleep."

The villagers gladly gave him what he asked. After a few days, he asked for another blanket because rats had gnawed on the second blanket, too. Soon he was back again with the same request, then again. Finally, someone said, "We'd

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better give you a cat. That will solve the problem for good."

Gorun returned happily to his abode. The rats

were no longer in control. But after two days he was back. "Could you please give me some milk for the cat?" The villagers were happy to comply. But the need persisted. So they decided to give him a cow.

Again he came back. "I need something to feed the cow." They decided to give him pasture land in anticipation of future needs. Soon he came back. He was not used to taking care of both land and animals, so they gave him two workers to help him. Then he needed bricks and materials to build houses for the workers. Then the cow calved, and so on and on.

Years passed, and Jesus went to see his beloved disciple. A fat man greeted him and asked, "What business brings you to this place? What would you like to buy?" The now well-to-do merchant no longer recognized his Master.

Beginning with this legend, I had taught that we should not put distance between us and Jesus, not even so much as a stone's throw. Even at such a small distance, disciples slept while Jesus agonized in Gethsemane. Do business only if the Lord works beside you with accompanying signs (MRK 16:20), as He does in your Christian endeavors. If not, abandon the business.

Don't leave Jesus even for holy meditation or great missionary deeds. To lie quietly on His breast like the apostle John is preferable to the greatest enterprises in His service. Whoever has once leaned on this breast can no longer find full joy anywhere else.

Jesus said, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel' (MRK 12:29). Hear the beating

of my loving heart. Everything else follows from this."

Nothing should be preferred to loving gestures for the One Who leads us to eternal life. There is a depth in renunciation of everything else. The devil can tear one away from the life of a hermit on Carmel but not from the very breast of Christ. Blessed is the man who can do both his secular work and visible work

for the church while lying spiritually on His breast. If he cannot do both, he should forego the work rather than the quiet adoration.

A brother of almost eighty repeated this sermon to me, heard fifty years before. He served me well. Curiously, I have no recollection of ever having read or heard the legend of Gorun. Yet I am told it was part of a sermon of mine. Perhaps I composed it myself. Legends are often good clothing for truth.

COUNT YOUR SECONDS

Another person reminded me of a sermon thirty years old about PSA 90:12. Again, I had started with a story (sermons without illustrations are not remembered).

A man was obliged to walk late at night to a village far away. The journey was monotonous, especially since it was dark and he could scarcely see the road. At a certain moment he stumbled on something in his path. Reaching down, he picked up a small bag full of pebbles. To distract himself from time to time he threw one in the river bordering the road on which he traveled. Plitch ... plitch.... The sound of the splash was harmless amusement. When he reached his destination, only two pebbles remained. In the lighted house he glanced down and

saw that they were diamonds. He had squandered a fortune.

Our days are made up of seconds. There are 32 million seconds in a year. A person who has lived thirty years is responsible for one billion. Every second comes to us from God as a gift to use in His service. If we do not, the second returns to God in sadness and reports that we have neglected His precious gift.

Then I told about a general in the former Royal Army with whom I had been in jail. He was very ill. When I spoke to him about God, he showed no interest. But then his last hour came, and he asked for a priest. There were plenty of priests in that jail, but it

took time to bring one from another cell. When he came, the general was no longer able to speak and make confession. The priest gave him Communion, but he could not swallow the wafer. He died without confession and Communion. He valued the treasure only when the last diamonds remained in the bag.

I spoke about how well Jesus used his seconds, even when crucified: pardon for his crucifiers, . salvation to a robber, good words to his holy mother and to a beloved disciple, the assurance that all things needed for our salvation were fulfilled, a trusting prayer to God. Even in those dire circumstances, moments were not lost.

"Use your time well. Time is the most precious commodity. You can regain money lost but not time lost. Use your time in the Lord's service."

PHYSICAL ACTS COMMUNICATE THE SPIRIT

I visited Oradea, the city with the largest evangelical churches in Romania: a Baptist church led by

Dr. Gheorghitza and Pastor Negrutz, with 2,500 members attending, and a Pentecostal church with some 2,000. Space forbids my recounting all the things I preached in these churches, but I will mention one pronouncement that stunned the audience.

Ceaushescu is hated by the whole populace. I never heard one good word spoken about him. All speak evil of him, except Christians who have learned from the Arch-angel Michael not to dare to bring against even the devil a railing accusation (JUD 9). We often bring such accusations against men, even dead men. I was once warned in the night by a voice which said, "Don't speak evil against any dead persons. They hear us. If they are lost, they have pain enough. Don't add to it."

Now the congregation was anxious to hear my message. All eyes were fixed on me.

I spoke from JHN 20:22-23 - "Jesus breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If

you forgive the sins of men, they are forgiven them."

"A physical act, a special manner of breathing," I continued, "can impart the Holy Spirit. At ordination, another physical act, the laying-on of hands, imparts the gifts of the Spirit. Bodies can be the tool of the Spirit, which can be communicated not only through words, but also through a really warm handshake, a loving look, a face expressing goodness and understanding, a brotherly kiss. A spiritual man should be such not only in words but in all his gestures."

I DEFEND CEAUSHESCU

Then I made my second point, to the stupefaction of my listeners: "Why did Jesus impart the Spirit to

the apostles? He answers the question: that they may be able to forgive or retain sins.

"I regret not having been in Romania when Ceaushescu was judged. I would have volunteered to defend him."

It was obvious the audience could not believe their ears. I was reputed to be a fierce anti-Communist. having opposed Communism when even some of the best pastors had compromised their beliefs. Defend Ceaushescu? Out of the question! Not only had he and his wife been killed, to everyone's satisfaction, but all his children, brothers, and in-laws were in jail. To bear the name Ceaushescu was crime enough.

I went on to explain: "I was in jail with a former major in the police during Fascist times. His sentence was twenty years. He claimed to be a Christian, blessed himself the whole time with the sign of the cross, and prayed to God, the Virgin, and a number of other saints.

"This man was sentenced for having arrested during the war (in the early forties Romania was at war with the Soviet Union) a lad of fourteen who had distributed Communist leaflets, then strictly

forbidden. This lad was a member of an atheist organization, the Communist Youth.

"What an occasion this was for a Christian! The major should have seated the young lad and taken the opportunity to show him lovingly how wrong he was. He should have pointed him to a better way, the way of Christ.

"Instead, he beat the boy savagely. With every lash he inflicted, he strengthened in him his atheist convictions and confirmed his hatred for God.

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"The name of that young boy was Nicolae Ceaushescu. Some of the foremost criminals of history - Hitler, Stalin, Lenin, Marx - also had early encounters with Christians who had not used the occasion well.

"At a certain moment, the guards threw into my cell a Catholic priest who had been beaten badly and was bleeding. We washed him as best we could and gave him water to drink.

"When he came to himself I asked him, 'Can you pray, like Jesus. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"?'

"He replied, 'Jesus could, I cannot. My prayer would rather be, "Father, forgive me and them, because if I had been a better priest, they might not have become torturers.'"

"'I would have told the court which judged the Ceaushescu all this,' I went on, 'and would have concluded: "Judge for yourselves if you have no part in their crimes.'" Then I challenged the audience: "You judge yourselves and ask if you have done your utmost to share with the Communists the teaching of Jesus and to turn them from their wicked ways.'

"In 1918, the Russian Communists killed Czar Nicholas II, his wife, his four daughters, the twelve-year-old crown prince, and their servants. After the murder they found in the house a handwritten

poem from the pen of Princess Olga, aged fifteen:

On the threshold of the grave,

Put on the lips of Your servants

Superhuman power to pray humbly

For our enemies.

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"This too I would have quoted to the judges. May we all learn the beautiful art of forgiveness."

There were tears in the eyes of many in the congregation.

"GORBACHEV, REMEMBER CEAUSHESCU'S LOT!"

Obviously I was not able to appear in court to defend Ceaushescu. He and his wife Elena had both been sentenced to death. She was executed. He was badly tortured to get him to reveal where he had deposited - abroad - the millions he had allegedly stolen from the country. He is said to have died of a heart attack during the torture. His corpse was shot and displayed on public TV.

Ceaushescu's death frightened other Communist dictators and their stooges. The president of the court that had sentenced him committed suicide one week later. In East Germany, seven generals of the ~Stasi~, their Secret Police, also committed suicide. These are known. No one knows how many of their subalterns did the same thing. There were many suicides among the officers of the Soviet KGB as well.

On the 15th of July, the Russian magazine ~Gudok~ reported on a demonstration in Moscow with an estimated attendance of 400,000.

There were posters with messages that were unthinkable a year ago: "Down with the Communist Party!" "Down with the KGB!" "Communism is the scourge of the twentieth century." "The Communist Party consists of henchmen and deceivers." And so on.

But the most striking slogan was: "Gorbachev, remember Ceaushescu's lot!" There was another

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praising Fanny Kaplan, a girl who in 1921 had wounded Lenin in an attempt on his life.

A member of the Supreme Soviet Murashov, delivered a speech in which he said: "We don't want a restructuring (perestroika) of Communism. No reforms, no changes. Communism should perish. The Romanians did well with Ceaushescu."

A general of the KGB, Oleg Kalughin, joined the ranks of the opponents of Gorbachev. He declares he ha.s become a democrat, but the opponents don't believe him. They ask him to enumerate the crimes committed in his career that allowed him to rise to the rank of general. In the debates in the press about him, it is suggested that he and others have changed sides only because of the fate of Ceaushescu. What happened to him also frightened the Communist dictators of Albania, Mongolia, Korea, and Ethiopia, who began to take steps to come to terms with their own people. Romanian blood shed for the cause of liberty by martyrs of the revolution has had wide-ranging effects.

DO WE NEED TWO RELIGIONS?

In Oradea, I had one of my most memorable encounters. I met my former fellow-inmates Pastor Visky, Pastor Sz”ke, and others from the so-called Bethanists, a revival movement within the Hungarian-speaking Reformed Church. Several members of this group, theological students as well as pastors, along with pastors of the Hungarian Unitarian Church, were in one huge cell together with Catholic and Orthodox priests, some sixty or seventy in all. Each confession gathered separately, with no common fellowship in Christ. Instead,

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there were heated debates, not so much about which religion was right but about what was wrong

with another's religion.

The story is told of a lone survivor of a shipwreck who made it to a desert island where he lived like Robinson Crusoe. Two years later, when he was discovered, his rescuers were surprised to find that he had built two prayer houses. "Why would you, alone on an island, build even one prayer house, let alone two?" they asked.

"Every man needs two religions," he explained. "One that he is for and one that he is against."

What was the essential question we debated in our overcrowded cell?

The essence of religion cannot be the subject of debate. If it is, the debaters reveal their ignorance. Religion is life, adoration, silence. Though words may indeed be spoken, it is not in the English sense of the expression "word."

The Hebrew word for "word," ~davar~, also means "the real thing." In Hebrew, John's Gospel reads: "In the beginning was Davar, 'the real thing,' and 'the real thing' was with God, and 'the real thing' was God." The verb "to speak" in Hebrew is ~ledaber~, from the root davar in its sense of giving a real thing. Even in Greek the word logos has both meanings.

Unhappily, at that time I too got caught up in the debates, but I remember telling the following Jewish joke. A young couple went to a rabbi to obtain a divorce. Among Christians, people go to the pastor or priest only for weddings, but in Judaism a rabbi is needed for divorces as well. The astonished rabbi responded, "I married you only a year ago, and

you seemed so much in love with each other. Why do you want a divorce now?"

The woman replied, "Let's not waste any time. Reconciliation is useless. Just go through the formality. That's all we want. At this point talk is superfluous."

The rabbi insisted: "At least satisfy my curiosity. What happened? What is the reason for divorce?"

The man said, "We had a child, a boy."
"That's no reason for divorce."

"Yes it is, because we cannot agree on a name for him."

"What name did you choose?"
"I chose 'Nahum,'" he replied.

' Very good - the name of a prophet. But why did you choose this name?"

"Because it was the name of my father."
"Even better. You wish to honor your parent."

The rabbi then turned to the woman. "What name do you wish to give your son?"
She replied, "Nahum."

Surprised, the rabbi asked, "Why did you choose this name?"
"My father's name was also Nahum."

The rabbi couldn't help asking, with wonder, "If you both want the same name for the same reason, why do you quarrel?"

The man replied, "My wife is shrewd. I wish to call him Nahum for my father and she for hers. But her father was a horse thief and mine was a sage."

This is the impression I get of religious squabbles among Christians. All Christians want to glorify God's name, work for the coming of His kingdom,

spread the gospel and the message of His love, and more. Then let us love one another!

The rabbi counseled the couple, "Call him Nahum after the prophet. Then live together happily for some twenty years. By that time, if your son

becomes either a rabbi or a thief, you will know which parent's name he bears. Why start the quarrel now?"

In the divided cell, it took a long time for us to persuade even the priests of the two Catholic Churches, Roman and Byzantine Rite, to say an "Our Father" together.

A CHRISTLIKE PASTOR

During all this mental, physical and spiritual anguish, Pastor Visky was a unique example to us. Many considered him the most Christlike among us. During the time when we had one small slice of bread a day with some soup of potato peels or rotten carrots, he would give half of his bread to a sick, weak or older prisoner. Once I remember he shared a sweater with a fellow prisoner. His words were always pleasant, and a smile did not disappear from his lips.

As for the rest of us, we were happy if we chanced to observe in him some little sign of irritation or a harsh word, because we knew then that we still had a chance with God. We reasoned that if a Christian had to be as advanced in holiness as Pastor Visky to be acceptable to God, our chances were nil. He retained this composure though he suffered more than us. Somehow he had received news that his wife and seven small children had been deported to a barren part of the country where not only food but also water were lacking.

In Gethsemane, where Peter was ready to defend Jesus with a sword, he said to the disciples, "Permit even this." The worst must be accepted with composure and even with joy. Now I had the joy of meeting Visky and his family. Our mission had supported such families through secret channels in Romania and several other Communist countries. He expressed deep gratitude to all donors who helped him survive.

WHICH IS THE TRUE BIOGRAPHY?

First there was just small talk, but then he gave

me the outline of a book on his prison experiences that he was writing. I could not believe my ears. All the beautiful attitudes and laudatory deeds I had said about him as illustrations in my sermons, he attributed to me. Bemused, I asked him, "Was it you or I? Which of us is telling the truth?" Then I knew the answer. It was simply what minds with great love, true attachment, and holy fantasy see in their beloved.

Never believe biographies. If they are written by adversaries, they tell not what the man truly was but what enmity, rancor, or jealousy saw in him. If they are written by admirers, they will reveal the noble heart of the biographer, who ornaments the subject of his book with his own virtues. As for "objective" biographies that tell the story with pedantic exactitude and thrifty dosages of praise or criticism, don't waste your time reading them. They are boring. worth nothing.

Truth is truth only when told by the passionate. The original of the New Testament had no punctuation marks. It is up to us to decide how to punctuate

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JHN 14:6, where Jesus says, "I am the way the truth and the life." I would suggest the following: "I am the way: the truth and the life." Those who think like Him never offer prosaic truth by itself, but animate it with the beautiful passions of lives worth living.

Visky's children, who grew up in utter misery, are all believers now, some engineers, some pastors, every one in some useful work for the kingdom. Men like Visky brought love, peace and light to shepherds at loggerheads with one another, even in a prison cell where all suffered for the same Savior. But this common suffering was worthwhile. Christians learned in time to understand and admire each other.

Now in 1990, Romanian Christians have formed for the first time in history an evangelical alliance, which includes Baptists, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Brethren, and the Army of the Lord. The latter, with an estimated membership of 800,000, is the cream of the Orthodox Church.

The Roman Catholic Church is not in the alliance, but relations with it are correct and friendly. The enmity of past times no longer exists. One side does not call the other "idolaters" and the other does not respond with "heretics." The Catholic archbishop Robu is the only head of a denomination who, in his sermons, took a public stand against the murder of innocents instigated by the new president Iliescu.

THE MOST PERSECUTED

As for the Byzantine Rite Catholic Church (1.5 million members), also known as Uniates7 we all admire the heroism in faith of their members. Almost all its bishops and many priests died in jail after .severe torture. Their jail sentences totaled 600

years. All their church buildings, schools, and charitable institutions were stolen from them by the Communists and given to the Orthodox Church, whose hierarchy was foremost in collaborating with the Reds.

The crime against the Uniate Church has not been repaired even now. The government has assured them that in principle they are completely free. But how can 1.5 million people enjoy religious freedom when deprived of all their buildings? Stolen property has not yet been returned.

The Uniate church has a history of two hundred years of great suffering. The church began in the eighteenth century in the Romanian province of Transylvania, at that time under the domination of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy of the Hapsburgs. It was a split from the Orthodox church, to which most Romanians belong. The Uniates retained all the Orthodox rituals but accepted all the dogmas of the Catholic church. Composed only of Romanians, it suffered in Transylvania all the vexations to which the nation was subjected under the years of Hungarian rule. The church enjoyed freedom for only thirty years, from 1918 when Transylvania united with Romania until 1956 when the Communists abolished it.

The second most persecuted group is the Army of the Lord whose very existence had not been recognized, either by the state or by the Orthodox church subservient to the state until late in 1990.

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS

How can I tell all that I experienced in Romania?

One day as a boy, with deep emotion I entered an

Orthodox church in Bucharest. It was the first Christian church I had ever seen on the outside. Brought up by non-practicing Jewish parents, I never heard in my childhood either a bad or a good word about Jesus. He was simply unknown to me.

One day as I returned home from school with another boy, he stopped in front of this church and said, "Wait for me a minute. My father asked me to tell the priest something." I said, "No, I'll go in with you." This is how I crossed the threshold of a church for the first time.

I was deeply impressed. Now, re-entering the same church after some seventy years, I relived vividly my initial experience.

As a child I saw a picture of a man crucified. I had no idea who this man was, but thought he must have been very bad or this would not have been done to him. As a child I was much spanked and probably deserved it. But this man, bleeding all over, attached with nails to a cross - why?

I also saw at that time a picture of a beautiful young lady, who looked at me with great love. I was not accustomed to such an expression. I was despised for being a Jewish boy, and was also very poorly dressed, thin, frail, small. This lady loved me. I loved her, too, from that moment.

I wonder why some Christians never think of Mary with love. The Bible says "all generations will call her blessed." Why don't we?

Reason tells me that I did not actually see the Crucified One or that lady, but only a representation. At that time I had the impression that I was seeing real persons. It was one of the several existential events in my life.

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The other boy spoke with the priest, who then came to me and caressed me on the head. It meant much to me, since my parents were not demonstrative. He had a fine touch, the kind I felt at my ordination. Bishop Argay really loved me. Only ordinations performed by those with divine love impart gifts of the Holy Spirit.

As the priest caressed me, he asked, "Little fellow. what can I do for you?"

I was embarrassed, thinking perhaps I was not permitted to be in that strange place. I replied, "Nothing."

He said, "That can't be. I belong to Jesus, who taught us not to allow anyone to pass near us without doing him some good. It is summertime and it is hot outside. I will bring you a cup of cold water."

Jesus - what a strange being! To that point no one I had met knew anything of His teachings. I was given no toys, no chocolate. (When other children ate chocolate, I licked the paper in which it was wrapped.) Jesus changed the water I received into wine. I was stunned.

Being young, I soon forgot this incident. But when I became a Christian, it came back to my memory. The name of that priest was Cavane.

Many years later when I was an evangelical pastor. the Fascists came to power. A new priest in that church, Chiricuta, was the only Orthodox priest who allowed me, a Protestant and, even worse, a Jew, to preach regularly at evensong in his church. He was unconcerned that other priests bullied him for this. I became a contributor to his Orthodox magazine.

During the war, when my wife and I and several

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other Hebrew Christians were court-marshaled, he dared to offer himself as a defense witness. He defended a Jew when Hitler ruled Europe! His defense and that of a German Baptist pastor resulted in ours being the only case in which Jews were acquitted under Hitler. Normally, we would have been condemned, whether guilty or not guilty.

Now, back in Romania after an absence of twenty-five years, I was able to pray in that same church, remembering how much good God had done to me there. God surely has a reward for the one who offered a cup of cold water and unconditional love in His name.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Only some 15,000 Jews have remained in Romania, which at one time had a Jewish population of 600,000. Many of those - among them my wife Sabina's family - perished in the Holocaust. Quite a few have emigrated to Israel and other countries. But even this small remnant wants to leave the country now. The stirrings of anti-Semitism, which were stifled under Ceaushescu, are evident again.

Why didn't this dictator persecute the Jews? Because no one persecutes a cow that gives him milk. The Jews were a great source of income for the government. They were sold to the state of Israel, sometimes at very high prices, depending on their qualifications. The sale of Jews to Israel and ethnic Germans to West Germany enriched the treasury and - it is said Ceaushescu personally. Anti-Semitic publications were forbidden.

Now the situation has changed in Eastern Europe. There is ~glasnost~ and relative freedom of speech. So

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anti-Semites are free to reveal the hatred they have in their hearts for Jews.

The Romanian president Iliescu is a former school colleague and personal friend of Gorbachev, who has shown how he feels about Jews by naming to his presidential council Valentin Rasputin (the name means "profligate" in Russian and gained notoriety in the person of an immoral monk who was an intimate adviser to the Russian imperial family). In an interview given to the ~New York Times~ Magazine, Rasputin said, "Our Jews must feel responsibility for the sins of the revolution and for its consequences . . . responsibility for the terror that existed during the revolution and especially after it. ... Their guilt is great, for they killed God and also Russians."

It is moving to read how painful it is for this high-ranking leader of a God-hating regime to think of God being killed when He came to earth. Certain Jews of old did play a role in the death of Jesus. It was because He Himself was a Jew and lived in Israel. Curiously, I never heard accusations against the (Greek people for having killed Socrates or the Italian nation for having persecuted Galileo.

The interview with Rasputin was published in January 1990. In March he was named to Gorbachev's presidential council. This was his reward. Some knew what conclusion to draw from this interview. In the Moscow magazine ~Nedelia~ (16/1990), one person proposed a simple solution to the Jewish problem. If everyone who understands the Jewish danger would free the country of one single Jew, tomorrow there would be no more Jews. Certainly a program to which Ayatollah Khomeini

and the leaders of the Lebanese terrorist organization Hezbollah would subscribe.

"Nothing distorts human nature so much as maniacal ideas. If a man is possessed by the idea that all evil in the world comes from the Jews, Masons, Bolsheviks, heretics, capitalists, etc., even the best man becomes a wild beast." So wrote Berdiaev.

One can choose among many accusations against

the Jews: "Christianity is a Jewish ideology into which nations have been tricked to create a Judeo-Christian civilization, so that in the end the whole world will become an enlarged Israel."

"Communists were right in fighting capitalism, but they did not say who is guilty of it: the Jews."

"Columbus was a Jew who discovered America with the purpose of making it a center of Zionism from which the Jews would dominate the world through the dollar."

"International Communism was also created by the Jew Marx for the purpose of destroying love for one's nation and fatherland." And so on.

This anti-Jewish propaganda could not be spread in the USSR without the connivance of Gorbachev's government.

From the Soviet Union, anti-Semitism spread.s to other countries just freed from the shackles of Communism. All are passing through a grave economic crisis. In Romania, the new government has declared it will no longer subsidize the prices of bread, milk, meat, etc., which means prices may soon rise by 50%. In times of crisis people need to blame someone, and the Jews provide a convenient scapegoat. For two thousand years of history this has been the case.

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Some of the Romanian Communist leaders were Jewish: Ana Pauker, Kishinevski, Rautu, along with some of the leaders of the Secret Police. That the majority were Romanians or Hungarians doesn't matter; the Jews are guilty.

While it is true that Roman, the first prime minister after the revolution, was a Jew, it must be remembered that Marx himself was also a Jew and a Jew-hater.

Romanian anti-Semites who are also anti-Hungarians are grouped under the name ~Vatra Romaneasca~ - "The Romanian Home."

Romanian Jews, as well as those in other Eastern European countries, are concerned. But where should they go? The USA does not receive them. In Israel, Arabs kill Jews and there is always imminent danger of war. In Romania there are Jewish Christian efforts to acquaint Jews with their King, Jesus. Many are from the province of Bessarabia, theater of the Second World War. They remember that when the Nazi army entered, posters were seen everywhere: "Calamities come from the dirty Jews"; "Jews have provoked this war': "Jews are behind Communism"; "Death to the Jews." And the Jew-haters did not only threaten. Rare are the Jewish families from that province who had no relatives executed by firing squads or deported to concentration camps. Almost the whole of my wife's family (both parents, three sisters, and a brother aged six) perished in such a camp. Since the situation in Romania cannot be assessed apart from the rest of Eastern Europe and especially the Soviet Union, a few words are in order about the latter.

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Gorbachev a Blessing

Gorbachev has been a blessing for the western world. Just imagine the Gulf crisis with the USSR and the West opposed to each other, as in the cold war!

When, during the thirties, Stalin killed all the high command of his own army, suspecting them of intrigue against him, Italy's Fascist dictator Mussolini wrote, "Stalin is a disguised Fascist." Gorbachev was hardly an agent of the American CIA, but he has done its work well. He undermined the power of the Soviet Union and with it the power of Communism in the whole of Eastern Europe. The western Communist Parties have also been shattered.

I remember how, when I arrived in the USA, the general secretary of the World Council of Churches begged me not to publish the atrocities of Communism. But Gorbachev caused them to be publicized. Today you can read in the Soviet newspapers about the millions of innocents killed and

about the whole populace being robbed, exploited, and oppressed by the Communists.

But while he himself exposes the cataclysm Communism brought to Russia, Communist Leaders, nicknamed the nomenklatura, still cling to power. They acknowledge they have nothing to give to the people, yet they continue to wield power and, begging money from the capitalists, they lead Russia to tragedy, a bloodbath that might surpass everything history has known till now.

Perhaps they are guided by the instinct of self-preservation. Or perhaps they have simply abandoned planning and thinking about a more distant future.

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Though Gorbachev played a leading role in the preparation of the drama, he himself would be better suited to play the actor in a farce. He presided over the dismantling of his Party and of the Soviet Union itself, yet ended the congresses by singing the "Internationale," the venerable hymn of Communism. He and his cohorts chant about fighting to the end the deadly battle that will give the whole world the "ideal" society that is now in its death throes in its homeland, Russia. Their slogan is still "Proletarians of the world, unite!" Then they decide at their congresses that the Ukrainian, Russian, Byelorussian, Baltic, and Uzbek Communists should go their separate ways. These decisions only help to enhance extreme nationalism. The result will be a new brand of Fascism, or, more likely, several brands of Fascism, because each of the Soviet republics will have its own to foster against others. Gorbachev and his ilk have played a major role in emasculating Soviet and Eastern European Communism. Without intending to do so, they have rendered the free world a great service, putting off for a time the threat of war between East and West.

Yeltsin, also a former Communist leader, though in personal conflict with Gorbachev, walks the same way.

Should Christians Be in Politics?

Before going further, I feel I must reply to a frequently heard and pertinent question. Should a Christian, and especially a pastor, depart from the Bible and speak out on political matters? This question is very acute for Romanian Christians as well. Some claim we should speak out on political issues,

while others say we shouldn't. Somehow they don't realize that by speaking out fervently about not making politics. They are playing the political game. Why don't they use their energy to explain the atonement of Christ or the doctrine of the Trinity?

The word "politics" comes from the Greek ~polis~, meaning city. "Alms" is doing good to a few men, "philanthropy" is doing good to many, and "politics" is the art of doing good to a nation and even beyond.

Some 70% of the Bible is concerned with politics: the constitution of a nation, its liberation from slavery, the multitude of its wars against other nations, laws regarding social relations, agriculture, hygiene, matrimony, inheritance, the establishment of monarchies and the rivalries among them, along with the misdeeds of rulers, much as the media would expose them today.

"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's" is political advice, as is incitement to rebellion. "Be submissive to authorities" is also political advice, along with descriptions by Daniel and the Revelation of world rulers as ferocious beasts.

We have to evaluate political events to find our way through them. Many discussions among Romanian Christians were not only about the ascent of the soul from the earthly to the angelic, which is holiness, but also about political events in the country and under Communism in particular.

PREACHING UNDER ESCORT

Another place with powerful memories for me is the Baptist church in Giuleshti, a suburb of Bucharest. I had been invited to preach there the first

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Sunday after Romania entered the Second World War, in 1941. At that time the Nazis dominated our country, and when their army attacked Russia, it was in alliance with our troops. The slogan was, "Destroy Communism created by the dirty Jews. Beat the Jews!"

I went to church with a group of other Hebrew Christians. The brethren had invited many unbelievers, telling them who would be the preacher. The Baptists were already hated by the Orthodox. Now something even worse was about to take place: a Jew would preach in the pulpit of the despised Baptist sect. Anti-Semites could not stomach the situation. They denounced this intolerable crime to the police, and we six Hebrew Christians were arrested. A Romanian Christian lady, Sister Mindrutz, knocked at the gate of the prison where my wife and I and the four other Jews were detained and said, "My brethren from the chosen people suffer here for Christ. I wish to suffer with them." Her demand was graciously accepted. She was put in the same cell with us. Now we were seven: three Jews, three Jewesses, and the Romanian.

The cell was small, with only one single bed. The police officer said, "You priest (meaning me), will sleep in the bed and all the others on the floor."

Meanwhile, the Orthodox priest of Giuleshti went to the police to make sure that we would not be freed. He also spoke with me to convince me that there was no place for Jews in Christianity. At that time, the patriarchy had forbidden the baptism of Jews.

Following the Giuleshti arrest we were taken to the prison of the Military Tribunal for interrogation.

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While we were being questioned, the air raid alarm sounded. Bucharest was being attacked by Soviet planes. Soldiers with bayonets on their rifles escorted us to the basement, along with our investigators,

the staff of the Tribunal, our prosecutors and future judges. We prisoners were kept in a corner under strict surveillance. The conversation of the others was about trifles. One young lady complained about a new garment she had not yet worn - and now the bombing!

Then the first bombs were heard falling. The explosions shook the earth. Weeping and panic broke out. Seizing the opportunity, I said with authority. "You have a pastor among you. I will give you a word of comfort from Scripture, and then we will pray. Please kneel."

Everyone knelt, including guards, prosecutors, and judges. I was then able to speak to them from the word of God.

When the bombing was over, we were taken back to our cells, escorted again by soldiers with bayonets they would not hesitate to use if we attempted escape. Those who had knelt at my command h an hour before were again my prosecutors judges.

I relived all these events on seeing the Malmezon prison. What I have just recounted took place Fascist times. Later, under the Communists, I again a guest in this same prison.

A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

In one of its solitary cells, I had had a spiritual. experience to which I alluded in several sermons delivered in Romania upon my recent return. I say

"alluded" because a deep spiritual experience cannot be adequately expressed in any language. One enters into contact with a reality that is neither namable nor explainable. Therefore, the Bible is God's revelation in both senses of the word: it reveals something so that we may perceive it, but it also re-veils It.

Explaining what you experience often does little good. Beethoven had experiences and put them in

music. A sculptor in Buenos Aires carved for a cemetery nine statues symbolizing the nine symphonies. After I had visited the site, someone asked me to explain what the statues were. Sentiments had become music, which then became sculpture, which needed words for interpretation How much of a relationship would these words have had with Beethoven's experiences?

The Bible says, "Taste and see that the Lord i good" (PSA 34:8). No speech, no music, could explain to you the difference between the taste of watermelon and a peach. Only tasting works.

We can hint at spiritual experiences but only with the aim of encouraging others to have their own. Put through the filter of words, such experiences are diminished in value. Everyone has to make an individual effort to obtain the capacity to see reality beyond appearance.

A Zen master was asked by a disciple, "What is Buddha?" He replied, "This flax weighs three pounds" - another way of saying, "What Buddha is cannot be expressed in words. Let us spend our time better by talking about practical things."

If Buddha cannot be expressed in words, even less can Jesus.

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TIMELESSNESS

I have spent years in solitary conf1nement in three different prisons. While there, I lost track of time. Our solitary cells had only a window facing the corridor, none on the outside. We never knew if it was bitter winter or beautiful spring. We could not tell night from day. The same electric bulb burned constantly. Probably for the purpose of confusing us, the prisons had no fixed program of hours when they would awaken prisoners, give them food, or allow them to go to the toilet. We were time-disoriented.

We lived in timelessness as astronauts live in weightlessness. If prolonged for years, timelessness produces a state of mind apart, not comprehensible

intellectually. Our senses had nothing to sense. Perfect silence reigned. We almost never heard a voice or a whisper, and the guards wore felt-soled shoes. There was nothing to see. We were surrounded by the same gray walls. We forgot that colors exist. The stench was overpowering and unrelenting, to the point of paralyzing the olfactory nerve. To this day I cannot smell the perfume of flowers. As for taste, the food was always bland and bad and always the same.

Our minds were not oriented to the senses or regulated by logic.

As I tried to relive those days on my return to Romania as a free man, it was difficult to interpret those experiences for contemporary ears as I spoke in churches. However, being Jewish helps when it comes to timelessness.

Biblical Hebrew does not have our tenses: I eat, I ate, I have eaten, I had eaten, I will eat, I will have

eaten, and so on. God's people are not intended to cut time in pieces: past, present and future. This dividing of time is not natural. The past is not only past; it lives very much in the present, often carrying with it joy or sadness. It will also live in the future. The basis of today and tomorrow is what has been accumulated in the past. Some of the past was also determined by the previous perspective of the future. We are part of one undivided ocean in which waves flow back and forth but remain part of the same ocean. And so as I gazed at the prison walls that had contained me and thought of what went on below, I tried to relive old experiences.

CRUCIFIED FOR YOU TODAY

How easy it is for one who can divide time to accept salvation. I can be forgiven of all my sins and obtain heaven by believing that Jesus died for me long time ago. He chose to suffer for me without asking me. He suffered on the cross for a few hours and then died. On the third day He was resurrected, then returned to heaven, where He has lived now for two

thousand years. It would give Him great joy if I was converted. Then why shouldn't I become a Christian? It would give us mutual joy. Many people come forward during evangelistic appeals with a smile on their face. In great crusades, few tears are shed.

With us, dwelling in timelessness, it was otherwise. Everything was experienced only in the present. Golgotha did not belong to the past but was a present event. It was as if Jesus was standing before me, saying, "You have sinned. For you I will be whipped and crucified. Before your very eyes you will see and hear nails being driven into my

flesh. You will see my holy mother weeping at the foot of the cross. Do you accept this my actual sacrifice for you, or do you prefer to bear the punishment of your sins yourself?"

The crucifixion was no longer an old story read in a book. I had to decide then and there who should die: Barabbas or Jesus. Peter, John, and Mary Magdalene did not have to accept a past sacrifice of Christ, but one in the present or near future. No guilty person with a sense of decency would allow himself to be the eyewitness of the actual cruel death of someone else for what he had done. Neither could we in solitary confinement.

Now I relived what I understood then. It was never intended that salvation should be the result of His dying for me, period. There is no period after His death. not even a comma. We are meant to be "crucified and buried together with him" (ROM 6:6), which is something entirely different.

Luther called the book of James "an epistle of straw" because it teaches that faith alone without deeds is not sufficient. He was wrong. "We are saved by faith" - no period after this assertion. We have to add many sacrifices to this faith (2PE 1:5-8). It is a sacrifice to remain always pure, loving, forgiving, active in God's service. We have to fill up what is lacking in the cross of Christ.

The priest Cheruvian did so. Forced after

unspeakable torture to give a Satanist Communion, pronouncing the holy words "This is My body" and "This is My blood" over human excrement and urine, he later told me, "I have suffered more than Christ." As far as physical torture was concerned, perhaps this is true.

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In timelessness, we lived simultaneously the passion of Christ, His resurrection, His ascension, and His final triumph.

In that solitary cell, we were also concerned not only with the earthly life of men but with their eternal life as well. Death is not an end. In timelessness, we also experienced the afterlife.

WHERE IS CEAUSHESCU TODAY?

With these thoughts in mind, I preached again in Romanian churches. I asked my listeners, "Where are the Ceaushescus today? He was not able to finish his last speech. The audience booed him and he fled. But now he speaks again. Don't you hear him?

"In Jesus' parable, the rich man in hell begged Abraham to send someone to his brothers to tell them not to lead lives that would bring them to the same place of torment. He was refused; he had asked the wrong man. Abraharn had been very harsh with Hagar, mother of his own child. He expelled her from his house with only a loaf of bread and a skin full of water. Why should he show pity to those in hell?

"But perhaps Ceaushescu petitions Jesus, with whom he has a better chance. The rich man was not totally wicked. At least he had love for his lost brothers. Perhaps Ceaushescu too loves some of his old Communist comrades. Perhaps he asks each of us now, 'Go to other Communists and tell them that I suffer the fire and brimstone of condemnation. Warn them to seek another Way.'

"Whoever has experienced timelessness or, in better words, reality beyond the temporal, hears not only the songs of cherubim and seraphim calling

him, but also the howling of those in despair in hell. And there is something even more unbearable to listen to: the deep silence of those kept in darkness (1SM 2:9).

"The silence of some pleads from hell, 'Tell the good news to the worst of men. Think about their terrible destiny. Jesus is interested in them. He proved it by descending into hell.'"

There were unusual strains in my Romanian sermons. I thank God they were well received. For these moments of triumph in my homeland, I had passed through much suffering and sickness and perils of all kinds. It was all by God's grace.

A SIGN FROM GOD

In the case of Chinese wornen over seventy, mortality diminishes by 35% before the harvest feast. In the week following, it returns to normal. This has been established in the studies of the death dates of Chinese-Americans in California The expectation of a feast, the sentiment of duty to help prepare for it, can influence mortality. With Orthodox Jews, mortality diminishes before the Passover feast and returns to normal during the week following.

Epidemiological Research reports only on physical, chemical, and psychological factors that influence mortality. Religion has its influence too. My wife and I believed that God would prove that we were justified in our fight, in which we had encountered much opposition and contrddiction. He would give us a sure sign. We willed not to die before revisiting the old places, bearing triumphantly the banner of Christ. More were on our side than the enemy's. I revisited Romania and its churches at the age of

eighty-two. I will not disclose my wife's age, but she too knew the triumph when well advanced in years.

ROMANIA NOT YET WHOLE

What one sees on the map is not the whole of Romania. The vicissitudes of history have caused much of the nation to live outside its boundaries.

In 1939, when Hitler and Stalin divided up Eastern Europe, Russia obtained the Romanian provinces of Bessarabia and Bucovina. The Red Army occupied them at the end of the Second World War. The Soviets renamed Bessarabia"Moldavia" and invented a language that the Bessarabian Romanians were obliged to use. To do so, they mixed Romanian with a number of Russian words and then required that the result be written in the Cyrillic alphabet of Russian instead of the Latin alphabet used in the West. Romanians are the only Latins of Eastern Europe, but they were forbidden to use their own alphabet.

Bulgaria also stole from Romania - the province of Cadrilater. To the east of Bessarabia is Transnistria, another territory thickly populated by Romanians. The province of Banat, in Yugoslavia, is ethnically Romanian, as is the language spoken there. We hope this whole territory will be reunited with the motherland once and for all under our beloved King Michael I. It should certainly be the concern of the Romanian churches.

It is a special sorrow to me that the Bible, even the New Testament, has not yet been translated into the Macedo-Romanian language spoken by a compact Romanian minority in Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania. Lydia, the first Christian in

Europe, was a Macedonian (ACT 16:12-14). Her language must have been Macedo-Romanian. which is nothing but a dialect of Romanian, but the difference is still so great that an uncultured Macedo-Romanian would not understand a plain Romanian Bible. It would be like Languedocian and French, Frizian and Dutch, Swiss-German and German, though the Swiss-German, being cultured. would know classical German. European Christians owe it to the memory of Lydia, the first European Christian, to care about the translation of the Bible into

Macedo-Romanian.

ROMANIAN MARTYRS

Romanian Christians also miss much through the lack of communication with Bessarabia. This eastern province, stolen by the USSR, is known for its many wonderful Christians.

The renowned martyr, Vania Moiseev, was from that area. In spite of his Russian name, he was Romanian and did not even know the Russian language. The Soviets have Russified Romanian names. Moisiu was renamed Moiseev. He had been a soldier in the Red Army. He had the same faith that we have, with one difference: his faith was contagious. True faith is like the flu. If you have the flu, it is catching. So is faith. In his regiment, soldiers and officers were converted.

His superiors ordered him to keep silent, to avoid speaking about his beliefs, to stop singing. He replied, "What would a nightingale do if ordered to stop singing? It cannot stop, and neither can I."

So they tortured him and in the end drowned him after stabbing him repeatedly in the heart.

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While under persecution, he sent word to his mother: "They give me much pain. I might die at their hands. But don't weep, mother. [He was twenty-one. At that age it is still possible to believe you can stop a mother from weeping.] An angel showed me heavenly Jerusalem, and it is beautiful. Do your best, mother, to meet me there."

Did this Vania really see an angel? People can have foolish hallucinations. But we have proof he did, because, as an uncultured peasant boy, he described this angel as no professor of theology would.

He went on to say, "Angels are transparent. When you have one in front of you and a man stands behind him. the presence of the angel does not keep you from seeing the man. On the contrary, you see

him better. Seen through an angel, all men look more lovely. You can understand and appreciate even a torturer."

Many regret they have never looked upon an angel. They are wrong. You see an angel as often as you accept an unlovely person, as often as you love the one who hurts you.

Vania Moiseev is the pride of our Romanian nation.

Another is the young girl Sophia Chiriac. From the age of eighteen she worked in the underground print shop of the unregistered Soviet Baptists. Confined in a small cellar full of machines, paper, ink, and stocks of books, she had little room to move, stagnant air to breathe, and never any sun-sunshine. She became sick but could not go to a physician. The rule of conspiracy is that once on the staff of such a secret enterprise you never leave it till

near death. When she was finally taken to a hospital, it was too late. Sophia was a Romanian girl who had sacrificed her life to give light to the Russian nation that had subjugated her own.

And then there is another Bessarabian, the well-known confessor Nikolai Horev, who was repeatedly in Soviet jails and came out each time strengthened in faith, a shining example to others. From all he said and wrote, I value most a prayer of his: "Lord, you are my shepherd forever, and I am your sheep forever. May your rod always be in your hand so that when I am in danger, you will protect me from my enemies, or when I stray from your way into wrong paths, either through temptation or through the fear of difficulties, you will use your rod to bring me back to the right way. And should I ever ask you, O Lord, for anything different from what I am asking you now, please ignore it."

Have you ever asked God to ignore your prayers if they should keep you, or others through you, from becoming a saint?

We hope Bessarabia, as well as all the other territories formerly belonging to Romania, will soon unite with the motherland. At this moment, the fact that we have a Communist government bodes ill for the fulfillment of our national ideal: the union of all Romanians.

CONFESSIONS

Much of my time in Romania was taken up with hearing confessions.

I was terribly tired after having preached twice or thrice a day, but was not allowed to go to bed. Some with burdened hearts asked me to listen to them.

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Perhaps it is good for confessors to be tired, because then they speak less and don't interrupt, letting the words and tears of the penitents just flow.

Not one of the main collaborators with the Communists and none of the outright traitors confessed this particular sin. I met with men who had denounced their brethren in faith to the authorities, knowing how much they would have to suffer as a result. When I was arrested, the police officer who interrogated me let slip the name of one who had denounced me. In another case, I was given the actual denunciation to read. Those guilty of such extremes of apostasy never confessed the worst they had done. They told of sins that were minimal, but their disproportionate regret showed that they carried a much heavier, though unacknowledged, burden.

I understood. Cain, after killing his brother, said to God, "~Gadol avoni linso~ - My sin is greater than one can bear" (GEN 4:13).

When conscience reproaches a person for an extreme sin, memory tells him, "You never did it." And memory usually succeeds in convincing conscience. This happened in Germany. It was too difficult to acknowledge that millions of Jews had been killed, so conscience was silenced. Memory won: "It did not happen."

I know how difficult it is for me to admit the worst sins I have committed and my reluctance to confess them to anyone, even to God. On the other hand, reason tells me - very often rightly - that it is far from wise for a person with standing in the church to tell his sins to any man. An American evangelist produced havoc for the babes in Christ by

confessing on TV, before an audience of millions, a sin that only two or three persons knew about.

In Romania we had an Orthodox monk, Arsene Boca, who would tell the penitent, "I know it is too difficult for you to relate certain things you did. Therefore I will tell them to you." He was a man with clairvoyance. But a confessor doesn't need this quality. It can drive one mad to know all the sins of his interlocutors. Be modest. Be happy about the little you are told. God is a modest God. David and Manasseh did not spell out all the gruesome details of their sins. David simply said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2SM 12:13). No more was required.

However, the brethren who have sinned most profoundly under Communism did not confess, though some of them might have made decisions in their heart to change. You may wonder who confessed with tears: it was the best, the most heroic. They felt guilty, some for having survived. If they had been heroic the whole time - and no one could have been - if they had stepped forward and protested each time another was beaten, they would have died of the many beatings they would have received.

Others felt guilty that, because of their involvement in the underground church, the family had broken up. Their children had not approved of the fact that father or mother went to jail for their beliefs and left them to eat from the garbage, suffer poor health, and forego proper schooling. Their reproach was always the same: "If father had kept quiet like so many other believers, we would not have been deprived of a normal childhood." And so the parent returned from jail and found hostile children and

sometimes a bitter spouse, too. They felt it was all their fault.

It is difficult to win in this life. Other children were rebellious against parents who had played a treacherous role. These children could not bear the thought of being children of a Judas. Many felt guilty for having lied to the police during investigation, to protect themselves or to keep others from being arrested. They had been taught strict honesty. been wise never to engage in secret work. Such work is impossible for someone who considers it a sacred principle always to tell the full truth. A Bible smuggler from the West to Eastern Europe told me, "I never said a lie." I asked him, "When applying for a Russian or Romanian visa, what did you declare as the purpose of your visit?" He replied, "Tourism." This was a lie.

"Lies" in self-defense, in defense of innocents or the church, are not really lies. When in danger of death, Paul defended himself before the priestly council with these words: "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged" (ACT 23:6), which was certainly not the issue. But those who felt the guilt of having lied were indifferent to any ethical niceties. They said, "If these Communist police were to find out that I lied to them in matters about which I was questioned, how would they believe what I told them about salvation?"

Others had something else on their heart. They had not seen a female for years, even decades. Once free, they found every girl an irresistible temptation. (This was less true of Catholic priests, who had been

brought up with the discipline of celibacy, than of evangelicals.) I told everyone about the blood of Christ that cleanses every sin, and souls found rest. Such conversations in intimacy were as important as speeches delivered to audiences of thousands.

I had the advantage of having known great confessors personally. One was an English missionary to the Romanian Jews, David Adeney. When a person confessed a major sin to him, Adeney would weep. His tears spoke. He added to them not a word. I had also known the Lutheran bishop, Frederic Muller. No matter what sin of mine I told him, he would always reply, "This I have, too. It belongs to all men, just as forgiveness belongs to God."

I had known the Orthodox priest Suroianu who, when I told him many sins of mine, said, "Well, you have plenty of sins, and grievous ones. But beware of one sin, that of despair. Never believe that your sins can be more or greater than God's grace. You can never out-sin God. He forgives for Christ's sake. Go in peace."

THE BROTHER WHO DIED FOR ME

To each person who came to me, sometimes four or five in an evening, I told a story that I had told to robbers and murderers in jail. I felt it was appropriate for saints carrying remorse, and I offer it to the reader for comfort, regardless of the monstrous sins he may have committed.

In the olden days there were two brothers, the elder good and devout, the younger a libertine who reveled with unsavory companions. The elder brother prayed for the younger and often begged him to change his life, but all seemed in vain.

One night as the elder brother sat in his study reading, the younger brother rushed into his room, begging, "Save me! The police are after me! I have killed a man." There were bloodstains on his clothes.

The older brother grasped the situation immediately and said, "I will save you. Let us change clothes." He took the bloodstained suit of the criminal and gave him his white robe.

The two had barely dressed when the police arrived. They had pursued the criminal from the

place where the deed had been committed and seized the brother in the bloodstained garment.

Brought before the judge, he pleaded guilty, saying, "I bear the whole responsibility for the crime."

Faced with the evidence before him – the pursuit, the blood, the confession – the judge had no doubt. He sentenced the man to death, then asked him his final wish.

"Only one," said the supposed criminal. "I want my brother to receive this letter, which I have prepared for him, at the very moment I am hanged."

The wish was granted.

The next day, his brother received the letter. Opening it, he read: "My beloved, at this very moment, I die in your place, in your bloodstained clothes, for your crime – and I am happy to offer this sacrifice on your behalf.

"But I would like you, in the white clothes I gave you, to lead a life of righteousness and purity. I have no other desire!"

The younger brother, on reading these words, was taken by remorse. He ran to stop the execution – but it was too late. Then he ran to the judge to confess

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his crime, but the judge would not listen to him. "A murder was committed; it has been expiated. What was between you two brothers is of no interest to us."

After that, as often as his former comrades in revelry called the young lad to drinking parties and loose living, he would say. "In the white clothes left to me by the brother who gave his life for me, I can no longer do the evil deeds I did before."

YOU RECEIVED AN ANGEL

I was in the Christian home of a couple I had married some forty years before. They reminded me

of what I had preached at their wedding.

I had told them that on the preceding evening, unable to sleep, I was wondering what to say to them at the ceremony. My wife was already asleep. I was having considerable difficulty finding a suitable text for the occasion. Only one verse of the Bible kept coming to my mind: "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels" (HEB 13:2). I dismissed it. How can one make a wedding sermon out of that?

But since it was on my mind, I tried to figure out who of the many who had stayed in our home was an angel. Some later proved to be devils, some were nice people, but angels? None fell into this category. While speculating like this, I chanced to look at my sleeping wife, and said to myself, "This is the angel entertained by me unwittingly." That became the text of my wedding sermon. "You, the bridegroom, are now receiving an angel. Angels were badly treated in Sodom. Others are not taken into

consideration. You give to your bride the honor due to an angel."

Forty years have passed. He still calls her not by her name, but "angel."

In the USA, 50% of marriages end in divorce, and probably a good percentage of the other half are torn by quarrels. Even a great number of pastors divorce. I rejoice that it is not so in my homeland. Divorce among evangelicals is a rare event.

It would be easy to say that this situation is due to the greater spirituality among believers, but there is a more down-to-earth explanation: the hardship of life. When husband and wife, after a day of hard labor, have to stand in line many hours for the bare necessities of life, there is less time to quarrel. One man told me, "Our apartment is not heated in winter. The electricity bill is high. We cannot afford to have many bulbs burning. The cozy atmosphere needed for a good quarrel is missing, so we forego it."

In contrast to this, the opulence in the West favors divorce. I have known couples who divorced because of quarrels about how to squander their surplus on futilities. If western Christians gave more of their surplus to good causes, the number of divorces would drastically decrease.

CHRISTIANITY AND COMMUNISM

This leads me to express a few thoughts about the relationship between Christianity and Communism.

I have long been aware that, on a practical level, sinful mankind does not know a better economic system than capitalism. This system conflicts with Communism; between Christianity and Communism there is not a total contradiction. How is it that the

name "Communism" is so much akin to notions dear to Christians, such as "the communion of saints," "holy communion," etc.? Whenever I met with a convinced revolutionary, I felt guilty. I would say to myself, "He is the wrong kind of Communist, because I am not the right kind."

Nowadays we discuss how one becomes a Christian: is it through infant or believer's baptism, sprinkling or immersion? Does one receive the Holy Spirit at the same time, or is this a second experience? Which denomination should one join, if any? It was not so in the beginning. In the early years of the Christian church, all believers "had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all, as anyone had need" (ACT 2:44-45). Today it is difficult to guess which confession is the church that Christ willed. Is it the Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Baptist, Pentecostal, Adventist? However, we can be sure that one church was organized as Jesus willed it. After the resurrection, he spent forty days with his disciples and surely must have told them what to do. He taught that the multitude of those who believe should be of one heart and one soul; that no one should say that anything he possessed was his own; that they should have all things in common

(ACT 4:32). Measured by this standard, all today's Christian denominations are heresies.

It is obvious that contemporary Christianity, which numbers hundreds of millions on all continents, must have other life structures than those Christianity had when it numbered only a few thousand in Jerusalem, but the principle should remain the same. We should all be able to say,

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"None of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself" (ROM 14:7).

A theoretician of the New Age movement read my book ~Tortured for Christ~, in which I describe the heroic virtues of Christians in the underground church under Communism. Then he wrote, "If today's Christians in the West were like this, the New Age movement would not have arisen." I paraphrase him: "If we had been the right kind of Communists, we would not have the wrong kind of Communists opposing us."

Meanwhile, we should not deceive ourselves. The Communist ideal has lost some very important battles, but it is far from being defeated or extinguished. A fourth of mankind is still under Communist rule: China with 1.1 billion people and Russia with 280 million which still has a one-party Communist system at the moment I write these lines. There is Communism in Vietnam, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Angola, and Cuba. In Nicaragua, the army, police, and trade unions are still under Communist control, while the government belongs to a divided opposition.

And there are still thousands in Romania and other eastern countries, where a major change has taken place, who still want Communism - some to regain the privileges they lost, some because they retain their Communist ideology. Many of the political concepts they believed in, many axioms they took for granted, crumbled with the Berlin Wall, but they are still sure that a society in which people have all things in common and share according to need, a society without millionaires on one

side and homeless on the other, is to be preferred to

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the capitalist society in which profit is the mainspring for action.

Is there any Christian who loves Jesus' teachings who does not see that they have a point? It might not be practical, but many impractical things have spiritual value. We should all feel some uneasiness in our conscience when we read the Master's words: "Sell all you have and give to the poor, if you wish to be perfect." Is there anyone among us who does not have a longing for perfection?

Our God is modest and looks at our modest, sincere desires as if they were accomplished facts. It is not easy to go back two thousand years and fulfill all commands literally just as they were given. But I feel a bond uniting me with every sincere Communist and can extend to him wholehearted love. The fact that I suffered under Communism is not sufficient motive to reject it totally.

Communists no longer kill wholesale in Russia or Romania, but they continue to kill retail wherever they have guerrillas, as in India, the Philippines, and Latin America. Though they are killers, they are also ready to die for their beliefs. Therefore, they should not be simply discarded as worthless junk. Communism is the old dream of mankind for a kingdom of justice and happiness. Whence did this idea arise if not from a reminiscence of paradise? Many anthropologists maintain that Communism is the first primitive social order. Communism as practiced by Marxism has been and still is horrible. Today even the Communist press in Russia admits this.

DISTINGUISH IDEALS FROM THEIR SUPPORTERS

Some will be shocked that I, a man who has suffered

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so much, can still say a good word about Communism as a principle. Intellectual and spiritual progress is impossible if we do not make a clear-cut

distinction between an ideal that can be sublime and the gruesome deeds of those who proclaim themselves its adherents.

If we were to take into account the very base deeds committed at a certain stage of their lives by David, Solomon, and Paul, we would have to discard their writings as unacceptable.

Great crimes have been committed over the centuries against Jews and fellow Christians of other persuasions as well. Because of this, should we forego Christian teaching altogether? Christians love their enemies - all their enemies. They have a loving understanding for what makes a man an enemy. Communists, on the other hand, are passionate in evil. They have learned Communism from Marx, who had connections with Satanism, as I proved in my book ~Marx - Prophet of Darkness~.

Christians can teach what the first Christians learned directly from Jesus: to have all things in common; not to claim anything for oneself; to share with the brethren. After two thousand years, living as we do under entirely different circumstances, we may not be able to follow this command explicitly. But the great principle remains: Christians have to deny themselves, deny their ego, their selfishness. Not one of us lives or dies to himself. Let us show that the spirit of primitive Christianity has not been extinguished.

I believe there is no greater and more effective Communism ever propagated in the world than the loving, giving Communism practiced by the first

Christians and continued by many groups since. It is the only solution for the economic and social ills of the world. Mankind will have to ascend a steep road toward this ideal. For the time being, however, capitalism is surely better than Communism as we have seen it.

DANCING IN PRISON

Once when I was especially hungry in the Jilava

jail, Lieutenant Franco from the ~Securitate~ came to investigate me. Angry about such an untimely visit, I decided I would investigate him. I asked him about his soul, with the result that he was converted and gave me the lunch he had brought for himself: sandwiches with fine, white bread and the most expensive sausage. I even had dessert - luscious chocolate candies. He now lives in Israel.

Another time, in the solitary cell under what later became the headquarters of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, I remembered Jesus' words: "When men hate you and revile you, rejoice and leap for joy" (LUK 6:23). It occurred to me that I had neglected a duty. I had rejoiced but not leaped for joy, as Jesus had taught us to do. So I began to dance around the cell. The warden, who kept an eye on me through the peephole in the door, was sure I had gone mad. Guards had orders to behave well towards madmen so they would not disturb the silence of the prison. To quieten me down, he brought a large loaf of bread, cheese, and two pieces of sugar.

Romania should do what all believers are intended to do when in distress. Do nothing practical to remedy a situation that is irremediable. Just praise

the Lord, sing and dance in His honor. Angels can take care of the rest, not only for individuals but also for whole nations. Isaiah recommended just "quietness and confidence" (ISA 30:15). Some will discard such advice as foolishness. But surely it is more practical to be a fool in Christ than to be a "wise" man foolishly angry about what he cannot change.

WHY NO APOLOGY?

In spontaneous actions, western evangelical and Catholic groups have done much to help the Romanian people in need since the revolution. Great quantities of Bibles and good Christian books have also been sent in.

But this is not enough to establish right relations between East and West.

After the War, the churches of Germany, acknowledging that Nazism killed millions of Jews, made public statements of apology for having supported the Nazis or at least for allowing mass slaughter to take place without protesting and helping the persecuted to escape. The German democratic government itself recognized their national guilt and gave great sums of money in restitution to the surviving victims.

Romania and other Eastern European states were given into the hands of Communist butchers - already known as such - by Britain and the USA at Yalta. In his memoirs, Churchill says that he passed a slip of paper to Stalin, whom he had characterized previously as a bloody criminal, with the following proposal: "You give me Greece and Romania will be yours." He disposed of Romania as if it were his private possession. Roosevelt went along with him as

they committed their nations to handing over whole countries to God-hating rulers. Hundreds of thousands of innocents died as a result. My country has been ruined.

Until Vatican 2, the papacy was the only large religious body that took an anti-Communist stance and defended the persecuted. After Vatican 2, they gave up their crusade. Meanwhile, the World Council of Churches for thirty years has harshly criticized the western world while covering up the atrocities taking place in the East. It has vigorously supported liberation theology, which means liberation from capitalism but never from the injustices of Communism. The great Protestant bodies, such as Lutheran and Reformed World Federation, followed suit. During the worst years of terror, Romania was visited by bishops, pastors and renowned evangelists. Not one said a word in defense of the sufferers.

I was reminded of the fact that in 1935, when Hitler ruled Germany, the Baptist World Alliance chose Berlin as the location for its world congress. Hitler's program to exterminate the Jews was

known. While the delegates quoted Bible verses written by Jews about the Jew Jesus and spoke about His sufferings, not one word of compassion or solidarity was spoken on behalf of the German Jews threatened with mass murder. There was only one American Jewish Christian among the delegates, a Mr. Gartenhaus, but he was not allowed to speak from the rostrum.

On one occasion, I read the report of an Anglican bishop in his diocesan bulletin about his visit to Romania. He wrote glowingly about the many lavish

breakfasts (wrongly so-called, because they broke no fasts), luncheons, and dinners, but said nothing about the Christians starving in jail.

Today foreign church leaders are certainly welcome in Romania, but it would be appropriate for them to express some word of repentance. They might also publicly acknowledge that during the years of terror not one denomination had budgeted so much as one pound for the families of Christian martyrs, who never received one parcel of food from abroad. On the other hand, through the World Council of Churches, many denominations have given money to Communist guerrillas in Africa who, when they came to power, imprisoned and killed Christians. Mozambique and Angola are prime examples. Again, no money ever went to families of prisoners.

TEACH, BUT ALSO LEARN

Something else needs to be said about the relationship of the West with Romanian churches (and also for other countries of the former eastern bloc).

Western Christians can afford the luxury of expensive journeys to teach others. Why then don't they invite Romanian or Russian Christians to evangelize in the West? Why, at large evangelistic congresses, are only well-fed, affluent western evangelists the key speakers? It was not so in the early church. There, men like Paul shared the mysteries of Christ learned while in chains.

Hands that have worn chains can give blessings and should be awarded this privilege. In the first centuries, the church in Rome was heeded by others because it had given the most martyrs.

One more detail: in Romanian evangelical

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churches women use no makeup and wear no jewelry. Believers who do so are not accepted as church members. Smoking and drinking are strictly forbidden. American evangelists who wear rings and whose wives use lipstick are not acceptable. It is helpful to know this.

THE DUTY TO HOWL

Many western preachers have had the advantage of a theological education, which can be very profitable. Many of the Romanian preachers, as well as Russian, Bulgarian, etc., have not been in seminaries but in dark cells, hungry, beaten, and suffering with the cold.

I cannot explain why, but in certain cells in utter cold and darkness, prisoners could not refrain from howling. God says, "I will howl for Moab" (JER 48:31). Before being in such a cell, I had never imagined how terrible is God's pain for sinners. It makes Him howl. I now knew another aspect of God: a God who howls. This is also a revelation about Him.

It can be learned best from those who have been through this school. They have fulfilled an amazing commandment from God: "Howl for Babylon." Howl for the worst enemy of your people. We howled in these cells for our Communist torturers, knowing that if we did so, "they may be healed" (JER 51:8). We consider it important that a minister should be trained in homiletics, dogmatics, Greek, Hebrew, and church history. The West can give us teachers for these. But ministers must also be prepared for howling, for being men who feel they will die if souls are not saved.

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The prophet Joel says, "Howl, all you who minister before the altar" (JOE 1:13). Preachers should imitate Micah, who at a given moment made the decision, "I will wail and howl" (MIC 1:8), not, "I will preach according to the rules of rhetoric."

Perhaps eastern preachers can teach the West how to weep when you have been stabbed with the knife of treason, how to bear the burden of suffering for the honor and good of the holy church. They will add that the great suffering is not produced by lost battles (no warrior can win them all) or by physical wounds, but by brothers and sisters who do not take up a cross and fight the good fight, who renounce the holy dream. They will teach us to smile not only when comforted by friends, with lilies strewn in their path, but also when surrounded by enemies, with nails driven into their bodies.

A HEAVENLY SMILE

Speaking of smiles, let me write about one fellow-prisoner whom I did not meet again on Romanian soil because he is now in a better land.

We usually imagine the saints as being in a heaven far away. The Bible tells us in HEB 12:1 that they surround us. They continue to be interested in all they left behind and participate in the fight. They inspire us in the very strict sense of the word.

It is said about a disciple of John Chrysostom, the greatest preacher Christianity has ever had, that he peered into the room where his master was preparing a sermon and saw two unknown beings whispering something in his ears. Curious, he asked about them and received this reply: "It was wrong of you to peek, but since you did. I will tell you. These

were the apostles Paul and John, who sometimes suggest what I should preach about."

This story might be legend, but the fact remains that we are in the communion of the saints of all times. It is good for those who visit Romania not

only to look around to see living saints, but also to look up and through the spirit get a glimpse of those in glory who surround them.

I remembered Milan Haimovici, a Hebrew Christian pastor who spent seven years in jail. Even enemies of both Jews and the gospel admired his courage. He would protest against any injustice on the part of the wardens though he knew that for this he would be savagely beaten.

Once I was in a large cell holding perhaps a hundred prisoners. We were crammed together in utter misery with no room to walk even a few steps. We were overcome with the dirt and the stench. At night it was impossible to sleep because there were always three or four who snored, each on a different melody. When they stopped, others started. Some coughed, some sneezed, some quarreled.

In these close quarters were Christians of many denominations, Jews, atheists, men of all political parties and social categories. Among them was Milan, who witnessed for Jesus. He had no Bible and had seen no book for many years. He could advance no intellectual arguments. He could only say repeatedly, "I know Jesus. Walk and talk with Him."

A professor, member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, scoffed: "Jesus has been dead for two thousand years. How can you talk with Him? Even admitting that He was resurrected, as you Christians

believe, and went to heaven, this heaven is millions of miles away. Don't tell us any more lies. No one can walk and talk with Him."

Milan simply repeated, "I wonder myself how it can happen and have no real explanation, but it is a fact. He walks and talks with me." A great circle of prisoners listened to the discussion. Continuing, Milan asserted, "I even see Him sometimes."

This was too much for a man of science. "What you say is the greatest lie I have heard in all my life.

Since you claim you see Him, can you please tell us how He looks at you: angry, wrathful, bored, indifferent, polite, interested, loving? Does He perhaps also smile at you?"

Milan replied, "How did you guess that? Really, He sometimes smiles at me."

"Well, well," said the professor. "You are lucky I am not a psychiatrist, or I would diagnose you as having religious mania. Perhaps you can show us how Jesus smiles."

"I will gladly try," said Milan.

The scene that followed was the most beautiful in the eighty-one years of my life. Like all the rest of us, Milan resembled a scarecrow. Shorn, dirty, with dark circles around his eyes; only skin and bones, with teeth missing, and in a zebra uniform, he was anything but attractive. But when he received this challenge, his face began to shine – the glory of God can shine through a thick crust of dirt – and a beautiful smile appeared on his lips. Romeo must have looked like this when he smiled at Juliet.

There was a touch of sadness in the smile because of the lost condition of his questioner's soul. But one could read on his lips a passionate love, an

unquenchable longing, a sure hope and an ardent desire of a lover to receive the kiss of the beloved. All the splendor of heaven was in this magnificent smile. (An ugly thought passed through my mind on seeing this smile: the definition of the word "kiss" in a Russian dictionary – "the mutual touch of two pairs of lips with reciprocal transmission of microbes and carbon dioxide." Who can avoid such wrong thoughts at a sublime moment?) The atheist professor bowed his head and said, "Sir, you have seen Jesus."

When I became a Christian, I was advised to read every day a page from the Bible and the life of a saint, a martyr, or a renowned missionary, which I do. But before I was in jail, I read the lives of saints

with skepticism. The writers always seemed to exaggerate. I knew the story of the charming and convincing smile of Bernadette de Soubiroux of Lourdes. I had known several Christians on earth who had heavenly smiles (one of whom is my wife Sabina). But now I saw such smiles in conditions of utter suffering.

I have seen them many times, in many jails. Sometimes I have difficulty remembering the circumstances. All the great smilers became one for me, fusing into the smile of Jesus. Saints bring the smile of heaven into the deepest valleys of the shadow of death. Men with such a smile do not die. They surround us after death as well, encouraging and helping us. Romania has just such a cloud of witnesses above it. This too is a Romanian reality. A Christian who goes to such a place must look for it.

A renowned church leader told me that he had visited Lenin's tomb in Moscow and had seen his

mummy. I asked him if he had perceived the presence of some other dead person in Russia. He had not. But Paul says in HEB 13:1 that he had seen cloud of God's witnesses from thousands of years before.

KILLED FOR DISTRIBUTING BIBLES

Milan Haimovici is one of many martyrs who beautify the sky over Romania. I am very much attached to some of them because in a certain sense I played a role in their dying under tragic circumstances.

We know the names of four Romanian Christians who had to die for the crime of distributing Bibles they had received from us through underground channels. Clipa was caught and badly tortured to reveal how he obtained and distributed the Bibles. Then he was found hanged. No one really knows how he died. Did the Communists hang him? Did he commit suicide, like many others in Communist China, fearing he might weaken and betray when subjected to further torture? Another Bible distributor, Bogdam, was also found hanged. Tudose was

found electrocuted. Pastor Radu Cruceru died of a staged automobile accident, a method of killing much practiced by the Communists.

If we and others from abroad had not smuggled in Bibles, these persons would have lived. We bear a responsibility that their wives are widows and their children orphans. Every Christian who contributes to such a work should know that someone at the receiving end might give blood in the cause for which we in the free world give money.

Some do this underground work in Communist

and Muslim countries without pangs of conscience. But I know directors, personnel, and supporters of our mission who are very conscious of the risks and suffer because of it. They feel it is not enough to give money and send Bibles; we must share with those in Communist countries the pain, the tears, and the sorrows of the distributors and their families. Some dear saints in the West have broken down mentally under this burden. It gives me many sleepless nights. Couriers of our mission have been killed in China, too. And some were imprisoned for many years under the appalling conditions of Communist jails, among them the translator of my book ~Tortured for Christ~ into the Amharic language of Ethiopia.

DON'T GIVE MONEY EASILY

I was scheduled to preach at a large meeting in Norway that was called for the special purpose of gathering money for Ukrainian Bibles. The mission counted on my presence to be an encouragement to others to give more.

I told the crowd the story of Nikolai Hmara, a Soviet Christian who had died for Christ after having his tongue cut off and his eyes gouged out, and I ended by saying, "Don't be quick to give. You might be punished by God for having given money to print Ukrainian Bibles. Some will believe so devoutly that the Bible you donate is the word of God that they will be ready to endure prison, torture and death for sharing it. Your Bibles will be read in

the Soviet Ukraine, where those who read the word will follow its command and renounce everything for the sake of the kingdom. Some will prefer

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Jesus to wife, mother, and children, and will fulfill dangerous tasks in the underground church, such as working in secret print shops or running forbidden Sunday schools. If they are caught, their wives might remain widows and their children orphans, who may later accuse their father of putting religion above duty to provide daily bread for the family.

"The Bible you donate might inspire someone else to become a Nikolai Hmara. You will answer to God for having given this money if your life does not show that you yourself obey the Bible as the word of God, if you do not lead a life of intimacy with Jesus, following Him on the way of the cross, of prayer and praise and self-sacrifice.

"lf you do not intend to commit yourselves wholeheartedly to Jesus, it is best for you not to give. Please forego giving."

It remains for the reader of these lines to guess whether the offering on that evening was large or small.

I constantly hear the cries of those suffering in Communist countries because they desire the spreading of the gospel and relief for their abandoned families. This spurs me on when I feel my age and feel tempted to give up. But Bishop Meshkala died in Albania at the age of eighty-four after forty-three years in jail! He was not too old to suffer for Christ and never gave up. Should I give up my fight under entirely different circumstances?

Some, after reading this book, might feel like giving money for the cause of Christians in Communist countries or in those only recently liberated. Giving will oblige you to have fellowship with them in their

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heavy tribulations. Think carefully about what you

intend to do.

LOVING THE ENEMY

Every place I visited in Romania brought back other memories to my mind.

In Bucharest, I preached in the Dragosh Voda Brethren church. This building had been used before by my church in its peregrinations from one place to another under different dictatorships.

It was immediately after the invasion of Romania by Soviet troops toward the end of the Second World War. Whole units of the German army that had occupied our country were taken captive. They had no illusions. Slavery in Siberia would be their lot. For many it would mean death. While a large group of German prisoners of war were being led to their barracks. two officers succeeded in escaping from the surveillance of the escort. Still wearing their Nazi uniforms, they wandered trembling through the streets of Bucharest. The one thing that shielded them was the night. We were still at war, and the streets were only very dimly lit.

All at once they spotted a ray of hope: a sign saying "Lutheran Chapel." They knew the Lutherans of Romania to be of German extraction. Here someone would help them. What a disappointment awaited them when they heard that we were Jewish! Jews had more reason to hate the German soldiers than even the Soviets did.

I quieted their fears. "We are Jews, but also Christians and give no one into the hands of their enemies. There is a story about a lamb led to slaughter that fled and ran to Moses, asking him to

protect it. He replied, "I cannot do so. God has ordained that your meat should serve as food for men," and he handed the lamb to the butcher. A Jewish writing says that God hid His face for shame at what a man who bore His name could do.

"We have suffered under the German occupation. But you personally may not be guilty. In any case, we are not your judges. You are welcome in our home. We will also give you civilian clothes so that you can try to make your way to Germany."

We were then under a decree forbidding anyone to hide a German soldier under pain of death. In time this developed into a systematic work of helping persecuted Germans just as, during the war, we had used our influence in Christian circles to help persecuted Jews.

The believers in the Brethren church where I was now asked to preach knew all this. They knew that I meant it when I spoke about forgiving those who have abused you, even the God-hating Communists.

So I traveled from one place to another in Bucharest and then to different cities and towns, reliving events of the past.

REVISITING PLACES WHERE I SINNED

I not only saw places that held pleasant or sacred memories, but also places where I had gravely sinned.

I saw once again the homes in which my family had lived when I was young. I had been very evil towards a mother who had sacrificed herself for her orphaned children.

Here was the quarter called - I don't know

why - "The Stone Cross." It was a place of prostitution. "Friends" led me here when I was twelve. No Christian stood before the ill-famed house warning youngsters not to enter. The first time I saw the half-naked women, I fled. Not so the second time. I saw again the places where I had taken advantage of other women. I saw gambling houses that I had frequented, places where I had met with other blasphemers and mocked God, places where I had failed and sinned even as a Christian and then a pastor.

I had confessed this whole life of sin and believed that Christ had forgiven everything. Paul wrote that he pressed forward, forgetting those things that were behind him. But he, too, could not forget his whole past. He tells us about it. Neither could I forget it all.

In Romania I thought, too, of all the shortcomings and grave sins committed during the quarter of a century lived abroad.

How happy I was that "there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins" and that if one plunged into this fountain, a great miracle takes place. Not only are sins (even crimes) forgiven, but also they become white as snow. They become visible tokens of actual purity. What happens to them is beyond description. Jesus was made sin. One of the purposes was to show what beauties can be made of sins through repentance, as a potter can make a luxurious vase out of what had been mud.

However, like the pieces of pottery or like metal that has to be refined, we must pass through the fires of affliction. This cleansing process lasts until all impurity has disappeared, which in our case means until all complaining, all rebellion, all pestering God

with the question "Why?," all selfishness, pride, and an unreadiness to forgive have disappeared.

A little girl watched a goldsmith hold the costly metal in a jar for purifying. Repeatedly he took out the slack and the metal shone more and more beautifully. The girl asked, "How long does this go on?" He said, "Have patience." The goldsmith had to repeat the words often as he waited for the moment called "the silver look," when he saw his image in the metal.

This is how the heavenly Goldsmith works. A sinner who has passed through His purification has a beauty he never had before, the beauty of Christ Himself.

ENCOUNTER WITH A TOP SOVIET OFFICIAL

For twenty-five years I have played in the world the role of Tychicus (EPH 6:21), who during Paul's day made known to the brethren how the persecuted were doing. While in Romania, I had the opposite role: to tell how the church in the free world is faring, as well as how we worked for the persecuted while they were under the yoke of Communism.

Romanian Christians were aware of the fact that Bibles and other books entered their country, along with financial aid and radio broadcasts, but they did not know about the vast organizations that were behind all this and about the thousands upon thousands of fellow believers who gave sacrificially and prayed for them. They were most interested in our Christian Mission to the Communist World and its work in over forty countries. I told them not only about the relief work for the persecuted but also about our missionary endeavors among their persecutors.

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I will mention here just one of my most interesting experiences in this area.

In Switzerland, another brother and I visited a world industrial exhibition. The most beautiful section was the Soviet department, the only one to add a fashion show, which attracted thousands, and a religious exhibit which was very well put together.

At the entrance was a huge picture of Billy Graham preaching in Moscow, of the Patriarchy, and of the one single synagogue in Moscow (a city with 200,000 Jews), of a mosque, and so on. The obvious aim was to reveal the perfect religious freedom that exists under Communism.

An album was prepared for each visitor to register his impressions.

I wrote the following: "I congratulate you for this unique idea to ornament an industrial exposition with words and pictures about religion. If there were no God, there would be no human mind and no industry. Everything you show is well arranged, but as a friend of the USSR, I would suggest that you enrich this

exposition with other valorous pictures: that of Nikolai Hmara, a Baptist who, because of his faith, had his tongue cut off and his eyes gouged out. I can provide you with the picture of his corpse. The picture of Nikolai Hrapov would fit well, too. He spent thirty-four years in jail for his faith. Also that of Vania Moiseev, stabbed seven times in the region of his heart and then drowned," and so on and on.

A gentleman I believed to be from the Soviet staff read what I wrote and said, "There is a wicked man by the name of Wurmbrand who spreads such slander sbout us." After I told him I was that very same Wurmbrand, we spoke with each other for four

hours. He was the head of the Foreign Department of their Ministry of Cults, a top man of the Soviet government on religious matters. He spoke fluent English and German. He had read all my books as well as other publications of our mission.

He started in a bellicose manner by saying there is no persecution. I answered, "It would be useless to contradict you, because you are obliged to speak thus. Let us rather pass to something much more important.

"A day will come when you will no longer be a man in high position in the Communist Party and government, and I will no longer be a pastor. We will both die. For a short time someone who loves us will weep at our grave. Then those who knew us will die too, and we will lie in a forgotten grave.

"What happens after that? If at this point everything is ended, then it is stupid to be a Christian pastor and just as stupid to be an atheist opponent of religion. The best course is to eat. drink, and have some amusement; nothing more. In my homeland of Romania, there was a custom in the olden days to give a person sentenced to death a good meal with all his favorite dishes before his execution. The accused ate and drank well, and then he was shot. If everything ends with death, the most beautiful life that Communism or capitalism can provide is no more than a henchman's meal. It would not be worth

while to fight for any cause."

He listened without interrupting.

I told him that in my youth I was meditative and inclined to melancholy. I had had a bitter childhood, without any such childish pleasures as toys or chocolate. When other children in school ate chocolate,

I would lick the wrapping paper because it smelled good.

"I was sure that a God could not exist. If he did, he would have given me a nicer childhood. But for some reason I liked to take lonely walks through cemeteries and read the inscriptions on gravestones. I do so even now. It makes for highly interesting reading. This person had been a general, and he died. Another was a renowned poet. and he died. Another was a banker, another a beggar. But the end of life was death.

"On every gravestone there were two figures, the year of birth and the year of death, with a stroke in between. This is the sign that nature draws over every life: a stroke. Thus life is annulled. Without knowing a thing about any religion, I said to myself at that time, 'I wish to find Someone who can give youth without old age and life without death.' It took me a long time, but I finally found this Someone."

He continued to absorb my words without interruption. He had a soul hungry for God. I told him how I had prayed the prayer of an atheist: "God, I know for sure you don't exist. But if you exist - and this I contest - it is not my duty to believe in you. It is your duty to reveal yourself to me. I regret that you do not exist. I could have wished that somewhere in this universe there should beat a heart of love. I speak as a madman to the nonexistent. Well, that is all."

I went on: "This prayer was accepted. God sent a carpenter my way, who told my wife and me the story of the Carpenter of Nazareth who lived and

died for us and was resurrected."

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He asked question after question. At the end of four hours, he said, "I must admit there are two problems to which we Marxists have no answers. First, how is it that something exists? We explain everything by evolution, but how come evolution exists and that the first living cell existed from which all animals, the monkey, and man came into being? Secondly, what happens to man after death? We have no answers; you have. Therefore you are strong and we are weak."

Later he played a role in liberalizing the Soviet policy towards religion, which in turn had an effect on Romania and the other Eastern European countries.

Our mission sees to it that specific Christian literature for Communists, such as my books ~Answer to Moscow's Bible~ and ~Marx - Prophet of Darkness~, gets into their hands and those of their leaders, with amazing results. These books have been translated into many languages and distributed in Romania, Russia, China, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Angola, among others. The professor of atheism at the highest school of the Romanian Communist Party was converted through their ministry, along with many others in a number of Communist countries.

A COUNTRY REDUCED TO POVERTY

Back in Bucharest I was driven around and I also walked the streets, but it was no more the same city. In times past it had been called "the Paris of the East" because of its beauty, but it had long since foregone its proud boast. The impression was one of hopelessness.

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Grand avenues such as grace the largest western cities lie unfinished; they end in nothing. Ceaushescu had the sickness of gigantomania. All his enterprises

were to be unsurpassed in greatness, but he could never finish what he began. Most houses are decayed. They were in ruins before the windows were put in. You can see the results of the ravaging earthquakes of the recent past, but also of the bloody unrest. Facades are blackened by fire, and in the walls are bullet holes.

The shops are empty. Long lines of people wait for hours in the hope, often vain, that there will be something to buy. The queues for bread begin at four in the morning. By seven there is no more bread. The black market flourishes. There you can buy strawberries, furs and shirts, or suspect alcoholic beverages made with chemicals that have killed many people.

Small children beg. Crime is rampant. Tourists are advised not to walk at night carrying money. The economy is in a coma and the populace lacks even basic necessities. Skyrocketing unemployment seems unavoidable. The USA and the European community have stopped giving aid because Communists are still in power. The present regime is unhappy, but the rulers continue to live well. In fact, Ceaushescu would be pleased with his successor, who has also killed innocents, just like his predecessor.

Although Communists are still in power in Romania, they are politically bankrupt, reduced to the level of a theatrical prop, just as in Russia.

THE DANGER OF COMMENTARIES

God declared "I am what I am, not what men

believe me to be." He is the entirely Other. We cannot fathom His ways.

Innumerable books have been written explaining how biblical prophecies correspond to current events. Many books were full of predictions about how the Communist colossus in the north, Russia, would attack Israel. Then the much-dreaded Battle of Armageddon would ensue, along with the reign of

the Antichrist.

Some said that Kissinger was the Antichrist. Before these, others had offered biblical proof that Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini were the Antichrist. Now a book denounces Gorbachev as this enigmatic person, especially since he is marked with an indisputable sign: a red spot on his forehead.

To one such writer I said, "Every book on prophecy written till now has proved to be false after twenty years." He did not mind.

When my twelve-year-old grandson Alex was with me at a Christian booksellers' convention recently, he saw a great deal of advertising for Bible commentaries. "What's a commentary?" he asked. I responded that there are many things in the Bible that are difficult to understand, for example, predictions of doom and great suffering that will arise in the latter days. These are explained in the commentaries.

His reply was, "Such predictions should not be explained but contradicted. Abraham did not write a commentary on God's prediction that Sodom would be destroyed, nor did Moses on the prediction that God would destroy the Jewish people. Instead, they pleaded with God that it should not take place, and they changed His mind. Why

shouldn't we do the same instead of writing commentaries?"

THE POWER TO OVERTURN COMMUNISM

God is not bound by what men - who are not commissioned to write or speak in His name - say. He has destroyed a great deal of the power of Communism and will destroy the rest, not through political events, but through the prayers of the saints and the power of the Word distributed under duress.

He altered the mind of Gorbachev and many of his comrades. They in turn destroyed the power of Communism as no bombs or political action could

have done. No plagues from above were needed. Men can forestall tribulations even if predicted in the Bible. God foretold Nineveh's destruction but then relented from this decision. His love is more reliable than any word spoken or written in His name.

When God has shed His love in our hearts, we have enormous power. We can affect God. ZEP 3:17 says that we can make God rejoice with singing. Our burning love can change men, too. They can be consciously won by it. Others will be confused by the rays of our spirit and will lose the capacity to oppose us. The sun shines on some and gives them life; it burns others. So love is always effective regardless of whom it touches. Humans do not realize what enormous power they possess. It extends not only to the whole earth but also to the cosmos.

Daniel 8 [DAN 8] tells about a king who cast down some of the host of heaven, exalted himself as high as the Prince of hosts, and cast truth down to the earth. A very great power of evil can exist in a man. But at

least this much power exists in good and saintly men and women.

The church of Christ can finish with Communism, with fanatical Islam, with the darkness of heathenism, with a Judaism without the King of the Jews.

I have many more things to say about my visits to Romania after twenty-five years of enforced exile. But I will permit myself to imitate Paul when he said, "Time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets" (HEB 11:32).

STRANGE COMMUNION SERVICES

Pastor Vasile Vadan's church in Bistritza was destroyed with bulldozers. Treacherous official Baptist leaders connived in this act. In a heavy frost, he gave Communion to his flock on the ruins. The

surface of the wine was frozen. After preaching in the open, he fell gravely ill of pneumonia, but that did not prevent the Communists from putting him in jail.

Many Communion services in Romania have been strange. In home churches there would be bread and wine on the table, but also a pot of tea and biscuits in reserve. When a guest (a person known as a Christian but suspected as an informer) appeared unexpectedly, the wine would disappear from the table in a second. The pot of tea and biscuits gave the impression that the meeting was just a social gathering.

In jail there were times when we had no bread and certainly no wine. We took Communion with nothing, remembering how precious a thing "nothing"

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was. The world was created out of nothing. The earth is suspended on nothing. Paul wrote that he was nothing. We learned to appreciate the value of nothing.

To write about all the beautiful things that can be said about Romania today and its church would fill a large volume. But I would like to say a few words about what our Christian Mission to the Communist World is doing in other parts of the world.

A GREAT COMMUNIST STRATEGEM

When I left Romania, I thought that I would work only for my own country, but then the Rev. Stuart Harris, director of the European Mission, offered me a larger sphere: the whole of Europe. However, Communism stretches to all continents. And so we enlarged our vision to include the whole Communist world, though I never forgot Romania. [When I say "we," I mean all the co-founders of our international mission: the Rev. Stuart Harris (UK); Myrus Knutson and Casus Styrdy (USA); J. Maris (Holland); Hans Braun (Germany); H. Zrcher and Hedi Fluri (Switzerland); Pat Henegan (S. Africa); Laiso (Italy); Colette Grarsu (France); Reg Werry

(Australia); and many, many others.]

We confront Communism as a whole, of which Romania is only a small part. The whole is affected by any one of the parts. What is happening in Communism today? We have seen great changes. Are they for real?

The changes in the USSR and Eastem Europe are real enough and concern politics, economics, even religion; all institutions that can be controlled. But

there is no change in the attitude towards God or in the basic outlook on life. In his speech on the Seventieth Anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution, Gorbachev said, "We are moving towards a new world. the world of Communism. We shall never turn off that road." He repeated, with the same vigor, that he remains an atheist. If there is one thing we can learn from the Communists, it is consistency. They abide by their teachings.

At the end of the Second World War, the Communists were granted dominion over all of Eastern Europe, without firing a shot. Roosevelt and Churchill ceded them this hegemony at the Yalta conference because they promised free elections, which of course never occurred. They had won through deceit.

The bloody dictator Stalin, whom the Soviet press now accuses of having killed fifty million innocents, had made a tremendous impression on western rulers. After meeting him, an American diplomat commented, "His brown eyes are exceedingly wise and gentle. A child would like to sit on his lap and a dog would sidle up to him." Nothing has changed. After meeting Gorbachev, even a world-renowned evangelist praised his charm and his "warm eyes." But Gromyko, former president of the USSR, had recommended Gorbachev as successor with the words, "He can smile beautifully, but he also has steel teeth tor biting."

Marx said, "Religion is the opiate of the people," which means it must be countered as resolutely as

drugs. Lenin wrote, "Thousands of epidemics and natural catastrophes are to be preferred to the slightest notion of a god." Marx wrote in his poem

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"The Player" that "hellish vapors" filled his brain and that he "bought a sword from the Prince of Darkness." (Elements of satanic rituals.) Communism continues to brandish this sword against religion.

God-haters are also haters of mankind. In a letter to Engels on the 18th of June, 1882, Marx called mankind "a bunch of rascals" who can "kiss my [obscenity]." But miracle of miracles, the party he created, which never renounced its militant atheism, has now reopened hundreds of churches and closes its eyes to intense religious activity. Today there is mass evangelism, Sunday school for children, and charitable work - all totally proscribed a short time ago. There are even processions on the street in which these words are sung: "For the Czar [title of Russian emperors], for our country and faith." Bibles and other Christian literature continue to enter freely. We have 100,000 letters from the USSR alone, thanking us for the literature individually received.

Communism is far from being defeated, but it has received mortal wounds. The Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain crumble!

Communists have killed millions of believers, and they were sure religion was dying. Now the church triumphs. It is Communism that struggles for survival in Eastern Europe. There is no human explanation for these events. Thanks be to God for working this miracle!

When we began our mission twenty-four years ago, anti-Communists thought that Communism could be defeated only through war. They said, "Only a dead Communist is a good Communist."

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We came with a new message: just as Communists

subvert the free world with their poisonous doctrine, let us subvert them with the Gospel. Let us work secretly to make Christ known. Let us help the underground churches. Though the Communists hate us, let us win them with love. Let us pray for them and bring them to Christ.

I ended my book ~Answer to Moscow's Bible~ by calling upon the Reds to repent and confess their crimes openly. The Soviet press now acknowledges that their Party has killed tens of millions of innocents, and Gorbachev has apologized to the Patriarch. Articles by atheist lecturers and officers of their Secret Police appear, acknowledging that they have lied to the people and shed innocent blood. Yet many Communists still stick to their ideology, modified by what they call "glasnost" and "perestroika."

GLASNOST AND PERESTROIKA

What is the secret behind these words? We fear it is another example of Communist deceit, a maneuver intended to lull the West to sleep. Terror could not uproot religion - the blood of the martyrs has always been the seed of the church - so the Communists are trying another approach.

In an article in ~Kommunist~, Lunacharsky, author of ~Socialism and Religion~, is quoted as predicting that persecution of religion would be counter-productive. (After seventy years of terror, 70% of adults are still believers.) He advocated that Communists create a "religion without God," a "religious atheism."

"Let the Christians believe," the argument runs.

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"Communists will infiltrate Christian ranks, will befriend them, disguising themselves as having similar ideals on many points. They will attract Christians to common social actions and will influence them to keep only an external form of religion, while becoming basically as godless as ourselves."

The same situation took place in the Roman Empire during the fourth century, under Constantine

the Great. Ten emperors had slaughtered Christians. Constantine did an about-face, gave them full liberty, and made Christianity a state religion. Under him every baby was baptized and declared a Christian. Thus Christianity seemed to triumph - but it ceased to be truly Christian. The church leadership increasingly became a tool of the emperors.

In the USSR, the Orthodox patriarch Pimen cabled to Gorbachev, "We express deep thankfulness for your attention to the needs of believers and for all you do to reestablish the Leninist norms." (Lenin's norms included the killing of millions of Christians and the destruction of churches.) Kharchev, then head of the Religious Council of the Soviet government, declared, "Religion is penetrating socialism, not on foot but on wheels. And since power belongs to the Party, it is up to us to steer those wheels in one direction or another, according to our interests."

Few Soviet Christians are aware that Gorbachev and his kin follow the same Constantinian road. He wants to give liberty to the church, but to a church that will not be really Christian. It will be an outreach of Communism just as it had been of the Czar. Yeltsin asserts he is converted, but in his government he has hard core Communists.

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The media have created the impression that Communism has been overthrown and a Communist world no longer exists. If this is true, there is no need for our mission. On the contrary, Communism has full power over a third of mankind, including China (1.1 billion), the USSR (280 million), Vietnam, Laos. Cuba, Ethiopia, Angola, and Zimbabwe. In Eastern Europe, Communist governments have been overthrown, but not Communist domination over the minds of men. Marxism has filled the whole populace with fear. People feared to say what they thought, whether by phone, in the marketplace, or even in the privacy of their own homes. Everyone was forced to inform on everyone else, even on members of their own family. Priests had to report privileged confessions to the police. Letters were censored. It was dangerous to meet a

foreigner. Spies of the Secret Police were everywhere.

Publicly, everyone was on the side of the Communists, who always got 99% of the vote because no one dared to vote on his convictions. But in reality everyone hated the government. Millions have passed through jail. Many died before gaining freedom. Their relatives well knew what took place in prison. Torture has been used throughout the whole history of mankind. It would seem that all methods of torture were already known.

But Communists are innovators. Knowing that few men volunteer to do the work of torturing and those they victimize are many, thus allowing much respite between torture sessions, they forced others into torturing. Not satisfied with squeezing out of the victims a denial of their convictions and a betrayal

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of the secrets of their organization, the Communists tortured them to the extreme until they consented to become torturers of their brethren in faith. The result was that a new prisoner, thinking he was in a cell with fellow-believers, was subjected to the worst ignominies, not by officers of the Secret Police, but by those he had trusted and worshiped with. He was together with them day and night, tortured without pause, until he too consented to become a torturer. Some became sadists for life, others went mad.

All nations under Communism have been traumatized: not only those of Eastern Europe, but also Mozambique, Laos, Mongolia, etc. It will take decades for them to recover. The best medicine is the Gospel. The work of our mission in providing these people with the word of God is needed now more than ever before. Neglect of our duty angers God. Fulfilling it will make Him rejoice with singing. Jesus said, "Take heed that no one deceives you" (MTT 24:4).

The warning is pertinent because Christians in the free world are in danger of being deceived by changes in the USSR. Apologists are saying, "Gorbachev is democratizing the country and

extending liberty, so missions to the Communist world are no longer necessary." Lenin, founder of Communism and Gorbachev's avowed mentor. wrote: "Hundreds of epidemics and natural catastrophes are to be preferred to the slightest notion of God. Even flirting with a god is an unspeakable abomination." He also wrote: "The more representatives of the reactionary clergy are killed, the better." In their ~Communist Manifesto~, Marx and Engels wrote that the aim of Communism is "the

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abolition of all religion and all morals." Gorbachev calls himself a Communist and remains such even if, like Yeltsin, he ceases to be a member of the Party.

Let us not forget that Communists seized power in Russia under the name "Social Democrat Party Bolshevik)" and in Romania under the name "National Democratic Front." A change of name is not a change of heart. Stressing the point that Gorbachev is still a Communist and thus a God-hater, let us remember, too, that Castro, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, wrote in a letter to Gorbachev, "Christianity and Communism pursue the same aims."

WHY SO MUCH SUFFERING?

The one pain above all others endured by Romanians and inhabitants of other Communist countries is not knowing ~why~ they suffer such pain. The thought paralyzes the mind.

In the USSR, an estimated fifty million innocents were killed, another fifty million in China. No one knows how many were killed in Romania and other lands. One person was in prison for being a Jew, another for being an anti-Semite. Pastors were imprisoned for spreading religious propaganda, atheist lecturers for not having been effective in their anti-religious propaganda. Anti-Communists suffered next to convinced Communists who had fallen foul of their party about the interpretation of some tenet of Marxist teaching.

Communists used to condemn whole families if

one member had done something amiss. I remember being imprisoned with a father and his four sons. His wife and daughters were in other cells.

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Hungry and beaten prisoners renounced some of the few hours of sleep allotted them to discuss without end such questions as "Why did all this come upon us and upon the world?" "Is there a God?" "Where is God in all this? He is supposed to be all-powerful and loving. He could have kept these things from happening or could at least end them now. Why doesn't He?"

A Jewish prisoner went out of his mind. He constantly repeated one Hebrew word: ~Maduah~ - "why?" He said, "I could fill volumes with ~mah~ - (what) is happening, but no one can reply to the question ~moduah."

I never met even one sufferer who was satisfied with the explanation that all evil - Auschwitz, the Gulag, Piteshti, and so on - is due in the last resort to the fact that Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Their sin was inherited by their descendants down all generations. It even passed into nature. Lambs are eaten by wolves, little fish by bigger fish, and children are beaten to the blood by Communist torturers in the presence of their parents to make them confess - all because many thousands of years ago a couple ate some fruit. The original sin is to blame.

It might be because of the sinful nature inherited from Adam that his descendants in our generation cannot comprehend this explanation. Other explanations I heard in these marathon discussions over the years were: "There is no God and therefore no sense." "It is punishment for our own personal sins." "Suffering is not real, it is ~maya~. It belongs to a world of delusion." None satisfied.

One prisoner who had escaped from Nazi camps, in which he had lost almost his whole family, and

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now suffered under Communism, shouted in despair

at a certain moment, "Haven't I endured enough from the Nazis and the Reds? Why must I bear the torment of listening to your senseless explanations? Suffering is bad enough. Don't make it worse with explanations." Believers who know God personally should trust him without asking questions. Our minds cannot comprehend the ultimate answers.

The Jewish people, generally considered to be very intelligent, had Jesus in the flesh in their midst. He spoke to them in plain language, but they did not understand Him even when He spoke in very simple parables. The disciples themselves understood Him only in part, but they believed in the unintelligible Jesus. This is faith. It supplements reason, which can know only an infinitely small range of things in this huge universe. We still don't know what an atom is. The image of an atom provided by science changes every couple of years. How then can we understand God?

I learned something in this regard from my grandson Alex when he was eight. We had guests in our home who discussed higher mathematics in his presence. I did not know how to hint to them in a polite manner that they should change the subject because it was boring for a child. So I asked him, "Alex, do you understand what we're talking about? Do you know what logarithms are?"

He replied, "Yes, I do."

Amazed, I asked, "What are they?"

"Logarithms are things I will learn about when I'm in high school."

Like children in school, Jesus' disciples advance

from the merely human to the divine. They are learners. One cannot learn in elementary school what is taught in universities. One day "I shall know even as also I am known" (1CO 13:12).

Of all the explanations in answer to the question, "Why so much suffering?" the most compelling is simply, "We don't know." One day God will be all in all, which means that He will be all in Richard Wurmbrand. There will be no questioner, no questioned,

and no question. We will be one spirit. It will be a mini-incarnation.

Jesus said. "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne" (REV 3:21). Somewhere there is a throne from which universes are created and ruled. This will be my throne too. Today I have to learn patiently all I will need at the moment of enthronement. The knowledge of suffering is part of the curriculum. Jesus himself was made perfect through suffering.

Some theologians adopt a softer tone than the Bible, claiming that God only permits evil. But according to Isaiah, God said, "I make the good and create the evil" (ISA 45:7, as in the original).

A racehorse trainer not only constructs a course but also obstacles which the horse must overcome. This comparison may seem inadequate to us because we have to overcome terrible physical and psychological torture. When we meet Jesus at last, we will see that our sufferings were insignificant in comparison with what we have attained. Scars will be ornaments. The wounded will be enriched by what they lost. Those who were killed will have exuberant life.

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Christians face not the ~problem~ of evil, but its ~challenge~. Problems depress, challenges spur us to activity. Christians in Romania see no possibility of solving problems, but they have learned to transcend them, to view them from heavenly places. For us, it was enough that the Communists tortured us. We decided not to add self-inflicted torments, such as philosophizing about the unknowable. Every torment was only a challenge to surmount the biggest obstacle: to win the tormentor through love.

David was our example. He wrote Psalm 9 [PSA 9] on the tragic death of one of his sons, as is indicated in the title. But he does not complain about God and his own fate. He says what he would have said at the birth of a son: "I will praise you, O Lord, with my whole heart."

The Bible tells us that in the beginning was ~Tohuwabohn~ - dark, formless chaos. God, the Spirit of love, worked on this, encountering resistance to create a kingdom of unspeakable beauty and truth. I adore the audacity of this enterprise, His persistence in the face of failure, and His readiness to sacrifice His dearest for the salvation of the children of chaos. Psalm 121 [PSA 121] tells us that from Him comes your help, not your sorrow.

THE LEGEND OF KISHAGOTAMI

In my visit to Romania, whenever I was confronted with questions about suffering, which were very often overwhelming, I told the old legend of Kishagotami, a young woman whose only baby had died and who could not bear to bury him. She went from one person to another asking how she could have him back alive.

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One man told her, "Your only hope is the Savior. He has miraculous power like none other."

She brought her baby's body, knelt before the Lord, and begged. "Please resuscitate my child."

He replied, "Gladly, if only you will bring a little bit of salt to me."

Now, salt could easily be obtained, so she started to run. But he shouted after her. "The salt must be from a house in which no one has died."

"All right, all right!" she shouted back.

At every gate at which she knocked, she was gladly given salt. But when she asked if there had been a death in the family, she was always told, "I'm sorry, yes. My Father ... or my spouse ... or my child died."

She wept with everyone who gave such a reply, because now she knew what the sorrow of bereavement was. She comforted them and received comfort from the consolation she gave to others.

In the end she came to the Savior again and said, "Thank you for what you taught me. I will give back the body of my baby to the earth. Praise to you who give to my child and to all of us eternal life."

I have seen many a sad face illuminated when they heard Jesus' teaching.

"Why suffering?" is a wrong question. No right answer exists for wrong questions. Who can tell the melody of a peach? The question is wrong. Ask instead, "What good can I do with my sorrow? How can I use it to become more loving and more understanding towards others?" Sympathy will surely do them more good than theological explanations.

As for the rest, accept what Jesus said to Peter:

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"What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

WHY IS THERE CRUELTY IN THE BIBLE?

One more very troublesome question I often met in Romania was, "Why does God order so many horrors? He commanded Moses, Joshua, and others to exterminate whole populations, specifying each time that children and infants should be slaughtered, animals hamstrung, and trees felled. Such destruction surpasses even what Stalin and Ceaushescu have done."

I had heard these questions in the West, too, but rarely and not with such insistence as in my homeland. The many mass murders to which my nation was subjected made hearts more sensitive to such passages of Scripture. I am therefore against what is much practiced in the East nowadays: the indiscriminate distribution of Bibles to everyone we can reach. This was not originally God's intention. He gave to mankind a Bible and a church with wise teachers to explain it. Where there are no such teachers, it is preferable to give at first books explaining the main biblical messages.

But as I had to answer this difficult question, I preferred to give the simplest answer possible. In a sense, criminals decide what weapons the forces of law and order should use against them. Police don't use guns against pickpockets, because pick-pockets have no guns. But they do use guns against armed robbers. Some methods used in a just war might be considered inhumane if the same results could have been obtained otherwise. Against Nazi and Japanese aggressors who had tanks and

bombers, tanks and bombers had to be used; otherwise evil would have been victorious.

God can evaluate evil in certain nations and social structures as we cannot. If wide-spread anti-American feelings in the West had not impeded the victory of the U.S. in Vietnam, Cambodia would not have become Communistic and its leader Pol Pot would not have killed two million innocents. God alone knows the whole of a person, including the genes that will determine a baby's character. Jesus says about some, "It would have been better if they had not been born." He calls others devils and has a right to treat them as devils deserve to be treated. His decisions and actions are not subject to our judgment. We have to submit to His.

Lenin, founder of Russian Communism, said, "If Kerensky (prime minister of Russia before the Communist takeover) had arrested in time two dozen leaders of our party, we would never have come to power." And millions of innocents would not have been killed and mankind would have been spared a seventy-year bloodbath. No doubt some crusader for human rights would then have criticized Kerensky for depriving Communists of their "right" to prepare evil.

Don't philosophize about the Bible, but enter into the holy nation of God's children. Flee from those who deserve God's wrath. But do be attentive. In the original text of the Bible, there are no punctuation marks. There is not one single full-stop or comma. Only in translations is there a full-stop after

expressions such as "They killed" or "God killed." In Hebrew, it is "The Lord kills and makes alive" (1SM 2:6).

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In heaven, we will meet many of those we thought were slaughtered. Alive and happy, they are thankful to God for elevating them from the level of pagan notions to that of children of God.

It is also good to know what the words "God said" mean in the Bible.

No one has seen the heavenly Father (except Moses, in one instance). When biblical authors (like today's believers) say, "God spoke to me," they mean an inner voice. We are composed of many parts. We have the conscious, the unconscious, different inclinations and impulses, even contradictory ones. All these can take, in our mind, the shape of voices that counsel and prompt us to action. Religious people call the voice that calls them to what they consider the noblest action the "voice of God." Sometimes they are right. But they can also be terribly mistaken. Ayatollah Khomeini, the Rev. Moon, Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism - each was sure that what he said was "God's word."

Jesus is skeptical about some events in the Old Testament. The prophet Elijah caused fire to fall on the troop of a wicked king. Elijah was sure that his action fulfilled God's will. But when Jesus' disciples wanted to proceed in such a manner against those who opposed Him, confident that what Elijah had done was inspired by God, He chided them: "You don't know what manner of spirit you are of." The Old Testament prophets did not always act from the inspiration of God's spirit, though they believed they were.

Let us cherish Jesus' revelation: God is love.

THE TASK OF HEALING NATIONS

Communism is finished as a political institution

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in almost all of the former satellite states of the USSR. But in Romania and Bulgaria, Communism still struggles to retain political power. Although it still does much harm, we can be sure that it is a rearguard fight; it is the despairing fight of a defeated enemy, the last writhing of a serpent before it dies. It will not survive in the Soviet Union either, except that Communism is more than a political institution. A Filipino who heard me speak twenty years ago in the Military Academy of Manila and who took part in armed fighting against Marxist guerrillas, reminded me that I said then something that made a lasting, because unexpected, impression on him: "There is a Communist rebel in each of us."

Marxist hatred of God is the most powerful expression of the human heart alienated from the Creator. It has always existed in fallen mankind in a latent form, but all societies tried to repress it. Communism lifted the lid. Marx wrote, "It is the evil side that makes history." I heard a Communist torturer say, "I thank God, in whose existence I don't believe, for making me live just at such a time when I can do all the evil I want without fear of punishment - yes, even with the assurance I'll be rewarded for it." This evil spirit has come out of the box under Communism, and the church will have to fight for many decades against Communism's poison in human hearts: hatred, envy, betrayal, lawlessness. (The Hebrew word ~Belial~ means etymologically "without yoke.")

In Romania, as in Bulgaria and Mongolia, the 1990 elections were free. After forty-five years of fierce terror, the Communists won great victories.

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There were several serious reasons for this, which I have already mentioned. The opposition parties pleaded for friendship with the West. Romanians had been taught for decades that western governments were oppressors and exploiters and that their people went hungry. But the principal reason for the success of Communism lay elsewhere: who dared vote against the Party?

If Communism had fallen from power and the volumes of the Secret Police were opened, whole families would have been split apart because wives had denounced husbands; brides, bridegrooms; children, their parents; pastors and priests, members of their churches and vice versa. Even where the transition from Communism to a free society has been greatest, as in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, the archives of the Secret Police were not made public. If they were opened up to public scrutiny in Russia or Romania, these would cease to exist as nations. People would not be able to look into each other's eyes.

The pastor of a small Romanian Baptist church of only forty members confessed to me that he had been an informer of the Secret Police and that he knew five members who informed against him. I was in jail with an atheist who had had a quarrel with his bride. She told the police that he had expressed anti-Communist sentiments to her, and he received twenty years in prison.

Romania feels guilty. (In Nazi-occupied countries, there were also a significant number of collaborators, but the numbers were not so high as in Communist countries as the time-span was shorter.) Romania fears disclosure. Thousands voted for the

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Communists they hated because they had been their accomplices. It is estimated that every tenth adult was an informer for at least a time. Our Orthodox synod called back Patriarch Theoctist, a bootlicker of Ceaushescu, when he retired after Ceaushescu's fall. The guilt had been collective, involving the priesthood as a whole.

When the final judgment is near, Satan will be released from his prison of a thousand years. Only he, restored to power, could cover up - men will hope - all the satanic deeds they themselves have done (REV 20:7).

All Romanian writers, almost without exception, had flattered Ceaushescu's pride, calling him "the greatest genius ever" and other such stupidities. Not

one has admitted guilt. They all keep silent. The Romanian churches have an enormous task: to heal the nation.

GOD'S REMNANT

God has a remnant in Romania as He has in other Eastern European countries. Very many Christians died in the revolution of December 1989. Thanks to them. Ceaushescu has been overthrown. It was on Christmas Eve - a sign from God. The celebration of Christmas had been forbidden. But thousands of others are alive, and they have an amazing Christian spirit.

On the 13th of July, 1990, just a few days after so-called miners (in fact men of the former Communist Secret Police) had killed five, wounded hundreds, and arrested over one thousand peaceful demonstrators in Bucharest, there was another demonstration. Thousands marched with flowers in

their hands, chanting a slogan that rhymes in Romanian: "You came to us with clubs and axes, but we come to you with flowers." The army sent out to quell the demonstrators was showered with flowers. The soldiers were overwhelmed. This time there were no bloody incidents. This was the first demonstration in which flowers were used against an oppressor, epitomizing Jesus' teaching: "Respond to evil with good."

Our mission had taught Romanians this for over twenty years through the written word and by radio. It was my message from the first day of my pastorate, at liberty and in jail, and it was what I preached in Romania on my return. It was Christ's triumph, but also the greatest personal satisfaction of my life.

And it has not remained the only one. The river Prut separates Romania as it is today from its province of Bessarabia, stolen by the Soviets and renamed the Moldavian Republic. On the fortieth anniversary of this tragic event, Romanians from both sides of the river turned it into a flowery carpet

in a huge demonstration as people threw blossoms into the water. A people that has such a remnant will not perish. God will turn its mourning into feasting. Marx and Lenin, the deceivers, will be defeated by Jesus, the Truth.

But the true Romanian church, like that of other former Communist countries, needs your help. Give them Bibles and Christian literature. Give them Christian teaching by radio. Help the impoverished churches rebuild their prayer houses. Help former prisoners remake their lives. And help us bring Communists to Christ. If conquerors are not capable

of converting the conquered, the conquests are not complete. The Allies conquered Germany in the First World War but did not convert the Germans to their ways of thinking. And so the stage was set for the Second World War.

Communists have lost decisive battles in Eastern Europe. If they are not won for Christ or at least for decent human behavior, the devil will be loose again in a very few years. We have to be on the alert. I certainly am. Many aged people live only on rehashing the past, which is nonproductive. I am only eighty-two. I still have a present as Christ's soldier and a great future in prospect. Come, fight with me.

The End of "FROM SUFFERING TO TRIUMPH"

From The Lips Of Children

Richard Wurmbrand
Copyright 1986

Note: Portions that are italicized in the book are, in this computer text file, enclosed by tildes (~).

Back cover:

'The Bible is meant for children. Only the children of Israel came out of slavery in Egypt; the grown-ups stayed behind. Only the children of God enter heaven. It will be a country without any grown-ups.'

The observation by Richard Wurmbrand's grandson Alex is just one of the many delightful anecdotes and children's sayings in this attractively illustrated volume, which challenges Christians to take seriously Jesus' teaching that his followers must become like children.

'Some stories are amusing, some startling, some very moving, but all make us think about our faith. The anecdotal style could make this a useful source book.'
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Evangelism Today

PASTOR RICHARD WURMBRAND spent fourteen years in Romanian Communist prisons for his faith, and is author of several books including the classic "Tortured for Christ," and "Along with God."

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'To lovely Rosemary Harris, a loving friend with a child's heart,
the first to introduce me to churches in Britain'

Acknowledgments

Almost all the sayings of children recorded in this book have been gathered by myself at the very source - 'from the lips of children.' However, I acknowledge gratefully other sources, including Alfonse de Liguori's ~Life of Martyrs~ (for stories of children who died for Christ); the secretly printed magazines of the Soviet underground churches (for stories of prisoners' children); various Christian publications including ~Daily Bread~ and ~Portals of Prayer~, and a few foreign publications.

Some of these stories have appeared in several versions in various places. It has sometimes been impossible to find the original source.

Where I quote from children's own remarks, I have used only their words. I hope they will not insist on their copyright! Almost all the commentaries are my own.

Richard Wurmbrand

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A ship's captain took his six-year-old daughter with him

on an ocean journey. A terrible storm arose, and the order was given for everybody to enter the lifeboats.

A maid came into the captain's cabin, where his little girl was sleeping, and woke her. 'Quick! Come with me! The ship is sinking.'

The girl asked, 'Where is my father?'

'The captain is at the helm.'

'Then,' said the girl calmly, 'I can go back to sleep. He will not let the ship sink when his child is on board.'

* * *

A child, standing on the ocean shore, waved to an ocean liner passing by, hailing the captain to take him on board. An adult watching him in amusement finally spoke. 'Don't be silly! You can hitchhike by car, but not by oceanliner!'

Undaunted, the boy continued to signal. Suddenly boat was lowered from the ship. Sailors came to the shore to pick the boy up. As they left he shouted back to the astonished observer, 'You see - I wasn't silly. I knew what I was doing. The captain of the ship is my father!'

* * *

May we have such childlike trust in our Captain!

p011

Prologue

[illustration appears at this point in the book]

"Jesus is going to come back with his arms full of toys."

Today new theologies are sweeping, like weather fronts, across the globe: black theology, God-is-dead theology, feminist theology, liberation theology, and many more.

So why should we introduce yet another - 'children's theology'?

Jesus would surely have preferred it to some other human fabrications. In fact He endorsed it: 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven' (MTT 18:3).

p012 ..... From the Lips of Children

To become like little children means to think as they do, and that is as true in theological matters as in any other. My grandson Alex (who at six years old was quite well read in the Scriptures) once said to me, 'The Bible is meant for children. Only the Children of Israel came out of slavery in Egypt; the grown-ups stayed behind. Only the Children of God enter heaven. It will be a country without any grown-ups!'

Little did he know how close he was to the truth!

Jesus' teaching that we must become like little children has been the subject of much thought and discussion both by theologians and by philosophers. What exactly does Jesus mean? Does He mean that we have to become less complicated, more humble, more open, more trusting? Perhaps He means we must be prepared to play? What precisely are the characteristics of children which we are to imitate?

The German philosopher, Karl Jaspers, commented: 'It is part of the very essence of man that he is a philosopher, and there is a wonderful confirmation of that in the questions that children ask. It is not unusual to hear, from their lips, profoundly philosophical statements.'

The psychologist Carl Jung went even further. He suggested that adults whose minds were troubled should play with toys, like children. He himself, he said, had found it to be a helpful spiritual exercise.

A little Turkish girl of four years old, called Ariel, told me, 'Jesus is going to come back with his arms full of toys. He will even bring a piano for me!'

If we have not 'become like little children,' to whom will Jesus give his playthings?

In the Bible it is written that 'a little child shall lead them (ISA 11:6). A child whose parents were divorced came across that verse and demanded, 'Then why don't they let us lead?

We would never have invented pubs, casinos or nuclear war. If we were the leaders, there would no spankings and no divorce.'

p013 ..... Prologue

Jesus tells us that we must be born again, and that suggests that we must return to the innocence and trustfulness of childhood. But it must be a genuine return. We must not be people who put on childlikeness to order, but people who are childlike by nature, having a spontaneous sense of dependency and an awareness that we need to be guided.

Children have a great advantage; their minds are not compartmentalized. They do not make a distinction between the concrete and the abstract. They have no need to pretend.

So their thoughts on theological matters are of special interest to us.

I have often been taken aback by the remarkable insights of the children I have known. For many years now I have been recording their questions and comments, observations and insights. Many are from my own family, from my son Mihai and my grandchildren Amelie and Alex.

My hope is that the incidents which are recounted in this book will help you to listen the more perceptively to the children in your own life, and enable you to recapture some of the unsophisticated candour and openness that belong uniquely to childhood.

It is said that the child is father to the man. Similarly, a child's intuitions about God may well help adults embrace true theology.

p014 ..... From the Lips of Children

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p015 ..... Beliefs

[illustration appears at this point in the book]

"It is cold outside. How are you?"

When he was five years old my son Mihai became dangerously ill. His life was threatened; he needed an emergency operation, a trepanning of the skull. This is a major operation, in which a piece of bone is removed to relieve pressure on the brain.

The night before the operation we called a number of fellow-believers to gather round his bed to pray for a successful outcome.

As I sat beside him I touched his body. It was burning with fever. I said to him, 'Tomorrow you are to have an operation, a dangerous one. It's possible that you will die.'

Mihai replied joyfully. 'Then I'll go to heaven! Angels must have splendid toys. An angel might teach me how to play the harp!'

p016 ..... From the Lips of Children

'Well, it's not that simple; you are a sinner.'

'But Father, didn't you tell me that Jesus' blood cleanses us from sin? I'm not worried - I will be in heaven.'

'Well, Mihai, these brothers and sisters have come to pray for your welfare. The Bible says that when someone is sick, the elders of the Church should be called and they should pray over him. Then he will recover. Do you believe that?'

'I believe everything the Bible says,' he answered simply.

One brother after another prayed. Then Mihai himself prayed: 'I thank you, God, that you are making me healthy now, and that I will soon be able to go with my father to the toy shop to buy a new toy.'

My hand still lay on his chest. As he prayed I felt the fever diminish markedly. When he had finished his brief prayer, I said to my wife 'Take his temperature. God's miracles are measured with the thermometer!'

Sure enough, Mihai's temperature had dropped. There was no need of any operation the next day. Instead, he played in the garden.

Several days later, I was able to take him to the toy shop. At that time, the Soviet army had just invaded Rumania, our homeland, and had shown a marked liking for alcohol. A great deal of drunkenness was in evidence.

When we entered the department store, a Soviet captain was there with a woman sergeant. They were attempting to make some purchases, but were handicapped by not knowing our language. On the other hand, the salesman could not speak Russian. I offered to translate for them.

Mihai repeatedly urged me to tell them about Christ. I too was waiting for the right moment.

After I had helped them in their spending spree sergeant said to me, 'You have been so kind to us.

p017 ..... Beliefs

Perhaps you could do me one more favour. I need some dresses. Where can I find them?' Now I knew she was at my mercy!

'I haven't the slightest idea about such matters - but may I invite the captain and you to come to our home for lunch? Afterwards, my wife will take you shopping.'

Mihai was delighted that we would have them in our home, where they could learn about the faith.' Buy them a bottle of wine,' he urged. 'Then they'll listen better. You know that all their soldiers are drunkards!'

Probably he had heard me quote Paul's words: 'To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews.... To the weak I became weak, to win the weak' (1CO 9:20,22). I smiled at his ingenuous suggestion; but I was indeed able to share with my guests the fruit of the True Vine, which gives life eternal.

Both officers were converted.

* * *

In the Soviet Union, Piotr, whose father was in prison for his faith, was interrogated at school by a police officer who had a hidden motive for his questions. Smiling and apparently sympathetic, the officer said, 'I really like your father, and I want him released. But I need more information about him. Tell me about your father.'

'Oh!' replied Piotr. 'He tells beautiful children's stories. When he speaks it's as if Jesus were present in the room. Only last Christmas he told us how Jesus was born in a manger, and how wise men came to worship Him. We should worship Him, too.'

The officer ignored this. 'Where was this gathering? Who was present? Who else spoke?'

The child sensed the danger. 'I can tell you the whole story just as my father told it. Beyond that I have nothing to say to you. You are not one of our people. I don't trust you.'

Many disasters have been caused in the Church by unveiling its mysteries to the profane, and by casting the

pearls of the Kingdom before swine. It is important to cultivate a discerning spirit, such as Piotr had.

* * *

When young Alex arrived home from holiday with his parents, he went round the house kissing the front door, his pillow, and many other things, repeating 'This is my home.'

We should have that same spirit as we approach the heavenly Jerusalem, which is our everlasting home. Even though we may live very comfortably here, we are still pilgrims and strangers in this world.

A missionary came back to the United States after forty years of service in Africa, where he had endured many hardships. Sailing on the same ship was President Theodore Roosevelt, returning from an elephant-hunting safari.

A large crowd turned out to greet the president, but no one came to meet the missionary. He was feeling very sorry for himself. Then he was comforted by an inner voice that reminded him: 'The president has come home; you are not home yet.'

When we reach the heavenly Jerusalem, we too will impulsively kiss the door and threshold of our real home.

* * *

Here are some letters written to Basil Rishuk, imprisoned in the USSR for his Christian faith, by his children Andrew (ten years old), Gena (twelve), and Tanya (fourteen).

> I kiss you, dear Daddy, in the love of Christ. As I it is cold and unpleasant outside. How are you? How is your health? May the Lord shed in our hearts the peace and joy that Jesus gives, in spite of all the tempests. We will always trust only in Him. We believe that He will give us power for the fight, that He will help us to withstand the tempest.

p019 ..... Beliefs

> It is important to withstand it, because we know that the calm follows the storm and that this time it will be eternal, with a happiness that has no end.
>
> At home, everything is going well. We live in the hope of seeing you, but also of seeing the Lord, so that we may enter into eternal life, where no one will separate us.
>
> A hearty kiss.
> Your loving son, Andrew.

Dear Daddy, I greet you in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Papa, we never forget you. We pray constantly to God for you. We pray for your health. We pray also for all prisoners, and trust that God will keep them.

Daddy, ask the prison commander to allow a personal visit, for it is a long time until the New Year and we all want to come to you. We have such a yearning for you!

Your loving son, Gena.

Dear Daddy, Christ has risen!

How are you? May the resurrected Lord illumine your camp, so that you may be joyous even in sorrow. When I hear hymns sung my heart shrinks and tears run, though I screw my eyes up as tight as I can. May we see each other soon. You are alone, and we are all together. But soon all will pass, and then you will be with

Be strong.

Your daughter, Tanya.

May we learn from such children to have a burning love for our imprisoned brothers and sisters in Christ.

* * *

A Methodist missionary in Africa told of a child who went to Sunday School and there heard the story of Abel sacrificing a lamb to God.

p020 ..... From the Lips of Children

The next day the child made an altar from a few stones out on the fields. On it, he placed a mutton chop. Then he prayed.

'O God, my Father, I have made You a sacrifice. I have only two pence, so I can't buy a lamb. If I owned any lambs I would give You one; but I only have this meat. Please, my Father, send fire down from heaven to consume it.'

God did touch the meat, though not with fire. Ants consumed it. Ants belong to God just as much as a flame of fire does.

May we have a child's readiness to follow the example of the saints of old, and bring sacrifices to God.

* * *

It might seem that the ultimate anguish is to lose a child

through death.

It is not so. There is worse suffering.

In the village of Dubrovo in the Soviet Union, a family named Sloboda (the name means 'liberty' in Russian) had committed the crime of being Christians.

For that crime Mrs. Sloboda was jailed for four years. Her five children - Galia, Shura, Kolia, Liusa, Pavlik (the youngest five years old) - were taken away and placed in an atheistic children's camp.

This type of separation is more difficult to bear than that of death. Mrs. Sloboda never saw her children again. At the age of forty-nine she died in prison, as a result of torture. The children were only allowed to attend her burial. At her grave, they recited this prayer: 'Lord, our mother has died. Help us to be as righteous as she has been. Help us to give a witness such as she has given. Amen.'

And that was all. Unafraid of pain, they had decided to walk the way of martyrdom. Detention in the Communist camp had neither frightened nor 're-educated' them.

Accepting suffering for Christ's sake will be an essential

part of children's theology, if they are provided with true Christian models.

* * *

In Communist Rumania, a Christian girl named Viorica was beaten harshly in school because she had invited her schoolmates to church. She fainted during the beating, and an ambulance had to take her to hospital.

Two days passed before she regained consciousness. When she did, the doctor at her bedside said, 'You poor girl, at last you have opened your eyes. All this time I have been thinking of the cruelty of the Director who beat you like this. My heart has been bitter with hatred. I wish

I could take revenge on him.'

Viorica smiled. 'There is no need to hate him. Jesus taught us to love everyone. Just before I opened my eyes, I saw Him and talked to Him. He asked me whether it still hurt. And He told me that in heaven I will receive a very beautiful crown, which is reserved only for those who have suffered for Him. He told me to pray for those who mistreated me, and to love them, because our influence will help them to give their lives to God and so become His children.'

According to children's theology, this is how a Christian should react to being flogged. Like their Saviour, they know how to love when abused, and how to forgive when persecuted.

* * *

Charles Spurgeon once said, 'A child of five, if properly instructed, can as truly believe and be regenerated as an adult.' This suggests that a child so instructed can have very valuable theological insights.

When he was a child Spurgeon's mother told him, 'Charles, your father and I have trained you in righteousness. We have taught you the Word of God. We have lived a godly life before you. If you do not live a godly life,

we will stand before God in the day of judgement and bear witness against you.'

A friend once argued with the adult Spurgeon that children cannot really understand the gospel. Spurgeon took him to his Sunday School, where the gentleman asked one of the boys, 'What kind of a heart do you have?'

'A very good one, sir,' was the reply.

The man turned to Spurgeon. 'You see? He does not understand the ABC of the gospel. He does not realize that he is a sinner.'

Spurgeon asked the child, 'How do you know your

heart is good?'

'Well,' he answered, 'I had an old heart, inherited from my ancestors who were sinners. But Jesus gave me a new heart. Jesus has no bad hearts to give! If He gave me a heart I am sure it is an excellent one.'

* * *

Heinrich Heine, the German Jewish-Christian poet who lived in the first part of the nineteenth century, wrote of his early yearnings for God:

As a little child I was already asking questions such as, Who is God? and, What does He look like? I could spend whole days looking up towards heaven and would be very sad in the evening because I had not seen the most holy face of God, but only grey, silly caricatures formed of clouds. I was totally confused by astronomical events, which were not concealed even from little children, and constantly marvelled that these thousand million stars were big,beautiful earth-balls like ours and that one single God ruled over each shining world.

I remember that once, in a dream, I saw God very high up and far away. He looked happily through a little window in heaven, with the face of a pious old man with a small Jewish beard, and scattered downward

a multitude of seeds that blossomed as they fell from heaven, grew in the infinity of space, and enlarged until they became glittering, populated worlds, each as big as our earth.

I could never forget this vision. Several times I saw the happy old man, sowing the seeds of worlds from His small window in heaven. Once I heard Him click His tongue as our maid did when she threw barley to the chickens. 1

As an adult Heine mocked religion and the churches. He became the great friend of Karl Marx, the God-hater, and forgot this vision, which became a reality to him again only a short time before his death.

Those who are privileged to know God when they are children should strive to retain their tender images of Him, and not surrender them to pseudo-intellectualism. 'Remember your first love,' says Jesus. (If we fail to do so, the images of those early days may come back to haunt us at death.)

* * *

When she was four years old, Amelie was alone with my wife and me in the chapel of Campus Crusade in San Bernardino, California.

Suddenly, without any prompting, she stepped forward and said: 'Jesus, I am Yours.'

Since that time she has steadfastly resisted any calling to commit herself to Christ. 'I did so once,' she says. 'I am a child of God. I'm sure of it.'

If a child can be so sure that Christ has received her into His loving care, why should we ever doubt that He has accepted us, as our Saviour?

* * *

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1. Heinrich Heine, ~Works~ (Lowit, Germany), Vol. II, pp. 425-56.

p024 ..... From the Lips of Children

Julieta was an aristocratic lady who lived during the reign of the fourth-century Roman emperor, the cruel Diocletian.

She was asked to bring a sacrifice to a heathen altar, but answered, 'I am a Christian. I am prepared to lose not only my property but even my life, rather than deny my God.'

Alexander, proconsul of Cilicia, ordered that Julieta's three-year-old child Quiricus be torn from her embrace and be flogged to a pulp.

The child saw his mother's agony and struggled to

return to her. But he was held back by Alexander, who sat him on his knees and tried to kiss him. Punching and kicking, Quiricus freed himself from the tyrant and cried out, 'I too am a Christian!'

In a rage Alexander grabbed him and beat him to death. The ground was spattered with the boy's blood and brains. Julieta, who was herself being flogged, cried 'I give You thanks, O my God, because You have called my boy to Yourself before me.'

Would we have the courage to say, 'I too am a Christian,' if it meant 'I too am prepared to die under torture for Christ'?

A child did so.

* * *

St. Cyril, who was born at Caesarea, became a Christian while he was a child. In consequence he was ill-treated, and finally turned out of his home, by his idolatrous father.

Word of this reached the judge, who summoned Cyril to appear before him. He had been told that the child frequently called upon the name of Jesus. So he promised Cyril that he would work out a reconciliation between him and his father - on condition that he promised never to utter that name again.

The child answered: 'I am content to be turned out of my father's house, because I shall receive a more

spacious mansion in heaven. Neither do I fear death; by dying, I shall obtain a better life.'

In order to frighten him the judge ordered him to be bound and had him led away, apparently to execution. But he secretly gave orders that the boy should not be harmed. The executioner brought Cyril to a blazing fire and threatened to throw him in. But Cyril was quite prepared to lose his life.

The executioner then brought him back to the judge,

who said to him, 'My child, you saw the fire. Cease to be a Christian, so that you can go back to your father's house and inherit your estates.'

Cyril replied: 'I fear neither fire nor sword. But I long to have a dwelling more magnificent, and riches that will last longer, than my father's. God will accept me. So hasten to put me to death, so that I can quickly go to enjoy Him.'

Those standing by wept, to hear the child speak in this way.

'You must not weep,' said Cyril, 'but rather rejoice and encourage me in my suffering, so that I may come to have that house which I desire so passionately.'

He did not flinch from his position, and when death came he suffered it with joy.

* * *

In the sixteenth century there was a great persecution of Christians in Japan, under the Emperor Taicosoma.

At first, the officers whose responsibility it was to make up the list of Christians to be executed refused to include the name of little Louis. But the boy, who had been baptized only a few days earlier, cried and begged to have his name on the list. Eventually he was successful.

As he was led to his death, which was to be by crucifixion, his face radiated joyful confidence; and those who were watching were deeply moved.

The under-governor of Nagasaki presided over the execution. He was willing to release Louis, provided that

he was prepared to renounce the Christian religion. But the child declared, 'On such a condition I do not want to live. If I die, I shall be losing this short and miserable life and gaining a happy and eternal one.'

When he saw the cross, upon which he was to be

nailed, he ran to embrace it. The cross had always been an object very dear to him.

* * *

In another Japanese province, there was a further persecution of Christians a century later under King Canzugedono. Another little Louis was condemned to die, and his mother with him. His last words to her were 'My dear mother, I will not forget to call upon the name of Jesus as long as I am alive.'

They bound him to a small cross, opposite his mother and he continually repeated the sacred name. His executioner, in a fury, killed him with his lance.

Let us learn from such children to find, in the very name of Jesus, comfort in all suffering.

* * *

On that occasion, two more children were sentenced to death: Thomas, who was twelve years old, and Peter who was only six.

Their fathers were sentenced first. When Thomas heard that his father was to be a martyr, he longed so passionately for such a death for himself that when his own turn came he hastened to join him. Embracing his father, he said, 'I am going to die with you for the faith. We will go to heaven together.'

The executioner wanted to spare Thomas the horror of seeing his father being tortured, but the child cried out, 'I want to die with him!' They brought him near to where the bleeding body lay. There, his face radiant, he offered his his head to the executioner.

Little Peter also said, of his father, 'They will make me die with him because I am a Christian. And I am so glad!'

p027 ..... Beliefs

Arriving at the place of execution, he knelt readily. Seeing the executioner with his sword, he extended his neck, all the time clasping his hands in prayer.

The executioner was deeply moved, and he replaced his sword in its scabbard. 'I have no heart to kill this innocent lamb,' he protested. A second executioner did likewise, and so did a third. The child knelt patiently until a fourth executioner carried out the sentence.

* * *

Those who are now past childhood, but have learned to become like children, think as these young martyrs thought.

Madame Guyon was a seventeenth-century contemplative who was imprisoned for several years because of her beliefs. 'I claim for my dowry,' she wrote, 'only crosses, scourges, persecutions, ignominies, lowliness, and nothingness of self; which God, in His goodness and wise purposes, grants unto me.'

p028 ..... From the Lips of Children

[illustration appears at this point in the book]

"How can God think about me when He is busy with all the things He has to do in the world?"

Sometimes the thoughts of children explore unknown worlds.

'Do boys have boy angels, and girls have girl angels?' asked my granddaughter Amelie.

It was not a ridiculous question. Spiritual beings are not sexless. The 'great and wondrous sign' that John saw in his vision was no asexual being, but a woman (REV 12:1). Zechariah in his vision also saw women, some of them demonic (ZEC 5:7-9). The 'night creature' mentioned in ISA 34:14 (called, in Hebrew, ~Lilith~) is believed

p029 ..... Questions

in Jewish demonology to be the chief female

wicked spirit.

* * *

Amelie asked her father, 'Why is it that your wishes are always the ones that have to be obeyed? The Constitution says that we have equal rights.'

It is a fair question. There is an answer to it. The Bible teaches great respect for one's parents. The only one of the Ten Commandments that promises a blessing is the fifth: 'Honour your father and your mother.' It is in the interest of children to be obedient: they get blessed.

Christian parents owe it to their children to give them this explanation. In fact, they should be ready to reply to any questions that their children ask, however uncomfortable.

For example, Amelie once asked, 'How was God the Father born? How did the whole thing begin? How did He come to be in heaven?'

The best answer is simply this: 'Whatever age we live to, we can only ever know a little. We must learn to accept that limitation, however old or young we may be.'

Moses warned, 'The secret things belong to the Lord our God: but the things revealed belong to us and to our children for ever' (DEU 29:29). And on the last evening, before His crucifixion, Jesus said to His disciples, 'I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear' (JHN 16:12).

* * *

A question children often ask is, 'What does God look like?'

I have a simple answer: 'What does the image in a kaleidoscope look like?'

The image changes all the time.

p030 ..... From the Lips of Children

In the Bible, God is likened to many things: love, a consuming fire, a lion, a stone, a man of war, the Ancient of Days, and many more. Everything can be in His image, because He encompasses everything. He is all in all.

If a child responds to this by saying, 'I can't understand,' then you must reply 'Neither can I'! God is not to be understood but to be ardently loved. He is beyond anything that man can imagine. He is what He is, not what we fancy Him to be.

'How can God think about me,' asked a child, 'when He is busy with all the things that He has to do in the world?'

Yet even man, with all his cares and activity, still has time to think about sub-microscopic atoms, even tinier electrons, and beyond them, the most minuscule elementary subparticles. He makes hypotheses about particles which he can only visualize mathematically, and builds vast nuclear chambers to isolate them, to prove their existence, because they constitute the very life of mankind and the essence of his environment.

We may be just as minuscule in the scheme of things, but we are very important to God; we are part of His inner life. 'In Him we live and move and have our being' (ACT 17:28).

God is as interested in us as we are interested in every facet of our bodies. Our minds are a part of His consciousness. God also cares about the most minute details of His creatures' lives.

A small boy asked his mother, 'Did God remember that you liked curly hair when He planned me?'

The answer is, 'Yes, He did.'

Another child wanted to know, 'Why did God make people, when He had the stars and the flowers?'

The answer is that it was for the same reason that we appreciate having brains as well as kidneys, lungs and toes - for the same reason that a man is not satisfied with a 'Mona Lisa' or a 'Venus de Milo,' but prefers a woman

p031 ..... Questions

who is alive, even though she may not possess an ideal beauty.

* * *

When I am out driving with my son and grandchildren, I often hear the familiar request, 'Grandpa, tell me a story.' And Amelie fastens the seat-belt, settles herself comfortably, and looks up at me expectantly.

On one occasion I decided to tell her about Noah's ark. But I had not been telling the story long when she interrupted.

'Why didn't the wolf eat the sheep in the ark?'

My son exchanged glances with me in the rear-view mirror. We took deep breaths and in turn tried to provide an answer. But Amelie was not satisfied. Then she brightened, and came up with an answer unassailable in its logic.

'I know! When each animal entered the ark, Noah fastened its seat-belt! He separated the wolf and the sheep, so the wolf could only snap and not bite.'

Perhaps Amelie was wiser than she knew. We would be well advised to widely separate individuals whose temperaments clash, and who generate quarrels and dissension when they are near to each other.

* * *

A child listened to a learned sermon that attempted to explain away the plain meaning of Scripture. Eventually she interrupted, exclaiming, 'If God did not mean what He said, why didn't he say what He did mean?'

Out of the mouth of babes!

When he was quite a small boy, Mihai asked, 'Why didn't God simply kill the devil, and put an end to all the trouble?' (When he was grown up, his own daughter

Amelie asked exactly the same question.)

I replied, 'The devil was not always the devil. Once he

was a good angel, until the day came when he chose to become evil. If he had been killed, another good angel might have made the same choice. So killing the devil would have achieved nothing. Jesus did not say to the devil, "Perish!" He said, "Get behind me!" He puts demons to flight; He does not destroy them. We must develop that inner resistance. We must learn to do as Jesus did, and say to the devil, "No, I'm not going to listen to what you are suggesting."'

In his childish way, Mihai understood the point, and so in her turn did eight-year-old Amelie.

* * *

The famous American evangelist Billy Sunday told the story of a twelve-year-old boy who went to a preacher and begged him, 'Please go to the jail and speak to my Daddy. He murdered my Mummy. We loved him so much, he was always kind to us; but then he began to drink. It was whisky that made him do it. Now I have to look after my three small sisters. Please pray with him. He's going to be hanged tomorrow.'

He added, 'They told us we would be given his body. What am I going to do with it? Why don't they deliver it to the owner of the saloon that sold my father the whisky? Why don't they hang him? He murdered my father's soul before my father strangled my mother.'

Who is going to answer the questions children ask? Why is it that the people who receive the harsh punishments are those who commit the crimes, and not the brewers and publicans, the authors and publishers of obscene literature, and the producers of television shows that glorify violence - all of whom must share responsibility for incitement to crime? Why not indict those legislators and judges who let the poisoning of souls and minds go unpunished?

I can name very precisely those people who destroyed

my soul with the poisonous ideas that they purveyed,

p033 ..... Questions

when I was very young and lacked discernment. I also remember with shame that I too led others astray.

* * *

A child wanted to know, 'Will God do anything I ask Him to do? That is what He promised - can I rely on it? Can I really ask Him for anything at all?'

Yes, it is an all-embracing promise. 'Ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you,' says Jesus (JHN 15:7). But there is an 'if' preceding the promise: 'If you abide in me, and my words abide in you.'

Be a living part of the mystical body of Christ; let His words be your guide; and then you can ask anything, and you will have it.

Those who fulfill the condition will never ask for anything wrong.

Many children are still very young when it occurs to them to ask why there is so much evil in the world. But if they retain the mind of a child as they grow older, one can teach them to see good in everything, and potential good in everyone.

If a child asks, 'Why should there be evil?' then the answer must be, 'How can what we regard as evil be used for good?'

The crucifixion of Jesus was a terrible evil. But it served the greatest good that this world has ever known; the salvation of mankind.

The evangelist, Cerullo, asked a boy in Haiti: 'Do you know Jesus?'

'Is that a new American drink?' he replied. 'I only know Coke.'

The promoters of Coca-Cola have been more successful than the promoters of Jesus. Many children do not even know His name.

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The Church could learn something from the merchants of this world, although it has an advantage that they do not have. It has not a product to sell, but a person to introduce; a person who has living water to give, so that one need never thirst again.

* * *

A boy of four had to play Joseph, and a girl of the same age Mary, in a Christmas play. The two children began to quarrel while they were on the stage.

The boy's father chided him. 'You forget what role you're playing! Joseph never quarrelled with Mary.'

The boy answered, 'How do you know?'

The father was dumbfounded. How did he know?

And in truth, he did not know.

However, we know from the Bible that the disciples quarrelled between themselves. Statues and pictures that show the saints always smiling are the inventions of grown-ups. Children know that saints on earth can be weak and earthly - especially if they live with parents who are Christians!

But if somebody happens to quarrel or commit some other sin, it does not mean that he ceases to be a saint. Christianity is not just a treasure and not just an earthen vessel. It is a treasure in an earthen vessel. Deny that the vessel exists, and you deny that the Christian exists.

* * *

When Mihai was five, he heard that the saints would one day walk with Jesus dressed in white garments. 'Does He have robes in children's sizes?' he enquired.

I assured him that they come in all sizes. St. Pancras and St. Tarcisius were devoured by wild beasts; they died as martyrs when they were only nine years old.

There are garments not only for those who are small and large in body, but also for those small and large in faith.

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A bulldog, on seeing a pocket-sized poodle, demanded, 'Do you dare to call yourself a dog?'

The poodle replied, 'I admit that I am not as big as you are, but you certainly can't call me a cat. A small dog is still a dog!'

A feeble, fearful, backslidden Christian is still a Christian, and still has a white robe waiting for him.

* * *

A class of children was shown a painting of the Nativity and told that the holy family was very poor.

'Then where,' queried a child, 'did they get the money to pay the photographer?'

The child's question could well prompt the reflection that it is good to share not only bread with the poor, but also the means of pleasure - such as provision for a family portrait!

* * *

A mother assured her child, who had confessed a sin, that 'the blood of Jesus has cleansed you from it.' The child thought for a moment, and then remarked, 'You said the same thing another time that I sinned. But where is Jesus' blood when we don't sin? What does it do then?'

In the words of a hymn:

> E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
> Thy flowing wounds supply,

Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

(~William Cowper, 'There is a fountain filled with blood'~)

There is an unbroken stream of blood flowing from the wounds of Christ.

Blood flows constantly in our bodies, never pausing, never resting. It serves a hundred trillion cells, providing them with oxygen, amino acids, nitrogen and many

other necessities. It carries away waste products and fights invaders. In the meantime, we go about our work without any awareness of what is happening inside us. Yet if the blood ceased to flow for a few brief moments; we would be dead. In just the same way, the blood of the Saviour flows throughout His Church, nourishing it with heavenly manna, and bearing away sins.

Let His blood be an object of our devotion. We need it, even when we do not sin.

* * *

A child once asked her mother, 'If I had not been your little girl - what would I have been?' She could not imagine that she might not have existed at all. 'Non-existence,' 'nirvana' - these are concepts that only adults wrestle with.

For years I was in solitary confinement, without books, without paper or pen, without ever hearing a voice or a whisper.

To occupy my time, I sometimes spent hours imagining what I would do in various situations. What would I do if I were pope - prime minister - a celebrated writer - pastor of a church - a millionaire - a beggar?

Once I tried to imagine that I was dead. I imagined myself in a coffin. Loved ones stood around weeping. A pastor said a prayer. Then I laughed heartily. 'If I can see myself in a coffin,' I thought, 'then I can't be dead!'

Many things are possible in life, and it is possible

imagine oneself in all sorts of situations. A soldier can dream of becoming emperor. It's possible- it happened to Napoleon. A beggar can become a millionaire. It's possible - I have known men who did. The reverse is also possible.

Because all these reversals of fate ~are~ possible, we can imagine them happening. But what is unimaginable is that we might cease to exist. Life is a gift of God, and it only finds fulfillment in eternal happiness.

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The little girl found it impossible even to imagine never having existed.

* * *

Alex's curiosity is boundless. When he was five, he began to be suspicious about the origins of meat. 'Where do we get meat from?' 'From the supermarket.' 'But where does the supermarket get the meat from?' 'From cows.'

Alex's suspicions were confirmed. He became very grave. 'Do you mean that we kill cows so that we can eat their meat?'

'Yes.'

'Why?'

'Because we need nourishment.'

'But,' asked Alex, 'do we at least explain to the cows that that is why we kill them, and do we apologize to them for doing it?'

Very orthodox Jews do. I have seen their special 'slaughterers,' whose religious function is to sing hymns while slaughtering animals. The kabbalistic purpose of doing so is to communicate somehow to unreasoning animals that they will be incorporated into the bodies of the chosen people, and will thereby become part of the temples of God, which is what our bodies are.

We ought to eat our meals with great devotion, remembering how many of God's creatures have been sacrificed so that we may live.

When Alex was six, and had heard the story of Cain and Abel for the umpteenth time, he said: 'In the beginning it was Cain who was good and Abel evil, because Abel killed a lamb, which is wrong, whereas Cain did not. Lambs are nice, living beings. Why did God order people to kill them for sacrifices?'

To kill a lamb wantonly - or, worse, to have somebody else kill one because I like eating lamb chops - is wrong. The Bible teaches that whatever we do we should do to

the glory of God. Are we quite sure that He is glorified when we kill lambs?

Millions of animals are sacrificed each year just so that we can enjoy a good meal. But it is only justifiable to eat animals when it is done in the sole desire that our strengthened bodies may serve God better.

This is why the Talmud says, 'Every meal at which the subject of conversation is something other than the Word of God, is an idolatrous meal.'

(On the other hand, vegetarianism does not necessarily make men better. Cain did not kill a lamb, but he slew his brother; and Hitler was a strict vegetarian.)

* * *

A child was urged to eat carrots and peas because they contained vitamins, only to retort, 'Why didn't God put the vitamins in the sweets and ice-cream?'

My answer would have been, 'Because it's important for children not only to have vitamins, but also to learn to swallow what may be unpleasant to the taste.'

We all need to learn from the good and the unpleasant. A Christian must welcome unpleasant things sometimes, because they are part of the 'all things' that God is working together for our good.

* * *

Amelie at six listened to a sermon on Jesus' words, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these (MTT 19:14).

Turning to me she commented, 'But all men were or little children, and so they must have had the kingdom of heaven. How did they lose it?'

I remember my childhood sins very vividly. It does not require very much effort for most of us to remember how we lost our childhood innocence: lying, stealing, perhaps sliding downhill into a particular bad habit.

We had the kingdom, and we lost it. The Bible urges us

to return; we don't have to come to something entirely new, but simply to return to what was once ours, to the treasure that we lost.

A boy born in the satellite age was told by his father, 'We have just placed another star in the sky. We have launched a manned satellite.' He asked, 'Who placed all the other stars in the sky?' To this his father, who was not a believer, had no reply.

If it took so much genius and skill and intellectual brilliance to place into earth's orbit a satellite, manned by only a few people, a far greater intelligence must have been required to create the starry heavens.

The existence of man-made satellites is one more proof of the existence of God.

* * *

A child heard his father say 'Faith moves mountains,' and asked him, 'Father, you believe in Christ. When did you last move a mountain?' The father was embarrassed!

Jesus surely did not intend that we should move real mountains. One can imagine what chaos would be caused, were men to decide to move the Himalayas, the Rocky Mountains, the Carpathians or Alps according to whim!

But there are mountains of difficulty, of all kinds, that faith can move. Every believer should pay heed to this blessing of God. Then he will be able to say when he last moved a mountain!

* * *

When Amelie was eight, she asked me, 'You were on a Communist jail. How did you come to the free world?'

I explained to her that Christian organizations had a ransom of œ5,000 for my release.

'But,' she mused, 'you were in jail for fourteen years –

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why did it take Western Christians so long to collect 10,000 dollars?'

I had no answer.

Others, who still suffer in Communist prisons, could have been helped long ago if it were not for our apathy. How much do we contribute towards easing their lot?

But the question goes even deeper.

When Hudson Taylor went as the first missionary to inland China, one of his first converts asked him, 'How long have you Englishmen known the gospel?'

'For 1,600 years,' he replied.

'Then why did you leave it so late to tell us about it? My parents and my ancestors died in sin, and went into the outer darkness.'

Why is it, that the good things in life seem to take so long to come to fruition?

I once discussed these matters with a child who, because he was a child, was not afraid to go even further in his thinking. 'God is like us,' he observed. 'He has promised that His kingdom would return. Jesus said, "Behold, I come quickly."

But He tarries.'

Let us continue to pray, 'Thy kingdom come,' and all we can to hasten His coming. And let us 'never tire doing what is right' (2TH 3:13).

* * *

In Canada some children were asked to write down what they would ask the Pope if they were able to speak to him during his visit to their country.

They wrote down such questions as: 'What can I do to make God happier?,' 'What can I do to help poor people?,' 'How do you feel when you have to make decisions that will upset people?,' and 'How do you feel about not being able to marry?'

Children ask direct questions; they are much less inclined to be devious than their elders. And they expect straight answers!

* * *

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In front of Holman Hunt's well-known painting, 'Christ knocking at the door,' a large group of visitors stood in admiration. One praised the colours; another noted the expression on Jesus' face; another called attention to the fact that the door had no outside knob, explaining that the heart can only be opened from the inside. Still another pointed out that the feet of Jesus were painted as turned away from the door; long accustomed to being rejected, He was prepared to depart.

Only one, a child, asked the question that really mattered: 'Father, did they let him in?'

It was a very small question. But it is the principal theme of the painting. All other aspects fade into insignificance.

* * *

A scientist was speaking to a group of children about Einstein's Theory of Relativity. A child raised the question: 'And what if Einstein was wrong?'

Only God can be totally trusted. All human assertions must be treated with a healthy scepticism.

A cardinal was once asked, 'What if scientists agree unanimously that the statements of the Bible are untrue?

The cardinal replied, 'I would wait a while! Scientists do not hold on to their certainties for very long.'

* * *

Once - I suppose it was from weariness - I protested to Amelie, then aged seven, 'You can't ask questions about everything!'

'Why not?'

'Because some things just happen. For example, Jesus said, "You hated Me without a cause."'

But still she persisted. 'Why isn't there a "Why" for everything?'

Even Einstein could not accept the theory of Heisenberg, the great German microphysicist, concerning the indeterminism of elementary particles. Heisenberg had

shown that the law of causality, which was considered universal, has its limits; and therefore certain events have no 'why.'

Adults as well as children have to learn to simply accept certain facts that seem to do very well without our analysis and our categorizations as to cause and effect. It demands humility of mind. 'So much I know, and further, at this stage, I cannot go.'

The Hebrew Bible begins with the letter 'B' (~beth~), written [Hebrew character] - rather like a box with three walls. Hebrew text is read from right to left, so the opening in the 'box' faces forward. The rabbis explain that Scripture begins with this letter because it teaches that you will never know what is above, behind and below. And so we are to look forward, in the only direction in which God wishes to reveal Himself to us.

Amelie again: 'God must have known that Adam and Eve would sin. Why did He allow it?'

Again this 'Why' - the great 'Why.'

The response is simple. Sin is here, and we must fight it unceasingly. To waste time on fruitless 'Whys' is simply to sin all over again.

A person who has just been bitten by a rattlesnake will be foolish to waste time speculating about why he was attacked. Time is of the essence! The venom must be extracted - or he will die.

There are times when 'What' and 'How' are much more important than 'Why.'

* * *

Why so many questions, in a book about theology - even children's theology? Isn't theology a set of dogmatic statements?

No, it is not.

In the four Gospels, Jesus asks no less than 287 questions. His statements and assertions are far fewer in number.

His first recorded statement is a question: 'Why were

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you searching for me?' (LUK 2:49). As a child in the temple, He, like children everywhere, spent His time simply listening and asking questions (cf. LUK 2:46).

As an adult He retained this childlike characteristic. Even on the cross, He asked a question: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (MRK 15:34).

Later, confronting an enemy of His Church, He asked him a question: 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' (ACT 9:4).

When I first became a Christian and asked myself two vital questions, the only answers that I could find in the Bible were two further questions.

Firstly, I needed to know, which was the true Church? The Bible answered, 'Who is this that appears like the dawn, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, majestic as the stars in procession?' (SOS 6:10).

Secondly, I needed to know who was a reliable pastor to follow. Again the Bible replied with a question: 'Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?' (LUK 12:42).

The question is 'Who?': the reply is also, 'Who?'

Questions are an essential part of true theology. As Heidegger remarked, 'Questioning is the piety of thought.'

'For we know in part' (1CO 13:9).

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[illustration appears at this point in the book]

"I would like my father to walk out of the frame and be with us again."

When Mihai was five, I came home one day and learned from my wife that he had committed some wrongdoing for which he needed to be punished. This time I decided to try a different approach. I left him alone.

The next morning, I told him the story of how Peter denied his Lord, and how, later, Jesus asked him three times: 'Do you love Me?' When I had told him the story, I asked Mihai, 'Do you love Jesus?'

'Yes,' said Mihai.

I asked him again, 'Do you love Jesus?' And again he answered, 'Yes.'

The third time I asked the question, he understood that I was chiding him for his sin of the day before. Tears came to his eyes as he said for the third time, 'Yes, I love Jesus.'

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I thought that he might simply be repeating the words of Peter without really meaning them. So I asked him 'How do you know that you really love Him?'

His thoughtful rejoinder was: 'Jesus did not ask Peter that. He was satisfied with the words, "I love you."'

Love really needs no explanation.

* * *

The comments of pre-school children indicate how much of positive value they can be taught, even at an early age.

Little Alex brightened our lives many times with his little pearls of wisdom.

'I like everybody in the whole world,' he said once, 'because I belong to God. All except the devil - because he put Jesus on the cross.'

Once, watching ~Romeo and Juliet~ on television, I tried to explain the plot to him. Later I asked him: 'Did you understand what was going on?'

His reply meant more than he knew. 'Yes - Grandma is Jesus' Juliet.'

He had understood, without theological ramifications that Jesus' love for His own is like that of a bridegroom for his bride.

* * *

A child sat in his grandfather's arms as both of them looked in a mirror. 'Did God make us both?' he asked. 'Yes, of course.'

'Well, He does a much better job nowadays. He's had lots of practice! Now He doesn't put wrinkles on faces.'

God-improving?

Well, strange as it may seem to us, He says so about Himself: 'I will . . . do better unto you than at your

beginnings' (EZE 36:11 AV).

The fact is, that God has given this generation more knowledge about health and much greater possibilities of learning than previous generations - at least, in the

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Western world. May our young people respond by being more faithful to Him!

* * *

Linna was six years old. She asked a newly-married man, 'Do you love your bride?' 'Yes, of course,' was the quick rejoinder.

'That's good, because I imagine it must be awful to be married to a woman you don't love.'

The only basis for marriage is love between two people. Divorce is often the result when two people pledged to love and care for each other, break their vows and abandon their commitments - unlike God, who keeps covenant with His bride, the Church, and is grieved when she is unfaithful (MTT 23:37-38).

* * *

'Tell me something about Jesus, in whom you say you believe,' a man enquired of a young child.

The boy answered simply. 'I'm too small to say something great about Him.'

He did not know that he had repeated, almost verbatim, what Justin Martyr had said when asked to explain the mysteries of Christ. Justin was beheaded in the year AD 155.

* * *

'God is gigantic,' Alex pronounced, with childish finality.

I thought of John Mazzuconi, the Italian missionary who died a martyr's death in New Guinea at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Mazzuconi wrote, 'It is wrong to call the ocean immense. I traversed it in three months in a small ship. If one owned this whole world, he would own something smaller than a

grain of sand. I wonder why so many fight to have it? Only One is truly immense, and He is eternal.'

* * *

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Eusebius and John Chrysostom were both among those who praised the very young Christian child Barulas, who was brought before the heathen governor Asclepiades and asked: 'Which is better: to adore the one God who made heaven and earth, or a multitude of gods?'

The child replied, 'God is an almighty being. If there were many gods, they would become powerless, because the might of one would cancel out the might of another. God can be only one. Your gods are frauds.'

The tyrant demanded, 'Who has taught you these things?'

He replied, 'My mother, who was herself taught by God.'

The child was flogged and beheaded.

His mother herself carried him to the place of execution, and without shedding a tear, kissed him; and, telling him to remember her in heaven, gave him to the executioner.

* * *

We should not forget that it is to a child that we owe the writing of the most celebrated book about the holy Trinity.

Augustine was walking on the seashore meditating on this great mystery, about which he intended to write a book; but he could not develop his thoughts clearly. He was so frustrated that he was almost inclined to abandon the project.

Suddenly, he heard weeping. Running towards the sound, he found a child in tears. He asked what was the matter.

'Look what a big hole I have dug in the sand,' the child sobbed, 'but I cannot put the whole ocean in it. Can you?'

Augustine interpreted the question as a message sent to him by God Himself. Challenged by it, he wrote the book, but he

wrote it with great modesty, realizing that God is limitless and we are very small. Like the child on

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the seashore, we can know only a very little about what - and Who - lies beyond.

* * *

During a science lesson in school a pupil asked, 'Why did God make the earth?'

Before the teacher had a chance to reply, a seven-year-old boy gave the answer: 'So that people would have something to stand on.'

He spoke a profound truth. This is why God gave mankind the Law, the prophets, the Bible - even His own Son.

* * *

A Pentecostal preacher patiently explained to Alex, who was then five, the doctrines of his Church. He did so with fervour, repeating again and again that this was the only correct doctrine and that all others were heresy.

I wanted to spare this preacher, by giving him the impression that he was wasting his efforts on a child who could not understand. So I asked Alex, 'Do you know what the word "heresy" means?'

He replied straightforwardly. 'Sure I know! When you have the right faith, you are happy. When heresy arrives, your head begins to ache.'

The way of salvation is simple: 'Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.' Beware of things that cause headaches!

* * *

Listening carefully to a narrative of the events led up to the crucifixion, Amelie at six concluded: The disciples in Gethsemane were right when they decided to flee. Peter was admonished for trying to help. So why should the others have stayed? If they were in the wrong, why did Jesus choose them in the first place?'

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Many a preacher has decried the weakness of the disciples in deserting Jesus on that dark night in Gethsemane. Curiously, the Gospels contain not one word of criticism or rebuke.

* * *

The distinguished psychologist Viktor Frankl was asked by his six-year-old daughter, 'Why do we speak of the "good" Lord?'

'Some weeks ago,' he reminded her, 'you had measles. The good Lord made you completely better.'

His daughter frowned. It was the wrong answer. 'But don't forget, Daddy, it was Him that sent me the measles in the first place!'

Children are not easily taken in by religious cant and cheap propaganda for God. They take His words seriously - 'Come now, let us reason together' (ISA 1:18), which means that both sides have a say.

When children ask us why innocent people suffer, we have to confess to them that we simply do not have an explanation for this mystery. They do not respond to theological speculation about the whys and wherefores of pain.

Can a guinea pig in a laboratory understand its many sufferings? Is it aware that it serves the good of higher beings? Our sufferings may be of great value for the instruction of angels.

Let us not be afraid to admit how limited our human knowledge is. Children's questions lead to a theology that compels us to face up to our ignorance of many aspects of reality.

God is omniscient. We are not.

* * *

Six-year-old Alex had been throwing sand at other children, and as punishment had to report every day to the school principal. He asked his mother to write a letter of apology on his behalf, promising that it would never

happen again. With this, the matter was settled. His father attempted to impress upon him the lesson to be learned from the episode. 'If you sin, you are hooked.' To which the reply came, 'But with promises, you can get off the hook!'

The prodigal son of Jesus' parable got away with even less. He promised nothing, but just uttered a few words that showed his repentance. It was enough. He had a loving father.

* * *

Somebody asked a child what one must do before receiving forgiveness of sin. The candid reply was, 'Sin!' There could not have been a better answer.

That is why the Catholic Church sings '~O felix culpa~' - 'O blessed sin, which gave us such a Saviour.'

* * *

E. Stanley Jones, the renowned missionary to India, told a story about a child whose teacher asked him, 'What would you like for Christmas?'

Looking up at a picture of his father, who was dead, the child said wistfully, 'I would like my father to walk out of the frame and be with us again.'

Children love their parents by instinct. When you stop loving your parents, you have stopped being what Jesus wants you to be - childlike.

* * *

One child asked another: 'What does it mean, to be a real man? Does it hurt?'

The other child replied, 'It hurts a great deal. Grandma is a real woman, and look how many wrinkles she has! But only unreal people think that is ugly. I love her!'

* * *

A teacher once asked her class, 'What does the Bible contain?'

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A girl replied: 'In our Bible there are a lot of dates, marriages, deaths, newspaper clippings, a birthday card, a Christmas card, and that's about all.'

Children who are brought up in homes where that is all they can find in the Bible are in great spiritual danger.

What is in your Bible?

* * *

A five-year-old boy had recited his usual bedtime prayer: 'Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep; If I should die-' Here he stopped, and asked, 'Daddy, what's dying like?'

'It's dark,' replied the father, for that was all he knew. The little questioner remained awake in the dark, sobbing uncontrollably.

Another child had a father who sent him to Sunday school. He knew that his mother had a terrible fear of dying. One Sunday he came home from church in great excitement.

'Mother! You don't have to be afraid of dying any more, because Jesus went through the tomb and left a light behind Him!'

Jesus submitted to the power of death, and was entombed. But He had the power of resurrection, and He promises us this same experience if we commit our lives to Him.

'Death' is the name given to a deep sleep, by those who do not know about resurrection. But Jesus has the keys to the grave. He knows how to give life to those who die. The proof lies in His empty tomb.

* * *

A child who had just said his morning prayers was asked by his mother, 'What did you pray about?'

'I told Him to rest,' he said. 'I told Him to sleep in

peace, because I'm awake now.'

Love calls for reciprocity. Jesus says, 'Come unto Me,

and I will give you rest.' May we not say the same thing to Him, with all our hearts?

* * *

A Christian girl was once asked by a friend, 'How do you begin to love Jesus? I don't love Him - I can't see any reason why I should. I can't make myself love Him.'

The girl replied, 'Don't try! Just repeat to yourself "Jesus loves me," over and over again. It was through Him that the flowers, the birds, and everything beautiful were created; He went through a lifetime of suffering and died on the cross in great sorrow, for me, He has prepared for me a heaven of exquisite beauty; He offers me forgiveness for all my sins and a life full of joy. He loves me, for sure! Never try to love Him. Just say again and again, "He loves me."'

Later the other girl confided, 'I love Him.'

What a model of Christian witness! And what a sermon in miniature!

* * *

A father once noticed that his son was reading the Bible a great deal, and he asked him why. 'I'm preparing for my final exam,' he said. His motive was a good one.

* * *

Little Alex was asked, 'How would you make a painting of love?'

'Two people kissing,' he answered.

'How would you paint death?'

'A man lying in a coffin, with a red cross on it. The cross saves.'

'And how would you paint life?'

'I'd paint a man and the sun.'

It is not just the things that children say that are remarkable, but also their drawings. Those reproduced

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below were drawn by a four-year-old girl whose father was convicted of raping her repeatedly.

[illustration appears at this point in the book]

In her drawings the middle part of both bodies is omitted. It was abhorrent to her to think about that part of the body. The father has no legs; they are replaced by phallic symbols. She has scrawled over his face, reflecting the anger she feels towards him.

If a child knew me as I really am, how would he or she draw me?

* * *

J. Allen Blair told of a proud Sunday school teacher, who was attempting to explain to children how they should practise the virtue of obedience.

As he strode up and down the platform, everything about his outward appearance betrayed his self-esteem - his head was held high, his chest was thrust out, his gestures were commanding.

'Now, children,' he boomed, pausing to fix them with a stare, 'why do people call me a Christian?' He was

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clearly expecting somebody to respond with 'Because you are obedient to Christ.'

But a boy raised his hand and ventured, 'People call you a Christian because they don't know you well enough.'

Little children find it hard to disguise their true feelings, especially when they are talking about other people. Telling falsehoods is something that they learn later, often out of fear of punishment (though sometimes what is thought to be lying is in fact the child's imagination).

Adults tend to be much less candid in what they say to each other's face. Instead they learn the virtue of 'tact,' which is shown up as hypocrisy when they gossip about an individual behind his or her back.

It is sometimes necessary to meet evil head-on, with a child's directness. John the apostle, who wrote so extensively and so beautifully about love, nevertheless had this to say about Diotrephes ('who loves to be first'): 'I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us' (3 John 10).

In the words of a wise man, '[There is] a time to be silent and a time to speak' (ECC 3:7). Children's theology 'tells it like it is'!

* * *

Children know how to apply what they have learned, but sometimes they do it in unexpected ways.

A boy complained to his mother that his stomach ached, and she said, 'It's probably because your stomach is empty. I'll make you a snack.'

Not long afterwards, a pastor visited the house. He mentioned that he had a headache, upon which the child observed: 'Probably, Pastor, it's because your head is empty. You should feed it with something.'

* * *

p055 ..... AnswerS

When pupils in a school in England were asked to name the person with whom they would most like to be stuck in a lift, a girl answered, 'A lift specialist!'

In a very real sense, we are all 'stuck' - not in a lift, but on a planet bent on self-destruction. We go through life like a train that roars through the darkness towards an unknown destination. The problems of our own lives are already too complicated for us, but when they are multiplied by the threats of nuclear war, the population explosion, pollution, increasing immorality, crime and violence, they are too much to bear. Perplexed and afraid, we can see no way out.

Jesus is a specialist in human tragedy. His was the most tragic of all human lives. Poor, oppressed, rejected, scorned, spat upon, whipped, crucified, buried - He offered the only solution to the world's problems: the power of His resurrection.

Let us prefer the Specialist to anybody else!

* * *

An atheist once said, in reply to a child who had claimed to be a Christian, 'I will give you a pound if you can show me where your God is!'

The child replied, 'I only have a fifty-pence piece, but I will give it to you if you can show me a place where God is not.'

* * *

Addressing a group of schoolboys, a bishop gave the following example of 'moral courage': 'A boy in a dormitory, who, in front of everybody, kneels and says his prayers before hopping into bed.'

He asked the boys if they could think of another example.

'Sir,' a voice piped up, 'a bishop in a dormitory full of bishops, who hops into bed ~without~ saying his prayers.'

Bishops and prelates rarely have that courage! But biblical authors like David, Job and Jeremiah had the

courage to complain to God, using words that to us might seem blasphemous. We ourselves would probably have suppressed such

thoughts, and the result would have been that they would have become submerged and unresolved within us.

Children teach us to have the courage not only to tell God that we love Him, but also to argue with Him. In the words of a hymn, He has 'the answer to all our questionings.' By the same token, He will surely accept us when the questions are hard ones.

p057 ..... Prayers

[illustration appears at this point in the book]

Nadia reached up and handed him the flowers.

I was once a guest in a Christian home. I was rather depressed, brooding about all the things that I do not possess.

The children's bedtime arrived. A boy who was not four years old prayed. 'I thank You, God, for my hair, my face, my eyebrows, my eyelids, both my eyes, my cheeks, my nose, my lips, my teeth, my tongue ...' On and on he continued, until he had itemized everything down to the soles of his feet. He finished his prayer with the request 'Make my Daddy and our guest happy.'

His prayer was answered, as I realized that I possessed

p058 ..... From the Lips of Children

all the same things that the child did - and mine came in a bigger size! I was also aware of other aspects of my being, about which he had not yet learned. But I had never recited them all in a prayer of thankfulness. 'A little child shall lead them' - even in prayer.

* * *

In Sunday school a pastor showed the children a telephone. He explained, 'You speak on the telephone to people whom you cannot see. It's the same with prayer. You call God, and He listens. Don't be distressed that you can't see Him. We speak to people we cannot see, every day.'

A boy asked, 'Pastor, what is God's telephone number?'

The pastor could have replied something like this: 'It is a five-figure number: repentance, faith in Jesus' sacrifice, love, truth and righteousness.'

* * *

During a prayer meeting a restless child continued to misbehave after several warnings. Finally his exasperated mother said to him, 'Come outside with me. You're going to get a spanking!'

As he left the boy called out to the group, 'Pray for me! Mother hits hard!'

Impressed by his plea, his mother decided not to spank him. When they came back, he greeted the believers with: 'You see? Prayer works!'

* * *

A girl who had been naughty was sent to bed and advised to pray to God that He would take away her bad temper.

She knelt and prayed: 'Dear God, please take away my bad temper. And Mother's.'

We always need to pray from both sides of a situation.

* * *

p059 ..... Prayers

A child prayed, 'Dear God, please convince Father that he should not spank me any more. You will remember that I have already asked You to do this. How many times do I have to tell You the same thing?'

We can take risks in prayer.

* * *

I overheard a girl praying 'Dear God, be nice and obey your mother.' I remembered that there was a time when God was on earth in the person of Jesus Christ.

It cannot have been easy either for the virgin Mary or for Joseph to have such a child. I wonder, did His uniqueness ever seem to them to be merely self-will? The fact that there was some distance between the child and His parents can be inferred from His words to His mother when He was twelve years old, and she had sought Him for three days: 'Why were you searching for Me?' (LUK 2:49).

He was obedient, in His own way. But when His mother asked a special favour from Him at the wedding in Cana, He answered, 'Dear woman, why do you involve Me?' Perhaps when He was small, Joseph might occasionally have said to Him, 'Please obey your mother.'

* * *

In a morning prayer, little Dorothy said, 'Thank God, for this beautiful morning. My dog will enjoy it.'

She had a breadth of vision. The Bible's vision is even broader. God feeds the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, so satisfying their needs. He also makes the sun shine and the rain fall on the evil as well as the good.

Let us, like this little child, appreciate the joys given to others, whether or not we share in them.

* * *

p060 ..... From the Lips of Children

I once stayed in the home of a farmer, whose three-year-old Carlitos always prayed for 'Daddy, Mommy, Grandma, the sheep, the goats, the guinea-hen, the dogs, and the cat.'

Do we pray like that, in detail - or in mere generalities, like 'God bless the missionaries'?

Jesus prayed for Peter by name.

* * *

When he was only five, Alex prayed, 'Dear God, take good care of Father, Mother - and also of Yourself. If anything happens to You, we'll all be in trouble.'

It was not a unique prayer. Peter the disciple prayed that Jesus would not go to His death. He was afraid that their entire group would be in trouble without Him.

We can all pray not only ~to~ God, but also ~for~ God - that His name might be hallowed, His kingdom come, and His will be done.

* * *

A father and his little son sat down at the counter of a small cafeteria for a bite to eat. 'We'll have a silent prayer,' said the adult, and bowed his head.

Minutes passed. The boy's eyes remained closed. When he finally looked up, his father asked him, 'What were you praying about for so long?'

'How could I know how long my prayer was?' asked the son. 'You told me it was to be a silent prayer!'

He may well have known more about silent prayer than his father did. A silent prayer is one in which not only the lips, but also the mind keeps silent. In mental prayer one should close the mind's door and let no distracting thoughts enter- not even the thought of time passing.

The first disciples met behind locked doors out fear of the Jews, who could only destroy their bodies. So how much more carefully should we lock the door when we pray silently, so that no thievish idea may enter which

might destroy the soul. The Lord can enter through locked doors; and we desire no other guest.

Mental prayer means a time that is spent in the embrace of Jesus, our heavenly Bridegroom. And what bride, in such an ecstasy, could tell you how long it has lasted?

* * *

During the night a loud knocking sounded at the door of the Danielsky family in Russia.

'Open up! It's the police!'

The mother whispered quickly, 'What should I do with the Bible? They'll take it away.'

'Open the door quickly- or we'll break it down!'

Piotr, the little boy, had a sudden idea. He took the Bible and placed it under the blanket on his sister's doll's bed. To Nadia, who was even smaller than he was, he whispered, 'Don't pay any attention to the people who are coming in. Just carry on playing with the doll, in her bed.' Quietly, he prayed, 'Lord, please keep the Bible safe for us.'

It was many hours later that the police left, taking with them their plunder of hymnals and other books. When they had gone, Nadia retrieved the Bible from the doll's bed. 'The credit belongs to Piotr,' she said.

Piotr replied, 'Let us thank God. I prayed that they would not find the Bible, and He heard my prayer.'

May we all cherish the Bible as tenderly as Piotr did!

* * *

Because of his faith in Christ, Nadia's father was in a Soviet jail. She was walking one day with her grieving mother through a meadow.

Turning to her, Nadia said thoughtfully, 'Be at peace, Mummy. God, who takes care of these flowers, will also care for Daddy.' She picked a few flowers and prayed: 'Dear God, please make it possible for Daddy to have these flowers.'

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The next day she accompanied her mother to the police station to leave a parcel of food for the prisoner. Nadia smiled at the officer on duty. 'Do you have any children?' she asked.

He looked down at her. She was very like the young daughter he had recently buried.

Nadia reached up and handed him the flowers that she had picked, saying, 'Uncle, please give these to my Daddy. You will,

surely, won't you?'

The torturer was no match for the little girl. The prisoner received the flowers.

God does indeed answer prayer.

* * *

It was Nadia's birthday. 'Lord Jesus,' she prayed, 'last year on this day my father brought me a bar of chocolate' - chocolate is a luxury in Russia - 'but now, he is in jail. You are my only hope. Please bring me some chocolate.'

Larissa, her older sister, rebuked her. 'We are only allowed to pray for absolute necessities, not for dainties.'

Her mother agreed. 'We can only ask for food when we are hungry, or for clothes when our old ones are worn out. We can also pray for health if we are ill. But I don't think that chocolate is a necessity of life.'

There was a knock at the door. It was their pastor. He had known nothing of the birthday, but something had made him buy chocolate for the children.

It was a lesson for Nadia's family, and for the rest of us. Our God is a bountiful God! Sometimes He takes delight in answering prayers for things which are not absolute necessities.

* * *

Once, when Mihai was small, we left him with a babysitter. Before going to bed, he prayed with her. He asked God to bring us back home immediately.

After the prayer, he said to the babysitter, 'Please open the door. My parents will be waiting there.'

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We actually were! I had discovered that I had forgotten to take any money with me.

Mihai was triumphant. 'I ~knew~ my prayer would be answered!'

May we have such childlike faith.

* * *

When he was a boy, Robert Louis Stevenson remarked to his mother, 'Mama, one cannot be good without praying.' 'How do you know, Robert?' 'Because,' he said with an air of great finality, 'I've tried.'

It might be valuable, I suggest, to try a childish experiment. Decide to spend one whole day without prayer. Then, in the evening, examine yourself and see whether you have succeeded in being good without it (Be honest!).

* * *

A little fellow was sent to bed early because he had been naughty. Soon he reappeared. 'I've been thinking about what I did,' he told his mother. 'And I said a prayer.'

'That's fine - if you asked your heavenly Father to make you good.'

'Oh no, I said something else; I asked Him to make my mother put up with me as I am.'

In the Greek New Testament, ~aphiemi~ means 'to forgive' and 'to leave.' In the Lord's prayer, the text can be read either as 'Forgive us our trespasses,' or 'Leave us our trespasses.'

Each of us is a cluster of selves. One part of me wants to be forgiven, while another part is very much attached to a given sin and wants to be allowed to keep it.

One voice in us asks the Father to make us into saints; another says, 'Put up with me, just as I am.'

As adults, we repress this second voice. A child, lacking our inhibitions, openly expresses this other side

of his being. It is better to expose and then expunge our self-centred attitudes than to repress them and deny that they exist.

The Psalmist said, 'I ... did not cover up my iniquity ... and you forgave the guilt of my sin' (PSA 32:5).

* * *

When she was asked whether she prayed every day, a little girl replied, 'Not quite every day- some days, I don't need anything.'

She was right not to make prayer just a routine. But if we have nothing to ask God for, then let us thank Him for that! And let us praise Him continually.

* * *

At a family gathering, little Alex prayed aloud as we knelt together. 'God is great; God is good; and I thank Him for the food.'

My wife gently chided him. 'Why did you pray like that? It's not time for a meal.'

'That's not my fault,' Alex responded stoutly. 'I've said grace, now it's up to you to give me something to eat!'

He had touched on a profound truth. It is written in Scripture, 'Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see' (HEB 11:1). Let us thank God for His blessings whether or not we have yet received them. Then it is His responsibility to ensure that we receive them - and He will not fail.

Jesus said, 'Have faith in God ... If anyone ... does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him' (MRK 11:22-23).

* * *

The well-known Christian psychiatrist, Paul Tournier, tells how as a small boy he used to dream of doing some great deed.

With a toy construction set, he began to build a strange machine, bristling with springs and gears. One day, he confided his ambition to his young

sister. The machine was to be capable of creating life.

She asked him to explain how it would work, but Paul was vague about that. He admitted that he would have to rely on prayer. He would pray hard, and God would work through the machine.

'If that is so,' exclaimed his sister, 'what are all the gears for?'

What are our many gears for?

Once we have prayed, we must be patient. Even if it seems impossible, we must quietly put up with our impatience and allow God to work. He hears us, and he answers us.

* * *

Billy Graham has five children. One day at family prayers he was jolted by his son Franklin, who interrupted his father's exposition of Scripture with the words, 'Daddy, let's not talk so much – let's pray more.'

Even a child understood that talking to God is more valuable than mere human talk.

But how we love our own talk!

* * *

A friend of ours died in circumstances that caused his family to doubt his salvation.

Amelie, who was then seven, comforted them with these words: 'I'm positive that he is in heaven. He was very nice to me. I prayed for him. I said to Jesus, "God promised Rahab, who did a favour for some Jews who were in trouble, that she and all her house would be saved [cf. Josh. 2]. This man belongs to my household. He is in my heart." There is no doubt that he is saved!'

When Jesus saw the faith of the men who brought the paralytic to Him (not the faith of the paralytic himself) then, we are told, He honoured them with a miracle of healing on their friends' behalf.

* * *

Allenby was the British general who freed Jerusalem

from Turkish rule during World War I, without firing a single shot.

When he was a boy he used to repeat his evening prayers after his mother. They always ended with these words: 'Dear Lord, we would not forget Thine ancient people Israel. Hasten the day when Israel will again be Thy people and will be restored to Thy favour and their land.'

What joy it must have given the God of Israel, to hear an English boy pray such a prayer! In His good providence, God allowed Allenby to become the man to fulfill his childhood prayers.

* * *

Dwight L. Moody, the noted evangelist, used to go into saloons with a little boy named Tommy, who really knew how to pray. If Moody's exhortations met with a cool reception, Tommy would perch on a barrel of wine and begin praying aloud. He then kept on praying until he had 'prayed out' all the drunkards. Many were converted through his simple, yet effective, ministry.

* * *

A little girl prayed, 'Dear Lord, please make all the bad people good and all the good people nice.'

We can learn from children how to wrap goodness in cheerfulness.

* * *

When a Rumanian child heard, for the first time, that a book exists in which are contained the names of all who will enter Paradise, he knelt and prayed: 'God, please write me down. My name is Rada Ionescu. I'd better spell it for you, so that there will be no mistake.' And he carefully pronounced each letter.

Then he added, 'Other people may have the same name as me. So, please note my name and address, and my date of birth, to

avoid any confusion.'

Are we as precise and careful in our own relationships with God?

* * *

p067 ..... Prayers

An eight-year-old boy in America prayed, 'Father, my Daddy sometimes lets me sit on his lap and steer the car - but he puts both hands over mine. Please, put Your hands over those of the President as he rules our country to keep it safe.'

The prayers of young children are often full of insight.

* * *

A child knew he had done something very wrong. He had told his mother a lie. So he prayed, 'O God, make it not to have happened.'

This is not such an unreasonable prayer as it might seem. God can undo events for us. We regret having committed a sinful deed. We know it was as red as scarlet. Remorse cannot undo something done. Repentance obtains forgiveness, but how can the lie, murder, adultery, blasphemy or whatever it might be, be erased from history?

God can do even this. He makes sins that are scarlet as white as snow (ISA 1:18).

When Jesus changed water into wine at Cana, it was into the best wine, which is old wine. The liquid He gave to the wedding guests was not something which had formerly been water and had suddenly become wine. His miracle was profounder than that. In place of the water was something that had always been wine.

For King Hezekiah, God caused the sundial to go back ten degrees (ISA 38:8). Suppose this happened at 6 p.m. Miraculously, it was again 8 a.m. on the same day. He had said rash words to his wife, he might have been harsh with a servant, he might have issued a bad decree - but it was as if things had never happened.

God gave back to Hezekiah the day that had passed. In the spiritual realm this is possible. The same can be true of us in our daily lives. The child was right in praying 'God, make my lie not to have happened.'

p068 ..... From the Lips of Children

[illustration appears at this point in the book]

"Look, your heads are bent! You must straighten up too."

A Christian child, aged ten, had been brought up on the Bible and its teachings about love. But there was a great deal of quarrelling in his family.

One day, following a harsh exchange of words between his parents, he approached his father. 'Daddy,' he said, 'please take me to an oculist, and to an ear specialist.'

'Why, son?' 'Well, there must be something wrong with me. I can't

p069 ..... Interpretations

see the things I hear in the Bible, and I can't hear the things I see.'

Many of us would have to say the same. Jesus is the Word who became flesh. Our faith must be seen also in the flesh.

* * *

'Alex, get in the car,' urged his mother. 'I'm taking you to the doctor.'

'Why?' asked the five-year-old.

'Because of the cough.'

They came from the doctor's surgery to my house. Alex was happy and carefree. 'The doctor hasn't got a cough,' he told me. 'We went to see him, and he's OK!'

Hearing him say this, I told him once again the story of

my conversion. Somebody who loved my soul brought me to Jesus, though I felt no need of Him. The friend told me that I must come to Him because of my sin. But I emerged happy from that first meeting with Jesus. I had discovered that He has no sin. He is clean and pure. This gave me a joy that has lasted for half a century.

If Jesus had committed a single sin, He could never have helped a single sinner. But because He was without any sin, the sinner can have confidence that all his transgressions are forgiven.

The last word is with Alex: 'So it's the same with Jesus as with my doctor! If you are taken to him with a cough, you are glad that he hasn't got a cough himself.'

* * *

When he was six, Alex sat looking at a picture of Golgotha. 'They killed the one who was good, and they killed those who were bad. But this is wrong. They ought not to have killed the robbers like that. Jesus? Yes. They were right to crucify Him, because His death opened up the gates of heaven for us. But robbers should only be locked up.'

p070 ..... From the Lips of Children

Do we judge and speak evil of good and bad men?

* * *

A little French girl named Bernadette told her priest and her whole village that the virgin Mary had repeatedly appeared to her. This happened in Lourdes, and since then the village has become a world-famous place of pilgrimage.

Catholics believe in the objective reality of Bernadette's vision; Protestants would prefer to say that she had a subjective experience, because she was used to venerating Mary. These differing opinions, however, do not alter the value of the following episode.

An unbeliever asked Bernadette, 'What kind of expression did the Virgin have? Was she frowning? Was she sad? Did she smile?'

Bernadette replied, 'She was smiling.'

'Then show me how she smiled.'

Bernadette, so the story goes, smiled with an inimitable expression of mingled compassion, tolerance, grief for sin, painful surprise, and hopeful expectation.

The unbeliever fell to his knees. 'Now I believe!'

I have myself witnessed a similar incident in jail.

Have you ever looked attentively at the smile of a child who has a personal relationship with the Saviour? In that smile, all heaven is mirrored.

* * *

A girl of ten learned that the gospel must be preached to every creature, and she came to the conclusion that this must also apply to stalks of wheat. Were they not created by God?

But what should she preach to them?

She went into the field, and shouted, 'The Bible commands us to make His paths straight. Look, your heads are bent! You must straighten up, too!'

We should call upon everyone to 'straighten up.' And

the stalks of wheat? They bow as a mark of gratitude to the earth, for nurturing them with water and minerals.

* * *

My wife and I are Jewish Christians. When Mihai was five, we took him to the synagogue on ~Simhat Tora~ (literally, 'the rejoicing in the Law'), which is the festival commemorating the giving of the Law on Sinai. The scroll of the Law is taken around the synagogue, and the people, especially the children, press forward to kiss it.

When the procession came near us, Mihai asked me 'Should I kiss the scroll?'

'It's up to you,' I said. I had previously explained to him the significance of the day and the ceremony.

The rabbi approached, and lowered the scroll so that Mihai could kiss it.

'Thank you,' said the child, 'but I will not kiss it.'

The procession came to a halt, and hundreds of pairs of eyes focused on him in consternation. Mihai, by now extremely tense, repeated his words: 'I will not kiss it.'

When the service was over, the president of the synagogue, who was a friend of mine, asked Mihai, 'Why did you do that?'

'Sir,' he said, 'God has given us mothers for kissing. The Law of God was given to be read and obeyed, not to be kissed.'

In Orthodox Churches also, the Gospel, luxuriously bound, is paraded so that all the communicants can kiss it. Few ever read it, and fewer attempt to obey it.

* * *

There is a Jewish legend that Terah, Abraham's father, was a manufacturer of idols. He made small wooden figures of the gods and sent his son to the market place to sell them.

But as soon as the boy Abraham found a buyer, he would say to him, 'I can see that you are an elderly person. Perhaps you are sixty or seventy years old.

So how can this god which my father made yesterday possibly help you?'

So he returned home at the end of the day with his merchandise unsold, and his father would beat him.

One day, he decided to test the reality of these gods for himself. In Terah's home was a chapel containing a series of wooden gods, with the figure of the chief god in the centre.

Little Abraham asked his mother to prepare a fine stew, which he planned to offer as a sacrifice to these so-called 'heavenly powers.'

He presented the food to the chief god, and knelt before it to see what would happen. The hours went by and still the god made no move. Finally Abraham took an axe and smashed all the gods except the chief one, into whose arms he placed the axe.

His father returned and found the idols hacked to pieces. He asked what had happened, and the boy replied, 'I presented some food to them. They quarrelled over who should have it, and the big fellow killed the smaller ones.'

'Don't be stupid,' said his father. 'They can't see, or speak, or move.'

'Then they are no gods,' replied Abraham, and with a rapid movement he destroyed the last idol.

Then he wandered far from his father's house, wondering all the time who had made the world.

He saw the moon rising, and said to himself, 'This must be he!'; and he adored it. But after a few hours, the moon set and the sun rose. 'Aha, this must be he!' he cried, and so he adored the sun.

But the sun also set. Then he thought, 'There must be someone who alternates the sun and the moon.'

He passed by a house and noticed a number of white linen cloths in the garden. Later, returning by the same road, he saw that the cloths were no longer white but many-coloured. There was no one to be seen but he deduced: 'There must be a man in the house. He is

probably a dyer, and he has coloured the cloths. Likewise, in the heavens I can see no one, but I can see the colour of the sky change every day. There must be an invisible Master!'

And Abraham became a worshipper of the invisible God.

* * *

When Amelie was nine, she came to me one day with a serious question: 'Grandpa, are we allowed to say something when we know that God is wrong, or do we have to swallow our questions and keep quiet?'

I replied, 'Great men of God, like David and Job, spoke frankly with God when they sometimes had the impression that He was in the wrong. You can do that too. But what is it that has made you dissatisfied?'

'Two things. Firstly, He ought not to have given commandments. Daddy gives commandments as well. One should only give advice. Secondly, surely God was wrong when He said "Love your neighbour as yourself." We don't love ourselves very well. We torment ourselves and make our lives unhappy. If we were to love our neighbours like that, it would be awful for them! We have to love them ~better~.'

As regards Amelie's first criticism of God, she is correct; but the fault lies not with Him but with the translators of the Bible. What we call 'Commandments' are not commandments at all, but expressions of desires and enablings. The Hebrew language does not use the imperative, but the so-called 'jussive' tense. The prohibitions do not begin with the imperative (which in the Hebrew is ~lo~), but with ~al~, which conveys a desire.

A correct translation would be, 'Please do not kill,' 'Please do not steal,' and so on. Or, more to the point, 'If you love Me, you will not kill,' and so on.

As regards Amelie's second criticism, she is right again. To love your neighbour only as well as you love yourself would be inadequate. Jesus taught a better way:

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'As I have loved you, so you must love one another' (JHN 13:34). There is no greater love than to give your life for another.

* * *

After a sermon on obedience, a mother sought to reinforce the message for her child: 'You heard what the pastor said - you must

obey your parents.'

The child replied, 'You seem to have missed the other part of the sermon. Are you obedient to father?'

We all have filters; we often hear in sermons only what suits our interests and inclinations.

* * *

A little boy in New York wrote the following letter to God.

> Dear God, if You do all these things, You are pretty busy. Now, here is my question: What is the best time for me to talk to You? I know You are always listening - but when do You listen to New York?

Perhaps it had occurred to the child that God does not listen to every place at every time. For certain places, it can be too late for God to listen. It is now too late for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Capernaum and Bethsaida, just as there was a 'too late' for Esau after he had lost the blessing.

It is better to make arrangements ahead of time. God longs for human beings to communicate with Him. He is so anxious for us to do so that He says, 'Before they call, I will answer' (ISA 65:24).

* * *

A group of children were watching the space shuttle ~Discovery~ taking off like a ball of fire.

A little boy shouted, 'God is putting a new star in the sky!'

p075 ..... Interpretations

You can smile and say, 'This is a star that will last only a few days.' But all stars have only a finite existence. They appear, grow and die, like everything else in our knowable universe.

But there is a God who has put them into the sky. He also sends aloft the ~Discovery~, according to laws that He has

ordained, and through the medium of human hands and minds which are also His creation.

Children grasp this and go straight to the First Cause, just as the Bible does:

'In the beginning, God' (GEN 1:1).

* * *

Amelie was asked a riddle. A man on a river bank has a wolf, a lamb, and a cabbage. He wants to get them safely on to the other bank, and the condition is that he can take only one at a time in his boat. How is he to do it? If he takes the wolf first, the sheep will eat the cabbage. If he takes the cabbage first, the wolf will eat the sheep. He can take the sheep first, but on the next crossing he will have to take either the cabbage or the wolf; in both cases, one of the objects will be eaten on the opposite shore.

Some of the adults who were present hazarded a few guesses. Finally Amelie said, 'We should hasten the Lord's return through prayer and preaching, for when that happens the lion and the sheep will be friends. The cabbage will be safe, too, because the kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink' (cf. ROM 14:17).

For her, the Lord's return was a certainty, upon which she counted to solve the problems of life. Sadly, it rarely enters into the calculations of adults. That is why He will return for the children of God; for children He counts, He is important. 1

* * *

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1. If you want to find the original solution of the riddle, remember that what is taken to the far bank by boat can also be brought back!

p076 ..... From the Lips of Children

A four-year-old toddler had his own version of the pledge to the American flag:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States, and to the Republic for which it stands; one nation under God, indivisible,

with liberty and Jesus [instead of 'justice'] for all.

* * *

One morning, a boy said to his father, 'I dreamed about God last night.' 'What was He doing in your dream?'

'He was locked in a cupboard. He was begging me to let Him out. What does it mean, Daddy?'

The father could have answered that when we shut Jesus out of our lives, it is as if we were locking Him in a cupboard, and all His powers of love and goodness with Him. Let us unlock the door, and let Him enter our lives.

The Bible uses a slightly different image: Jesus says, in effect, 'Behold, I stand at the door of your heart and knock. If you let Me in [He never enters uninvited], I will come in and eat with you, and share My bounties with you' (cf. REV 3:20).

* * *

In Russia some children were taken from parents who had taught them about God. In the atheistic boarding school to which they were sent, they were given a doll.

When they thought they were unobserved, the children decided to play at 'prayer meetings.' But they found that the doll's knees did not bend and so it could not kneel.

One of the children went to the teacher. 'Please can I have another doll? This one is plain stupid.'

'Why do you say that?'

'Well, everyone who does not kneel before God must be stupid.'

It was a witness to the Communist teacher.

* * *

p077 ..... Interpretations

A sixteen-year-old Arab father took his baby girl to an Arab orphanage in Israel. Her fourteen-year-old mother had died in

childbirth. If the child had been a boy, the father's family would have looked after it, but they had no use for a girl.

The young father visited the child, Muna, regularly. As she grew older she looked forward joyfully to his visits, and would wait for him to arrive, crying 'Baba [Daddy] comes!'

Every time he came she clung to him, begging him not to leave, or at least to take her with him.

Eventually he remarried and decided not to visit any more. His new wife did not want the child, and he could not bear his daughter's weeping.

Muna was devastated. She refused to eat or drink, and sat at the door, repeating over and over again, 'Baba comes.' No one could make her give up her self-imposed fast. Finally she had to be force-fed.

Still she continued to insist, 'Baba comes!' A missionary tried to tell her about a heavenly father, but she would not listen. One Baba had abandoned her. Why have another, who would probably be no better?

Fortunately the missionary was able to convince her that the heavenly Father is an entirely different kind of Baba, a Baba whose love never fails. Muna became once more a happy child.

Too many of us accept the notion of a heavenly Father who might forsake us or let us down. Who needs a Father like that? Have we not been forsaken by enough humans? Why open ourselves up to another bitter experience?

But this picture of the heavenly Father is a false one. He loves to the uttermost. He runs to meet the returning prodigal. He gives him the finest robe. He kills the fatted calf in his honour. Then He says, 'What more can I do, to prove I love you?' (cf. ISA 5:1-4).

* * *

p078 ..... From the Lips of Children

When Mihai was four or five, he asked me, 'How was Jesus born?'

He had heard the story many times, but I told him again

how Jesus was born in a stable, how the shepherds and magi visited Him, and so on.

'I know all that,' he said. 'But I'm curious about something else. I've often heard you quote the proverb, "Whatever is born of a cat, eats mice." But if Jesus had been born like us, He would have been bad like us. So He must have been born entirely different.'

Intuition like that has enabled Christians through the centuries to believe in the revelation of the virgin birth of Jesus.

* * *

The 'Christian Mission to the Communist World,' having received news of a Lithuanian Christian who had been imprisoned for his faith, sent a parcel to his mother.

To their great surprise, they received a letter of thanks from the prisoner himself; because of a serious injury, he had been released before completing his sentence.

He wrote:

> Working as a slave-labourer in a uranium mine, I was hit by a large chunk of rock. As a result I have become a hunchback for life.
>
> Naturally, I was deeply depressed. I was in love with a girl. Would she accept me, with such a deformity? Who would want to marry a hunchback? I felt like an outcast. Little children mocked me, crying behind my back, 'Hunchback! Hunchback!'
>
> One day a little boy stopped me on the street and asked me, 'Uncle, what is it that you are carry your back?' I thought, ~Now I will be mocked again.~ But nevertheless I replied, 'A hump.'
>
> He looked at me with love. 'Uncle, I don't believe that. God is love, He does not give people deformities.

p079 ..... Interpretations

> What you have on your back is a box containing angel wings. If you carry it with humility and love to the end of your life, the box will then open; the wings will unfold; and with those wings you will fly to a beautiful heaven.' I wept when I heard those words. Even now I weep again, as I write these lines.

This Soviet child had within him the Holy Spirit, who in Scripture is called the Comforter, and knew how to offer a word of cheer to one in need.

We too have the promise of the same Spirit, and under His blessed influence, our words can provide comfort and encouragement.

* * *

A sick child was asked how he was feeling. He replied, 'I suffer, but I suffer little, because Jesus said, "Suffer little, children, to come unto Me." Only those who think of their sufferings as little are called.'

To this child a comma made all the difference. The earliest Greek manuscripts have no trace of punctuation. Jesus ~could~ have pronounced the sentence like that!

* * *

The parents of President Ronald Reagan did not practise much religion, but his grandfather did. When the family were preparing to dine with him, little Ronald's parents warned him, 'Grandfather always asks every child to recite a Bible verse at meal time. You must have one memorized.'

But the future president was only four, so his mother found him an easy verse to remember: 'Jesus wept' (JHN 11:35). Ronald was now sure of himself.

At dinner, with ten children sitting at the table, grandfather asked the first for a verse. 'Jesus wept,' he replied promptly.

Ronald was in despair. What was he to do now? To

make matters worse, his mother had not been the only one to find a simple solution to the problem. Two other children produced the same verse, and grandfather eyed them with displeasure. Ronald shrank in his chair.

When his turn came, however, he had a sudden inspiration. 'Jesus weeps,' he volunteered.

The other children laughed. Grandfather rebuked him: 'That is not written in the Bible!'

Ronald defended himself. 'It may not be written, but it is true.'

Grandfather was unrelenting: 'Jesus wept then because He was at the tomb of a friend. Why would He weep now?'

'He weeps now,' said Ronald, 'because we children only know that He wept a long time ago.'

That was a remarkable insight for a child. The Bible teaches that we are involved with a God who is ~crushed~ because of our adulterous hearts (EZE 6:9, NKJV). Our Lord is also wearied (MAL 2:17). When on earth, He was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief. As such, He represented the heart of God (cf. JHN 14:9).

At the age of thirty He was told that He looked around fifty (JHN 8:57). So much sorrow was visible on His face that some believed He was suicidal, and asked 'Will He kill Himself?' (JHN 8:22). That is not a question that is asked of somebody who looks cheerful and happy.

It is part of children's theology to seek God's sadness, and to want to make Him rejoice with singing' (ZEP 3:17).

* * *

A four-year-old in an American department store was given several biscuits, among them one shaped like the United States. His mother asked, 'What does this remind you of?'

'I know!' he replied, beaming. 'It's the weather.' It had reminded him of the television satellite picture of the United States on the evening news.

p081 ..... Interpretations

Does the name 'Jesus' remind us of the real Jesus, of the whole Jesus; or does it only remind us of something associated with that name?

* * *

As a pastor in Rumania during the war, I had only one suit, which eventually became worn and frayed. I had to get a new one.

One morning in our family devotions, we read these words: 'The man with two tunics should share with him who has none' (LUK 3:11).

Mihai, who was then four, interrupted. 'You've got two suits now. You should give one to Brother X, who is in rags.'

'Which one should I give him?' I asked.

'The new one, of course. God always gives the best.'

It was a difficult decision, but I took his words as a mandate, and the God who gives generously somehow kept me clothed.

* * *

On her first visit to a church with stained glass windows, a little girl asked her mother who the persons were through whom the sun shone. 'They are saints,' her mother replied.

She thought about this for a while, then said: 'Now I understand what being a saint means. It means, to be a girl through whom Jesus's beauty shines, even if I'm not beautiful myself.'

When one reads the sad biographies and dark episodes in the lives of some saints, this childish definition becomes astonishingly perceptive and true.

* * *

At our family devotions, we read the song of the virgin Mary which is known as the '~Magnificat~.' Then I said, 'Let us pray.'

p082 ..... From the Lips of Children

Amelie, then five, spoke up. 'Isn't what we just read a prayer? We weren't just reading.'

In her childish thinking she had followed the Scripture prayerfully. There was no need to begin to pray after the reading!

No wonder Jesus said, 'Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven' (MTT 18:3).

* * *

p083 ..... Misinterpretations

[illustration appears at this point in the book]

"In due course a tree will grow."

A father wishing to put his son to the test gave him a pound coin and a ten-pence piece for the Sunday school collection. 'Put whichever of the two you want to in the offering,' he said. 'It's your choice.'

When the boy returned he said to his father, 'I listened to the pastor's advice - and I gave the ten-pence piece.'

'Is that what the pastor really said?'

'He certainly did! He said we should give cheerfully,

p084 ..... From the Lips of Children

and it was a lot easier to be cheerful giving the ten-pence piece!'

We should all give as much as we can cheerfully, but we have to learn how to give both cheerfully and with generosity.

* * *

In our family, before going to church on Sunday each grandchild receives from his daddy some money to put in the offering.

Five-year-old Alex once queried this. 'Why should I give money to God? Does He want to become a millionaire? Let's send Him a Bible. You told me that there's a verse in it that says, "The love of money is the root of all evil."'

God not only knows but inspired the Bible, and we need not remind Him of those words. But some pastors would do well to ponder St. Paul's comment.

I know one clergyman whose small granddaughter asked him, 'What does the word "allergy" mean?' He explained it as an aversion to certain foods or medicines. The child replied, 'I understand, Grandpa. You are allergic to money.'

If only that were true of all ministers! Too many nowadays are preoccupied with their benefits and investment and properties. Even the clergyman who told this story said that he felt that this most beautiful compliment was not entirely true of himself, though he wished it were.

* * *

Like many children, Amelie sometimes has a finicky appetite.

Once I said to her, 'It's not good for you to only eat dessert. You must first eat your soup and salad, and the other good things that Grandma prepares.'

She replied, 'I eat as Scripture tells me to.'

'What do you mean by that?' I inquired in surprise.

p085 ..... Misinterpretations

'The Bible says that God prefers the dessert! Look, here it is, read it.'

The verse she actually showed me said that God led His people forty years 'through the desert' - she had misread it as 'dessert.'

I smiled, but I could not help wondering whether perhaps we adults are not sometimes just as guilty of reading into the

Bible what we hope to find there.

* * *

The English language, with its many 'homonyms' - words that sound the same but have very different meanings - can be very confusing to a young child. A five-year-old observed, 'It must be very wrong to fly in a plane. Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always."' Of course, he had thought it said 'low.'

We smile. But in truth, Jesus is with us only if we seek the low places. The Bible says that 'in lowliness of mind' we should value others better than ourselves (cf. PHP 2:3).

* * *

On the other hand, Amelie once remarked that Jesus must have enjoyed flying in aeroplanes. Puzzled, I told her that He never flew. But she insisted that He did, and pointed to a heading in her Bible: Jesus' flight to Egypt' and to LUK 6:17 where it is said that Jesus 'stood in the plain.' As his disciples and a large multitude were with Him, she added, it must have been a large plane!

The subtleties of English spelling had not yet become apparent to her.

I was reminded of a Russian Baptist who, unlike other Baptists, insisted on making the sign of the cross. He justified himself by asserting, 'It is written in the Bible that we must do so.'

In Russian, the word ~krestitsia~ has two meanings: to be

baptized, and to cross oneself. He had adopted both meanings of the word.

* * *

Schoolchildren were asked to draw the holy family. One child drew them in an aeroplane. Four heads were looking through the windows.

Curious, the teacher asked, 'You have Jesus, Mary and

Joseph - but who is the fourth person?'

'That's Pontius, the pilot!'

From the mouths of babes have come many versions of the Lord's prayer. One prayed, 'Our Father, Harold be Thy name,' and 'Give us this day our jelly bread.'

But are grown-ups any better than children?

When Jesus cried from the cross, 'Eli, Eli,' His hearers thought He was calling Elijah. How do we listen to the words of the Bible?

Jesus once asked, 'How do you read it?' (LUK 10:26).

* * *

A child who heard that God Himself wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone observed, 'God must write with His left hand.'

'Why do you say that?'

'Well, you read to me yesterday from the Bible, that Jesus sits on God's right hand - so He can't move it.'

To an adult this is an entertaining deduction, but it is also a correct guess. The Law comes from the side of harshness, called in the Bible the left side; whereas grace flows from the right side (cf. MTT 25:33). The saved are on His right.

* * *

Some children might have theological intuitions, but since they are human and influenced by the good and evil to which they are exposed, it is our responsibility to be careful what we say in their presence.

A teacher asked in class, 'Is the world round?'

p087 ..... Misinterpretations

Isaac replied, 'No, Ma'am.'

'Is it flat, then?'

'No, Ma'am.'

'Well,' demanded the teacher, 'if it is neither round nor flat, what is it?'

Isaac was equal to the challenge: 'My Papa says it's crooked.'

* * *

Another child was asked, 'Where do you live?'

'In hell,' was the startling reply.

Next he was asked, 'Who is your father?'

'The devil.'

The teacher was shocked. 'How can you say such things?'

'It's what my mother says, all the time.'

Children can receive negative images from us – of the world, mankind, the Church, clergy, rulers, our nation.

If they do, we will be held responsible for their negative or false theology.

It is wrong to criticize churches, clergy or grown-ups in the presence of children.

* * *

During World War II, a child in an American home heard only the worst about Germans from the tender age of two. Since there was no television, the child could not possibly understand what a 'German' actually was.

But once her mother warned her, 'Be careful; there are germs on the plate.' Now she knew. When her father came into the room, she announced, 'I've got Germans on my plate!'

Be careful of what you tell children. If you stir up disgust in them for a certain category of men, they may unintentionally project it on to others who are related to them

perhaps only by a syllable.

* * *

p088 ..... From the Lips of Children

At the age of six, Amelie was more charitable towards sinners than were most of her elders. 'I don't believe there is a hell,' she said. 'Bad men enter Paradise as well - but with a sad heart.'

Concerning the existence of hell, there has been much debate. Is it a place, or simply a horrible state of mind experienced by those eaten with remorse, with no hope of reparation or restoration?

When St. John Chrysostom was asked which of the two he thought was true, he answered, 'I don't speculate about hell. I shun it!'

* * *

At seven, Amelie approached me one day and asked me to baptize her dog. 'Honey, only humans are baptized, not dogs.'

'Why?'

'Because dogs can't tell the difference between good and evil. They are not responsible.'

She was thrilled. 'If my dog has no sin, then it will surely be with me in the resurrection!'

Does not Isaiah 11 describe the messianic kingdom as belonging also to sheep and tame wolves, which will be led by a little child?

* * *

Children's questions are sometimes perceptive, and sometimes foolish and perplexing. Amelie once stumped me with: 'Grandpa, why don't you bow to windows?'

'Wherever does the Bible say such a foolish thing?'

She promptly showed me: 'Honour widows.' With her limited vocabulary and experience - she knew nothing about widows - she had given the printer the benefit of the doubt and supplied the 'missing' letter. She wanted to fulfill a commandment which she thought she had found in the Bible, even though it made absolutely no sense.

p089 ..... Misinterpretations

When it comes to fulfilling God's commands - do we lean on our own understanding?

Jewish theology distinguishes between ~mitzvah~, a commandment that is intelligible, and ~chok~, a commandment for which we can see no reason but which must be fulfilled because God says so.

* * *

Members of a family were discussing the Christmas story. The mother asked the others why they thought Jesus was born in a stable.

Seven-year-old John answered, 'Because there weren't any doctors at that time.'

'But,' countered his mother, 'God could have provided a nice place for Him to be born in if He had wanted to.'

'Well,' reasoned John, 'God was in Mary's tummy, and He couldn't work out anything from there.'

We know of no high thoughts or great deeds on Jesus' part while He was in Mary's womb. Some keep Him locked up in a closet, and then wonder why he does not perform miracles.

* * *

Eight-year-old Amelie confided one day, 'I love a boy who is in my class, and I told him so.'

'What did he say?'

'He said he couldn't stand me, and he hit me on the head as well.'

'Well then, you had a chance to obey Jesus' advice to respond with love!'

'But Jesus told us to turn the other cheek when somebody hits you on the cheek. He didn't say what to do when somebody hits you on the head. So I did the same thing to him, and now he won't forget me.'

Children, like us, have a tendency to pharisaism. They also have their own excuses for evading the universal duty of love, which applies in all circumstances when

there is no specific commandment covering an unexpected situation.

* * *

A boy of six saw a skeleton for the first time and wanted to know what it was.

'Those are the bones of a man who has died,' he was told.

'Oh,' he commented, with childish logic, 'so it's just the fat that goes to heaven!'

In this case the child was wrong in his theology. Fat can be an impediment to entering heaven: 'Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life' (MTT 7:14). Delicacies and luxuries must be left to others if we are to advance along that narrow way.

* * *

A Baptist child in America was baptized at the early age of six, on a particularly cold day. Next day he sang with his family the hymn 'Holy, holy, holy,' which ends with the words, 'God in three persons.' The child sang, 'God in four persons.'

When he was chided for this, he said, 'But I was baptized in the names of four persons. When the pastor immersed me, he said "In the name of the Father- Brr! - the Son- Brrr! - and the Holy Spirit- Brrr!"'

The pastor had shivered aloud, and the child, too

overwhelmed by emotion to register the chill of the water, had assumed that 'Brrr' was the name of a fourth member of the Trinity.

In Communist countries, where the underground Church has no baptistries, believers in winter make holes in the ice through which to baptize.

In Western countries, we should not only count our blessings, but also ignore our inconveniences.

* * *

p091 ..... Misinterpretations

During family devotions a child heard that we are made of dust and, when we die, return to dust. A little later he commented, 'There's a man under my bed who's either being born or dying.'

'What do you mean?' queried his startled mother.

'There's a lot of dust under my bed!'

* * *

Another child was taught that Adam became a living soul when God breathed His spirit into him. He sighed: 'So God is dead.'

The child could not be convinced otherwise: 'Anyone who gives up his spirit is dead,' he explained.

* * *

At five, Mihai asked me where apricot trees come from. I told him, 'You have to dig a hole in the ground, put an apricot stone in it, cover it and then water it. In due course a tree will grow.'

Excitedly he summoned his brother and together they followed my instructions. After watering their buried treasure, they dug it up again immediately to see whether a tree had begun to grow. Naturally, they were greatly disappointed.

Children in this respect make the same mistakes as

adults. We all rush to see results. God made the world in six days, not one.

* * *

When I read to Mihai from the book of Joshua, about how God ordered wars, his comment was, 'This must have been before God repented and became a Christian.'

Christians should take care not to read the writings of the Old Testament undiscerningly.

* * *

Children, it seems, sometimes know only too well how to be deceitful.

p092 ..... From the Lips of Children

A Slovak nun, a primary school teacher, tells of an amusing incident. She was distributing sweets to the children on St. Nicholas' day. One child, Stanko, was ill, so she gave a slipper full of sweets to another boy, John, to take to him.

When Stanko was better, she asked him if he had enjoyed the present. He claimed that he had never received it. So she decided to confront the two boys.

'I gave them to you,' said John, pointing to himself.

'I didn't get anything,' protested Stanko.

But John, pointing to himself again, repeated, 'I gave them to you. Don't you call me "you," when you speak to me? Well then, I gave them to "you." I carried out my assignment.'

Once I had to speak to an American pastor about his financial dealings, which were not above board. He said, 'You don't understand the Bible at all. All money belongs to God. I am God's child. What's wrong with depositing God's money in the bank account of one of His beloved children? We Christians all belong to one body. It only seems that I have dishonestly taken for myself something that belongs to another. We are one; the money belonged to a member of the body; and after I have taken it, continues to be the property of the same body- though of another member.'

Such deceptions are amusing in children, but in adults they are criminal.

As we seek to become like little children in matters of faith, let us at the same time remember that all of us, children as well as adults, have sinned. We do well to shun childish foibles, while emulating childlike faith.

* * *

The greatest danger in children's theology lies in the fact that they are prone to gullibility. Because of their trusting nature, they are easily led astray. The suggestibility of all human beings is limitless, but it is greatest in children.

Two small boys were discussing the myth of Icarus.

p093 ..... Misinterpretations

'There was once a prisoner who wanted to escape. He stuck some feathers on himself with wax and flew. But he went so near the sun that the wax melted, the feathers fell off and he fell into the sea!'

'Is that a true story?'

'Of course it's true! It's in my history book.'

Another boy was a member of the Orthodox Church; he was sure that St. George really did kill a dragon, because he had seen ikons portraying the victory.

We can learn a great deal from children, but let us grow in understanding and not be taken in by every wind of doctrine, nor be led astray from the truth and go after fables (cf. 1 Tim. 4). Furthermore, let us not demand of our pastors that they 'tell us pleasant things' (ISA 30:10).

* * *

A child asked his father, 'Why are all the pastors in America either white or black? Why aren't there any green pastors?'

'Where did you find such a silly idea?' laughed his

father.

'Daddy, you read yesterday from Psalm 23 that He leads us to green pastors.'

This urban child did not know what a pasture was, and could not relate to it.

Pastors must be very careful to communicate effectively. Even adults can misunderstand what they are told, thinking only in terms of their own theological vocabulary- obviously more limited than that of the pastor. They relate what he says to what they know.

I was born a Jew. The Christian language was completely foreign to me. When at the age of twenty-seven I entered a Christian church for the first time and heard the congregation singing of 'the lamb of God,' I whispered to my wife, 'These are the idolators of old who worship animals!'

Children's misapprehensions should serve as a reminder to theologians and preachers, to speak the truth

p094 ..... From the Lips of Children

plainly. They are handling matters of eternal significance.

* * *

'God must have an awfully big stomach,' said a little boy returning from church.

'Why?' asked his mother.

'Because the Bible says, "In Him we live and move and have our being."' (ACT 17:28).

Another boy aged four observed that God must have many ears, because He has so many prayers to listen to at once.

The Hindus paint Krishna with many arms, because God has to help many people simultaneously.

Children, and primitive religions, have sensed a truth: heavenly beings have many more organs for perceiving reality than we do.

It is written of the cherubim that 'their entire bodies, including their backs, their hands and their wings, were completely full of eyes' (EZE 10:12). They also have four faces, with ears, noses and mouths on each.

If this is true of His heavenly creatures, one can be sure that God is even better equipped for hearing, seeing and handling everything. Children can be reassured about God's capacity to take care of them. There is no need to worry that a prayer will go by unheard.

* * *

p095 ..... Versions

[illustration appears at this point in the book]

Back to playing with toys.

I taught little Alex the verse, 'He shall pray unto God, and He will be favourable unto him' (JOB 33:26, AV). But the word 'favourable' did not exist in his six-year-old vocabulary. When he came to recite the verse, he said, 'He shall pray unto God, and God will pray unto him.'

He could not understand why his 'version' was wrong; it tallied with his experience. 'I pray to God and tell Him what I desire. Then He prays to me and tells me what He desires. I tell Him I love Him; He tells me the same thing. He prays even better than I do!'

We have a problem; we need a sense of purpose in life, something to live for. Jesus has a problem; He needs workers in His kingdom.

p096 ..... From the Lips of Children

We pray to Him about our problems. He also speaks to us through the Bible, the Church, His special servants, an inner voice, the events of life; sometimes even visions and dreams.

Ultimately the child was right. We pray to Him, and He to us.

* * *

Sometimes children have unusual insights. An eight-year-old girl said, 'I wonder why all these people are talking about their experiences with Jesus? I never had an "experience." He told me to come; and I came. He said, "I will give you rest," and He gave it to me. I wonder also why they bother Jesus so much. He gave them rest; they should give Him rest, too.'

* * *

There are often guests in my home. The conversation ranges over many subjects. Once I and a fellow-Christian were discussing some philosophical problems. Ten- year-old Amelie was quietly playing with her toys in the sam room.

I remarked, 'Every point of view is actually a "point of blindness," for it blinds you to every other point of view. If you look at the ceiling of a room, you cannot see the floor, and vice versa. If you look at the right side of the room you cannot see the left. Each point of view of a party, religion or social class diminishes your ability to see with equal clarity a different point of view. Only an overall intuition can get at the truth.'

To our surprise, Amelie interrupted. 'Only to see the whole is still blindness. It keeps you from recognising that there is not just the whole but also the parts, which are different from each other. The "whole" is an abstraction, which means it is only part of reality. The truth comprehends all the parts and their sum, in a totality.'

Now I cannot vouch for the fact that these were her

exact words, as I had no tape recorder running. But the thought here expressed was very definitely hers.

Everyone in the room was stunned for a moment. Amelie went back to playing with her dolls.

A multitude of Christians are now so enamoured of ecumenism that they can see only the whole as the representation of true Christianity. But individual denominations are as

legitimate a part of the truth as is the sum total of which they are part - and even that statement assumes that an organic whole is a possibility and that it would be recognized as such.

Let us pursue Jesus' desire that all Christians should be one. Let us also value the certain truth that we have in our own denominations. Christianity would not have denominations were it not for the good of those who love God, though we do not yet understand the mystery that lies behind it.

But a child understood.

* * *

A six-year-old girl had heard the story of the annunciation of Mary, and asked her father, 'What is a virgin?'

He replied, 'It's a kind of forest. Look at these pictures of virgin forests in the Amazon. They are forests never penetrated by man.'

'Oh!' exclaimed the girl. 'Then the angel saw her as a virgin, alone in such a forest with no man ever to hug her. So he came to spend an hour with her and tell her beautiful things. Angels are ~neat~!'

* * *

Five-year-old Alex thoughtfully remarked, 'God will have to be patient with me when I become an angel. I won't be able to fly very well. I expect it is like skating - you fall over a lot before you get good at it.'

Later he wondered, 'Aren't fallen angels merely angels who are just starting out?'

The point about fallen angels is of course far-fetched.

p098 ..... From the Lips of Children

But Christians begin angel-like lives here on earth. Like children, they should not be discouraged if they do not become instant flying experts! It takes a great deal of practice to develop spiritual as well as physical skills.

* * *

When Mihai was six, I attempted to impress upon his young mind the truth of JHN 3:16, that God gave His only Son to die for us.

'Isn't it wonderful?' I asked, and was taken aback when he calmly replied, 'Not at all.'

I was surprised, and insisted that he explain what he meant, and he readily did so. 'It is wonderful when a poor man gives a large gift to the Church. But large gifts are normal for a rich man. For God, it must be the normal thing to give the best.'

Since we belong to God's family, it should be normal for us to give of our best too.

* * *

A child of five, on hearing the Christmas story, commented, 'See what the angel wants you to understand. The news of Jesus' birth was a great joy only to people. For the angels, it was great sadness. They were going to be without Him for a long time.'

May we too always be aware of how angels feel about what happens to us! Sin gives us pleasure; if it did not, we would never sin. But it grieves the angels.

* * *

An eleven-year-old boy once acted the role of Joseph, Jesus's adoptive father, in a Sunday school Christmas production. When he discussed with his parents what sort of shoes he should wear, they suggested sandals. He wanted cowboy boots. When his father explained that it was unlikely that Joseph would have worn cowboy boots, the boy replied, 'Yes, but he didn't have braces on his teeth, either!'

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He had understood that biblical personalities can be represented in a contemporary way.

Some believers do not accept this. A lady once said to me, 'My daughter claims to be a believer, but she is not born again. Look how short her dress is - and how bare her arms!'

I pointed to the picture of her mother that hung on the wall. It was taken in the last century. The lady wore a dress as long as a nun's habit.

'What you yourself are wearing,' I pointed out, 'would have seemed like a mini-skirt to your mother. You have to accept the fact that your children may hold to the same faith as you do, but in forms other than those to which you are accustomed.'

* * *

The twelve-year-old son of a doctor learned in Sunday school that Jesus was delivered up to death out of envy (cf. MTT 27:18). When he was asked why Jesus was crucified, he replied, 'Well, in the Bible it says it was because of envy. Doctors were mad at Him because He healed people for nothing. If there were many like Him, my father would be broke.'

A pastor's son contributed, 'He also deprived priests of their income by forgiving the sins of men who had not brought a sacrifice. Was Jesus right to take away the jobs of men like that?'

Albert Schweitzer, like many hundreds of self-sacrificing physicians, did not use his medical knowledge as a means of making money. On the contrary, he served the poor while remaining in poverty himself. Likewise many pastors have been more concerned preaching the gospel and ministering to others, than about looking for high salaries and personal well-being.

* * *

Somebody asked a child what it is like when you die. 'When you die,' he replied, 'God takes care of you, just

like your mother did when you were alive - except God doesn't yell at you all the time.'

Ought we not to make sure that children do not see such a contrast between God and ourselves?

God is perfect. Since we are Christians, children cannot see why we are not perfect too. Jesus said, 'Be ye perfect, even

as your Father in heaven is perfect' - perfect in this respect at least, that we do not yell at our children.

* * *

During the Nazi era, a great many members of my family were killed for the crime of being Jewish. When the slaughter began, Mihai was only two. He grew up in our home, constantly hearing conversation about killing. It seemed that whoever entered our home spoke only about relatives and acquaintances who had been murdered. The concept of actual killing was as familiar to Mihai as toy soldiers and toy wars were to other children.

One evening, after we had prayed together before bedtime, he asked me, 'Will we be killed too?'

He was only four.

I replied, 'Possibly.'

'How will it happen?'

'The police will come and take us away in a car,' I explained.

Mihai had never been in a car. In Eastern Europe pastors had no money for bus fares, let alone for cars. He rejoiced. 'And will they drive us around much?'

'Quite a lot; to the edge of town.'

'And then what?'

'And then they will shoot us all with a machine gun.'

He was silent for a few moments. Then he said earnestly, 'They will kill us a ~little~, and then we will be resurrected much - and we will go to heaven. The police cannot follow us there because they don't know about the ladder that reaches up to the sky.'

* * *

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The Soviet Baptist Peters was killed while transporting Bibles

which had been printed in secret. As his wife wept, their four-year-old child asked, 'Mother, is heaven a very bad, ugly place?'

'What makes you ask such a foolish question?'

'I can't understand why you're crying, now that Daddy has gone to a place like Paradise, which you both always told me was lovely.'

Compare what these children say with the words of a pastor I read about. He was asked at a party, 'Can one be ~sure~? Where do you go, Pastor, when you die?'

'To heaven, of course,' replied the pastor. 'But why should we talk about such a sad subject as death?'

For a Christian, 'death' is quite the wrong word. It means passing to a much better life. 'He is not the God of the dead, but of the living' (MTT 22:32).

Often children do not 'put the lid on' the dead, but speak of them as if they were still living.

Alex once prayed at the meal table, 'God, thank you for the food. Please feed those in heaven also, especially General Eisenhower and George Washington.'

At the age of eight Amelie prayed for a multitude of friends - and also for the well-being of St. Paul. I asked her why. She answered, 'Paul finishes an epistle by saying "Pray for us," and that includes the other apostles. Mustn't we obey everything in the Bible? It doesn't say anywhere that we must stop praying for them when they die.'

* * *

A family had moved into a new house which was far more luxurious than the one they had lived in previously. The child wandered round admiring all the new and different things, and finally exclaimed, "What beautiful things we have now!' He would never have thought to say to his father, 'These beautiful things belong to you.'

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The child understood what the Bible says: 'All things are yours ... and you are of Christ' (1CO 3:21,23).

* * *

In Russia, schoolchildren are taught that man has descended from apes.

A child stood up and said, 'Thank you, teacher, for giving us this explanation. I always wondered how Communists could be so wicked. I never knew but now you have made it clear. You are wicked because you come from gorillas.'

Another child in Russia reacted differently when told of his alleged descent: 'That can't be true. I've seen apes in the zoo and they're delightful creatures. It is a pleasure to see them jumping around, they grin at children, they are grateful if you give them a nut. I can't believe that wicked Communists could have descended from such happy creatures as apes.'

* * *

Rumania is an Orthodox country. In such countries it is the custom for the priest to go from house to house with a cross in his hand, blessing the family, on the first day of every month.

Little four-year-old Gaby was stopped by a priest in the street. He held out the cross towards her so that she could kiss it.

Looking up at him gravely, she asked, 'Why should I kiss it? The cross doesn't need my love. ~You~ do.' Whereupon she reached up, grabbed hold of the priest's beard, pulled his face down to hers, and kissed him right on the mouth.

The words might have seemed impolite, the gesture forward. But oh! If we could lavish on our fellow human beings the love we show for mere things, how much brighter this world would be! I know many Christians who are attentive to the words of Scripture, but deaf to the heart-cries of those around them.

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It is not the cross, but the Man of the cross who needs our love. And Jesus said in effect, 'Inasmuch as you have shown love to your fellow man, you have shown it to Me.'

The child was right.

* * *

When he was five, Mihai said to me, 'Father, I was smarter than you! When you were young you sinned and then later you repented. I was born a Christian from the very beginning.'

A professor of religion once asked his class, 'How many of you were born Christians?' Several hands went up. He smiled tolerantly, then commented, 'No, you weren't. You were born miserable sinners like all the rest of us.'

We are not born sinning, but we are born sinners; we need the grace of God to enable us to become Christians. Through dedicated Christian parents, this grace can be mediated to children at a tender age.

In this regard, Mihai had not been smarter than me!

* * *

Amelie wanted to know how Jonah managed to get out of the fish.

Alex, with the confidence of a six-year-old, had an explanation: 'Jonah was a prophet - that means he was smart. When he boarded the ship he knew that ships sometimes sink and that he might then be swallowed by a fish. So to be on the safe side he put some red pepper in his pocket. He put the pepper in the fish's nose and that made it sneeze. Then he could slip out.'

We smile leniently at the naivete of a child, but how prepared are we for emergencies? More to the point - do we arm ourselves daily for the battle with evil? The Bible describes in precise detail the armour that will help the Christian to cope (cf. EPH 6:13-17).

* * *

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At seven Alex loved football, and tried to explain it to his Grandpa - who was not really interested: 'During the game it sometimes seems that your team is losing, but in the final minutes the game can turn and you can finish up as the winner.

It's the same in the game between God and the devil. On Good Friday it seemed that God had lost. Jesus had died on the cross. But then God turned things round, and on Easter Sunday He put the ball in the devil's goal! God came out the winner.'

Let us never say 'We have lost' or 'We are lost.' The Referee has not yet blown the final whistle.

* * *

Six-year-old Alex was much impressed by a film about chivalry.

'When I'm big I'll be a knight,' he decided. 'Then I'll have to fall in love with a lady. But Grandpa, don't be frightened. When you fall in love, you don't fall down and break your bones. You fall up!'

* * *

A small boy once said something to another which he had probably heard from his parents: 'Your God is evil' Such words never come from the heart of a child.

The young Christian replied, 'Really? Then let's work together to make Him good.'

'That's stupid. We can't decide how God should be.'

The Christian child (who was perhaps eight years old) said, 'Sure we can. God was once a boy like you and me, in the house of Joseph and Mary. They taught Him every day by word and example to be loving, good, honest and hard-working. If Jesus had been born in some other home, wicked parents might have taught Him swearing, lying, stealing and drinking. We can teach God.'

This was a child's way of expressing thoughts which are too profound for words.

The Bible says that we can 'magnify' God - which means, to make Him bigger. Bigger in what? We can

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make Him rejoice with singing (ZEP 3:17). We can make Him very sad. We can provoke Him to wrath. We ~can~ decide how God should be. God is love - but so much depends on our response.

* * *

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[illustration appears at this point in the book]

Little Alex injured himself climbing a fence.

A child, who was expelled from Sunday school for being naughty, cried, 'I want my money back!'

I once did the same. I was at a Sunday morning service in a church in Boston, Massachusetts. The customary offering was taken, and I put some money on the plate. Then the pastor preached a sermon against Richard Nixon.

Though I had not voted for Nixon, I was not at all disposed to sit through a sermon against him in the morning worship hour. I bore with the minister for some ten minutes, then stood up and interrupted him: 'Please start speaking about God' (he had mentioned neither God nor Christ).

The pastor was unnerved, and shouted back, 'I have the right to say what I like.'

I replied, 'Not so, sir! When I ask for cheese at a grocer's, I get cheese; if I ask for tomatoes I get tomatoes. The store belongs to somebody else but because I am

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paying, I am considered the boss. I've paid here, too. I put money in the offering plate on the assumption that I would get my money's worth of knowledge about God. If you want to talk about Richard Nixon that's all right by me, but then please give me my money back.'

I had applied the principle of children's theology. If there were more children in the churches, pastors would have to give proper value, or go broke!

* * *

We were walking in a park with Mihai, who was probably four years old at the time. At one point he had to be taken to a public lavatory. As he left he said, 'The lady in charge is a very good Christian. She allows people to make her home smelly. She couldn't be nicer.'

What a beautiful image of a Christian, who is friendly and hospitable even to those he finds repulsive! He remembers that Jesus showed compassion for the poor, the unlovely, the weak; and that He invites to His banquet those from the byways as well as the highways.

* * *

When Mihai was small I once spanked him for some minor transgression. 'If you beat me again,' he told me, I might die. How sad you will be then!' He was genuinely not thinking about his own discomfort, but about my sadness.

I was deeply moved.

When I myself was later passing through great suffering, I surprised myself by saying the same words to God, (echoing those of Job: 'You will search for me, but I will be no more' (JOB 7:21).

When somebody wrongs us, we would do well to disregard our own afflictions and think rather of the harm our adversary does to himself, and of his future regrets.

* * *

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At the end of World War II, posters were displayed in all the trams and buses, portraying hanged men. It was effective propaganda for capital punishment of war criminals.

One day, travelling in a tram with Mihai, I noticed that he kept his eyes covered with his hand the whole time. When I asked him why he did so, he replied, 'I don't want to look at evil.'

It is recorded that Jesus knew no evil. It is far better to have no knowledge of evil, than to know it and reject it.

* * *

When Mihai was five, I rebuked him for a sin. 'God has a book, and in that book there is a page with your name on it. There He writes down all your sins. There was one the day before yesterday, another yesterday, and now you have sinned again.'

He replied, 'Do you believe that God only writes down the bad things I do? Doesn't He write down the good things as well?'

He was right. The image of God as a policeman who books one only for law-breaking is wrong - and harmful.

* * *

A child was given two coins, one for himself, the other for the offering in Sunday school. Clutching them in his hand, he trudged off to church. On the way he fell over, dropped the coins, and could only find one of them again.

'I'm sorry, God,' he said,
'but your coin is missing.'

Children can sometimes be selfish - just like their parents!

* * *

When Mihai was small he could not be dissuaded from coming with us to all-night vigils, though he sometime fell asleep half-way through them.

He would complain that the services were too short.

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He often said, 'Being in church is being with God, so why not spend all our lives there? The church should be our playground.'

He certainly acted as if it were, and could not understand why everyone was so serious in church.

One Sunday morning he disrupted the whole service with his noisy playing. By the time we got home I had decided to punish him.

'Do you think it is nice
that only the pastor's son misbehaves in church?' I demanded.

He
replied, 'You think I wasn't listening to the sermon. But I know
every word of it.'

'Very well; what was it about?'

'You spoke
enthusiastically about forgiving somebody who has sinned,' he
replied. 'So you ought to do that now.'

There could be no arguing
with such words!

* * *

Almost since the day she was born, Amelie has heard stories about Jesus. I have sometimes wondered what the name could mean to a very small child, to whom so much remains yet to be told.

When she was two, I showed her a picture of Jesus for the first time, and pronounced His name, pointing to His bleeding heart. She became very serious, and spontaneously kissed the picture twice, though she had never seen anyone do such a thing.

Even at that early age, she knew that Jesus was a person to be cherished.

Speak to babies about Jesus. Speak in their presence about His glory! One cannot tell how early their understanding begins.

* * *

When Amelie was three my wife gave her a sweet. The child took another piece from the box and gave it to me.

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Gently refusing it, I explained, 'Today is Friday. This is a day on which we do not eat.'

Of course, she asked why. I told her what fasting is and explained that it is an old Christian custom not to eat on

Friday, the day on which Jesus was crucified. (This fast is particularly observed by the persecuted Church.)

Amelie gave both sweets back to her grandmother saying, 'I will fast too.'

* * *

A boy wrote God a note: 'Dear God, church is all right, only the services are very boring. Can you write some new songs? Your friend, Barry.'

True religion is never boring, because its focus is on a lovely person. The psalmist wrote, 'Sing to the Lord a new song' (PSA 149:1).

* * *

Dorothy, a girl of six, protested when her mother insisted on treating her doll Elizabeth just as a doll.

'She's not a doll; she's a ~girl~. I can tell. If she were a doll I would not put her nappy on, so you see – she's not a doll.'

The way I treat a person affects how I think about him. If I treat him badly I will begin to think of him as an enemy.

If we get into the habit of following a false god, we begin to think of it as real because we worship it. That is how false religions begin. That is how the nightmare of Jonestown started.

We should become like little children in matters of faith and trust, but not in everything. Our powers of reason and discernment must mature.

* * *

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Somebody asked a minister's nine-year-old son, 'Have you decided what to be when you are grown-up? Will you be a pastor like your father?'

He answered, 'I don't think so. Ministers work too much

and don't get paid much. My father could have made more money as a plumber.'

Another boy of six was invited to dinner along with his parents. During the meal, he announced loudly to the hostess: 'You sure don't know how to cook!'

Jesus tells us to become like little children, honest and forthright - but not naughty and mean-spirited. The truth should always be seasoned with politeness and kindness.

* * *

One of my nieces had several guests at a time when her husband was abroad. Being short of accommodation, she explained to Alex, then five years old, 'You'll have to sleep with me in my bed.'

'I
can't do that,' protested Alex. 'We're not married!'

Would that those who are much older had such strong principles!

Valladares, the Christian poet, spent twenty-two years in Cuban jails. In prison, he was married. On his release friends prepared a bedroom for the couple, who had not yet enjoyed the privileges of their relationship.

'I cannot sleep with her yet,' he said gently. We only had a civil marriage. I will wait for the religious ceremony.'

He and Alex shared the same theology.

* * *

My son and daughter-in-law once took the children to a restaurant that was not very impressive from the outside. Alex asked his father, 'Why are you taking us to such a shabby place?'

But once inside, they saw that everything was clean and pleasant.

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Alex asked to be allowed to say grace. 'I thank You,

God,' he said with childish candour, 'for the lesson You taught me today, that I should not call somebody or something ugly because of its outward looks. Help me always to see the inside.'

Man sees not as God sees, for God looks at the heart. Let us not be hasty in our judgements.

* * *

Victor, a Jewish child of five, was being driven past a church. 'Father, let's stop here a while and see how God is today.'

Do we
go to church with such a purpose?

Victor also took part in a Christian prayer meeting, in which every prayer began with 'Lord Jesus ...' Puzzled, he asked, 'Where is God in your prayers?' It was a valid question; Jesus taught us to pray 'Our Father,' and to approach the Father 'in My name.' He never taught us to pray to Himself.

* * *

A twelve-year-old Jewish child was told the story of Jesus and was warned, 'Know that if all those things are true, and you don't believe them, you will perish.' He replied to the teacher, 'Know by the same token, sir; you will perish if those things are untrue and you have believed them.'

We all need to ask the age-old question, 'What is truth?' However, unlike Pilate, we should follow it through and not rest until we have found out the answer.

But the primary question should be, '~Who~ is truth?' Jesus said simply, 'I am the truth' (cf. JHN 14:6). Having settled that, we next learn 'Your word is truth' (JHN 17:17). The Jewish boy had no need to remain in doubt.

We must take care as to what we believe or disbelieve. We walk a narrow pathway to heaven.

* * *

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A child, on being shown the splendid mausoleum of a millionaire,

exclaimed, 'This is ~really~ living!'

* * *

Alex, who has been in many prosperous homes, remarked 'It isn't good to be a millionaire. It makes you nervous, and then you don't share with people.'

* * *

A husband and wife quarrelled constantly, and finally decided to get a divorce. On hearing this, their six-year-old child - who had been a constant witness of their disputes - said, 'I can't tear myself in two to please you.'

Next morning he told his parents, 'My shoulders and arms are aching. During the night I felt like Daddy was pulling me by one arm and Mummy by the other. I feel as if I've been torn in pieces and I don't know how to put them back together again.'

God Himself has put into children's hearts the intuition that 'What God has joined together, men should not separate.'

* * *

In Russia, secondary school pupils are taken to the Museum of Atheism in Moscow.

A guide showed one school group all the exhibits designed to prove the evils of religion. They were shown pictures illustrating man's evolution from animals, the horrors of the Inquisition, and so on.

Then the guide showed them an ancient crucifix. 'You see, children, in olden times people were backward. They believed that there was a man called Jesus who was God's son. It was supposed that He came from heaven to earth, to save men from their sins. In their stupidity, they believed that He took everybody's sins upon Himself and that, animated by love, He was crucified for our misdeeds. Our forefathers had no sense! Their religion said that if anybody believed in Jesus he would be forgiven for

sins, and would eventually be resurrected from the dead, just as Jesus Himself was resurrected, and would enjoy a

beautiful life for all eternity!'

A girl of twelve began to weep.

'Comrade teacher,' she said, 'Thank you for telling us these interesting things. My wrongdoings have been greatly distressing me. I made my mother cry; I lied to my father; I cheated at school. I have been wondering how I can get rid of my sins. And I am terrified of dying. Every time I see a funeral, I think, "Some day I will be lying in a coffin, and everything will be over." But I want to live!'

She continued, 'If no modern intelligent person can believe what you have told us, then I will return to the foolish ways of our forefathers. It is better to be foolishly forgiven, and be resurrected, than to be burdened with them intelligently and miss heaven. I will always be grateful to you for what you have shown me.'

* * *

Once Amelie saw Jesus in a dream. He was saying gently, 'Come to Me.' She went to Him, circling as if in a dance.

Dreams about Jesus are rare. They may well be premonitions.

* * *

The Russian Christian, Gennhadi Malachov, had completed his prison sentence, and his family had arrived at the jail to take him home.

At the prison gate, his daughter asked, 'Father, where are you going?'

'I am coming home with you, my child.'

'No,' the girl said unexpectedly, 'you must stay here.'

'Why? Aren't you happy that we will be together again?'

'No,' replied his daughter, who had been born after his imprisonment and had never known him at home. 'I have always been taught that my Daddy's place is in jail, to suffer for Christ.'

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A Christian child should know that his father is a cross-bearer, and should be surprised to see him without a cross. Jesus said, 'Take up your cross, and follow Me.' That is the role of the Christian, the 'Christ-follower.'

* * *

The child of Michel Sakharov went with his mother to visit his father in jail, where he had been imprisoned for his faith.

The prisoner stretched out his arms to the child and said, 'Come to me, darling.'

The child clung to his mother, and said, 'I don't want to go to him. My father is handsome, I've seen his pictures; this skinny wrinkled man is not my father.'

Children of Christians tortured and imprisoned by Communists are not the only ones who fail to recognize their loved ones. The Jews loved God in glory, but when the Son of God appeared first as a baby in a manger, and later as a marred and crucified Saviour, they failed to recognize Him.

Malachov's child had sharper spiritual perception than Sakharov's.

* * *

During the Christmas season a Sunday school teacher told her class about Jesus' birth in a stable. The following week one pupil asked, 'Do those poor people have a house yet?'

That is a good reaction to the Christmas story; the Holy Family should have a home. My own home should certainly be made available. Better still - my heart.

* * *

After visiting Israel for a few days at the age of eight, Amelie observed, 'This is a land where cats don't scratch, dogs don't bite, and all men are good.' After a brief and unpleasant encounter with a cat, she changed her mind.

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'Some cats scratch - but they must have come from somewhere else.'

It is said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Jesus taught us to look at the lilies as they grow, not after they are picked; at birds as they are fed by God, not after they are killed by predators. We are told to worship God 'in the beauty of holiness,' and to think about 'whatsoever things are lovely.'

We ask God to turn away His eyes from our sins. Let us also learn to turn our eyes away from what is ugly. Let us open our eyes to the beauties of the holy land, the holy Church, the holy nation, the holy Bible.

* * *

Little Alex injured himself while climbing a fence. Examining his wounds, which were bleeding, he said, 'Now I know what a crucifixion is like.'

May we also bear every wound as a reminder of Jesus' sufferings on Golgotha.

* * *

Before our trip to Israel, I promised Amelie that I would take her to all the places that were significant in the life of Jesus: Bethlehem where He was born, Nazareth where He grew up, places in Galilee and Judea where He preached, and then the places where He was judged, whipped, crucified and entombed; finally, the place of His ascension.

She thought for a while, and then said, 'Let's do it the other way round. Show me first the place where, glorified, He ascended to heaven. Then I will not be so sad when I see the places where He suffered.'

I was reminded of meeting a Russian lieutenant during World War II. He knew absolutely nothing about Christ.

I told him the story of Jesus' birth, childhood and baptism, and then described the Sermon on the Mount, the parables and the miracles. He, who had never heard anything like it, was jubilant. Dancing round the room,

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he exclaimed, 'What fairy-like beauty! How could I have lived, without knowing these things?'

Then I told him how Jesus was betrayed, arrested, bound, sentenced, flogged and crucified. He could not hold back his tears. When he heard that Jesus' enemies had asked Him to show them He was the Son of God, by descending from the cross, he considered that it was a reasonable demand. He was sure I was going to say that Jesus agreed to it.

When He heard that in fact, Jesus actually died on the cross, he collapsed into an armchair and wept bitterly. He had found a Saviour - but to no avail. Jesus had died.

Only when I was able to tell him the story of the resurrection did he once again rejoice. I could have spared him the tears and anguish, if I had told him at the beginning that the story of Jesus has a happy ending.

* * *

Four-year-old Terry listened to a religious broadcast and heard the preacher say, 'Jesus is mine.'

'That's wrong!' he exclaimed. 'He forgot about me. Jesus is ours, not only his.'

Take all you can from Jesus and his Church, but remember that nobody has a monopoly. Jesus taught us to pray '~Our~ Father,' not '~My~ Father.'

* * *

A boy who had heard me speak of 'narcissism' asked many questions about it.

Narcissism means self-admiration. Narcissus, a legendary person who spent all his time gazing at his own reflection, which was to him of surpassing interest.

The boy remarked, 'Then our Sunday school teacher is a narcissist. He boasts that man is the crown of creation. But when I went to Marineland I saw whales and dolphins doing amazing

things. Can men do forty-ton backflips? Why does the Bible call Jesus a lion and a lamb?

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Because the lion is more powerful and the lamb more gentle than men.'

Little children are free of adult sophistication, and they don't look down on the animal kingdom. It's true that God made only man in His image. He gave him a mind that thinks, feels and reasons. But unlike Narcissus, man is to reflect God, not himself.

* * *

Michel Horev, a Russian Baptist, wrote from jail the story of his conversion. His father Mihai had died a martyr's death, leaving his mother very poor and with four small children.

Once she was peeling potatoes - their only food - and asked Michel as a favour to read the Scriptures to her as she did so.

Michel balked at that. He found the Bible boring. 'You read, and I'll peel the potatoes.'

'That's not such a good idea; I'll have to find my glasses first, which might take a while. Please be kind and read to me.'

'What part do you want to hear?' he said reluctantly.

'The Sermon on the Mount.'

~Such a long passage~, thought Michel. ~Three long chapters.~ He was a very poor reader, and his eyes were weak. He got the Bible.

'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' he began, struggling over the words. 'Blessed are those who mourn.' But suddenly his eyes were opened to words which were not on the page. ~Blessed are my parents. My father suffers in chains. My mother is sad. Her life is bitter, too.~

'Blessed are the meek,' he continued. ~Jesus must have

meant my parents. They've always been so meek.~ 'Blessed are the merciful ...' ~Mother would share her last piece of bread with anyone who was hungry or poor.~ 'Blessed are the pure in heart . . .' ~They've never had a spot on their hearts.~ 'Blessed are the peacemakers ...' ~They don t know what hate is. If it

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were left to them, they would even be at peace with the Communists.~

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake ...' ~For this blessing I am without a father.~

His mind flashed back to earlier days. What a strange man his father had been - as strange as this book!

His mother had told him that when he had been born, the doctor had said to Michel's parents, 'The boy's eyes seem weak. He may never see very well. You will have to accept the fact that he may soon be totally blind.'

On hearing the doctor's sombre prognosis, his father lifted the infant Michel towards heaven and said, 'Thank you, God, for giving me a son after four girls, and thank you that he has poor sight, perhaps no sight at all ...'

His mother interrupted - 'Stop this senseless prayer!' Tears coursed down her cheeks. 'You don't give thanks for a child's blindness.'

'Do you believe, then,' replied her husband, 'that God makes mistakes? If he is blind he will be useless for factory work or for any profession. Therefore he will be dedicated to the Lord's work. The Bible can be read in Braille.'

Remembering this, Michel thought to himself, ~That must be how Mary thanked God for giving her a Son whom the prophets described as a 'man of sorrows,' destined to die on a cross.~

'Rejoice, and be exceeding glad ...' He read on and on, through page after page of the Sermon on the Mount. By the time he had finished, he had settled in his heart that he belonged to Jesus.

His father's predictions came true. He really did become

a pastor, and as a result he too has been in prison for many years. He is in prison as I write, and he is almost blind.

* * *

p120 ..... From the Lips of Children

In Aurora, Colorado, USA, an eight-year-old boy named Charlie hanged himself.

He had sometimes been mischievous. Once he deliberately ruined school equipment belonging to other pupils. As a punishment his mother told him she would withhold his pocket money to pay for the damaged articles.

He became resentful. 'When I'm naughty I have to lose my pocket money, but when my parents have a big quarrel and they are naughty God does not keep back their pocket money.' His final argument was suicide at the age of eight.

Charlie's brother told his grandmother, 'Charlie went to heaven to visit God, but he'll be back in a couple of weeks.'

No doubt, when Jesus returns, Charlie will be back, together with all who have suffered innocently. Will we be able to look into their reproachful eyes? 1

Parents, teachers and judges often have to punish wrongdoing, and in this they are the representatives of God, who hates sin. Everyone who punishes must take good care to be very God-like, lest those who are punished be driven to despair. Unjust punishment inflicted by unrighteous men can produce indelible trauma, neurosis or psychosis.

Biographers tell us that one beating received by the young Lenin caused him to tear the cross from his neck and become a God-hater for life. His father had asked a priest what he should do with his son, who had failed to attend church. The priest replied, 'Beat him and beat him.' The boy overheard.

One slap received by Tito when he was an altar-boy made him a revolutionist and a mass-murderer. Having been slack in his duties of serving the priest, he was punished with a slap he never forgot.

Many people are like Charlie. They say, 'I get punished

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1. Story from Denver Post, 22 April 1985.

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for my mistake, while God is good to those who beat me - though their sins are greater than mine.'

Children's theology demands that adults behave as they expect others - especially children - to behave. They all too easily perceive the fallacy of 'Do as I say, not as I do.

Jesus said, 'If you love Me, keep My commandments' - but He kept them too.

* * *

Some boys were misbehaving. Their Sunday School teacher wished to impress on them the fact that God would judge them. So he lectured them at length, repeating over and over again, 'Where is God? I say, where is God?'

One boy whispered uneasily to another, 'Let's get out of here - we're getting blamed for so many things, next he's going to say it's our fault that God's disappeared.'

Of course children should be taught to be aware of their sinfulness - but there is a need for proportion in all things! We must not make them feel responsible for all the tragedies of their homes and the world at large.

They have been born into a world that is full of sins they did not commit. The entire weight of sin has been carried by Jesus. It should not burden a child's heart.

* * *

In Sunday School the pastor was describing the crucifixion and death of Jesus. A child said afterwards, 'That story can't be true!'

'Why?' responded the pastor.

'If it were true,' the child replied, 'you would have tears in your eyes as you told it.'

Such incidents taught me how to preach.

* * *

A boy whose mother was dying at Christmas time went into the church and took the figure of the baby Jesus out

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of the crib. On the way home, he said to the figure, 'Now you can see what it's like not having your mother.' When his mother recovered, he put the child Jesus back. We can have childlike daring in our relationship with God. Who could not forgive a child?

* * *

p123 ..... Motives

[illustration appears at this point in the book]

"Oh, but others see my kite! It gives them joy."

When Mihai was only five, I came home one evening to find him very distressed. He had been playing with an electric wire and had received a shock. To teach him a lesson the baby-sitter had told him, 'Now you will die.' Mihai believed her, and told me the sad story. Trying to reassure him, I said, 'Don't worry - if you die, you will go to heaven.' 'Yes,' he said, 'but I want to stay here, to do more good deeds,'

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St. Paul once wrote that he wanted to depart and be with Christ 'which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body' (PHP 1:23-24).

Was Mihai speaking out of altruistic motives like Paul, or did he simply want to get out of an embarrassing situation? I can't tell.

I was similarly unsure of eleven-year-old Amelie's

motives when she badly wanted to have a horse. I told her, 'That could cost a fortune! You could do a good deed by giving up what you want, and giving the money to the poor.'

'But that's what I want it for!' she explained. 'So many people beat horses. This horse might even be bought by a circus, where it would suffer terribly learning the tricks it would have to perform. If I had it to look after, the horse would have a very good life.'

Do we make our decisions out of pure motives? Are the good intentions we claim genuine?

* * *

There is more than a touch of irony in the story of the atheist's child who said to his parents, 'It's safer not to tell God that we don't believe in Him. Then He might take us to heaven anyway.'

* * *

When Amelie was tiny, someone told her the story of Lourdes. To my surprise, she insisted that I take her there. 'Why?' I asked. 'You aren't ill.' 'But I want to pray at Lourdes, that I won't become ill.'

Must we wait for trouble before appealing to God to free us from it? Must we for ever fall asleep only to awaken time and time again in revivals and crusades? Or would it be wiser to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation'?

The chief concern of pastors for their flock should not be the recovery of sinners, but teaching their congregations

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how to vanquish sin when it first intrudes, and how not to entertain lustful or impure thoughts.

* * *

My wife and I once stayed with an Indian family whose five-year-old boy had just been given, for the first time in his life, a really beautiful pair of shoes. I was barefoot, because my legs were hurting.

During the meal he must have overheard the words of John the Baptist: 'He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none.' He took off one shoe and handed it to me.

When, not realizing what was happening, I made no effort to take it, he asked whether he had done something wrong; perhaps I was not a believer?

He certainly proved that he was a believer.

* * *

When he was nearly four, Alex heard his sister say, 'I'm going to be a doctor when I grow up.'

Feeling that he needed to say something about his own plans, he chimed in, 'When I'm big, I want to be a man who will make his mother happy.'

What a beautiful ambition! We would do well to copy it. We can make our heavenly Father rejoice over us with singing (ZEP 3:17). We can make heavenly Jerusalem - which is our mother - rejoice. Even a prodigal son can make his father happy by returning home.

* * *

A Scottish pastor was given notice of dismissal. During his years of service, it seemed that nobody had been converted.

Moreover, he had allowed a foolish thing to happen that had scandalized the congregation. When the offering plate had been passed around, a nine-year-old boy had asked the sidesman to put the plate on the floor. Wondering what would happen, the sidesman had done

so. The boy had stood on the plate. The congregation had not understood that he had given himself as an offering.

That boy was Robert Moffat, who later became a well-known missionary in Africa. His son-in-law was David Livingstone.

We can learn from this child the best kind of giving.

* * *

A missionary in Uganda in the nineteenth century told this story.

His church had a gift day, but instead of sending their gifts ahead of time for decorating the church, they brought them with them on Sunday morning. When the service was over and the missionary stood looking at the pile of gifts, he thought he heard something. Raising his head, he saw a little African girl in the aisle.

'Do you want to speak to me?' he asked.

Very timidly the girl came to the front of the church, and said, 'Please sir, I want to give something.' Putting her hand into her scanty garment she pulled out a bag. Opening it, she brought out handful after handful of silver and gold until there was a pile on the table worth more than all the other gifts put together.

The missionary said, 'You ought not to have done this. Tell me where you took the money from, and we will put it back.'

The child burst into tears. 'It's all mine!'

'It can't be!' exclaimed the missionary. 'You are much too poor.'

Then the story came out. The child had sold herself as a slave in order to be able to give money to the church.

To become self-sacrificing like God is an excellent way to find Him.

* * *

The archives of the China Inland Mission contain a letter sent over a hundred years ago to its founder, Hudson Taylor.

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> If you are not dead yet, I want to send you some money I have saved up to help the little boys and girls of China to love Jesus.

The Christian Mission to the Communist World received a similar letter from a boy of nine:

> Mr. Wurmbrand, my mother read to me from your book, ~Tortured for Christ~. I had tears in my eyes when I heard about the sufferings of Christians under the Communists.
>
> I hope you are grand enough to accept criticism without getting offended. My Mom told me this is a sign of grandeur in a man.
>
> We live in Rhodesia. You lead missions in many countries. Why not in ours? It was wrong of you not to think about it. Many Rhodesians would help. I'll volunteer to become your general director. It must be nice to be at the same time a general and a director and also to serve the Church. Do your generals wear uniforms like those of The Salvation Army? Please reply. Don't despise the little ones. Our angels daily see the face of God.

I replied with a four-page letter telling him what his duties as general director would be.

As a result, not he but his mother became our general director, and the nine-year-old 'missionary' became her assistant.

* * *

The story is often told of the six-year-old boy who carrying another aged four. An adult asked him, 'Isn't he too heavy for you to carry?' The reply was, 'He ain't heavy. He's my brother.'

* * *

p128 ..... From the Lips of Children

Amelie remained in the house as we accompanied departing guests to the car. Within minutes she joined us, saying, 'I was afraid that if I remained alone I might do something stupid.'

People are especially prone to doing stupid things when they are on their own and unobserved. But why should they be alone? There are no loners in God's service. Christians should

remain in constant fellowship with their brethren.

Amelie's comment reminded me of a quiet madman who was a member of my congregation in Bucharest, Rumania, years ago. Once, when we invited him to lunch, my wife set before him the usual knife, fork and spoon.

He said, 'Please, take the knife away. I know I am mad, so I have said to God, "Since I'm foolish I don't know what I might do if I had access to a knife." So I promised I would never hold one in my hand.'

If only all adults and mentally healthy people had such wisdom!

* * *

Many devices for rescuing individuals from alcoholism or other bad habits are often unsuccessful. I read of one method that was very successful.

A five-year-old boy said, 'Mummy, do you know what I want for Christmas more than anything else?'

~Little con-man!~ thought his mother. ~I wonder what he's after?~

The answer bowled her over. He said, 'All I want is a Mummy who doesn't smoke any more. I love you very much, and want you to live for a long time.' Then he put his chubby arms around her neck and kissed her.

She had to brush away a tear. She never smoked again.

* * *

A mother gave her son an apple. 'Share it with your brother in a Christ-like way.'

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'What do you mean?'

'Give your brother the bigger half!'

Handing the apple back to her, he said, 'Why not give

it to my brother and let him have the chance to share it with me in a Christ-like way!'

We smile. But it ill becomes us to pass to others the duty of being like Him.

* * *

Children can be disarmingly honest when their motives are not entirely pure.

A grammar class was asked to write a sentence containing an object. One child wrote, 'Dear lady, you are really very beautiful.'

'Thank you very much,' responded the teacher, 'but what is the object in this sentence?'

'To get a good mark,' the pupil replied candidly.

* * *

When my grandson Alex was four, I asked him for a kiss. He said, 'I can't give it yet.' After an hour, he came to me and announced: 'Now you can have the kiss.'

I asked, 'But why not earlier?'

'Because my kiss wasn't yet stuffed with enough love.'

Are our kisses always stuffed with enough love? There is nothing more saddening than a loveless kiss.

* * *

When Luke, who was nine, heard people cursing the gypsies for stealing and fortune-telling, he wanted to be taken to them so that he could share his sweets with them. He told his mother of his intention: 'When I grow up, I am going to wash the feet of gypsies, just as Jesus did. Isn't that better than complaining that people have dirty feet? Will you let me do it?'

That child died young, having lost his sight. On his

deathbed, he said: 'I would like to take all the gypsies with me

to heaven.'

* * *

'If someone wanted to kill me,' observed Amelie, 'I would say to him, "First let me tell you the story of Jesus." If he killed me afterwards, at least I'd go to heaven.'

Her thinking was wiser than her years. Christians in Communist or Islamic countries who are brought before torturers or executioners make it their first priority to tell them about salvation through Christ. Before answering any questions from their interrogators about the underground Church, they share their faith. Then what comes, may come.

* * *

Isaac Feinstein was a Hebrew-Christian missionary in Rumania who was killed in the Holocaust. He left six children behind him, one of whom died at the age of nine. On her deathbed she comforted her mother: 'You have five other children. Papa is in the next world, without any of his children. It's only right that I should go to him.'

That is how easily a child who believes is able to face death.

* * *

A blind child was flying a kite. She was asked, 'Why are you doing that? You can't see anything.'

'Oh, but others see my kite! It gives them joy. And I have the feeling that it draws me upwards.'

* * *

A child asked, 'If I pray, will I get everything that I ask for?'

'Yes, but only if it is good for you.'
'Well, "all things work together for good" anyway, so I

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don't have to pray for good things! Can I pray for what is bad, and get it?'

The answer is yes, it is possible. Balaam, a false prophet, was granted the fulfillment of a bad desire, but this resulted in his own destruction.

* * *

A girl named Catherine read the whole Bible, Old and New Testaments, eight times before she reached the age of twelve. Are you wondering what became of a girl like that?

She became the wife of William Booth and the co-founder of The Salvation Army.

Such a little child can lead us, by her example, into the Word, so that we too may maximize our usefulness in the kingdom of God.

* * *

Count Zinzendorf, at the age of four, was taken to an art gallery in Dusseldorf, Germany. He stood before a picture of the crucified Christ. It bore the inscription, 'This I have done for you; what are you doing for Me?'

Then and there, the little boy decided to dedicate his life to the Saviour.

He could never forget that question. While still a child he told himself, ~A faith that does nothing is just babbling.~

When he was grown up, he formed the community of the Moravians, which has as its motto, 'The Saviour deserves everything.' Missionaries from the community went to Greenland, to India, to Africa.

Acknowledging the decisive influence of a picture on the life of this Christian, can we discredit the use of holy representations in worship? We use pictorial Bibles and Bible story books for the instruction of children. Perhaps art might serve to arouse the child in every adult.

Children's theology does not object to religious art.

* * *

p132 ..... From the Lips of Children

A partially paralyzed girl, who was distressing to look at, was avoided by adults and children alike. No one wanted to be subjected to her endless complaints.

Finally she realized what the problem was. She decided not to complain any more. She would tell jokes - jokes even about her own disabilities - and she would amuse and cheer up those who were in her company.

Soon people were delighted to be in her presence. Eventually she became a professional comedienne.

* * *

In November 1984, Galina Viltchinskaia was freed after five years in jail, which had been interrupted only by three months of freedom. From jail she went directly to a service of the underground Church in Habarovsk. It was the normal thing for her to do; after all, she had been imprisoned for her faith.

When she was released she was twenty-seven years old. The church in Russia which told her story to the outside world said that she was extremely thin, and had shrunk so that she looked like a child of eleven. Her face was yellow; she had little hair left. It was an effort to try to smile.

Because of continuous starvation in prison, her body was unable to manufacture fat. It was reported that it might be months before she could eat normally - assuming that she remained free, which was considered very unlikely.

When a friend met her who had known her in the old days, she exclaimed, 'What have they done to you? You look like a child!'

Galina replied meekly, 'I should have made myself look like a child of God, but I suppose I did not, so they did it their own way.'

* * *

The Russian Baptist leader Mihail Khorev tells of one of his childhood experiences.

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During the siege of Leningrad in 1941, he was living with his mother and three other small children (his father had died in jail for his faith in Jesus). The family was doomed to starvation.

His mother used to pray, 'Thank you, God, that you love us so much.' Little Mihail always wondered about that. ~If God loves us so much, why can't we have a piece of bread?~

One day she brought home a piece of cheese, divided it into four, and left the room. Mihail wondered why there were not five pieces. Unsure what to do, he held his piece in his hand.

After a few minutes, his mother came back into the room and asked, 'Does anybody have a piece of cheese left?' Mihail nodded. His mother continued, 'Old Kolia our neighbour, is dying of hunger. I asked him what was his last wish, and he said, "Something to eat." The last wish of a dying person ought to be granted. Would you give up your piece of cheese?'

Mihail went with his mother to see how Kolia would eat the cheese. When his mother placed it in the dying man's mouth, he smiled and breathed his last. He had not been able even to swallow the morsel.

Mihail was tempted to remove the cheese from the dead man's mouth and eat it himself. When would he ever see cheese again? His mother saw what was going on in his mind.

At last he said, 'I gave the cheese not to Kolia, but to God. I won't take back a sacrifice given to Him.'

His mother was happy. Later Khorev wrote, from the same jail in which his father had died, 'I can testify that the greatest happiness for a man is to be to consecrated to God.'

Have we made vows to God which we have later regretted? Then let us remember the saints and martyrs - not only those of old, but also those of today.

* * *

p134 ..... From the Lips of Children

A poorly-clothed barefoot Egyptian child who was about ten years old pointed to the Nile. He told me, 'As a baby, Moses floated on that river in a basket. Princess Hatsheput saved the little boy, who then went on to save his people and to save mankind from much ignorance. I have nothing either - but nobody has saved me.'

Incredible things can result from the saving of a single child.

I told this story to an adult afterwards, who retorted, 'Nonsense! How do you know that the child you save won't turn out to be another Hitler?'

How cynical we become as we grow up! Children are much less inclined to indulge in such negative speculations.

* * *

A Moslem boy of thirteen heard a Christian extolling the sublime teaching of Jesus, that we must love our enemies and turn the other cheek when we are beaten.

He said to himself, I'll test this teaching. He slapped the Christian.

True to his convictions, the Christian wept silently, saying, 'I am weeping for you.'

Surprised, the Moslem boy asked to be shown what part of Scripture contained this strange command. He was shown the text in Matthew chapter 5, and after reading the chapter through he decided to live according to its precepts. But he could not break the habit of swearing, nor could he see any 'blessedness' in mourning and in being poor.

He consulted a wise Christian, who explained, 'The teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are not commandments given to men; no man could fulfill them. There has only ever been one life motivated by such love, and that was the life of Jesus Himself. Ask Him to come into your heart, and He will change you.'

The boy did so, and became a new person.

* * *

p135 ..... Motives

A five-year-old, who had been ill since birth and had an incurable handicap, awoke from what the doctors had believed to be a coma.

He said to his parents, 'I saw Jesus. He sent me back. He did not tell me why.'

Many of us have escaped near-brushes with death. Let us believe that it was Jesus who sent us back. We might not know for what specific purpose, but it was surely so that we might serve Him whole-heartedly.

* * *

Mihai was eight years old when he came home from his Catholic school and announced that he was not going to pray any more.

I said, 'All right, you have the freedom to decide what you want to do. But can I ask you how you came to make such a decision?'

He complained that he had had two discouraging religious experiences that day.

In class, he had discovered that he had forgotten the exercise book that contained his homework. So he had prayed to God, who can do anything, to make the exercise book fly the short distance from home to school. Had I not told him that God took a whole man, Ezekiel, and transported him from Babylon to Tel-Aviv? So it would be no problem for God to fetch his exercise book.

The prayer had been in vain. The book did not arrive, and his teacher had scolded him.

Later, in the religious knowledge class, his teacher - a monk - told the pupils about a mason who swore at the virgin Mary while working on a high scaffold. As punishment, the blessed virgin allowed him to fall from the scaffold that very day and break his legs.

Unable to bear this, Mihai had stood up and said, 'Teacher, that can't be right. If someone wrongs my father, he forgives him. Surely the virgin Mary is even better than my father? If somebody speaks badly of her,

surely she forgives. The man must have fallen because he was careless.'

In answer to this argument the teacher had given Mihai a slap.

We decided that the best course was to leave Mihai alone. We did not force him to pray.

At the same time I told his story to a lady who knew the Catholic archbishop, who made the monk apologize to Mihai. After that they became friends, and once more Mihai joined with us in prayer.

Later still, I shared a cell with that same monk in prison.

* * *

Political circumstances forced the father of Laura del Carmen Vicuna to flee from Santiago, the capital of Chile. She was still a baby when he fled. Soon afterwards he died, leaving the poor mother to work as a seamstress to support her two little children.

The mother, who was very beautiful, soon became the prey of a rich but brutal landlord, Manuel Mora. He grew tired of the woman he had lived with for a while, branded her like an animal with a red-hot iron, and chased her away.

The knowledge that her mother was living in sin with Mora caused the young Laura much suffering.

At the age of ten she took her first communion. On that day, in 1901, she wrote down the following resolutions:

1. My God, I wish to love and serve You all my life long. Therefore I give You my soul, my heart, myself.

2. I would rather die than insult You by sinning Therefore I wish to shun everything that could separate me from You.

3. I take it as my aim to do everything I can to ensure that You may be known and loved, and to repair the

insults that You receive daily from men, especially from my relatives.

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When she was twelve, Laura unwittingly aroused the lust of the same Mora and had to flee. To avenge this insult, Mora bound her mother to a pole and flogged her almost to a pulp. Laura, inspired by Jesus' words about the good shepherd who gives his life for his sheep decided to offer her life to God on behalf of her poor mother.

Soon she fell fatally ill. But despite her sickness, Mora attempted to seduce her. Only the intervention of neighbours saved her.

Towards the end of her short life, she said to her mother, 'I am dying. I have asked Jesus for this. For two years I have offered my life to Him so that He might give you the grace of repentance. Mother, before I die, will I have the joy of knowing that you will return to God?'

Her mother promised, and Laura died breathing the words 'Thank you, Jesus. I die satisfied.'

She was thirteen.

Her mother kept her promise and became a believer. She refused Mora's demands, even when he threatened her with a revolver.

Jesus wants more children like this, to offer their lives for the salvation of sinners.

* * *

A child was anxious to wear spectacles, because he thought they would give him the same prestige as his father, who was a bespectacled executive.

He was taken to an optician, who showed him a chart and asked what letters he could distinguish.

'I can see the first letters very well- H, I, C. But I can't see the next ones - S, A, B - at all.'

Our amusement at this story belies our own inclinations! When we read the Bible, we readily accept what fits in with our own ambitions and preconceptions. But we fail to see what does not agree with our own theories or pet sins, because we want to see the world through spectacles of our own choosing.

* * *

p138 ..... Solutions

[illustration appears at this point in the book]

"God doesn't wear shoes."

I have shouted many Hallelujahs in my time - but I never thought to hurl them at the enemy's head!

My grandson at the age of five was determined to become a soldier, though he was not sure whether in the American, Israeli, or Salvation army. He looked forward to the time when he would be able to shoot, but thoughtfully anticipated my reaction. 'Don't worry, Grandpa. I won't shoot with bullets - but with Hallelujahs.'

This struck me as being thoroughly biblical. Are praises to the Lord ('Hallelujahs') really as ineffective as we might imagine? In Joshua's time, when it was time for the Jews to capture Jericho, they were commanded not to shoot but to blow their trumpets and shout. A great victory was gained.

Consider too the great victory of Jehosophat over the Ammonites and Moabites - sworn enemies of the Lord -

p139 ..... Solutions

when he sent an army of singers against them, praising the Lord. 'You will not need to fight this battle,' the Lord promised, and the enemy was utterly destroyed and left much booty. We would do well to shoot with Hallelujahs!

* * *

I have always enjoyed telling Bible stories to my grandchildren. I remember telling Alex how Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had

set before his citizens the alternative of bowing before a statue portraying him as a god, or being thrown into a burning fiery furnace.

I asked Alex what he would have done. 'Would you have bowed to another god than our heavenly Father?'

'No way!'

'So you would have let yourself be thrown alive into the fire?'

'No way!'

'What other choice would you have had?'

'I would have thrown Nebuchadnezzar into the fire!'

* * *

Five-year-old Alex listened carefully to Jesus' story of the man who owned a hundred sheep, lost one, and searched until he found it. Joyful at reclaiming his loss, he gathered his friends for a feast. The conclusion of the story is that in heaven 'there will be more joy over one repenting sinner than over ninety-nine people who need no repentance.'

'What did you learn from the story?' Alex's father asked him.

'The man should have watched over his sheep more carefully; then he would not have lost one.'

Clergy expend a great deal of energy on revivals and on seeking to rehabilitate Christians who have gone astray. Would it not be better to warn Christians about the pitfalls and bypaths that might lead them astray in the first place?

* * *

p140 ..... From the Lips of Children

When he was four Mihai said to me, 'Father, what can I do? I'm bored.' I suggested that he should think about God.

'What can I think about Him with my little mind? He can

think about me with His big mind.'

Instead of theological speculations, which are often fruitless because of the limitations of our minds, we would do better to assure ourselves, through Christ, of God's friendship. Then He will be free to take care of us without hindrance.

* * *

A child tried to draw a picture of God, and was rebuked. 'Give up this silly attempt. Nobody knows what God is like.' He answered simply. 'They will when I have finished.'

* * *

Whenever I came home after work, Mihai would ask, 'Father, did you bring me anything? Good evening.'

One morning I read to him the story of how Jesus chased the merchants from the temple, and I took the opportunity to draw a lesson from what we had read.

'You are a temple - but you also have merchants that must be chased out.'

'What merchants?' he asked.

'One merchant is in the habit of asking first what gift I have brought, and then offering me a greeting.' He acknowledged that this was true.

'You have a second merchant,' I added. 'You love Jesus because He promises you Paradise. Would you love Him if He had no Paradise to give? To love Him just for what you can get out of Him is mercenary.'

Mihai replied, 'You have to pretend that you don't know He can give you Paradise, and say to Him simply, "I love you." But deep down, we know what He can give.'

* * *

p141 ..... Solutions

A father agreed to be a one-man audience for a drawing-room Nativity play produced by his four children.

One played Mary, another Joseph, and the third an angel bringing the good tidings. The fourth child presented herself: 'I am the three Magi who have come from the East.'

When it was pointed out that she could not possibly be three wise men, she replied, 'Why not?'

And why not, indeed? Nobody is a single self, but rather a cluster of selves. We have the outward man, the inner man, the hidden man of the heart, the Id, the Ego, the Super-Ego. Often we 'talk to ourselves,' or conduct mental arguments with ourselves.

It was the best in Peter that acknowledged Christ as 'the Christ, the Son of the living God.' It was the worst in him that denied his Master, saying, 'I do not know the man.'

To a greater or lesser degree, we are all 'split personalities.' Very young children are probably the most integrated among us.

One child can play all three Magi. Were an adult to attempt the role, the three would probably quarrel within him.

* * *

A mother was putting her child to bed. 'Don't forget to pray for Grandma, that she might grow very old with us.'

'Why?' asked the child. 'Wouldn't it be better to pray that God will make her young again?'

The fact is, that those we pray for will one day be young again.

* * *

Andrew Carnegie, who was known as the King of Steel, became rich as the owner of the greatest steel mills in the world.

When he was a ten-year-old boy in Scotland, he had a rabbit-hutch but no food for his little animal friends. So

he told the neighbourhood boys that if they would gather clover

and dandelions for the rabbits, he would name the animals after them. The deal was accepted.

Carnegie learned early in life how fond men are of their own names, and he applied that knowledge throughout his life.

Years later he named his steel mill in Pittsburgh after Edgar Thomson, director of the Italian railway company to which he wanted to sell steel rails. He had learned his lesson well!

Perhaps he had been inspired by reading what the Bible says in this regard. God promised Abraham, 'I will make your name great' (GEN 12:2). Jesus promised the overcomer, 'I ... will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels' (REV 3:5).

Don Pedro, king of Brazil, intended to build the first hospital in his country, but had no money. So he issued a decree promising to everyone who gave the sum of $10,000 the title of Baron; to those who gave $20,000 the title of Viscount; and to those who gave the sum of $40,000, the title of Duke.

Money began to pour in, and the hospital was built. When inauguration day came, the veil covering the plaque was drawn aside to reveal this inscription: 'This hospital has been donated by human pride to human misery.'

At some time or other, everyone suffers from frustration or a lack of self-confidence. Consequently most people - including ourselves - are not as we would like them to be, and so we must meet them on their own ground as we attempt to win them for the kingdom.

Little Andrew Carnegie made use of a form of recognition-award to accomplish what he wanted. Let us apply his tactics, by making sure that in our churches every individual counts and is highly regarded.

* * *

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The Sunday school teacher rambled on and on about the great characters of the Bible, starting with Adam and Eve; after an

hour he had only progressed as far as Jeremiah.

'Now comes Ezekiel,' he announced. 'Where should I place this great prophet?'

A girl answered promptly, 'He can have my place - I'm leaving!'

Worse things can befall a preacher who has not learned the skill of communicating the gospel in terse words!

* * *

~Nauka i Religia~, the chief atheist magazine of the USSR, tells of the life of some Christian families who fled to the tundra (treeless arctic plains) and the taiga (swampy forests) of Siberia, in order not to associate with the God-hating Communists. They were discovered by anthropologists, after living a solitary life for forty years.

The scientists recorded the following story about two children in the community.

When a dog died, one child said, 'Let's bury it and put a cross on its grave.'

The other said, 'It wouldn't be lawful; the dog wasn't baptized.'

'Then let's put a garland on the grave. The dog will see it from heaven and rejoice.'

* * *

The atheist Einstein was brought to believe in God by a very small child; none other than Yehudi Menuhin, who astounded the world at the age of six with his violin-playing.

Einstein was visiting Menuhin's father, a practising Jew. They discussed ideas about God, and Einstein explained why he did not believe in the existence of God.

Yehudi, the wonder child, overheard the discussion while playing with his toys, and interrupted. 'Mr. Professor, I will prove to you that God exists.'

Amused, Einstein asked, 'What is your proof?'

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Yehudi took his little violin and began to play. Einstein listened in ecstasy. When the child finished, he asked Einstein, 'If there were no God, how could a child of six play music that delights thousands in concert halls?'

Einstein never again claimed disbelief in God.

* * *

A little girl was talking to her mother, who was busy in the kitchen. She was telling her the events of the day. When she had finished, her mother said, 'Now go and polish Daddy's shoes.'

The girl did not enjoy the task, but she obeyed. Soon her father came in, but before he had a chance to thank her, she asked, 'Who polishes God's shoes?'

Her father was no theologian. Even if he had been, would his theological qualifications have been any help?

Somewhat embarrassed, he said, 'I suppose some good angel considers it an honour to do so.'

She was not satisfied. 'I was wrong - God doesn't wear shoes. He told Moses, "Take your shoes off, because you are on holy ground." God is always on holy ground in heaven. So He can't wear shoes, and there's no need to worry about it.'

At family prayers that evening, her father read how Jesus washed His disciples' feet.

She remarked, Jesus too had walked barefoot, or with just sandals, on the dusty roads of Palestine. It would have been nice if one of the disciples, after having his feet washed by Jesus, had offered to wash His feet. How come it didn't occur to any of them?'

Again, the father had no answer. He had never realized that we must not only accept Jesus' services, but also ask ourselves what little things we can do to help Him.

His daughter was wise beyond her years. It is important for us to consider the theology of children.

* * *

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Today's headlines contain many unnerving and tragic events, among them the abduction, kidnapping, rape and murder of little children. Like many concerned parents, my son instructed both his children never to get into a stranger's car and to refuse any toys, sweets or money from strangers, however pleasant they may seem.

Once he decided to test Amelie. 'Would you go into someone's car if he offered you 500 dollars?'

'No way!'

'What if he offered you 5,000 dollars?'

'No way!'

'But what if he offered 50,000?'

'Well ... 50,000 dollars is a lot of money. I'd tell him "Give me the money and I'll ask my Daddy what I should do."

Everyone has a breaking point. Anyone can resist a small temptation. But if it is really enticing or overwhelming - don't be in a hurry to give in. Rather, ask the One who has told you not to yield, the One on whose good intentions you can always rely.

* * *

A little girl in a wretched attic, whose sick mother had nothing to eat, knelt down by her bedside and said slowly, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Then she went into the street, wondering where God kept His bread. Turning a corner, she spotted a large, prosperous bakery and thought, 'This must be the place!' So she went in confidently and said to the baker, 'I've come for it.'

'Come for what?'

'My daily bread,' she said, pointing to the tempting loaves. 'I'll take two, if you please - one for my mother and one for me.'

The baker wrapped them and gave them to his little customer, who started at once for the door.

'Stop, you little rascal!' said the baker roughly. 'Where's your money?'

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'I haven't got any,' she replied simply.

'Haven't any? You little thief! What brought you here, then?'

The harsh words frightened the little girl and she burst into tears. 'Mother is sick, and I'm so hungry. In my prayers I said, "Give us this day our daily bread," and then I thought God meant me to fetch it, so I came.'

The rough but kindly baker was softened by the child's simple story, and instead of punishing her he said, 'You poor girl! Here, take this to your mother.' And he filled a large basket with bread and gave it to her.

* * *

The famous missionary to Africa, George Moffat, went to a new tribe and found to his amazement an inscription on a tree: 'The Christian school gathers here.' He did not know of any Christian missionaries who had been there before him.

Soon he found a twelve-year-old girl and asked her about the school. Well, she said, she was the headmistress and the only teacher. She had lived in a neighbouring area for a time, where she heard the gospel; and she had returned to be the first missionary to the tribe.

It is not impossible to recruit children for home and foreign missions. In fact, children have special access to people's hearts.

* * *

A four-year-old boy from Sri Lanka, born with terrible deformities, listened intently as his father read in the Scriptures of how the disciples questioned Jesus about a man

handicapped from birth: 'Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' (JHN 9:2).

The little boy broke in to ask, 'Mummy and Daddy, did you sin, and was I born blind because of that?'

The parents replied, 'We were God-fearing from childhood. We are not conscious of any sin that would have deserved such punishment.'

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The child then said, 'If that is so, I can be quiet. God will show in me some work of His.'

Now some thirty years later he is still alive, living mostly in hospitals in great suffering. Through his quiet witness, God shows that a cross can be borne patiently, lovingly, and with the hope of a better life in Paradise.

* * *

A boy of twelve threw a stone that accidentally hit one of the family geese on the head, killing it. Scared of the consequences of his carelessness, he buried the dead fowl, thinking that his mother would not miss it since they had a number of geese.

That evening his sister blackmailed him. 'Tonight you can wash the dishes. Otherwise I'll tell Mother what you did.'

So he washed the dishes. But when she tried to blackmail him again the next day, he replied 'No, today you wash the dishes. I told Mum all about it - and she forgave me.'

If you have committed a sin, however large, will you allow men and devils to inveigle you into more and more sins to cover up for the first? Better be quick to confess your sin to God. You will not surprise Him, for you are certainly not the first sinner. In fact, He would be surprised if you did not sin.

Know also, He forgives gladly. Where appropriate, confess your sin to the one you have wronged. And be aware how important it is that you do not let anyone force you into a wrong direction for ever, simply because you have taken a single step in that direction.

* * *

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Origen, one of the most celebrated teachers of the ancient Church, passed through the gamut of suffering, though he did not attain to the privilege of dying a martyr's death.

He was only a child when his father Leonid (who later died for his faith) was arrested. When he heard that his father had been imprisoned, he did all he could to get himself jailed. His mother tried in vain to dissuade him. Finally she hid his clothes in desperation, and so forced him to stay at home.

Unable to do anything else, he wrote to his father: 'Beware of altering for our sake your decision, that you will suffer for Christ.'

Some Christians, thinking of the suffering that their loyalty to Christ brings their families, crack under pressures and persecution. Some are concerned lest their

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dangerous stand for Christ might make members of their family forsake the faith, because of the heavy burden that their father's sacrifice imposes on them.

I have heard many martyrs' children exclaim, 'If only my father had kept silent, my childhood would not have been so bitter.'

It is a great encouragement to have children like Origen. When I was in jail, my son who was then very young sent me letters in the same spirit in which Origen wrote. His first words to me, when he was allowed to see me after four years of detention, were: 'I have a rich Father who is taking care of me. You need not worry.'

The guards who were listening knew that he was my son. They wondered who this rich father might be.

May we encourage all who walk the way of the cross, assuring them that we do not resent the suffering that we may

endure on their account. They should know that we are proud of them.

* * *

Strolling through a park with six-year-old Mihai and his friend, I sometimes found myself left behind as the boys skipped ahead. All of a sudden Mihai spotted a man reading a book. He went up to him and said, 'You'd be better reading the Bible!'

'Why?'

'It tells you how to go to heaven. If you don't, you will burn in hell. See that tall man over there? He's my father. He'll explain things better.' With such an introduction, I was able to take the opportunity to explain further. The man was won for God, and is today one of Rumania's greatest Christian poets.

Let us be evangelists, preparing the way like John the Baptist.

* * *

At five, Mihai attended a prayer meeting where there were prayers for the poor. 'Father,' he enquired, 'why do

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you bother God with prayers for the poor? Put your hand in your pocket and give!'

Many say that they do not know how to pray. A child provided the answer: a good deed is a wonderful prayer.

* * *

Once I explained to a child how tiny we are in this immense universe. Man ought to be humble. He is no more than a pebble.

The child (who was eight) replied, 'A pebble is a big thing. If it gets into the shell of an oyster, it becomes a pearl! It's wrong to despise oneself.'

When my granddaughter was seven, she watched me drawing men's faces. My drawing is worse than poor. She said earnestly, 'Grandpa, you are sinning. God made men to be beautiful. In your

drawing you are making them ugly!'

I would have liked Picasso to have heard those words. He painted men ugly. But then I realized how often I have labelled people bad whom God loves and who are appreciated in His sight. A pebble can become precious, and a sinner can be of great value.

* * *

A five-year-old child was watching his mother as she made some cakes. Eventually he had a bright idea.

'Mummy,' he said, 'you have taught me so many nice words. May I teach you some as well?'

'Yes, of course. What would you like to teach me to say?'

'Try "Have one, my dear child!"'

The mother accepted the instruction immediately.

* * *

A group of us were discussing some serious mission problems. Amelie, who was about six years old at the time, was playing with her toys. Presently she interrupted.

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'Grandpa, whereabouts is the word "problem" found in the Bible?'

'Nowhere that I know of.'

'But you all believe in the Bible - why are you so worried about something that's so unimportant, it isn't even mentioned in the Bible?'

I learned from this childish comment that looking for solutions to problems can be a useless exercise. It is simpler to reject problems, as things that do not belong to our lives.

In a life which has seen a great deal of suffering, I have learned that it is a sin to be plagued with headaches!

In the Bible, Jesus is called the head of the Church, and the believers are the body. Now, neither the foot nor the elbow

can have headaches - only the head. So a believer with a headache has usurped the role of Jesus! It is as if he said, 'Come down from the throne! I am the head now. To prove it, I have headaches.'

In what sense do we have headaches like this?

At night Luther used to pray, 'God, is it my world - or Your world? Is it my Church - or Your Church? If it is Your Church and Your world, please take care of them. I am tired, I have to go to bed. Goodnight, my God. We will see each other in the morning.'

Let us leave everything in God's hands.

* * *

A boy of six overheard his older sister exclaim several times, 'Oh God!' Finally he said to her, 'You're doing wrong. Don't bother God.'

There is an old teaching in the Bible that is almost completely neglected. Jairus was rebuked: 'Why bother the teacher?' (MRK 5:35). The Psalmist says, 'My soul waiteth upon God' (PSA 62:1, AV).

It is said that Teresa of Lisieux once chided a nun for constantly complaining about her troubles. 'Don't bother your sisters. They each have their own burdens.'

The nun accepted the rebuke in a good spirit. 'You are

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right. From now on, I will only tell my troubles to Jesus.'

'Oh, no,' Teresa said, 'to Him least of all! Has He not suffered enough? Let Him have peace.'

* * *

A couple had always put their toddler in the church crŠche, which is often very noisy. The day came when they decided to take him into the adult service for the first time. Before they did so, they told him, 'No talking in church.'

Everything went well while the choir was singing. But when the pastor began to preach, the boy shouted, 'No talking in church!'

Most older children would probably agree that there is too much talking in church! If the words they heard there were warm with love and truth - the 'real thing' (which is the meaning of the Hebrew word for 'word') - children would not mind long services. In the underground Church and in India, I have seen children quiet and interested in services lasting two to three hours.

* * *

When the Union forces finally gained victory in America's tragic Civil War, a jubilant crowd cheered Abraham Lincoln. He asked the people what should be done with the leaders of the rebellious South. They roared, 'Hang them!'

Lincoln's son, Tad, said, 'Father, don't hang them, but hang on to them.'

'You are right,' said his father, and acted accordingly; and so, in the opinion of some, made his assassination inevitable.

Whether the child reflected the man or the man the child, the Union was saved, and today America is one nation under God.

* * *

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An American pastor was once asked to preach in Japan. When he came home, his young son asked him, 'How could people understand you? You don't speak Japanese.'

His father explained. 'I spoke a couple of sentences in English, then someone translated my words into Japanese.'

The child considered the explanation, and then said brightly, 'Father, why don't you stop in your sermons occasionally, and have somebody explain what they mean?'

* * *

In Aria, which is 50 kilometers west of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, the first German missionaries bred cattle. They had a twelve-year-old boy looking after their herd.

One evening they observed him reading to his friends from the New Testament which they had translated. With great difficulty he stumbled through the words, trying to make some sense out of them. Finally, he closed the book and prayed: 'God in heaven, these white men have come to speak to us about Jesus, but they have heads like wood. They speak our language poorly and we can't understand them. Break open their heads, and put the words of our language into their brains, so that we can learn.'

Many good Christians who try to heed Jesus' advice to become as little children have difficulty in understanding some of the sermons for grown-ups. Preachers who can speak 'theologese' or 'philosophese' ought to learn to speak 'childese.' They would do well to remind themselves that their learned discourses are out of the reach of some listeners; or that their sermons are neither practical nor down-to-earth.

Jesus told us to feed His sheep - not His giraffes!

* * *

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Once Amelie told a playmate, 'Tell your father not to ask my Grandpa to play chess. Grandpa hates to beat anyone even at chess, and he hates taking other people's pawns. I can see how he always loses at chess.'

I wish I were as altruistic as my grandchild perceives me to be!

* * *

Once we arrived at a hotel in San Francisco, and the manager informed us that we had no reservation and there were no rooms available. We argued with him, but it was no use. Finally Amelie spoke up. 'You're supposed to be saints. Why are you arguing? You should be praying.' Abashed, I bowed my head.

I had scarcely finished when the manager called me over, and said, 'You're in luck! I've found you a room.'

Amelie simply said, 'I hope you learned your lesson.'

I had. But would I remember it? Would she?

* * *

Sometimes when my son Mihai felt tired and prayed too briefly with his children, Amelie would pluck his sleeve and say, 'Daddy, we haven't prayed enough.'

Do we pray enough, by children's standards? We pray to the heavenly Father through Jesus. Does the holy Child think that we have prayed enough?

* * *

A group of thirteen-year-olds were asked to illustrate one of the Ten Commandments by drawing a picture. Several chose the seventh: 'You shall not commit adultery.'

One boy's effort showed a stick-man taking a stick-woman by the arm. Above his head was a wordless heart-shaped thought-balloon; above hers was a thought-balloon containing the question, 'What about my husband?'

When temptation blurs spiritual vision, it is helpful to focus attention on the possible effects of such a wrong

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course and to consider the likelihood of people getting hurt.

When the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, the American pilot on his return was surrounded by reporters who asked, 'What do you think about this action?'

He replied, 'Why don't you ask the victims?'

The child in his rudimentary picture teaches us to put ourselves into the situation of the wronged party before we decide on a course of action that will cause that wrong.

* * *

Mihai was perhaps five years old when he sat on my lap and commented, 'You seem sad today. Why?' I said, 'Because I realize

I am a great sinner.'

He answered, 'You know what the proverb says: God takes away His gifts from those who are dissatisfied. Be thankful for what small goodness you have.'

At the same age, Amelie counselled me, 'Never complain about the state of your heart. You can be sure you will go to heaven, believe me.'

Cornelia, an eight-year-old, once interrupted one of my sermons. 'Don't tell lies when you preach! Don't say you are bad! Aren't you washed by the blood of Jesus? You are a saint!'

I was judging myself according to the deeds I had committed; these children believed my sermons asserting that those who trust in Jesus are made whiter than snow.

Why should Christians not be able to say, with David's simplicity, 'I am holy' (PSA 86:2)? Indeed, we are called to be saints (1CO 1:2).

* * *

A father told his child, with a wealth of detail, the parable of the lost sheep. To dramatize the story, he told how it had crawled through a hole in the fence at night and then

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wandered away. But fortunately the Good Shepherd was able to find it.

When his father finished, the child commented, 'I suppose Jesus made sure He mended that hole in the fence.'

Pastors too should concern themselves not only with regaining the backslidden, but with seeing to it that their parishioners do not backslide in the first place.

* * *

The late Archbishop Fulton Sheen once told about how he lost his way when trying to find Philadelphia Town Hall. He asked directions from a group of local boys. They told him the way and asked him why he wanted to go there.

'I have to give a lecture, on "The Way to Heaven,"' he replied. 'Would you like to come with me?'

One boy laughed. 'How would you know the way to heaven, when you don't even know the way to the Town Hall?'

Children, like parents, are inclined to reject advice on how to get to heaven when their informant does not know how to behave decently upon earth.

The fact is that understanding and behaviour are not always cultivated to the same degree in a human being. David, and many other biblical and modern saints, could give very reliable information about the way to Paradise, while wandering far off from the paths of righteousness themselves.

Let us be sure that we discriminate between the man and his message. And for the clearest directions about the way to heaven, let us choose the Word of God.

* * *

A group of ten or so Christians of different persuasions were gathered in my home. We were having a heated debate about biblical problems.

The holy rule had been forgotten: that when discussion

waxes hot, it should be abandoned. People shouted at each other in anger.

Mihai, who was about four years old at the time, was present. When the argument reached a peak, he said four Greek words quietly: '~Kardia kai psyche mia.~'

The others, assuming he was speaking in tongues, asked me what they meant. I translated: 'One heart and one soul.' They were stunned into silence. The discussion ceased.

The only explanation I can offer is that Mihai must have heard me when I read the New Testament aloud in the original. The words occur in ACT 4:32: 'Now the multitudes of those who believed were of one heart and one soul.' I would have drawn my

wife's attention to the beauty of the words, and the fact that they rhyme - kard~ia~ ... ~mia~; and I would have explained to her what they meant.

Mihai had apparently remembered all this, and used the words at the right time.

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[illustration appears at this point in the book]

"I'm playing ball with God."

When Amelie was eight, she asked me to tell her yet again the story of how Jesus washed His disciples' feet. When I came to the words spoken to Peter – 'Unless I wash your feet, you have no part with Me' – she was very sad.

Jesus didn't wash my feet; so I have no part with Him either,' she mourned.

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I tried to explain. 'You were baptized. You have seen others being baptized.'

'But that's no help,' she countered. 'Jesus said that He must wash our feet. Anything else will not do.'

A chill travelled down my spine. I quoted many Bible verses before I found one that satisfied her completely: 'The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sins' – those of the head, the hands, the feet, 'just everything,' I explained.

'Well then,' she asked, 'if you are washed by Jesus, you are absolutely sure of entering heaven?'

'Absolutely sure.'

'Are you positive?'

'Yes, of course.'

'Then give me the names of the disciples whose feet He washed.'

I started to give her a few names. She broke in: 'Didn't He wash Judas' feet as well?'

'Yes, He did.'

'Then it is absolutely certain that Judas Iscariot is in Paradise.'

'I'm afraid not.'

'Why not?'

'Because he betrayed his Lord by selling Him for thirty pieces of silver.'

Amelie brought the discussion to an end by observing, with great candour and perception, 'Grandpa, it's not enough to be washed by Jesus; you have to behave afterwards.'

In that one sentence, she had summed up the entire epistle of James.

* * *

A Catholic child of eight gave a good explanation of 'holiness': 'Every person has a circle round his head, just as we see in the holy images. Some walk carefully so as to be right under the circle. Then it lights up. They are the

saints. As for the rest of us, the circle remains invisible.'

No saint could have explained it better.

* * *

Nina and her small brother were fascinated by the siren of a passing ambulance.

Attempting to educate the wide-eyed toddler, Nina explained, 'They have the siren so that cars will stop and let them go past.'

Her brother disagreed. 'I don't think so. They make a big noise so that everybody will know "Here is somebody you should pray for because he's in great need."'

Who was right? I suspect both were!

* * *

I once read to Mihai from 1CO 11:28 - 'Let a man examine himself.'

Puzzled, he asked, 'How?'

I said, 'We must knock on our chests and ask, "Heart, do you love? Heart, do you love?"' To illustrate, I smote myself hard on the chest.

Mihai objected. 'In the railway station, I saw a man going from one train wheel to another, striking them with a hammer. I asked him to let me do it. When he handed me the hammer, I was surprised to see how light it was. He explained that if the wheels were struck with a heavy hammer at every station, they would eventually break.' (What Mihai had seen, of course, was the process of testing wheels for damage by listening to the vibrations of the metal when struck.)

'So,' continued Mihai, 'I believe we ought not to beat too hard on our chests, but only very lightly. Otherwise we might break our hearts! We should ask the heart very gently, "Do you love?" and if the heart whispers "Yes," we ought to be content.'

I learned something valuable that day. Self-examination, yes; but not self-torture.

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Kindergarten children often surprise us with their unexpected juxtapositions of ideas. Looking at a picturebook about Africa, a five-year-old concluded, 'There must have been a lot of ice in the Sahara, and a lot of people must have slipped and fallen over - or God wouldn't have put so much sand on it!'

Can we fault this child, for trying to make sense out of a world for which the Father cares so deeply?

* * *

A rabbi walking down the street saw a little child playing with a ball. He fell into conversation with him.

'What are you doing?'

The boy replied, 'I'm playing ball with God.'

The rabbi laughed. 'How do you do that?'

The little one replied, 'I throw the ball up to Him, and He throws it back down to me.'

We should strive, like little children, to interpret events like these with such simplicity. Things do not fall because of the Law of Gravity, but because God allows them to fall for our good. He may use the Law of Gravity, which He ordained, to accomplish His ends; but we should see His hand in all that happens to us.

We interact with a living God, our loving Father; not with blind laws that impinge upon our material, psychological or spiritual world.

* * *

A father gave pocket-money to each of his children, and asked how much of it they were going to give to Jesus. The youngest replied, 'Nothing.'

Surprised, the father queried, 'Don't you want to show Jesus how much you love Him?'

'I don't have to show Him a thing,' the toddler said earnestly. 'He knows exactly how much I love Him, even if I don't put a penny in the basket.'

The child was quite right. We must learn not to use religious jargon when we speak to children. To show

Jesus we love Him, we give ourselves. Then because we have given ourselves, we delight in giving things. God doesn't need our money - the cattle on a thousand hills are His - but He allows us

the pleasure and privilege of filling human need by sharing with others.

* * *

Sometimes children display a refreshing honesty.

When Mrs. Booth of The Salvation Army preached on one occasion, she noticed a child in the front row crying. She paused to comment, 'I am moved to see a child weeping at the sufferings of Jesus.'

An adult might have been happy to accept the compliment. But the child stood up and admitted, 'No, lady; an insect got into my eye.'

Let us not pretend to have more spirituality than we actually possess!

* * *

Bramwell Booth was the General of The Salvation Army. His young children prayed, 'Dear Lord, send the Army a lot of money to make Papa happy.'

Alex says of his father, 'He wants to be a millionaire so he can give all the money to the Church.'

It is not money, but the love of money that is the root of all evil.

* * *

Children make theological mistakes just as adults do. A pastor once delivered a rousing sermon about sin and hell.

'One thing is certain,' he thundered. 'Every man, woman and child in this parish will die one day. There is no escape!'

A boy in the front row began to giggle.

'Every person in this parish,' reiterated the pastor, 'will die.'

The boy continued to laugh.

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Affronted, the pastor challenged him. 'Why are you laughing?'

'I'm not from this parish,' he replied.

* * *

Amelie at the age of five volunteered her own explanation as to why the capital of Rumania is called Bucharest.

'It's because the country is Communist, and if you're caught with a religious ~book, arrest~ will follow.'

* * *

In a small provincial town in Rumania I went to the Presbyterian church and asked for the pastor. Some children were playing in the churchyard and one of them, who was about twelve years old, offered to take me to the manse.

As we walked, I asked him about himself and learned that he was to be confirmed the next week. I asked him 'Do you believe in Christ?'

He replied determinedly, 'Oh, no. I'm only getting confirmed because my mother really insists.'

'Why do you feel like that?'

His answer was remarkable. 'I believe that if it were true that God created, 2,000 years ago, the marvellous Christ I'm taught about, He would also have made some little Christ in every generation, in every town, to show us that such a character is possible. But - I've never met a Christ. My father is dead, my mother is poor and has lots of children. Nobody has ever given me a sweet or shown me any kindness. There never was a Christ.'

I asked another question: 'Isn't your pastor a little Christ?'

'No,' he said.

We had arrived at the pastor's house. The boy left. I took the opportunity of relating to the pastor what the child had said, emphasizing his desire to meet a little Christ.

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'What an idiot!' said the pastor. He was right. But who was the idiot?

* * *

Little children love stories. When Amelie was five she begged, 'Grandpa, please tell me about Jesus, but every little bit, from when He was born to the very end.' Then she added, 'I know you can't do that. Nobody can tell the whole story of Jesus because it isn't finished yet.'

And so it is written in MRK 1:1 that the evangelist records only 'the beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ.'

Let us also acknowledge that we know very, very little; but the little we do know is so beautiful that it is well worth repeating and well worth investigating further.

* * *

I remember having to tell Mihai off for some wrongdoing when he was small. Convicted, he stood before me with bowed head. I asked him, 'Why don't you look me in the face?'

'I don't want to look at your mouth when it says harsh words,' he said simply. 'I want to look at the loving heart from which they come.'

* * *

A child was taken to the opera for the first time. He saw ~The Masked Ball~ and was very impressed.

At home, he said to his father, 'I didn't understand what was happening on stage. What is the opera about?'

His father replied, 'It is all sung in Italian, and I don't understand Italian. But the orchestra conductor's son is in your class at school. When you are at his house, why not ask his father? I'm sure he'll be glad to explain.'

The boy did so, but the conductor could not help. 'I have to spend my time seeing to it that every instrument and singer comes in at the right time. I've never actually watched what

happens on stage, so I can't tell you. But

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wait a minute: the tenor who sings the leading role will be here for tea soon. He'll explain everything.'

So the boy asked the tenor, but he replied, 'I'm not on stage all the time, and I've had to memorize so many roles.... I really don't care about what the others are singing while I get a bit of rest in my dressing room. But look, here is the stage manager. He'll tell you.'

The stage manager had little more to offer. 'I only have a very general idea. My concern is the scenery, not the plot.'

So the boy went to the author of the libretto, who replied, 'I only wrote the words. I've wondered myself sometimes, about the weird music that draws attention away from the words.'

He went to the composer, but he only said, '~The Masked Ball~? Who knows? As far as I'm concerned, the author could have made the Governor of Boston a Spanish cavalier. For me, the text was just an excuse for my own musical fantasies.'

The child went back to his father, much enlightened. 'Nobody knows a thing. We're all playing some little part in a drama we don't understand.'

So it is written in Scripture: 'The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know' (1CO 8:2). Love is the key to knowledge and to meaning.

* * *

When she was eleven, Amelie had to write an essay in school on the subject of capital punishment. In her efforts to gather all the arguments for and against she consulted many people, including me. Six-year-old Alex listened for a while, then gave his unsolicited opinion: 'I am for capital punishment - but with love.' St. John of the Cross wrote, 'On the last day we will all be judged by love.' Sometimes life obliges us to use harsh

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methods and take up unpopular attitudes; but even these should be motivated by love.

* * *

The late Orthodox priest Sheludkov of Russia, a man much persecuted, tells in his book about a twelve-year-old boy in Moscow.

A terrible thing had happened; young Misha was a believer, and the Communist teachers had found out. A conclave of teachers gathered to persuade Misha to abandon his faith. They asked him, 'How can you believe in God? Have you ever seen Him?'

He answered, 'If I were to see Him, I would not believe in Him. The real God is invisible. Gagarin the first cosmonaut mocked Him saying, "I looked around in space and could see no God." Was he so ignorant? Didn't he know that God is invisible?'

We all wish sometimes that we could see God visible in our lives, giving direct answers to our questions or providing us with the things we most desire. But if He were thus visible, He would not be God. In our sinful state, we cannot look on Him and live. That is why God is the Invisible in the events of our lives, the mysterious, the awe-inspiring in our experiences.

We are pilgrims, bound for another world. What our senses can perceive in this world will never satisfy the human soul. We are looking for a better city, 'whose builder and maker is God.'

Then we shall see our Redeemer face to face, and know who He is.

* * *

The writer Elie Wiesel was once an inmate of a Nazi concentration camp. He tells of a starving Jewish child who was hanged for stealing a piece of bread.

The child asked for no explanation. He did not cry, nor even protest. Life had been given him without explanation,

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and in a cruel way, life was taken from him without

explanation.

Where was God?

God was right there, on the gallows with the child, silent and hurting. What is there to say, in the solemnity of such an hour?

Christ too was 'led like a lamb to the slaughter ... He did not open His mouth' (ISA 53:7).

* * *

I explained to a child of nine that hatred is an evil.

She said, 'Then hate is sin, and so is love.'

'Where did you get the idea that love is sinful?'

'Well,' she said, 'Jesus said we should love each other as He loves us. Everything less is sin. I don't love anybody as Jesus does. I would not die on a cross for anybody.'

From this discussion I held on to the concept that to love less than Jesus does is sin.

On the altar of sacrifice in the temple of Jerusalem, the blood of animals was to be found, that cleansed worshippers from their trespasses. But once a year, the altar itself had to be cleaned.

Before God, even our good deeds are like filthy rags. Only Jesus' righteousness satisfies. Only His love is worthy of this name.

* * *

One evening the son of a celebrated evangelist threw a tantrum. When his mother went to sort him out, she asked him why he had behaved so badly.

'I didn't do it,' he said. 'The devil did it.'

Oh, that we would have the wisdom not to attribute to ourselves actions that we deplore, and not to despair when we fall into sin! The devil really does seek constantly to ensnare us in attitudes and actions that are alien to our nature.

Let us place the blame where it belongs, and quietly

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acknowledge the mis-steps in our lives, and firmly denounce the devil's doings in our lives.

And then let us pray: 'Our Father .... lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'

* * *

A boy was making a brave attempt to draw a dog in pen and ink. The result was pleasing, except that the dog had no tail.

Naturally, an adult who saw the picture asked 'Where's his tail?'

He answered disingenuously, 'It's still in the ink-bottle.'

Sometimes we are criticized for not being polished saints. A few years ago, there was a saying that was popular: 'Be patient with me - God isn't finished with me yet.'

Our virtues are still 'in the bottle,' along with His promises.

'He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus' (PHP 1:6).

* * *

A child asked his mother how he was born. She told him, 'God sent you into the world.'

'And how were ~you~ born?'

'I was sent by God too.'

'And Grandmother?'

'Yes, she was sent by God as well.'

'Mummy, why has there been no sex for such a long time in our family?'

In these days of television and ~Playboy~ Magazine, children are aware of sex from a fragile age. They won't stand for fables.

They should be told about sex, but told of it in its fullness - its beauty and its dangers. They should know that God has provided a framework for the precious gift of life to appear.

* * *

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A child came back from Sunday School very excited. 'We learned how Moses brought the Jewish people over the Red Sea!' he told his mother. 'He just waved his stick, and building materials fell from heaven! Then he waved it again, and everything stuck together and made a huge bridge! Then he waved his stick again - and there were horses and carts to carry the old people!'

His mother frowned. 'I'm sure he can't have said that.'

'Well,' replied the child, 'if I told what he ~really~ said - you wouldn't believe it!'

Nowadays children suck scepticism with their mother's milk. They don't take Bible stories on trust.

We must not only tell children the stories of God's miracles. We must also explain to them that an almighty God can do things we cannot; and we must explain to them why God worked miracles, and how trustworthy is His Word.

* * *

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[illustration appears at this point in the book]

Love for God should always resemble that of a child

Not long ago, I had a dream that made a vivid impression upon me.

I was in a prison cell again. On my bed was a giant

caterpillar. I wanted to get rid of it, but couldn't because the door was locked. I had no alternative but to kill it, and I succeeded in doing so only after great efforts. Exhausted from my exertions, I suddenly realized that what I had killed was the child in me - that capacity to believe wholeheartedly, love unstintingly, trust implicitly. I had killed the best in me.

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I awoke with a feeling of great sorrow. Is it possible to kill the child within the man?

Today, abortion is a controversial issue. Some fifteen millions of the unborn have been killed in the United States alone during the last decade. In Red China, new-born girls are slaughtered by the thousand, because women are not allowed to have more than one child and they would rather have a boy.

We also kill spiritually. We murder the child within the child who, as Nietzsche wrote, 'wishes to play.' Even Marx, that implacable foe of religion, was driven to admit: 'I have to concede to Christianity one great merit. It has taught men to love children.' It has done more than that. It has taught men to love the child in themselves.

In this area, children's theology is unique.

After Christ had ascended to heaven, His followers referred to Him as 'the holy child, Jesus' (ACT 4:27, AV). Why?

A Cambodian girl, Arn Chorn, who grew up in the middle of the holocaust that annihilated at least two million of her countrymen - including her family - gives an interesting answer.

> Children are less angry than adults and forget insults more quickly. Maybe children know more about their imperfections, and when we do, we have a chance to laugh at ourselves more easily and not take ourselves so seriously. Maybe as children, we can feel a brotherhood of imperfection. Children are less sure that they are absolutely right. Adults, who are sure that they are absolutely right make war- even religious war- over their absolute rightness.

Jesus chides us with the observation, 'You have forsaken your first love' (REV 2:4) - a child's love. Love for God should always resemble that of a child.

Many believe that the innocence of children is a myth

created by adults. Freud went so far as to call children 'polymorph perverse.'

I do not wonder. He was repeating what David said long ago: 'Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies. Their venom is like the venom of a snake' (PSA 58:3-4).

This is the bitter complaint of a father who had several wicked children. Perhaps Freud experienced similar frustration.

As for Jesus, He admired in little children their unqualified love, trust and openness. When the religious leaders and theologians of the day shut Him out, the little ones, with their children's theology, accepted Him, climbing all over Him, and, I think, hugging and kissing Him with unabashed warmth and ardour. Without knowing theology, they embraced the God about whom theologians argue.

The heart of the gospel - the Good News to which all Scripture testifies - is that God loves, forgives and accepts His creatures; and Jesus came as Man to demonstrate this true character of Deity (cf. JHN 3:16).

May God grant us the grace to grasp this, with the simple faith of a child!

[The End of "From The Lips of Children"]

In October of 1967 Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, along with his wife Sabina, founded a non-profit missionary organization to bring assistance to persecuted Christians around the world.

Today "The Voice of the Martyrs, Inc.," directed by Pastor Wurmbrand, continues to carry out this work. For more information about the mission activities or a complete listing

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If Prison Walls Could Speak

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Pastor Wurmbrand gave his personal approval for the free dissemination of this file. It is based on the book published by Pastor Wurmbrand's organization. Italicized text in the book are enclosed by tildes (~) in this file.

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page 7 Preface

THROW A CHRISTIAN INTO THE RIVER, AND HE WILL COME UP with a fish in his mouth. I have not known a Christian, who remained faithful through adversities and inner struggles, who did not come out of them enriched.

When I was released from prison, I brought with me a treasure which God had given me there: three hundred and fifty-six poems, which were in fact condensations of sermons, preached while I was alone in a cell.

I published some of them in my book ~Sermons in Solitary Confinement.~ They were well received, and many people have written to tell me that they have been helped by reading them. This encouraged me to publish another volume of these sermons composed when I had no pen or paper, and delivered to an in invisible audience. I was imprisoned underground. I saw nobody except the guards and the examining officers. I entrusted my sermons to the angels. They have wings. They could take my words to my brothers and sisters in the faith.

The angels have done more than I asked of them. They always do. They released me from prison, brought me to the free world and gave me opportunities to publish in many languages my experiences in prison. Let me be more precise. I do not publish the experiences, but the words in which these experiences are expressed.

There is a big difference.

When Patton tried to translate the New Testament for the people of New Hebrides, he found that they had no word for "faith" in their language. Instead, he used a word

which means literally "to repose quietly, without worrying, on the grass." So those who read JHN 3:16 in the New Hebrides understand that a man who rests serenely, without fretting, on the fact that God gave his Son for him, will have eternal life. In Central Africa, other translators have used a word meaning "to hear and to do," which is the exact opposite. The Hebrew word for faith, ~emunah~, or the Haussa, ~amince~, both mean "to say amen."

When I read the word for "holy" in Hebrew, ~kadosh~, I know it to come from the same stem as the word for "prostitute," which helps me to understand that a saint is a man who offers himself spiritually to everybody and embraces everybody in love, without distinction of age, physical or moral qualities, race or creed. When I read the Greek word, ~aghios~, which means literally "not of the earth (ghea)," I understand that a saint is a man detached from earthly things. In different languages words convey different sentiments.

On the one hand there is your experience, and on the other hand a very poor attempt to put it into words developed by men whose experiences have been totally unlike yours.

In order to give a true account of my own particular experiences, as a man tortured, mocked and drugged in a solitary cell, I would have to invent words of my own; but then I could not communicate.

We did not live in the sphere of words there. St. John says that on Patmos he saw. We can put into words what we saw only in the measure in which we could describe to a blind man Michelangelo's Pieta, or Leonardo's Mona Lisa.

Moody said that the Christian on his knees sees more than a philosopher standing on tiptoe. If you want to know what hundreds of thousands of Christians have experienced, and are still experiencing, in Communist dungeons, don't stop at reading these sermons, but get down on your knees and ask God for the privilege of sharing the cross of the sufferers, of remembering them as though you were bound in chains with them.

But don't share only the outward physical suffering, the hunger, the tortures. Share what is far worse, the inner tempest, the doubts, the moments of despair.

These sermons are not what we usually understand by a sermon - the proclamation of God's truth - but an attempt to make others feel the storms of doubt, and sometimes even of rebellion against God, which assail a prisoner under such

conditions. They assailed St. John the Baptist when he knew that Jesus was living not far from his prison yet never came to visit him. They forced Christ himself to ask God why he had forsaken him. Under normal circumstances, it would be blasphemy to suggest that the Heavenly Father could give up a righteous man. But Jesus was not preaching on the cross as priests do from their pulpits. He was experiencing suffering - the greatest mystery in the good and almighty God's creation - and was expressing what he felt at that moment when he cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

There are not enough shovels on earth to bury the truth. And there are no pains enough to prevent truth and faith and love from triumphing at last, even when you pass through the worst temptations. I have doubted, I have had moments of despair, but these were all overcome. The sermons finish on a note of victory. I left prison still a Christian.

I was set free. Others have remained in captivity. Watchman Nee and Wang-Min-Dao have been in prison in China for nineteen years, Hrapov in Russia for thirty years. Many have gone into prison since I left it. When you read these sermons, you are reading what is going on in their hearts today. You will thus be able to weep, but also to rejoice with them, and to arrive at some sort of understanding of the life of those who suffer.

I publish these sermons not in order that people should learn Christianity from them. For this they have their pastors. My purpose is to show what Communist imprisonment and torture can do to a Christian's mind and faith.

The evangelists found it necessary to publish the doubts which assailed John the Baptist when he was in prison and the distress of Jesus's mind in Gethsemane and on the cross. The purpose of the evangelists was not to teach you to question the messiahship of Jesus, or to consider yourself forsaken by God when you suffer innocently. But it is important for a disciple to know that such doubts come. It helps him not

to be afraid of them when they come.

I am very well aware that some of the ideas expressed in this book will run counter to the understanding of Scripture which many Christians have. But my life at the time when these sermons were composed also ran counter to the style of life of Christians of the free world. I had no Bible, no books of theology, no Christian fellowship to check whether my thoughts were right. Don't compare my thoughts in a solitary cell with your thoughts when you sit comfortably in a study or in a sitting-room. Try rather to understand what the

millions of Christians in Communist prisons have thought and think when beaten by terrible tempests.

I composed these sermons on the verge of insanity. In the Soviet Union Christians are put in asylums. After a time some of them really go mad. Are their ideas on the last days before they go mad not also a treasure of the church, a treasure which must be kept with respect as a holy thing, though they contradict what those think who never were put in strait-jackets and gagged?

Even theologically sophisticated readers, if they will weep with those who weep, instead of judging them as sobbing in an unorthodox manner, should listen to the voice which brings the cries of sufferers. The good Samaritan did not question the orthodoxy of the man who had been beaten by robbers. He helped. It is an essential part and test of orthodox Christian belief to be silent and to help when men in terrible pain say wrong things.

I will not take the place of your pastor who will be responsible before God for his flock. It is for him to teach you the fundamentals of faith. I wish only to remind you of your brothers and sisters under extreme pressure in Communist jails. Not only their bodies are wounded. Their minds also suffer deformations.

Now when I write down these sermons, kept in my memory during the years, I realize that sometimes they contradict each other. I leave them as they were composed. What man does not have inner contradictions? And if we have them, why pretend to be consistent? It is we who make the Bible consistent. Its authors were too big to waste time on this. They loved

God with all their heart, with its good and with its evil side and allowed both to speak to the glory of God. God accepted it and has caused the bloody psalms of vengeance in the Old Testament and clamour for retaliation in the Book of Revelation to be included in the same book with the poem on love in 1 Corinthians 13 [1CO 13].

In these sermons thoughts are expressed which would not occur to a Christian of the free world. But would his thoughts not change if his country fell under a dictatorial rule? Bonhoeffer was an Evangelical pastor. When his country was under the boot of Hitler he became an agent of the "Abwehr," the Nazi intelligence service. He got orders from this organization to spy on the ecumenical movement. For this purpose he was allowed to contact church leaders of countries which fought against Germany. Using these contacts he served Christ, telling the foreign church leaders of the atrocities of

Nazism and what might be done to overthrow it. Then he came back and reported something other than what he had spoken. His only aim in this double play was to help the cause of God and of freedom. In the end he went to prison for his faith and died a martyr's death. Anyone who has not worked in an underground church has to accept that things like this happen and is not to judge. When his own church is underground, he will have to do the same.

The thoughts contained in these sermons do not occur to a Christian in the free world, because he has never been alone for years in a Communist jail. Solitary confinement under the Reds, accompanied by torture, doping with narcotics and brain-washing, gives you unique experiences.

We read in 1SM 1:1 that the prophet was from the tribe Ephraim. Then he had a rare experience. God spoke to him when he was only a boy. God who is sovereign raised him to a priestly office, normally reserved for the tribe of Levi. This changed not only his status. In 1CH 6:36-7 the same five ancestors of Samuel are named, but no more as Ephraimites. When Samuel was changed to the tribe of Levi by a direct call from God, the tribe of his ancestors until the fifth generation has changed too. Now they are numbered among the Levites, just like their descendant.

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An exceptional happening, a boy's talk with God produced great changes not only for him, but also for those related to him. I'm far from being a Samuel. But I also had a tremendous experience with God in unusual circumstances. It has changed my manner of thinking, my feelings, my relationship with other men. My experience has perhaps also changed the status of some related to me. It has certainly brought with it fierce attacks of the devil, fierce attempts on his part to suggest wrong thoughts disguised as revelations from God. I have now put on paper everything: what came from God, from the devil and from me, so that you might understand the terrible fight going on in the minds of those who suffer for Christ today. For many of them the worst pain is not the physical torture, but the intellectual conflict. Dostoievsky, who had also been in prison, wrote, "It is not as a child that I believe and confess Jesus Christ. My 'hosanna' is born of a furnace of doubt."

For Samuel the change was a permanent one. He remained a Levite to the end of his life.

I have come back to normal conditions of life and to normal thoughts. Today I have the same quiet creed which all Evangelical Christians have. Looking back to the thoughts which

passed through my mind in solitary confinement, I wonder myself about many of the ideas which I nurtured there. I am on the safe side now. But the communion of saints is possible only if we bear with our imprisoned brethren their tempests of doubt and the assaults of the devil. In ~Tortured for Christ~, ~The Soviet Saints~, ~If that were Christ would you give him your blanket?~ and other publications, I gave a description of the physical sufferings of the bride of Christ in Communist countries. The other side also had to be told - the story of the mental stress. You need to know the state of their minds when their reason rocks under the pressure of Communist imprisonment,

Read this book with charity towards those who suffer more than words can describe, instead of comparing every assertion with Bible verses. We had no Bibles and had forgotten theology.

page 13 Chapter 1: The Making of a Messenger

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

TO WHAT SHALL I COMPARE MY SOLITARY CELL?

It is like a wood full of the fragrance of flowers. No tree in the forest gives off a sweeter perfume than the one out of which crosses are made.

To what else shall I compare my cell?

It is like a rich storehouse. The same Greek word translated "closet" in MTT 6:6 is translated "storehouse" in LUK 12:24. God, the angels, the devils, the saints, my forefathers, my friends and my enemies, all future generations, the whole universe and its Creator are here. There is no joy which I cannot experience by the simple method of rejoicing with those who rejoice. In the spirit, I can accompany others on wonderful journeys, I can share their emotions as they worship in church or enjoy a good meal. I can rejoice with mothers bending over the cots of their babes. I can play merrily with young children. I can weep with those who weep. Here in my cell I have theology, philosophy, politics, light-hearted jokes and serious projects, virtues and vices.

I could liken my cell to a cinema. "~Vechol haam roim et hakolot~ - and all the people saw the voices." (EXO 20:18 in the original). In exceptional circumstances, like the terrifying moment when God appeared on Mount Sinai, it is possible to see voices. I used to wonder about that verse when I was free. It was usual for the Jews to listen. Unhappily, it has remained the usual thing for most Christians also. But it ought not to be so. Christians are meant to be men and women who "behold," if only as in

a mirror. They are meant to see the glory of the Lord. (2CO 3:18). Here in my cell I see phantasmagoric moving pictures. Some depict scenes of horror but some are of indescribable beauty, such as I have never known before. And it is not only pictures I can see. What normally would be voices, expressing clear propositions of philosophical, theological or social content, become images. How much there is to be seen in a solitary cell! It really is true that you are never less alone than when you are alone.

But I would also liken my cell to the studio of a sculptor. Michelangelo looked at a block of marble, and saw an angel. All he had to do was to hew away the superfluous stone. I believe that these cells are places in which the great Sculptor shapes his future messengers.

Supposing that he makes a messenger out of me, what shall I look like? The thought becomes an image. I see myself as I shall be then.

Now I see the person described in Kipling's poem, "the Prophet of Utterly Absurd,"

> Who, when the thing that couldn't be occurred
> Just takes time to change a leg and goes again.

You don't think during tortures. But now, when I think back on them, I find in them a symbolism.

They fix a rope around your manacles. Then you are lifted up in the air so that you cannot reach the ground except on tiptoes. The steel of the manacles cuts into your wrists. You have cramps in your feet for a long time afterwards, but you have stretched higher than anybody else. An utterly absurd position, like the prophet's calling.

Supposing God, that I do become a messenger, will it be a source of joy or pain for me? I will have to receive messages from you. Daniel trembled when he received a revelation from the mysterious being Gabriel, who is simultaneously man (DAN 9:21) and angel (LUK 1:11). The beloved disciple John fainted when he saw the Lord. (REV 1:17) I am driven nearly insane at the mere thought of receiving messages for the people directly from you.

Usually, preachers get their messages from books they

read, which copied the thoughts of other writers, inspired in their turn by an earlier sermon of Spurgeon, who took his inspiration avowedly from Calvin, who was greatly inspired by St.John Chrysostom, who learned from men of a former generation how to interpret a message which an apostle received from God. This is a golden chain of tradition through which the truth has been conveyed to us. The church possesses a treasury accumulated over centuries, from which preachers do well to draw. But a messenger from God is a rare phenomenon.

You cannot call St. Athanasius other than utterly absurd. Arius's teaching is so clear, so easily acceptable to the human mind. But the Athanasian creed makes human reason shudder: "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith; which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly ..."

What will the absurdity of my message be? When I see myself as God's messenger, I see two possible Wurmbrands. One plays a role similar to Jeremiah and Gedaliah, (2KI 25:22) telling Christians what they will never accept, unless perhaps outwardly, that they must submit to the Communist oppressors, as the Jews had to submit to Babylon, and seek the peace of those who subdued them by violence (JER 29:7). On the practical level the Jews had no other choice. If they had resisted, Babylon would have utterly destroyed them as a nation. So, the Communists have the prospect of remaining in power for generations. Should not Christians submit and accept the terrible fact? Much suffering could be avoided if they did. The Communists have proposed that I should play a role similar to that of Jeremiah. The Babylonians would protect me. How ashamed Jeremiah must have been to receive their favour. My brethren would call me a traitor. Yet, notwithstanding, I would be sure that I was a messenger of God. Jeremiah did not doubt his calling, though it was nothing less than what any martial court would condemn as high treason, propaganda made in time of war to submit to the enemy.

Then I see another Wurmbrand, who is organizing a Christian fight against Communism, in Rumania itself or

perhaps abroad - this also could be, because to a messenger the utterly absurd can happen.

These two types are contradictory. I see two Wurmbrands before me. I see them delivering contradictory messages. If each were embodied in different persons, they would have to quarrel publicly. Neither could fulfill his task without the

other denouncing him as an evildoer. But there is a high spiritual level on which the two are one.

According to the Talmud an animal is unclean for food if it has some stones in the kidneys. "How big must the stone be to make the animal unclean?" asked a rabbi. To which another replied, "The stones must be the size of an olive kernel in one kidney, and another olive kernel in the other." The first rabbi guessed, "You are hiding something from me. It is not about stones in the kidneys that you wish to speak, but about some deep mystery." "You have conjectured rightly," the other answered. "I meant that if there comes a persecution against religion. the rabbis must divide into two camps. Some must accept death and not change even the manner in which we Jews tie our shoe-latchets. The other group must make friends with the tyrant, compromise with him, in order to win at least some concessions. And the martyrdom of those who pretend to be on good terms with the murderers of Jews is not less than the martyrdom of those who sacrifice themselves on matters of principle. This is the meaning of the size of the stones in an animal's kidneys."

God looks only on the heart. And both Wurmbrands may be right. To say that there is only one truth is like denying the existence of both positive and negative electricity. It shows a lack of understanding of the notion "one," which can only be defined as a synthesis of contradictory forces. That is what ~one~ atom, or ~one~ man, is. That is the sense of the word "one" even when applied to God. A Son who prays with bitter tears that he might be spared the cup of suffering. and a Father who says No to his agonizing Son, are one God. That is why the Bible calls God by the Hebrew word ~ehad~, which means compound oneness, and never by the word ~iahid~, which is absolute oneness, uniqueness. Absolute one does not exist.

page 17 Chapter 1: The Making of a Messenger

The Sculptor knows what he will hew from the block of stone which he keeps in this cell. I can see the manifest beauty of the one masterpiece and the veiled beauty of the other. The latter resembles a piece of surrealist art - only the initiated can understand it.

But a third image emerges, one which I like more than any other. This is the image of a Wurmbrand who practises no wise policy, who is no warrior - but one who smiles. For centuries Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa has done nothing else but smile and make the onlookers just a little bit happier. Isac Feinstein, the man who played a big role in my conversion and who was later killed in a pogrom, had received this

message from God. Years after his death, a man to whom I spoke about him said, "Nobody could ever forget his smile." Did he smile like that to the last? The greatest preacher of our country was Brother Paulini, president of the Seventh Day Adventist convention. His message was a smile on a shining face. Such messengers fulfill the words of St. John of the Cross: where there is no love, put love, and love will grow.

It may be that God, like every great sculptor, has several projects, and that the images which I see are only provisional drafts of his possible intentions. Or perhaps I shall die in prison, and go to God as a messenger of mankind, to tell him that it is much too unhappy to be judged guilty.

We used to read to our little son Mihai every day a passage of Scripture and a page from the ~Lives of the Saints~. I remember the Christians who were brought before the Roman proconsul Saturninus. St. Speratus told him, "I do not acknowledge the rulers of this age, but rather I serve the God who has never been seen by men and who cannot be looked on with mortal eyes." St. Vestia said simply, "I am a Christian." The proconsul wanted to give them time to rethink their attitude. St. Speratus said, "In a cause so righteous there is no need to rethink." Both were beheaded. Now they serve God day and night in his temple (REV 7:15). In what does this service consist, if not in telling God how invincible was the ignorance of their persecutor and how great is the misery of humanity? They do not have to tell God much about God. He knows this better himself. I would like to be a messenger of mankind to

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God, as much as to be a messenger of God to mankind. I will allow God to choose which it is to be.

My brothers and sisters, you also must believe that your lives are clay in the hands of a wonderful sculptor. He never makes mistakes. If he is sometimes hard on you, it is because he sometimes has what we could call negative successes. He loses a pawn in order to win the chess game. He loses a battle in order to win a war. He causes his Son to endure suffering in order to save a world. Just trust. Don't live on another's messages, but discover the message for which he is moulding you. Amen.

page 19 Chapter 2: A Joyful Noise Unto The Lord

MYSTERIOUS RULER

TODAY IT SEEMS QUITE POINTLESS FOR ME TO SPEAK TO YOU.

Humiliation destroys a soul far more easily than torture. This morning the examining officer asked me to open my mouth. Well, they often do this, to check that you don't have any poison hidden in it. But when I opened my mouth this time, he spat in it. I swallowed the phlegm.

Then he ordered me to kneel. His warm urine ran down my face. How stupid one can be. The verse which came into my mind at that moment was the one about "the precious ointment upon the head, that runs down upon Aaron's beard" (PSA 133:2)

And now I am back in my cell. Ought I to pray? "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray" (JMS 5:13). But how can I pray to one who has foreordained all things, who has all power in heaven and in earth, and in whose world somebody urinates on my head?

I wonder why I swallowed the phlegm instead of spitting out. I certainly was not thinking what I was doing. But we are surrounded by the saints, with whom we are in communion (HEB 12:2). They are not in some far-off heaven. St. Catherine was with me when the officer spat in my mouth. She was a princess who cared for the sick. One of them was full of lice, and she was so overcome by disgust that she almost left him uncared for. So she swallowed a louse taken from his body. This helped. I have always admired her for this. Now perhaps she has taught me to do, just for a moment, something similar.

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But his urine on my head was too much. God, I have simply nothing to tell you about it, neither as a reproach, nor by way of thanks. Nor do I wish to embarrass you by asking you the indiscreet question "Why?" You would perhaps not know the answer.

So I circle round my cell, making a noise which I call joyful. Tra-la-la-la-tum-tum-te-tum-tra-la. Or am I in fact weeping? The Hebrew word ~nud~ means both "to bemoan" and "to skip for joy." You have asked us to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord" (PSA 98:4). Well, here you have it, "Pom-pom-tara-pom-tara." When I am beyond understanding anything, I can enjoy the miracle of hearing my own voice.

I stop making a noise, in order to think. Why do you need joyful noises? I prefer the quiet. Perhaps you are stricken by some deep sorrow which we have to cure, as David of old had to cheer Saul's melancholy by playing on the harp.

Perhaps you are like the ancient Persian kings, whose palaces no mourner was allowed to approach. A king needs quiet, and a cool mind, in order to rule a country.

Nobody is allowed to disturb a surgeon with bad news from

his family while he is performing an operation. Even more, God must not be worried with transitory human sorrows, so that he is free to concentrate on eradicating evil from his kingdom.

But men are constantly crying out to you in their need. The joyful noises of believers must drown these cries, in order to create in the Godhead the right mood for its own work. It is probably for this reason that the angels sing unceasingly the same monotonous "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts" (ISA 6:3). The Church repeats over and over again the meaningless words "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be." Nobody really wants the glory of God to be through all eternity what it is now. It would be a poor thing. But because these songs are being repeated uninterruptedly, you cease to pay attention to them. They become just a joyful noise, a background against which you can continue to think your own thoughts

Our job is to create a barrier of noise around you, so that

man's cries of despair may not distract you from your work which alone can destroy the root of all despair.

You must be deeply sad, because you find yourself in one of four situations:

(1) either, as Origen taught, you are working with uncreated matter, existing since eternity, in which there is intrinsic evil which you have to overcome;
(2) or you have yourself foreordained all the sufferings of the world, including this urine on my head, for an ultimate good purpose. This is a Protestant concept. But I don't know if you agree with the Protestant creed. When the Augsburg and Westminster confessions were drafted, you were not consulted. But anyhow it must be terrible for you to look at sufferings which you, who are fundamentally good, have foreordained;
(3) or man has free will, and his sufferings are the result of his rebellion against you. Then your sorrow must be that of a father whose own children are his enemies;
(4) or Zoroaster was right, and you have a great adversary who cannot yet be subdued.

You choose. Don't ask me to solve theological problems with this head of mine which they have abused. I will just make a joyful noise. Tum-tum-te-tum. No words, no tune, no rhythm. Don't even try to find some sense in it. You just mind

your business, which is to create a new kingdom.

The places where I have felt the deepest quiet have been in the Jewish Chassidic synagogues, or Christian Pentecostal meetings, where everyone is shouting at once, in a mixture of voices at different pitches, all saying something different. The unintelligible noise gave me a feeling of inner serenity.

Jesus, on the cross, after having uttered the seven words, did the most beautiful thing of all: "He cried with a loud voice" (MTT 27:50). What did he cry? It was not a what. It was just a joyful noise. "Tra-la la-la. Tra-la - You, Father, just quietly get on with your own business. I have done my work. I have endured all the mockeries and the pain. I have just one thing more to do: to make a joyful noise. So I will cry out aloud." It is only

now that I understand this verse. That cry is worth more than all the theories of Origen, Luther, Spurgeon or anybody else.

If I had to die today, I would like my last breath to be not a prayer or a hymn, but just a joyful noise.

The tra-la-la can be joyful because I may meet in heaven the man who humiliated me. He has as many chances of salvation as I have.

I always marvelled at the ritual of the Day of Atonement as described in Leviticus 16. The high priest had to cast lots upon two goats: one lot for the Lord and one for the scapegoat. The scapegoat was destined for the evil spirit, Azazel. If the law had stipulated one hundred lots for the Lord and one for the demon, nobody could have objected. But God is all for fair play. Only one lot for him, the same as for the scapegoat, not a whit more. His Son was born in a stable, like many poor children. His Son feasted at the banquets of rich publicans, as many other men did. His Son died on a cross; so did the robbers. His Son rose from the dead, as millions will also rise. He will keep no privilege for himself. He is in glory, and "when he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1JN 3:2); we, his former enemies. We shall sit with him on his throne - we, former murderers, liars, adulterers, slanderers, unbelievers. One lot for God, one lot for the scapegoat. There is equality of chances with the Lord.

So this officer's chances of going to heaven are equal with mine. I cannot imagine how any conversation between us will be possible there. It will be too difficult for him to apologize, he will not be able to explain or justify his action. I shall not be able to speak any kind words. We shall simply take each other's hands and cry out ecstatically some loud, senseless noise.

Tra-la-te-tum. How wonderful to circle around my cell and make a joyful noise! A pity it cannot be too loud now. The guards would object. Perhaps you will take this noise as a prayer.

Protestants reproach Catholics for praying before statues of the saints. But for me, even such a prayer is more acceptable than one in which a man keeps before his eyes only his own self with its remorse, its troubles, its desires, its ambitions,

its needs and its stupid memories about somebody having reviled him. Is it not much better just to make a joyful noise?

What this officer did to me was base. But God chooses the base things (1CO 1:28). I will think of him as my future companion in the heavenly choir which will make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Tra-la la-la. I am calmer now. This also has passed.

I started my first sermon as a young pastor with a story; King David once summoned a jeweller and gave him the order: "Make me a ring which will transform my mood from sorrow to joy or from joy to sorrow whenever I look on it. If you make it within a week, you will be royally rewarded. If not, you will be beheaded." The jeweller left the palace a broken man. He knew that his life was lost. But in the palace courtyard little Solomon was playing. He noticed the sorrow on the man's face and asked him the reason. When the jeweller told him of the king's command, Solomon laughed and said, "You must make a plain ring of tin, and engraved on it the words ~Gam ze iavo~ - this also will pass. That is all. If he looks at it when he is merry, my father will at once become serious, and when he is worried, a look at the ring will wipe the frown from his face."

~Gam ze iavo~. So many terrible events have passed in my life. Now this has passed, too. With Jesus the incarnation passed, the crucifixion passed. Everything passes. It is as though nothing has happened to me today. My beloved God, let us walk again in companionship with one another. Amen.

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

THE EXAMINING OFFICER WAS IN A GOOD MOOD TODAY. YOU could sense it from the very beginning. There would be no beating. He just wanted to amuse himself with some pleasant conversation.

He asked me, "Do you believe that God created man in his own image?" I answered, "I certainly do." "Do you believe that you are in the image of God?" "Of course."

Then he took a mirror out of his pocket and handed it to me. "Look into the glass. See how ugly you are. You have dark circles under your eyes. You are all skin and bones. Your whole appearance is haggard, like a madman. If you are in the image of God, God must be as ugly as you are. Why should you worship him?"

I had already seen myself in a mirror once since I had been in jail, and I knew that I was terribly ugly, I who had been considered a handsome man. I had been horrified to see myself in such shape. Now, my ugliness was being made into a theological problem.

Happily, Christians do not have to think beforehand what to answer. The words are given to them.

I said, "Yes, my God has an ugly face like me. In Hebrew there is no such word as 'face.' You can only say 'faces'- ~panim~. The word has no singular. There is a deep meaning in this, because no man has only one face. He shows one countenance when he speaks to a superior, another when he bullies an inferior, one when he is grieved, another when he hears good

news. Our God also has many faces. One is a face of complete serenity, the serenity of a Being who has foreordained everything and can see from the beginning the happy end of the tortuous road. He has a face radiant with joy, sharing the pleasure of all who rejoice, even that of a little girl who has been given a new doll. But he has also another image, one of even worse suffering and ugliness than mine. We saw this face on Golgotha. His hair was disordered, his brow was disfigured by wounds. Spittle and blood mingled on his face. He had dark circles under his eyes. He had no form nor comeliness" (ISA 53:2). This, too, is one of the faces of the Godhead. Christ is not ashamed to call me his brother."

I hope the Communist officer may have understood at least something of what I told him.

Now, back in my cell, my thoughts, which are not diverted as they would be if I were free, by new events, continue to dwell on the question put to me. Everyone who suffers bears the image of the God who became "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (ISA 53:3). But what about my soul? God, too, has a soul (ISA 42:1; ZEC 11:8). Is his soul also like mine, a bird which continually flies from place to place, from

ugly thoughts to the most lofty and back, tossed to and fro by passions, a mixture of holiness and worldliness? Does my soul, polluted by sin, bear the image of his, as my face, vilified by sufferings, is surely an image of the Godhead; yes, of the Godhead in its highest form - the self-sacrificing Godhead?

Does God also have an ugly soul, like mine?

But how do I know that my soul is ugly? By self-analysis. "Examine yourselves," say the scriptures (2CO 13:5). "Know yourself" was the teaching of Socrates. But can we do this? When I think about myself, as about everything else, I do so in words. The Rumanian language has possibly 200,000 words. So we could not even give a name to all the 30 billions of stars which exist in our galaxy alone, nor to the octillions of atoms which constitute my body. With what poor instrument I think about myself!

How much of my soul is really me, and how much is a legacy from my ancestors, or telepathic influences which reach me from the prayers or curses of others?

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If Judas Iscariot had examined himself with absolute sincerity, he would have discovered that he was a genuine disciple of Jesus, who had sold everything in order to join the group of apostles, that under his preaching men were converted, that, like the other apostles, he had developed a beneficent activity, healing sick people, driving out demons. He had just one besetting sin remaining. But so had his colleagues: a quarrelsome spirit, or pride, or cowardice. Judas's besetting sin was dishonesty in petty things. But there is no man who has not some sin, and with Jesus there is forgiveness. How could Judas have known that the devil had put it into his heart to betray Jesus? What do I know about the imponderable influences of angels and devils in my heart? Their influences have a long incubation period, as with some diseases, and you discover them only years later when they appear in some unexpected outward act.

All psychoanalysts would agree that there is no possibility of a thorough and valid self-examination. The examiner is I. The examined is I. The subjects on which I shall be examined are decided by the teacher, I, with the knowledge of the pupil, I. The examiner is biased. The apparatus with which I examine the I is I. There is not the slightest possibility of achieving an objective result.

A Pharisee examined himself and found that he was a good man. He was mistaken. Close by him, a publican examined himself and discovered that he was lost. He, too, was mistaken. He was unable to discover the reality, that he was justified. Wisely, Jesus's parable does not tell us that he ceased to be a

publican after having beaten his breast about his sin. Neither have I reason to believe that Zacchaeus fulfilled his promise to restore everything he had stolen. Self-examination can bring a man to beautiful decisions, not to their fulfillment. The Bible does not tell us that he really gave back the money. We always examine only the superficial strata of our ego. We don't penetrate to its ultimate depths.

The law of Moses was given, not that we should fulfill it, but to make us discover our incapacity to do so. And the Bible says "Examine yourselves" to make us aware that self-examination is impossible.

page 27 Chapter 3: My Image

The thinker, the subject of his thought and the act of thinking are one, as God is one.

Why do I believe God to be one, and not two as in Zoroastrianism, or many as in Hinduism? The number one has certain peculiarities. It is the only number which remains the same when you multiply it by itself. God can multiply himself; he can beget a Son; the Holy Spirit may proceed from him; then many children can be born from him and added to the mystical body of Christ. They become partakers of the divine nature. But the One remains one.

One is the only number the root of which is itself. Extract the root of the Godhead, and a carpenter will tell you, "He that has seen me has seen the Father" (JHN 14:9). It makes no difference whether we look at the Creator of the galaxies and of all mankind, or at a carpenter confined to one room, who is soon to be crucified. The root is equal to the whole number. I may be the millionth root of the One. I am still One, not a particle less.

The definition of the word "number" is a quantity related to one. The number one is the foundation of everything. Therefore God is one, Christ is one. I am this one. Luther says, "The Christian is Christ." The faith is one. There is nobody to analyze himself. There is no analyzer and no analyzed. There is only the One God in whom we all live, move and have our being. We belong to an inner world, of the one Soul, full of beauty. What appears in the distorting mirror of my mind as ugliness is the splendour of his all-understanding and all-pardoning love. My cursed mind considers me ugly. In his eyes, the eyes of the only One who judges rightly, I am comely.

A great miracle occurs. The highest possible beauty, the Godhead, is beautified even more when mirrored in the soul of a bride of Christ, who like Mary of Bethany sits quietly at the feet of Jesus, instead of torturing herself with

self-examination, which can result only in pride or despair.

We have to look not at ourselves, but at the brazen serpent. It is this faith which heals (NUM 21:9). There is no healing in evaluating the number and gravity of the wounds inflicted by the snakes. Look away from the pus and blood, and concentrate upon the

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One Saviour who has taken up residence in you to make you one. One with him and one with yourself. There is no greater beauty than that of oneness. I have this beauty. Yes, my soul bears his image.

"All things work together for good" (ROM 8:28). St. Augustine adds "even my sins." Mary Magdalene's former sins were the raw material out of which her future faithfulness was produced. The former crimes of Saul of Tarsus were the ingredients for making the most zealous apostle. Some men have to choose their way. Abraham was privileged. About him it is written that God was with him "in all that he did" (GEN 21:22).

Be happy, my soul. You bear the beautiful image of God, as God bore your ugly countenance during his passion. Or rather, just because of this.

Don't examine yourselves, my brothers, by criteria chosen by yourself, by a book declared by yourself to be holy (your fellow-men do the same thing with the Talmud, the Koran or the Vedas), according to an interpretation of it chosen by yourself, according to a standard of morality which changes when you cross a frontier, or when the century changes. Believe that God blesses you in what you do. The Church needed the intransigence of St. Paul, the courage of the first martyrs, the compromise with the State made in the time of Constantine, the quarrelsome spirit of Luther, the calm of Melanchthon, the neutrality of Erasmus, the costly love of the arts of the Popes, without whose selling of indulgences we would not have had the works of Michelangelo, Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci. The Church needs men who choose the way of martyrdom under Communism, and also the official church leaders who in good faith serve the same Lord, accepting the limitations imposed by tyrants.

Be happy that God has chosen you to bear his image in your soul. It is a free gift. Be thankful for it. And cease to judge yourselves and others.

The Sasover rabbi once gave his last coin to a man of evil reputation. His disciples asked him why he did so. He replied, "Should I be more particular in my choice than God, who gave the coin to me?" God has chosen you to be moulded

in his likeness without any merit of yours. Now you also must

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love other men independently of their moral and spiritual status.

Yes, lieutenant, we, the ugly, haggard prisoners, bear his image. Amen.

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

THE CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE MOSAIC RELIGION BEGINS WITH the word "Hear" - "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord" (DEU 6:4) There were exceptional personalities in the Jewish religion who saw - men such as Moses and Isaiah. But the people had to hear, and to obey what they heard.

Christ said to his first disciples, "Come and ~see~ (JHN 1:39). We have passed from hearing to seeing. To Martha, the Lord said, "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest ~see~ the glory of God?" (JHN 11:40) The Book of Revelation, too, is a book about things which St. John actually ~saw~.

The highest Jewish spiritual exercise is meditation on the Word. The Christians know a higher stage: contemplation. They can visualize.

In conditions of solitary confinement, which are similar to those of a hermit in the desert deprived of material things, the seeing becomes so real, that you have difficulty in convincing yourself that what you see is an event in the spirit and not in the material world.

This reminds me of two old Chinese legends. How true legends can be. It is said that a great painter once painted on a wall a beautiful landscape with a cave. When he had finished, he walked into the cave and disappeared, and was never heard of again. Another legend tells of an artist who painted a lake with reeds. Among the reeds he placed a fish. The painted fish swam in the lake, alive and happy like all fishes.

page 31 Chapter 4: Hearing and Seeing

Whatever you create or evoke in the spirit can become a

reality, into which you can enter, and live, and disappear

All I have in my cell is a bed with a straw mattress and a blanket. In the corner there is a bucket. My only other possession is a tin mug. With no earthly possessions to live on, I live in the world of the promises of God. Faith sees them as already fulfilled.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (REV 2:7). Under the Nazis, I once had a narrow escape from death. Still under emotional stress, I told the story to a wise old pastor. When I had finished, he said, "If you have gone through all that, you had better eat." And he asked his wife to bring me some fish. So Jesus, when we meet him and tell him all the tribulations through which we have passed, will say, "Then let us first eat." I see him leading me to the tree of life, which is simply life itself. A blind man whom he healed saw men who looked like trees. That is what we are really like. Our lives are "the tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself" (GEN 1:11). Now I lie down in the shadow of the tree of life. He plucks the fruit of everything good which I have done. I see him bending over me and giving me to eat. It is written, not that we shall eat, but that we shall be given to eat. I am a beloved bride, and the Bridegroom cherishes me. He plucks the fruit for me, and puts it in my mouth.

What a man sows, that he will reap. He enjoys now, for eternity, the fruits of his life of faith.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna" (REV 2:17). ~Manna~ means "what is this?," the words which the Jews said not only in the wilderness, but also what they saw the Lord driving out an unclean spirit in the synagogue at Capernaum. It is an expression of amazement. I see so many amazing things in heaven. God has surprises for his children. There are many more joys here than I expected, and a greater capacity for enjoying many pleasures at the same time. In Indian art, Krishna is depicted with many arms. This is a basic archetype of the human soul. You need many arms in a world where you have to receive so much. Most of the beings around me are like this. So I feel the greater pity for a few

others whom I see around me in heaven. They have their share of joy. But I find it tragic that they should be in heaven with one single arm. They have obeyed Jesus and cut off the hand which offended them. It would have been simpler to

readjust their whole life so as to prevent their hand from offending.

I would not dare to say whom I have seen in paradise. Nobody would believe me. This much I can say, that it contains more people than the average Christian would permit to enter.

I see something like an Orthodox church - that is the nearest comparison l can make, but it is something completely other. In it I see among the worshippers an exclusive brother, who would never have entered an Orthodox church during his earthly life. I ask him, "How do you come to be here?" He answers, "In heaven, there are many mansions. We, the exclusive brethren, have our own quite separate dwelling. But we enjoy visiting each other."

"And I will give him," says the Lord, "a white stone" (REV 2:17). I have actually received it. "And in the stone a new name."

The Communists have put me in jail under the false name of Vasile Georgescu. I have been forbidden to reveal to anyone my true identity. They are afraid that a warden may commit an indiscretion. But it is not only they who give new names. God also gives new names. God was not satisfied with the name of Abram. He wished that its pronunciation should last longer; so he added a syllable to it. We would never have thought that God would appear to a man just to give him a nicer, more meaningful name. But, not satisfied with this, God changed Sarai's name, too. He called her Sarah, because that is the Hebrew name for "princess." She was a princess in his sight. Jesus changed Simon's name to Cephas (JHN 1:42), a simplified form of Caiaphas (the name of the high priest of that time), to show him that he, the ignorant fisherman, was the real high priest in the Lord's sight, and not the man who dressed in gorgeous robes.

I also received from Christ a new name. After something like a year, it was changed. It was not only that I heard it, I saw his face, the movements of his lips when he pronounced

it. And the name lost its importance for me. Before he pronounced it there had been his desire to give it to me. The name was new only as applied to me. It was a Biblical name. There was in his mind a comparison between me and the persons who have borne it before. There was the ineffable source out of which his thoughts have their provenance. I had touched the depths. The new name was only a hint inviting me to these depths.

When he breathed upon the apostles and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost"(JHN 20:22), they surely caught his quiet breathing

rather than the words he said while expelling the air. It is in catching this quiet breathing that you receive the Holy Spirit.

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations" (REV 2:26). I see myself on a throne. Why should a throne be made of gold and velvet? Can it not as well be the few planks of a prisoner's bed? Men have given a certain kind of chair the name of throne. I can give this name to any other object I please. From this my throne I decide about nations.

Not only the Christians will be saved. If they have the monopoly of salvation, over whom will they rule? And how will this promise be fulfilled, that to faithful servants is given the government over five or ten cities (LUK 19:17-19)? It is no fun to be king over empty towns. So they will be populated by those who have not been faithful servants. We Christians will be in the heavenly Jerusalem, but there will also be nations walking in its light (REV 21:24). The leaves of the tree of life will serve for the healing of the nations (REV 22:2), which means that there will be in the life beyond people who need a cure for their souls.

And I am seated on a throne, and have the power to do good to multitudes of people. I can send messengers to give light and health. I get reports about the progress of difficult cases. They have to be thought about. There is no rest in heaven. It is the busiest place I know.

I see myself clothed in white raiment. I read this promise to Mihai when he was small. He was worried, "But what if the Lord does not have clothes small enough for children like me?" I had to assure him that Jesus has white garments of every size, for giants and dwarfs and babies. He also has white

garments for those who are small in faith as well as in body. St. Peter, the apostle, writes to very simple Christians, "You that have obtained a like precious faith with us" (2PE 1:1). A little dog may be despised by a big Dobermann, but the Dobermann has to recognize that the little dog is also a dog, and not a cat.

I am dressed in white, in fullness of light, and so are all those around me. We walk with Jesus. What a privilege it was to walk with him through the earthly meadows! Birds sang more melodiously than ever. Lilies bloomed with a scent never smelled before. But we walk with him in the golden streets of the heavenly city.

An old Jewish book, ~Sefer Ierahmeel~, says that in the life to come the day is divided into four watches. In the first watch, we shall be like children, and shall know all the joys of childhood. In the second watch we shall be young, and know all the joys of youth. In the third watch we shall know all the joys of maturity, and in the fourth watch those of the wisdom of old age. Next day, the cycle of joys begins again. It really is so. I pass from joy to joy.

Like the Chinese painter, I enter this cave, painted once by St. John the Divine and now once more by me. Like the painted fish I swim in the water. No man can become a future citizen of heaven without passing hours in heaven now. Therefore we have been given the power to ascend in the spirit. Poverty, sickness, inner and outer tragedies, prisons, chains, cannot hinder this ascent. On the contrary, they assist it.

O my brothers and sisters, why remain in the ugly places? Evoke heaven and enter for ever into what you have evoked.

What will death matter then?

The ~Zohar~, the ancient book of Jewish mysticism, says, "When such a soul departs from this world, pure, bright, unblemished, the Holy One, blessed be he, daily causes her to shine with a host of radiances, and proclaims concerning her, 'Here is the soul of my son such a one. Let her be preserved for the body from which she has departed."

"Jacob kissed Rachel" (GEN 29:11), which is to say, the Lord discerns each holy soul and, taking each in turn to himself, embraces and caresses her. To die is to pass into his embrace. Amen.

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME NOW.

The tuberculosis microbe has invaded my whole body. I spit blood. On the spots where I was most severely beaten, bone tuberculosis has fixed itself. I have read somewhere that the secretion of the tuberculosis microbe greatly excites the sexual glands, giving rise to a rich erotic imagery.

It may be that they put aphrodisiacs in our food. A pastor in a cell nearby was put to sleep in the same bed as a girl prisoner, only to torment them both.

The fact is, I cannot defend myself against erotic fantasy. You young people, when you have it, can escape by reading a

book, listening to music, or taking a walk. I lie on my bed and imagine, for hours at a time, all kinds of wild sexual scenes in which I myself am taking part.

I cannot escape from this torture into any other activity. And I feel a deep disgust with myself after making love for hours in my imagination to girls and women who were my former parishioners. Some of them won for Christ by me.

But we have to bear such crosses, too. There is an objective law of the soul, just as in the material world. Given a man of a certain type, under such circumstances, such thoughts are the unavoidable result. I will not consider it a matter for guilt. We can try to do our best, even when we are haunted by obscene imagination.

Here you are, Helen, offering yourself to me.

Your name reminds me of many things. One beautiful

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Helen was the cause of the Trojan war in which so many heroes died. There must be a value in a beautiful Helen. Welcome!

At the beginning of the fourth century, Christians were thrown to the wild beasts under the Emperor Diocletian. A Christian servant at the court of Queen Helen brought her to salvation. The Queen persuade her son, Constantine the Great, to give freedom to the Christians. That was the beginning of our Christian civilization. So much can a Helen achieve! Before her marriage her future husband, Constantius, may have had day-dreams about her. She may have appeared to him in these dreams naked and offering herself. But this can be brushed aside. Welcome, Helen. It was because of his wife Helen that the name of Constantius and their more famous son, Constantine, entered history.

And what if, perhaps under the influence of drugs, or simply because of long sexual abstinence, I see you in provocative poses now my dear Helen? Does it diminish anything of your value?

What a fight I had to win you for Christ! You belonged to a family with Communist affiliations, and refused to come to church. You said once, "If Pastor Wurmbrand wishes me to become a Christian, he will have to come every Sunday evening and repeat the whole sermon just for me." So I did. Sunday after Sunday. I came even when I was very tired. I came on cold winter evenings. I came once even when I had a fever.

Usually, priests and pastors do not have to fight for souls. A Catholic man and a Catholic woman have a child who is born predestined to be the Catholic priest's parishioner. The child is brought to baptism. The priest has one more member in his church without any battle. The same kind of thing happens in

the major Protestant denominations. When you don't have to fight for souls, you don't value them so much. You don't love them so much. Not every priest weeps when he loses them, seeks them when they go astray. I wonder if they are even the objects of his erotic fancies.

I have fought for you, Helens and Marias and Floricas. You were my every day's work and my every night's prayer.

Why should I wonder that you are now the objects of my obsessions?

I must learn to accept even these erotic imageries. Now, when my mind and memory are deteriorating more and more under the influence of drugs and hunger, they may be the manner in which God is reminding me of you, and of every one of those souls who, left without their pastor, have a heavy battle to fight. Who knows all the laws of the spirit? Perhaps what appears to my conscience as a disgusting sexual obscenity is a distorted image of the uniting of our souls in the battle against the forces of evil.

You, Maria, had an only daughter sick with a heart disease. The girl begged not to have an operation, but you decided otherwise, and she submitted. She died under the anaesthetic. After that you were heartbroken. My visits were a comfort to you. Every time, you asked me, "What is my daughter doing now in Paradise?" and you felt relieved when I answered, "She is still asleep, and the angels are working on her soul to prepare her for the shock of opening her eyes in a new, unknown world. In the meantime, she dreams."

It was an erotic fantasy which reminded me of you. We don't see things as they are. So, perhaps, I don't see what is really happening now between us two. What may seem to me to be an obscenity may be a false image, under the terrifying prison experience, of a beautiful reality, a holy union of our souls. It may be that it is a distorted image of our bending together over the soul of your daughter, Yvonne. Her sleep of initiation may be approaching the end. She may soon be awake, and enjoy the beauties of heaven. Jesus may be approaching to tell her, "Talitha, kumi" (MRK 5:41).

"All things work together for good to them that love God," says the Scripture (ROM 8:28). St. Augustine adds, "even my sins." Perhaps these fantasies too.

And then, have we not to share the sufferings of the Man of Sorrows? Were not the sorrows of all who are in pain his also? What about the pain of sexual desire which cannot find fulfillment? It is one of the greatest sufferings of mankind. So many beautiful souls cannot find a suitable partner; others

are sick. With others, utter poverty or a wrong education are

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a hindrance. Many are unhappy because they have not been able to marry, or because they have married the wrong person. Sexual obsession is one of the great tragedies of mankind. Jesus, who became sin for us, shared this tragedy, too. His heart is open to this suffering also.

If he is in me, the suffering of the world is a burden which I have to bear, too. God being in me, all his responsibilities become mine. The disciples of Jesus have power to remit sins and to retain them. They can tie and they can loose (JHN 20:23). But in order to use this power well, they have also to be tempted in all things. There is an educational value in such things happening to me. God shapes his ministers.

There is a value in all the sexual sufferings through which you pass, my brothers and sisters. They teach you to understand people, to love them as they are, to do your best to see that there should be more sexual justice, in the same way as a Christian has to work to bring about political and economic justice.

Jesus said that there will be a world in which people will not marry, nor be given in marriage (MTT 22:30). If you pick flowers and put them in a vase, they become your property. You can uproot a plant and put it in a pot. It will be yours. But why not leave all the flowers to grow in the garden, so that all can enjoy together, without claim of property, their beauty and their perfume?

God will be all in all. Unfettered, we shall all meet in him. There will be nobody who is not united to everybody else, and everybody will be like Christ, splendid, radiant, full of virtue and perfection. Therefore we shall neither marry nor be given in marriage.

Why should we look only at the ugly side of erotic images? Perhaps they are a dim presentiment of the state predicted by Jesus, when Richards and Georges and Stephens and Helens and Marias and Floricas, in glorified bodies, will live lives which will be a continual embracing of each other and being all embraced by God, a life of increasing voluptuousness in the spirit and in glorified bodies.

So let us remain serene, even through those tormenting imaginings from which, in a different measure, many of you

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also suffer. Christ is with us in these things, too.

The Communists have lost the battle of doping us with aphrodisiacs.

Rejoice, my young brothers and sisters. Christ conquers this temptation. ~Amen.~

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

I HAVE NO BOOKS. I NEVER SPEAK TO ANYONE. IT IS QUITE A long time since I was last called to an interrogation. I live intellectually on the thoughts which flash through my mind. Sometimes I hear my thoughts.

A few days ago - it was on Good Friday - suddenly a voice said distinctly, "Mary sees everything." This was contrary to all I had previously thought about the mother of the Lord. Since I had become a Christian, I had always held her in high respect. A woman does not become a Jewess by giving birth to a Jew. She gives birth to a Jew because she is a Jewess. And Mary did not become the mother of the Lord by giving birth to the Lord. She gave birth to him because she was essentially a God-bearer. This potential existed in her before her meeting with the Archangel Gabriel. She said, "All generations shall call me blessed" (LUK 1:48). And I have always called her the blessed virgin, though this is very unusual for a Protestant.

But I could not admit the practice of addressing prayers to her. In order to hear them, she would have to possess the divine attribute of omnipresence. She is not everywhere. She is a human being. She is a saint in glory, but even these have their limitations. They are creatures, not the Creator.

I have often argued along these lines with my Orthodox and Catholic friends. They seem to forget sometimes how unspeakably small the Virgin Mary felt herself to be, and how unworthy, when she held the infant Jesus in her arms. They

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could do well to bear in mind what their own hymns say.

There is a beautiful hymn sung in the Orthodox churches every Good Friday, in which the Virgin is made to express the awe which her Son inspired in her: "O Son, my Son, how shall I wrap thee in swaddling clothes? How shall I give thee milk, who givest food to all creation? How shall I hold thee

in my arms, who holdest all things? How shall I look upon thee without fear, on whom the many-eyed cherubim dare not lift their gaze?"

And now. out of the unknown, comes this voice saying, "Mary sees everything." Strangely, far from being scandalized, I feel so well, knowing that it is so. For days, I have kept repeating to myself "Mary sees everything." I feel so happy about it. It gives me comfort. I have not the slightest desire to pass on to any other thought. I am reminded of the story of a Jewish rabbi who was observed reading a page of the Bible. Hours later, he was seen still pondering over the same page. More hours passed. Still he had not turned the page. He was asked, "Why don't you read further?" and he answered: "This page is so beautiful. Why should I go on to the next?"

Mary sees everything. St. Francis's prayer was "Dio mio e toto mio - my God and my all." God was his all. To blessed Mary, her Holy Son was everything. I cannot say that he is everything for me. I love many other things besides him. To her, he was and is everything. She sees only him, she sees others only in him, through him, as if through his eyes. Mary has a unique vision.

One evening Joseph was cold towards her. She could guess that he wished to leave her because she was pregnant. But she saw no sin in his suspicion; she did not tell him what had happened. She did not defend herself. She looked towards her. Everything and could be quiet. What did it matter if Joseph thought her impure?

Centuries later, the Lord said to St. Brigit, "The name of humility is Mary." Humility cannot be insulted. The friends of Jesus said "He is beside himself" (MRK 3:21). Blessed Mary looked to the Everything and did not quarrel with those who insulted him, knowing that he is above any insult. She never saw

anybody other than him. She looked on those who mocked him as he saw them, with a love which covers sin. The brothers of Jesus did not believe in him (JHN 7:5). She did not tell them to believe. She trusted that they would. She did not even notice their disbelief. It was only transitory. Later, one of these brothers was to become an apostle and die a martyr's death .

She did not complain at the foot of the cross that the disciples had forsaken him. After the resurrection, he did not show himself to her. It was not necessary. She saw him, the Everything, even when he was not before her eyes. Afterwards she

sat quietly in the midst of the church at Jerusalem, attending services conducted by an apostle who had fled in the dark, or by Peter who had denied his Master. She saw no sin in them.

She was essentially the Mother of the Lord, and in this respect she was a partaker of the divine nature. She had the nature of One who does not behold iniquity in Jacob, neither perverseness in Israel (NUM 23:21).

"God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (GEN 1:31). Everything is very good. Only if you look at things in isolation do they appear sometimes good and sometimes bad. "Toto mio." For the holy Virgin, Jesus was the everything. Through him, everything she sees is good. And Mary sees everything.

O. give me dove's eyes, as Mary has.

In Acts 22, we are told that, while St. Paul was in a trance in the temple, the Lord appeared to him with the practical purpose of telling him where to go next. But Paul, instead of talking business with Christ, reminded him "I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death" (ACT 22:19-20).

The Lord wished to speak with Paul about a beautiful future of service and self-sacrifice, crowned with martyrdom at the end. He answered by remembering the past.

Paul knew that sin brings a curse, and so it is. Except that words used by God do not have the same meaning as when they are applied to men. When we curse a man, we hate him

and wish him evil. With God, the opposite happens. He cursed the serpent, and it finds its food everywhere. He cursed the woman. and all men love her. He cursed the earth, and it brings forth tulips and wheat. He cursed Ham, and the Hamites have created powerful civilizations, and have also played an important role in building up America.

The Lord refused even to talk to Paul on the subject, completely uninteresting for him, of Paul's former misdeeds. When you speak in his presence about your past sins, he does not even understand your language. Only the present and the future have any interest for him.

I have wasted so much time in my solitary cell remembering my past. I was a very bad child. At the age of six I threw a knife at my mother, showing criminal tendencies. By the time I was fifteen, I was already something worse than my present jailors. They at least have some kind of discipline. I was on a lower level than they. I was, and remained until my conversion,

an anarchic element, capable of any misdeed, for or against the revolutionist cause. I hated God, mocked him publicly and tried to persuade everybody else to hate him. If I loved Marx and Bakunin and Kropotkin, it was not for their political or economic doctrines, but chiefly for their antitheism. I have committed crimes. I have blood on my conscience. I told Jesus about it again and again. And there was no possibility of communication between us. Because he had long ago washed all this away. He did not understand what I was talking about.

God had separated Paul from his mother's womb. He chose me, too, before the foundation of the world. It would have been a curious kind of election if he had not foreordained all my steps. My sins belonged to his mysterious plans. God tried to make something whiter than snow. The only raw material out of which he can achieve such whiteness is grave sin of which a man repents. There is a deep significance in falling into sin. The Book of Daniel says, "Some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white" (DAN 11:35).

Past sins, if you repent of them, whiten you. They made a great psalmist out of David, a faithful disciple out of the

courtesan Magdalene, a zealous apostle out of the persecutor Saul. I have been a loved preacher and writer with a particular vocation. My sermons and books would not have had the same quality without my past of anarchy, vice and violent atheism.

But I feel so peaceful now. Mary, the lovely one, sees everything. She sees simultaneously the ugly past, the present state of grace and the future of possible glorification. She sees the whole picture, and it is that of an ascension. This is how the Lord sees it too.

When St. Paul touched on the problem of his past sins the Lord did not react at all. He continued to give directions of the future. It was for him as if Paul had said nothing. And you really are speaking about nothing, when you speak about your past offences. Where are they? They have as much reality as the snow of ten years ago. The statutes and judgments of God are given in order that men shall live by them, and not that they may torture themselves slowly to death with continual remorse.

Jesus does not see any sin in me. Everything is washed away. He is God. But there is also a human being, Mary, so pure that she, seeing the everything, the whole picture, never rebukes, but only understands, only loves, only helps.

I promise you – and O, Lord, help me to keep the promise when provoked to do otherwise – never to mention my past sins, neither before you, nor before men. In the frame of the everything they were preparatory steps toward holiness. For saints, past sins have formed the roots of future beautiful flowers. I will live only the present and the future, learning from Mary not to see meaningless isolated fragments, but the great, beautiful everything.

Hail, Mary, full of grace. Hail, Mary, who sees everything. Amen.

page 45 Chapter 7: The Remnant of My Faith

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

A FAITH WHICH CAN BE DESTROYED BY SUFFERING IS NOT FAITH.

I have read many stories of men who experienced great sorrows, but who believed to the end; stories of martyrs, and of missionary heroes. Bishop Hannington of Uganda must have preached to the cannibals about a faith which endures through every suffering. Then they took him away to be eaten. On the way to the place where they cut his body into pieces, he repeated to himself all the time, "Love your enemies; pray for them which despitefully use you" (MTT 5:44). When his sons took his place as missionaries and converted the bishop's murderers, they were told the story. So he must have kept his faith unaltered to the end. A man will continue to hold his true creed even in the face of death. You give up only what you imagined you believed.

Today I have had a time of quiet to think about what I have really retained of the creed I used to hold.

The relationship between the body and the soul is a curious one. The soul is not always tied to the body. When I was arrested, for weeks it was as if my soul had remained at home. This lasted for quite a time, until my soul accepted the new situation, joined my body and began to function normally as the soul of a prisoner. The Orthodox say that for forty days after death, the soul of the dead man remains near his old home with those he has loved. Only after this – a period equal to that for which Jesus remained on earth after his resurrection – does the soul go to its destination.

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Is there something in this? The soul does not automatically follow the body. After a session of heavy torture, my soul is not in my cell, but remains, obsessed by what it has endured, in the place of torture. The torturers are no longer

there. They are no longer concerned with me. But I live over and over again the past tortures, until they become infinitely multiplied.

Now my soul has come back to me; I have scarcely any more pain. I can think quietly about my faith.

Certainly I believe that God is the maker of heaven and earth. I could not explain the existence of the universe otherwise. This is called theism. But really it is unimportant to me how this universe came to be. God made it. Fine. Reason is satisfied with this. But what about the rest?

My reason categorically refuses to believe that God is love. Your interrogators tie you to a chair. Your head has been shaved, and at intervals of one minute, tup-tup-tup, a drop of water falls on you, always in the same spot. And this happens in a world ruled by the God of love! Luther called reason a beast because it gave him arguments against the faith. But I treat it as a beast when it puts forward arguments to convince me that belief is the right thing. Reason tells me fairy tales: that I have free will and that I, and others, have chosen to sin. Hence all sorrows! Suffering is the unavoidable outcome of sin. (Something unavoidable in the universe of an almighty God! It makes me laugh!) But why then do babies suffer? What have they done to deserve it?

Men are torn to pieces by wild animals; poisoned by reptiles; killed by microbes and viruses. Do they deserve it? How is it that the God of love had prepared the viruses long ages beforehand, against the eventuality that man would sin? And again I ask. why do babies die? Because of the sin of Adam and Eve? But death must have existed in nature before the Fall. God said to Adam, "Of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, ye shall not eat of it ... lest ye die" (GEN 3:3). If Adam had not known the phenomenon of death, these words would have been completely unintelligible to him. He knew what "death" meant. Eve, too, understood it, when the serpent assured her that she would not die. She must have seen

animals dying, at least. Maybe death is the wages of sin for men, but why did animals die even in paradise? Why do fishes and crabs suffer in the depths of the sea? They have never even seen a man. It is madness to believe that fishes eat one another because a man has sinned.

I shudder every time I say the word "madness." I see that it is the unavoidable outcome for me. (Again something unavoidable in an almighty God's universe.) I fight against madness, and cling desperately to reason. Why did Luther not cling to reason? Why did he call it a beast? He too knew

maddening suffering. Sometimes he actually raged like a madman.

He, seeing himself driven towards madness, simply threw himself trustingly into its arms.

The whole story of a God of love is madness. It is madness that God should love, not only the good people, but also those who use the Chinese drip torture and make jokes while you suffer. And how can he love the dictator who sits quietly in his office and never touches anybody himself, but orders these things to happen? Equally mad is the story of redemption by the blood of Christ. My reason rejects it. And if I don't keep my reason, the purpose of the Communists will have been attained. I shall begin to yell, and to bang on door. I shall be put in a strait jacket. I shall end up in an asylum.

But could I not be mad in a reasonable way - reasonably mad? In the conflict between Galileo and his inquisitors, reason was on the side of the inquisitors. It was obvious, a simple fact proved by the senses since humanity existed, that the sun moves round the earth. Galileo's assertion was mad. But observations, experiments, calculations were made, and what was madness became reasonable. Galileo was reasonably mad. It is reasonably mad to believe that I am surrounded not by strong walls, but only by whirlwinds of electrons, with huge spaces between them.

And if the earth is in fact circling madly without any reason for doing so, and all this time has been mocking our senses, if elementary particles are dancing around as unpredictably as madmen, then the ultimate truth in religion is obtained in a very strange biblical expression. While all other religious

writings flatter God and speak of him in the most reverent language, the Bible speaks of "the foolishness of God" (1CO 1:25). Maybe he does love, but not as a reasonable being would. He loves to the point of folly, in the truest sense of that word. The Chinese drip cannot come from the love of a reasonable God. But it might have a place in the plan of a God's foolishness, or it might be an expression of the weakness of a deeply loving God. St. Paul speaks in the same verse about both the foolishness and the weakness of God. If God is almighty, he must also have a capacity for weakness and madness. Nothing is impossible for him, not even this.

We think of Job and David as holy men, but they both said the most blasphemous things about God. Even Jesus, on the cross, accused a God whom he had proclaimed as love of forsaking in his sufferings his only-begotten son. Whatever the

motive, this is surely not a very laudable attitude for a God. At one time I used to prostrate myself before God. But to reproach God with a lack of love, or at least a lack of normal love, is also a part of religion.

Othello loved. and killed because he loved. Was this not love? Desdemona accepted it as such and, in her turn, loved to the end the one who strangled her. That madman had the right wife. Job displayed the same spirit when he said: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (JOB 13:15).

There is a foolishness in God, and a corresponding foolishness in the saints. My reason stops short at theism. But Einstein
demanded that we relinquish convictions which we have held for so long that they have become synonymous with common sense. I will give up common sense in religion, too. If Einstein consigned to the flames the classic laws of physics, we must do the same with the classic notion of love. God loves in a sense of this word which is different from our use it. And, as for me, my foolish love will not stop where my reason stops. God loved us without any deserving on our part. I will love him, and believe in him and in his plan of redemption, without any reasonable cause, simply because it pleases him.

And having once given up reason, I will go all the way with madness. I will love my torturers, too, though to do so is sheer folly. And when you, Jesus, come to take us to yourself.

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I will make it difficult for you. I will refuse to go with you. I will keep my arms firmly around the worst of hangmen, and I will say to you, "I go to heaven only if he comes too." You will have to yield.

As for you, Devil, I recognize you now. It was you who made me doubt.

In the early days of my Christian faith, I was very much assaulted by a certain temptation. I asked an Armenian-Catholic priest, a very wise man, what I should do about it. He answered, "Despise the devil." Thomas More said, "The devil is a proud spirit. He cannot endure to be mocked."

Later, I found the same thought in Luther: the best way to drive out the devil, if he will not yield to texts of scripture, is to jeer and flout him, because he cannot bear scorn.

Stupid devil, he hopes to wipe out my faith with the arguments of reason. But arguments are not so painful as beatings and the Chinese drip. If these have not destroyed my faith, should I abandon it because the battered reason of my little mind finds fault with it? I renounce you, reason, and the devil who inspires you, and I will remain madly attached to

the foolishness of God which is wiser than men, and to his weakness which is stronger than men. Amen.

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JESUS HAS LED ME AT LAST TO STILL WATERS.

The period of instruction of my case is finished. Soon I shall appear before the court. I did not defend myself before the examining officers. I shall not defend myself before the judges. Lao-Tse rightly said, "Those who justify themselves do not convince." I signed everything they asked me to sign against myself. I refused only to accuse others.

Why should I justify myself before the Communists? I am sure I am right in my attitude towards them. But you cannot be right without being wrong at the same time. "Fair is foul, and foul is fair," say the witches in Macbeth. To believe that you can be entirely right without also being wrong is like believing you have a front without a back. I hate Communism, so the Communists must defend themselves against me, as I defend the cause of the Church against them.

The chapter of instruction, with its torture, is finished.

The waters have become still in my relationship with God also. Things have taken on a crystalline clarity. A God from whom I can depart, who would let me go, who would not keep me to the end, never was a God. I can rest completely tranquil. The real God will uphold me.

I have passed through the period of remorse for past sins, and the period of moral perplexities over lying or not lying at interrogations. I know the evil in me, I know the good. I can use both. The Lord has said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" (DEU 6:5). How can a man love God with

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all his heart if in the heart there are so many wicked passions? The Kabbala's answer is, "Love God with your evil side also."

When we were children, we used to play on the sea-shore throwing a ball from one to the other. The ball floated both on the crests and in the troughs of the waves. So does the faithful soul, until it ceases to judge itself. There are no such things as good flowers and bad flowers. There are simply flowers. One is a tulip, another a rose, another a violet. Some have a fragrance, some do not. Some are gorgeously coloured. Others are modest. So our souls are as God has created them. Some mountains are high, but you do not have to be an Everest to be called a mountain; neither do you have to be

an ascetic or a hero of faith in order to be a Christian.

I do not agree with canonizing certain men as saints. Always to have before your eyes exceptional characters like St. Francis of Assisi or St. Theresa of Lisieux is enough to drive you to despair. It makes it difficult to believe that an ordinary human being, with a good appetite, normal sexual instincts and a sense of fun, can be a real saint, having been washed in the same blood of Jesus Christ to which even the virgin Mary owes her sanctity.

My whole inner conflict has passed. I no longer try to compare myself with anybody. I am what ~I~ am, and in this knowledge I lie down in green pastures. I no longer live between two states of existence, my past liberty and a future reunion with those I love. I am able to realize the Kingdom of God present within me at this moment.

I knew very little of Father. He died when I was nine. He was a very taciturn man. I don't remember ever having heard him speak. He only gave you a deep look. I went to see him in hospital the morning he died. Even then he told me nothing. He had been in touch with the Gospel. Probably he could not communicate in words what he knew. He was silent. (The New Testament never mentions a word ever spoken by Joseph.) That very afternoon, I went to meet you when you returned from the hospital. You were in tears and said, "From now on you will be orphans." I remember weeping. Then followed the burial, a simple ceremony for a poor man. The coffin was made of a few planks, not even painted black.

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An old Jew with a beard and side-curls said the prayer, "~El mole rahamim~ - God full of mercy." None of us understood then what he was singing. We came home. You fainted. Father came into my mind no more, until now.

Thirty years have passed. During the night, I feel his presence in my cell. I have his image before my eyes. He is silent, as he always was. Only his eyes speak. And his eyes make me understand why the Lord said to Peter after [he] had sinned, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?"(JHN 21:15). Why did he remind him just at that moment, and only at that moment, about his father? Because on the other side our parents participate in our lives. We grieve them terribly when we sin. We are useful to them when we walk in the ways of righteousness. I could see no approval on my father's face, nor rebuke. He was waiting to see the outcome of the struggle. His place in eternity will also be influenced by my victory or defeat.

I did not know my father, but you, Mother, I knew. How I regret that I was a bad son.

When I was small, I would turn the handle of the sewing-machine for you as you sewed. You would sing to me. Always the same two songs. One was about a monk who, being asked what had driven him to the monastic life, answered, "Two blue eyes." When I saw those two blue eyes which look into the ultimate depths of the soul, and became a Christian, you did not understand it. I read to you one evening the story of the Passion. You wept over it. You never spoke about it afterwards. I remember your second song was "Silent Night." Where did you, a Jewess, pick it up? And why were you always singing it?

It was a deadly blow for you when I experienced my silent night, and Jesus was born in my heart.

Where are you, Mother, now? Are you weeping?

In a cell near me there seems to be an elderly woman. Her daughter must also be a prisoner. When she is led past a certain cell, the mother begins to cry, "Ioana, Ioana," and begs the guards to allow her to see her child. She says, "I will kiss your hands with which you have beaten my daughter, if only I can see her." The guards laugh, "We would rather have her kisses than yours," and they pass by.

And then the mother yells, and bangs with her fists on the

door. Afterwards she becomes silent. Perhaps they have gagged her. Perhaps they have given her an injection.

How was it with the virgin Mary when her Son was led away to his death? "Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted" (MTT 2:18). Can anyone comfort you, mother of the Lord, for so much suffering of your Son's disciples? Do you always weep?

Most of your statues in churches do not correspond to the picture I have of you. In the statues you are shown very much like a nun, with a rosary in your hand. You are smiling serenely. But nuns have no children. You have. Your true likeness has yet to be depicted.

It is said that the artist who first made a statue of the Buddha disappeared. He had himself become the Buddha's statue and, even so, an unfinished one. Michelangelo and Raphael remained very much alive after they had produced their great works of art. You, Mother of the Lord, are different from anything they have painted or carved. You are still waiting for a sculptor to make a transparent statue of you, which would draw the eye not to your outward appearance, but deeper, to seek your indescribable purity and sorrow. You must be like the mother imprisoned near me, devastated by suffering. Would you kiss a Communist's hand to be able to help me?

Foolish, foolish thoughts - it is a long time since I had a normal one. St. John says he saw you clothed with the sun and with the moon under your feet, and upon your head a crown of twelve stars (REV 12:1). You are beyond bowing to a Communist.

But how about you, Mama? Will you be able to come to see your Richard, your youngest son, again?

I remember your heroism and self-sacrifice. Left a widow with four small children, you brought us up to adulthood. I remember you in all your beauty. You were in your seventies when they arrested me. But you still had a brilliant and youthful appearance, with hardly any wrinkles.

Will age have made your beauty decay? Will you die, and have passed away for ever, and will we never meet again? You are not a Christian. St. Thomas Aquinas said that one of the

joys of heaven will be to see the endless tortures of the damned in hell. A cannibal could not have said it better. I don't believe it. When I first went into a church, it seemed to me to have wings. Would the Church's wings not be strong enough to carry you, too, to heaven? The Communists mock the mother near me. Jesus cannot mock my feelings, my love towards you. I and my house shall be saved. Mother, you belong to my house.

You will be saved, Mama. You will have your silent night in heaven. You will look into those two blue eyes and you also will leave everything for them, as the monk did about whom you sang.

Forgive me, Mother. I will sanctify myself for you. When Jesus tells me, "Well done," he will call me "Richard, son of Henric and Amalia," as he said "Simon, son of Jonas," when Peter sinned. And if Richard, son of Henric and Amalia, is to inherit the Kingdom, his parents cannot remain outside it.

A parable tells of a young man who loved a girl to folly. One evening he could stand it no more. He knocked at her door and begged "Let me in. I must be with you." She asked, "But who is it?" He answered, "It is I, your beloved," to which she replied, "My room is narrow and my bed is straight. There is no place for you." He left and waited for years through the world, not understanding her refusal. He had assumed that she loved him, too. But the moment of enlightenment came. He knocked at her door again. She asked, "Who is it?" He answered, "It is you." The door opened for him. He was received with embraces. She said, "For years I have waited for this moment."

Heaven, Mama, is a narrow place. There is room in it only

for one. The soul who wishes to enter must be able to say at the gate, "It is you, Christ."

This will be difficult for you, Mama. You have not known him. But say, "It is Richard's mother," and you will be received with love. David asked, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" (2SM 9:1). and he was good to a worthless man, Mephibosheth, for his friend's sake. Jesus calls me his friend. He is more generous than David. Not only I, but all my house will

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be saved, and you belong to it. So does Father. So does my little sister Mary, for whom I long so much. I have never seen her. She died before I was born. But in this cell I have a burning desire to be with her. We shall all be together. And it will no longer be the Richard who often made you weep. Everything will be new.

Don't cry, Mama. Good night. Until we see each other again.

Angels, you, too, will have to bow before the "It is written." The Scriptures say that, "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him" (1JN 3:2). He is with his mother. I wish to be like him in this respect also. See to it, angels. Amen.

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BELOVED CONGREGATION

EVERY DAY I TELL MYSELF AT LEAST ONE NEW JOKE. THE ONE for today was this: a man was complaining to his friend about doctors. "They write so illegibly. Don't you think there should be a law obliging them to write so that everybody can read it?" - "No," answered his friend. "God forbid. I have a completely illegible prescription from a doctor. With it I have passed through several customs offices without any trouble. I have travelled free on trains and I have even been exempted from taxes."

I laughed dutifully. Then I thought: so many people, complain that the Bible is full of contradictions and of mysterious and incomprehensible passages. Is there not a good purpose in this? Is it not just for this reason that for so many centuries men of all kinds of religious beliefs, of different intellectual calibre, slave owners and slaves, feudal lords and revolutionaries, socialists and capitalists, schoolchildren and eminent scientists, have all passed unhindered through the customs offices of life with the Bible as their guide? The fact is that Hebrew and Greek are full of double meanings, and capable of many different legitimate translations. Is there any value in

imprecision, in vagueness?

My first impulse would be to deny it.

There is only one thing which I hate more than Communism, and that is lack of precision in thinking.

Every false, every imprecise thought makes the very operation of thinking appear unreliable. And as a result men are

driven to irrational actions, which have not been properly thought out. Imprecise thought drives them to drugs, alcohol and other excesses, all means of evading reason, which apparently gives false results.

As a matter of fact, even the reason why I hate Communism is not so much because of its brutality as because of its imprecise thinking. A good musician feels something like a physical pain when the orchestra plays a false chord. In the same way it makes my heart ache when I hear thoughts expressed which are not mathematically precise.

It is said that once a radical agitator rode his bicycle to Hyde Park in London, where he left the machine against a fence and addressed the crowd, "Property is theft. We are all descended from Adam and Eve, or from a pair of monkeys. At the beginning there were no rich and poor. How is it that some are rich now? They have stolen from their neighbors. By taking from rich men you are taking from expropriators. To take back what has been stolen from you is not theft. So if you need anything, you are entitled simply to take it. No policeman in the world has the authority to stop you. Everything belongs to everyone." The crowd applauded him. But when he wanted to go home, his bicycle was missing. He at once began to shout, "Police! Police! My bicycle has been stolen!"

Communists think wrongly, which is a greater crime than brutality. It is a sin against reason.

But there are certain ambiguous and mysterious matter about which our thinking becomes more precise as it becomes more imprecise. In such matters the object of thought has no precision in itself. A system is projected into it, from my mind, and this falsifies reality. Every definition of the Godhead, of the Kingdom, of eternal life, must be false. We have to do here with mysteries. The God of love and the God of revenge, both the same God, is an ambiguous God. Only ambiguous thinking can reflect his reality. He is a mystery, and we think rightly about him rather in the mystery and confusion of the subconscious than in the clear-cut definitions of the scholars.

Let us not allow ourselves to be led astray by the plainness of biblical statements like "God is love" (1JN 4:8). When David

Livingstone first went to the backward tribes of Central Africa, he could not preach to them about this verse, because their language did not have the word "love." So he asked them, "What is the thing you like best?" They answered, "~Unboi~. It is the name we give to meat from the arm of a man after it has been smoked. There is nothing better in the world than ~unboi~." Then Livingstone delivered his famous sermon on the theme that "God is the best ~unboi~," and with this he reached the hearts of the primitive people. You may think it blasphemy to compare God with pastrami from the arm of a man. But did not St. John do something similar when he said that "God is love"? Love is a human affection towards a person we strongly like. The higher animals also know this affection. Does anybody believe that God is an affection shared by men and animals? But love was the highest thing known to the Jewish and Greek contemporaries of the apostle, just as ~unboi~ was the highest thing known to the African cannibal. So John said that God is love. As for God, he is what he is, neither pastrami, nor an emotion. He is a mystery which cannot be put into words. A person who thinks about him in precise terms is imprecise in his thinking. Only vagueness is precise in this sphere. My Christianity is undogmatic. Dogmas are much too clear-cut.

When my son Mihai was small, his favourite books in the Bible were Nehemiah (which he pronounced "Nehembiah") and the Book of Revelation; the first because Nehemiah not only smote some whom he disliked, but also plucked off their hair (NEH 13:25). (I had to explain to him in detail how this happened, whether he plucked out the hairs one by one or in handfuls.) The second he liked because of the multitude of beasts, dragons and four-headed creatures.

His preferences compelled me to read Nehemiah over and over again. I remember it quite well. Nehemiah calls the Creator "the great, the mighty and the terrible God" (NEH 9:32).

In the Babylonian Talmud, Rabbi Mathana says of this verse that he learned from Rabbi Jehoshua ben Levi that the scribes of the time of the second temple were called "men of the great synod" because they restored sovereignty to its rightful owner. Moses had said "the great, mighty and terrible

God" (DEU 10:17). Then came Jeremiah, who said: "The Gentiles are pillaging the temple. What has become of God's terrible character?" So, in his prayer (JER 32:18), he leaves out the

words "the terrible." Later, Daniel said, "The Gentiles oppress his children. Where is his might?" Therefore, in his prayer (DAN 9:4), he leaves out "the mighty." Then came the men of the great synod, who said, "On the contrary, this is his might, that he has power over his indignation and is longsuffering towards offenders. By this he shows that he is terrible, because if the Holy One, blessed be his name, were not so, how could our nation exist among the peoples of the world?"

God is mighty and terrible in his own way. Words applied to him have not the same meaning as when they are applied to us. He has the might to forget about himself and to give his only begotten Son to help some infinitesimal beings who are in deadly danger. What man would use his might to help an ant to get out of trouble? God is mighty in an absolutely unique sense of this word.

We continue to sin even after we have become children of God. We sin before his very eyes. And he looks away from our offences, keeping always the sweet remembrance of the moment of our conversion. Call this attribute of God his terribleness if you like. But it is a terribleness apart, without comparison.

How terrible is a God who strips himself naked, because Roman soldiers armed with whips order him to do so! He stripped himself not only of his clothes, but also of his ability to perform miracles, he stripped his immaculate human nature of its immortality. This God cannot be put into words. We can only be changed into his likeness. Then people, looking at us, will believe in this strange God.

During an interrogation, a Christian was asked by a Communist officer. "Where is your God? Why doesn't he perform a miracle?" Our brother answered, "You have a great miracle before your eyes, but you are blind. You mock me and beat me. I look at you with love. That is the miracle."

We have to speak like this to the Communists. It may even convert them. We ourselves are not satisfied. We would like to see quite another miracle: that there should be no more

beatings, no more suffering. But God is what he is, not what we want him to be. This is why we call the Beloved terrible.

I have said that my Christianity is undogmatic. Again I use a human word, and it may mislead. Christianity can no more do without dogmas than natural sciences can do without laws.

But in many sciences the notion of the "natural law" has changed. Science has ceased to be consequent. The atom is considered, according to the needs of a given experiment, as a

particle or as a wave. Nobody has seen it, and it cannot be located. So it makes no difference. Or try to imagine what geometry calls a point - an entity without dimension. It is impossible. Or, take Max Planck. He says that matter ~per se~ does not exist. Matter appears and remains only thanks to an energy which brings particles of the atom into orbit. This energy is the ultimate basis of matter.

This means that the scientist must live in different spheres. He has an object in his house which he can handle and sit on, and which he calls a chair. When he begins to think about it in his laboratory, he knows it to be a whirlwind of elementary particles. When he draws philosophical conclusions from his science, the chair becomes an unreal object. Planck says that it is not the seen, transitory matter which is the real, the true, the existent, but the unseen, the immortal spirit, without which matter would not even exist. And having said this, he sits down on a chair with full confidence. On a practical level, he knows it to be matter.

So we have to live our life with God on different levels. There is practical religion, in which God is very like a man. He has eyes with which he looks on us. He can stretch out his arm to help us. He speaks to us in our language. He enjoys our songs and prayers.

When we meditate about him, all these things disappear. No human words exist to explain him. The French say, "~Un dieu defini est un dieu fini~ - a god who is defined is a god who is finished." You cannot define his image.

Yes, we have a dogmatic Christianity, but its dogmas are inconsequent, vague, contradictory. God is light. Physicists

will tell you that light behaves in an inconsequent, contradictory manner.

Imprecision is the only precise manner of thinking about God and about his rules. The leap of faith is a leap into the vague, the indefinite, the equivocal, the uncertain, the undetermined.

"He hangeth the earth upon nothing" (JOB 26:7). Hang your faith upon nothing. Jesus "offered up prayers and supplications with strong cryings and tears unto him that was able to save him from death" (HEB 5:7). But he was not saved. He had to endure death. And on the cross he asked in vain, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (MTT 27:46). There came no answer and no help, but only a new mockery. To this mysterious, terrible God he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (LUK 23:46).

My last sermon before my arrest was on the terribleness of God. My congregation did not understand much of it. Neither

did I, and I wondered about what I said. Now I begin to understand. Because I understand less and less about what God is doing with me.

How beautiful is the bride of Christ when she does not try to understand the Unintelligible, but follows him blindly, and embraces him in love. Amen.

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

AND THE FIRST BEAST WAS LIKE A LION, AND THE SECOND BEAST like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle" (REV 4:7).

The Christian pastor today needs many qualities. He must be a mystic of high degree; he must be a clever strategist with the skill to win battles; he must possess a practical organizing capacity; he must be a revolutionary, preparing the way for the twenty-first century to be an age of Christ's dominion.

There are two sides to religion. There is ezoteric religion, a name which comes from the Greek word ~ezos~, inner. In this religion you are taught the deep mysteries of God which are reserved for the few.

Then there is the exoteric side, from the Greek ~exos~, outer, which is the practical day-to-day religion of the great majority of men.

The Book of Esther in the Bible is the prototype of exoteric religion, a religion which stops at the outward man, and is concerned with national destinies. That is why this book never mentions the name of God. But a book of sheer politics forms part of the Holy Scripture, and has its honoured place there, on an equal footing with the Song of Songs, a book of pure mysticism.

Exoteric and ezoteric religion must go to together.

We recently learned, from a new prisoner tapping on the wall in morse code, that Tibet has been invaded by the Chinese Communists. The Tibetans had a purely mystical

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religion, which did not equip them for diplomacy and political fighting. Now politics will entirely wipe out the mysticism. That is the fate of mysticism, if it is not allied with right political thought.

Those who are prepared to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of God are few. Let the other Christians be drawn into political activity which will serve to the glory of the same

Kingdom. Then the mystics, like the apostles of old, will be able to withdraw from serving at tables and ascend to the spiritual world. They will live only in the realm of truth, undistracted by material problems, an involvement which can bring harm both to them and to the material world.

The fall of Adam was a premature initiation into mysteries. The deep designs of God cannot be plucked from a tree. A man must first learn over a long period to put aside selfish interests, and the interests of his social group, vainglory, passion and the judgment of other people's passions, prejudices, his sin and his righteousness. Only a holy man can know the whole truth accessible to mankind.

A man is prepared for the highest initiation, only if he can die on a cross with the words "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

All others have to remain in the lower spheres, in the realm of the exoteric. But how unspeakably useful they can be there! If there had been no Esther, the Jewish nation would have disappeared, there would have been no Jesus and no Christian civilization, and the gates of Heaven would have been closed for many.

The Esthers, those who do not have the word God much on their lips, but who fight to keep the world free for the Gospel, to liberate it from the dominion of Communism and from heathen terror, are especially important today.

A group of people were once amusing themselves by considering which book they would choose to have with them on a desert island. A clergyman chose the Bible. Another man decided on the plays of Shakespeare. Another settled for a book of jokes to keep him amused. Then a wise man spoke, "I would choose a book which would teach me how to build a boat in which I could escape to the mainland. Once there,

I would be able to decide what to read, whether it is the Bible, fine literature or pornography. But first of all I must be free."

Men must be free. Jesus teaches that only the truth can set us free. The converse is also true. Only freedom gives us truth. Under a dictatorship, truth is inaccessible. Fighters for freedom are fighters for truth, and therefore for God. The warriors of Cyrus, who were not worshippers of Yahweh, are called a holy army, because they freed from Babylonian captivity the Jews who were the depositories of the truth.

In LUK 6:1 there is a strange Greek word, what is called a ~hapax~, a word which occurs only once in the Bible. In most translations it is rendered as "the second Sabbath after the

first," which makes no sense. The word is ~deuteroprotos~, literally translated "the second first." The translators did not know what to do with this word. Even St. Jerome considered it disrespectfully to be sheer nonsense. But it has a deep meaning.

A man must first seek the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, and then care for his belly. But there are moments when the second things come first, moments of ~deuteroprotos~. If on a Sabbath day you are so hungry that you have to pluck ears of corn, and eat them after having rubbed them in your hands - or if you have a hungry family to care for - second things come first. You must be concerned first for food and then for the sanctification of the Sabbath.

That is what the gospel teaches in Luke chapter 6. There are many things in life which are decidedly of secondary importance, but which can put you at a given moment under such high pressure that you have to treat them as priorities.

That is how it is with liberty.

Forget about mysticism, for which most of you are not intended (those who are made for it will ignore my appeal to forget it) and become political fighters against the Communist oppression. It was something like this that Joan of Arc did, and she came to be recognized as a saint.

Is there any hope that your fight will succeed? Reason tells you no. Bolshevism has reigned for decades undisturbed in

Russia. Now it has conquered half of Europe and infiltrated the other half.

Reason tells you that yours is a vain fight, just as reason told David that he could not overcome Goliath. It is a characteristic of the Christian that he accepts things which seem absurd to reason. Reason, by believing that the earth revolves round the sun, believes what is absurd to the senses. Why should we not treat reason as it treats the senses? Why should we not transcend reason?

The human mind has gone mad, and you attain reality only when you pass beyond reason.

"In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (MTT 24:44). When any thought of victory is abandoned, he will come and make you triumph. Don't be concerned about your chances of immediate success, but continue to fight for freedom.

There is another kind of knowledge than that given by reason. Love has a greater knowledge than logic. The Hebrew word ~iada~, to know, and the Greek word ~gnosis~, knowledge, are both related to sexual union, "And Adam knew (~iada~) Eve" (GEN 4:1). The man who unites himself in burning love with the world which

suffers under slavery knows more than the strategists and the politicians. He knows the God who did not allow the Jews to be slaves of the Egyptians has remained the same God who hates the slavery imposed today by the Communists upon hundreds of millions of Russians, Rumanians, Poles and others. He hates any slavery and social injustice.

In the preamble to the Ten Commandments, God does not say, "I am God, your Lord, who created heaven and earth," but, "I am the Lord, thy God, which have have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (EXO 20:2). To free slaves is a bigger honour for him than to be the creator of the universe.

Rely on him, and fight. Fight on the level of earthly needs. "I have told you earthly things," says Jesus (JHN 3:12). I, too, have told you earthly things today. Fight to overthrow Communism. If you are hearing me from even more distant places, fight to overthrow heathen terror, fight to overthrow racial hatred, all the godless rulers. Daniel writes of four kings, and with no

fear of lese-majesty, calls all the kings whom he has seen beasts. Let us not fear to think like this about all dictators and to treat them as beasts must be treated. Amen.

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

SOME OF YOU HAVE MET THE FIGHTERS OF THE UNDERGROUND Church of the Soviet Union. You met them when the Red Army invaded our country. What beautiful characters they were, but what intriguing and gruesome stories they told us about their lives.

Now the best of you who are outside prison have no alternative: you will have to organize an underground work. The official churches will either be closed, or will accept Communist limitations on how much of the Gospel can be proclaimed. The small legal opportunities which they will leave must be used to the maximum. But we will accept their fragments of freedom on the point of a spear. We will fight to be able to proclaim the whole, which will be possible only in a church like that which existed in the catacombs of Rome. Except that the conditions of modern life, the perfection of police methods and equipment, will make the task much harder.

It makes sense to attempt only what you are able to perform. The Christians of the Soviet Union could organize an underground church. So we shall succeed, too. But I do not

approve of everything our Russian brethren told us. Their stories of the heroism of the martyrs thrilled and inspired us. But the best underground church is surely that which has the least number of martyrs, just as the best spy ring is one which remains for ever undiscovered. It is not martyrs we want, but victories.

Be careful about accepting new members into the underground

church. To be a member of an ordinary church, you have to fulfill two obligations: to believe and to be baptized. The biggest denominations consider you a member even if you don't believe, once you have been baptized. The Salvation Army has renounced baptism. But acceptance into the underground church lets a man into secrets. He will know hidden meeting places, pastors who are wanted by the police. If he cracks under torture, he may destroy a whole organization. To be baptized and to believe is not enough. St. Paul was a convert for only three days, and had not yet received the sacrament, but he had to be told about one further condition: "how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (ACT 9:16).

The capacity to suffer is an absolutely necessary condition for being a member of the underground church. You must teach converts from the very beginning to be like Mary, the holy mother of the Lord, who gave her own heart to be pierced by a sword and her Son to be crucified for the salvation of the world. They will have to bear such pain with patience, with joy and with thankfulness.

But it is not only torture for which they must be prepared. Beatings and a certain amount of torture can be borne by every well-prepared Christian who has the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But just as the atomic weapon is absolute and irresistible, so there is an absolute torture which no man, whoever he may be, can stand. Under this torture, Savonarola recanted, Cranmer's courage deserted him and he repudiated his own writings. Under such torture Thomas Munzer recanted, too, and so did many Catholic heroes tortured by the Protestants. Here in prison, sometimes the most refined cruelties are committed. In the limited sphere in which our morse-code system operates, I know only one or two who did not confess when submitted to such pressure. Neither do I know what would have happened if it had been continued with me. But happily, these heavy tortures are very rare, because the torturers themselves cannot bear them. Man is not made to inflict agony upon his fellow men. Even torturers have religious mothers, wives, or children, who chide them for what they do. There is no perfect criminal, nor is there a

perfect torturer. He tires of his job.

page 69 Chapter 11: Problems Of An Underground Church

The Russian Christians told us that in the Soviet Union the Communists have succeeded after thirty years in creating a new type of being, the "anti-man," a man who can over years inflict extreme torture and not flinch. The Nazis also created such a species. In Rumania we have not yet gone so far.

But still, you must be prepared for the worst. The newest convert must be told that not only may he have to pass through terrible physical pain, but he may also become a traitor, after having suffered much for Christ. We have not to frighten him unduly, but neither can we deceive him. He must know all the risks in which he will be involved.

The convert will have to give up all romantic expectations. He must know that a foolhardy enterprise, a superhuman task, awaits him.

It is related that Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, when told to form a committee, because otherwise he would not have the necessities of life in a country so far away, replied, "I have no difficulty in remembering that my children need breakfast and dinner. Is it possible to imagine that our heavenly Father is less tender and mindful of His children than I?" A beautiful sentiment, but romantic. I have had no breakfast for two years. Dinners I have had. I wonder if Hudson Taylor would have called them dinners.

The convert must know that he has no guarantee from God that he will have breakfasts or lunches. He must know that he may starve to death in prison, without any hand stretching out from heaven to feed him. God must simply be served. If or what he will give you in return for this is incalculable.

You will also have to entirely revise you thoughts about suicide. The question is not whether it is moral to commit it under certain circumstances. You have simply not to care about morals and do it, if by doing so you can avoid betraying others. Once you begin to argue within yourself whether it is permissible or not, you will have betrayed before you have made a decision, so many are the arguments for and against. If there is any guilt in suicide during close interrogation, it is not yours, but the fault of the one who drove you to it.

To protect the church from the Secret Police, you will have

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to infiltrate the latter. This you can only do by deceiving, dissimulating, accepting the necessity for lying. This ought not

to be a moral problem. Christians who are undercover agents in democratic countries do the same when they infiltrate criminal circles and spy rings in order to serve their country and the cause of order. Why should it not be done for the good of the underground church?

There is a legend that when Herod had given the order to kill the children in Bethlehem, Mary and Joseph tried to escape with the Child. But the sentries at the gate stopped them. They asked Mary, "What are you carrying in your arms?" She answered, "A bunch of lilies." "Unwrap your bundle and show us." She unwrapped it with confidence. They saw on]y lilies, and allowed her to pass. Was Mary lying? Did God strengthen a lie with a miracle? Or did God change the Child at that moment into a bunch of lilies, as Catholics believe that bread and wine are changed into his body and blood during the Communion service? Did Mary hope that God would make the soldiers have an optical illusion? Some may wonder that I ask serious questions in connection with a legend. But you know me. You know that for me the world of legend and myth is reality. I

The Creator shows us the whole creation otherwise than as it is. It took men thousands of years to discover that the earth revolves round the sun, and that our whole material world is a whirlwind of elementary particles. God does not seem keen to tell us the whole truth. Why should I tell it to a Communist officer? We have to discover God's realities; let the Communist work to try to discover our organization. It is not my business to tell him the facts about it.

The Russian underground church, as it was described to us by its members and leaders, is not sufficiently sophisticated. They have not thought out these questions. That is why they have lost so many victims. A "sincere" underground pastor is no more possible than dry water or wooden iron.

They did not use codes in their exchange of letters. Some did, but the codes were primitive, ridiculously easy to decode.

Many other problems arise. We have either to renounce the idea of a well-organized underground church, in which

case we will only furnish more and more victims to the Secret Police; or we must agree to use nicknames and false documents, to hide and distort facts. But this is exhausting for a man who is of the truth and yearns for it. Communists have worked secretly very successfully, but with them the lie is their very element. Christians will easily get tired and, once they have compromised in what they have been taught about the duty of always telling the truth, the door will be open

for another compromise: why not come to an arrangement with the Secret Police and play a double role? We need men of steel. But the amount of spiritual energy which a man possesses at a certain moment being limited, we have to put a total ban on energy-robbing ideological controversies in order to concentrate the energy for the moments of great temptations and great trials.

We must learn to discover the Communist spies within our ranks. Sometimes it will be quite easy. Just tell a suspected informer about an important meeting with top leaders at a certain address. This meeting must not on any account take place. But the address must be chosen so that you can observe the house secretly and see if there is police surveillance. You can apologize afterwards to the informer for having given him wrong directions. If you have discovered an informer, keep him in the church. A known informer is good capital. By following him, you can discover the officers of the Secret Police with whom he is in touch and through these afterwards other informers. Don't give him his punishment too early.

A well-organized underground church needs money. It must have secret printing presses, secret broadcasting stations, the latter frequently changing their location, because they can be traced; there will be bribes to ensure warning of impending arrests, and other expenses. The Communists, when they were a secret organization, used to rob to help the party. Stalin went to prison for committing such a robbery. They forged money. Will our brethren from abroad give us material help? I hope so. They do not help the Russian underground church.

There was a Lazarite Catholic nun who tended a sick, lonely old man. His house was full of gold and silver objects which were of no practical use. She took first one thing then

another, sold them and gave the money to the poor, keeping a strict account of what she did with it. When she was arrested, a French jury acquitted her. Ought our conscience to acquit us for similar actions? Napoleon said that to win a war you need money, money and again money. I believe that this also holds true for the war of the underground church, though money alone will not achieve it.

There will be many problems. As in the church in general, women will play an increasingly large role in the underground church. Some of the leaders will have to meet Christian women. They will often have to be alone together, probably late at night, without any witnesses. This will not happen only once or twice. It will be a general practice. Temptations will arise, which will be the more intense because the

underground workers will inevitably be under constant emotional and nervous strain, which tends to bring about an increase in sexuality. We learned about this from our Russian brethren. St. Paul wrote to an underground church, in Corinth, "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you." (1CO 5:1) Though this sin is common, he proposes expelling from the church only one, who had committed incest. Paul knew the special difficulties of leading a pure sexual life in underground conditions.

Wives whose husbands have been in prison for years will have to meet with new underground pastors. There are certain dangers which have to be faced and accepted.

As underground workers have to move about from place to place, meeting privately with girls, unavoidable jealousies will arise. Jealousy may lead to denunciations. Great caution is needed. St. James, writing to underground churches, calls their members several times "my brethren" and then suddenly "ye adulterers and adulteresses" (JMS 4:4).

Every member must obey his conscience and his pastor, more than the state authorities. The pastor will have to be obeyed as strictly as in the army. There is no time, no place, for argument.

I am far from you, alone in a cell. May God give you wisdom to organize a powerful, well-trained underground church. Amen.

page 73 Chapter 12: You'll Be On The Right Side

DEARLY BELOVED BROTHERS AND SISTERS

TODAY SOMETHING SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE HAPPENED. THE officer on duty came into my cell. In his hand he had a pot of honey. "This is from your brother Herescu; he brought it," he said. "A daring guy." Then he went out, locking the door again behind him.

I have no bread, nor spoon. I shall manage somehow. But Herescu has risked his liberty by bringing me a gift, and the officer has risked even more.

They will be on the right hand side of Jesus on the day of judgment. I was in prison, and they visited me. Also on his right hand side there will be the guard who sometimes passes a word from me to my family and back. So will be my wife, with two others sisters.

Before I was put in this underground cell, I had a cell with an outlook towards the front entrance of the prison. One day, in a fit of depression, I asked God, "Where are you? Have you forsaken me?" At that very moment, I saw coming into the yard my wife, and Bianca, and Alice, who had come to inquire

about me. Since then, whenever I say "Lord," I see these three. When I think about these three, I see the Lord. I identify Christ with his believers.

All these will be at Christ's right side.

But what about the others who did not dare, those who did not even wish to move a finger in our defence, the millions of Christians who care nothing for the sufferings of their fellow-believers? What will be their fate?

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We pass about two-thirds of our life awake and another third in sleep, dreaming. What makes us believe that God will judge men only according to what they do while they are awake? If the whole life is examined, should not the dreams count also?

When I fall asleep, I see myself surrounded by so much love. People whom I knew to be most selfish or apathetic, sometimes even my torturers, are bending over me tenderly, giving me food and drink, offering me flowers. All these people have visited me in prison, though they did it in my dreams. Does this count for nothing? If what happens in a dream is nothing, why is there a dream recorded on the very first page of the New Testament?

And surely it is not in my dreams only that they are good. Bad men are often very good in their own dream life. For many years l have paid close attention to what I see in my sleep, because I believe the Talmud is right when it says that a dream which is not understood is like a letter which has not been opened. I cannot agree with Freud that only our base and ugly impulses are expressed in dreams. If this were true, we should have to throw away the Bible, because it teaches just the opposite.

I have known Orthodox Jews who hated the very name of Jesus, which reminded them of anti-semitic Christians, but who had dreamed of him and were happy about it. Joseph, in the Old Testament, saw himself in his dreams as a ruler. But this did not express ambition. What happened later showed that what he meant by a ruler was a benefactor. In his dream he had great benevolent plans which embraced his whole family and whole countries, things which were not in his mind when he was awake.

The benzene ring was discovered in a dream. So the scientist who discovered it was wiser in his sleep than during the day, when he had sought in vain for the chemical formula.

Now, if a bad man dreams that he visits prisoners, feeds, washes and comforts them, should this have no validity before God? Which is which? A Chinese poet says, "I dreamed last

night that I was a butterfly, and I do not know now whether I am a man who dreamed he was a butterfly, or a butterfly

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who dreams that he is a man." Why should we call someone a bad man rather than a likeable dreamer? Many great artists have led morally wretched lives. What of Oscar Wilde, Guy de Maupassant, Richard Wagner? We judge them according to their books and their music, which were so remote from their manner of life. Does God judge men according to their beautiful dreams rather than by their neglect of us when they are awake?

In the primitive conditions in which I live, my mind may simply have returned to primitive ideas. Some backward African tribes assume that, if a man dreams of having sexual intercourse with another man's wife, he will be fined the usual adultery fee, for his soul and hers have had intercourse. But who bears more clearly the image and likeness of God, the sophisticated European intellectual or the childlike primitive?

Good actions performed in dreams are simply good actions.

The Bible tells us that the angel of the Lord appeared to Mary's bridegroom in a dream (MTT 1:20). It does not say in whose dream. It must certainly have been in Joseph's dream, because he acted on it. But did the angel perhaps appear also in a dream of his own? Do angels sleep? Is there a telepathic communication between sleeping beings? (You will forgive me. I am not entirely normal. Don't expect me to give normal sermons.)

Do angels sleep? And how about the believers who have passed into the life beyond? Are they awake in paradise, or is their whole eternal life a continuous beautiful dream? Jesus said of Lazarus, "He is asleep" (JHN 11:11). Every other Jew would have said: "He is walking and worshipping now in God's paradise." Again, Jesus said that Jairus's daughter was sleeping.

I know myself, that in this cell my heaven is to fall asleep. At once the grey walls and the brutality disappear. At times everything becomes beautiful, and even the wardens appear angelic.

At his judgment, God will keep in view the good which we do in dreams. "Christ died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him" (1TH 5:10). I thank you all who visit us in our prison cells while you sleep. You also will

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hear the words, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the

kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (MTT 25:34).

Jesus himself, who preferred the fantasy world of sleep to the harsh though exciting realities of the storm, must surely love those who have beautiful dreams.

The Coptic church honours Pontius Pilate as a saint, which seems very curious to us, who do not allow God to forget his crime, reminding him of it as often as we recite the creed. (I wonder why this man alone has been singled out for condemnation.) There must have been something holy in Pilate. He did very wrong things. He gave Jesus to be scourged and crucified. But he also said some very good things: "I find no fault in this man" (LUK 23:4). I understand criminals, because I myself have a criminal element in my nature, and have committed the gravest offences. Criminals often dream of themselves doing the most wonderful things. Pilate's remorse may have made him dream that he was caressing Jesus. The Coptic church may have judged him according to this.

Jerusalem was called "the holy city" after it had crucified the Lord (MTT 27:53). The criminals who had demanded his blood became, what they will be for millenia, Ahasuerus, the wandering Jew, unable to die, torn between his hatred of Jesus and his attraction to the One who so loved his murderers that his last words were a prayer for their forgiveness. When a Jew or a heathen says "No" to Jesus, do not look only at his conscious attitude. If God is the maker of all things - "visible and invisible," is He not the maker of the unconscious, too? Out of my unconscious there emerged one day the image of Jesus, and I loved it. But it had been there for a long time. St. Paul killed Christians. That is what men knew. But there was another side to him, of which he himself was unconscious, that he had been "separated from his mother's womb" to serve Christ (GAL 1:15). Deep in his unconscious, there was the call. And one day the unconscious became conscious. It pleased God to reveal his Son in him. The wicked Saul or the saint Paul - it depends how we look at him, whether we judge by superficial impressions or employ depth psychology.

What a crazy sermon! I would never have delivered it from a pulpit. But just take it as a dream of mine, that even

torturers can have something good in them, at least when they are asleep, and will be with us in heaven; that a man may be washed by the blood of Christ without being conscious that it has happened. Dreams are madness, and that is why I am preaching today as I do. I should like to see our executioners saved.

And remember that the Old Testament praises Joseph, not as a man who lived intensely in his real life, but as a dreamer of dreams.

To look on a woman to lust after her pollutes me even if I have not touched her. Then what if I look on a woman with the thought of doing her good, even if I do nothing afterwards? Righteousness demands that this also should be enough. Where is the miserable man who has never had any good in his intentions, in his looks, in his dreams?

Leave me with my foolish thoughts. I will still hope for you, who have abandoned us, who have not visited us in prison in your waking hours. You too will be on the right side. Amen.

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

I CAN ADMIT OF NO FREE LANCES IN CHRISTIANITY - CHRISTIANS are soldiers who belong to an army. They have commanders, and must obey them. Christ himself "gave some apostles ... some pastors and teachers" (EPH 4:11). Nobody can be a Christian and declare Jesus as his only pastor, just as nobody can obey a general while refusing obedience to the captain or even the sergeant, though these are much less competent than the commander-in-chief.

We used to live under a free enterprise system, and we have applied to our churches principles and ideas taken from this system. But Christianity is not of this world. There is no such thing as free enterprise in Christianity. There is organization, hierarchy and, I repeat, obedience. Obedience not only towards God, but towards your fellow-Christians "who have the rule over you" (HEB 13:7). Protestant Christians do not have a man to rule them in matters of faith. They have rejected the Pope, because everyone considers himself a pope. Such an attitude is not biblical. It is not Christian.

But once the question is put like this, you have the right to ask, "Well, then, who is the pastor in whom I should have confidence?" It is his task to bring me to perfection as a saint, but there are so many fakes. Some men, who are called pastors, don't even have the intention of making men into saints. Those who believe they have this calling say so many contradictory things, and give so many contradictory examples of living, that I am confused. Who is the true pastor?

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This is a problem which is not yours alone. Christ has it, too. He, too, asks, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them

meat in due season?"(MTT 24:45) and he finishes the sentence with a question mark. So much he knew. So much he said. He could give you no clear indication of where to find the right pastor. He could not tell you to rely on the Bible alone. The Bible teaches you about faithful servants who will give you the Word of God. To give men the Bible alone as a sufficient rule is like giving the pupils in a school all the books, without guiding their reading. They need more than books. They need a teacher.

But what has Christ revealed on the subject of who is the right teacher? His revelation was a question mark - one of many in the Bible. Who is the true bride of Christ? Would you like to know? Look it up in the Scriptures, and you will find God's answer in the Song of Solomon 3.6 [SOS 3:6]. There is posed the same question that you are asking, "Who is she," (so says the original) "that comes out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?" Look carefully at the answer which follows. It is a question mark. Just that. Question marks are God's only revelations concerning some of the biggest problems of the Christian life, such as how to find the right pastor, and how to be sure which is Christ's true bride. In the original, even the question mark is missing. There is just a blank space, a stimulus to thought.

God wants us to find the answers for ourselves. We are in the paradoxical position that we have to be taught matters of faith by God-approved teachers, but we must know these matters beforehand so well that we are able ourselves to choose the right teacher from among hundreds who offer themselves as guides. It is a paradox, like all the paradoxes of life. In order to extract iron, you need iron tools. In order to have iron tools, you must extract iron from the mines, which you cannot do without having the tools first. Theoretically, the extraction of iron is an impossibility. But life has shown itself stronger than theory.

You have the same thing here. You begin with very primitive

tools, in this case with very simple criteria. With these you can make the first steps towards discovering the right teacher. Having found him, you will progress further, together with him, since he also is only a man, but guided by him.

One very primitive criterion for discovering the right teacher is to ask, "How long has he kept silent?"

The soul does not leave a place at the same speed as the body. A messenger from God cannot deliver his message at once. His spirit continues for a long time to dwell in the heavenly places where he received the message.

When I was arrested, it was a long time before my spirit came to stay with me in prison. To begin with, it remained at home. It took the Holy Spirit thirty years to reach Jesus. Empowered by the descending of the Spirit, he could then deliver his message. St. John the Baptist also had to wait thirty years.

St. Paul, after having seen and heard Jesus, and after having received instruction in the proper manner, from a pastor, Ananias, went to Arabia to meditate in loneliness. He was not good yet as a messenger. His soul was still tossed to and fro by tempests, and continued to dwell for a long time in the old Pharisaic framework. Only after many years did his soul realize what his ears and eyes had perceived. After this he became fit to be an apostle.

Slowness to speak is generally a characteristic of a Christian (JMS 1:19). - even more so of the righteous teacher. A man who has not passed years in silent meditation may be able to give you a useful interpretation of messages delivered by others in times gone by, but he is not a reliable teacher. Why should you receive messages at second hand and not directly from the source?

How long has the would-be teacher been silent? Put this question to him. Ask him, "How long have you been non-existent, of no standing at all in the spiritual life?" This is the only guarantee against pride. The man who does not stand on a height can never fall.

A second characteristic of the true teacher is that he will use language of a different quality. The officers who went to arrest Jesus returned saying, "Never man spake like this man" (JHN 7:46).

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Unquestionably, many of the teachings of Jesus existed also in the Old Testament, in the Jewish tradition, in the Vedas, in Meng-Tse and Lao-Tse. They were similar to the teachings of Rabbi Hillel. Jesus used words common to religion and mysticism in all times. Otherwise nobody would have understood him. But, along with all this, there was a uniqueness in the language he spoke which startled men as they had been startled - to a lesser degree - whenever they had met a prophet before. What the true teacher of God has to say, cannot be described in terms of common concepts, because God's thoughts are not like our thoughts. Our languages and concepts have been formed since prehistoric times to make possible communication between men in hunting, fishing, and the production of food, and in personal relationships. From where could we have found the words to convey a divine

message?

The true messenger from God cannot find adequate words in any human language. Neither can he fit his message into the much too simple patterns of logic. So many words are homonyms, and when I use a word in one sense, a secondary meaning passes simultaneously through my mind, creating thought associations which have nothing to with logic. Words alone, and their logical connections, are quite unfit to express a divine message. Logically well-constructed, systematic theologies, and highly logical sermons, come rather from the devil.

Goethe knew the devil, and in ~Faust~ he puts into the mouth of Mephistopheles these words to a young student:

Waste not your time, so fast it flies.
Method will teach you time to win.
Hence, my young friend, I would advise,
With college logic to begin.
Then will your mind be so well braced,
In Spanish boots so tightly laced,
That on 't will circumspectly creep,
Thoughts beaten track securely keep.
Nor will it, ~ignis-fatuus~ like,
Into the path of error strike.

Then many a day they'll teach you how
The mind's spontaneous acts, till now
As eating and as drinking free,
Require a process - one, two, three.
In truth the subtle web of thought
Is like the weaver's fabric wrought.
One treadle moves a thousand lines,
Swift dart the shuttles to and fro,
Unseen the threads unnumber'd flow,
A thousand knots one stroke combines.
Then forward steps your sage to show,
And prove to you it must be so.
The first being so and so the second,
The third and fourth deduc'd we see.
And if there were no first and second,
Nor third nor fourth would ever be.
This, scholars of all countries prize,
Yet 'mong themselves no weavers rise.
Who would describe and study aught alive,
Seeks first the living spirit thence to drive.

Then are the lifeless fragments in his hand,
There only fails, alas - the spirit-band.

Logic is a subtle web of thoughts, but they are only thoughts, and so they remain. Pastors have to be, according to EPH 4:11-12, makers of saints and not of logically well-connected systems.

Ordinary language is not enough for the true messenger of God. That is why David and Deborah used song, accompanying the words with music. That is why the first Christians used to dance, according to gnostic sources. That is why the Church has always expressed its message in sculpture and painting and ceremonial.

And even these are not enough. Consider how much Jesus spoke without words. The gospels continually remark that "He lifted his eyes," "He lifted his hand," "He touched." He spoke not with words only, but with gestures, with the expression of his face. Look at Rubens' picture of the driving out of

the merchants, and you will have some idea of how much the face of Jesus must have spoken.

In a true message from God, the significant silences play also an exceptional role.

Many assert their belief in the Bible as the Word of God. But if you examine them more closely, you will find out that they do not really believe it. The Bible consists of white sheets of paper (in the early days, of parchment), with black letters inscribed on them. Nearly all Christians believe the black letters to be God's word. But the white pages do not have a place in their creed. Yet these are of enormous importance.

St. Luke says that at the age of twelve, Jesus was in the temple and all the doctors were astonished at his answers (LUK 2:46-47). You will seek for these answers in vain in the black letters of the Bible. They are on the white pages.

Mary chose "the good part." She sat at the feet of Jesus and heard his words (LUK 10:37-42). This may be interesting, but I would rather like to know what was the word to which she listened. This is reported in the Bible, but not in the black letters. You must learn to read the white pages. There also you will find the solution to the mystery of what Jesus did between the ages of twelve and thirty.

The Bible is a message from God, and speaks through its silences, not only through its words. Music is beautiful not only in its notes, but also in its pauses.

Try to understand the silences of God's messengers. The truer the messenger, the more mysterious his silences. He often speaks a great many words to cover the silence about the deepest things. You have to go beyond his words to find the truth which he means to convey.

Discover the mystery beyond the words of the messenger, and you will know the message from God.

But what if you cannot find a teacher with the characteristics I have described? Then you yourself may be a righteous teacher in the process of formation. You can put these things to your pastor, and in this way you can be very helpful to him. The relationship between the pastor and his parishioner

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is a paradox. The parishioner learns from the pastor. But it is also true that he has to form him.

In everything you do, begin by accepting these criteria.

I am sorry that I was never a good Christian teacher. I had not yet had my time in Arabia. Now I live in complete silence. absolutely alone. The guards have felt-soled shoes. I don't hear their approach. They give me my food without saying a word. Inner voices have also ceased. For long periods not even God speaks to me. My conscience keeps quiet, too.

Perhaps God is reforming me to be a good teacher in future. Pray for this. Amen.

page 85 Chapter 14: Salt Is Good

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

THE JEWS, WHEN THEY GET UP IN THE MORNING, FIRST WASH themselves, and then immediately start their prayers, which last for at least an hour. Christians, on the other hand, first read the Bible, and only afterwards begin to pray.
Why?

The Rabbi David Talner, contrary to the normal custom of the Jews, used to start the day by reading his mail, and only prayed afterwards. When asked why, he answered, "The more renowned a man is, the more difficult is his struggle against besetting evil thoughts in prayer. So I always read my letters first. Usually, they begin by addressing me as a righteous rabbi, a teacher, a leader, a holy man or by some other complimentary phrase. Then I begin my prayer saying, 'Lord, you know that I do not deserve these titles of honour. But since so many men believe me to be so in all sincerity, do not put their faith to shame. Make me become what they believe I am.'"

This is the reason why we read the Bible before praying. Through the Bible, not men, but God himself speaks to us the most beautiful and undeserved words, "Ye are the salt of the earth (MTT 5:13). Ye are the light of the world (MTT 5:14). Ye are children of God (GAL 3:26); partakers of the divine nature (2PE 1:4), heirs of God (ROM 8:17). I love you with an everlasting love" (JER 31:3). This incites us to prayer that we may become what we are called by God. I

But as in Shakespeare's ~The Tempest~, Antonio, a usurper, "made such a sinner of his memory to credit his own lie - he

did believe he was indeed the duke," so it is easy for us to take as realities compliments which spring from love and are a call to goodness. We can easily believe a lie, we can believe that we are indeed what we are deemed to be, without any striving to attain the qualities of these titles.

We are the salt of the earth. Jesus says, "Salt is good." I wonder what made him say those simple words. Did he ever eat unsalted food? At one time, our guards poured spoonfuls of salt down our throats, and then left us without water. Now, on the contrary, we have for months been given completely unsalted food. For us, these oats boiled in water, without any salt, are absolutely unbearable. We sometimes prefer to go hungry, and do not eat them. Primitive peoples, once they have known salt brought by traders, long for it. Travellers in some parts of Africa are surrounded by men begging for a little salt. We, who are deprived of it, know that "salt is good." The idea that Jesus spent part of his youth in countries far from Palestine, perhaps in countries where salt was not known, might not be entirely invention.

Now, "ye are the salt of the earth." "Salt is good." Are we good? Are we seasoning the meals of other men? Are we giving taste and sense to other men's lives? Or do we leave them without salt, as we prisoners are left? The simple fact that the Bible calls us salt is not enough. A friend of mine, a teacher, had a pupil who had great possibilities, but was lazy. Once he handed in a bad thesis. The teacher reproached him for this, but gave him the highest mark, telling him, "Now you have got this mark, try to deserve it in the future."

But how do we become good? The conditions do not seem to be very favourable. At first, I did not exist. Then I was made, from the very same elements from which the dust of the earth is formed. Soon, I shall be dust again. My soul has inherited a sinful character. There is no possibility of my becoming good by any act of my will. Neither can my will keep me good. We have to rely utterly on the grace of God.

You have become good when you have made the great discovery that you are not good, and cannot be so. Then you ask God to make you so. The result is that you die, and you be- come another person, you become He. All his righteousness

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becomes yours, not a particle less than it was his. You are as much entitled to proclaim yourself the owner of his righteousness and goodness, as you are to proclaim yourself the owner of any estate which has been given you legally as a gift, or which you have inherited. Either all the Christian mystics have been fools, or a Christian can say to Jesus, like St. Gertrude, "You are I!"; or like Luther in his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, "A Christian is Christ."

By putting on Christ's personality, by being clothed in him, by being able to say "not I, but Christ liveth in me" (GAL 2:20), you are the salt of the earth, you are good and will remain so for ever. The question as to how the salt will be seasoned again if it has lost its saltness becomes purely theoretical, because for you it can never happen that the salt should lose its saltness; you can as little lose your divine nature as Christ can cease to be Christ.

Now, how should I proceed practically to be not me, but him? The Bible speaks of the foolishness of the cross (1CO 1:18); even about the foolishness of God (1CO 1:25). So, let us learn from the madmen.

There are madmen who believe that they are Napoleon. Others reckon themselves to be St. Francis of Assisi, or Winston Churchill. Each behaves according to what he reckons himself to be. The man who thinks he is Napoleon will put on a tricorne hat, keep his right hand in the breast of his jacket, discuss military strategy and boast about Austerlitz or curse the English for having defeated him at Waterloo. Those who think they are St. Francis will wear the habit and girdle of a monk, will fast and pray a great deal and speak holy phrases, even if they do not make sense. The man who reckons himself to be Churchill will always go about with a thick cigar in his mouth and talk about politics. What you reckon yourself to be, determines your behaviour.

Begin with this madness. Consider yourself what St. Gertrude and so many other saints have considered themselves to be: you are He. This mad presupposition will have the same result as with other madmen. More and more, you will come to behave like him.

There is a difference, though, between the two kinds of

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madness. If you consider yourself to be Churchill, you behave like Churchill, but you are not Churchill. But if I believe myself to be He, an essential part of his mystical body (just as my heart is me, and my brain is me, and my glands and my soul and my spirit and my eyes; so every member of his body is He) and if this produces in me step by step the corresponding changes, then I am really He. The words of the Bible, "As He is, so are we in this world" (1JN 4:17) have found their fulfillment.

It needs faith to believe yourself to be He, when you are a sinner. But what do we really know about the lives of the prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi? We know their prophecies, not their virtues and failures. You become a child of God by faith, not by virtues and good deeds.

Have this faith, and you will be essentially good, with a goodness which cannot fade away. The salt can never more lose its saltness. This or that bit of salt can lose it. Salt – the chemical formula, salt; the notion, salt in its essence, can never cease to be salt. You will become the unalterable formula of "goodness."

Cease your own life completely. Deny the self. Cease to practise its virtues as much as its lusts. You have been crucified with Christ, and have suffered the fate of every crucified man. You have died. But you exist. Since you exist after having died, you must have been born again, this time not from an earthly union; you have not being conceived in sin, but are begotten from God. You are once again a child, an angel. (According to the Talmud, the etymology of "cherub" is ~kerabja~, like a child – this because in Babylon a child was called ~rabja~.) You have been born with a new, angelic, divine character. Believe it.

Don't be disturbed if you continue to see evil in yourself. Children see many fancies. Their world is populated with many products of their imagination. Rather believe the word of God, "In those days and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found" (JER 50:20). This refers to the time of the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity. Looked at from the human level, they had plenty

of sins. Nehemiah punished some of them for this. From the godly level, which is now yours, they had none. Self-diagnosis is no good. Do not judge yourself. Only believe steadfastly that it is not you who live, but He. Continue to believe it, just as the madman believes himself to be Napoleon although everybody contradicts him, and you will succeed. You will achieve the goodness which does not fade. Amen.

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

HOW, IN PRACTICE, DOES GOD COMMAND A CHILD OF HIS WHAT to speak? It happens in different ways. He can do it through a dream. I once dreamed an article for a magazine, from the beginning to the end. I was so shaken by the dream, that I awoke and wrote it down in the middle of the night. The article has been spoken of as one of my best. It was also an accurate prediction of my future spiritual journeys, although I did not understand this at the time,

Another time I dreamed a whole sermon, beginning with "Beloved brethren" and finishing with "Amen." This too I wrote down during the night. (I never went to bed without having paper and pen near me. "I sleep, but my heart is awake," says the bride in the Song of Songs (SOS 5:2). She is continually waiting for some communication from the bridegroom.) This sermon seemed to me so fantastic that I never delivered it. Only after I had gone to prison did I realize that, if I had preached it, it would have warned my church of much suffering and could have halted some who were already sliding down the path of betrayal.

God does not speak only in dreams. Once at midday in the busiest part of Bucharest, I felt a compulsion to take out paper and pencil, and write down what would be given to me. I rested my paper against a shop window, and in half an hour the outline of a whole booklet was dictated to me. You know it as ~The Mirror of the Human Soul~, and you considered it the best thing I have written. I don't shrink from

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repeating this tribute, because I had no part in writing the book.

I imagine that many children of God have experienced similar inspiration, either when awake or asleep.

At other times, God speaks through a verse of scripture, a sermon, a book, or a conversation. But the most usual way in which he speaks to one of his children is, probably, by insinuating himself into our own thought process. He commands me through my own character. I believe that my thoughts are his, even if these thoughts seem very odd to me. Many of the thoughts expressed in the psalms of David, or in the prophecies of Jeremiah or Ezekiel, and attributed to God, must have seemed very peculiar to the prophets. Peter and Paul may perhaps have wondered why, though they were convinced that they were inspired

by the Holy Spirit, they called some Christians "dogs" or "sows" (2PE 2:22), and put so many under curse.

Be yourself, speak what you think, and - if you are a child of God by faith - you can be sure that you have spoken what God has commanded you to speak. If not he, who else? He could change Baalam's curses into blessings, against the false prophet's will (Num. 23,24). So he can change my words before I have uttered them. Since he does not do so, he must wish me to say the very words which I speak. Have your words sometimes been enticing words? Don't be afraid that because of this they were not words from God. The Lord sends enticing spirits (2CH 18:18-21). Perhaps he wants to destroy some Ahab who deserves it, and is using you as his instrument.

You would prefer to be used for other purposes? But society needs both perfumed ladies and evil-smelling tanners. Why should another man be the tanner, while you are the one who spreads intoxicating fragrances? Just put yourself at the disposal of God. Be his voice, as John the Baptist was, just a voice, allowing him to be the mind which decides what the voice will say. John, the voice, spoke of Jesus having a fan in his hand and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire (MTT 3:12). The same divine mind later used the same voice to say that the one described so harshly was "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (JHN 1:29). John the Baptist was not concerned

with how far the two utterances agreed. He simply said what flowed out of his mind, which he had yielded to God. You must do the same.

St. Bonaventure says that the devil proceeds against us like a general who sets out to capture a city. He finds out which is its weakest point, and there he attacks. Our weakest point is not to believe that God wills, speaks and works through us.

In the second book of Chronicles it is written that "the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots that were with him, saying 'Fight ye not with small or great, save only with the king of Israel'" (2CH 18:30). This is the devil's strategy. Our most truly royal characteristic, the full assurance that we are entitled to behave and speak as we do, this is the target for his attack.

So the doubt arises in our mind, and in that of our hearers, whether we might have presumed to speak a word in God's name, which God has not commanded us to speak. That is how the whole confusion arises.

Jesus knew himself to be the truth. He knew that in everything he spoke, he said exactly what God meant him to say, and in the way in which God intended. He had not the

slightest doubt. How could anyone doubt, who asserts, "I am the truth" (JHN 14:6)?

Jesus said, "I am the truth." On the basis of this text, for nearly two thousand years the Church has continued to assert that he is the truth. But he never proclaimed that he, Jesus considered as a third person, is the truth. He said very clearly, "~I~ am the truth"; I am this only as long as I am an I, a first person. A Jesus who is a he, a man who lived two thousand years ago in Palestine, cannot be the truth. He never expressed his opinions about such modern questions as the theory of relativity, modern technical or political life, the problems of Nazism, Bolshevism and Imperialism, and so on. Only a Jesus who is an I, a living I, can answer each day's problem.

In the true prophet, and even in the most modest witness to the truth, he is an I. He lives through his witness with all the power of his truth, in the first person, giving to the disciple his own full confidence in everything he says and does. Some of the things the witness says may be erroneous

from a human point of view. But God willed those words. A chess player may sacrifice a pawn in order to win a game. The pawn may blame himself for the fact that he is captured. He does not know what role this apparent loss may play in the strategic plan of the master.

God may have told Shimei to curse David (2SM 16:5). He certainly willed that Caiaphas and Pilate should behave towards Jesus exactly as they did behave. The apostles said it, "Against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou has anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" (ACT 4:27-28). From a human point of view they committed a crime in killing Jesus. From the divine viewpoint, they would have committed a crime by not crucifying him, thus hindering the redemption of the world; this in the vain supposition that they had free will and could have done otherwise than they did.

I know that I am shocking you by talking like this. That is just what I want to do. Shocks can cure deafness. An enormous possibility is opened to you: to live free from doubts, free from the fear that you may do or say something contrary to the commandments of God; because Jesus, the Truth, has become "I" in you by faith.

Do you believe that you have become the temple of the Holy Ghost? Then, being sure that the Holy Spirit is God, be also assured that he will allow nothing evil to dwell in this fair house of his.

St. John writes in his first epistle to the believers, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One and ye know all things (1JN 2:20). Jeremiah tells us the terms of the new covenant, "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord. For they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord" (JER 31:34). A Christian knows that what he knows is right. He need take no thought about what to speak. What flows out spontaneously from his new heart is God-given (MTT 10:19).

But does he never make a mistake? Dr. Erlich made 665 unsuccessful experiments before he discovered the remedy against syphilis, a remedy therefore called 666. Were the first

665 unsuccessful experiments errors? You may call them that. You might just as well call them 665 steps upwards towards the truth. Only in this sense does a Christian err. Every error of his is a necessary. unavoidable step towards the ultimate truth which lies within him, waiting only for the Christian to dig deeply enough within himself to find it. For him, to be a false prophet is no longer possible.

I have been through a terrible period of doubt. For weeks, the devil has tormented me every night, telling me that I have been a false prophet, and am being punished for it. One night I made the decision to return to the Jewish faith. Another time I felt a strong compulsion towards the Church of Rome. But what if the Adventists were right? The Bible tells us hundreds of times to keep the Sabbath. To know that Jesus is the truth was of no help to me at that time. I recovered my serenity when I told the devil who tempted me, "I am the truth." I believe in what I think. Because I, the I sanctified by Jesus, so believe. That is the reality. Amen.

BELOVED BROTHERS AND SISTERS

THOSE PASSAGES IN THE BIBLE WHICH APPEAR TO US TO BE boring genealogies or lists of places on a journey, have in reality a deep significance.

Almost without exception, Hebrew names of towns and people have a specific meaning. It is therefore possible to read certain Bible verses in the original either as mere enumerations of names, or as sentences in which every word has a meaning. So, for example, the Babylonian Talmud, commenting on Numbers 21.18-20, "And from the wilderness, they went to Mattanah, and from Mattanah to Nahaliel and from Nahaliel to Bamoth and from Bamoth

in the valley," says, "If you become like the sand of the wilderness on which everyone can tread, you go to ~matanah~ (in Hebrew, gift), that is you receive the gift of the Law. From there you go to ~Nahali-El~ (my inheritance is God). God becomes your inheritance. From here you got to ~Bamoth~ (this means to the heights). But if, once there, you become proud, you will descend again from the peaks into the valley." I remembered this part of the Talmud when they ordered me to lie down and then trod on me. That is the way to Mattanah.

Many Bible verses take on a new meaning when you know them in the original languages. At least pastors and priests should be required to know these. When people of different nationalities love each other, they usually learn one another's language. Why do children of God, especially those who are cultured, not learn the original language of the Bible? It

made a great impression on me when I read once that, many years ago, a missionary visited the shop of a Chinese Christian, at a time when he had no customers. He found him at his counter studying the New Testament in Greek. Amazed, he asked him how he had come to learn Greek. The shopkeeper answered, "Out of respect for the Word of God."

In the Book of Nehemiah there is a verse which has a deeper significance than appears on the surface, "And Jeshua begat Joiakim, Joiakim also begat Eliashib and Eliashib begat Joiada" (NEH 12:10).

Jeshuah is the first link in this genealogy. Jeshuah is the name of the Saviour in Hebrew; it is the equivalent of Jesus, and means "salvation." We usually think of Jesus as saving us only from the punishment of our sins. We are rather like the Catholic girl who prayed before the statue of the Virgin Mary, "Help me to sin without giving birth as you gave birth without sinning." We would like sin without hell, which is its unavoidable result. But he is a Saviour not only from hell, but also from sin, and from much more besides. He is a Saviour from error. God made him to be for us not only ransom and redemption, but wisdom, too. He saves us from a life without meaning, without aim and without vision. He saves us from pettiness.

For Ibsen's Peer Gynt, his self was "the host of desires, passions and lust." It was the sum of caprice and all demands, in short "everything which belongs to me alone and is made to show my manner of being." He was sufficient to himself, forgetting that he came from someone else and depended on others for his life.

Jesus, Jeshua, saves us from this minuscule self. While Peer

Gynt roamed for years about the world, as a drunkard, a magician, a false prophet, a merchant of slaves, his real self lived on in the faith, hope and love of Solveig, who waited for him faithfully.

Jesus gives us his self to be ours. What a delight it was, and is, for him to have suffered for us, to share all our shortcomings, our failures and our inability to rise above ourselves. He saves to the uttermost.

This Jeshua, salvation, begets in us Joiakim, which means

"God raises us." Now we are fit to be raised to great heights. We are no more burdened by sins, we have been saved from attachment to transitory things.

This in turn begets Eliashib, "God turns to us." Glory be to God on high! It is not right that God should always descend to the level of our human misery. His plan is to raise us to the place where his throne is, to show us the beauties of his kingdom. Christ has supped with us. Now we shall enter into fellowship with him, share in his divine thoughts, and help to fulfill his divine tasks.

Eliashib begets Joiada, which means "to know God." Before passing through all these stages, we may have known a good deal about God. Know we know him. The Greek word for "knowledge," as well as the Hebrew, also contains the meaning of sexual union. "Adam knew Eve his wife" GEN 4:1). Now the time has come for the mystic marriage, the marriage of the Lamb. The wise virgins have entered with him into the bridal chamber.

One state of heart begets another, one stage of spiritual growth begets another, just as a father begets a child. This is the deeper meaning of this verse, and of many other similar ones.

Rip off the mask and reveal the falsity which disguises itself as truth. Shun any religious guide who does not know this ancient way, trodden by the saints of old, and who does not walk in this path himself.

There are beauty shops for lies. You can dress them in priestly robes, surround them with the smoke of incense and with the impressive music of the organ, wrap them up in old or new theological assertions.

The truth is found somewhere else. It passes through the state of full salvation to that of being raised to high and heavenly places, where God turns to you in love and unites with you, embracing you with the holy kiss. This may happen in a splendid religious service, in a simple little chapel, at home or in prison. But this is the real aim of religion, to love

God without restraint, and never to rest until you have been united with him for ever.

The greater the pain, the more slowly the time passes.

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This is why God is eternal while we are transitory. He feels a pain so difficult to bear that we cannot even understand it. It is pain which causes his time never to pass.

In the Talmud it is written, "The night is divided into three watches. In every watch, the Holy One, blessed be his name, sits and roars like a lion, saying, 'Woe that I have destroyed my house. I have burned my temple and have banished my children among the nations ... woe to the father who has expelled his children, and woe to the children who have been driven out from the table of their father.'"

The pain of God must be made to cease, and this can only be done by rooting out its cause: our separation from him We must travel from Jeshua, through the intermediate stages, until we arrive at Joiada, in a union with God as complete as that of a bride with her husband. Then, God being no longer in pain and having experienced perfect happiness, time will fly quickly for him, as it does for all those who know joy. It will pass so quickly that it will disappear completely. When this transition from salvation to union with God has happened for all creatures, God will be all in all. All creatures will be deified. We shall sit with him on his heavenly throne (REV 3:21). The word of Jesus, "Ye are gods" (JHN 10:34), will be fulfilled. God being all in all, he will no longer be anybody's God. We shall all have entered into the Godhead. The distance between adored and adorer will have ceased to exist. The aim of creation will have been fulfilled. The heirs of God will take over their inheritance. The old myth about Brahma's falling asleep will have found its fulfillment.

We suffer remorse about all kinds of little sins. At the moment of the decisive crisis in our life our greatest remorse will be not about our sins, but about our religiosity, and our faith which has fallen short of this ultimate aim: to pass through full salvation, ascension, and his turning to us, into indissoluble union with him. St. Bonaventure said that a servant of God should examine himself seven times a day. Do we do this? And do we do it concerning what principally matters in religion - the mystical marriage with the Godhead?

This is prefigured in the Holy Communion. In it we unite

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with the Godhead in the person of Christ. We become one.

He becomes flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood.

Before appearing before King Ahasuerus, the young maidens had to purify themselves for six months with oil and myrrh, and six months with sweet odours (EST 2:12). Even more so, ought to purify ourselves and anoint ourselves with all that is best before uniting with him in Holy Communion. Here again, Jeshua begets Eliashib, and Eliashib begets Joiada. You become a palace for God. You can then rightly apply to yourself the words of David, "The work is great, for the palace is not for man, but for the Lord God" (1CH 29:1).

David did not just begin building at random, but gathered a vast quantity of gold, silver and jewels. The building passed through many stages, until the glory of God came to dwell in it.

Your only true friend is the one who shows you this way, travels along it with you, and helps you as you go.

Which sense of ours shows us that a caterpillar is in the process of becoming a butterfly, or that an ugly egg is a future peacock? Our senses apprehend things statically, as they are at a given moment, not dynamically, as a process of evolution. So the sinners who confess to you are not only what your senses perceive.

A wicked man can be saved from his cruelty; a melancholic can be saved from his worries. Jesus can save everyone to the uttermost. Every soul can pass from Jeshua through Joiakim and Eliashib to Joiada, moving and living henceforth within the Godhead, indissolubly united with it.

When you see people in that way, it becomes progressively easier to overcome sensuality. Then the Spirit moves you, and you are able to overcome. Amen.

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MY DEAR CONGREGATION

I WONDER IF A RICH CHRISTIAN FARMER, IN THE WEST, WHERE farmers can still be rich, would be willing today to give for his religion the great quantity of bullocks, lambs, rams, flour, oil and wine, besides the obligatory tithes, which the Jews gave as offerings. The Israelites gave freely, and they gave out of poverty. Palestine may have been a blessed land, but the Jews of that time knew nothing of farming economy. They had nothing like the income of a modern Western farmer. But they gave so much, that there came a time when Moses had to restrain them from giving any more, telling them: "Enough."

Religion for the Israelites was what it ought to be for

every Christian: their ruling passion. A man who has a real passion, whether it be for gambling, drunkenness, whoring, pride, or addiction to drugs, will give everything he has to satisfy it - his money. his honour, his health, his family. So it is with those who are passionately devoted to art, or science, or politics. Nansen, passionate to know the secrets of the North Pole, lived there for three years among the polar bears. Men will die on the gallows for their revolutionary or reactionary ideals.

For your passion, you sacrifice everything. And religion is a passion. It calls for the sublimation of all evil lusts, and spending your human energies and possessions on God instead of on worldly things.

When you are young and have the spring in your blood,

you do not keep account of how much your passion costs. So the Jews did not keep an exact account of their tithes. Besides the prescribed offerings, which were many, there were free-will offerings, some offered in fulfillment of vows made in difficult circumstances, some simply out of overflowing love to God. Religion is the state of heart of those who, more than anything else in the world, love, prize and honour God.

A man cannot decide of his own free will whether or not to have a passion. No man is a drunkard or a chain-smoker because he decided to be one. He becomes one by a slow sliding into sin. You do not know at the beginning where it will lead you. The same thing happens with religion. It may begin by being just a legitimate curiosity, you experiment with it as others might experiment with narcotics. From being an occasional practice, it can become a habit, and from this it develops into an irresistible passion.

Those in whom religion is not a passion for God are nevertheless not excluded from religion. They can be servants of those who have the passion. There are many people who work in breweries and tobacco factories, in the cinema industry, in printing shops which produce pornographic literature, or as smugglers of drugs, who, without having the passion themselves, help others to see their desires fulfilled. If you don't love God passionately, you can passionately love the passion for God which you don't possess; you can be a servant of the bride of Christ. Jesus said, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple ... shall in no wise lose his reward" (MTT 10:42). Your reward will be that you will come to know the religious devotion for which you have longed. You will at last know the passion for the Lord.

But this passion is shallow, so long as it is a passion for

somebody else. At the beginning of ~Romeo and Juliet~, Romeo is madly in love with Rosaline. It is enough for him to see another girl at a ball, to change his passion. Fortunately, both Romeo and Juliet die shortly afterwards. Otherwise he might have changed the object of his love again. It is in the very nature of passions to be able to change their object. All the time you can see men passing from one ideal to another.

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Jesus said that you can only really love your neighbour if you love yourself. The highest measure of love for another is that which you have for yourself. The more you are deified yourself, the more you will be able to love God. The more you are changed into Christ, the more Christ will become your passion, because he will be your real self.

Christians have almost forgotten the Orthodox teaching that they are being transformed into Christ even during this earthly life. St. Augustine recounts how he heard the voice of Christ saying, "I am the food of grown men; grow, and thou shalt feed upon Me; nor shalt thou convert Me, like the food of thy flesh, into thee, but thou shalt be converted into Me." St. Thomas Aquinas said that it is in the nature of the sacrament of Holy Communion to transform man into God, and to make man to be like him. Because if fire has the power to change all things into itself and, having first destroyed in them all that is contrary to its nature, to transmute them into its own form and perfection, how much more will the consuming fire of divinity (HEB 12:29) destroy every impurity which it finds in our souls and transform them into his likeness?

The God for whom the Christian entertains a fierce passion is not merely an external being far away. My passion for him is a passion for myself in my highest stage. "Ye are gods" says Jesus (JHN 10:34). So my passion for God is also a passion for what is divine in myself. This discovery of the divine jewel in yourself makes every day a Sunday for you. Most men are more generous on Sunday than on other days. This is the day on which they spend most on satisfying their own pleasure. Now you will spend your energy, your time, your liberty, your life, on God.

With this discovery, the old nature dies in you. It dies in poverty. It never did possess anything worth mentioning. The dead are free from debt. Your mind is no longer burdened by the remembrance of past sins. They do not belong to you, but to another being, who has passed away. You can speak of them as you would of a crime committed by some murderer three hundred years ago. It is not you. Your mind is free. Now you can judge before you act. And so you will see the salvation of the Lord.

page 103 Chapter 17: God Is My Passion

We have from the Greeks the legend of Prometheus who stole fire from the gods and made possible the progress of humanity by giving it to men. Prometheus means "the one who thinks beforehand." Such a person is very rare. Most people are "Epi-metheus." They act under impulse, prompted by psychological complexes, fears, anxieties and so on, which are all the result of past sin. Only afterwards along comes the mind, liked a wicked stepmother, to tell you how wrong you have been.

But the discovery that Christ, the divine jewel, the hope of glory within your own heart, is himself your real personality, sets you free from all this. For the first time you can begin to fulfill the commandment to serve God with all your mind. You are a true Prometheus. Your actions are well thought out beforehand. They are successful, as Godhead is always successful. It succeeds even when it seems to be defeated, as it appeared to be on the cross. Such a life is worth living. You will sacrifice for it gladly and liberally, where once you did so grudgingly.

It is not extraordinary deeds, like going off as missionaries to arduous places, which make us Christians. It is our daily burnt offering and the abundance of our freewill offerings. To devote as a matter of course your thought, your time, your energy, your substance to the cause of God - which is nothing else than your own cause because you are a partaker of the divine nature - this is true Christianity.

God united with a human body and made human life his own. So you now unite with the Godhead. Its life is your real life, your ordinary everyday life. It was not an exceptional deed for Jesus to be human. He was human day by day, as a helpless babe, as a diligent schoolboy, as an obedient son, as a conscientious carpenter, as a faithful preacher and healer, as a martyr, in his weakness and despair as one who went down into hell. He daily shared all aspects of human life, including its temptations. He spent all his Godhead on human life. In the same way the child of God shares the whole of divine life. He does not express this life only in moment of mystical elevation and rapture. He carries out the ordinary things of life in a divine manner. In his routine occupations,

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in the home, in the workshop, in the scientific laboratory, in unavoidable failures of the flesh he spends himself as a god would do, because God is a passion for which he gives up

everything, because God has become his real being.
Prisons are full of men who suffer for passions such as gambling, stealing or sexual vice. Why should we Christians not also suffer gladly for our passion? Amen.

page 105 Chapter 18: Prayer For The Dead

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

I HAVE NOT PREACHED TO YOU FOR A LONG TIME. WE HAVE HAD a very bad time lately. Our jailors have behaved worse than ever. They filled our bellies with water and jumped on us. They hung some of us up by our thumbs. They tied us with crossed arms between two pillars and whipped us until we fell over fainting. Why did they tie our arms like this? It was with his arms in the same posture that Jacob blessed his grandchildren.
God is becoming, just as he wishes to be, less and less intelligible, a God who "would dwell in the thick darkness" (1KI 8:12). Let him fulfill his desire. I leave him in peace. I don't disturb him with my demands.
I have something better to do, to prepare myself for meeting him. If things continue like this, I shall not last long. I shall die. They will bury my corpse.
The Trappist monks greet one another with the words "~Memento mori~ - remember you will die." As a spiritual exercise, I had formed the habit some time before my arrest of saying the burial service which we use in our church, imagining myself to be the one for whom it was spoken. At the end, I would sing Mozart's ~Dies Irae~, composed in macabre circumstances. Legend says that, when he was writing it, he was visited by a mysterious stranger with the appearance of a death's head and a skeleton. Catholics sing it at burials:

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Day of wrath, O, day of mourning!
See fulfilled the prophets' warning!
Heav'n and earth to ashes turning!

O what fear man's bosom rendeth
When from heaven the Judge descendeth,
On whose sentence all dependeth...

When the Judge his seat attaineth
And each hidden deed arraigneth,
Nothing unavenged remaineth.

What shall I, frail man, be pleading,
Who for me be interceding,
When the just are mercy needing?...

Low I kneel, with heart submission,
See like ashes my contrition.
Help me in my last condition.

I have continued with this practice in my solitary cell though my mind often gets confused and it is difficult to remember the exact words.

There is something unique about a burial service. It is possible to imagine myself to be a king (Napoleon started as a corporal and became an Emperor), a bishop (St. Ambrose was chosen to be a bishop before he was even baptized), a millionaire (many poor people have become rich), free. Such eventualities are all possible, and so we are able to imagine them. But to be dead is not possible for the human soul. Proof of this is the fact that we cannot imagine ourselves to be dead. I try to picture my death. I see myself lying still and cold in a coffin. But the fact that I see myself, and that I can even recite the burial service, shows that I am not very dead. A man should be serious during his spiritual exercises. Sometimes I roar with laughter. I am not dead, and never will be. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," said Jesus (JHN 11:26).

But I am no longer normal. I stop suddenly in the middle

of my laughter and begin to cry, because the words of Jesus belong to some mysterious sphere of unintelligible truth. They don't correspond to reality. The fact is that Christians do die. Countless numbers of them have died under torture or otherwise over the centuries. And I may die very soon.

At this moment, people are praying for me. I am sure of this. Will they stop praying if, by chance, they hear that I have died? Will they stop praying for me just when I will need it the most?

In times past I have taken part in discussions on the subject of whether Christians should pray for the dead. People smiled as they debated. No one had in mind the moment of his own death. When death threatens you, you see things otherwise. Why should I be abandoned in prayers as soon as I die?

Because prayer for the dead is unscriptural? Many things which are unscriptural are still very good. You will not find family prayers mentioned in the Bible. Is this practice therefore wrong? The Bible only mentions churches in towns.

Village churches appear to be unscriptural. Are they wrong? Is it scriptural to be a Lutheran, or a Baptist, or Catholic, or Orthodox?

But is it even certain that prayer for the dead is unscriptural? I remember a prayer in Nehemiah, which I often used in my devotions: "Let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings ... and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria" (NEH 9:32). The Jews had no kings in the time of Nehemiah. He prays for kings and for Jewish ancestors long since dead.

In any case, I would think the same way even if there were verses which seemed to contradict this. The true interpretation of all Bible verses is love. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (EXO 3:6).
In Hebrew, and even more clearly in Greek, it is said "I am the God Abraham, the God Isaac and the God Jacob." He has identified himself with these living dead. To abandon them means to abandon God himself.

I don't know about others, but I, when I die, will need your prayers. I am saved, but even the children of God come to

judgment. They will have to answer not only for every wrong deed, but even for an idle word. We will not go to hell for these sins, but God has punishments for his children also.

St. Mary Magdalene was saved, but what a punishment it was for her to stand at the foot of the cross and to hear Jesus crying, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" (MTT 27:46) Jesus at that moment did not know the answer to the question. Magdalene knew. He was forsaken because she had sinned. And she could not help him. He had to pass through darkness and death because of her past lasciviousness.

St. Peter was forgiven for his denials, but he had to bear a heavy punishment. He was asked three times by the Lord, "Do you love me?" (JHN 21:17) He was not trusted after his first answer. Punishment enough for a lover.

I have sinned so much, even since I became a Christian and a pastor. I need your prayers. I need the prayers of the glorified saints. Would it not influence the judgment at all if I could appear before the Lord surrounded by the prayers of thousands of children of God who would declare their solidarity with me and implore pity for my failures?

Whatever you think about prayers for the dead, pray for me. Pray what Nehemiah prayed for the Jewish kings and his forefathers who had died long ago, "Let not all the trouble

of Richard seem little before thee. It is true that Richard has sinned much. but he has also had a very troubled life. He has suffered much. O, that his grief were thoroughly weighed and his calamity laid in the balances together. It would be heavier than the sand of the sea (JOB 6:2-3). He has sinned, but he has received from thy hand double for all his sins (ISA 40:2). Let his sin be small before you, and his trouble great. For Jesus's sake, forgive him."

God is sovereign. It depends on him whether to see a thing as big or small. St. Paul decided to consider his terrible afflictions - the repeated jailings, beatings, stonings - as "light" (2CO 4:17). If we can consider our afflictions for God as light, could he not reciprocate by considering the sins of those who have suffered as light also? When I am overcome by worry, I begin to whistle quietly. Why should God ponder in detail about my sin? Simply by

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turning away his head he no longer sees it. So by a prayer of yours you could distract his attention from my sins, you might make him turn his head towards you. My sins would not be observed any more.

Live just once in the spirit your own burial service, even if you cannot recite it under such menacing conditions as ours. Then you will no longer philosophize about the question of prayers for the dead. You will think, "Poor man, he has died. Even now he may be passing through judgment. Let me make a desperate attempt to help him. I may not succeed. But neither can I harm him by my prayer."

Brothers and sisters, death is ready to swallow me. Pray for me. The German Lutheran Pastor Blumhardt asserts that he saw the souls of the dead in church imploring the prayer and fellowship of the living. I may not be normal any more, but I have the same fancy. I see dead persons in my solitary cell, asking for my prayers. Luther objected only against public prayer for the dead, because of the abuses connected with it and the false hopes which it might give, but not against private prayer for them. Pray for me.

Remember the words of Boaz, "The name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren" (RUT 4:10). Amen.

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BELOVED BROTHERS AND SISTERS

THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF "THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD" (1CO 1:25). THE original Greek word has the meaning more of "stupidity";

our Rumanian translators have used the word "madness." This madness of God's attracts me much more than his wisdom. And I will ask a question which may seem most impious. Has God always been mad like this, or did he become so by suffering too much pain? Is his madness curable? But these are mad questions, you will say. I agree. I cannot deceive myself. I am slowly going mad. So I cannot ask any questions other than mad ones. Well then, if I know this, why don't I keep quiet instead of asking questions? But he, too, knows about his madness, yet he still puts questions to us, and gives us revelations.

I want to know all about his madness, because madness has become my lot.

A high percentage of mental patients are Jews. As pastor of a Hebrew Christian congregation, I had to deal with quite a number of cases. My wife nursed schizophrenics. I have read about this illness. I know what is happening to my mind.

Schizophrenics withdraw from reality. Their only pre-occupation is with inner fantasies. Well, all prisoners shut up in solitary cells develop these characteristics. We grow out of touch with the world. We live on our imagination, which is entirely different from that of men who lead a normal life. But what about God? He is ~aghios~. This Greek word, which we translate as "holy," means literally "not of the earth" (ghea). It is a way of saying that God is out of touch with the

realities of this earth. And as to his thoughts, he says himself that they are not like ours (ISA 55:8). So, even by becoming mad, I become close to his image. How trustfully a Christian can watch himself losing his mind!

My responses have become dulled. The guards shout. I sometimes, rarely, hear the screaming of prisoners who are being beaten. I continue to pursue my own line of thought. Gone is the time when I reacted by banging on the door or even weeping. God sees from heaven the tortures of his children. He hears their cries. He does not react either. What inconsistent behaviour for a God as men imagine him to be if they don't believe his own revelation about his foolishness. My hands tremble all the time. I see no reason why they should. I suppose it is an image of God's hands, which tremble when he has to punish, because he loves the wicked man and cannot bear to see him destroyed.

Being constantly watched through the peep-hole, no wonder I have developed a persecution complex. I am afraid to touch the food. It might contain narcotics or poison. Jesus said unexpectedly to those "Jews who believed in Him" (JHN 8:31): "Ye

seek to kill me" (JHN 8:40). That looks like persecution mania. The curious thing is that those Jews, who believed in him and whom he was apparently falsely accusing of harbouring murderous intentions, really did take up stones to cast at him. So in the same heart there can co-exist belief in Jesus and the desire to kill him. And the foolishness of God, which recognizes the latter desire in believers, may be wiser than the wisdom of men. Perhaps my own persecution mania is also well-founded, and I do well to beware of men.

Being much persecuted, and my sick imagination making me exaggerate the extent to which I am in danger, produces a reaction in me. Why should I be persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, if I am not somebody important? Now I observe the delusions of grandeur growing in me. I hear voices strengthening me in such delusions. How sure Jesus was that he was the Messiah, though he knew that many others in the past had believed the same thing of themselves, but wrongly. If he was not the Messiah, why should Herod have tried to kill him while he was still a babe in his mother's arms? Why

all the anger against him when he spoke and even when he healed? I, too, firmly believe in my delusions of grandeur. St. Augustine said, "We are Christ." What higher thing than this could I be? It is condescension on my part if I sometimes have fantasies of being merely some little earthly ruler or pope.

No, I do not have delusions of grandeur. I am grand. I can die today in this prison cell, and suddenly have the wonders of God burst upon me. One of these wonders will be his kinship with me, even when I am mad.

The guards mock me. They call me "Hamlet in misery." Well, Hamlet was a prince, even though he was mad. Every day men share his tragedy and foolishness, and learn from it to be better. Who remembers the name of even one of Denmark's jailors of his time?

I don't mind going mad, and God does not mind having his foolishness proclaimed. No treatise of systematic theology mentions it among his attributes. It is contrary to reason to believe in a foolish God, but one plain text is worth a thousand reasons. And here is the text "the foolishness of God." In here I am going foolish, too.

A man must be mad to believe in a mad God. But here is the supreme test of faith.

A Canaanite woman appealed to Jesus to cure her sick daughter. He refused, saying that he was not sent but to the lost sheep of Israel. When she insisted, he called her a dog, saying, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to

dogs" (MTT 15:26). I was revolted when I first read this. A healer who practises racial discrimination towards the sick is not worthy of the name of healer. Not only is he not divine. He is not even human. It is shameful to call somebody a dog because he belongs to another nation than yours.

It took me years to understand that Jesus was not using the word dog as an insult. It only seems so to us. The people of the east did not have the same attitude to animals as we do. Among us, a man would mind very much if his father called him an ass. But Jacob praised his son Issachar by calling him "a strong ass" (GEN 49:14). Jesus was highly commending this woman. He saw with sorrow that the Israelites were lost sheep, whereas

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this woman was faithful, like a dog. He was ready to perform miracles for those who were lost. But a faithful dog, a soul as attached to him as this Canaanite woman was, a person who had crossed racial barriers and appealed to him, a Jew (even today Brahmins in India would prefer to see their son die than call in a doctor from among the pariahs), should not ask for wonders. She should bear quietly with the tragedies of life. Miracles are bread for children. It is not meet to take it from them in order to give it to those who are already faithful, and should believe without seeing wonders. The word "dog" in Jesus's mouth is a compliment. But she continued to demand healing for her daughter, and the Lord agreed that some crosses are too heavy even for the faithful. He cured the sick child.

To be like a dog - this is what being faithful means. A dog does not care about the character of its master. He may be a genius or an idiot, wise or foolish, a thief or a saint, he may treat the dog with affection or he may beat it - the dog will continue to watch the house, and fight with aggressors, and never cease to be a trustworthy companion.

Let the lost children of Israel find it objectionable to believe in a God who acknowledges his own foolishness. Dogs simply love God, whatever he is like, and whatever he does. This dog- like attitude is unreasonable in the eyes of men. They call Christians fools, and they are right. But we have become fools, and are going mad, in the knowledge that God has chosen the foolish things of the world (1CO 1:27). Though we are fools, progressing visibly towards madness, we do not despair. It is for us one more sure sign of our election.

God has suffered terribly because of the rebellion of his children. This drove him to the mad solution of sacrificing his beloved Son for unworthy sinners. He did it out of love for us, but it is love to the point of folly. His madness will be

cured. It will be cured when the wall of partition erected by sin has disappeared, and he is all in all; when his creation has entered once more into rest, and his kingdom stretches from shore to shore.

Until then, I will quietly accept my growing madness. I may be a madman, but I am his. Amen.

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

AND WHEN THE APOSTLES HAD LIFTED UP THEIR EYES, "THEY saw no man, save Jesus only" MTT 17:8).

You can look at things at many different levels. Suppose I look at myself in a good mirror. I see myself exactly as I am. But then I look in a magnifying mirror. Now I see my image distorted. I change the mirrors, using ones which magnify more and more, until I am looking through something which resembles huge lentils. I can no longer see my face, only the molecules of which it is composed. I am once again seeing myself without distortion, but at another level, the molecular one. I can continue with the operation until I see the molecules composed of atoms, and then the atoms composed of elementary particles. Or, conversely, I can look at a man standing in a crowd, while I am going up in an aeroplane. The crowd will become smaller and smaller, until in the end hundreds of men have converged into one point. They have become a single unity.

On the earthly level, there were six men on Mount Tabor - Jesus, Moses, Elias and the three disciples. You could see them as separate individuals. But if you are looking from above, from the level of spirituality, you see all individuals unified in Christ. So the apostles saw Jesus only - not the mighty prophets, not their companions, not themselves, but only him in whom we all live.

The ovule of the holy virgin out of which Jesus was born had at first been inorganic matter. Then it became synthesized

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into organic matter. Then, at her meeting with the archangel Gabriel, it became fertilized with the heavenly seed. The "holy thing" (LUK 1:35) came into existence. Jesus was once merely a thing. The embryo developed just like every other embryo, passing through the different phases of animal life, until it took human shape. But he was the embodiment of the pre-existent Son of God. So in him all things could be seen united - inorganic matter, organic form, the animal world, the human world and the Godhead.

He was both High priest and the sacrifice offered by the priest. He was the lamb of God and the lion of Judah. He was the Holy One and he was made sin. Angels ascended and descended upon him, but he was counted among the criminals. He was a carpenter and the King of Kings. He was a man, yet bore the feminine name of Jeshuah. He was a man of sorrows, yet joyfully took part in marriage feasts and banquets of a very worldly sort, given and attended by publicans and sinners. He was a Jew with an open heart for Gentiles, rating the good Samaritan higher than a neglectful priest of his own race.

Ibsen's Peer Gynt, when he awoke from a lifetime of failure, realized that he had never been himself, except in the heart and dreams of Solveig, the girl who had loved him and waited for him all the years. We live in the sphere of illusion if we live the life of our little self. How can you isolate the self? Parts of plants and animals, of other creatures than yourself, constitute and continually renew your body. You think in a language formed by others long before you were born, and according to laws of logic established by Aristotle. Your mind is full of what you have learned from others in school, from newspapers and films, from conversations or from books. How much of your thoughts are really yours? You may have been born as an original, but now you are a copy, a representative of a social type, you think what your nation, your social class, your race, your sex, your religious denomination thinks. What individual thoughts or desires remain in you? Perhaps 0.00005 per cent of what is you. You live the transitory life of a man of a certain social and psychological type in a certain age. Your true self waits for you in the thoughts and aspirations which your best friend Jesus experiences for you. He is the one in

whom we also, torn apart by so many conflicting tendencies, become one.

A Christian sees only the One. In an apocryphal papyrus found at Oxyrrhinchus, Jesus is quoted as saying, "Cleave the stone and you will find me within it. Cut the wood, and lo, I am within it." Nature receives its beauty from him. He is mankind's ultimate aim. He is the King of the choirs of angels. He is the Beloved of the Father. In him, God and creature become one.

It is said that the Japanese wanted to find a good market for their steel, which was of an inferior quality to the Swedish product. They named the town in which the steel industry was situated, "Sweden," so that with a clear conscience they could then label all their products "Made in Sweden."

Our false self tends to do something similar. He will give

himself a new name - he becomes a religious self, a spiritual self, a self faithful to Jesus, instead of denying himself totally and seeing "no man save Jesus only." Jesus in me, Jesus in my neighbour, Jesus in development in the torturer who beats me, Jesus in Moses and Elijah, Jesus in those yet to come, Jesus in nature, Jesus in all things.

During the war, my wife was away in another country on a very dangerous mission. There was no possibility of communication between us. All the time she was away, I could read nothing. On the pages of newspapers and books, I saw her image. I walked along the road and surprised myself by calling out her name. When the branch of a tree, shaken by the wind, knocked against my window during the night, I had the impression that she had returned and was knocking at the door. Her image persisted continually in the retina of my eye. This is what happens with Christians. They see in sinners and saints alike only what comes from Jesus. Like the Abbot Zosima in ~The Brothers Karamazov~, they would bow before the criminal. He is made Christlike by the sorrows and sufferings which he prepares for himself through his wickedness. There is no place on earth where sparks of Christ are not spread around.

Shakespeare's Prospero says to Miranda that, by withdrawing from the world, he awakened his brother's evil nature.

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"My trust, like a good parent, did beget of him a falsehood in its contrary as great as my trust was." We criticize our bishops, priests and pastors, without asking ourselves whether our shyness and trust might have created their untrustworthiness.

I have said that there is a way of looking up in which, although six people are present, you see no man save Jesus only. Why have you allowed your priests and pastors to give you less than this? Why have you accepted as spiritual guide a man who does not see the One only, and is unable to direct your gaze in such a manner that you also see only One?

When you see in everybody only the One, the true Light which lightens every man that comes into the world (JHN 1:9), you will no longer despise any man.

The Jewish scribes of old despised the common people. It is recorded in the Talmud that Rabbi Eleazar said, "It is lawful to kill a common man even on the Day of Atonement which falls on a Sabbath." Rabbi Samuel ben Nahmani said, "It is lawful to tear a common man to pieces like a fish." Jesus has taken such common men, fishermen, harlots, publicans, and has made them into saints and heroes, by teaching them

the great mystery of oneness. God is one. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. There is only one to be seen, to be looked upon. It was in looking not on the multitude of snakes crawling around them, but only on the one brazen serpent, that the Israelites were healed (NUM 21:9). As long as you see a multitude of men and things, you will always be afraid and troubled by their multitude; but Mary chose the good part, to sit at the feet of only One, the One in whom all the other twelve guests lived, the One who was the real Self of the twelve (LUK 10:42). She looked to him only, listened to him only. This part cannot be taken from you. In the multitude, every moment new things and new men are appearing and disappearing. But the One is eternal.

United with this One, you too are eternal. There will never be a time without this One. If he is your life, there will never be a time without you. We bear his name. So many people believe us to be Christians. Let us not put to shame those who have believed in us, but let us be what a Christian is

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meant to be, a Christ in miniature, a living part of the one great mystical body in which Jesus is the head and we are all members.

So long as I was still out in the world, surrounded by crowds of people, I was too weak to attain this state. He has given me the privilege of being put in a solitary cell. At least through this I have been able to learn, what all Christians must learn even when they are surrounded by multitudes of people, to "see no man save Jesus only." Amen.

page 119 EPILOGUE

THE CATHOLICS HAVE A HYMN, "O, FELIX CULPA - O, BLESSED guilt, which has given us a Saviour." Some believe that I am anti-Communist in the vulgar political sense of the term. On the contrary, I am tempted to sing, "O, blessed Communists who have given us hours of voluptuous embraces with the heavenly bridegroom, an insight into heavenly things which we never had before, victories of faith, not only under difficult outward circumstances, but through inner storms."

Countless thousands of people are in prison for Christ's sake in Communist countries today. It is not only the physical fact of being in prison, it is the shame. Joseph in the Old Testament, just because he wished to keep his purity, had to bear the humiliation of sitting in prison under the trumped up charge of adultery. Christians in the Red camp are accused of theft, treason, espionage, currency offences and even of

ritual murder. But, please, don't pity them. Don't pity the bride who has gone into the marriage feast leaning on the arm of her bridegroom. The bridegroom loved the cross. She shares the joy of the cross with him. Suffering is involved. But this is no reason to pity her.

When asked why I describe the atrocities of Communism, I searched myself to discover my real motive for doing so. It is most of all to stir up your compassion for the Communists, who are burdening their poor souls with crimes.

I wish to stir up prayer for them, to call the churches to the task of spreading the life-giving Gospel among the Communists.

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There is, of course, the other side. Christians must pray for and help the persecuted underground church. Well over 1,000,000 letters of enthusiastic support, and the creation of Missions to the Communist World in twenty-nine countries within four years, are proof that the rank-and-file Christians of all denominations are on our side.

We also have Christian leaders who support us, but these are fewer. Why the adverse attitude, or at least the apathy, of some?

It is, I think, first of all because they are theologians. Theology is a setting aside of ~Theos~, of God himself, who is not interested in doctrines but only wants our love, in order to dissect the ~logos~, some hundreds of millions of words which have been written about the one Word of the living God: "Unite with me in love, forget about words in the reality of my embrace." ~Theos~, God, makes you love. Theology has produced strife, hatred and even murder.

Secondly, it is because these people carry the responsibility for vast church organizations, which can subsist as such only by adjusting themselves to successive political regimes. There was a time when Hitler's photograph was on the altars of some German Evangelical churches, when certain Catholic and Protestant German pastors wore the uniform with the swastika, instead of going to prison or to death. In Communist countries, theologians have had to cheer Stalin and to praise the Soviet regime. There is a big difference between what an American Baptist pastor preaches in the South and what he says in the North, when he touches on racial issues. I have myself heard a renowned pastor saying two different things according to the attitude of his audience, which in one state was in favour of segregation and in the other against it. Without this adjustment, the big religious organizations could not exist. Of this fact we must have full understanding.

But why do big religious organizations have to exist at all? St. Athanasius had the truth about the Holy Trinity. An ecumenical council disowned him and he was expelled from church membership under no less a trumped-up charge than of murdering a bishop and raping a virgin. He was told, "The

whole world is against you," to which he replied, "Then I am against the whole world." It is only men of this calibre who have been canonized; only they are considered heroes of Christianity.

Happily, the underground church has no big structure to keep in existence. Even less do you have to worry about buildings, finances and committees when you are alone in a solitary cell. There, only truth counts. You struggle to find it.

The story is told that a Mikado once announced his intention of going to see a renowned garden of orchids. On the appointed day, his host met him at the gate, and bowed respectfully. "Would His Imperial Majesty please to come into the garden first? Tea will be served afterwards." They went into the garden, but the earth had been levelled. There was not a flower to be seen. The Emperor did not say a word. Then he was invited into the house. On the tea table stood a vase containing one single orchid, of unsurpassable beauty. The host said, "I have kept the most beautiful flower for the grandest of Emperors. The other blooms did not deserve to live."

Only the ultimate, eternal truth survives in the underground church. All other considerations which engage the transitory interests of a church disappear.

By joining hands with the underground church, Christianity in the free world will gain an influx of truth, love and heroism. It is a question of life or death for Christians of countries which are not yet under the Red yoke.

The purpose of this book, as of all my books, has been to familiarize children of God in the free world with what may be their own lot very soon – if Communism continues to spread at the rate it does now – and to bring them into the holy atmosphere of those who continue to believe when their faith is gone, who hope when they are in despair, who love even when they rebel, and who proclaim that God is King where Satan reigns. Will you too leave reason behind, and follow us into the realm of the foolishness of God which is shared by his suffering children – a foolishness which is wiser than men?

I wonder if you disagree with many of the thoughts

expressed in this book. I, for my part, disagree. I told you what I thought then, not what I think now. I did it, because my "then" is the "now" of millions of men and women imprisoned for their faith in Communist countries today. You can share their sufferings only through the knowing the torments of their minds.

I have done my part. I leave it to you. Choose to judge, to cavil or to help.

I am happy also to render a service to my adversaries and to the opponents of my missionary work.

One of the men whom I respect most is a Catholic bishop with whom I was in prison. He once told me, "I wish to give you as a gift a very strong argument which you can use against my church. Christ has taught that when someone has sinned, he should say, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' when according to our doctrine he should have said to the offender, 'Go and confess to a priest.'" The bishop told me this, just because he loved Protestants.

Jump at this book, all my enemies and all the opponents of our mission. I make you a rich present. I give you here plenty of material to prove that I am a heretic, mad and whatever else you like. Just profit by it. I love you. Why should you not have a little joy? You don't know the beauty of the embraces of the heavenly Bridegroom. Have at least the joy of attacking me.

But the children of God will understand. They will feel as if they themselves suffer today this terrible strain. The Bible teaches, "Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them" (Hebrews 13.3). Manacles hurt not only the wrists, but also the soul. If this book will have caused some to shed a tear, to say a prayer and to help practically the martyrs, my aim in publishing it will have been achieved.

The End of "If Prison Walls Could Speak" by Pastor Richard Wurmbrand

If That Were Christ, Would You Give Him Your Blanket?

Richard Wurmbrand
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Two Chinese Christians shivered with cold in a cell. Each had a thin blanket. One of the Christians looked to the other and saw how he trembled. The thought came to him, "If that were Christ, would you give Him your

blanket?" Of course he would. Immediately he spread the blanket over his brother.

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"There is no better rest in this restless world than to face imminent peril of death solely for the love and service of God our Lord." St. Francis Xavier

page 7 If That Were Christ, Would You Give Him Your Blanket?

CHAPTER 1

Episodes in the Life of the Underground Church

In North Korea few workers have a free day. They work from the 1st of January to the 31st of December. The revolutionary feasts are celebrated by increased production. You can stay at home only when you are sick.

In a big coal-compound with some 40,000 workers, it was observed that 1,200 always reported sick on Sundays. The authorities became suspicious, and they discovered that, in turns, these gathered in private homes or, during the good season, in the woods. Their pastor would announce a hymn, but nobody would sing. The danger of being heard was too great. They all would read silently at the same time the respective songs from hymnals written by hand. Then they would pray, also in perfect silence. The pastor would read a few Bible verses and give a very short exhortation, which was meditated upon in silence by the whole congregation, which would disband afterwards in small groups, looking around to be sure that nobody saw them.

Forty-five Christians considered to be leaders of this Christian group have been shot. We do not know the fate of others.

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What is this? A scene in the life of the Underground Church. This happened in 1969.

Rev. Fang-Cheng is in jail. He has been tortured, but has not betrayed the brethren.

One day he is brought again before the examining officer. He sees in a corner of the room a heap of rags, and hears a rattling of chains. The image becomes clearer. It is his mother. But she did not have white hairs before. Now she has. The colour of her face is like ashes. You can see that she, too, has passed through heavy ordeals.

The Communist asks Cheng, "I have heard that you Christians have ten commandments allegedly given by God, which you strive to fulfil. I would be interested tO know them. Would you be so kind as to recite the

commandments?"

Cheng is in a terrible state of heart, but still such an opportunity to acquaint a disciple of Mao with God's law must not be neglected. He begins to enumerate the commandments until he arrives at "Honour father and mother." Here he is interrupted. The Communist tells him, "Cheng, I wish to give you the opportunity to honour your mother. Here she is in suffering, in chains. Tell us what you know about your brethren in faith and I promise that tonight you and your mother will be free. You will be able to give her care and honour. Let me see now whether you really believe in God and wish to fulfil his commandment."

It is not easy to take a decision.

Cheng turns to his mother – "Mummy, what shall I do?" The mother answers, "I have taught you from childhood to love Christ and his holy Church. Don't mind my suffering. Seek to remain faithful to the

Saviour and his little brethren. If you betray, you are no more my son."

This was the last time that Fang-Cheng saw his mother. The probability is that she died under torture.

What is this? A scene from the life of the Underground Church.

An officer of the Secret Police sits in the study of a pastor. The Communist is very polite. He asks the pastor to become an informer for the Secret Police. In exchange, he can preach as much as he likes. "And then, you know. We have a say in the Church today. We can help to make you bishop."

The pastor refuses.

It is a Saturday afternoon. The Communist leaves. When he is already at the door, he says, "I will be back for a definite answer on Monday. You had better think it over. By the way, your congregation considers you a saint. But you remember your affair with Betty. It went far. We have a picture of her in your embrace. You have been very incautious. If your congregation knew the story, you would be finished. I wish your good. Better accept our proposal. In any case, goodbye, and have a very blessed Sunday."

On Sunday morning the pastor tells from the pulpit his love affair, omitting only the name of the girl. He says, "We all are sinners, pastors as much as laymen. I

have failed. The Secret Police blackmails me by this sin to inform on you. I prefer my shame as a whoremonger to be considered by you. God forgives, and I will not become a Judas. The wrong which I have done is enough. For the rest, it is up to you to decide if I can stay on as your pastor or not."

When he descends from the pulpit, the parishioners throng around hi n. In tears they kiss him and say,

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"Don't leave us. We are not better than you. Now you will be the best of pastors."

When the Communist comes back on Monday, the pastor says, "Just go ahead and publish what I have done." The publishing does not discredit him. Everyone answers, "We know the story. He has told us himself, and we forgave him."

Soon after this, the pastor is sent to prison, but it is like going to a feast.

What is this? A scene from the life of the Underground Church.

A Christian has been released from prison. He is a farmer. He goes into the fields and prays, "God make me perfect." An inner voice answers, "Would you be ready to return to prison in order to become perfect?" He shrinks back. He has suffered so much. He replies, "Anything else, God, only not this." The inner voice says, "Then do not ask to be perfect."

A long inner struggle follows. In the end the Christian yields. "Make me perfect at whatever cost," he prays. Soon he is re-arrested and put in solitary confinement. He passes a long term there. Beatings, hunger, lack of sun, no reading material. His only pastime is to communicate by Morse code through the wall with his fellow-prisoners. One day he has near him a new prisoner. He asks him his name. It is the same as his own. It is his son. Encouraged by the heroic example of the father, the son has also walked the way of the cross and has also arrived in jail. The father thanks God for the privilege given him to have a confessor of the faith as a son. A remarkable step on the way to perfection.

What is this? An occurrence from the life of the Underground Church, as reported in ~Vestnik Spasenia~

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(The Herald of Salvation), the secret magazine of the Russian Baptists.

~Sovietskaia Bielorussia~ of the 15th of August 1967 said, "Ignorant fanatics of the Utevsk Baptist Evangelical Christian Church have woven their nest in the area... They are determined to convert the population and to establish the rule of the evangelical ideology over the land, to introduce religious instruction of children and the abolishment of anti-religious propaganda. They urge each person to earn their salvation by active recruitment and winning others to Christ."

The Moscow publishing house ~Znanie~ published recently a book by a Communist A. Shamaro, called ~lrreconcilability~. It thunders against the Christians. But at the same time it describes them: "The preachers, the active bearers of religion in all its forms - in churches or sects - don't laugh and don't make jokes. They act. They work day and night. They preach everywhere, at bus-stations and in hospital wards. They seek new men for the parishes or sectarian congregations. They seek them everywhere. They would stop on the streets unknown men whom they saw to have a sad face... Day and night they seek the sheep that have gone astray. "Faith without works is dead," they say. And the first work pleasant to God and which honours him, ... they consider to be "the fishing of men," the attraction of new adherents in church parishes and sectarian groups... If the dirty religious preachers and recruiters endeavour not to miss any occasion to fish a soul among those with whom they work, with whom they live in the same town or village, with whom they meet on the street, they surely do everything to fill with religious faith the heads of their children, and of the children belonging to relatives and acquaintances"

Where are there such faithful pastors? Where are these zealous Christians? We do not meet them often ;n the free world. You have heard again about the Underground Church, as described by her worst enemies.

A letter arrives. The writer introduces himself as a florist. He is a specialist in breeding orchids. He has cultivated new variations of orchids which can grow even in Northern Siberia. As far as from there, but also from many other parts of the country, people come to

copy his catalogue of twenty-seven new kinds of orchids. (By the way, what a coincidence! The New Testament is composed of twenty-seven books. Would it be so that he is the lucky possessor of a New Testament and people come to copy it by handwriting?) He says that the most appreciated are his Amosian orchids, types 8 and 11. I open the Bible at AMO 8:11 and read "Behold, the days come, says the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord."

In this shrewd manner, this brother informs western Christians about their need for Bibles.

Others make it simpler. A Christian begins his letter with the words "Dear Censor, I know that every letter written abroad is censored. But you are also a man created by God, who will stand once before his judgement seat. Allow this letter to pass. It does not harm the state. I simply communicate with my brethren in faith in another country." The letter passed. Some Communist censors are also men with hearts.

A tourist returns from the Soviet Union. She received there various little gifts, among them a towel. The tourist is thoroughly searched when she leaves the U.S.S.R., but nobody pays attention to the towel.

When we get it, we dip it in a chemical solution. And we can read a communication from the Underground Church.

There exists a church which keeps relationship with other churches by methods like this.

Mrs. Ghinzburg is a Soviet writer and a Communist. Notwithstanding, she has been in Soviet prisons some seventeen years. She has been jailed by her own Party comrades. This is not an exceptional case. Communism is not only anti-Christian, or anti-Jewish, or anti-imperialist, it is simply anti-everybody. One Communist hates another Communist. The Communist Kosygin put manacles on the wrists of the Communist Dubcek. Mao hates Kosygin. Kosygin hates Tito. Khrushchev has kept his own wife in prison eight years. It is a religion of hatred. In Party purges, thousands of Communists have been jailed and killed. Mrs. Ghinzburg has been one of the victims.

Released from prison, she wrote a book called ~The

Whirlwind~. She asserts that she still has Communist convictions. Nevertheless, she describes honestly the horrors of Communist prison-camps. Among other things, she says that in the north of Siberia, where the snow never melts, some Christian women prisoners refused to work on Easter Sunday, saying that they had to celebrate the Lord's resurrection. They were punished by being made to stand barefoot on the ice. And the Communist writer adds, "Not one of them fell sick."

It reminds us of what happened I,600 years ago.

Forty Christian officers serving in a Roman legion in Sebaste (Armenia), refused to bring sacrifice to the Roman Emperor as a god. They were stripped naked and made to stand on the ice of the river Kisil-Irmak. On the shore, a fire burned. A warm bath was prepared for

those who would recant. Every hour they were asked if they were ready to renounce their faith, in which case their life would be spared. In the end, one denied the Saviour. At that moment, the Roman centurion who watched the execution, saw forty angels with forty crowns descending from heaven to crown the martyrs. But one of the angels found no head on which to put the crown. The would-be martyr had become a renegade. So, the centurion stripped himself of his clothes and crying, "Angel, I come" ran to the ice. He died, as did the others, for the glory of the Saviour.

Those have died. The sisters in Siberia did not die. But neither was there even one to recant.

This is the Underground Church as described by a Communist writer

The Christian Ketchik had been converted late in his life. He lived on a small pension. His wife did not share his Christian faith.

One day, Ketchik was found at a secret prayer-meeting and compelled to pay, as a fine, his income for two months. He came back from court happy, and told his wife, "Now you see that I was right telling you the great worth of prayer. You did not believe me. But look here - the sentence. The Communists know the value of prayer. Even ill their eyes a prayer has the value of two months" pension. If it is of such high price, from now on I will never miss a prayer-meeting." He was fined three times during one year. He lost his income for half a year. But he learned the truth of what St. Augustine

said: "Prayer is the strength of Christians and the weakness of God."

This is another of the many happenings in the life of the Underground Church

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Monsignor Draganovic was head of the Yugoslavian section at the Vatican. He himself is a Croatian.

But then the Vatican decided to arrive at an understanding with Tito. He had not killed all the Catholics. You just pass over the corpses of the hundreds of thousands dead, forget to mention their innocent death any more, and you sign a concordat. So Monsignor Draganovic, opponent of Communism, had to leave the Vatican. But he continued to work from Germany on behalf of his persecuted brethren.

He foresaw the possibility that he might be kidnapped. Therefore he wrote and deposited in a safe place a statement that he had no intention of returning to Yugoslavia and that he considered invalid any declaration which he might give, if he is ever in Yugoslavia, this being possible only against his will. Monsignor Draganovic was lured to Trieste where allegedly one waited for him to give him more documents and pictures about Tito's crimes. From Trieste he disappeared.

The foreign correspondents in Belgrade were shown afterwards a declaration written by Draganovic in which he declared that he returned to his fatherland of his own choice. The reporters even got photocopies of the document. It was certainly his handwriting. But Monsignor Draganovic was a sophisticated writer. In this declaration the syntax was that of an illiterate. It had been dictated by a Communist officer of little education.

After a few weeks, Draganovic himself appeared before the foreign press and declared that he had decided to come back to Yugoslavia and to stand trial under the charge of having been a "war criminal," though he had never been in the army. Only God knows through what methods of torture and brainwashing he had passed before giving such a declaration.

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The American Government apologized before the North Korean Communists for having intruded into territorial waters, though it had not been true. This has

happened even though the American president had not been beaten by the Communists. Why should we wonder about Draganovic?

This bishop did not resist. Nobody must judge him. Two hundred pounds of flesh under Communist torture are not a man. They have ceased to be a human body. As the root of the figure 4 is plus 2 or minus 2, these pounds of flesh under a Communist whip are a bunch of several possibilities: they can make a hero, a traitor, a weakling.

Christians meet in a wood. The police surround them. Several try to flee, but they are caught by dogs.

Many get short terms of prison, fifteen days, but they have to pay for their board in the hospitable institution which detained them! A heavy burden for a family of poor Soviet citizens.

A Christian lady fights with the policemen. She would not allow her hymnal to be taken away from her. She has had it for forty years and could not replace it She bleeds. The bone of her nose is broken. She also has injuries to her arms. Just visualize the scene. Physical violence endured for possessing a book containing praises to God, while we have hymnals and never sing except in church.

In the U.S.S.R., hundreds of families have their children taken away because they teach them the Christian faith Now, these families understand in a new manner the words of the Lord, "Except ye become as children, ye cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." According to them this means unless you accept to be come sufferers like these children, unless you accept to

lose the one most beloved as they lose their mummies and daddies, there is no place for you in the Kingdom.

This is a new interpretation of the Bible, or rather a return to an old interpretation, and it happens in this world apart, the world of the Underground Church.

Children fight. The teacher says, "Cosmonauts have been in space and have not met God. " A pupil stands up. The child knows that by its Christian witness it may lose father and mother. But she says, "Comrade teacher, did the astronauts have a pure heart? Without it you will never see God on whatever star you arrive. If you have it, you can see God everywhere, even while sitting on a

form in an atheistic school."
In another school, the children are taught that man comes from a monkey. The teacher, suspecting Eve to be a Christian girl, points at her and asks her what she thinks about it. She answers, "I am thankful, comrade teacher, for what you taught us today. I have always asked myself how it is that Communists are so wicked and torture so many innocent men. Now you have given me the explanation. You are from the monkeys."
The children Vania, Pavlik, Andrei, Vera and Sveta were given a rubber doll. When the children played "a prayer-meeting," they were embarrassed by the fact that the knees of the doll could not be bent. So they complained to the teacher that they have an unbelieving doll. "We have learned that every knee must bow before the Name of Jesus." What a lesson for an atheist!
Many children taught in the Underground Church say openly what they think about God, and also what they think about Communists.

Y. I. Kushev stands before a court in Moscow. He has been one of the organizers of a demonstration on a public square against the arrest of Soviet writers. He

had shouted, "Release Dobrovolski. Down with dictatorship."
The prosecutor asks him, "Do you believe in God? - Yes."
Then Anatalovy Krasnov-Levitin takes the stand as witness for the defence. He had brought Kushev to Christ. Doing this he knows that he exposes himself to heavy sufferings. Krasnov-Levitin had already been for seven years in prison for his Orthodox faith. Now he sees his convert in the dock. It is not like bringing somebody to Christ and then rejoicing that he sings dressed in a choir-robe in the church.
Krasnov-Levitin says, "It is under my influence that Kushev asked to be baptized. I was on the square Someone said to me, "They've arrested Kushev." I ran after him, but it was too late. They pushed him into a car and drove off. And now I see him after eight months -here, pale and drawn after his long imprisonment ... he is a man of exceptional integrity ... What happened to him is the direct result of his generosity ... he is very unselfish, always thinking of others, never of himself. A gifted poet ... he has all the making of a

brilliant writer."
The defence asks, "Were you pleased to have him baptized?" Levitin: "Of course I was pleased. What kind of a religious man or writer would I be if I wasn't happy when people come to believe in God? But I am most displeased to see him in court." The defence (which in the Soviet Union also acts as the prosecution): "You think you can baptize a nineteen year old boy without his parents" knowledge?"-"There is a canonical rule that the church is not entitled to refuse baptism to anyone and the Gospels call upon everyone without exception to be baptized."
The lawyer Alski "defending" Kushev: "Levitin

asserted his right to be religious and to propagate religion; but no one has given him the right to subvert minors to religion or to use compulsion. In coming to your verdict, I ask you to keep in mind the need to protect such youngsters from Levitin."
Soon after the trial of Kushev, Levitin was also arrested. A Communist, general-major P. Grigorenko, protested against the injustices. He is an atheist, but Levitin called him "the good Samaritan" who helps, while priests pass by. Grigorenko has been interned in an asylum.

A new fashion appeared in the Russian town of Liubetz. Women wore ribbons with inscriptions like, "May God arise and His enemies be dismayed," "The Most High is alive to help," "May the devils perish before the face of the living God," and so on. These were worn publicly in open defiance of the Communists.
But how could they be produced? Every factory has a political commissar who surveys everything. Well, it so happened that the man of the Secret Police appointed for the textile factory of Liubetz was a secret Christian. He had infiltrated the police in order to help the cause of Christ. His name is Stasiuk. He has been discovered and is in prison now. But he did it.
This is how the Underground Church works.

Some of the Underground Churches, especially those from among the Orthodox, are also politically active. Christians would like not to be busy in politics. But when Communists are busy to meddle in church affairs, when Communist politics jail, and kill millions of

Christians, believers have not much choice. They have to defend themselves. Did not the Scottish Covenanters fight with weapons against bloody King James II?

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In Leningrad a plot to overthrow the Communist regime, headed by brethren of the Orthodox Underground Church has been discovered. Involved in it were sixty intellectuals of high-rank position.

On this occasion we received the explanation how it was that the Soviet press itself contained much data about the persecution and growth of the Underground Church. We can tell the secret now because it has been discovered.

Some Christians made a much bigger sacrifice than that of their liberties and their lives, as martyrs do. They sacrificed for Christ their integrity. They became members of the Communist Party. They tried to arrive at top positions in order to help the Underground Church

Some of them became editors of anti-religious magazines and newspapers. Pretending to oppose the Bible, they published whole chapters of it, followed by a few words of criticism. In this way the Underground Church had pages of the Bible printed by the Communists. For the same reason, they published facts about the persecution.

Hmara was a Ukrainian. His father was a well-to-do farmer; for this "crime" he was deported with his whole family to Siberia, Hmara grew up there with bitterness in his heart and became an anti-social element, a robber. He was put in jail for criminal offences. In jail he met Christians, beings apart, who suffered with shining faces for a Lord about whom they and their lives spoke so beautifully. Overwhelmed by what he saw in them, Hmara told one of them how he had become a robber, and finished with the words, "I am a lost man." The Christian, smiling, asked him, "What is the worth of a ten rouble bill when it has been lost by its owner? Is it

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not still worth ten roubles? Does a diamond ring diminish its value if someone has lost it? So a lost man has the whole value of a man, of a splendid creature of God. God values men even if they are sinners. And he gave

his Son for them." The old story about Jesus followed, told in simplicity with its old effect. Hmara was converted.

In 1964 he finished his term, and was released. He was no longer the old drunkard who beat his wife and children. They saw in him a new man. They, his brothers, his neighbours, were converted. Hmara became a member of the Underground Church

In 1966, he was arrested. The Secret Police had no special motive in arresting him rather than anybody else. He was to be the subject of a new experiment.

The Communists had hands on a leading personality of the Underground Church, whom we will call Brother X. He had resisted all tortures and refused to betray. The Secret Police thought, "What about torturing one of his flock in his presence, telling him that this torture of somebody else, of a beloved brother, would stop only if he disclosed the secrets? Worth trying."

So Hmara was flogged, submitted to all kinds of tortures. He had the lower part of his belly split, his tongue was cut, in order to make a leading pastor become a traitor. This pastor did not betray. And what if Hmara should die? Should a pastor tremble because one of his flock will have his body killed and fall into the hand of the One who made the lilies. Hmara will have the same God on the other side of death.

Brother X told afterwards that, while Hmara was tortured, he did not think so much about Hmara. He knew that he was walking a thorny path towards heaven. But he was appalled by the sight of the sadistic joy on the faces of the torturers. He remembered that for

these, too, Christ has died. And he prayed for them.

The experiment did not succeed. The corpse was returned to the family in order to scare others away from becoming Christians. But its sight produced such an indignation in the population, that the authorities could not prevent the burial from becoming a triumphal march of the Underground Church. Singing Christian songs, masses of Christians and non-Christians took the coffin to the cemetery.

As Communists usually do, they got rid of the hangmen. Those who had tortured, having been ordered to do so, were sentenced. The judge was a woman. She wept hearing of the ordeals; she embraced the children of Hmara. Then she was converted. I, who come from a

Communist country, know that the sentenced hangmen were released soon, and sent to do the same things in another place.

Jesus has been given again to be crucified in the person of Hmara of Kulunda. Two brothers of Hmara are still in jail.

How do Underground Christians think? Aida Skripnikova, the heroine of the Christian youth in the Soviet Union, at the age of twenty-seven, and in prison for the fourth time (her father was shot by the Communists for his faith), writes, "I cannot divide my heart in two, for it all belongs to the Church." (A western Christian would have said, "It belongs to Christ." In the Soviet camp the Church is very much beloved. She has been seen in her splendour. There the words of old have remained true, "Whosoever has God as his father, has the Church as his mother." Western Christians speak about the Church rather as about a mother-in-law.) Skripnikova continues, "Religion is my very heart and to take away my religion would be to tear out my heart."

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I met an Underground Orthodox priest from Russia. I asked him by whom he had been ordained He answered, "We were ten young men decided on entering the ministry. No regular Orthodox bishop would have ordained us, because they can do this only with the approval of the Communist authorities, who put unacceptable conditions. So we went to the tomb of a martyred bishop, and formed a circle round it, holding each other's hand. Two of us held the hands on the tombstone. We gave an oath of faithfulness, which we had found in an ancient book of Church history; "I take on myself scourgings, imprisonment, tortures, reproaches, crosses, blows, tribulations and all temptations of the world, which our Lord and Intercessor and the Universal and Apostolic holy Church took upon themselves and lovingly accepted. So even do I, an unworthy servant of Jesus Christ, with great love and ready will take upon myself all these until the hour of my death." Then we prayed that Jesus might ordain us with His pierced hands. We believe He did."

In my eyes, this ordination was valid.

Two women kneel on the steps of a warehouse in Russia. When asked why, one of them answers, "It is a

former church. It is still sacred ground. When I kneel on the steps, I can hear the priest singing the praise of God in a loud voice. You'll say that here textiles are sold and that there is no priest. I don't believe you. I believe what I hear. I smell the incense. I see the images. The worship continues. Therefore I come every night"

Typical Russian mysticism, you will say. But why do you feel compelled to say something? Is it not better to refrain from any comment? You are on sacred ground. Who can define what is possible and impossible on holy ground?

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I am Romanian, not Russian. My former Lutheran church in Bucharest is now a studio for making movie-pictures. When I walked into the building after its desecration, there could be no shadow of doubt. The angels had not left it.

When the Cathedral St. Sophia was invaded by the troops of Mohammed the Second, the priest interrupted the Liturgy and disappeared behind a door, which has remained closed since then. The Christians then believed that when Constantinople becomes Christian again, this same priest will reappear and continue the Liturgy from the very place where he interrupted it. In the 15th century, the Christians were such children. There are still children who believe that this building which has been changed first into a mosque and then into a museum, will be a church again and that the priest mentioned will serve in it. The childlike minds who believe legends have become few. My mind is among these few.

In Russia there are Christians who wear iron chains under their shirts, day and night, so as never to forget their brethren who are in bonds.

I have brought you on to most holy ground. You have now lived scenes of the Underground Church oppressed by the Communists.

Poor Communists. They do not know the words of Tertullian, "To kill us means to multiply us. The blood of martyrs is the seed for new Christians." (What about sowing this seed also in the West by sharing in the Spirit the sufferings of martyrs?) Neither do the Communists know the words of St. Hilarius, "The Church triumphs when it is oppressed and progresses when it

is despised."

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CHAPTER 2

Does the Underground Church Exist?

When, by publishing ~Tortured for Christ~, ~The Soviet Saints~, ~In God's Underground~ and other books and articles, I made known this wonderful world of Christian martyrdom and heroism, when I told this Church's story which, though real, sounds more fictitious than any novel, the response was huge. I gave up counting the letters of enthusiastic support, after they passed the figure of 300,000.

Christians simply know that they have now been told a truth which had been hidden from them. The human heart knows many things for which it does not need any proof. They knew Communism to be atheistic. They knew it to be a dictatorship

And in the free world, as well, Christians have around them atheists, or men who are practically godless, though they might profess some form of religion. Christians know from their own experience how tyrannical a boss, a husband or a parent can be if he does not fear the Creator. They know the resistance to the terrible pressure of the world in their own hearts. When they read about the fighters of the Underground

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Church who chose to die rather than compromise with the Red Dragon, they saw in their beautiful examples only a magnification under exceptional circumstances of what was best in themselves.

I received letters from some who had passed through prisons or who had worked with me in the Underground Church. A former prisoner wrote: "What you say is as true as the fact that two and two are four." A Romanian Lutheran pastor wrote: "We are whole-heartedly behind you."

But I had interesting letters from people who had quite different backgrounds. One of these came from among the Sikkim, in India, and encouraged us: "Warmed through your most timely message, I cannot help shedding tears for all you, dears. I hope that the message of the Underground Church will prepare God's

children of the free world also to face such hardships in the coming day."

I quote from a letter from Sweden, "I heard you in a church in Stockholm. For many days afterwards, I could think or speak of nothing else than the Underground Church."

A pastor from Bombay states - "My colleagues have already been excited by the publications of your missions and many are telling about them to their own congregations. The demon of acquiescence to the torture of the brethren has suffered a defeat."

An American writes, "Please continue. The common people hear you gladly. Even if you just stir up some of us common people to prayer, you will have a very faithful ministry. Please, give our love to our brothers and sisters in the Communist countries."

Another voice from Scandinavia: "Do not give up. It is true that most of us sleep, but there are also those who suffer because of this laziness. There are 10,000 people

in our congregation. At the most twenty-five come to our large church building on Sunday ... Sometimes, a hymn is being played, without a single person opening his mouth to sing ... I received the message of the Underground Church. It gave me a period of searching of my heart, good for me. I will read again everything which I receive from your mission and lend it to others, as often as I can. The ignorance about the Church in the East seems to be great in our country."

Another letter from India: "The night after reading about the martyrs, I could not sleep. I pray that many people have such sleepless nights and be aroused to prayer." In the same spirit is a letter from France: "The example of the Underground fighters whips us in a welcome manner. In it there is grace for all."

And now a Britisher: "I was not a Christian. I have never been a member of any Church and I have never lived a Christian life. But I read now about today's martyrs and cannot stop weeping. Now I understand the verse,

> When I survey the wondrous cross,
> On which the Prince of Glory died,
> My richest gain I count but loss
> And pour contempt on all my pride."

Innumerable writers show their thankfulness at having been made able for the first time to fulfil the Biblical commandment, "Weep with those who weep." Christians have received one of the finest gifts of the Holy Spirit, that of shedding tears for their suffering brethren.

A New Zealander: "The things which you describe may well be repeated in our land. I have faced this possibility and decided that I am ready to suffer with Jesus, as these beloved ones have done."

The opinion of an Englishman is, "The type of

Christianity practised in the Red Camp is much needed in our country."

An Indian writes: "The only conclusion I am able to draw from the message of the Underground Church is: I wish I had suffered more for Christ." A letter from Nigeria, "You asked me about the best way to combat the Communist threat in my country. You have supplied already the best weapon: the examples of the heroes of the martyr church."

One letter from Ulster: "My congregation is very earthly. My sister and I have always felt contempt towards its cold services and the stale sermons which are quite often preached. The singing in our church is so dead and heartless, that it must be an insult to our Lord. But having read about Christians going to prison for singing Christian songs and continuing to sing like nightingales would do, even when they are in dungeons, I am determined with Christ's strength and guidance to change this, so that the western Church may be as soul-winning as the Underground Church in countries behind the Iron Curtain."

A Californian boy of fifteen writes that he challenged the kids in the junior high school group to give up their candy bars and malts and send money to get Bibles into Russia.

Top leaders of the churches of the free world received our message with love and opened to us their cathedrals to bring there the cry of those tortured for Christ.

But we met also some sceptics. These sceptics had not read a letter which I received by hidden channels from an officer of the Russian Secret Police: "I read all your books and am happy that these things were told. I know that some doubt your assertions. I would recommend to these people to come and sit in a Soviet prison ten years under my command. Then they would know

the truth. The only thing in your book wherewith I do not agree is that you are so mild. I, in your place, would have thundered."

I am in the office of an important personality of the World Council of Churches.

"Your books and lectures have produced a big sensation. I take it for granted that you sincerely believe what you say, but objectively your assertions are untrue. There is no Underground Church. I have visited innumerable times Russia, Romania, and other Communist countries. I never saw the slightest trace of an Underground Church."

I asked, "Have you been also in China and Korea?" "No. My travels did not take me so far. But let us stop at Russia and Romania."

I refused. "No, I will not stop here. Supposing that my assertions are wrong and there is no Underground Church in the Soviet Union and the European satellite countries, you have won no point. Every fourth man is a Chinese. In China, for sure, not one single church is open. One million catholics, it is reported, have been killed. Proportionally, the same number of Protestants. The jails are full. Christians there practise their religion only underground, under the danger of torture and the death penalty. The same holds good for North Korea, Mongolia. ~Nendor~, organ of the Albanian Communist Party, announced officially in November 1968 the closure of all churches. Here you have four countries about which nobody can argue. The Church there can only be underground. It suffers. Instead of debating about Russia, why not organize better help for the Chinese martyr Church?"

He was a ruddy-cheeked man, but his face now became red altogether. He said decidedly, "Let us remain at the European countries." I knew that I had to yield.

Otherwise the discussion would have ceased. He was a bishop and I was not. He had to remain in the right.

"Naive people are easily impressed. And you have a gift. But I am no fool. I looked around well when I was in Russia. There is no Underground Church." I replied, "I have been five years in the West and have also looked around attentively. I never saw a Soviet spy. Would you

say that it would be right for me to assert that there exist no such spy-rings? People who do an underground work never introduce themselves as such."

Now he walked round the room agitated. His new shoes squeaked. I remembered how in prison I had shared one pair of shoes with a former general. Each of us went to the exercises in the yard every second day.

The bishop said "Comparison n'est pas raison." (Comparison is no argument.) Underground Church is an expression with a very precise meaning. We don't live in the times of the catacombs any more. An Underground Church would have to have secret seminaries, secret printing-presses, secret services, Sunday schools and so on. Such things don't go unnoticed."

I had come to him well prepared. I took out from my bag ~Nauka i Religia~ (Science and Religion), the ominous atheistic magazine of the Soviet Union, dated May 1966. In it an article called "Podpole" (Underground) describes how a Christian with the name of Elisha created a secret seminary for young believers. It is deep in the endless Siberian woods, many miles from any house, and at a distance from the last village to which you could pass only through mire and jungle. There was the seminary - two houses. One for men and one for women. The Christians called this seminary ~The Academy in the Forest~. The atheistic magazine mocks the secretary of the organization of Communist youth of that district who had not the slightest idea of the

existence of the seminary. But even the Christians knew about it only if they had something directly to do with the school. The rules of conspiracy were kept perfectly.

"So we have the first sign of a regular Underground Church: secret seminaries."

I took out a book proving the existence of underground printing-presses written by the Soviet author P. Savkin and entitled ~A Meeting in Hiding-Places~. It finishes by describing the arrest of Christians who have organized such a press.

I then produced a Russian New Testament printed secretly within the Soviet Union. So it is much more than a secret printing-press. They have a secret Bible Society.

My brother, who was my opponent said, "What you say seems factual, but is not when you take a closer look. We know about a small Baptist splinter group

which did such things. Now this group has reunited with the official Church. It was a small, transitory thing. You have greatly exaggerated its importance."

I replied, "I am sorry to contradict you. The documents show clearly that The Academy in the Forest is Orthodox. Those arrested because of the printing-press mentioned in Savkin's book, are the Orthodox priest Pletkov and several Orthodox ladies. ~Anglican Digest~, one of the organs of the Episcopalian Church of the U.S.A., says that the Orthodox Underground Church of the Soviet Union has - brace yourself - forty-five million members. The Episcopalian Church of America collaborates in the World Council with the official churches of Russia. It would have no interest in exaggerating the role of the Underground Church.

"~Headway~ of January 1968, a magazine not noted for special sympathy with sectarians, says that the number of underground Baptists is four millions. If you add the

Catholics, the Pentecostals and other groups, it appears that every fourth citizen of the Soviet Union has some ties with Underground Churches. It is not the question of a small Baptist splinter group."

I took out of my bag a pile of articles from the Soviet press and wished to show reports about secret meetings, secret Sunday schools for children. But he did not seem likely to melt like an icicle in the sunshine before my proofs.

Lenin has said that if there were important interests involved in denying that two and two are four, people would deny it. I remembered the hundreds of thousands of letters of support. People write that after having listened to the cry of the martyred Church they wept, they had sleepless nights. Others wish to be comfortable. They wish to sleep.

The bishop shook my hand. He told me, "I sympathize with you. I understand you have suffered much. This makes you emotional. We are used to thinking factually. A man who has passed through pains like yours cannot be objective any more. Facts do not count with you. It is all sentiment."

The door had opened already. The secretary announced the next visitor. When I closed the door behind me, it creaked. My last thought as I left him was, "They should have an oil-can and drop a little oil into the hinges." What thoughts pass sometimes through a human

mind?

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CHAPTER 3

Facts! Only Documented Facts

The episodes of the life of the Underground Church may be beautiful and impressive. But we have to distinguish between beautiful legends and an impressive reality. I leave all my emotions on one side for a time and will give only facts as proved from unchallengeable sources. I cannot be quiet about them, not because of the accidents of my own destiny, which brought me into conflict with Communism, but because I love Jesus. It is written in MTT 24:31 that his angels shall gather his elect from the four winds. If the gospel will not be published in the Communist world, angels will find elect ones only in three winds and the word of the Master will not be fulfilled.

The Church in the Red Camp is persecuted. She needs our help. Therefore the facts of her martyrdom must be known. Even in seminaries you are taught about all kinds of churches, but never about the Underground Church, a Church existing in one third of the world. This anomaly must cease. Its existence, its suffering, its victory must be proclaimed.

~Sovietskaia Moldavia~ of the 11th of June 1968, under

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the heading "There exists no more open and disgusting lie than the Christian religion," describes a secret meeting of Baptists in Chishinau. Children keep an eye on the street, so that no stranger may interfere. Many of those who attend the meeting are young teenagers. The guilty man is Horev, who has passed already several times through prisons. He organizes such meetings, the article says. He spreads secret religious literature. Also charged with having organized a secret prayer-meeting in the woods, is the Christian S. Apostu.

~Pravda~ of the 19th of August 1969 describes a Baptist Underground Church in the town of Mozdok. Believers meet in an apartment with two bedrooms which are full.

The newspaper says, "During the service, people weep." This is one of the distinguishing features of the Underground Church. I don't remember ever seeing a

religious service there without tears being shed. They don't ~enjoy~ their sermons, they suffer them. They share the sufferings of Christ, the sufferings of all who suffer. They weep for those in the West who have lost the precious gift of having a tender heart and the ability to weep with those who are persecuted.

~Pravda~ (don't forget, please, that this word means in Russia "The Truth") describes the secret baptism of three believers. The Christians went to baptism through dark streets, avoiding men. Now, why would they be fools to be baptized secretly if the Soviet Union has religious liberty, as we are told again and again?

The same article in ~Pravda~ calls the fact that Christians teach love towards enemies "treason." The article concludes by reporting the arrest of several Christians, among them a certain Cherviakov charged with having arranged a sort of Bible Summer School for children. Twelve boys and girls have been taught there the word of God. For this crime, Cherviakov works now in bitter

winters in northern Siberia's slave labour camps, knee-deep in snow.

In the French Christian magazine ~Tant qu'il Fait Jour~ of November 1969, a Danish Christian describes his participation at an Underground Church meeting somewhere in the Soviet Union. He had the address of one of its members. Having succeeded in escaping from his hotel one evening, without attracting attention, he met in the comparative obscurity of the outskirts of the town a young girl who asked him in bad German if she could help him. He said the convened password. She asked him to follow her, going before him at a distance of some ten yards and pretending not to know him. She took him to a house where there were boys and girls between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. These did not need to take narcotics for kicks. To follow Jesus on the way of the cross, to worship Him under danger of arrest and death, was thrill enough. Not to attract attention, one single candle illuminated the room. At the beginning nobody spoke. After a long time of silent prayer there followed a whispered Biblical lecture. Then, one after the other, at irregular intervals, the Christians disappeared into the night. But the night was not dark for them. They were the light of dark Russia.

~Zaria Vostoka~, a Caucasian Communist newspaper of March 1969, reports the arrest of Peter Restshuk and

others for having organized a secret printing-press in Suhum.

I can describe such a printing-press, which I have seen myself. Imagine a small state grocery. Trucks discharging goods or taking back those which had remained unsold. Nobody would notice if ballots with paper were discharged or printed material put in boxes were taken out. In the cellar of the house was a well. It was on the outskirts of a primitive town. You don't find running

water everywhere in the Communist Camp. A man was let down into the deep well by a rope. From the side wall of the well, above the level of the water, a tunnel led to a small room in which was the printing-press. Those who worked there had little air. Again and again they had to leave to take a breath. Such printing-presses are discovered. Others take their place. But ~The Herald of Salvation~ has appeared regularly for many years. It is the underground magazine of the Soviet Baptists.

It is not only the Baptists. The Soviet Union is mainly an Orthodox country. ~Sovietskaia Kirghizia~ of the 15th of November 1969 tells of the Orthodox monk Zosima who had been in prison already once for his faith. After having been released, he organized a church in his parlour and held its liturgies there. The church is the house of the Christian. So it was in New Testament times. It would be much more effective in the West, too, rather than the huge buildings which exist and that are sometimes empty as regards men and often empty of Spirit.

The Communists report about this monk that Christians spoke about him in the following terms, "The glory shines upon him," "God has given him a gift of speech like that of the Apostles," "He leads a righteous and blameless life."

The article uses the very expression "Underground Church" and it is the most adequate. I looked up in ~Webster's Dictionary of the English language~ what the word "underground" means, and found it to be a synonym of "secret." The church of monk Zosima was surely secret. Whoever wished to visit it had to have the recommendation of a trusted person and give the promise of silence, just like in the Academy in the Forest. Then you could enter the church from one

street, the exit being in another. (The existence of such a church with two exits has saved my life in Nazi times.) Monk Zosima told the Christians to be as clever as serpents and righteous as doves, and, if asked, not to tell where they had been, but to invent some story.

I myself believe that St. Dominic was not mistaken when he wrote about a saintly hypocrisy. This does not mean that the end justifies the means. Just the contrary, the end to keep personal integrity and purity of heart does in no case justify the ugly means used for this purpose, which are to leave the world terrorized by the Communists without the gospel, which cannot be brought to them without using conspiratorial techniques. Moralists would call this hypocrisy, forgetting that it is immoral to leave the victims of tyrannies without the knowledge of Christ.

Zosima had also an underground workshop for the producing of candles. ~Sovietskaia Kirghizia~ says that many bought his secretly produced candles, which shows that there are places where there are no other possibilities of getting candles, considered as necessary for the religious services by our Orthodox brethren. The newspaper does not say what happened further to monk Zosima. But hundreds of other articles from the Soviet press justify the supposition that he must be in prison again.

More than all this. In the huge Soviet Union there exists a whole district populated only by Christians, a district about which Westerners know nothing. The world first heard about it from the Communist source ~Nauka i Religia~, issue of September 1968. It tells us about large numbers of old-ritual Orthodox who took refuge in an inaccessible district in the far north of Siberia. These Christians deny the whole Soviet reality, as centuries ago Protestants denied the then oppressive

Catholic reality and fled to America. Nauka t Religia says: "They are a mysterious, unbelievable, newly invented world. The women and men do not recognize the anti-Christian power, but they wish a righteous death as a step towards eternal life."

The atheistic magazine also gives several pictures taken in Siberia. Among others, it shows a copy of their Holy Scriptures. It has a great hole in the middle which

has been caused by rats. They had nothing wherewith to replace it.

I myself am not an idolatrous worshipper of facts. Every man sees what he calls "the facts" according to a pre-existent image which hovers in his mind. It is not possible to establish facts, apart from the variety of opinions which arise when they are viewed from different standpoints. But my opponents wished facts. Here they have them.

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CHAPTER 4

Russia's Golgotha

Figures show that more Christians have been suffering persecution during the Communist period than at any time in history. In the Red Camp, those who have the longest road of Calvary behind them are the children of God in the Soviet Union.

The test of the veracity of any report about the state of religion in that country is if the martyrs of today are mentioned.

When Eban, minister of external affairs of Israel, came to Western Germany, his first visit was to Dachau, the place where his co-nationals and co-religionists had been exterminated. Should Christians not learn from Jews how to behave?

I know not of one single case of a Christian church leader who, visiting Russia or any other Communist country, would have gone to place a wreath of flowers on the tomb of a martyr or who has even asked to visit the Christians in jail. Yet ~Bratskii Vestnik~, the organ of the official Baptist Union of U.S.S.R., publishes that a delegation of Swedish Baptist preachers visited the mausoleum of Lenin, the murderer of millions of

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Christians, instead of going to the grave of one of his victims. In Germany, Eban would not have gone to honour the tomb of some Nazi war-criminal. Is not the Christian religion meant to teach a higher level of solidarity with the innocent victims than the Mosaic religion?

As for us, our hearts go out to the martyrs. Not that we pity them. Their chains are of pure gold. Their cross is perfumed. All those whose spiritual senses are alive know it. To Christians, prison has always been a delectable orchard where the sweetest nectar flows. Neither do we give to the sufferings of the martyrs an honour due only to the cross of Christ. Only to this cross apply the words of St. John Chrysostom, "The cross is the will of the Father, the honour of the Son, the joy of the Spirit, the jewel of angels, the assurance of the faithful, the glory of Paul. By the cross we know the gravity of sin and the greatness of God's love towards men." But the true knowledge of the state of Russia's Christianity will enlarge our minds and hearts and will help us to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

Russia! Its writer Tiutchev said, "You cannot comprehend her with your mind, you cannot measure it with any rod. She is an entity apart. You can only believe in Russia." I, from my side, do. I believe that she will yet find peace at the feet of Christ.

We love Russia. Jesus descended into hell. So we descend into Russia's hell. When Brother Andrew, the author of ~God's Smuggler~, made, in Norway, an appeal for Christian workers on behalf of Russia, two hundred volunteered at one meeting. The same thing happens now all over in the free world. Young Christians expose themselves to prison sentences, but they protest against the persecutions in Moscow itself, in public squares and shopping centres. There are now innumerable Christians of the free world who can use of themselves the

words of a Russian underground poet, whose verses circulate in handwriting:

I bend to the head of thy bed;
You, Russia, wash
your tears and pus
with my blood.

The Russian martyrs are no longer alone in their fight.

There are now millions in free countries who weep with those who weep in the Soviet Union because of the closing of their beloved houses of God.

~Pravda~ of the 18th of April 1968 says that in the district of Vologodsk there are now only seventeen

churches, where there existed eight hundred before the Communist take-over. Is this because people have ceased to believe? The answer is given in the same article, "The leaders of sects could increase their influence. Religion is not harmless in our days. It does not breathe its last as some believe, but somehow it has the tendency to go on, to attack."

It is not her fault if she has to attack from the underground, into which she has been driven because of the closure of churches in a time when she is increasing her influence. On the 8th of April 1968 ~Pravda~ reports the closing of 210 churches in the Odessa region.

But how do the churches fare which have remained open? They seem to be all right in Moscow, Leningrad and a few other places visited by foreign tourists. But how about the smaller towns and villages?

A secret communication of the Underground Church tells us that on the 10th of April 1969, during a Baptist religious service in Kopeisk, a group of atheists, led by a policeman, disturbed it. They put bottles of alcoholic beverages on the Communion table and photographed

the people with the bottles. These pictures will be used for atheistic propaganda.

The assertion of the Underground Church is corroborated by official communications. In ~Science and Religion~ of November 1967, the Communists tell what happened in the licensed Baptist Church of the village Batiatitsh. The atheist lecturer Bilchenko entered the church on Sunday, pushed aside the pastor and delivered her blasphemous doctrines. Those who had come to worship had to swallow the praise of godlessness.

Foreigners and church leaders from the West are never present at church services where this kind of thing happens.

The Psalmist loved the house of God. So does every Christian. Next Sunday when you sit comfortably in your pew, remember Russia's churches changed into warehouses, museums, factories and dancing clubs. Out of 50,000 Orthodox churches before the Revolution, only 7,000 remained. Remember the churches who have to bear the mockeries.

But the temple of the Holy Spirit is the Christian himself. Against him the great fight is fought.

A letter signed by 180 young Christians, addressed

to the Soviet Government and other oflicials, has been smuggled out of the U.S.S.R. It is dated the 13th of May 1969, and protests against the arrest of a great number of brethren. The youngest among them, E. Radoslavov, is only 19 years of age. (The oldest Christian prisoner about whom we know is Peter Popov. He is eighty years of age, the age of St. Polycarp, when he was thrown before lions.)

When this group of Baptists were arrested, in the school No. 61, the director Malamud told the children that the Baptists were sentenced because they had sacrificed

to God a girl, by crucifying her. Therefore children and parents have to beware of the Baptists.

This was not the fancy of just one man. The State Publishing House of Leningrad published a book called Children and Religion. In it the Communists reiterate the old lie also used in times ago about the Jews, that Christians teach and practise ritual murder. Allegedly, Christians, to atone for their sins, kill their own children. The Roman persecutors had invented the story centunes ago. Now it has been unburied by the Bolsheviks to frighten the children and hinder them from becoming Christians.

Many Christians are sentenced today in the Soviet Union under the accusation of ritual murder. Just one example: in 1969 the Military Publishing House of Moscow issued a book by F. Dolgich and A. Kurantov, called ~We must not forget~. In it, pastor M. Krivolapov of the village Neftogorsk, district of Karaganda, is said "to have sacrificed to God as a lamb without blemish" the three-year-old boy of the Christian Oslovetz. He allegedly killed the child in the presence of its mother and of all the worshippers. None of the faithful ever tried to hinder the horrible crime. They considered that all this happened by the will of the Holy Spirit. The child is said to have been buried during the night in a forest. The young mother died for grief Such "facts" from Soviet publications are all lies, needless to say. Have Krivolapov and others like him been executed already for an uncommitted murder or are they in a death-row awaiting execution?

Even to be an ~official~ Baptist leader, licensed by the murderous Communist Government, does not necessarily save a person from persecution and years in state prisons.

~Sovietskaia Moldavia~ of the 13th of November 1969,

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describes the trial of such a pastor, Slobodchikov, in Chishinau. He was known in town to have denounced the underground leader Rudenko, who received ten years in jail because of him. Rudenko died as a consequence of the tortures he endured.

So Slobodchikov knew himself to be in good standing with the Communists and imagined he was exempt from danger. He therefore dared to use a microphone at a Baptist wedding and so, as the article puts it, "he committed the darkest of possible crimes." A few words about Christ slipped out of his lips while speaking with the children. The newspaper says that he should have taught them rather about Paul Morozov, a Soviet hero, a child of twelve, whose statue is in one of the parks of Moscow. The heroism of Morozov had consisted in the fact that he had denounced his own father for having taken some weed from the field formerly owned by him, but now the property of the collective farm. The father was sentenced to prison. The boy had been lynched by the population.

Well, Slobodchikov had committed two crimes. He had used a microphone and, instead of eulogizing a lad who had put his father in jail, had said good words about Christ who had been obedient to His parents. So Slobodchikov got two years in prison. In jail he might remember his victim, Rudenko, and repent.

The world press has announced the arrests of the Orthodox Talantov and Krasnov-Levitin. The charge against them is that they had protested at the lack of religious liberty in Russia, the closure of churches and the stupid burning of ikons. You can surely burn an image. But the knowledgeable Orthodox believer has never bowed before it. For him the image is transparent. He looks through the image to the holiness of Jesus, to the purity of Mary, to the courage of the martyrs

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painted on them. Burning images, you burn together with them many superstitious conceptions connected with them. But fire cannot burn those whose pictures have been on the images. Neither can you stamp out the love towards them in the hearts of Christians. The Christian on earth is one with Christ and with the

glorified saints in heaven.
The closing of churches, the jailing of Christians, the taking away of children - all this seems insufficient to Communists. An underground document tells how aged Orthodox nuns Morozova, Gherasimchuk, and Korolenko, had been raped at the monastery of Pochaev.
Tomakova was raped and killed. The writer, Galanski, who published this news in his secret periodical ~Phoenix~ (a mythical bird which resurrects from his ashes, which was used as symbol of the Saviour in the catacombs), went to prison for this.
The Moscow Publishing House issued a book ~Psychosis and Religion~. They say that arguments have failed to convince religious people. Christians must be considered as mentally sick and put into asylums for the insane. We now have brethren and sisters of the faith in strait-jackets and gagged. We know the location in the town Kalinin where this institution is.
All denominations are persecuted. The Lutheran World Federation had forgotten to inform us. We had to read in the novel ~This Happens More Rarely~ by the Communist M. Glinka, that the largest Lutheran Church in Leningrad had been converted into a swimming pool.
~Unirea~ of January 1969 reports about the sentencing of the Catholic Priest Potochniak in Lviv to five years' hard labour. ~Vysti iz Rymu~ of June 1969 announces the death in prison of the Catholic bishop Welyezkowich.

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Other sources say that he is still alive in jail. But in any case, the Catholics, too, are persecuted.
If it would not be for God, the spring of vitality in the Church of the Soviet Union would be unaccountable. It blossoms under persecution. It is the fastest growing Church in Europe.

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CHAPTER 5

How Many Christians are jailed in the Soviet Union?

The only true answer is that nobody knows.
~Free Trade Union News~, the organ of the American

trade unions, a sound proletarian source, says in its issue of April 1968, that fifty-six concentration camps have been identified in the Soviet Union. The total number of prisoners is estimated at 1,150,000.

How many of them suffer for their faith in God? Try to guess the right figure yourself on the basis of the following data:

On the 8th of May 1969, ~Pravda Vostoka~ reports from the town of Angren the sentencing of eight Christians - Friezen, Schmidt, Walla and others. They received between two and five years for having plotted wickedly to spread diseases in the population by three means: taking holy communion from the same cup, being baptized in the same baptistry, and greeting each other with a holy kiss. (The Russian Christians have the biblical habit of kissing each other as often as they meet, and greeting each other with the words, "The peace of God be with you," instead of the ugly and nonsensical

"Hallo" or "Hi" used by the Christians in the West. These are Bible-believing Christians. Could someone tell me where they have found a "Hallo" or "Hi" in the Bible? Did St. Paul greet his brethren like this?)

Well, this is Soviet justice. To go together with others to a swimming pool does not spread diseases: to be baptized with others does. Unholy kisses are immune. Only holy kisses transmit microbes. If you kiss in a holy manner, you may suffer five years in prison.

Only a month later, on the 12th of June 1969, the same newspaper announces the arrest of another fifteen people for their religious belief. These have committed the crime of going from home to home to call people to salvation. Among these fifteen is a certain Rabinchuk together with all his five sons. Stop a little and try to understand the grief of Mrs. Rabinchuk's heart. She lost on one day all the joy of her house.

So twenty-three men sentenced for their faith in the town of Angren during a single month. Twenty-three about whom we happen to know. There may be many more. We have no reason to believe that the anti-Christian terror in Angren would be fiercer than anywhere else. The Soviet Union has 5,092 towns. If in one town twenty-three go to prison for their beliefs in one month, how many Christian prisoners are there? Who knows what happens in the villages about which we never hear anything?

It is naive to reduce the problem of Christian prisoners in Russia to a couple of hundred Baptists. The Baptist prisoners themselves number more than that.

The Baptist Underground Church is not centralised and has no possibility of knowing what happens in the vast Soviet Union. There exist several Baptist underground groups working independently of one another.

In December 1969, the European Baptist Union

announced with great joy that "the Initsiativniki," that is the underground Baptists of the U.S.S.R., had united with the official Church. But in the same month, on the 4th, ~Red Star~, the organ of the Soviet Army, announced the sentencing of a group of Baptist soldiers. Nobody knows how many, to what terms of imprisonment, under what charges. The names are not given. So much is said about them that "the Baptists have a fierce religion and do not pity their children. They do not kill them only because the law of the state does not permit it." In January 1970, after the "reunion" staged especially for foreign delegates, the whole underground activity continued, as well as its denunciation by the Soviet press.

There must be thousands of Baptists in prison. ~Kristeligt Dagbladet~, Copenhagen, of the 4th of March 1970, evaluates them at 10,000.

In my book ~The Soviet Saints~ I have provided many instances of sentencing of Pentecostals. In my hearing before the U.S. Congress Committee, I gave names of persecuted Seventh Day Adventists. Forty Catholic priests from Lithuania signed a protest, dated August 1969, against the sentencing to forced labour of Rev. M. Gylys and Rev. J. Sdepskis. Miss Paskeviciute, a Roman Catholic who had prepared children for their first confession, was also deported to a forced labour camp, where she died of over-exhaustion. But the great bulk of Christian prisoners are the Orthodox, these constituting the majority of the Soviet population.

The official Orthodox Church has a membership of fifty millions, according to the claim made by its delegation at the session of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi. The Orthodox underground is considered to have another forty-five millions. Then there exists the so-called True Orthodox Church and Old Ritual Orthodox. All these give huge numbers of prisoners.

Sometimes we read about them in the Soviet press. Some other news we have from underground documents. But the names of most of the martyrs are known by God alone. Then there are sufferers from all kinds of Christian sects which exist only in the Soviet Union as the Molokans, the Duhobortsi, the Murashevtzi and others.

The Underground Church is the most powerful anti-Communist force in the Soviet Union. It is also the most organized. If the figure of 1,150,000 political prisoners is correct, a big percentage must be the religious opponents, considered by the Communists as political criminals. The Communists themselves say again and again that religion is their No. 1 foe.

How many Christians are in prison in the Soviet Union? Nobody knows. Remember this, however: in one town twenty-three were sentenced during one single month. There are 5,092 towns and there are twelve months in a year.

Perhaps after these grim things we should smile a little, even if it will be a bitter smile.

~Moscow News~, the newspaper in English which appears in the capital of the Soviet Union, says in its issue of the 25th of October 1969, "All religious associations in the country (Baptists, Mennonites, Methodists, Adventists, Molokans, Pentecostals and even Jehovists) have the right freely to observe their rites at specially allotted premises." The newspaper did not say that the premises were prison cells.

Michel Zhidkov, one of the top leaders of the official Baptist Union of U.S.S.R., declared at the European Baptist Congress in August 1969 in Vienna that nobody is persecuted for his faith in his country. Michel Zhidkov's own father spent many years in Siberia because he had dared to believe in Christ contrary to the

orders of the Communist dictators. Not one delegate booed Michel Zhidkov.

The Belgian magazine ~Panorama~ of the 9th of May 1969, publishes that one of the former heads of the Gestapo, Henrik Mueller, sought as a war-criminal, is now leader of Moscow's Communist Secret Police.

He has tortured Christians and Jews in times past in Hitler's name. He does the same job now in the name of Karl Marx's ideals. The important thing for him is to

be able to torture.
  Men like him, and his genuine Communist comrades, do not feel it wrong to commit cruelties, just as we do not feel it cruel to peel potatoes. For Marxists, man is only matter. They do not believe in the existence of soul or spirit. We cut wood, we tear down houses, we hammer nails into walls. It is matter. We have no remorse. So, Communists do not pity their victims. For them, they are matter.

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CHAPTER 6

The Prison Regime

We could describe the regime in Soviet prisons from communications smuggled out by the Underground Church. But these might be considered as biased. So I prefer to allow a Communist to tell the story.
  Under Dubcek, there was a short respite in Czechoslovakia. You could tell some of the truth. At that time a certain Loebl, an old-time Communist, high-ranking official of the Ministry of Foreign Trade told the story how he has been tortured by his own comrades under Novotny, in a time when the Czech Secret Police was led by Russian specialists. Loebl's story, corroborated by writings of other Communists who have passed through the same ordeal (see Arthur London's ~The Confession~ and the book of Mrs. Slanski about her husband being hanged by his own comrades), will give us a picture of what our brethren have to endure in Soviet prisons and will give us the chance of fulfilling the commandment, "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them" (HEB 13:3).
  I quote from the Czech Communist magazine ~Reporter~ of the 15th of May 1968. Loebl writes that

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during the interrogations, which lasted an average of sixteen hours a day, he was not allowed to sit. He had to stand or march sixteen hours a day, day after day. All the time he was hungry. After a fortnight, his feet were swollen, every inch of his body ached at the slightest touch. Sometimes he had to stand for a whole day with

his face to the wall. Even the latrines were of the stand-up type.

Loebl was drugged. So was I. So are Christian prisoners in the Soviet Union. "All of a sudden I would feel as if someone were trying to push his hand into my head. It was a sensation similar to that which one has after laughing-gas has been administered as an anaesthetic ... I heard from other prisoners, who had to do the cleaning at the prison hospitals, that they had found empty bottles of narcotics, which were put into the soup served to prisoners.

"In addition to classical beatings, there were ice-cold showers, the crushing of genitals or the victim's head was wrapped in a wet cloth and when this cloth dried and shrank it caused unbearable pain ... I was no longer a person."

During this short respite in Czechoslovakia we heard what is happening continually in the Soviet camp but remains untold. The Czech Communist newspaper ~Kulturny Zhivot~ of the 31st of May 1968 reads: "The church as a whole has been in prison since 1950 ... In jails, guards fired from the observation towers into the cells. Dogs without muzzles were led into the prison hospital, the inmates were beaten on their heads with horse-whips and sprayed with water from hoses. The investigators yelled, "We do not recognize any humanitarianism." Many of the inmates suffered internal injuries. Some, for example Hermanovsky, a very young man, became insane from the torture. In one of the

transports was also the seventy-five-year-old bishop Vojtassak. They stripped him naked and he had to stand for several hours on the stone floor. When he could not continue the squatting exercises, they yelled at him, "squat, until you spit blood, you ..."

At that time, the late professor of theology, Hromadka, Czech himself, was touring through all the continents for the World Council of Churches telling of religious liberty.

Don't read only the story of these tortures. But feel them as if you are being tortured, because in reality it is you. All Christians are one soul and one heart. They constitute the mystical body of Jesus Christ. When one member suffers, all the members suffer together with him. Never would a mouth say, "I don't care. It's not me, it is the tooth or the stomach which aches." It would

rather say, "I have pains," and all the members would collaborate to evince or ease the pain.

With a hard look in his eyes, with a face which had grown grey from care, a leading personality of the German Lutheran Church warned me: "No point in publicizing such facts. It will only make things to become worse." My hands began to quiver, and I said with vehemence, "It was centuries ago that the Chinese might have refused to rescue a drowning man for fear of antagonizing the water demons. Such a mentality is obsolete in the twentieth century. Crocodiles do not eat men because zoologists have upset them by writing about their voracity, but because it is in their character. Russian Communists began with torturing Christians when I was the age of nine. They will continue to do it, and even grow in ruthlessness, because this is their teaching, not because I protest against the terror and organize relief for those persecuted."

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CHAPTER 7

Red China

An ingenious person has estimated that if a man stood by a roadside and watched the whole people of China walk past him at the rate of one individual per second, more than twenty years would elapse before the last member of the procession went by. But in this huge and steadily increasing crowd, very few would be Christians.

Even before the Communist take-over, there was in China only one Christian to 475 non-Christians. We must be aware of the quantitative insignificance of missionary work. Ten per cent of the population of the world are English-speaking. They have ninety per cent of the preachers and pastors. Only ten per cent of the preachers work among the ninety per cent of those who have committed the sin of being non-English-speaking and belong therefore to the spiritually under-developed peoples. As far as I know, Norway and Northern Ireland are the exceptions, and the missionary effort of churches in other western countries is minimal. From the immeasurable incomes of the churches of the U.S.A. only six per cent is used for charitable and missionary

purposes. We have not fulfilled the great commission, "Go and teach all nations.

In China, the Christians have always been a small minority.

And now the Christians had to face the onslaught of a new religion, "the Mao worship." Giant Mao statues began going up throughout the length and breadth of China. Millions were mesmerized by the method of brainwashing brought to its final perfection.

Many of the influential Christian leaders had not realized the danger of Communism. Some had sympathized with it. Others would confine themselves to what they understood to be a pure Gospel, not mentioning the Communist menace because this would mean becoming involved in politics. But when Communist politicians enter in the sphere of religion, introducing there their poison or persecuting the children of God, politics is forced upon us. It cannot and should not be avoided. Who thinks that he can separate religion from politics, knows neither religion nor politics.

Just mark in your Bible all the parts which have political connotations. You will find they are seventy per cent of Scriptures. The formation of a nation, the freeing of slaves, minute laws regulating state life, rules of judges and kings, prophets expressing their thoughts about big empires and nations surrounding the Jews, "Render to Caesar," "be submissive to authority," but also the description of these authorities as wild beasts in Daniel and Revelation, all these and many other parts of the Bible are political. Christians must speak out on political questions, only without distorting politics with personal greed or national ambitions.

In any case, the Chinese Christians were unprepared for the onslaught. When the Communists took over China, Communism had ruled Russia already thirty

years. Nothing was taught in Chinese churches and seminaries about the experiences and methods of work of the Underground Church. The examples of the Russian martyrs were not known.

No bells ring any more on the mainland of China under Communist occupation. All the churches have been closed and desecrated. You can see on them the inscription, "Hang God," which is also shouted as a

slogan at their parades.

An eye-witness who escaped to Hong Kong reports about the stoning to death of a Christian girl in a Communist slave-labour camp. She was bound hand and foot, and made to kneel in the centre of a circle of people who were commanded to stone her. Those who refused to participate were shot. The eye-witness says that she died with her face shining, like St. Stephen. At least one of those who saw her was led to faith in Christ through that girl who sealed her testimony with her blood.

Five students who were sent out to dig deep holes into which they were then placed, sang Christian hymns as they were buried alive.

~Vart Land~ of the 11th of February 1969 reports how a pastor from the district of Swatow had been dragged through the streets with a dunce's cap on his head. The cap had ugly inscriptions on it. Faithful pastors would be led, with shaved heads, in mocking processions, exposed to revilings. But these pastors continued to gather their flocks in small groups, usually not larger than four to ten people.

Christians have to kneel in the streets. They are spat upon. With some, their hair was cut, leaving them with only a cross as a mark that they are Christians.

The most minute descriptions of the tortures inflicted upon Christians have been given by their Russian comrades, upset against them for a while. A thief whom I

knew in prison had very high moral principles! He told me once that he condemned decidedly and considered as unethical, any theft committed by somebody other than himself. That is how the Russian Communists think. They demand the monopoly of directing the torturing of innocents in the whole world. The Chinese Communists, not being obedient in this, are denounced now for their cruelty, learned in the Soviet Union, by ~Literaturnaia Gazeta~, a Moscow magazine (quoted in ~Russkaia Jizn~ of the 18th of June 1969).

During one torture called "the small criticism," the man is paraded through the street having a dunce's cap on his head, with an inscription on his breast listing the charges against him. This continues for three consecutive days. After parades, he is put to fulfil the dirtiest and heaviest work. He receives food only once a day, but before receiving the food he has to bow ninety times to the earth, before the portrait of Mao.

If this treatment does not re-educate him, then follows the "big criticism." With hands tied behind his back, he has to attend daily meetings for two months. At these meetings his sin of not believing in Mao is exposed. He is ruthlessly beaten and spat upon. After every meeting, again the respectful ninety bows before the picture of Mao.

The third torture is called "airplane." A rod is put upon the man's shoulders. The hands, tied to the back are strung upwards towards this rod, until they are out of joint. In this position he has to bow 180 times before the one who is better than all gods.

During the torture called the "Golden Scale," on the shoulders of the guilty one a heavy desk is placed. On each side of the desk the Red Guards put three bricks. With the bricks on his shoulders, he has to stand at attention before the picture of Mao for two hours. Everv

twenty minutes, a brick is added on each side. In the end he has eighteen bricks to bear. Woe to him if they move. If he bows his knees even a little bit, the whole torture begins again.

Another torture is to shave the heads of Christians and to put ashes on them. So they must stand at attention before the sacred ikon of Mao. No moving is allowed.

A Christian bore all the humiliations, but refused to bow answering again and again, "I know one single thing: there is a God. Apart from this, I know nothing." (He had not read the "God-is-dead" theologians.) He answered again and again, "Do with me whatever you like, but I will not deny my faith." Brave Sung-Fu. We do not know his end.

Christians were obliged to hand over their Scriptures and religious books in order that they should be burned publicly. To some their own hearts told them, others had learned it from church history, that in the early centuries whoever handed a Scripture to the persecutors was expelled from the Church for ever.

Christ is the Word of the living Father. So are the Scriptures. To give the Scriptures to be burned is like giving Christ to be killed. There were Christians who realized the respect due to the written word of God. They hid the Bible. ~Asian News Report~ of March 1968 says: "In Canton, a Christian lady who had hidden her Bible in a pillow was subjected by the Red Guards to

the grossest humiliation. She was stripped naked, smeared all over with honey and made to stand in the fierce sun for many hours."

Parcels from abroad containing Bibles, are returned with a slip stating that its teaching is "against the law and morality of the People's Republic of China."

To possess a Bible is to be in deadly danger. A brother

who had been sent there from the West to help, was taken by a Chinese Christian into his room. He closed the shutters to be sure nobody saw from the outside. Then he removed some boards from the floor. There he kept a Bible and hymnal. When he was sure he was not observed, he would take them out and read them.

The well-known book by the German Christian Rittling, entitled ~Red or Dead~, states that Red Guards are burning men with red-hot pokers. There have been cases of crucifixion. But the same report states that sometimes Communists preferred to be jailed instead of continuing to be torturers of Christians. One of them was overheard saying, "If we cut their tongues and forbid the Christians speech, they love with their hands, with their feet and with their eyes, they love always and everywhere until their last respiration. Does nobody know how to take out the power of love from these stupid Christians? Does nobody know a way to put hands on their Christ?"

CHAPTER 8

The Christian Church at Midnight

A refugee in Hong Kong tells that in a little Christian cell-group of the commune where he was made to engage in forced labour, they would meet together in the very early morning in a basement, before they went to work. If they were not able to meet together, they would join two by two in the early hours, as they walked to work and, on the pretext of being engaged in conversation, they would quietly quote Scripture verses to each other. How well it is for those who have gathered a

treasury from the word of God in their hearts!

This little cell group was discovered by the Communists. The refugee and his friend were put in prison. His friend died there.

Chinese prisons are real hells: dirty, humid, cold and full of insects. It is considered that some forty thousand Protestants are today in prison. The number of Catholics must be higher.

But the dirty cells are the setting for episodes of heavenly beauty.

Two Christians trembled from cold in a cell. Each had a the blanket. One of the Christians noticed how

the other trembled, and the thought shot into his mind, "If that were Christ, would you give him your blanket?" Of course he would. He immediately spread the blanket over his brother.

Next day they were given more blankets.

The Christian prisoners have to pass through brainwashing. Communist indoctrinators visit them regularly while they are sitting in the yard of the prison.

One Christian, when the Communist tried to convert him to his beliefs, wrote on the sand the Chinese characters for righteousness. The Chinese letters are painted rather than written. The ideogram for "righteousness" in Chinese is showing a lamb over the personal pronoun "I." The Christian asked the Communist, "Could you tell me what this character means?" He answered correctly, "Righteousness." Then the Christian pointed to the lamb over the I and quoted from the New Testament, "Behold, the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world," the Lamb of God which covers the sinful "I." The Communist indoctrinator walked out silently. He might have had a Christian background himself.

Two Christians were led towards torture and death. "It is finished now," said one in a whisper. His brother answered, "No, this is not what Jesus said when He suffered. His words were 'It is accomplished.'"

By His cross Jesus redeemed mankind. In order to bring souls to salvation made possible by the Redeemer, others must be ready to bear crosses. Our Chinese brothers and sisters, when enduring water being forced up their noses, pieces of wood put between the knuckles and compressed tightly, severe electric shocks and even

crucifixion, they share the sufferings of Jesus for the salvation of mankind.

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Not only the heroes of faith suffer. China's Church had not only faithful, but also treacherous leaders. No wonder. The first band of apostles had a Judas. These traitors had collaborated with the Communists from the first, leading astray the rank-and-file believers and making 278,000 to sign the Communist manifesto.

Communists love treason, but not the traitor. After having used them, the Reds sent the traitors to sit in prison together with the faithful Christians whom they had denounced. They now have time for reflection in their dirty cell. What is better? Compromise with the tyrants or purity of soul?

Many pastors committed suicide out of fear of betraying secrets of the Underground Church in some moment of weakness. We know also Christian laymen who did the same.

Others went mad, for example, Rev. Beda Tsang, who repeated continually, "Tsang Beda, 47 years of age. Tsang Beda, 47 years of age." He was deprived of sleep until he died.

Some told me, "I could not bear to read your books to the end. They give you sleepless nights." This is just what I aimed at. I wished you to find fellowship with those to whom sleep is denied. I have known a prisoner to whom sleep was denied twenty-five days and nights.

China had 6,000 missionaries before the Communist take-over. Now they have not a single one. Some missionary agencies make big plans for an uncertain future when the doors of China may open. No, I am for breaking down the doors. We cannot allow millions of Chinese to die without the knowledge of Christ in the hope that in a future generation others will die saved. God tore in two the veil in the temple of Jerusalem. Why not tear the Bamboo Curtain? Why not penetrate with the Gospel

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into Red China secretly, risking imprisonment and death? The multitude of missionaries who died in China during the Boxer rebellion and the martyrs of Communist times, now glorified saints in heaven, call us to follow their example.

CHAPTER 9

Romania: A Liberal Communist Country

I had a whole committee of church leaders before me.

"Your fault, Mr. Wurmbrand," said one of them, "is that you mix up things. You put all Communists in the same pot. I admit that things are very bad in Red China (that is what the Chinese Christians have from his side: an admission of the tortures they endure. And what a rich church this interlocutor of mine represented!). Things could be better in Russia, too. But I have just returned from Romania. You cannot contest the full liberty there."

Pleased with himself, he looked around to his colleagues. Then he stretched out his hand towards me: "Would you contest?" From some hands power emanates: none emanated from this.

About Romania, the opinion seems to be unanimous. The Pope, the World Council of Churches, the Bible Society, the Lutheran World Federation, the Baptist Union - what a unity of opinion. In praising the liberty of religion under the Romanian Communists even Pentecostal leaders agree with the Pope.

They all have a virtue which I don't have - candour.

A candour which makes them see geese as swans.

In January 1968, the Pope received the Prime Minister of Romania and the Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Manescu. At that time, some 1,200 Greek Catholic churches had been stolen. They were not given back after this visit. All the Greek Catholic bishops except one had died in prison. ~Unirea~ of June 1969 reports that Romanian Greek Catholic priests and laymen have received a total of five thousand years of imprisonment. All their schools and philanthropical institutions had been confiscated. The Pope shook hands with the murderers of his flock. Blessed is he if he used the opportunity of this visit to call them to Christ.

After this visit, from the five dioceses of the Roman

Catholic Church, the situation continued that only one had a titular bishop. The Roman Catholic bishops had also died under tortures. The one surviving, Marton Aron, is not allowed even to visit his priests.

He could not attend the Council of Bishops in Rome, but when foreigners were gathered for the anniversary of 250 years since the building of a famous monastery, he was led by force and under threat was compelled to be present.

A Western bishop who visited Romania published a report in his diocesan magazine. In his article the word "dinner" occurs six times, the word "luncheon" five times, and once the word "breakfast." (This has nothing to do with the etymology of the word. There has been no fasting. What he ate did not break a time during which he would have fasted.) Not once does the word "martyr" appear. His fellow-bishops had been martyred. Now the Western bishop has eaten at table with their executioner, Dogaru, and he praises the dinners. They had been really good.

There appear in Romania religious and patriotic

magazines, which have only one defect: nobody sees them in Romania. They are for foreign use only. If anyone does not believe this, let him ask at a kiosk in Bucharest for ~Glasul Patriei~ (Voice of Fatherland). He'll not obtain it. But you can get it easily everywhere in the West and so be persuaded what good magazines appear in Romania.

In one issue Father Staniloaie praises greatly the religious liberty in Romania. He himself has been in prison for five years, together with me. He writes under compulsion.

I was interrupted. The one who did so, a short, bald man, with light eyes, told me in all sincerity, "There have been bad things in the past. But Ceaushescu has changed."

I replied, "And where are T. Dumitrache, Iorgu Stavar, Elena Sincai? They were arrested at Christmas 1968 having committed the crime of demonstrating on the street demanding religious liberty. Since then they have disappeared. There exists fears that they may have succumbed to the harsh prison regime." (~Bire~ of the 1st of December 1969.)

The Romanian Communists lie just like the others. They have asked American Baptists and Pentecostalists

to give dollars, for which they will build churches of these denominations. But why give dollars for this? Two-thirds of the Romanian-speaking Baptists, Pentecostalists, Brethren and Adventist Churches have been closed and the buildings confiscated. Why not restore and re-open these?

The aim of Romanian Communists is the same as that of Leninists all over the world: the destruction of religion. ~Romania~ of the 5th of June 1969 announced that Mihai Gere, one of the Communist Party secretaries, speaking at a meeting of the National Council of

"Pioneers," the Red Children organization, said that the political education of the pioneeers was inadequate, because there was insufficient emphasis on atheistic and anti-religious orientation.

Romania a country of religious liberty? The Bible Society is forbidden. The same is true of the Y.M.C.A., the Salvation Army (called there, "Army of the Lord"), the Church of the Nazarenes, and many other organizations.

Nobody is allowed to be a Baptist, or Pentecostalist, or Adventist preacher without the licence of the Government, which is given only if the Communists are sure that you will preach as they permit. Believers' baptisms must be authorized by the Commissioner of the Government. He authorizes an average of twenty-five per cent of the requested baptisms. So there exists the practice of secret baptisms, made during the hours of darkness. Those who are caught are sentenced.

In January 1970 we received the news of the sentencing of the Baptist deacons - Gheorghe Potoc of the village Leasa, Lupei Vasile of the village Bontesti, Popa Ioan from Sic and Florea from Suseni - for the crime of having baptized illegally.

To protect others from being arrested, Christians often turn to self-baptism. They go alone to a river and submerge in the water after having said, "I baptize myself in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost."

From 165 Baptist pastors the licence to preach has been withdrawn. The number of Orthodox monasteries has been reduced from 182 to seventy-four; the number of monks and nuns from 6,097 to around 2,000. There are in Romania 800 Greek Catholic priests who are not allowed to fulfil their vocation because they did not

comply with Communist orders.

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CHAPTER 10

The Absolute Torture

A government cannot be judged only according to what it does now. We must have in view also what it has experimented with, its future purpose and what it is prepared to do. The government of the Soviet Union wages no war. But it has experimented with the nuclear bomb and stockpiles it. So do other governments.

In the same way, whoever wishes to judge the religious situation in Romania must remember that members of its government, or of the Central Committee of the Party in power now include Ceaushescu, Maurer, Manescu and Bodnaras, among others.

Romania was the laboratory for experimenting in the perfect torture which breaks the power of will.

The big innovation of Russian and Chinese Communists has been the application of Pavlov's brain-washing technique to the re-education of prisoners. The results have been astonishing. Remember only what an enormous percentage of American prisoners of war in Korea became collaborators with the Communists. Remember the Bolsheviks like Zinoviev, Kamenev,

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Bukharin, confessing to crimes they had not committed, and pathetically demanding that death sentences should be passed upon them. Remember Cardinal Mindszenty confessing that he had been a spy and a black marketeer.

But Pavlov's method, the result of many experiments on dogs, is not perfect, because men are not like dogs. You can create conditioned reflexes in men, but here you will encounter also resistance to the forming of these reflexes. I myself have been subjected to brainwashing techniques for nearly three years and my brain still remained in a state which the Communists would consider dirty.

To brainwashing you can oppose heartwashing. While the brainwashing indoctrinator talks without

much conviction what is commanded of him, you can repeat to yourself silently but endlessly some short proposition, always the same, in the contrary direction. When the brainwashers said, "Christianity is dead," I repeated to myself again and again, "Christ is alive."

But Romania has been the place of tortures which can break any power of resistance.

Christians could bear beatings on genitals, being strung to ropes, standing on tiptoes for hours, the tying of hands and feet behind the back and hoisting the victim into the air, the slamming of fingers in a door, etc., when these things were done by the Communist foe.

The Romanian Communists invented the torturing of Christians and patriots ~by their fellow-prisoners~. A Communist officer would finish torturing after a couple of hours. With the fellow-prisoners you were in the same cell day and night. This torture never ended. Secondly, from a Communist you did not expect anything else than ordeals. But it was terrible to see a

fellow-Christian, with whom you had taken Communion earlier, or with whom you had worked in a patriotic organization, finding now delight in torturing you in a most refined manner. He has been corrupted and forced to do this by promises that he will be released, by threats, or by having himself first passed through torments in which he proved weak. The refinement of cruelty consisted in the fact that the Christians corrupted by the Reds would first pray with you who were completely unaware that they had become Communist tools, or they would speak about the Gospel and at a certain signal jump at you to inflict terrible ordeals.

When I came out from Romania, I had reservations. I did not say everything that happened in Romanian prisons. I had not witnesses to prove my assertions which would have seemed unbelievable. Therefore I did not describe all the suffering and nightmares. Now I have the testimonies.

Mr. D. Bacu and Ion Cirja, former fellow-prisoners, have published books about the perfect torture by the Communists in our country. Unfortunately, these books are available only in Romanian.

I quote from the book of Mr. Bacu, called ~Piteshti~, which is the name of a Romanian town, with a famous prison. The very name of the town comes from the

Slavic word ~pitka~, which means "torture." What predestination there is in names sometimes! The things which he describes have happened just the same also in other jails. Remember these tortures were practised not by Communists (though under Communist guidance), but Christians tortured Christians, patriots tortured patriots.

"We had to scrub the floors while two or three other prisoners rode on us ... We were obliged to eat like

the swines. We had to kneel, with the hands handcuffed to the back, lapping the hot soup from the dish. At noon, bread was thrown before you, which you had to eat in the same position, using only the mouth. The last crumb had to be gathered from the floor with the lips or tongue. The whole day you had to sit at the bedside with the feet stretched out, with your hands on the knees, head up, looking straight forward without the right to move. After sixteen hours of such torture, you were allowed to sleep, but only on your back, the face upwards, the body perfectly stretched, with the hands over the blanket. If you changed your position you were hit powerfully with a stick by the one who watched.

Sixteen prisoners were put one over another. Under the pressure of this weight, the muscles of the abdomen of the last yielded. He made in the cell what he was not allowed to do in the toilet. He was compelled to cleanse his undertrousers with his tongue. He refused first. His fingers were bruised between two pieces of wood. In the end ... The student A.O. was compelled to fulfil his necessities in his dish, then to receive the food in the same dish and to eat. The student N.V., not succeeding to cut his veins, threw his head in the bucket with hot food, hoping to die. He did not die. (Christians trying to commit suicide! What a nice subject of moral indignation in the free world, from the side of those who eat apple pies!) Some tried to tear up their veins with their teeth.

It was forbidden to hit in the temples, in the region of the heart, in the neck, wherever death might follow. They did not wish physical death ... They made a devilish experiment: the death of the soul,

> putting in its place conditioned reflexes. Not physical, but moral death.
>
> At Easter, they clothed a prisoner in sheets, he having to play the role of Jesus Christ. Out of soap they made a genital organ, which the theological student, the would-be Christ, had to wear on his chest instead of the cross. He had to walk around the room, beaten with sticks - the road to Golgotha. Other Christians had to bow before him, to kiss this genital organ and say, "I bow before your Almightiness." There was only one who did not accept to descend to such blasphemy. He was tortured for hours."

I have told in my book ~In God's Underground~ what happened to an Armenian Catholic priest who was compelled to say the Holy Mass over excrements and urine. I did not venture to say everything then. Now that it has been said by others, I can add: those who compelled him to do this were corrupted fellow-Christians who previously had confessed to him, prayed with him, who had been instructed to play their role perfectly. When he relied on them as being his flock, they tortured him until he became half-mad and did whatever he was commanded. May I add, that after being released from prison, he confessed his sin to another priest. This was reported to the hierarchy and as a result he was excommunicated. I consider that the church leaders of the West who did not move a finger to help us should have been excommunicated instead.

I have known an Adventist farmer whose toes were cut off by his former fellow-Christians, slowly, with intervals. The cutting was done bit by bit and lasted for weeks.

Later on, some of these corrupted Christians had

terrible excesses of remorse. My former fellow-prisoner, Ion Carja, tells the story of one who threw himself head down to the shoulders in a big bucket of faeces and urine. With the dregs on his face, he cried, "Don't wash me. So I wish to remain. What I have on my face is nothing. My soul is dirtier." He had tortured to death his brethren in the faith. I will not tell you how far I went to transpose myself into the situation of this poor,

precious soul, beloved by Christ, which has gone astray. But I could identify myself with him, to feel his dirt as mine, his guilt as mine, to be sure that I am not a little bit better than he. That is what Christ did when He took our guilt upon Himself.

To take upon yourself the sins of others is essential.

Jesus says to His adversaries, "Upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel ..." (MTT 23:35). Now, of one crime the Pharisees were surely not guilty. They had no part in the slaying of Abel. There were neither Jews, nor Pharisees at that time. How can Jesus call them to account for the blood of Abel? Why does Jesus in the same discourse say, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets ..."? (MTT 23:37). Nowhere is it written in the Bible that any prophet had been killed in Jerusalem. Neither does profane history report such a happening.

There is sense in it. Who does not learn to consider the guilt of others, of people completely foreign to him, even people belonging to past generations, as his own, will never be able to grasp deeply as his own the righteousness of somebody else.

If I don't learn to see myself in every other man, if I cannot identify myself with Cain, the murderer of thousands of years ago, and see my hands stained with the blood shed by him, how will I grasp deeply that

Jesus is my real self and that His sacrifice, which also happened a long time ago, is my righteousness, how will I learn this identification with Christ?

It is the daily practice of Christians wherever they meet sin and crime to appropriate them, to feel them as their own.

I was able to show that man when he quietened down that Christ had besmeared Himself with mire, that He allowed Himself to be treated as dung, to expiate even the crime of torturing fellow-Christians. To think that I will be able to see in heaven as a beautiful, glorious saint, clothed in white, the man who had felt this mad impulse to throw himself into excrement, this is really exhilarating.

But let us not deceive ourselves. Cases of remorse and the recovering of Christians who have gone to the extreme of torturing their fellow-Christians, and this in the service of atheists, have been extremely rare. In

ninety-nine per cent of these cases their hearts were hardened for ever. Who knows if there does not exist a point beyond possibility of return?

Just study ~Psychopolitics~, the book of Lavrentii Beria, former Minister of Interior Affairs of the Soviet Union, and you will see how scientifically the Communists have thought all this out.

Lenin had passed nights with Professor Pavlov to learn how his experiments of forming conditioned reflexes in dogs could be applied to men. They can be applied. Men, like dogs, can be brought to what is called in reflexeology, the ultra-paradoxical behaviour, to lick the hand of the one who beats him, and to bite the hand of the one who feeds him. Necessary for this are nervous exhaustion through sleeplessness, lack of food, humiliations, refined tortures, prolonged detention in darkness, or with a blinding light, etc. With

men, one thing more had to be added in order to obtain perfect results. The cruelties must be inflicted by those whom you love most and in whom you trusted.

Those who have not studied Pavlov, and the Soviet policy based on his theories, or have not experienced them personally, will always be a dupe of the Communists. Metropolitan Manuil Lemeshevski of Russia has passed twenty-seven years in prison. After this, he broke down. He became a member of the Soviet-controlled Orthodox hierarchy whose work consists on serving and flattering the regime which had made him to suffer so cruelly.

Monsignor Augustin, the real head of the Roman Catholic Church in Romania has passed through prisons. I was with him. His love and faith shone until a certain moment. Then he cracked. Can the Communists now rely fully on him?

It is interesting to see with what confidence the Romanian Communists have sent Orthodox priests, who have been in jail together with me, who have been beaten, treated with electric shocks, sentenced to long terms, to make their propaganda in the U.S.A. and in France. They travel now around the world praising the liberties under Communism. They don't defect. By the Pavlovian system they have been changed into neurotics with ultra-paradoxical behaviour. Their reaction to the stick is no more abhorrence, but loyalty. They are faithful to those who have beaten them. At a certain stage,

those who are made to drink urine in prison would no more recoil from it, but beg during the night, "Give me more urine." A Romanian Orthodox priest, Anania, who has suffered much in Communist prisons, now in the U.S.A., is loyal to the Red-controlled Patriarchy.

This belongs to the world of madness, but it is a madness scientifically produced and entertained.

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A Western church leader has before him some Russian or Romanian Baptist or Orthodox leader. He is fully assured that this man has many years of Communist prison behind him. How can this Westerner be convinced that this man is not a reliable Christian, but a lackey of Communism? First of all he would have to study reflexeology and Communist psychopolitics. But what Western Church leader has studied Communism? In what seminaries is it taught under this aspect, even though Communism rules one-third of the world?

To whom should we tell that young men trained to become officers of the Secret Police have to desecrate in an obscene manner the image of the Holy Virgin? It makes them ruthless torturers of Christians.

I was told that never will a Western publisher publish such gruesome things, and that Westerners would not read it. Well, we will have to circulate this information in handwriting, as the Bible circulates in handwriting in Russia. But the Christians of the free world must know all these things, and in detail, because it might be their future fate. I will not tailor what I have to say, I will not trim my thought in order to ensure it will be published.

From hundreds of prisoners in Piteshti, some detained there for their Christian beliefs, others for patriotic activities, three succeeded in committing suicide. Two kept their faith undefiled. All the others denied their beliefs, divulged secrets, denounced even their parents, became, in their turn, torturers of other prisoners. The experiment has succeeded.

Ceaushescu and Kosygin and Tito and Ulbricht know now how to do it. Blasts with nuclear power have been made. Today, the big powers only stockpile nuclear bombs. But they are piled with the purpose of using them in the future. The same is true here. A terrific

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experiment has been made in Romania, unequalled in the history of tortures. It was not made only by the late Prime Minister Gheorghiu-Dej, who has died. Ceaushescu, Maurer, Manescu and the rest of the gang collaborated with him. The method was also exported to Red China. Today Romanian Communists wish to trade with the West. They want loans, so they behave themselves for a time. But their character has remained the same. They have never repented of what they have done. They have never given up Leninism. Their aim is still the uprooting of religion. And at the moment which they will consider convenient, the Romanian and other Communists will begin again with the sure methods of Piteshti.

As regards the liberalization in Romania, it is more important to know what Romanians think, not casual visitors who do not know the truth. I will tell the situation in the form of a joke which circulates widely in my country: a tourist calls to a taxi-driver, "Are you free?" He answers, "No, sir, I am a Romanian."

And a second joke. Ceaushescu went to inspect an asylum for madmen. These were instructed to shout "Hurrah"; Ceaushescu was very pleased, but he observed that one of those present did not cheer him. He asked that man why. The man answered, "Comrade Ceaushescu, I am not mad. I am a doctor."

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CHAPTER 11

Beauty Shines at Midnight

A courier of the Christian missions to the Communist world reports: "I saw a wife of a Christian martyr in Romania. He had left many children behind. She looked amazingly young, though she had grown-up boys. I expressed my amazement. She answered, 'Suffering has renewed my youth.'"

Another Christian told him, "We would like an easing of our conditions but not the full ceasing of oppression. We fear that liberty will make us lose our burning love." Yet another, "We, when we think of the cloud of witnesses in the spiritual skies (HEB 12:1), are happy that the part of the sky which is most cloudy is over the Communist countries. We are glad to give the greatest

number of confessors and martyrs."
The Romanian Churches all know what has happened in Piteshti. They know that in the future excess of torture might break them, too. But as long as it has not happened they speak out for the Lord.
An eye-witness at the trial of the Seventh Day Adventist pastor Boian told us what happened. The judge asked Boian, "Do you believe that Jesus will return and

destroy His enemies?" "He surely will." - "Will He destroy me also?" "Without the slightest doubt, if you do not repent." - "Do you regret to have preached illegally?" - "I have done what was pleasing to the Lord. As for you, God will punish you here and in eternity." - "You were not allowed to preach." - "God not only allowed it, but commanded me to preach. Read yourself the order in the Bible. It is in Matthew 28 [MTT 28]."
He was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment. This happened in 1969, in the liberalized Romania of Ceaushescu. I had been in prison with the same Boian in 1964. At that time he was sentenced for only three years. Romania had not been liberalized then!
We have news that important leaders of the Communist Party listen to Christian broadcasting and are greatly impressed by it.
Our brethren in Romania allow themselves jokes. I was at the end of a conference with church leaders belonging to the World Council. Their aim had been to convince me about the liberties in Romania. Some of them were Lutherans and they were not aware that for twenty-five years the Romanian Lutherans were not allowed to publish one issue of a religious magazine. But one of the leaders handed me a letter. It was in Romanian. A Romanian Christian had asked him to smuggle this letter out and give it to me, which he did. In the letter our Romanian brother ridiculed the naivety of this very church leader who had expressed to him his enthusiasm about the huge attendance in the Romanian-speaking Protestant Churches. "Your churches are so over-crowded," he said with excitement. "There are people sitting on the floor, on the windows, standing crammed." He did not wonder why it was so. It is wrong that a church should be over-crowded. The normal thing is to have as many churches as are needed to give

people the opportunity to worship in comfortable conditions. It did not even pass through the mind of this church leader that Christians had walked forty miles and had arrived seven to eight hours before the meeting started to be sure to have a sitting-place.

He would not believe what the writer of the letter had told him that two thirds of the Romanian-speaking Protestant assemblies were closed. It could not be true. The important leader from the West had spoken himself with the butcher Dogaru, head of the Communist Departments of Cults and with the official Baptist leaders. They had assured him that there is full religious liberty. "Should I not believe such a high official and a leader of a Baptist Union?"

God mocked him by making him to bring out the letter in which his own unfitness for his high position in the Church was made clear.

But in this same letter, our brother told us about a meeting of pastors, at which the Commissioner of the Communist Government was present, who complained that since the Red rule the number of believers has increased by three hundred per cent. "We, the authorities, do not wish this to happen, and will give you no increase of liberty." Some official church leaders congratulated the commissioner and assured him that they would obey all the rules of the Communists and do nothing that would bring about a further increase of the number of Christians. In any case, their numbers increase in spite of and not because of these leaders.

The letter finishes by telling us that Jesus had been tempted with words of Scripture. The Christian leaders in Communist countries are also tempted by Bible verses. Foremost among these is ROM 1:3: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers," forgetting that this chapter describes the legitimate ruler. He is a

minister of God for the good and an executor of wrath upon him who does evil. If a ruler rewards evil and punishes good, it is not about him this chapter speaks, and to him we owe rebellion, not subjection.

Ah, and what about those hundred thousand Bibles printed in Romania? I am still waiting for someone to come forward and to assert that some team from the West has counted 100.000 Bibles and has seen to the distribution of 100,000, no more and no less. The

assertion of Communists has been believed. Any cashier who issued a receipt for œ100,000 without having counted them one by one would be fired.

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CHAPTER 12

Persecutions of Christians in Africa

When I wrote ~Tortured for Christ~ and ~The Soviet Saints~ there was still something like an Iron and Bamboo Curtain. Since then, these have ceased to exist. Communism does not begin any more somewhere at the Berlin wall finishing with North Korea. Two countries of Africa, the Sudan and Congo Brazzaville have become avowedly Communistic. Syria has an extreme left pro-Maoist Government. There are Communist guerilla fights in many parts of Africa. Moscow- and Peking-instructed Arab guerillas fight believing that they do it for their national cause. But Communists are not so unselfish as to train guerillas for something which will benefit another ideal than theirs. The Reds have made great advances in Laos, too.

I am sorry that lack of space does not permit me to give details about other European and Asian Communist countries, but I wish to write a few words about Africa.

My heart breaks for the Sudan. Kumm, the founder of the Sudan Interior Mission had written at the beginning of this century, "Was there no Christ of God for

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all these people of Sudan, no Jesus, no life set free from sin and fear? The vast Sudan, 3,000 miles across ... hundreds of languages, all, all non-Christians to this hour. I cannot escape these eyes. Walk away. They follow. Meet them, they watch you still."

He and others worked hard. The souls brought to Christ by them had to seal their faith with blood when the Arabs persecuted them.

Now the Communists rule the country. Twelve of the ministers are members of the Party. The others are sympathizers. The major-general Nimeri, who heads the revolutionary council, has had his military training in

America. Then he earned his reputation in killing non-Arabs in the south. The first thing which the new government did was to enter into friendly relations with the Communist dictatorships in other countries. There are now talks about uniting the Sudan, Libya and Egypt (the latter having become now in reality a Soviet colony) in one state. In it the dominant role will be played by the Communists. The Christians can await a new bloodbath.

The hammer and hoe is now on the flag of Congo-Brazzaville (the sickle is unknown there). At the first governmental rally in Brazzaville, "The Internationale" was sung as the national anthem. Christians still remember the cruelties of the Sambis who had killed a multitude of missionaries and native Christians just a few years ago. Now the murderers rule the country.

Let us remember just a few of the crimes committed by those who rule this part of the Congo today. They opened the chests of living men, tore out their hearts, and ate them. They cut the ears and genitals of native Christians and compelled them afterwards to eat their own organs. They opened forcibly the mouths of Christians and poured benzine into their bellies; afterwards,

they split open the belly and set fire to the benzine. (From the book of Rev. W. Van Straaten, ~Where God Weeps~). Those who committed these crimes were Chinese-, Russian-, Cuban-trained guerillas. They have conquered the leadership of the country now. You shudder when you think what Christians are passing through there.

It would be useful specially for American Christians to think over the fact that in the United States, Communism can rule only under the form of black power, and that such treatments will be applied to American Christians if ever the country falls under Communist rule.

Milton Obote, Prime Minister of Uganda, declared, "We will go left," which means in the historical situation of today, "We will pursue a policy, the ultimate result of which will be the harrassing of Christians." Odinga in Kenya has allowed his house to become a meeting place for all leftist sympathizers, for Communist diplomats, and for all who wanted the victory of the red star. Communist friends gave Odinga money to send students to universities in the red Camp. A coup from his side has

been prevented at the last moment by Kenyatta, as has been prevented that by another Communist-paid adventurer in Lesotho.

Seventy tons of atheist literature are brought into Africa from Red China every month. But it is not only the thoughts of Mao which are used to attract people. The Communists attract youth in Southern Africa by sex demonstrations of black and white nude parties, as a recent trial has shown.

At Nambuanfongo and Luvo, in the Portuguese territories, Communist guerillas trained in China, Cuba and the Soviet Union have bound Christians and others who dared to oppose them, to long boards, and fed them

through rotary saws like trussed-up logs of wood. One of the criminals, describing afterwards the events to a reporter of the Paris newspaper ~Le Monde~, said, with a broad smile, that once the Christians have been bound, "We sawed them lengthwise." Christian women, black and white, were raped before and after they were split open. Some were raped, still alive, with their entrails dragging to the ground. They stuffed the vitals into the mouths of those who had dared to keep their own faith and would not accept cruelty as a religion. Al Venter, a journalist of remarkable objectivity, says in his book ~The Terror Fighters~: "The incidents as described here were not isolated."

Blood and tears - this is the story of Communism everywhere.

CHAPTER 13

The Attitude of the Church of the Free World Towards Communism

In Italy every third man votes for the Communists, in France every fourth man. Even Christians vote unknowingly for those who will torture them when they come to power. Communists are masters of deceit. They assure everyone in the West that they will give religious libery. But this is what Lenin promised also in Russia.

To promise costs nothing. Italy and France have had already the rehearsals of revolution. Christians who sympathize with Communism would do well to ponder the following quotation from ~Voprosi Filosofii~, a Moscow magazine, of January 1968: "From the point of view of Marxism-Leninism, freedom of conscience demands full denial of religion, its definitive defeat and its exclusion from social life."

In the United States, revolutionism has taken an extremely subtle form. Be it enough to quote from ~Do It~, the book of Jerry Rubin, a leftist leader: "We've combined youth, music, sex, drugs and rebellion with treason - and that's a combination hard to beat." This man has been freed by a court of appeal, being

considered as not dangerous. Bombings and killings of policemen and occupation of campus buildings or churches are daily happenings.

Should all this make us become anti-Communist? What will we have gained by this? Hitler was surely an anti-Communist. Notwithstanding, he was a tyrant and a rogue. In my eyes, to be an anti-Communist means just nothing. I am much more interested to know what a man is for than what he is against.

The Communists are men and must be loved.

I am against any compromise with Communism, because it always starts from lies. Niemoeller, at that time vice-chairman of the World Council of Churches, asserted in the Norwegian press, that Communism has made no more martyrs since 1920. The Evangelical Relief Committee for interned persons of the German Lutheran Church and the department of External Affairs of the same, denied in 1969 the existence of Christian prisoners in the Communist camp. This is contrary to obvious evidence. The policy is not to upset the Reds.

All such compromises disarm the Christian fighters who have to oppose Communism. The ~Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate~ No. 3/68 reports on a symposium of church leaders in East Germany. Buievski, foreign secretary of the Moscow Patriarchate, stated there, "The fifty years since the October revolution characterize a new Socialist society as serving peace and love of mankind ... Every Christian must accept the fact that the foundation of the Communist revolution is love of mankind and he must thank God for the revolution."

Those attending swallowed these infamies. Buievski's boss, Khrushchev,had told mankind how many innocent victims were killed by Stalin in this revolution for

which we are called to thank God. Stalin's own daughter gave other facts.

I don't believe in what is usually called anti-Communism, and I refused to join any anti-Communist organization, but neither do I believe in compromising with Communism in the religious or in the political sphere. Every bridge built towards Communism will make it easier for the Reds to cross rivers and oceans to destroy freedom.

Communism is a religion of hatred. I believe in what St. John of the Cross taught, "Where there is no love, put love and love will spring up." I believe that it is right to follow the example of St. Patrick who, after having been held as a slave by the Irish, and treated as slaves were treated at that time, when he escaped to England, prepared himself for a noble mission. Passing over many hindrances, he went back to his former slave-holders and brought them to Christ.

PSA 104:35 is inexactly translated. In Hebrew the words are: "Let the sins (not the sinners) be consumed out of the earth and let the wicked be no more." The Talmud comments: "When the sins disappear, there will be no more sinners."

It is written in PRO 24:29, "Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work." When you tread a flower under your feet, she rewards you by giving you her perfume.

Christians are on the side of people oppressed by the Communists. Their duty is to help them and their churches by providing them with Bibles and Christian literature, by broadcasting to them the Gospel, by sending relief to the innumerable families of Christian martyrs.

Christians are on the side of the Underground Church in Communist countries, not on the side of the

official church leaders there, who have become stooges of the Communists. The Communists are anti-man, something similar to what anti-matter is in the physical realm. If anybody makes friendship with them and

obeys them now, what will be his attitude when the Anti-Christ will appear?

But by helping the Underground Church, we embrace in our love its torturers, too. Our ministry must extend to them. They should also be won for Christ.

St. Patrick won Ireland. We wish to win the Communist world for Christ.

Every missionary work in which the passion of Christ is passionately preached is valuable. But the missionary work in the Communist lands should have the top priority. From the point of view of salvation, all men are equal, not so from the point of view of missionary strategy.

When St. Paul wrote that the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto everyone that believes, to the Jews first and also to the Greeks (ROM 1:16), it was not because the salvation of a Jew would be more precious to God than that of a man of another nation. He speaks here from the point of view of the strategical priority. The most powerful arguments St. Paul had for his assertion that Jesus is Saviour, were the prophecies contained in the ancient Holy Scriptures of the Jews. A Gentile had to think it over well if he should become a Christian or not. To become a Christian could mean that he could be thrown to the wild beasts. Caution would counsel him first to ask some Jewish neighbour if the assertion of St. Paul regarding the contents of the Scriptures was true, he, very often, not having access to them. As a rule the Jews would answer, "No, Jesus has been a deceiver," in this way cancelling all the missionary efforts of the apostle. It was, therefore, of the

utmost importance to preach the Gospel first to the Jews, to those depositories of the sacred scrolls, in order to have an impressive group of Hebrew Christians, who would testify that their prophecies had been fulfilled in the person of Jesus. Then followed the possibility of winning those of other nations.

The same happens now. The salvation of an aboriginal in New Guinea or in South America is as important as that of a Russian. But if the aboriginal in the jungle remains unsaved, he cannot destroy the Church and Christian civilization. If we do not bring salvation to the Communist world, the Communists can destroy these. Don't forget they have piled up the experience of perfect torture. They can wipe out Christianity in a

huge part of the world, as Mohammedanism has wiped it out for centuries in the north of Africa, where in previous times it flourished. Gone will then be all missionary societies which work at spreading the Gospel to the primitives. Gone will be most of the church life in the free world as well.

~The Times~, London, of May 1968 announced that Russian nuclear-power submarines patrol full time the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the U.S.A. They have submarines, containing sixteen missiles each with a range of 2,000 miles, and they are patrolling at only eighty miles distance. Should we answer to the ravages which they can inflict with retaliatory nuclear ravages?

What about winning the crews of such Soviet submarines for Christ? What about winning the Communist world, oppressors and slaves? Once converted, Communists would never destroy our cities, which they will know to be full of churches and believing souls. I understand, surely, by conversion something entirely else than the phenomenon usually called so, which did not stop Christians of different nations from killing each

other with the benediction of their priests and pastors in two world wars. I mean by conversion a new birth, becoming a new creature, embracing all men in the love of God.

This is our attitude towards Communism - neither hatred nor compromise, but soul-winning love.

Will we succeed in winning the Communist world? Surely, under two conditions:

(I) We must be able to answer the questions of the Communists and the objections they raise against our religion. This means a huge intellectual task to which the best heads of the church must dedicate themselves.

(2) We ourselves should live up to the standard of what we teach. We do not demand the impossible. "Be ye perfect," or "Love from all your heart" are commandments which cannot be fulfilled all at once. But it is the same as the conquest of a country in war. You have a strategy for attaining the final aim. And you have daily tactical decisions for each step forward towards the goal. The standards of Jesus are the final end to be attained. Demanded from us is only the daily step forward in this direction. Neither God nor men can ask us more than this. But we will never win the Communist world without such decided steps. Winning the Communist

world for Christ is therefore connected with an urgent Christian revolution in the free world.

Our love extends surely also to the anti-Communists, to whom we show a new constructive way. It extends also to those who compromise. We have full understanding of the religious leaders of the West who do so. Eighty-five per cent of the Orthodox of the world and two-thirds of the European Baptists live in Communist lands. To break relationship with their official leaders means to be left with very little.

But St. Athanasius preferred to remain alone with

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the truth, having against him a whole ecumenical council, which expelled him under no less slanderous accusations than the killing of a bishop and the raping of a virgin. A Pope preferred to lose Britain for his Church than to yield once in the matter of what Christ had taught about divorce. We can understand the Western Church leaders and the accounts they make, but we cannot approve of them. No compromise, but secret Christian mission in the Red camp is our line.

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CHAPTER 14

What we should not do

Through letters or in big rallies with question and answer sessions, I have been asked again and again, "What can we do to help our suffering brethren? What can we do to hinder the spread of Communism in the free world?"

Before answering the question "What can we do?" I would say first what we should not do.

Don't remain asleep. The Ukrainian writer Shevchenko wrote, "It is terrible to fall in prison and chains, but it is much worse to sleep in liberty." Your country and your Church is also a target of world-Communism. They work already at the subversion of your country and they wish to destroy your Church.

Free yourselves from illusions. Don't believe such general vulgar sentences as "right triumphs in the end." The end might be after centuries. Mohammedanism

triumphed over Christianity in northern Africa a thousand years ago, and the situation has not been reversed until now. When Jesus promised that the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church, He relied on the fact that His disciples would not sleep, expecting

victories to fall from heaven. Leave the beautiful looking but false sentence, "God will save us." God does not help two and two make anything else but four. He will never make spiritual sleep and apathy give, as a result, Christian triumph. If we go on as until now, the persecution of Christians will become worse in Communist countries and Communism will expand further. The world in which we live is harsh and unromantic. Nice, hope-inspiring slogans do not prove true.

Do not see the main foe in Communism, without realizing that we are its accomplices. The great hindrance to spreading the Gospel in Communist lands is not the Iron Curtain. We can easily break through that. The hindrance is the Silk Curtain of easy living. I saw in Miami an ocean show. A barefooted man fought with an alligator. He hit him with a stick on his head, he drew him by his tail. The alligator snapped occasionally at him, but never did him any harm. I asked the man, "You seem healthy. You can make your living in some other manner. One day the alligator will bite you and you will be gone." He answered, "Out of the question." Marvelling about his assurance, I asked him if he had an agreement with the alligator. He said, "No, but before every show the alligator is over-fed. An over-fed alligator does not bite." This is the situation of many Christians in the free world. The U.S.A. spends more money on chewing-gum than it gives to missions.

When I preached about these things in the West, many Christians told me, "You are right." This is not enough. Take the decision. What useless or even useful things do you renounce in order to be able to do more for the holy cause?

A church with comfortable pews, with philosophical sermons which you can enjoy, a church without missionary endeavour, but debating trifles, while humanity

is engaged in a race with catastrophe, can become the Judas Iscariot of Christianity. THE CHURCH, the

Bride of Christ, is undefiled, unpolluted. She will never betray. The churches - Roman Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox, Lutheran, Baptist, Pentecostal - are human institutions. They have played many ugly roles in past times. Remember the Inquisition, the anti-Semitism, the connivance with Hitler, the splits in matters in which nobody knows the real truth, the blasphemous heresies. These churches can betray again if they do not watch

Opinions differ about the much-debated Baptist Church in Moscow. Is she genuine or not? Apply the test: on what unevangelised field does it do a missionary work? Well, she has accepted not to do missionary work even within the Soviet Union. A Church without missionary work is no Church. The persecuted Church under the Roman emperors sent missionaries to countries far away. The official Baptist Church in Moscow has no mission - no secret mission, if no open mission is allowed. By this simple fact, she has stepped out of the rank of Churches.

But what about our Churches? Christian missions are on the decrease. There are less Protestant missionaries than ten years ago, and these at the ratio of five women for one man. The population of the world grows with sixty-three millions a year. Only two millions will have a chance of hearing the gospel.

Fight Communism, but don't be arrogant towards it. Communism has not the monopoly of evil. There are shortcomings in Christianity, too. We are forgetful of the needs of the world we are commissioned to save.

Beware of anti-Communist hysteria or bigotry which makes you suspect a Soviet spy in everyone who speaks out for the poor, the hungry, for those who are victims

of racial, national or religious discrimination. Communism thrives on the injustices of our society.

Don't hope that politicians will solve the Communist problem. Churchill wrote, "It is the duty of a civilized world to conquer Russia. The Soviets do not represent Russia. They represent an international concept, entirely foreign and even hostile to what we call civilization." But it was he who had given at Yalta half of Europe into the hands of the Communist butchers. Richard Nixon wrote in ~Reader's Digest~ of September 1961, "The U.S.A. goal must be nothing less than to bring freedom to the Communist world." When he became President

of the United States, he danced with the Communist Prime Minister of Romania, Ceaushescu, on a public square.

I don't think that the Communist threat will be abolished by military means. Neither do I wish it. We don't know much about life after death. But by killing a Communist I might deprive him of all opportunity of being saved. Soldiers are right to kill in legitimate defence of their country, but the aim must always be peace, a peace based on righteousness.

The whole military fight against Communism is dubious. If anyone should have a Vietcong flag in South Vietnam, an American soldier would shoot him. But thousands parade with Vietcong flags in the U.S.A. itself. Nobody bothers them. Americans don't fight Communism in Cuba. They don't fight it at home, but fight it in Vietnam, while making friendship with the Soviets who support the Vietcong. The political and military fight is led without decision to conquer and therefore might not succeed. No hope from this side!

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CHAPTER 15

What Can Be Done?

Humans do not have the habit of committing suicide for another's grief, but that is exactly what we demand from you: "To deny yourself, to die for yourself and to live for Christ, who is in grief and suffers again in his mystical body, to feel every pain of his holy martyrs as your own, to remember those in bonds as bound with them" (HEB 13:3). At this moment you have brothers and sisters kept in chains tied behind their backs, sometimes for weeks, having to lap their food like dogs. You have brethren and sisters in strait-jackets and gagged. At this moment, Mrs. Malozemlova weeps in her home. Seven children have been taken away from her, because she had taught them about God. And her children and the children of the family Sloboda and thousands of others weep, crying desperately, "Mummy, Mummy." They will not see their mothers again. At this moment in Red China Christians have their eyes gouged out, their tongues cut. Die to yourself and live their life.

A Christian, even if he is well-to-do, free, young,

healthy, is like his Master always a Man of Sorrows,

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acquainted with grief (ISA 53:3). This, because like a sponge, he sucks in the sorrows of every innocent and shares them.

Share our griefs, help us to bear our heavy cross, as Simon of Cyrene helped Christ to carry his - this is the appeal of the Underground Church.

You hear again and again in churches, "Crucified under Pontius Pilate." Two thousand years have passed. The stain has not been washed away. Will it not be said once, that Christians in Communist countries suffered persecution, were without a Gospel, that families of Christian martyrs hungered, while Christians of the free world were richer than ever before?

Your riches, even if they are relative, will be a terrible burden for you at the last judgement. So will be, even more than your riches, your comfort, your easy-going, pleasure-loving ways. Unburden yourselves, prepare yourselves for meeting Jesus who will tell you, "I was in jail." You seek His fellowship. Be in jail with Him. It is the only place where you can be with him. He has never said that He will be in cathedrals.

Pray for the Underground Church. Elijah was a man with the same weaknesses as ours, but the fate of a country depended upon the prayers of this one man. Pray, having the same consciousness. The Christians of the Underground in Russia have organized a chain of prayer. They pray uninterruptedly twenty-four hours a day for the Christians in the free world. Do the same. Pray yourself. Organize prayer groups. Ask from your pastor or priest that there should be public prayer for the martyrs in Communist countries at every religious service. An old canon of an ecumenical council says that every liturgy at which the martyrs are not mentioned is not valid. Don't mention only the martyrs of centuries ago. Mention those killed today by the Communists.

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And when you pray, be careful to do it as many prayer-books righteously say, "together with the angels and archangels." Everyone of us has a guardian angel. These angels have wings. Why? Because they wish to be our messengers. We have left them unemployed. Tell your angel: "The Berlin wall and the Iron Curtain are

not too high for you. Fly over them to a Christian in chains, to a mother deprived of her children, to a brother who passes through tortures and tell them that they are not forgotten, that somebody prays for them. Strengthen them in their faith."

Don't simply pray, but agonize in prayer as Epaphroditus [PHP 2:25-30], yes, as Jesus Himself did.

Prevailing prayer is united with regular fasting. The Underground Church of the Soviet Union fasts on Fridays. They fast even in slave labour-camps, where they are hungry the whole week long. The Church Fathers and the great Evangelists believed in fasting. Tertullian wrote a treatise on this subject. St. Polycarp saw in fasting a powerful aid against temptation. Luther, Calvin, Spurgeon, the Catholics until not long ago, all stressed the necessity of fasting.

The thousands of Christians in Red prisons have no Communion Service. Remember them at every Communion. When you hear the words, "This is my body broken for you," remember the body of our Lord broken on Golgotha, but remember also His mystical body, broken by Communists today. Not only His blood was shed, His bride's blood is also shed on many modern Golgothas. Have a tear for those who give their body and blood today. Don't eat the wafer just as cattle eat grass.

When I came to the West, and afterwards to Australasia and Africa, bringing the message of the Underground Church, when my books ~Tortured for Christ~,

~The Soviet Saints~ and ~In God's Underground~ appeared, the response of the Christians was huge. The books were translated in a total of twenty-three languages. And in nineteen countries of the free world, missions to the Communist world were created.

The purpose of these missions which collaborate in an international fellowship is to help the Underground Churches in Communist countries with Bibles and Christian literature, with Gospel broadcasts, with relief for underground pastors and families of Christian martyrs, as well as to spread the Gospel among the revolutionaries in the free world. An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. It is better to prevent Communist revolutions by winning leftish youth for Christ, than to help the persecuted Christians after Communism has won.

Spurgeon said once, "I would be missionary-minded just for selfish reasons. What a joy it will be, when I enter into heaven and find some souls saved through my efforts or prayers or gifts. They will come and say, 'We are here because of your missionary interest and efforts.'"

Not many Christians have this holy selfishness. They make concrete plans for going to church or to a movie, they make concrete preparations for going on vacation. They don't make detailed preparation for their going to heaven.

Every time we take a breath, four souls pass away. Every hour 4,000 men die. It is 100,000 a day. One third of these live under Communist rule prevented by force from hearing the Gospel.

Leave aside discussions regarding post- or pre- or a-millenialism, leave aside debating infant or believers' baptism, apostolic succession, quarrels about the interpretation of the Bible (which was not inspired by God

so as to become subject for debate), leave aside the stupid modern theologies of whatever kind. Theology is sin. It produces only quarrelling. If the carpenter Jesus tried to read the books of Karl Barth, Bultmann, John Robinson and others like them or those of their theological opponents, He would put them aside after the first pages. He would not understand them. They are much too cleverly written. Believe in God, in love, in eternal life and tell the story of Jesus to lost souls.

Don't expect your church leaders to do it. It was rarely they who started it. The Bible Society was started when a girl from a Welsh farm met one faithful pastor. The China Inland Mission was started by an employee in a drug-store. The pioneer of Protestant missions in India was a cobbler, Carey. Moody was a salesman of shoes. Spurgeon never went to college. Up, cobblers, salesmen, men of little culture, men without degrees but with ardent love toward Christ! You do the work! Many pastors and bishops join you. Welcome them when they do. But don't wait. The Lord's work is urgent.

CHAPTER 16

The Need for Literature

~Pravda~ of August 1969 states that one quarter of all the literature produced on the whole earth is produced in the Soviet Union (it has less than one tenth of the world's population).

Christians believe the Word to be God and yet do so little in the matter of literature. The most widely-translated book in the world is no longer the Bible, but Lenin's writings. It has had 968 new translations since 1946, the Bible has had only 887.

The world is simply flooded with the book of Mao Tse Tung.

In the Communist world, Bibles and other Christian literature are very scarce. A Communist book ~Children and Religion~ by Ogrizko, tells how parents in the Soviet Union feed their children with the Word of God. The Party has published ~The Comical Bible~, a book ridiculing the word of God, but which contains excerpts from the Holy Scriptures. The Christians glue paper over all the mocking words, leaving only the Bible verse and feed thus the souls of their children. In the same way they also use other atheistic books.

The underground printing-presses work. Much literature is smuggled in. But how much is this much? There are in the Soviet Union alone some 220 million inhabitants with a hunger for the word of God as it is not known in the West. We have to give them the literature.

We find no difficulty in doing so in the Far East. Literature is flown in by balloons from South Korea.

We have broken also through the Iron Curtain.

Let us listen to what the Communists have to say about this. ~Leningradskaia Pravda~ of the 12th of October 1967, writes about "a stream of religious literature and leaflets directed towards our country." In the article we are told that the literature is spread by Christians who come disguised as tourists. In other articles they complain that it is smuggled into sacks or ballots with different goods imported into the Soviet Union. The Moscow magazine ~Voprosi Filosofii~ No. 6 of 1967 enumerated among the causes of the persistence of

religion in the U.S.S.R., "the distribution of literature ... which comes from abroad." At the big trial of Soviet writers, Galanskov was accused of having met a foreigner, who introduced herself under the nickname Nadia, in the monastery Troitsa Sergheievska. Nadia had brought religious literature from abroad to Galanskov.

You can help so that Communist countries should have Bibles and Christian literature.

In the Chinese town of Chungking, the Bibles, hymnals, prayerbooks, were burned publicly, the Christians being compelled to attend. One of them profited from a moment's inattention of the Red Guards and snatched out of the jar just one page which had not been consumed by fire. He had to act quickly and could not get more than one page. For years, the Underground

Church of this town feeds on this single page of Scripture.

I wondered which page it was. It could have been a page from Genesis or Nehemiah, full of genealogies, which have their importance, but which they would not have understood. I expect to see in heaven the angel of the church in Chungking and to congratulate him for the skill wherewith he directed the hand of that Christian towards the right page. Because after two years of striving, I have succeeded in getting the information as to which page they have.

Every Sunday they read, "On this rock will I build my church; and" neither Mao Tse Tung, nor the burying alive of Christians, nor the gouging out of eyes, nor the cutting of tongues, nor the desecration of church buildings, nor the gates of hell shall prevail against it (MTT 16:18). They have the page with this text. Really something to live on.

But it is a righteous thing to give them more of the Bible so that they might learn new things about the Person who builds the Church, about hell and heaven.

CHAPTER 17

Broadcasting the Gospel

The Communist customs officers cannot prevent streams of Christian literature from entering Communist countries, but they still make the work difficult and dangerous. Secret printing-presses are sometimes discovered, and this leads to arrests.

The Communists have no customs officers in the air. The radio-waves arrive. In Red China death sentences have been passed upon some for listening to Gospel broadcasts from abroad. But still they listen. In the Soviet Union they have jamming stations, but these are very expensive. The territory of U.S.S.R. is huge. There are large portions of this country where the radio is well heard. In the European satellite countries the messages are clearly heard.

The radio work is most effective. We know about Communist members of governments and diplomats who listen regularly to them. We know cases of conversion among them as the result of this broadcasting of the Gospel.

A young Chinese smuggled out a letter in which he said that he had been an atheist. But once he saw in a movie-picture a lady wearing a cross. He inquired what

the cross meant and was told that it is the symbol of Christianity. But he could not find out what Christianity meant. There were no Christians in his area. By chance, he tuned into a Gospel transmission. He listened to one broadcast after the other and began to love Christ. He asked, "Does God accept somebody from Red China? You have mentioned the church several times in your sermons. But with us it is so, that God is in heaven, we are in Red China, and we have no church in between. All the churches have been closed. How can we enter heaven?" The poor lad did not know that he has many churches. The whole Church universal is his. Then he puts a second question, "How should I pray? You always finish by prayer. I don't know how to pray." But then he says what he imagines prayer to be, and gives the most beautiful definition of it which, to my knowledge, has ever been given - "Prayer means to speak the whole day so as to be able to say after every talk, 'Amen.'" I think we must all learn from this definition. You cannot well say "Amen" after having

quarrelled with your wife.

We possess letters from Russia of men converted by radio transmissions, though they have never seen a Bible in their lives.

New congregations are created in this manner. I quote a letter from Romania: "We wish you to know that in the last three months over fifty souls in our village were converted, listening to the radio. Among them the wife of the head of the police. In this village there were no believers before. Now they all listen to the word of God. Work. Work as much as possible and God will reward you."

The Missions to the Communist world broadcast the Gospel in the languages used in the various Communist countries.

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CHAPTER 18

Help to Underground Pastors and Families of Christian Martyrs

The Christians in Communist countries are poor, they have to pay heavy fines. They have difficulty in supporting their pastors. Here help is required.

Innumerable Christians are in Communist prisons. Marchenko, a prisoner in a Soviet camp, has written the renowned book, ~My Testimony~. In it he says that in nearly every cell he met some believers. How many prison cells does the Soviet Union have? And what about other Red countries? The families of martyrs and confessors of the faith are hungry.

It is not easy to help them. Not so much because of the Communists watching. We have learned to work so that they do not know what we do. But we find resistance within the families of Christian martyrs themselves. One sister whose husband is in prison said, "Why do you wish to deprive us of the privilege to bear a heavy cross? Why do you wish to separate us from our loveliest friend, sister poverty?" Russian Christians have inquired if they could not help their Western brethren financially. Seeing that in the fifty years since

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Communist dominion the Western Christians have done nothing to help the sufferers, our Russian brothers who could not imagine that we are indifferent to their fate, draw the conclusion that we are very poor in the West. They thought about helping us.

We overcome the resistance and help the families. From one we received a beautiful letter of thanks. She is the mother of nine children. Her husband is sentenced to ten years: "I thank God for the privilege he has given me to bear a chip of the cross of Christ. My small children ask me when Daddy will return. But Daddy has put his life at stake for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. When the Communists took my husband, they mocked us saying, 'Now let your God come and help you. You will see that you will starve.' But love has a long arm. It stretched us a piece of bread from far away and now the Communists are ashamed."

We have succeeded in bringing food and clothes into Siberian slave-labour camps and in getting letters of thankfulness from there.

"I thank God for the privilege to bear a chip of the cross of Christ." Only a chip, so much is it to have a husband in prison and nine children to care for. I have heard somebody complaining in the West about a heavy cross that he had to bear with having to buy a cheaper car rather than a more luxurious one.

Those who have eaten excrement and drunk urine because they believed in the same Lord, have the right to receive from the Christians of the free world a piece of bread. Even a piece of chocolate would not be too much for them.

~The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles~, an early Christian book, says, "A prophet who asks money is a false prophet." This applies also to missionary organizations. I personally would never give to an organization

which demands money. Its cause must be so luminous that people should ask the organization to accept its gifts.

It is ugly for preachers to speak about the verse, "set your affections on things above," and then to fuss because the mission income is not high enough. It is higher than that of the first band of apostles.

My duty as a teacher in Israel is only to convey to you what has been always and everywhere the doctrine of Christianity in this matter. St. Ambrose said, "If my

brother hungers and I do not help him, I am a thief. And if my brother dies of hunger, I am a murderer, too." I have seen many Christian prisoners literally starving from hunger.

The words, "I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (PSA 37:25), hold true only where a David is king. Under the Communists, children of righteous fighters for the faith eat sometimes from the garbage. They have to be helped. Ask your church to do it, by whatever means she will know best.

~Soviet Lithuania~ of the 4th of June 1967 stated that the Easter collection at the Kaunas Orthodox Cathedral was 1,274 roubles. This is approximately the salary for a year of a Soviet factory-worker. In the West we are far from this. ~Questions of Scientific Atheism~ of May 1968, tells that in a village in which, according to their description, the average church attendance is about 300 persons, the income of the church has doubled in one year. The latest report about yearly income was of 23,000 roubles. Thus a churchgoer in an official village church gives on the average eighty roubles per year, which is one and a half times the monthly salary of a worker on a collective farm.

I don't ask you for money for a certain mission. I

don't ask you for money at all. I have described to you the Christian life of the underground fighters. It is of such a beauty that you have to go immediately to your pastors and friends to find out how you and your church can have the privilege of sharing the sufferings and future glory of the elect among the elect.

CHAPTER 19

Answer to the Most Frequent Criticisms

We don't pay much attention to criticisms. We have found that, as a rule, those who criticize our activity never care to help the persecuted Christians. Those who help never criticize. I, personally, do not care what

the whole world thinks of me. It did not think highly of Jesus.

But I wish to answer some sincere doubts about our work.

There are some Christians who ask, "Don't you endanger even more the persecuted Christians by your secret work of smuggling in Bibles and relief, by supporting the whole underground movement?"

We, surely, could endanger them. Did Jesus endanger men by exhorting them to become His disciples? He says, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves" (MTT 10:16). This surely was to endanger lives. The apostles would not have died a premature martyr-death if Jesus had not called them to such a risky task. St. Paul endangered the life of his converts. Listening to him, they arrived to be thrown before wild beasts. Every Christian soldier must be ready to die for his

Lord. Every officer in the Christian army must be ready not only to die, but also to send others to death for the good cause. If the Reformers had not preached their doctrines, thousands would not have been burnt at the stake. Neither would Catholics have died, killed by the Protestants, if the Pope had not taught them to withstand what he considered to be a heresy. If you are convinced that your cause is the cause of Christ, it is right to give your own life and to teach others to do the same.

In the end, it is very dangerous to feed a starving man. You might spoil his stomach. Should we, therefore, not give food to the hungry? No, they should be fed, but with caution. So, the underground work must be done, though it is dangerous, but avoiding blunders and wrong methods.

A Hungarian Christian wrote an article against me, in which he says that by my activity I am fixing the noose of the rope wherewith the Christians in Communist countries will be hanged. This was in 1967. Time enough. Not only was not a single Christian in Hungary hanged or even imprisoned because of our activity, the contrary happened. At this moment, not a single Protestant Christian is in prison for his faith in Hungary. Neither was anyone jailed because of our activity in any other Communist country. We know how to work cautiously.

If the figures of those arrested in the Communist camp after publishing my book had been increased, the

guilt would have been put on me, but since I published it the Bible Society received the freedom to print Bibles in some Communist countries. The merit is not attributed to me!

I am criticized as being an anti-Communist. I will answer with a word of Spurgeon, "We cannot do otherwise than contend with those who contend with God."

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Lenin wrote: "All modern religion and churches are agencies of bourgeois reaction, which serve to protect exploitation and benumb the working class." The Leninists desire the destruction of the Christian religion. This is their plan and it must be defeated. We have to fight against Communism. Christianity has always fought against its foes. Never has the Church canonised any leader who has compromised with the enemy, only those who stood up against him. Those whom we call saints, far from bearing tyrannies quietly, went rather in the opposite direction. The gentle St. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote, "The Christian glorifies in the death of an infidel, because Christ is thus glorified," and Anselm of Canterbury, referring to the crusaders, said, "Our men, returning in victories and bearing many heads, fixed upon spikes, furnished a joyful spectacle to the people of God." If there is a general consensus in Christianity to call men who have spoken like this about the adversaries of Christianity, "saints," why should I criticize who say much less? My message is: "Expose the evil of Communism, defeat it, but glory in converting the Communists, not in having killed them."

Everyone honours Dietrich Bonhoeffer, martyred for Christ, who justified under the Nazis the murder of the tyrant. Why then should I be criticized as deploying an unjustified anti-Communism because I exhort Christians, "Win the tyrants for Christ."

Dear brethren criticized me for not preaching the pure Gospel.

My Gospel is full of the tears and blood and spittle and excrements and urine which sully the faces of the saints of God in Communist countries. It is a dirty Gospel. A Gospel which hides these ferocities committed against Christians, which does not call us to

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fight for freedom and righteousness, to sympathy and

sharing with sufferers, is not a Gospel at all.

Neither do I know any one important preacher in the history of the Church who should have preached the so-called pure Gospel.

John Chrysostom has also been charged with not sticking to the Gospel, because he said in his sermons that the Archbishop Theophilus of Alexandria was guilty of simony, of misappropriating funds and practising brutality. This saint raged against degenerate Eudoxia, Empress of Byzantium, calling her a second Jezebel. He had to go into exile for this. Was he wrong? Was St. Ambrose wrong not to allow the king to enter the church when he returned from an unjust war?

Why did Charles Spurgeon not stick to the pure Gospel? It was the time of the war of secession. And Spurgeon spoke out on the side of the Northern Confederation which fought for the abolishment of slavery in the Southern States. His books, yes, he himself, was burned in effigy in the Southern States by his fellow-Baptists. He did not restrict himself to preach only the personal salvation of souls.

From these preachers I have learned which is the true Gospel.

I am criticized for my strong attitude against the Orthodox Metropolitans and Protestant leaders in the Red camp who flatter the Communists.

How many truths exist? When Hitler invaded Norway, the Lutheran Archbishop Berggrav refused any compromise with him. He preferred to become a prisoner. Nearly unanimously, his pastors followed his example. This was, probably, right. But Romania, Bulgaria, the Baltic countries, Hungary and Czechoslovakia have been invaded by Soviets. I expect the world church leaders to tell me that Berggrav was wrong. Then I

would understand. They greatly honour his attitude as right, but at the same time put in the leadership of the World Council of Churches the bishops and Protestant leaders of Russia, the Balticum, of Romania, Czechoslovakia and so on, who flatter the oppressors of their native countries.

Pope Pius XII and the leaders of the German Lutheran Church of that time, are criticized for not having taken up the defence of the Jews against Hitler. But the Jews were driven out of Poland and are discriminated against in the Soviet Union today. The very

existence of the state of Israel is put under a question mark because of the Soviets. Do the official leaders of the churches in the Soviet Union take up the defence of the chosen people? Has the World Council of Churches done it?

Hitler had invaded Czechoslovakia. It was a shame that the church leaders of Germany of that time had not protested. With this everyone would agree. But Czechoslovakia has been invaded again by the Soviets. Did the official church leaders of the Soviet Union protest? The underground fighter, Krasnov-Levitin, protested publicly and was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for this. Who represents the conscience of Christ in Russia today?

Others tell me, "Whatever you say about Communism might be right. But we should first put in order Christianity's house." It is like saying that every policeman must first be born again and become a saint before he gets a right to fight the gangsters. Christianity may have many shortcomings and failures. But it has the truth about Christ and about eternal life. The Church has a divine and human side. The divine side is constituted by the word of God, the sacraments, the fellowship with angels and the glorified saints, the Lordship of Christ,

the beautiful examples of those who follow him in truth The Church has also a human side. It is constituted of sinners who can and do commit bad deeds. Communism has no divine side. It is not even human. It is anti-human. Communists don't persecute only Christians, they just hate. They hate each other. The Communist Kosygin hates the Communist Dubcek, the Communist Mao hates the Communist Kosygin, comrade Brezhnev hates comrade Tito, Stalin killed his nearest friends and Khrushchev kept his own wife in prison for eight years. In opposing Communism the Church is right, even as the unconverted policeman is right when he fights a gangster.

Christians should simultaneously put their own house in order and fight Communism.

"But," I am told, "there is surely something valuable in the work of the legal Churches. The activity of your mission meant a death-blow to the legal work." It did not. On the contrary, we helped it. Pastor Paul Hansson, secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, declared in ~Kristeligt Dagbladet~, Copenhagen, that they could

help legally the official churches in Communist countries with four and a half million crowns, more than in previous years.

I will mention one more objection: "The church has its leaders, its Presidents of Protestant Unions, moderators or bishops. We have to listen to them. Some of these do not agree with you. Should we not rather listen to our bishops than to you who are not a bishop or hold no other high position in the church hierarchy?"

My answer might seem histrionic but it will be, "Ask that a bishopric should be given to me." How is it that Wurmbrand who has brought the message of the suffering Church in one third of the world has not yet been made a bishop or leader of some other Protestant

denomination? That he does not belong to that denomination does not count. St. Ambrosius was made bishop before even being baptized. Neither did he have a D.D. He had only a commission from God for the Church. It is not my fault that the Underground Church is not considered and that its messengers are not received in high places. Milan Haimovici, the greatest hero of the Christian fight in Romania, a man who has suffered beyond human imagination and always maintained the highest standards, though an ordained Lutheran pastor and one of the greatest preachers in Romania, works now as a caretaker of a church in Western Germany. They had no place for him. He does not mind it. Violets enjoy the shadow. Neither do I care for high positions in the church. But I had to give this answer for those to whom church authority is everything. Not every Church leader is a child of God.

When two Church leaders wrote circular letters against me, one in U.S.A., the other in West Germany, I remembered that a fourteenth-century Catholic historian wrote about Wycliff: "That instrument of the devil, that enemy of the Church, that author of confusion to the common people, that image of hypocrites, that idol of heretics, that author of schisms, that sore of hatred, that coiner of lies, being struck with a horrible judgement of God, was smitten with palsy and continued to live till St. Sylvester's day, on which he breathed out his malicious spirit into the abodes of darkness." Excommunicated after death, Wycliff's skeleton has been exhumed and thrown away.

There are many faithful bishops and other Church

leaders who have supported us.
To summarise, all the well-meant criticisms have two common denominators: critics consider Church life as they know it in the free world as being the normal. The

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Underground Church with its devices, nicknames, passwords, meetings in the wood, non-submission to state laws, infiltration into Communist ranks, they see as a Church gone wrong instead of seeing it as an entirely new phenomenon. It is the Church of the catacombs adjusted to conditions of the twentieth century, which has a perfected police, but also a perfected conspiratorial technique.
Others cannot find a label for me. They do not know in what frame to put me. I enter in no fixed set of rules. Every order of monks has its rules. So has any Protestant missionary society. But according to what rules did St. Francis Xavier, the first missionary to India, work, or, later on Hudson Taylor, Carey, Morrison, Patton, Livingstone? They established rules for those who would come after them. Until then they were rules for themselves, as it is always with pioneers, with spearheads. I do not compare myself with these great personalities, but on my modest level I am also a forerunner, the first to bring to the Western Evangelicals the message of the Underground Church. Neither did I have a predecessor to set me rules when I started the secret missionary work in the Soviet Army. I can be judged according to nobody's rules. If your country should be taken over by the Communists and you are forced to work underground, you will have to do it according to the rules learned from me.
There have been personal attacks against me - "madman, demon-possessed, Nazi, Fascist, anti-Semite, Communist, Anarchist, Jesuit agent, illiterate, fake, racketeer, etc." The slanders have never amounted to what has been said against those who shine today as beautiful stars in the spiritual sky. If these had to endure much worse than me, why should I, an unworthy servant of the Lord, defend my person?

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But I do defend the cause of the Underground Church. What I assert about its sufferings and victories is unchallengeable. This fact makes opponents try to

side-track Christians from the message to the messenger. They would like people to discuss, "Who is Wurmbrand?" instead of "What is the Underground Church?" They will not succeed. The cause of the Underground Church has already become the cause of faithful Christians all over the free world. In one country of the free world after another, missions are formed to support it. Christ is on our side. We will win. Making no apologies to the critics, we go brazenly ahead, burning the candles at both ends.

I know very well that I am one-sided. There exists a holy one-sidedness. When the Jews were burned by the Nazis, a man had to be one-sided. It would have been wrong to put the questions: But have Jews never sinned against the German people? Have not some Jews done very wrong things in the time of the Weimar Republic? Was it absolutely wrong for Hitler to rebel, asking for more vital space when Britain had a world-wide empire, and Russia had a huge territory badly managed, and so on? Men, even children were burned. They had to be defended. All other things did not count. One-sidedness was the right attitude.

The Underground Church is not ideal. It has its sins, as has the legal Church in Communist countries. But it is persecuted. This obliges me to be on the side of the underground fighters. The Talmud says: "If an unrighteous man persecutes a righteous, God is on the side of the persecuted righteous. If a righteous man persecutes an unrighteous, God is on the side of the unrighteous. God is always on the side of the persecuted."

But taking decidedly the part of only one side, I don't

have the deceptive certitudes which usually accompany one-sidedness. There exists no face without a back, no reality without a counter-reality. There is much to say for dialogue with the Communists. Contacts with the official Church are also very useful. And I ask all those in position for these to continue, but never forgetting the brethren in chains.

CHAPTER 20

My Last Word

Many Christians of the free world, if they had lived in Noah's time, would have said, "There are no signs of rain. It's just ridiculous to speak about the menace of a flood. Noah must be a right-wing crank who sees sinners under every bed. Why does he not keep to true religion, to the pure Gospel, instead of predicting an approaching geological catastrophe which is not his business? Geology does not belong to religion, neither floods, but only the personal, individual salvation through the blood of the Messiah who will come one day. In any case, there is no hurry." If they had lived in Noah's time they would have perished with the ungodly. The exceptions would have been few.

There are surely more signs of a Communist menace today than signs of a flood when Noah began to construct his ark. As for Noah's Gospel, he had it directly from God. God must have some idea as to which is the pure Gospel. And He instructs a teacher of righteousness not to stress for a while personal salvation, but to speak about geology and to make weather-predictions.

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This because the catastrophe to follow was to be a punishment from God, just as is Communism.

We have more signs of approaching catastrophe than in Noah's time. John Kennedy has been killed by Moscow-trained Oswald, Robert Kennedy by Sirhan, who declared in his diary that Communism is the best system. There is hardly a day in the U.S.A. without Communist-inspired blasts, killing of policemen, riots, occupation of university buildings.

Gus Hall, the secretary of the Communist Party of America, then a little man, said some twenty years ago, "I dream of the hour when the last congressman is strangled to death on the guts of the last preacher. And since the Christians seem to love to speak about the blood, why not give them a little of it? Slit the throats of their children and drag them over the mourner's bench and the pulpit and allow them to drown in their own blood and see whether they enjoy singing their hymns." (Quoted from the Hearing of the U.S.A. Senate Sub-Committee 86th Congress, p. 798). But Hall has worked hard since and he has arrived to say that

Communists and liberal Christians share so many goals, that they can and should work together for the same thing. This same goal cannot be the victory of Christianity. Hall would not work for that. Then which is it? Should theologians and pastors have arrived to prepare unconsciously the bloodbath against their brethren? Communists are now sometimes guest speakers at the principal services of churches in the U.S.A.

The influence of Communism in Italy and France has been already mentioned.

In Britain their influence is great in the trade unions. But not only there. The ~Liverpool Daily Post~ of the 29th of May 1968 has an admission of Sir Hugh Greene, then the Director-General of the British Broadcasting

Corporation, that he has Communists on his staff, "but they are none of his business." They are the business of the listeners who can be brain-washed by disguised pro-Communism.

In all Arab countries, the trade-unions, the universities, the army, the police, and the Moslem brotherhoods are infiltrated by the Communists.

According to ~A.B.N.~ of May 1969, the Kremlin finances its world-wide offensive as follows: Brazil, 40 millions a year, Argentina 30, Mexico 24, Chile 14, India 30, Indonesia 300. Apart from India, only Kerala gets a part of 66 millions, West Germany 60, Turkey 10 and so on.

In Japan, professors have committed suicide because of the Communist-inspired turmoil on the campuses, during which they have been compelled to confess publicly their crimes, exactly as in China.

We have shown the clouds of a near tempest in Africa.

By 1972 the Chinese Communists, who already have the nuclear bomb, will also have the missile to launch it and they are determined to do so. The Russian Communists have their orbital bomb. It may fly over your head as you read these lines. Treaties with them are of no value. They don't keep their promises.

Communism can be overcome. God has a chosen tool for this purpose. It is the Underground Church which gives to the peoples oppressed by the Communists the inspiration of the highest possible ideal - the service of Christ; the Underground which infiltrates even the high-rank Communists and can win them for Christ.

I have before me a bunch of letters from Christian prisoners of the Soviet Union. They show us the quality of its fighters.

A few quotes from them. From one: "Communists

have put on the wall of our cell a poster 'Reason is against Religion.' But weapons are used only against the living, never against the dead. So this poster told me that religion is alive, and I thanked God." Another describes a scene from his trial. A Christian child was brought as witness for the prosecution against him. "But our children are unafraid. When asked by the judge, 'Who performs the baptisms?,' the child answered, 'This is an internal affair of the Christian Church. I can give you no information about it. The secrets of the Church are not for unbelievers. You first repent, then you'll be in the right to know what happens in the Church.'" This child knew that by speaking thus he might be taken away for ever from Mummy and Daddy. But behind the Iron Curtain, Christ is loved in the only manner in which He should be loved, i.e. to the point of folly, and sacrifices do not count.

My son, Mihai, has also been brought up in the aura of arrests and trials. They were familiar to him.

In another letter from Soviet prisons we find Brother Alfred Boettcher's last word before court: "I have one aim in my life. This is to bring as many sinners as possible to Christ. Communists usually finish by putting in prison their own comrades. When you, Mr. Judge, will sit on this form, remember my witness for Christ."

The Underground Church fights for the salvation of souls. But like Noah, she does not remain in the sphere of pure religion. She is also a vanguard fighter for freeing the world of the Communist menace.

She is persecuted, but she can say the words addressed once by Theodor Beza to the king of Nevarra: "Sire, it belongs in truth to the Church of God, in the name of which I speak, to receive blows and not to give them. But it will please your Majesty to remember that it is an anvil which has worn out many hammers."

The Christians of the free world must support whole-heartedly the Underground Church or see in this generation their own Churches subverted and destroyed. This

is the choice.

There is one greater than the Church. Its head, Jesus Christ, will pour out the spirit of grace upon His followers everywhere. Instead of useless talks about the merging of empty churches of different denominations in the West, there will be a real union of the free Church and the Church of the martyrs.

One of our couriers writes: "I recall the joy the sister in Russia had last night, when she saw the Russian Bibles on the table. She literally ran to it and kissed the stock of Bibles, then circled around them the husband, the wife and I and prayed. The next morning, the brother was up at five o'clock, wrapping them up to distribute them." Such joy and love is contagious. From the Underground Church, the Western Christians will learn the enthusiasm, the ecstasy, the cherishing of the Word of God, and of the high calling to be a soldier in Christ's army, the divine impatience to see the Kingdom of God coming.

If my personal desire counted for anything, I would retire for quiet communion with God, as I had it in the solitary cell. But God decides. I can have communion with Him only to the diapason of the shrieks of my beaten and tortured brethren. My place is on the twentieth century's Golgotha.

Christ suffers here again in His mystical body.

On His right side suffers the penitent thief. The last words of Zinoviev, president of the Communist International, shot by Stalin, were, "Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is one God." The last words of Iagoda, head of Russia's Secret Police, were, "There must be a God. He punishes my sins." The last words of Yaroslavski,

president of the International Organization of the Godless, were, "Please, burn all my books. Look, the Holy One. He waits for me since long. He is here."

On the left side are the impenitent Communists. They have the deep suffering of a bitter heart.

Then there is the huge crowd of millions who just stand by and look upon what is happening, like on Golgotha. And you can hear from the bride's mouth the cry, a cry like that wherewith Jesus died. To make you hear that cry was the purpose of this book. It is not so much a cry of suffering. This they have learned to bear. It is a cry of anguish for the multitudes of Communists and Communist-indoctrinated souls who cannot come

to Christ because there is nobody to instruct them.
I would like to leave the work of supporting the Underground Church and go to theological universities, to pastors' studies, to Church leaders, and tell them, "Just give up cutting the Bible asunder, your worthless theological debates, your endless and fruitless discussions about merging or not merging into nothingness." Some call me mad. I would cry like crazy that souls go to hell in the Soviet camp, after having lived their whole earthly life in hell. "It is because of your neglect. Don't you fear God? Don't you know that you will give account to Him?"
I can breathe not only gentle words, I can breathe also fire. If good words would not help, I would vituperate, like Jesus did at times.
The Christians in Communist countries have borne prison without expecting any help from the West. They have kept the faith. To spread it to all creatures, as their all-embracing love commands, is not in their power without our help.
The souls who perish because of the Communist poison are an overwhelming sorrow, a painful wound

on their soul and mine. Would you not try to heal this wound?
I have described atrocious sufferings through which Christians pass there. It was not to make you pity those hapless ones, but to pity those who have the opportunity to be useful, and do not take it, leave alone the galleries of nonentities who quibble at this or that of my sayings. I am not infallible. Not everything that I say must be right. My character and my deeds are also far from perfect.
But that the Church of the free world must join hands with the Underground Church in the fight for Christ, against Communism, is surely right. This do, and God will bless you

The End of "If That Were Christ, ..."

In God's Underground

(formerly titled as "Christ in the Communist Prisons")
by Richard Wurmbrand
Copyright 1988

Edited by Charles Foley

Dedication

Dedicated to the Christian martyrs who
sacrificed their lives in the service
of God and died courageously following
torture in Communist lands.

I am a Lutheran minister who has spent more than 14 years in different prisons because of my Christian belief, but that in itself is not the reason for the existence of this book. I have always disliked the idea that a man who has been unjustly imprisoned must write or preach about his sufferings. Campanella, the great author of ~City of the Sun~ was kept in prison for 27 years; but that he was tortured and lay 40 hours on a bed of iron nails we know from his medieval biographers, not from him.

The prison years did not seem too long for me, for I discovered, alone in my cell, that beyond belief and love there is a delight in God: a deep and extraordinary ecstasy of happiness that is like nothing in this world. And when I came out of jail I was like someone who comes down from a mountain top where he has seen for miles around the peace and beauty of the countryside, and now returns to the plain.

First, I should explain why, more than two years ago, I came to the West. When I was released from jail in 1964 with several thousand other political and religious prisoners, it was because the Rumanian Popular Republic had adopted a more "friend]y" policy to the West. I was given the smallest parish in the country. My congregation numbered 35. If 36 people entered the church, I was told, there would be trouble. But I had much to say, and there were many who wished to hear. I traveled secretly to

preach in towns and villages, leaving before the police could hear that a stranger was in their district. This, too, had to stop. Pastors who helped me were dismissed by the State, and I could become the cause of new arrests and confessions obtained by torture. I was a burden to those I wished to serve, and a danger.

Friends urged me to try to leave the country so that I might speak for the underground church in the West. It was plain, from the statements of Western Church leaders, that some did not know and others did not want to know the truth about religious persecution under the Communists. Prelates from Europe and America came on friendly visits and sat down to banquets with our inquisitors and persecutors. We asked them why. "As Christians," they said, "we have to be friendly with everybody, you know, even the Communists." Why, then, were they not friendly to those who had suffered? Why did they not ask one word about the priests and pastors who had died in prison or under torture? Or leave a little money for the families that remained?

The Archbishop of Canterbury came in 1965 and attended a service. Dr. Ramsey did not know that the congregation consisted of officials and secret police agents and their wives - the same audience that turns out on every such occasion. It had listened to visiting rabbis and muftis, bishops and Baptists. After they had returned home, we read of their approving comments on freedom in Rumania. A British theologian wrote a book in which he declared that Christ would have admired the Communist prison system.

Meanwhile, I lost my license to preach. I was blacklisted and constantly followed and watched. I still sometimes preached at the homes of friends who did not count the danger, so I was not surprised when, some time after secret negotiations had begun for my departure to the West, a stranger asked me to his house. He gave the address, but no name. When I called he was alone.

"I want to do you a service," he said. I recognized that he was a secret police agent. "A friend of mine says that the dollars have been received for you. Probably you'd like to leave the country at once. My friend is worried. You are a man who speaks his mind, and you are fresh from prison. They think it might be better if you were kept a while - or that a member of your family stays here to vouch for your good behavior. Of course, your release will be unconditional..."

I gave him no assurances. They had the dollars

and that must be enough. Christian organizations in the West had paid œ2,500 in ransom money for me. Selling citizens brings in foreign currency and helps the Popular Republic's budget. A Rumanian joke says, "We'd sell the Prime Minister if anyone would buy him." Jews are sold to Israel at œ1,000 a head, members of the German minority to West Germany, Armenians to America. Scientists, doctors and professors cost about œ5,000 apiece.

Next I was summoned openly to police headquarters. An officer told me: "Your passport is ready. You can go when you like, and where you like, and preach as much as you wish. But don't speak against us. Keep to the Gospel. Otherwise you will be silenced, for good. We can hire a gangster who'll do it for $1,000 - or we can bring you back, as we've done with other traitors. We can destroy your reputation in the West by contriving a scandal over money or sex." He said I could go. That was my unconditional release.

I came to the West. Doctors examined me, and one said: "You're as full of holes as a sieve." He could not believe that my bones had mended and my tuberculosis healed without medical aid. 'Don't ask me about treatment," he said. "Ask the One who kept you alive, and in Whom I don't believe."

My new pastorate for the underground church began. I met friends of our Scandinavian Mission in Norway, and when I preached there, a woman in the front row began to weep. Later she told me that

years ago she had read of my arrest and had prayed for me ever since. "Today I came to church not knowing who would preach," she said. "As I listened I realized who was speaking, and I wept." I learned that thousands of people had been praying for me, as they still pray daily for those in Communist prisons. Children whom I had never met wrote, saying: "Please come to our town - our prayers for you have been answered.

In churches and universities all over Europe and America I found that people - although they were deeply moved, often, by what I said - did not believe that a danger really threatened them. "Communism here would be different," they said. "Our Communists are few, and harmless." We thought the same in

Rumania, once, when the Party was small. The world is full of small Communist parties, waiting. When a tiger is young you may play with it: when it grows up, it will devour you.

I met Western Church leaders who advised me to preach the Gospel and avoid attacks on Communism; this advice I had also from the secret police in Bucharest. But wrong must be called by name. Jesus told the Pharisees that they were "vipers," and for this, and not the Sermon on the Mount, he suffered crucifixion.

I denounce Communism because I love the Communists. We can hate the sin, while loving the sinner. Christians have a duty to win the souls of Communists, and if we fail to do so, they will overwhelm the West and uproot Christianity among us here as well. The Red rulers are unhappy and wretched men. They can be saved, and God's way is to send a man. He did not come himself to guide the Jews from Egypt, he sent Moses. So we must win over to God Communist leaders in every field - artistic, scientific and political. By winning those who mold the minds of men behind the Iron Curtain, you win the people they lead and influence.

The conversion of Svetlana Stalin, only daughter of the greatest mass-murderer of Christians, a soul

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brought up in the strictest Communist discipline, proves that there is a better weapon against Communism than the nuclear bomb: it is the love of Christ.

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PART ONE

The first half of my life ended on February 29, 1948. I was walking alone down a street in Bucharest when a black Ford car braked sharply beside me and two men jumped out. They seized my arms and

thrust me into the back seat, while a third man beside the driver kept me covered with a pistol. The car sped through the thin traffic of a Sunday evening; then, in a street called Calea Rahova, we turned in through steel gates. I heard them clang behind us.

My kidnappers belonged to the Communist Secret Police. This was their headquarters. Inside, my papers, my belongings, my tie and shoelaces, and finally my name were taken from me. "From now on," said the official on duty, "you are Vasile Georgescu."

It was a common name. The authorities did not want even the guards to know whom they were watching, in case questions should be asked abroad, where I was well known. I was to disappear, like so many others, without trace.

Calea Rahova was a new jail and I was the first prisoner. But prison was not a new experience for me. I had been arrested during the war by the Fascists who ruled in Hitler's day, and again when the Communists took over. There was a small window high in the concrete wall of the cell, two plank beds, the usual bucket in the comer. I sat waiting for the

interrogators, knowing what questions they would ask and what answers I must give.

I know what fear is well enough, but at that moment I felt none. This arrest, and all that would follow, was the answer to a prayer I had made, and I hoped that it would give new meaning to my past life. I did not know what strange and wonderful discoveries lay in store for me.

My father had a book at home which advised young people how to plan a career as a lawyer, a doctor, an army officer and so on. Once, when I was about five, he brought it out and asked my brothers what they would like to be. When they had chosen, my father turned to me, the youngest child. "And what will you be, Richard." I looked again at the title of the book, which was General Guide to the Professions, and thought about it. Then I replied, "I'd like to be General Guide."

Since then fifty years have passed, fourteen of

them in prison, and I have often thought about those words. It is said that we make our choices early in life, and I know no better description of my present work than that of "general guide."

The idea of becoming a Christian pastor was, however, far from my thoughts, and from those of my Jewish parents. My father died when I was nine and our family was always short of money, and often of bread. A man once offered to buy me a suit of clothes, but when we went to the shop, and the tailor brought out his best, he said, "Much too good for a boy like this." I still remember his voice. My schooling was poor, but we had many books at home. Before I was ten I had read them all and become as great a skeptic as the Voltaire I admired. Yet religion interested me. I watched the rituals in Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, and once in a synagogue I saw a man I knew praying for his sick daughter. She died next day, and I asked the rabbi, "What God

could refuse such a desperate prayer?" and he had no answer. I could not believe in an all-powerful being who left so many people to starve and suffer, still less than he had put on earth one man of such goodness and wisdom as Jesus Christ.

I grew up and went into the business world of Bucharest. I did well. and before I was twenty-five I had plenty of money to spend in flashy bars and cabarets and on the girls of "Little Paris," as they called the capital. I did not care what happened so long as my appetite for fresh sensation was fed. It was a life which many envied, yet it left me in great distress of mind. I knew it to be counterfeit and that I was throwing away like trash something in me that was good and which could be put to use. Although I was sure there was no God, I wished, in my heart, that it was otherwise, that there should be a reason for existing in the universe.

One day I went into a church and stood with other people before a statue of the Virgin. They were praying, and I tried to say with them, "Hail Mary, full of grace..." but I felt quite empty. I said to the image, "Really, you are like stone. So many plead, and you have nothing for them."

After my marriage, I continued to pursue other girls. I went on chasing pleasure, lying, cheating,

asking myself no questions, hurting others, until, at twenty-seven, these excesses combined with early privations to bring on tuberculosis. It was at that time a dangerous disease and it seemed for a while that I might die. I was afraid. At a sanatorium in the countryside I rested for the first time in my life. I lay looking out at the trees, and thought about the past. It came back to me like scenes from an agonizing play. My mother wept for me, my wife had wept; so many harmless girls had wept. I had seduced and slandered, mocked and bluffed, all for a sham. I lay there and tears came.

In that sanatorium I prayed for the first time in my life, the prayer of an atheist. I said something like this: "God, I know that You do not exist. But if perchance You exist, which I deny - it is for You to

reveal Yourself to me; it is not my duty to seek You."

My whole philosophy had been materialistic until then, but my heart could not be satisfied with it.

I believed in theory that man is only matter and that, when he dies, he decomposes into salt and minerals. Yet I had lost my father, and had attended other funerals, and I could never think of the dead except as people. Who can think of his dead child or wife as a heap of minerals? It is always the beloved person who remains in the mind. Can our minds be so mistaken?

My heart was full of contradictions. I had passed hours in noisy places of amusement among half-naked girls and exciting music; but I liked also to take lonely walks through cemeteries, sometimes on winter days when snow lay heavy on the graves. I said to myself: "One day I, too, will be dead, and snow will fall on my tomb, while the living will laugh, embrace and enjoy life. I shall be unable to participate in their joys; I shall not even know them. I will simply not exist any more. After a short time, nobody will remember me. So what use is anything?"

In considering social and political problems I thought that perhaps one day mankind would find some system that would provide freedom, security and wealth for all. But when everybody is happy, nobody will want to die, and the thought that they will have one day to leave their happy life may make them unhappier than ever.

I remembered reading that Krupp, who had become a millionaire by creating weapons of death, was himself horrified of death. Nobody was allowed to speak the word "death" in his presence. He divorced his wife because she told him about the death of a nephew. He had everything, but was unhappy because he knew that happiness could not last, that he would have to leave it behind and rot in a tomb.

Although I had read the Bible for its literary interest, my mind closed at the point where the adversaries challenge Christ: "Descend from the cross if you are the son of God"; and, instead, He dies. It seemed to prove His foes were right, and yet I found

my thoughts going spontaneously to Christ. I said to myself, "I wish I could have met and talked to Him." Each day my meditation ended with this thought.

There was a woman patient in the sanatorium who was too ill to leave her room, but somehow she heard of me and sent a book about the Brothers Ratisbonne, who founded an order to convert Jews. Others had been praying for me, a Jew, while I wasted my life.

After some months in the sanatorium, I grew slightly better, and went to convalesce in a mountain village. Here I became friendly with an old carpenter, and one day he gave me a Bible. It was no ordinary Bible, as I learned later: he and his wife had spent hours every day praying over it for me.

I lay on the sofa in my cottage, reading the New Testament, and in the days that passed Christ seemed to me as real as the woman who brought my meals. But not everyone who recognizes Christ is saved; Satan believes, and is not a Christian. I said to Jesus, "You'll never have me for a disciple. I want money, travel, pleasure. I have suffered enough. Yours is the way of the Cross, and even if it is the way of truth as well, I won't follow it." His answer came into my head, like a plea: "Come my way! Do not fear the Cross! You will find that it is the greatest of joys."

I read on, and again tears filled my eyes. I could not help comparing Christ's life with mine. His outlook was so pure, mine so tainted; His nature so selfless, mine so greedy; His heart so full of love, mine filled with rancor. My old certainties began to crumble in the face of this wisdom and truthfulness. Christ had

always appealed to the depths of my heart, to which my conscience had no access, and now I said to myself, "If I had a mind like His, I could rely on its conclusions." I was like the man in the ancient Chinese story, trudging exhausted under the sun, who came to a great oak and rested in its shade. "What a happy chance I found you!" he said. But the oak replied, "It is no chance. I have been waiting for you for 400 years." Christ had waited all my life for me. Now we met.

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This conversation took place six months after my marriage to Sabina, a girl who had never spared a thought for spiritual things. It was a terrible blow to her. She was young and beautiful, and she had lacked so much in her childhood. She hoped a happier life was beginning, when the man she loved, her partner in pleasure, changed into a devout believer who talked of becoming a pastor. She confessed to me later that she had even thought of suicide

One Sunday, when I proposed going to evening service, she burst into tears. She said she wanted to see a film.

"All right," I said. "We'll go - because I love you." We walked from one theater to another and I chose the film which looked most suggestive. When we left I took her to a cafe and she ate a cream cake. I said, "Now go home to bed. I want to look for a girl and take her to a hotel."

"What did you say?"

"It is plain enough. You go home. I want to find a girl to take to a hotel."

"How can you say such things?"

"But you made me go to the cinema, and you saw what the hero did - why shouldn't I do the same? If we go tomorrow and the days after to such films ... every man becomes what he looks at; but if you want me to be a good husband, come to church with me sometimes."

She thought about it. Then, quietly, gently she began to come more and more often to church. But she still hankered after the gay life and when she wanted to go out somewhere, I went too. One evening we went to a drunken party. The air was full of smoke. Couples were dancing and making love openly. Suddenly my wife was disgusted with it all and said, "Oh,

let's go! Now!"
I said, "Why leave? We've only just come." We stayed until midnight. Again she wanted to go home,

and again I refused. It was the same at 1 A.M. And again at 2 A.M. When I saw she was thoroughly sickened by the whole affair, I agreed to go.
We came out into the cold air. Sabina said: "Richard! I'm going straight to the pastor's house to make him baptize me. It will be like taking a bath after all this filth."
I laughed and said, "You've waited so long. You can wait until morning now. Let the poor pastor sleep."

4

Our whole life changed. Before, we had quarreled over nothing. I should have divorced Sabina with barely a second thought if she had interfered with my enjoyment. Now a son was born to us. Mihai was a gift from God, for in the old days we did not want a child that might have hampered our pleasures.
We were happy when the Rev. George Stevens, head of the Church of England Mission in Bucharest, asked me to become its secretary. I did my best to adapt my business instincts, but trouble arose when I persuaded an insurance agent to accept a bribe for dropping a claim against the Mission. To my surprise, Mr. Stevens did not seem to understand the arrangement I proposed. "But who is right?" he asked. "The Company or we?" I said that, in fact, the claim was justified. "Then we must pay," he said, closing what was to me an enlightening exchange.
In 1940 relations between Rumania and Britain were severed, and the English clergy had to leave. Since there was no one else, I had to try and carry on the Church work.
I studied and taught myself to preach, and was ordained as a Lutheran pastor. I had considered Rumania's rival denominations. The Orthodox church, to which four out of five people belonged, seemed to be overfond of outward show. I felt in the same way about the Catholic ritual: one Easter Sunday, after sitting through the Latin liturgy and a political address by the bishop, I left without even hearing in my

own language that Christ was risen from the dead. I was attracted by the simpler Protestant services which made the sermon - in which one could teach and set a feast for the mind - its central part. And then, without his greatness, I had some spiritual kinship with Martin Luther. He was a choleric, quarrelsome man, but he also loved Jesus so deeply that he came to think man is saved not by his good deeds but by his faith. So I became a Lutheran.

I had always regarded clergymen with wariness, and above all those who might ask whether I was "saved." Now, although I wore no clerical garb, the impulse was all but irresistible to take the whole world as my parish. I could not make enough converts. I kept a list of my congregation and pulled it out in buses and waiting rooms to ask myself what each was doing at that moment. If one of them defected, I was sunk in misery for hours. It was a physical pain like a knife in my heart and I had to ask God to take it from me. I could not go on living with it.

5

Under Stalin's conditions for economic help to Hitler during the war there was a partitioning of Eastern Europe. One-third of our national territory was divided between Russia, Bulgaria and Hungary. Nazi influence supported the growth of an "Iron Guard" movement whose members tried to harness the Orthodox church to political terrorism. The night before assassinating Premier Calinescu, their chief opponent, nine fanatics spent the hours prostrate on a church floor, with their bodies forming a cross. After that, the Iron Guard helped Hitler's protege, Gen. Ion Antonescu, to seize power. King Carol was forced to abdicate in favor of his young son Michael, in whose name Antonescu ruled as a dictator.

Now the Iron Guard had a free hand to deal with Jews, Communists, Protestants. Murder walked the streets. Our mission was accused of treachery. I was threatened daily. One Sunday from the pulpit I saw a

group of men in the green shirts of the Iron Guard filing quietly into the back of the church. The

congregation, facing the altar, were unaware of the strangers, but I saw revolvers in their hands. I thought, if this were to be my last sermon, it should be a good one.

It was about the hands of Jesus. I told how they had wiped away tears, and lifted children, and fed the hungry. They had healed the sick, and been nailed to the cross, and they had blessed the disciples before He ascended to heaven.

Then I raised my voice. "But YOU! What have YOU done with your hands?"

The congregation looked amazed. They were holding prayer books.

I thundered, "You are killing and beating and torturing innocent people! Do you call yourself Christians? Clean your hands, you sinners!"

The Iron Guard men looked furious. Yet they did not care to break up the service. They stood with guns drawn while I said a prayer and the benediction, and the audience began to leave. When nearly all had safely gone, I came down from the pulpit and stepped behind a curtain. I heard running footsteps and shouts of "Where's Wurmbrand? After him!" before I passed through a small door, turning the key behind me: this secret exit had been built many years before. Along corridors I found my way to a side street, and so escaped.

As the war progressed, many from the Christian minorities - Adventists, Baptists, Pentecostals - were massacred or driven into concentration camps with the Jews. All my wife's family were carried off - she never saw them again. I was arrested by the Fascists on three occasions; tried, interrogated, beaten and imprisoned. So I was well prepared for what was to come under the Communists.

6

Through the cell window at Calea Rahova I could see a corner of the yard. As I looked, a priest

was let in through the gates. He moved quickly across the asphalt and through a door - an informer, come to report on his congregation.

I knew that I faced questioning, ill-treatment, possibly years of imprisonment and death, and I wondered if my faith was strong enough. I

remembered then that in the Bible it is written 366 times - once for every day of the year - "Don't be afraid!": 366 times, not merely 365, to account for Leap Year. And this was February 29 - coincidence which told me I need not fear!

The interrogators showed no hurry to see me, for Communist jails are like archives, to be drawn on at any time when information may be needed. I was questioned again and again over the whole fourteen and a half years I spent in prison. I knew that in the eyes of the Party my connections with the Western church missions and with the World Council of Churches were treasonable, but there was much else of importance which they did not know and must not learn from me.

I had prepared myself for prison and torture as a soldier in peacetime prepares for the hardships of war. I had studied the lives of Christians who had faced similar pains and temptations to surrender and thought how I might adapt their experiences. Many who had not so prepared themselves were crushed by suffering, or deluded into saying what they should not.

Priests were always told by interrogators, "As a Christian you must promise to tell us the whole truth about everything." For my part, since I was sure of being found guilty whatever I said, I decided that under torture I might incriminate myself, but never betray friends who had helped me to spread the Gospel. So I planned to leave my interrogators more confused at the end of their investigation than at the start. I would mislead them to the hilt.

My first task was somehow to get a message out to warn my colleagues and let my wife know where I was. I was able to suborn a guard to act as intermediary, for at that time my family still had

money. He received about œ500 for carrying messages over the next few weeks. Then everything we owned was seized.

The guard brought word that the Swedish Ambassador had protested about my disappearance, saying that I had many well-wishers in Scandinavia and Britain. The Foreign Minister, Mrs. Ana Pauker, replied that nothing was known of my whereabouts since I had secretly left the country some time ago.

7

The Ambassador, as a neutral envoy, could hardly press the matter further, least of all with Mrs. Pauker, a lady before whom strong men quailed. I had met her, and knew her father, a clergyman called Rabinovici, who told me sadly, "Ana has no feeling for anything Jewish in her heart." She studied medicine, then turned to teaching at the English Church Mission before embracing the Communist cause and marrying an engineer of similar views called Marcel Pauker. Both were in and out of prison for conspiracy, but Ana proved the more violent partisan. She went to live in Moscow and Marcel followed, with less enthusiasm. During one of Stalin's pre-war purges he was executed - shot, it was said, by his wife's hand, and few doubted the story. Ana was outwardly a woman: inwardly she was "topful," like Lady Macbeth, "from crown to toe of direst cruelty." After spending the rest of the war as a Soviet citizen in Moscow, with officer's rank in the Red Army, Mrs. Pauker returned in the role of Foreign Minister to become the dominating influence in Rumania.

Such was her loyalty to Russia that when, on a fine day, someone asked why she was walking through Bucharest with her umbrella up, Ana is said to have retorted, "Haven't you heard the weather report? It's raining heavily in Moscow."

After a group of political leaders, headed by young King Michael, had courageously deposed General Antonescu and ended his partnership with

Germany, a meeting was summoned in Moscow to decide on the shape of the post-war world. Churchill said to Stalin, "How would it do for you to have ninety per cent predominance in Rumania, while we have ninety per cent of the say in Greece?" And he wrote these words on a sheet of paper. Stalin paused. Then he made a large tick with a blue pencil on the paper and passed it back.

A million Russian troops poured into Rumania. These were our new"allies."

"The Russians are coming!" was no joke-phrase for us. The new occupiers had only one idea in life: to drink, rob and ravage the "capitalist

exploiters." Thousands of women of all ages and conditions were raped by soldiers who burst into their homes. Men were robbed in the street of such novelties as bicycles and wristwatches. When order in the Red Army was restored by shooting, and shops began to raise their shutters, the visiting troops were astonished by the goods on show, and even more when they learned that most of the customers were farmers and factory workers.

The capitulation proclaimed on August 23, 1944, is still celebrated each year as the day when Rumania was freed. In fact, its terms were used to strip the country of its entire navy, most of its merchant fleet, half its rolling stock and every automobile. Farm produce, horses, cattle and all our stocks of oil and petrol were carried off to Russia. It was thus that Rumania, which had been known as the granary of Europe, became a starvation area.

8

On the day of my conversion I had prayed, "God, I was an atheist. Now let me go to Russia to work as a missionary among atheists, and I shall not complain if afterwards I have to spend all the rest of my life in prison." But God did not send me on the long journey to Russia. Instead, the Russians had come to me.

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During the war, in spite of persecution, our mission's following had greatly increased, and many of those who had harried Jews and Protestants now worshipped side by side with their former victims.

After the war, my work for the Western church missions continued. I had an office, equipment, secretaries - a "front" for my campaign.

I speak good Russian. It was easy for me to talk to Russian soldiers in streets, shops and trains. I did not wear clerical dress, and they took me for an ordinary citizen. The younger men, especially, were bewildered and homesick. They were pleased to be shown the sights of Bucharest, and invited to a friendly home. I had help from many young Christians who also spoke Russian. I told the girls they could use their beauty to help bring men to Christ. One girl saw a soldier alone in a wine-shop. She sat beside him

and accepted his offer of a glass, then suggested that they go somewhere quieter to talk. "With you, anywhere!" said the Russian, and she brought him to my house. The soldier was converted, and brought others to us.

We secretly published the Gospel in Russian. More than 100,000 books were distributed in cafes, parks, railway stations, wherever Russians were to be found, over three years. They were passed from hand to hand until they fell to pieces. Many of our helpers were arrested, but none gave me away.

We were astonished not only by the number of conversions, but by their naturalness. The Russians were wholly ignorant of religion, but it was as if, deep in their hearts, they had been seeking truth; and now they recognized it with delight. They were mostly young peasants who had worked on the land, sowing and harvesting, and they knew in their bones that someone orders nature; but they had been brought up as atheists, and they believed that they were, just as many people believe themselves to be Christians, and are not.

I met a young painter from outer Siberia on a train journey, and told him about Christ as we traveled.

"Now I understand!" he said. "I only knew what they taught us in schools, that religion is a tool of imperialism, and so on. But I used to walk in an old cemetery near my home, where I could be alone. I often went to a small, abandoned house among the graves." (I understood that this was the cemetery's Orthodox chapel.)

"On the wall there was a painting of a man nailed to a cross. I thought, 'He must have been a great criminal to be punished so.' But if he were a criminal, why did his picture have the place of honor – as if he were Marx or Lenin? I decided that they had first thought him a criminal, and later found that he was innocent, and so put up his picture in remorse."

I told the painter, "You are half-way to the truth." When we reached our destination, hours later, he knew all that I could tell him about Jesus. As we parted, he said: "I planned to steal something tonight, as we all do. Now how can I? I believe in

Christ."

9

We worked among Rumanian Communists, too. Every book had to pass through their censorship. We presented books which had Karl Marx's picture as a frontispiece, and a few opening pages repeating his and Lenin's arguments against religion. The censor read no further - which was just as well, since the rest of the book was wholly Christian in content. The censor liked another of our titles - ~Religion: an opiate for the people~. Faced with piles of old and new books to read, he did not trouble to look inside, where he would have found only Christian arguments. Sometimes a censor would pass anything for a bottle of brandy.

The number of Rumanian Communists had increased from a few thousands to millions, for a Party card could mean the difference between eating and going hungry. Stalin had installed a "united front"

government of his own choice with the leader of the "Ploughman's Front," Groza, at its head. Apart from Ana Pauker, who is said to have "invented" Groza, power was wielded by the Russians through three veteran Party comrades: Lucretiu Patrascanu, appointed Minister of Justice; Teohari Georgescu, who took over police and "security" as Minister of the Interior; and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, a tough railway worker who was First Secretary of the Party.

I attended, in the role of observer, a meeting of Orthodox priests which Gheorghiu-Dej addressed after the Communist take-over. Jovial and stubby, he assured them all that he was prepared to "forgive and forget." In spite of their church's many links in the past with the Iron Guard and other Right-wing organizations, the State would go on paying their salaries as before. His concluding remarks about the similarity between Christian and Communist ideals won a cheer.

On informal occasions Gheorghiu-Dej was frank about his atheism and his conviction that Communism would spread over the world, yet he could speak indulgently of his old mother, who filled their homes with icons and brought his daughters up as Orthodox

believers. In eleven years in prison under the old regime, Dej had time to study the Bible and discuss religion with many imprisoned sectarians, with whom he expressed sympathy. Escaping from jail just before the Russians came, he would have been caught and killed by the dictator Antonescu if he had not been sheltered by a friendly priest. But if religion had touched Gheorghu-Dej's life in his days of struggle, there was no room for it now that he was on top. The wife who had waited so long for his return was discarded, her place being taken by a film actress. The house was full of servants and suitors, Dej was rich and famous, and in no mood to listen to anyone.

When someone guided the conversation at his meeting with the priests into spiritual channels, he replied with standard Party arguments. He assured us that we would all have complete liberty of conscience in the new Rumania, and in return my

colleagues promised to make no trouble for the State. I listened, and kept my reservations to myself. Many priests came forward at that meeting as champions of the Communist way of life, but sooner or later they stumbled over some Party doctrine and ended up in prison.

The campaign to undermine religion developed rapidly. All church funds and estates were nationalized. A Communist Ministry of Cults controlled the priesthood completely, paying salaries and confirming appointments. The aging Patriarch Nicodim, a virtual recluse, was accepted as Orthodox figurehead, but the Party needed a more supple instrument and Dej decided that he knew the very man: the priest who had hidden him from the Fascists the year before. So Father Justinian Marina, an obscure seminary teacher from Rimincul-Vilcea, was made a bishop, and soon all Rumania's fourteen million Orthodox churchgoers knew that he was their Patriarch in everything but name.

The next task was to tear apart the Roman and Greek Catholics, of whom there were two and a half million. The Greek Catholics, usually called Uniates, while keeping many traditions of their own (including the right of priests to marry), accepted the Pope's supremacy. Now they were taken over and forcibly "merged" with the obedient Orthodox Church. Most

of the priests, and all the bishops, who objected to this shotgun wedding were arrested, their dioceses abolished and their property seized. The Roman Catholics, ordered to break with the Vatican. refused; they, too, paid dearly for their resistance. With priests filling the jails and lurid stories of their treatment spreading through the country, the minority religions simply bowed the head and waited to hear their fate.

10

They did not have long to wait. In 1945, a "Congress of Cults" was called in the Rumanian Parliament building, with 4,000 representatives of the clergy

filling the seats. Bishops, priests, pastors, rabbis, mullahs applauded as it was announced that Comrade Stalin (whose vast picture hung on the wall) was patron of the congress – they preferred not to remember that he was at the same time president of the World Atheist's Organization. The trembling old Patriarch Nicodim blessed the assembly and the Prime Minister, Groza, opened it. He told us that he was a priest's son himself, and his lavish promises of support, echoed by other personages who followed him, were appreciatively cheered.

One of the chief Orthodox bishops said in reply that in the past many political rivulets had entered the great river of his church – green, blue, tri-colored – and he welcomed the prospect that a red one should join it, too. One leader after another, Calvinist, Lutheran, the Chief Rabbi, rose in turn to speak. All expressed willingness to co-operate with the Communists. My wife, beside me, could bear no more. She said, "Go and wash this shame from the face of Christ!"

"If I do, you'll lose your husband," I replied.

"I don't need a coward. Go and do it!" Sabina said.

I asked to speak and they were pleased to invite me to the rostrum: the organizers looked forward to publishing a congratulatory speech next day from Pastor Wurmbrand, of the Swedish Church Mission and the World Council of Churches.

I began with a brief word on Communism. I said

it was our duty as priests to glorify God and Christ, not transitory earthly powers, and to support His everlasting kingdom of love against the vanities of the day. As I went on, priests who had sat for hours listening to flattering lies about the Party seemed to awake as from a dream. Someone began to clap. The tension snapped, and applause suddenly broke out, wave after wave, with delegates standing up to cheer. The Minister of Cults, a former Orthodox priest called Burducea who had been an active Fascist in other times, shouted from the platform that my right to speak was withdrawn. I replied that I had the right

from God, and continued. In the end, the microphone was disconnected, but by then the hall was in such uproar that no one could hear anything.

That closed the congress for the day. I heard that the Ministry of Cults intended to cancel my license as a pastor and was advised to seek the help of the influential Patriarch-elect. After several attempts I managed to reach Justinian on his return from a visit to Moscow, where a great fuss had been made of him. Black-bearded, smiling, full of his new dignity but no fool, this was the man who now had four-fifths of Rumania's church-going population under his care, and I suddenly decided that I might use my time with him better than to talk about my own affairs. So I said instead that, since his promotion, he had been constantly in my prayers. To have responsibility for fourteen million souls was truly a terrible load for one man to carry. He must feel like St. Ireneus, who wept when people made him bishop against his will, saying, "Children, what have you done - how can I become the man this burden demands? The Bible saith that a bishop must be righteous."

While I spoke, he said little, but after I had gone, he asked about me among friends. For a time the talk about withdrawing my license stopped. Later on, when I was held by the police for a six-week inquiry, Justinian was among those who helped to secure my release, and still later he invited me to Iashi, the seat of his bishopric, where we became friendly. His ignorance of the Bible was amazing, but not exceptional among Orthodox priests. He listened attentively when I reminded him of the parable of the Prodigal Son. Taking his hands in mine, I said that

God welcomed back all who strayed, even Bishops. Other Christians besides myself used all the influence they could bring to bear on Justinian. He had begun a life of prayer and love for God when, regardless of his feelings, the Party launched a full-scale campaign against religion and I lost sight of him for several years.

The anti-God drive went hand-in-hand with the elimination of opposition parties, for after Stalin had

all he wanted from his wartime allies, the last pretenses of democracy were dropped. Rumania's great National Peasant leader, Iuliu Maniu, was put on trial with eighteen others on false charges and, at the age of over seventy, sentenced to ten years' imprisonment - he was to die in jail four years later. In the reign of terror which followed, it is estimated that some 60,000 "enemies of the State" were executed.

Ironically, the Minister of Justice who presided over this wholesale purge, forty-seven-year-old Lucretiu Patrascanu, had received much help from Maniu in defending persecuted Communists before the war. The two men also worked together with King Michael to plan an armistice which Patrascanu then signed in Moscow in Rumania's name. Once Maniu was silenced, Patrascanu and other Party leaders forced our much beloved young king to abdicate.

So now a Popular Republic was proclaimed; but who would lead it? Not the puppet Groza, certainly. Ana Pauker was detested, even in the Party; the others were at odds. Many of Patrascanu's admirers saw in him a nationalist Communist who would guide the country away from Stalinist extremes. He was a "Western"-type Communist from a landowning family, and everyone thought the better of him for saying that he was a Rumanian before he was a Red.

The problem of the leadership was the subject of hot debate in the Central Committee of the Party.

My life as a pastor, until this time, had been full of satisfaction. I had all I needed for my family. I had the trust and love of my parishioners. But I was not at peace. Why was I allowed to live as usual, while a cruel dictatorship was destroying everything which was dear to me, and while others were suffering for their faith? On many nights, Sabina and I prayed together, asking God to let us bear a cross.

11

My arrest, in the widespread round-ups which were going on in this time, could have been considered

an answer to my prayer, but never could I have supposed that the first man to join me in my cell would be Comrade Patrascanu himself.

When the door of my room in Calea Rahova opened, a few days after my arrival, to admit the tall Minister of Justice I supposed at first that he had come to question me in person. Why was I so honored? Then the door was locked behind him: stranger still, his shirt was open at the neck and he wore no tie. I looked down at his highly-polished shoes - no laces! The second prisoner in my brand-new cell was the man who had brought Communism to power in our country.

He sat down on the other plank bed and swung his feet up; a tough-minded intellectual, he was not going to allow the transformation from Minister to jailbird to affect his poise. Wrapped in our great-coats against the March chill, we began to talk. Although I knew Patrascanu's doctrines had shattered justice and caused so much destruction, it was possible to like him as a man and believe in his sincerity. He passed off his arrest with a shrug. It was far from being his first spell in prison. He had been arrested several times by the former rulers of Rumania. It seemed that his growing popularity had banded the other Party leaders against him. At a congress a few days earlier he had been denounced as a bourgeois traitor in the class war by his colleague Teohari Georgescu, Minister of the Interior. A second charge, that Patrascanu had been "potentially helped by the imperialist Powers," was backed by Vasile Luca, the Minister of Finance, who had been in prison with him under the old regime. The accusations were driven home by Ana Pauker, another of his old friends.

They had been plotting against him for some time, Patrascanu said, but one incident in particular had told against him as a Communist. He had asked one of Georgescu's officials if there was any truth in the rumors that prisoners were being tortured. Why

certainly, said the man from the Ministry; they were counter-revolutionaries who deserved no pity, especially

if they held back information. Patrascanu was deeply disturbed. Was it for this, he demanded, that they had struggled all these years to bring the Party to power? His protest was reported to Georgescu, and the denunciation at the Congress followed.

"As I left the hall," he said, "I saw a new driver waiting at the car. He said, 'Your chauffeur Ionescu has been taken ill, Comrade Patrascanu.' I stepped in, two secret policemen got in after me - and here I am!"

He was sure that he would soon be reinstated, and when supper came I began to think he might. Instead of boiled barley, he was given chicken, cheese, fruit and a bottle of hock. Patrascanu took a glass of wine and pushed the tray over, saying he had no appetite.

While I tried not to eat too ravenously, he told amusing stories. One was about the Swiss senator who wanted to be Navy Minister. "But we have no navy!" said the Prime Minister. "What does that matter?" the senator asked. "If Rumania can have a Minister of Justice, why shouldn't Switzerland have a Minister of the Navy?" Patrascanu laughed heartily at this anecdote, although it ridiculed the "justice" he had created, and of which he himself was now victim.

Next morning Patrascanu was escorted from the cell, I supposed for interrogation. He returned bad-temperedly in the evening to say he had not been answering questions but giving a lecture at the university, where he taught law. The Party wanted his arrest kept secret for the time being, and he, with thirty years of Communist discipline behind him, had to fall in with their wishes. He talked to me because he could talk, even outside prison, with nobody else. To reveal, even to his wife, that he was "under examination," or to ask anyone's advice, would be a capital offense. This isolation preyed on his nerves, as it was intended to. He could be himself only with me, because he had no reason to believe that I would never see the outer world again.

As Patrascanu told me something about his early life, I was interested to see that he had become a

Communist through any objective judgment, but in revolt against early troubles. His father, a well-to-do man, supported the Germans so enthusiastically in World War I that, after the victory of the Allies, the whole family was ostracized. Young Patrascanu had to go to Germany for a university education, and on his return joined the only political party which offered him a welcome. His first wife, a Communist, died in the Stalinist purges, and when he remarried it was to another Party member, who happened to be a school friend of my wife.

I tried to show Patrascanu the source of his convictions. "You are like Marx and Lenin," I said, "whose ideas and actions were also the outcome of early suffering. Marx felt genius within him, but as a Jew in Germany when anti-Semitism was rampant, he could find no outlet for it except as a revolutionary. Lenin's brother was hanged for an attempt on the emperor's life - rage and frustration made him want to overturn the world. It has been much the same with you."

Patrascanu dismissed the idea. His nerves found an outlet in tirades against the wickedness of the Church. The evil days of the Borgia Popes, the Spanish Inquisition, the savagery of the Crusades, Galileo's persecution, were all surveyed.

"But it's the crimes and errors of the Church which give us so much more to admire in it," I said.

Patrascanu was startled. "What do you mean?"

I said, "A hospital may stink of pus and blood; in that lies its beauty, for it receives the sick with their disgusting sores and horrible diseases. The Church is Christ's own hospital. Millions of patients are treated in it, with love. The Church accepts sinners - they continue to sin, and for their transgressions the Church is blamed. To me, on the other hand, the Church is like a mother who stands by her children even when they commit crimes. The politics and prejudices of its servants are distortions of what comes from God - that is, the Bible and its teachings, worship and the sacraments. Whatever its faults, the Church has much that is sublime in it. The sea drowns

thousands of people every year, but no one contests

its beauty."

Patrascanu smiled. "I could make much the same claim for Communism. Its practitioners are not perfect - there are scoundrels among them - but that doesn't mean there's anything wrong with our theories."

"Then judge by results," I said, "as Jesus advised. Sad deeds have stained the history of the Church, but it has lavished love and care on people all over the world. It has produced a multitude of saints, and it has Christ, the holiest of all, at its head. Who are your idols? Men like Marx, who was described as a drunkard by his biographer Riazanov, director of the Marx Institute in Moscow. Or Lenin, whose wife tells us he was a reckless gambler, and whose writings drip with venom. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Communism has wiped out millions of innocent victims, bankrupted countries, filled the air with lies and fear. Where is its good side?"

Patrascanu defended "the logic of Party doctrine."

I said doctrines as such meant nothing. "You can do atrocious acts under polite names. Hitler talked about a struggle for ~Lebensraum~ (vital space) and murdered whole populations. Stalin said 'We must care for men like flowers,' and he killed his wife and yours."

Patrascanu looked uncomfortable; but he was frank. "Our long-range purpose is to communize the world. There are few who want to go all the way with us, but we always find some who are willing for their own reasons to go with us for a time. First we had the Rumanian ruling classes and the king, who backed the Allies against the Nazis. When they had served our purpose, we destroyed them. We won over the Orthodox Church with promises, then used the smaller sects to undermine it. We used the farmers against the landlords and later the poor peasants against the rich farmers - and now all of them will be collectivized together. These are Lenin's tactical ideas, and they work!"

I said, "Everyone knows that all your fellow-travelers have been jailed, executed or somehow destroyed in the past. How can you hope to go on using people and throwing them away?"

Patrascanu laughed. "Because they are stupid. Here's an example. Ten years after World War I, the great Bolshevist thinker Bukharin opposed Trotsky's plans for making world revolution by force of arms. He argued that it was better to wait until the capitalist countries came to blows among themselves - Russia could then join the winning side and take the lion's share of conquered countries. A remarkable prophecy - but no one took it seriously. If the West had known that half of Europe and two-thirds of Asia would become Communist as a result, the last war would never have taken place. Fortunately our enemies don't listen to our argument or read our books, so we can speak openly."

I pointed out a flaw in his argument. "Don't you see, Mr. Patrascanu, that as you used people and then cast them aside, so your comrades have used you and thrown you away? Haven't you blinded yourself to the evil logic of Lenin's doctrine?"

For once Patrascanu's bitterness was unconcealed. He said: "When Danton was driven to the guillotine and saw Robespierre watching from a balcony, he called out, 'You will follow me!' And I assure you now that they will follow me - Ana Pauker, Georgescu and Luca, too."

So they did, within three years.

12

We spoke no more that evening, but at 10 P.M., after we had gone to bed, the door opened and my new name was called. Three men stood outside. One, whom I later knew as Appel, told me to dress. I did so, and Patrascanu whispered to put my great-coat on as well: it might dull the blows. A pair of black goggles was put over my eyes so that I could not see where I was going, and I was led along a

corridor to a room where I was put into a chair. Then the blindfold was taken off.

I sat before a table with a harsh, accusing light shining in my eyes. At first I saw only a shadowy figure opposite, but as I grew used to the glare I recognized a man called Moravetz. A former police inspector who had been in trouble for betraying secrets to the Communists, he had been rewarded now

with the job of interrogator.

"Ah," he said, "Vasile Georgescu. You'll find paper and pen on that desk. Take your chair over and write about your activities and your life."

I asked what interested him particularly.

Moravetz raised sarcastic eyebrows. "As a priest, you've heard any number of confessions. We've brought you here to confess to us."

I wrote an outline of my life up to the time of my conversion. Then, thinking the statement might come to the notice of Party leaders and have some effect, I explained at length how I – an atheist like themselves – had my eyes opened to the truth. I wrote for an hour or more before Moravetz took the paper and said, "Enough for tonight." I was led back to the cell where I found Patrascanu asleep.

Again several days passed without my being troubled. The Communists reverse normal police methods, which rely on the shock of arrest to make a prisoner talk. They prefer to let him "ripen." The interrogator never says what he wants; he merely approaches his prey suggestively from this direction and that so as to create anxiety and guilt. While the man is racking his brains for the reason of his arrest, tension is built up by other tricks: a constantly postponed trial, the tape-recorded sound of a firing squad, screams from other prisoners. He begins to make false judgments. One slip leads to another, until exhaustion forces him to accept his guilt. The interrogator becomes sympathetic. He offers hope and an end to suffering if the prisoner admits that he deserves punishment and tells all. So Appel returned in a few days and the first of my innumerable interrogations began.

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I was taken this time to a basement room a few steps down from the cell by Appel, who gave me a chair, offered me a toffee from his briefcase and settled down on a sofa. One of his colleagues took notes. Chewing steadily, Appel checked points in my statement and commented that a man's thinking was decided by his class; not being of proletarian origin, I was bound to have reactionary views. I felt sure that Appel was no proletarian either, and I pointed out that none of the great Party thinkers were "workers" in that sense. Marx was a lawyer's son, Engel's

father was a man of property, and Lenin came from the nobility. Class alone never dictated a man's convictions.

Appel broke in. "What were your connections with Mr. Teodorescu?"

"Teodorescu?" I said. "That's a fairly common name. Which one do you mean?"

But Appel did not say. Instead he turned to discuss the Bible and the prophecies of Isaiah on the coming of the Messiah. From time to time, without warning, he mentioned the names of people who had helped in distributing my books to Soviet soldiers or in handling relief for the World Council of Churches. The shafts came seemingly at random. Appel was always polite and never persistent. He appeared to be more interested in my reactions to sudden questions than in my answers and, after another hour, I was taken back to the cell to think what it might mean.

13

Patrascanu tried to amuse himself at my expense by talking about the Party's plans to uproot and eradicate Christianity in Rumania. Already Ana Pauker, Georgescu and other Central Committee members had met Justinian in secret and decided he would serve their main purpose well.

"Justinian," he said, "has as much to do with God as I have with the Emperor of Japan. As for old Patriarch Nicodim, he's in his dotage. What respect

can you have for a man who was issuing encyclicals at the start of the war, calling on everyone to fight the seven-headed Bolshevik dragon and then, when we broke with Hitler, urged his flock to march with the glorious Red Army against the Nazi monster? That's what Patriarch Nicodim did, and the whole country knows it. These are the princes of the Church, and the rest aren't much better. They won't lead you far!"

I replied that if he did not leave prison as soon as he expected, he might come to meet more exemplary Christians.

"Patriarch Nicodim is a good man," I said, "but old and exhausted. Nor can I condemn the future Patriarch Justinian and those who have been tricked

or forced into taking your road. It's too much like taking advantage of a girl and then calling her a harlot."

I thought this dig might carry my point with Patrascanu, who was apt to speak with crudity and predilection about sexual matters. I tried, too, to tell him what Christian love meant. He was too engrossed in his own troubles to listen much at first; but he was a bookish man, at a loss with nothing to read, and argued for the sake of distraction. On religion, he said, "I passed through all that at school. I used to pray, but later I gave it up."

I asked him why.

"Your Jesus asks too much. Especially when one is young."

I said, "I've never thought myself that Jesus asks anything from men. When my son Mihai was small, I gave him money to buy me a birthday present. So Jesus gives the virtues he seems to ask for and makes us better characters. But perhaps you didn't have good religious teachers."

"Probably. They're not too common." Patrascanu sat up and yawned. "Besides, there's a lot in Christianity I can't swallow."

"For example?"

"Humility, and especially submission to tyranny. Take St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. It says all

authority is from God, so we must behave ourselves, pay our taxes promptly and not kick against the pricks - this at a time when the ruler of the world was Nero!"

I said, "Read the Bible again and you'll find it full of revolutionary fire. It starts with the Jewish slaves revolting against Pharaoh. It goes on with Samuel, Jael, Jehu and many other rebels against tyranny. Before going further, ask yourself how the authority approved by God came to power. It's usually the result of an upheaval - so submission to authority means submission to those who have made a successful revolution. Washington became an authority by overthrowing the English."

"As Lenin overthrew the Tsars," Patrascanu put in.

"Only to introduce a worse terror. The man will

come who will end the Communist tyranny, too, and bring free government. Then he will be the authority from God. Then we should submit. The real teaching in this part of the Scripture is not submission to tyrants, but avoidance of useless bloodshed in revolutions which have no chance."

Patrascanu said, "What about 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's'? [MTT 22:21, MRK 12:17, LUK 20:25] With this axiom, Jesus was surely urging submission by the Jews to the Roman tyrant?"

"The first Caesar was a usurper," I said, "even in Rome. He was a general who had made himself dictator. His successors had no more right in Palestine, which became a Roman colony by force, than the Russians have here. So it's clear that Jesus meant, 'Give Caesar what we owe him, a boot in the backside, and pitch him out.'"

Patrascanu roared with laughter. "If every priest explained the Bible like you do, we'd soon reach a better understanding," he said.

I was not so sure.

One evening, he asked me to tell him the Christian belief in a nutshell. I recited the Nicean Creed and said, "In return you should tell me what the Communist creed really is."

Patrascanu thought for a moment. "We Communists believe that we will dominate the world," he said, and lay back on his grubby pallet.

Next morning he was taken from his cell. I never saw him again. We had become quite close in the week we had been together. I felt that he was moved by much of what I said, but it did not suit his plans to admit it, even to himself. It was years before I heard what became of him.

14

My next inquisitor, a little man called Vasilu who liked to talk out of the corner of his mouth, read from a typed list of questions. The first was also the hardest: "Write down the names of everyone you know, where you met them and what your relations with them were." There were many friends whom I wanted to shield, but if I left them out, and the police knew I had done so, they would be doubly suspect.

As I hesitated, Vasilu snapped, "Don't pick and choose. I said 'everyone.'"

To make a start, I wrote the names of my known assistants and parishioners. The list covered a page or two. I added Communist members of Parliament and every fellow-traveler and informer I could think of.

"Question Number Two," said Vasilu, "is to say what you have done against the State."

"What am I accused of?" I asked.

Vasilu slapped the table. "You know what you've done. Get it off your chest! Start by telling us about your contacts with your Orthodox colleague, Father Grigoriu, and what you think of him. Just write, and keep writing!"

Clergymen were always asked about one another – Protestants questioned about Orthodox priests, Catholics about Adventists, and so on, to stoke sectarian rivalries. Whatever you wrote might be used to trap you. A prisoner would be told, "Sign with a nickname – it's the way we work here." When he had

given several statements in different names, he would be asked to denounce a friend – with the warning that if he refused, everyone would be told he was an informer who had already given statements under false names. The threat was enough to make many real informers. During the long, solitary waits between interrogations, fresh questions were prepared and you tried to remember what you had said before, and what you had concealed. The inquisitors usually came in pairs, with their typed questions. If one went out, the other did not speak until he returned. Some interrogators, in those early days, were decent enough men who had to live somehow. One showed me, when his companion was out of the room, statements made against me. Several were signed by men I trusted, and I could guess the pressure that had been used on them.

I was still in the first stage of a long process. The number of prisoners was overwhelming, and qualified interrogators were few, but more were being trained in Soviet methods every day. At least, I had time to prepare myself, and I was put in good heart when a barber, while shaving me, whispered that Sabina was well and carrying on our work. My relief was beyond

words. I thought my wife might have been arrested also and Mihai, my son, left to starve or rely on the charity of neighbors. Now I was ready to ream off as many chapters from my spiritual biography as the interrogators liked. On other matters I revealed as little as possible. The simple fact that a friend had once visited the West might get his family arrested and earn him a savage beating.

So interrogations continued, month after month. You had to be convinced of your criminal guilt before Communist ideals could be implanted, and they took root only when you had succumbed to the belief that you were entirely, endlessly in the Party's power and had surrendered every fragment of your past.

It was said now in Rumania that life consisted of the four "autos": the "autocriticism" which had to be recorded regularly in office and factory; the "automobile" which took you to the Secret Police; the

"autobiography" which they made you write; and the "autopsy."

15

Knowing that torture lay ahead, I resolved to kill myself rather than betray others. I felt no moral scruples; for a Christian to die means to go to Christ. I would explain and He would surely understand. If St. Ursula had been canonized for killing herself rather than lose her virginity to the barbarians who sacked her monastery, then my duty to protect my friends was also higher than life.

The problem was to secure the means of suicide before my intention was suspected. Guards checked prisoners and their cells regularly for possible instruments of death: glass slivers, a piece of cord, a razor-blade. One morning, on the doctor's round, I said I could not remember all the details the interrogators needed because I had not slept for weeks. He ordered me a nightly sleeping pill and a guard peered into my mouth each time to see that it was gone. In fact, I held the pill under my tongue and took it out when he had left. But where to hide my prize? Not on my body, to which anything might happen. Not in my pallet, which had to be shaken and folded daily. There was the other pallet on which Patrascanu had

lain. I tore open a few stitches and every day hid another pill among the straw.

By the end of the month I had thirty pills. They were a comfort against the fear of breaking under torture, but I had fits of black depression at the thought of them. It was summer. I heard homely noises from the world outside. A girl singing. A tram-car grinding around the corner. Mothers calling sons, "Silviu, Emil, Matei!" Feathery seeds floated softly in to settle on my cement floor. I asked God what He was doing. Why was I being forced to put an end to a life which had been dedicated to His service? Looking up one evening through the narrow window, I saw the first star appear in the darkening

sky, and the thought came to my mind that God had sent this light, which had begun its apparently useless journey billions of years ago. And now it passed through the bars of my cell, consoling me.

Next morning the guard came in and, without a word, picked up the spare pallet with my hoarded pills in it and took it for some other prisoner. I was upset at first. Then I laughed, and felt calmer than I had for weeks. Since God did not want my suicide, then He would give me strength to bear the suffering ahead.

16

The Secret Police had been patient, I was told, but now it was time for some results. Colonel Dulgheru, their grand inquisitor, never failed to get them. He sat at his desk, still and menacing, with delicate hands outspread before him. "You've been playing with us," he said.

Dulgheru had worked before the war at the Soviet Embassy. Then, under the Fascists, he was interned and thus fraternized with Gheorghiu-Dej and other imprisoned Communists. They noted his tough qualities, intelligence and ruthlessness. So here he was, with delegated powers of life and death.

At once, Dulgheru began to question me about a Red Army man who had been caught smuggling Bibles into Russia, Until now the interrogators seemed to know nothing about my work among the Russians,

but although the arrested soldier had not given me away, it was discovered that we had met. Now, more than ever, I had to weigh every word, for in fact I had baptized the man in Bucharest and so enlisted him in our campaign.

Dulgheru's questions were persistent. He thought he had scented something important. In the weeks that followed, I was worn down by a variety of means. The beds were removed from the cell and I had barely an hour's sleep a night, balanced on a chair. Twice every minute the spy-hole in the door

gave a metallic click, and the eye of a guard appeared. Often when I dozed he came in and kicked me awake. In the end I lost all sense of time. Once I awoke to see the cell door ajar. Soft music sounded in the corridor: or was it an illusion? Then the sound became distorted and a woman's voice was sobbing. She began to scream. It was my wife!

"No, no! Please don't beat me. Not again! I can't bear it!"

There was the sound of a whip hitting flesh. The screams rose to an appalling pitch. Every muscle in my body was strained in a rictus of horror. Slowly the voice began to die away, moaning; but now it was the voice of a stranger. It faded into silence. I was left drained of feeling, trembling and drenched with sweat. Later I learnt that it was a tape-recording, but every prisoner who heard it thought that the victim was his wife or sweetheart.

Dulgheru was a refined barbarian, patterned on the Soviet diplomats with whom he had mixed. "I order torture with regret," he told me. Being all-powerful in the prisons, he could dispense with notes and witnesses, and often came alone to my cell at night to continue interrogation. One critical session dragged on for hours. He asked about my contact with the Church of England Mission. What had I done there? I said that I'd visited Westminster Abbey. He became more and more incensed.

"Do you know," he said with venom, "that I can order your execution now, tonight, as a counter-revolutionary?"

I said, "Colonel, here you have the opportunity for an experiment. You say you can have me shot. I know you can. So put your hand here on my heart. If it

beats rapidly, showing - that I am afraid, then know there is no God and no eternal life. But if it beats calmly, as if to say, 'I go to the One I love,' then you must think again. There is a God, and an eternal life!"

Dulgheru struck me across the face, and immediately regretted his loss of self-control.

"You fool, Georgescu!" he said. "Can't you see

that you're completely at my mercy and that your Savior, or whatever you call him, isn't going to open any prison doors? You'll never see Westminster Abbey."

I said, "His name is Jesus Christ, and if He wishes, He can release me, and I shall see Westminster Abbey, too."

Dulgheru glared at me as if struggling for breath. Then he shouted, "All right. Tomorrow you'll meet Comrade Brinzaru."

I had been expecting this. Major Brinzaru, the colonel's aide, presided over a room where clubs, truncheons and whips were kept. He had hairy arms like a gorilla. Other interrogators used his name as a threat. The contemporary Russian poet Voznesensky writes, "In these days of untold suffering, one is lucky indeed to have no heart," and Brinzaru was lucky in this way. He introduced me to his range of weapons. "Is there any you fancy?" he asked. "We like to be democratic here."

He displayed his own favorite, a long, black rubber truncheon. "Read the label." It was inscribed, "MADE IN U.S.A."

"We do the beating," said Brinzaru with a show of yellow teeth, "but your American friends give us the tools." Then he sent me back to my cell to think about it.

The guard told me that Brinzaru had worked before the war for a prominent politician and been treated as one of the family. After the Communist take-over which hoisted him up the ranks of the Secret Police, a young prisoner was brought to him for questioning. It was the politician's son, who had tried to start a patriotic movement. Brinzaru told him, "I used to hold you on my knee when you were a baby!" Then he tortured the lad and executed him with his

own hands.

Curiously, Brinzaru did not give me the threatened beating. On his nightly round of inspection, he flicked the spy-hole cover back to watch me for a moment. "Still there, Georgescu? What's Jesus doing tonight?"

I said, "He's praying for you." He walked away without replying.

Next day he was back again. Under his supervision, I was made to stand facing a wall with my hands raised above my head so that my finger tips just touched it. "Just keep him there," Brinzaru told the guard before leaving.

At last, the torture began. I do not want to make much of it, but it must be told because these things were common to all Secret Police prisons. First I stood for hours, long after my arms had lost all feeling, and my legs began to tremble and then swell. When I collapsed on the floor, I was given a crust and a sip of water and made to stand again. One guard relieved another. Some of them would force you to adopt ridiculous or obscene postures, and this went on, with short breaks, for days and nights. There was the wall to look at.

I thought of the walls referred to in the Bible, recalling a verse from Isaiah which saddened me: God says that Israel's wrongdoings put a wall between Him and the people. The failures of Christianity had allowed a Communist triumph, and that was why I had a wall before me now. Then I remembered a phrase, "With my Lord, I jump over the wall." I, too, might jump this wall into the spiritual world of fellowship with God. I thought of the Jewish spies who returned from Canaan to report that the cities were great and walled - but as the walls of Jericho came down, so the wall before me must also fall at the will of God. When pain was overwhelming me, I said to myself a phrase from the Song of Songs: "My beloved is like a roe or a young hart, behold, he standeth behind our wall." [SOS 2:9] I imagined that Jesus stood behind my wall, giving me strength. I remembered that, as long as Moses held up his hands on the mountain, the chosen people went forward to victory; perhaps our sufferings were helping the people of God to win their battle, too.

From time to time, Major Brinzaru looked in to ask whether I was willing to co-operate. Once, when I was on the floor, he said, "Get up! We've decided

to let you see Westminster Abbey, after all. You start now."

"Walk!" ordered the guard. I tried to pull my shoes on, but my feet were too swollen. "Come on! Hurry! Keep going round! I'll be watching from outside."

The cell was twelve paces round: four steps - one wall; two steps - the next; then four, then two. I shuffled around it in torn socks. The spy-hole clicked. "Faster!" shouted the guard. My head began to spin. "Faster - or do you want a beating?" I bumped painfully into a wall. My eyes stung with sweat. Round and round, round and round. Click! "Halt, turn about! Walk!" Round, round in the opposite direction. "Faster!" I stumbled, and picked myself up. "Keep moving!" When I fell the guard charged in and cracked me across the elbow with a club as I struggled up. The pain was so agonizing that I fell again. "Get up! Get moving! This is the ~manŠge~!"

Nearly everyone had to go through the ~manŠge~, or training ring as it was known. Hours went by before you got a cup of water or anything to eat. The thirst drove out hunger. It was even fiercer than the stabbing of hot knives that ran up your legs. Worst of all was having to start walking again after being allowed a few minutes rest, or a few hours at night in a stupor on the floor. Stiff joints, cracked muscles, lacerated feet would not support the body's weight. You clung to the walls, while guards screamed orders. When you could no longer stand, you went on all fours.

I do not know how many days and nights I spent in the ~manŠge~. I began to pray for the guards as I moved. I thought of the Song of Songs, in which we are told of the holy dance of the Bride of Christ in honor of her bridegroom. I said to myself, "I will move with as much grace as if this were a dance of divine love, for Jesus." For a while it seemed to me that I did. If a man wills to do everything that he has to do, then he does only the things which he wills - and the hardest trials, being voluntary, become easier. And as I went round and about, it seemed as if everything

was revolving around me. I could no longer distinguish one wall from another, or a wall from the door, just as in divine love one does not distinguish between good and evil men and can embrace everyone.

17

I had been virtually without sleep for a month when the guard fixed a pair of blacked-out goggles over my eyes and led me to a new interview office. It was a large, bare room. Behind a table sat three or four figures whom I saw only dimly because of the blinding light of the reflectors in my face. I stood before them handcuffed and in bare feet, wearing only a torn, filthy shirt. Familiar questions were repeated. I gave the same replies. This time there was a woman among the inquisitors. At one point she said shrilly, "If you don't answer properly, we'll have you stretched on the rack." The machine used last in England for forced confessions 300 years ago had been added to the Party's weapons of persuasion! I said, "In St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians it is written that we must strive to reach the measure of the stature of Christ. If you stretch me on the rack you'll be helping me to fulfill my purpose." The woman banged the table and there was a discussion behind the dazzle of the reflectors. Sometimes, a ready answer has the effect of deflecting a blow. I was not "racked"; instead, we went back to the Inquisition, to the ~bastinado~.

I was taken to another cell. A hood was pulled over my head. I was ordered to squat and place my arms around my knees. A metal bar was thrust between elbows and knees and then lifted on to trestles, so that I swung head down, trussed, with my feet in the air. They held my head while someone flogged the soles of my feet. The blows were like explosions. Some fell on my thighs and the base of my spine. I fainted and was revived by drenchings in cold water. Each time they said that if I gave just one of the names they wanted, it would stop. When they

took me down from the spit I had to be carried to

my cell.

On every journey to this room I wore the blacked-out goggles which prevented me from learning the prison layout. Sometimes the goggles were kept on while I was beaten. When you see a blow coming, you tense yourself to receive it. But blinded, not knowing where it will fall, or when, the fear is redoubled.

I passed through other tortures. Brinzaru had a nylon whip. After a few strokes with this, I lost consciousness. Once a knife was held to my throat while Brinzaru urged me to talk, if I wished to stay alive. Two men held me down. I felt them tighten their grip and the blade pierced the skin. Again I fainted, and woke to find my chest covered with blood. Water was poured down a funnel into my throat, until my stomach was bursting; then the guards kicked and stepped on me. I was left in a cell with two wolf dogs who were trained to leap forward, snarling, at the slightest movement: but not to bite. Some bread would be placed nearby, but you dared not touch it. In time you realized that the dogs would not attack; but often their teeth snapped inches from your face. I was also branded with a red-hot iron.

In the end I signed about myself all the "confessions" they wanted: that I was an adulterer and at the same time a homosexual, that I had sold the church bells and pocketed the money (although our church was a prayer-house without bells), that under cover of work for the World Council of Churches, I had spied with the object of overthrowing the regime by treachery; that I and others had infiltrated in times before the Party organization under false pretences and revealed its secrets.

Brinzaru read these confessions and asked: "Where are the names of those you passed the secrets on to?"

He was pleased when I gave him a score of names and addresses. It would certainly earn him a bonus and promotion. A few days later I received another flogging. The names had been checked. They

were those of men who had fled to the West or who had died. But in the respite I recovered a little strength.

Perhaps waiting was the worst torture. to lie

there, listening to screams and weeping, knowing that in an hour it would be my turn. But God helped me never to say a word which harmed another. I lost consciousness easily, and they wanted me alive. Every prisoner could be a source of further information, of use in some later twist of Party fortunes, no matter how long he was kept. A doctor was present at torture sessions to take the pulse and check that the victim was not about to escape into the next world while the Secret Police still had need of him. It was an image of Hell, in which torment is eternal and you cannot die.

It was hard to remember the Bible. Notwithstanding, I always tried to keep in mind how Jesus could have come to earth as a king, but chose instead to be condemned as a criminal and whipped. A Roman whipping was horrible, and I thought with every blow I received that He also knew such pain, and there was joy in sharing it with Him.

The mockery and humiliation were also more than many could support. Jesus often said that he would be scourged, mocked and crucified. I used to think that mockery, compared with scourging and crucifixion, was nothing. That was before I knew that a man could be forced to open his mouth so that others could spit or urinate in it, while our masters laughed and jeered.

It is not easy to believe, but just as the officers of the Spanish Inquisition thought it a sacred duty to burn heretics, so many Party men believed that what they did was justified. Colonel Dulgheru seemed to be one of these. He used to say, "It is in the vital interests of society that men should be maltreated if they withhold information needed to protect it." Much later on, when he saw me reduced to a wreck weeping from nervous fatigue, he said with something like pity, "Why don't you give in? It's all so futile. You're only flesh and you'll break in the end."

page 46 In God's Underground

But I had proof of the contrary: had I been just flesh I could not have resisted. But the body is only a temporary residence for the soul. The Communists relying on the instinct of self-preservation, thought a man would do anything to avoid extinction. They were mistaken. Christians who believed what they said in church knew that to die was not the end of

life but its fulfillment; not extinction, but the promise of eternity.

18

I had been seven months in Calea Rahova prison. It was October and the winter was already on us. We suffered much from cold now, as well as hunger and ill-treatment, and months of winter lay ahead. Gazing from my window at the sleet falling on the prison yard, I shivered, yet my spirits were not low. Whatever I could do for God by patient love in jail would be small, I thought, but the good in life always looks small in comparison with the amount of bad. While evil in the New Testament is depicted as a huge beast with seven horns, the Holy Spirit descended as a little dove. It is the dove which will defeat the beast!

One evening, a plate of savory goulash appeared, with four whole slices of bread. Before I could eat it, the guard returned and made me gather up my things and follow him to a place where other prisoners were lined up. Thinking of my lost goulash I went by truck to the Ministry of the Interior. This splendid building is much admired by tourists, who do not know that it is built over an extensive prison with a labyrinth of corridors and hundreds of helpless inmates.

My cell was deep underground. A light bulb shone from the ceiling on bare walls, an iron bedstead with three planks and a straw pallet. Air entered through a pipe high in the wall. I saw there was no bucket and I would have to wait always for the guard to take me to the latrine. This was the worst imposition for every prisoner. Sometimes they made you wait for hours, laughing at your pleadings. Men, and

women, too, went without food and drink for fear of increasing their agony. I myself have eaten from the dish in which I fulfilled my needs without washing it, because I had no water.

The silence here was practically complete - deliberately so. Our guards wore felt-soled shoes and you could hear their hands on the door before key found lock. Now and again there was the far-off sound of a prisoner hammering steadily on his door or screaming. The cell allowed only three paces in each direction, so I lay down and stared at the bulb. It

burnt all night. Since I could not sleep, I prayed. The outside world had ceased to exist. All the noises I was used to, the wind and rain in the yard, steel boot studs on stone floors, the buzz of a fly, a human voice, were gone. My heart seemed to shrink, as if it, too, would stop in this lifeless silence.

19

I was kept in solitary confinement in this cell for the next two years. I had nothing to read and no writing materials; I had only my thoughts for company, and I was not a meditative man, but a soul that had rarely known quiet. I had God. But had I really lived to serve God - or was it simply my profession?

People expect pastors to be models of wisdom, purity, love, truthfulness; they cannot always be genuinely so, because they are also men: so, in smaller or greater measure, they begin to act the part. As time passes, they can hardly tell how much of their behavior is play-acting.

I remembered the deep commentary which Savonarola wrote on the fifty-first Psalm, in prison, with his bones so broken that he could sign the self-accusatory paper only with his left hand. He said there were two kinds of Christian: those who sincerely believe in God and those who, just as sincerely, believe that they believe. You can tell them apart by their actions in decisive moments. If a man, planning to rob a rich man's home, sees a stranger who might be a policeman,

he holds back. If, on second thoughts, he breaks in after all, this proves that he does not believe the man to be an agent of the law. Our beliefs are proved by what we do.

Did I believe in God? Now the test had come. I was alone. There was no salary to earn, no golden opinions to consider. God offered me only suffering - would I continue to love Him?

My mind went back to one of my favorite books, ~The Pateric~, concerning certain fourth-century saints who formed desert monasteries when the Church was persecuted. It has 400 pages, but the first time I picked it up I did not eat, drink or sleep until I had finished it. Christian books are like good wine - the older the better. It contained the following passage:

> A brother asked his elder, "Father, what is silence?" The answer was, "My son, silence is to sit alone in your cell in wisdom and fear of God, shielding the heart from the burning arrows of thought. Silence like this brings to birth the good. O silence without care, ladder to heaven! O silence in which one cares only for first things, and speaks only with Jesus Christ! He who keeps silent is the one who sings, 'My heart is ready to praise Thee, O Lord!'"

I wondered how you could praise God by a life of silence. At first, I prayed greatly to be released. I asked, "You have said in Scripture that it is not good that a man should be alone - why do You keep me alone?" But as days passed into weeks my only visitor was still the guard, who brought wedges of black bread and watery soup, and never spoke a word.

His arrival reminded me daily of the saying, "The gods walk in soft shoes": in other words, the Greeks believed that we cannot be aware of the approach of a divinity. Perhaps in this silence I was coming closer to God. Perhaps, too, it would make me a better pastor; for I had noticed that the best preachers were men who possessed an inner silence, like Jesus. When the mouth is too much open, even to speak

good, the soul loses its fire just as a room loses warmth through an open door.

Slowly, I learned that on the tree of silence hangs the fruit of peace. I began to realize my real personality, and made sure that it belonged to Christ. I found that even here my thoughts and feelings turned to God and that I could pass night after night in prayer, spiritual exercise and praise. I knew now that I was not play-acting, believing that I believed.

20

I worked out a routine to which I kept for the next two years. I stayed awake all night. When the 10 P.M. bell signaled time to sleep, I began my program. Sometimes I was sad, sometimes cheerful,

but the nights were not long enough for all I had to do.

I began with a prayer in which tears, often of thankfulness, were rarely absent. Prayers, like radio signals, are heard more clearly by night: it is then that great spiritual battles are fought. Next, I preached a sermon as I would in church, beginning with "Beloved brethren," in a whisper which no guard could hear, and ending with "Amen." At last I preached with complete truth. No longer need I care what the bishop would think, the congregation say, or spies report. I was not preaching to a void. Every sermon is heard by God, his angels and saints; but I felt that among those around me listening were those who had brought me to faith, members of my flock, both dead and living, my family and friends. They were the "cloud of witnesses" of which the Bible speaks. I experienced the "communion of saints" of the Creed.

Every night I talked to my wife and son. I pondered on all that was fine and good in them. Sometimes my thoughts reached Sabina over the prison walls. She has a note in her Bible from this time:

"Today I saw Richard. I was lying in bed awake and he leaned over and spoke to me." I had concentrated all my power to transmit a message of love to her. We were richly rewarded for a few minutes' thought towards each other, every day; while so many marriages were destroyed by prison, ours held firm and was fortified.

Thinking about my family could also wound. I knew that Sabina would undergo intense pressure to divorce me. If she refused, and carried on her Church work as well, they would almost certainly arrest her. Then Mihai, who was only ten years old, would be left alone. I lay face down on the pallet and hugged it as if it were my son. Once I leapt up and smashed my fists on the steel door, shouting, "Give me back my boy!" The guards ran in to hold me down, while I was given an injection which made me unconscious for hours. When I awoke, I thought I might be going mad. I knew many who had done so.

It gave me courage to think of Jesus's mother, who stood at the foot of the cross with no word of complaint, I wondered whether we were right to

interpret her silence as sorrow unalloyed; surely she was proud, too, that He was giving His life for man? In the evening of that day, being Passover, she must have sung God's praises, according to Jewish ritual. I, too, must thank God for the suffering through which my little son might pass. Again, I took hope: even if Sabina had gone, we had friends who would surely care for Mihai.

One of my constant spiritual exercises was to imagine as if in a picture that I was surrendering all my life to Christ: past, present, future; my family, my church, my passions, my secret thoughts; every member of my body. I confessed my past sins to Christ without reserve and saw Him wipe them out with his hand. Often I wept.

In the first days, I spent much time searching my soul. It was a mistake. Love, goodness, beauty are shy creatures who hide themselves when they know they are observed. My son had given me a lesson on this point when he was five. I had reproved him,

"Jesus has a big exercise book and one of the pages bears your name. This morning he had to write that you disobeyed your mother. Yesterday you fought another boy and said it was his fault, so that went down too." Mihai said, after thinking a minute, "Daddy, does Jesus write only the bad things we do, or the good things as well?"

My son was so often in my mind! I remembered with delight how he had taught me theology. When I read from the Epistle to the Corinthians, "Examine yourself to see whether you are holding to the faith," he asked, "How should I examine myself?"

I replied, "Thump your chest and ask, 'Heart, do you love God?'" I gave my chest a blow as I spoke.

"That's not right," said Mihai. "Once the man at the station who hits train wheels with a hammer let me try, and he said, 'You only give them a little tap in case they break, not a big thump.' So I don't have to give myself a thump either to see if I love Jesus."

Now I knew that the quiet "Yes" of my heart when I put the question, "Do you love Jesus?" was enough.

Each night I passed an hour living in the minds of my chief adversaries - Colonel Dulgheru, for instance! Imagining myself in his place, I found a thousand

excuses for him; in this way I could love him and the other torturers. Then I considered my own faults from his point of view and found a new comprehension of myself. It is easier to console others than to comfort oneself, just as we can read with calm sympathy of the guillotine's victims, but are shocked when a revolution threatens us. So now, I went on to reverse events in time, to think of the present as if it were happening in some previous era and about the past as if it were happening today. In this way one can even hope to meet the saints of old.

I thought what I would do if I were a great statesman, a multimillionaire, the Emperor of China, the Pope. I dreamed of what life would be if I had wings or the cloak of invisibility, and decided that I had chanced on a definition of the human spirit as an invisible, winged force which can transform the

world. These were diverting fantasies, but time-wasting. A busy architect does not speculate about what he might do with non-existent materials - weightless stone, elastic glass. Meditation, like architecture, should be constructive. But such digression helped me to see how opposed entities can unite in the life of the spirit, and now I understood how Christ can contain all things, be lion of Judah and lamb of God.

Nor did I lack amusement in my empty cell. I told myself jokes and invented new ones. I played chess with myself, using pieces made from bread: Black versus Less-Black, with chalk from the wall. I could divide my mind so that Black should not know Less Black's next move, and vice-versa, and since I did not lose a game in two years, I felt that I could claim to be a master.

I found that joy can be acquired like a habit, in the same way as a folded sheet of paper falls naturally into the same fold. "Be joyful," is a command of God. John Wesley used to say that he "was never sad even one quarter of an hour." I cannot say the same of myself, but I learned to rejoice in the worst conditions.

21

The Communists believe that happiness comes

from material satisfaction; but alone in my cell, cold, hungry and in rags, I danced for joy every night. The idea came to me with boyhood memories of watching dancing dervishes. I had been moved past understanding by their ecstasy, the grave beauty of these Moslem monks, their grace of movement, as they whirled and called out their name for God, "Allah!" Later I learned that many others - Jews, Pentecostals, early Christians, people in the Bible like David and Miriam, altar-boys in Seville Cathedral celebrating Easter, even today, also danced for God. Words alone have never been able to say what man feels in the nearness of divinity. Sometimes I was so filled with joy that I felt I would burst if I did not give it

expression. I remembered the words of Jesus, "Blessed are you when men come to hate you, when they exclude you from their company and reproach you and cast out your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy!" I told myself, "I've carried out only half this command. I've rejoiced, but that is not enough. Jesus clearly says that we must also leap."

When next the guard peered through the spy-hole, he saw me springing about my cell. His orders must have been to distract anyone who showed signs of breakdown, for he padded off and returned with some food from the staff room: a hunk of bread, some cheese and sugar. As I took them I remembered how the verse in St. Luke went on: "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy - for behold your reward is great." It was a very large piece of bread: more than a week's ration.

I rarely allowed a night to pass without dancing, from then on; although I was never paid for it again, I made up songs and sang them softly to myself and danced to my own music. The guards became used to it. I did not break the silence, and they had seen many strange things in these subterranean cells. Friends to whom I spoke later of dancing in prison asked, "What for? What use was it?" It was not something useful. It was a manifestation of joy like the dance of David, a holy sacrifice offered before the altar of the Lord. I did not mind if my captors thought I was mad, for I had discovered a beauty in Christ which I had not known before.

Sometimes I saw visions. Once as I danced I seemed to hear my name called - not "Richard," but another name which I cannot reveal. I knew that it was I who was called under my new name and it flashed into my mind, I don't know why, "This must be the Archangel Gabriel." Then the cell was full of light. I heard no more, but I understood that I was to work together with Jesus and the saints to build a bridge between good and evil; a bridge of tears, prayers and self-sacrifice for sinners to cross over and join the blessed. I saw that our bridge had to be one

that even the weakest in goodness could use. Jesus promised that at the Last Judgment those who have fed the hungry and clothed the naked will sit at his right hand, while wrong-doers will be cast into the outer darkness. Now every man, surely, sometimes helps others and sometimes fails to do so: the body is one, but the spirit is not. The Bible speaks of the "inner" man, and of the "outward" man, of the "new," and "old"; of the "natural," and "spiritual" man. It is the inner, spiritual man who may achieve happiness in eternal life.

I saw that I must love men as they were, not as they should be. Another night I became aware of a great throng of angels moving slowly through the darkness towards my bed. As they approached they sang a song of love that Romeo might have sung to Juliet. I could not believe that the guards did not hear this marvelous passionate music which was so real to me.

Prisoners who are long alone often have visions. There are natural explanations for such phenomena which do not invalidate them. The soul uses the body for its own purposes. These visions helped to sustain my life: that is enough to prove that they were not mere hallucinations.

22

One night I heard a faint tapping on the wall beside my bed. A new prisoner had arrived in the next cell and was signaling to me. I answered, and provoked a flurry of fresh taps. Presently I realized that my neighbor was conveying a simple code:

A - one tap, B - two taps, C - three taps.
"Who are you?" was his first message.
"A pastor," I replied.
From this cumbersome start we developed a new system: one tap to indicate the first five letters of the alphabet, two taps for the second group of five, and so on. Thus B was a single tap, followed by a pause, then two more taps; F was two taps followed after a

space by one. Even this code did not satisfy my new neighbor. He knew Morse and passed on the letters one by one until I had learned them all.
He signaled his name.
"Bless you," I replied laboriously. "Are you a Christian?"
A minute went by. "I cannot claim so."
He was a radio-engineer, it appeared, awaiting trial on a capital charge; aged fifty-two and in poor health. He had lapsed from faith some years before, having married an unbeliever, and was in deep depression. I spoke to him through the wall every night, growing fluent in the use of Morse.
Before long, he tapped: "I should like to confess my sins."
It was a confession broken by many silences. "I was seven... I kicked a boy... because he was a Jew. He cursed me... May your mother... not be able to see you ... when she dies.... Mother was dying... when they arrested me."
When the man had unburdened many things from his heart he said he felt happier than he had for years. We became Morse friends as others become pen-friends. I taught him Bible verses. We exchanged jokes and tapped out the movements of chess games. I sent him messages about Christ, preaching in code. When the guard caught me at it, I was transferred to another cell, with another neighbor, and there began again. In time, many of us learned the code. Prisoners were often moved, and more than once I was betrayed by an informer, so I tapped out only Bible verses and words about Christ: I was not prepared to suffer for political arguments.
Men were forced by solitary confinement to delve into deeply-buried happenings. Old betrayals and dishonesties returned with inescapable persistence. It was as if they came into your cell and

looked at you in reproach: Mother, father, girls long ago abandoned, friends slandered or cheated of their due. All confessions I heard in Morse began, "When I was a boy," "When I was at school... I" The memory of old transgressions stood like savage watchdogs

before the sanctuary of God's peace. But when all other gates to heaven are shut for a man, the Kabbala tells us that there remains the ~bab hadimot~, the gate of tears, and it was through this gate that we prisoners had to pass.

23

One morning, when a neighbor tapped that it was Good Friday, I found a nail in the lavatory and wrote "JESUS" on my cell wall, hoping it might comfort those who came after me. The guard was angry. "You're for the carcer!" he said.

I was taken down to the corridor to a cupboard built into a wall, just high enough to stand in and twenty inches square, with a few small airholes and one for food to be pushed through. The guard thrust me in and closed the door. Sharp points stung my back. I jerked forward, to be pierced again in the chest by a second set of spikes. Panic went through me, but I forced myself to stand still. Then, moving cautiously in the dark, I felt the sides of the cupboard – all were studded with steel projections. Only by standing rigidly upright could I avoid impalement. This was the carcer.

My legs began to ache. By the end of an hour every muscle seemed to hurt. My feet, sore from the manŠge, were swelling up. When I collapsed, lacerating myself on the spikes, they let me out for a rest, then put me back. I tried to keep my mind on Christ's sufferings, but my own were too strong. Then I remembered that my son Mihai, when very young, had asked, "What shall I do, Daddy? I'm bored." I said, "Think about God, Mihai!" He replied, 'Why should I think about Him? I've only a small head: He has a great big head, so He ought to think about me." So now I told myself, "Don't try to think about God. Don't think at all." In that suffocating darkness I reminded myself that Indian yogi clear their minds of

thought by repeating a sacred formula, over and over again. Much the same method is used by monks on

Mount Athos with their interminable "prayer of the heart," in which a word is said for every heart-beat: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me!" I knew already that Christ was merciful, but just as I used to tell my wife every day that I loved her, so I thought, "I'll do the same with Jesus." I began to repeat, "Jesus, dear bridegroom of my soul, I love you." The quiet beating of a loving heart is a music that carries far, so I said this phrase to the same rhythm. At first I seemed to hear the devil sneering, "You love Him, and He lets you suffer. If He's all-powerful, why doesn't He take you out of the carcer?" I continued to say quietly, "Jesus, dear bridegroom of my soul, I love you." In a short time the significance of the words was blurred and then lost. I had ceased to think.

Later I was often to practice this detachment in bad moments. Jesus says in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, "For in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." This has been my experience of Him. Don't think - and Christ will come, taking you by surprise. But the clarity of His light is hard to bear. Sometimes I reversed the process and fled from it to my own thoughts.

24

I spent two days in the carcer. Some were kept in it for a week or more, but the doctor warned that my condition had become dangerous. Already I was living in a borderland between the living and the dead. As a result of my long confinement, and the lack of sun, food and air, my hair had ceased to grow. The barber did not need to shave me for days. My finger-nails were pallid and soft as a plant kept in the darkness.

Hallucinations began to possess my mind. I stared at my tin cup of water to convince myself in moments of despair that I was not in Hell, where there is no water - and then it turned into a helmet. I saw delicious dishes laid out on a table that stretched out far beyond the cell. From a long way off my wife

approached, she carried a plate piled high with smoking sausages, but I snarled at her, "Is that all? How small they are!" Sometimes my cell expanded into a library, with shelf after shelf of books in bindings reaching up into the darkness: famous novels, poetry, biographies, religious and scientific works. They towered up above me. At other times, thousands of faces turned eagerly towards me: I was surrounded by huge crowds, waiting for me to speak. Questions were shouted. Voices answered them. There were cheers and counter-cheers. A sea of faces stretched into infinity.

I was also troubled by dreams of violence against those who had put me in prison, and tormented by erotic fantasies. This is a Hell which is not easily understood by those who have not dwelt in it. I was thirty-nine when I entered prison, healthy and active, and now the return of tuberculosis brought increased sexual desire. Lying awake, I had hot sweaty dreams of sensual pleasure with women and girls, then - although I tried to drive them out - came visions of perversions and exaggerations of the act of love. Frustration and the sense of sin caused me horrible suffering: sometimes sharp and searing, at others dull, but always present.

I found a way of shaking off such hallucinations by treating them as hostile intruders, like the T.B. microbes in my body. So, far from blaming myself for their inroads, I claimed credit for resisting them. Once I regarded the hallucinations not as sins but as enemies, I could plan how to destroy them. Evil thoughts can be subdued by reason, if their consequences are calmly considered. I did not try to drive them out, knowing that they would slip in again by a side door; instead, I let them stay while I worked out the cost in real life if I surrendered to them. To give way to such temptations would surely bring misery to other families and my own. My wife would have to divorce me. My son's future would be wrecked. My parishioners would lose faith. And then, despised by all, I should still have to answer to God for the harm I had caused. As doctors employ one virus to fight

another, so we can use the Devil's maxim, "divide and

rule," to defeat him. The devil of pride - the fear of losing face - can be turned against the devil of lust. The devil of avarice hates vices that cost money!

25

One day, our latrines being blocked, they took me to the toilet used by the guards. There was a piece of mirror on the wall over the washbowl, and for the first time in two years I saw myself.

I had been young and healthy on entering jail. I had been considered handsome. Now, as I looked at what I had become, I laughed: sad laughter, Homeric laughter. So many had admired and loved me: now if they could see the fearful old man who stared back at me they would be appalled. It was a lesson to me that what is really fine in us is invisible to the eye. I would become uglier still - a skeleton and a skull; and, remembering this, my faith and desire to keep to the spiritual life were strengthened.

There was a torn newspaper in the toilet, the first I had seen since my arrest. It contained the news that Premier Groza had firmly decided to wipe out the rich, which struck me as funny - a Government bent on liquidating the wealthy, while the rest of the world was trying to end poverty. I looked for Patrascanu's name, in case he had been reinstated, but it was not among the Ministers in the Chamber where Groza's speech was made.

On my way back to my cell under escort, I heard a woman weeping and crying out in a crazed way. Her shrieks seemed to come from a level of the prison below us; they rose to a paroxysm, then were suddenly stopped.

A few days later a new prisoner was put in the cell next to mine. I tapped out a "Who are you?" message and received a prompt reply. It was Ion Mihalache, who had been a member of several pre-war governments and a colleague of the great political leader Iuliu Maniu. When the Party terror began,

Mihalache joined a group which tried to flee abroad. He was arrested at the airport and, in October 1947, sentenced to life imprisonment. Mihalache was over sixty. "All my life I have struggled to help my

countrymen, and this is my reward," he said.

"When you will all that happens, then what happens is only what you will," I signaled. "Renunciation is the way to peace."

He tapped back. "There is no peace without liberty."

I said, "In a country where tyranny reigns... prison is the place of honor."

He said that God was lost for him.

I signaled, "God is never lost for any man... We are the lost ones.... If we find ourselves... we find the Godhead within us.... Prison can help us in this search." He said that he would try again.

Before Mihalache was moved on two days later he told me that the woman whose screams we heard was the wife of a former Prime Minister, Ion Gigurtu. The way her cries stopped showed that they were giving her injections to silence her. When I rapped on the wall next there was no reply. Mihalache was gone.

26

Soon after this, my interrogation was resumed. It was usually conducted by Lieutenant Grecu, a tough young man, intelligent and self-assured, who had been indoctrinated with the belief that he was making a better world. His questioning brought us back once more to the famine relief which I had undertaken for the Scandinavian church mission. Did I still deny, he asked, that the funds were used for spying?

I said, "I can understand your suspecting the British and Americans of spending money for espionage here, but what interest could Norway or Sweden have in such activities?"

He retorted, "Both are tools of the imperialists."

"But Norway is famous for its democratic spirit,

and Sweden has had a socialist government for forty years."

"Nonsense!" he said. "They're as Fascist as the rest."

At our next meeting, Grecu said he had checked and thought I might be right.

He enquired next about the distribution of the

Gospel in Russian. I suggested that a director of the Bible Society called Emile Klein might be behind it. He asked why I had made repeated visits to the town of Iasi (one of the centers of this work). I said I had a standing invitation to call on the actual Patriarch.

Next morning I was called again. Grecu was at his desk, with a rubber truncheon in his hand.

"Your story was lies," he shouted. "Emile Klein died before you were arrested. That's why you named him. They've checked the dates of your trips to Iasi - the Patriarch Justinian was hardly ever there."

He pushed back his chair. "Enough! Here's some paper. We know you've communicated in code with other prisoners including Mihalache. Now we must know exactly what each of them said. We want to know your other breaches of prison rules. And tell the truth. If you don't..."

He cracked the truncheon on the desk. "You have half an hour," he said, and left the room.

I sat down to write. The first word had to be "Declaration." I had trouble in starting: it was two years since I had held a pen. I admitted that I had broken rules. I had tapped the Gospel message through the walls. I had hoarded pills to kill myself. I had made a knife out of a piece of tin, chessmen out of bread and chalk. I had communicated with other prisoners, but did not know their names. (I did not mention that I had received confessions and even brought men to faith with Morse.) I wrote, "I have never spoken against the Communists. I am a disciple of Christ, who has given us love for our enemies. I understand them and pray for their conversion; so that they will become my brothers in the Faith. I can give no statement about what others may have tapped to me, for a priest of God can never be a witness

for the prosecution. My calling is to defend, not to accuse.

Grecu returned on time, swinging his truncheon. He had been beating prisoners.

He picked up my "Declaration" and began to read. After a while, he put the truncheon aside. When he came to the end he looked at me with troubled eyes. He said, "Mr. Wurmbrand (he had never called me "Mr." before), why do you say you love me? This is one of your Christian commandments, that no one

can keep. I couldn't love someone who shut me up for years alone, who starved and beat me."

I said, "It's not a matter of keeping a commandment. When I became a Christian it was as if I had been reborn, with a new character which was full of love. Just as only water can flow from a spring, so only love can come from a loving heart."

For two hours we talked about Christianity and its relation to the Marxist doctrines on which he was brought up. Grecu was surprised when I said Marx's first work was a commentary on St. John's Gospel; nor did he know that Marx, in his foreword to ~Das Kapital~, wrote that Christianity - especially in its Protestant form - is "the ideal religion for the renewal of lives made wretched by sin." Since my life had been made wretched by sin, I said, I was simply following Marx's advice in becoming a Protestant Christian.

After this meeting Grecu called me to his office almost every day for an hour or two. He had confirmed the quotations. This became the pretext for long discussions about Christianity, in which I stressed its democratic and revolutionary early spirit.

Repeatedly, Grecu said, "I was brought up an atheist, and I'll never be anything else." I told him, "Atheism is a holy word for Christians. Our forefathers when they were thrown to the wild beasts for their faith, were called atheists by Nero and Caligula. So if anyone calls himself an atheist, I respect him."

Grecu smiled. I went on, "Lieutenant, one of my ancestors was a rabbi of the seventeenth century. His biographers record how he met an atheist and said,

'I envy you, dear brother! Your spiritual life must be so much stronger than my own. When I see a man in trouble I often say, "God will help him," and pass on. You don't believe in God, so you have to take on his burdens and help everyone you meet.'

"Christians don't criticize the Party for atheism, but for producing the wrong type of atheist. There are two sorts - those who say, 'There is no God, so I can do all the evil I like,' and those who reason, 'Since there is no God, I must do all the good that God would do if He existed.' The greatest of all atheists in this second sense, was Christ himself. When he saw men hungry, sick and in distress, he didn't pass

on, saying, 'God will help them.' He acted as if the whole responsibility were his own. So people began to ask, 'Is this man God? He does God's work!' That is how they discovered that Jesus was God. Lieutenant, if you can become this sort of atheist, loving everyone and serving everyone, men will soon discover that you have become a son of God; and you yourself will discover the Godhead in you."

These arguments may shock some people. But St. Paul tells us that missionaries must be Jews among the Jews, Greeks among the Greeks. I had to be a Marxist with the Marxist Grecu and speak the language he understood. The words went to his heart. He began to think and to love Jesus. Two weeks later, in his khaki uniform with the blue tabs of the Security Police at his collar, Grecu confessed to me in my patched prison rags. We became brethren.

From then on, he bravely helped prisoners as best he could, through difficulties and dangers. He still gave lip-service to the Party and played an outward role, but one day he disappeared, and no one knew what became of him. I made cautious enquiries among the guards, who thought he had been arrested. To hide a true conversion is not easy.

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I met other secret believers among the Secret Police, and some still go about their duties. Don't say a man cannot torture and pray at the same time! Jesus tells us of a tax-gatherer (whose work in Roman times went hand-in-hand with extortion and brutality) who prayed for mercy as a sinner, and went home "justified." The Gospel does not say that the man immediately abandoned his unpleasant job. God looks into the heart and sees in a good prayer the promise of a new life in the future.

During my second year of confinement, one of these divided souls was put in my cell. All the time he stayed with me, his hands were chained behind his back. I had to feed him and do everything for him.

Dionisiu was a young sculptor, full of new ideas in a world which asked only flattering busts of Stalin. He had no money to buy bread, so he took a post with the Secret Police which obliged him to beat prisoners; but at the same time he ran great risks to warn them of informers. Finding himself under suspicion,

Dionisiu decided to flee the country; then, when close to freedom, was compelled by some inner urge to return and give himself up. These split personalities are found everywhere under Communism. Dionisiu had been pulled in two directions all his life.

For ten nights, all through the night, I taught Dionisiu from the Bible. His sense of guilt was driven out. Before they moved him from my cell he said, "If one of the fifteen priests in my little town had stopped to talk to me when I was younger, I should have found Jesus long ago."

28

Interrogation did not cease with Lieutenant Grecu's departure but God granted me the gift of being

able to forget the names of all for whom I could cause trouble. Although in prison I composed more than 300 poems, totaling 100,000 words, and wrote them all down on my release, I could make my mind a blank during interrogation. So a new device was tried.

On the pretext that my tuberculosis had worsened - and, indeed, my coughing was almost continuous - the doctors ordered me a new drug: a yellow capsule which brought long sleep filled with delightful dreams. When I awoke I was given another. I remained unconscious for some days, awakened only by guards bringing meals which had become light and wholesome.

My recollection of the resumed questioning is hazy. I know that the drug did not make me betray my friends, because when I was put on trial later, I was tried alone. No grand trial of the men behind the World Council of Churches' "spy net" ever took place. The drug was used on Cardinal Mindszenty, the Trotskyists and many others. It weakens will-power until the victim goes into a delirium of self-accusation. Later, I was to hear men who were taking the course, banging on cell doors and demanding to see the political officer so that they might make new charges against themselves. The treatment can also have long-term effects: men who had taken it months before later confessed to me sins they had no chance of committing. Perhaps the tuberculosis in my body

counteracted the drug. Perhaps I had received too big a dose of it. At all events, by God's grace, I was saved from treachery.

29

I became still weaker after the drugging, and one day collapsed completely. But although I could rise from bed only with extreme effort, my mind remained alert for a time. I was ever afraid of its lucidity.

It is no myth that the great St. Anthony, Martin Luther and many other more ordinary men have seen

the Devil. I saw him once, as a child. He grinned at me. This is the first time I have spoken of it in half a century. Alone in the cell, now, I felt his presence again. It was dark and cold, and he was mocking me. The Bible speaks of places "where satyrs dance," and this had become such a place. I heard his voice day and night, 'Where's Jesus? Your Savior can't save you! You've been tricked, and you've tricked others. He isn't the Messiah - you followed the wrong man!" I cried aloud, "Then who is the true Messiah who will come?" The answer was plain, but too blasphemous to repeat. I had written books and articles proving Christ was the Messiah, but now I could not think of one argument. The devils who made Nyils Hauge, the great Norwegian evangelist, waver in his faith while in jail, who made even John the Baptist doubt in his dungeon, raged against me. I was weaponless. My joy and serenity were gone. I had felt Christ so close to me before, easing my bitterness, lightening the darkness, but now I cried, "~Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?~" and I felt utterly forsaken.

During those black, horrible days, I slowly composed a long poem which may not be easily accepted by those who have not known any similar physical and spiritual state. It was my salvation. By word, rhythm and incantation, I was able to defeat Satan. Here is an unrhymed and unmetrical version which gives the exact meaning of the Rumanian:

> From childhood I frequented temples and churches. In them God was glorified. Different

priests sang and censed with zeal. They claimed it right to love You. But as I grew, I saw such deep sorrow in the world of this God that I said to myself, "He has a heart of stone. Otherwise He would ease the difficulties of the way for us." Sick children struggle with fever in hospital; sad parents pray for them. Heaven is deaf. The ones we love go to the valley of death, even when our prayers are long. Innocent men are burned alive in furnaces. And heaven is silent. It lets things be. Can God wonder, if, in undertones, even the believers begin to doubt? Hungry, tortured,

persecuted in their own land, they have no answers to these questions. The Almighty is disgraced by the horrors that befall us.

How can I love the creator of microbes and of tigers that tear men? How can I love Him who tortures all his servants because one ate from a tree? Sadder than Job, I have neither wife, child nor comforters, and in this prison there is neither sun nor air and the regime is hard to endure.

From my bed of planks they will make my coffin. Stretched upon it, I try to find why my thoughts run to You, why my writings all turn towards You? Why is this passionate love in my soul, why does my song go only to You? I know I am rejected, soon I will putrefy in a tomb.

The bride of the Song of Songs did not love when she asked if You are "rightly loved." Love is its own justification. Love is not for the wise. Through a thousand ordeals she will not cease to love. Though fire burns and the waves drown her, she will kiss the hand that hurts. If she finds no answer to her questions she is confident and waits. One day the sun will shine in hidden places and all will be made plain.

Forgiveness of many sins only increased Magdalene's burning love. But she gave perfume and shed tears before You said Your forgiving word. And had You not said it, still she would have sat and wept for the love she has towards You, even being in sin. She loved You before Your blood was shed. She loved You before You forgave. Neither do I ask if it is right to give You

love. I do not love in hope of salvation. I would love You in everlasting misfortune. I would love You even in consuming fire. If You had refused to descend to men, You would have been my distant dream. If You had refused to sow Your word, I would love You without hearing it. If You had hesitated and fled from the Crucifixion and I were not saved, still I would love You. And even if I found sin in You, I would cover it with my love.

Now I will dare to say mad words, so that all may know how much I love. Now I will touch untouched strings and magnify You with a new

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music. If the prophets had predicted another, I would leave them, not You. Let them produce a thousand proofs, I will keep my love for You. If I divined that You were a deceiver, I would pray for You weeping and, though I could not follow You in falsehood, it would not lessen my love. For Saul, Samuel passed a life in weeping and severe fasting. So my love would resist even if I knew You lost. If You, not Satan, had risen wrongly in revolt against Heaven and lost the loveliness of wings and fallen like an archangel from high, hopeless, I would hope that the Father would forgive You and that one day You would walk with Him again in the gold streets of Heaven.

If You were a myth, I would leave reality and live with You in a dream. If they proved You did not exist, You would receive life from my love. My love is mad, without motive, as Your love is, too. Lord Jesus, Send some happiness here. For more I cannot give you.

When I had completed this poem, I no longer felt the nearness of Satan. He had gone. In the silence I felt the kiss of Christ, and everyone is silent when he is kissed. Quiet and joy returned.

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PART TWO

After nearly three years of solitary confinement, I

was close to death. I spat blood often.

Colonel Dulgheru said, "We're not murderers like the Nazis. We want you to live - and suffer." A specialist was called. Anxious to avoid infection, he made his diagnosis through a spy-hole in the cell door. Orders were given for my transfer to a prison-hospital.

They carried me up from the underground cells, and in the yard of the Ministry of the Interior I saw moonlight and stars again. Lying in an ambulance, I caught familiar glimpses of Bucharest. We were moving in the direction of my house and for a moment I thought I was being taken home to die. When we were almost there, the ambulance turned off and began to climb a hill on the outskirts of the city. I knew then that we were going to Vacaresti, one of the great monasteries of Bucharest which during the last century had been turned into a jail. The fine church and chapel-of-ease had become store sheds. Many walls had been knocked down between monks' cells, making them into big rooms in which prisoners lived by the score. A few cells remained in which men could be isolated.

A sheet was wrapped around my head before the guards lifted me out of the ambulance. They gripped me under the arms and I was half-carried across the courtyard, up some stairs and along a balcony. When the sheet was removed, I was alone in a narrow, bare

cell. I heard an officer talking to a guard on the verandah outside.

"No one is allowed to see this man except the doctor, and then you must be there," he said. My continued existence was to remain a secret.

The guard, a grizzled little man, was made curious by these precautions. When the officer had left he asked what I had done. I said, "I am a pastor and a child of God."

He whispered, bending over me, "Praise be to the Lord! I'm one of Jesus's soldiers!" He was a secret member of "The Army of the Lord," a revivalist movement which had branched off from the Orthodox Church. In spite of being persecuted by Communists and clergy alike, it had spread rapidly through the villages, gathering hundreds of thousands of followers.

The guard's name was Tachici. We exchanged

Bible verses and he helped me as much as he dared - warders had been sentenced to twelve years for giving an apple or a cigarette to a prisoner. I was too weak to leave the bed, and often I lay in my dirt. For a short spell in the morning, I could think clearly, then I tossed and turned in delirium. I slept little. But there was a small window through which I could see the sky again. And in the morning I was awoken by a strange sound - it was so long since I had heard the song of the birds!

I told Tachici. "Martin Luther, when he walked in the woods, used to raise his hat to the birds and say, 'Good morning, theologians - you wake and sing, but I, old fool, know less than you and worry over everything, instead of simply trusting in the heavenly Father's care.'"

The window revealed a corner of grass and yard, usually empty. Sometimes white-coated doctors scurried across, afraid even to glance up. They had to practice medicine "in the spirit of the class-war."

I could hear men talking when they were out for exercise. In the past I had sometimes longed for the sound of a human voice, but now it was an irritation.

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Men spoke nothings. Their thoughts seemed trivial and false.

An old man's voice came from the next cell one morning. "I'm Leonte Filipescu. Who are you?"

I recognized the name of one of Rumania's first Socialists, a brilliant man whom the Party had used and then discarded. "Fight your illness," he called. "Don't give in! We'll all be free in two weeks' time."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"The Americans are driving the Communists back in Korea. They'll be here in two weeks."

I said, "But even if they meet no opposition, it will surely take them more than a fortnight to reach Rumania?"

"Bosh! Distance is nothing to them. They have supersonic jets!"

I did not argue. Prisoners lived on their illusions. If the daily gruel was a little thicker, it implied that an American ultimatum had frightened Russia, and so our treatment was being improved! If someone was knocked down by a warder, it meant the Communists were making the most of their last days of

power. Men came back in high spirits from the exercise yard: "King Michael has broadcast that he will be back on his throne next month!"

No man could bear to think that he would really spend the next ten or twenty years in prison. Filipescu was still hopeful of early release when he was moved out, a month later, to another prison-hospital, where we were to meet again. In his place came a leader of the Fascist Iron Guard, Radu Mironovici, who claimed to be a fervent Christian but was always spouting hatred of the Jews.

I asked Tachici to help me up in bed and called to Mironovici, "When you take Holy Communion in your Orthodox church, are the bread and wine transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ?" He answered that they were.

"Jesus was a Jew," I said. "If the wine becomes His blood, then that blood is Jewish, isn't it?"

Reluctantly, he supposed so. I went on: "Jesus

says that whoever eats His body and drinks His blood will have eternal life. So, to have eternal life, you have to add to your Aryan blood a few drops of Jewish blood. How then can you hate Jews?"

He had no answer. I begged him to see that it was absurd for a follower of Jesus, who was a Jew, to hate Jews - just as it was absurd for the Communists to be anti-Semitic, since they believed in a Jew called Karl Marx. Mironovici was presently moved to a distant cell but he told Tachici: "A part of my life which was false has fallen away. I was a Christian who was too proud to follow Christ."

2

On a day when I was running a high temperature and feeling sick and faint, the guards came for me again. They draped a sheet over my head and led me along a corridor. When the sheet came off, I was in a large, bare room with barred windows. Four men and a woman sat facing me behind a table. This was my trial and they were my judges.

"A lawyer has been nominated to defend you," said the president of the court. "He has waived your right to call witnesses. You may sit down."

Guards held me on a chair, while I was given an

injection to steady me. When the waves of nausea and dizziness cleared, the prosecutor was on his feet. He was saying that I stood for the same criminal ideology in Rumania as Josef Broz Tito did in Yugoslavia. I thought I must be delirious. At the time of my arrest Marshal Tito was held up as a model Communist – I did not know that he had since been revealed as a deviationist and traitor. He continued his interminable speech about my guilt: spy work through the Scandinavian church missions and the World Council of Churches, spreading imperialist ideology under cover of religion, infiltrating the Party under the same pretense, with the real purpose of destroying it, and so on. As the voice continued, I felt

myself slipping from the chair, and proceedings were delayed while I received another injection.

The defense lawyer did what he could. It was not much.

"Have you anything to say?" asked the president. His voice seemed far away and the room was growing dark. Only one thing came into my confused brain.

"I love God," I said.

I heard my sentence: twenty years' hard labor. The trial had taken ten minutes. As I left, the sheet was wrapped around my head again.

3

Two days later, Tachici whispered to me, "You're leaving. God be with you!" Another guard followed and, between them, they carried me to the main gate. I had a view of Bucharest spread below – the last time I was to see it for six years. Regulation chains weighing fifty pounds were hammered into place around my ankles. I was lifted into a truck in which there were already some forty men and a few women. All, even the sick, were chained. Near me, a girl began to weep. I tried to comfort her.

"You don't remember me?" she sobbed.

I looked more closely, but her face meant little.

"I was one of your congregation." After my arrest, poverty had turned her to theft, she told me, and now she had to serve three months. "I'm so ashamed." Her voice was full of tears. "I was in your church, and now you're a martyr and I'm a thief."

"I'm a sinner, too, saved by the grace of God," I said. "Believe in Christ and your sins will be forgiven you."

She kissed my hand, promising that on her release she would let my family know that she had seen me.

At a railway siding, we were loaded into a special wagon for transporting prisoners. The windows were tiny and opaque. As we rattled slowly across the

plain and into the Carpathian foothills, we found that all of us had tuberculosis and decided that we must be bound for Tirgul-Ocna, where there was a sanatorium of sorts for T.B. prisoners. For some 400 years convicts had worked at the local salt mines, and thirty years ago a famous doctor, Romascanu, built the sanatorium and gave it to the State. It had an excellent reputation before the Communists took over.

After a 200-mile journey, which took a day and night, we came to the station of Tirgul-Ocna, a town of 30,000 people. With six other men unable to walk, I was laid on the back of a cart. The others hauled us, while the guards looked on, to a big building at the edge of the town. As I was carried in, I saw a familiar face. It was Dr. Aldea, an ex-Fascist who had been converted and become a family friend. When I had been helped to a bed in the quarantine room, he examined me.

"I'm a prisoner myself," he said, "but they let me work as a doctor. There are no nurses and only one physician, so we must look after each other as best we can."

He took my temperature and made his check.

"I won't deceive you," he said. "There's nothing we can do. You may have about two weeks to live. Try to eat what they give you, although it is not good. Otherwise..." He touched my shoulder and moved on.

During the next days, two men died who had been in the cart from the station. I heard another of them pleading hoarsely with Aldea, "I swear I'm better, doctor. The fever's going, I know. Listen, please! Today I coughed blood only once. Don't let them put me in Room Four."

I asked the man who brought my watery gruel what happened in Room Four. He put the plate down carefully and replied, "That's where you go when

they know there is no hope."
I tried to eat the gruel but could not. Someone fed me with a spoon. The food would not stay down. Dr. Aldea said, "I'm sorry, but they insist. You'll have to go to Room Four."
I rejoined my companions from the cart.

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4

I might already have been dead. Prisoners crossed themselves as they passed the foot of my bed. I lay most of the time in a coma. If I groaned, others turned me on my side or gave me water.
Dr. Aldea could do little. "If only we had some modern drugs," he said. A new American discovery, streptomycin, was rumored to be doing wonders against tuberculosis; but the Party line ruled that this was all Western propaganda.
During the next fortnight, four men who entered the room with me died. Sometimes I was not sure myself whether I was alive or dead. At night I slept in snatches, woken by stabs of agony. Other prisoners turned me on my side an average of forty times to ease the pain. Pus was running from a dozen sores. My chest was swollen with it, and the spine was also affected. I spat blood constantly.
My soul and body were linked by the feeblest ties, and I moved to the borders of the physical world. I put a question to my guardian angel: "What kind of guardian are you who cannot keep me from this suffering, nor even from un-Christian thoughts?" And in a flash of dazzling light that seemed to last a thousandth part of a second, I saw a being who was many-armed as Krishna and heard his voice: "I cannot do all I should for you. I, too, am a convert."
I didn't know the Bible, nor dogma at that time. My mind didn't work so I couldn't judge the objective value of the vision. Vaguely I remembered that Orthodox mystics speak about isolated cases when black angels have been brought back to God's service. However, conversion can't change completely the character of those who have been very evil, even when the repentance has been deep. In any case, under those circumstances, the vision offering some explanation for things through which I passed helped me greatly then.

I survived the first crisis. Dr. Aldea's look of pity

began to change to puzzlement as I clung to life. I received no medicine, but for an hour in the morning the fever fell slightly and my mind was clearer. I began to look round and take stock of my surroundings.

5

The room contained twelve beds, close together, and some small tables. The windows were open and I could see men working in a vegetable patch, and beyond them high walls and barbed wire. It was very quiet. There were no alarm bells here, no shouting warders - indeed, no warders. They feared infection and kept away from the patients as much as possible. So Tirgul-Ocna was administered from a distance, and through neglect and indifference became one of the less rigorous prisons. Scarcely anything was provided or done for us. We wore the clothes in which we had been arrested, patched together over the years with whatever could be found.

Food was brought by common-law criminals to the door of the political section, and carried from there to the cells. Those who could walk, went for their ration, the rest were given it in bed. There was watery cabbage soup, a few haricot beans, or a thin skilly made of barley or maize.

A few prisoners who were well enough dug the plot outside the building. The rest lay on their plank beds and gossiped the hours away. But in Room Four the atmosphere was different. Because no one ever left it alive, it was known as "the death room."

Scores of men died, and their places were taken by others in the thirty months I lay in this room. But here is a remarkable fact. Not one died an atheist. Fascists, Communists, saints, murderers, thieves, priests, rich landowners and the poorest peasants were shut together in one small cell. Yet none of them died without making his peace with God and man.

Many entered Room Four as firmly convinced

unbelievers. I saw their unbelief collapse, always, in the face of death. I have heard it said: "If a cat crosses a bridge, it doesn't mean the bridge is sound; but if a train crosses, then it surely is." So if a man calls himself an atheist as he sits with his wife over tea and cakes, that is no proof of atheism. A true conviction must survive enormous pressure, and atheism does not.

6

Old Filipescu often recited passages of Shakespeare, whom he loved, or told us stories from his life to pass the time. He had been a revolutionary for fifty years. The first of his many arrests for political agitation was in 1907. But in 1948, the Secret Police came for him. "I suffered for Socialism before you were born," he told them. They retorted that he should have joined the Communists, in that case, and shared the fruits of victory.

"I told these youths, 'Socialism is a living body with two arms – Social Democracy and revolutionary Communism. Cut off one and Socialism is crippled!' They laughed."

Filipescu was sentenced to twenty years. A warder told me, "you're going to die in prison!" I replied, 'I haven't been sentenced to death, so why do you want to kill me?'"

He told us how he had started life as a shoemaker, but had given himself an education and learned to appreciate the beautiful in life. He accepted Marxist teachings on religion – that the Church was on the side of the oppressor, that the clergy were kept by the rich to persuade the poor that their reward would come in Heaven.

But no one knows the depths of his own heart. Just as many think themselves religious and are not, so some think they are atheists, without being so. Filipescu denied God, but he was denying only his primitive conception of the word, not the realities of love and righteousness and eternity.

I suggested this to him.

"I believe in Jesus Christ and love Him as the greatest of human beings," he said, "but I cannot think of Him as God."

His condition was growing steadily worse. Within a fortnight, after a series of hemorrhages, the end came. He spoke his last words to me. "I love Jesus," he murmured. There had been several deaths that week, and he was thrown naked into a common grave which the prisoners had dug.

General Tobescu, a former chief of the Gendarmerie, raised his voice from the corner when he heard this: "This is the fate the Socialists in the West are preparing for themselves when they make allies of the Communists."

The Abbot Iscu of Tismana, my neighbor, crossed himself. "At least we may be grateful that he came to God at the end," he said gently.

Sergeant-Major Bucur disagreed, from across the room. "Nothing of the sort! He told us he couldn't think of Christ as God."

I said, "Filipescu will have found out the truth by now in the other world, for he loved Jesus, who will never reject anyone. The robber converted on Golgotha to whom Jesus promised paradise also called him simply man. I believe in the Godhead of Jesus - and also in His love towards those who cannot see it."

Bucur loved no one, but he worshipped his conception of the State, with himself as viceroy of the village where he had dispensed his own brand of justice. He was fond of telling everyone how, as gendarmerie sergeant, he had beaten thieves and beggars, beaten his own men when they dared to answer back, and - especially - beaten Jews. "Not a mark on any of them," he would say proudly; "You put sacks of loose sand across their backs first. It hurts just as badly, but they can't complain, because they've nothing to show!"

Bucur could not understand why he had been deposed under the new regime. He was ready to thrash

anti-Communists with as much relish as anyone else in the way of duty.

Although he was very ill, Bucur would not admit it. When Dr. Aldea was examining him one evening, he burst out, "Why are you keeping me here? There's nothing much wrong with me. I'm not like these others!"

Aldea looked at the thermometer and shook his

head. "No," he said. "You're much the worst. You should stop arguing and think about your soul."

Bucur was furious. "Who do you think you are?" he shouted after the doctor's retreating back.

"I suspect Aldea has Jewish blood," he added - it was the worst that Bucur could think of anyone.

Bucur liked to quarrel with Moisescu, a small, middle-aged Jew whose bed was close to his.

"The Iron Guard knew how to deal with you," he said.

"Do you know," said Moisescu mildly, "that it was as a member of the Iron Guard that I was arrested?" A laugh went round the room.

"It's true," he protested. "After the Iron Guard were overthrown, it was a terrible crime to have a green shirt in your possession because it was regarded as their uniform. We Jews had lost so much during their reign that I thought, 'Here's a chance to get some of our own back. Buy up all the green shirts left unsold, dye them blue and sell them.' My house was crammed with all the green shirts in Bucharest when the police came for a search. They wouldn't listen to my explanation, so I was labeled as an Iron Guard. So a Jew was sent to prison as a Nazi sympathizer!"

Although Bucur loudly declared that he was a militant Christian, his whole life had been a quarrel with God. He went to church, but found no guide. The priests of his village were not ministers of religion, but masters of ceremonial. He could not understand, now, why he was suffering and dying, nor what true faith meant.

I told him: "You feel now that you have no reason to hope. But the night is darkest before sunrise.

Christians believe that the dawn will come. Faith can be put in two words: 'though' and 'yet.' In the Book of Job [JOB 13:15] we read, 'Though the Lord slay me, yet I will trust Him,' Many times these words come together in the Bible. They tell us to have faith in the darkest moments."

Bucur was pleased that someone should take an interest in him. But he showed no remorse for the cruelty and evil of his past; until the day on which he realized that Dr. Aldea had been right. His life was ebbing quickly. He said, in a frightened voice, "I'm dying for my country."

For hours he was unconscious. When he awoke, he said, "I want to confess - before you all. I have sinned so much. I cannot die thinking of it." His voice gained a strange calm. He told us how he had killed scores of Jews, acting not under orders, but because he knew he would never be punished. He had murdered women, and a boy of twelve years. He had been thirsty for blood, like a tiger.

At the end of the recital, he muttered, "Now Mr. Wurmbrand will hate me."

I replied, "No - you yourself hate this creature who killed. You have reviled and rejected him. You are no longer that murderer. A man can be born again."

Next morning he still clung weakly to life. "I did not tell everything yesterday," he said. "I was afraid."

He had shot children in their mother's arms. When his ammunition had gone he had clubbed them to death. His terrible story seemed endless, but when at last it was over, he fell into a sleep. His breathing was hoarse and irregular. His breast rose and fell as if he could have never enough air. We were all silent. His hands clenched and unclenched on the soiled blanket, and then hands clasped themselves around the small cross at his neck. There was a tortured rattling from his throat and the breathing stopped.

Someone called out to a prisoner in the corridor. Two men came to take Bucur's body. The morning sun poured through the open windows on to his face, but now that the eyes were closed and the hard lines

of the mouth relaxed, his features in death showed a great peace, such as he had never known in life.

7

Prisoners from other wards came often to Room Four to pass the night with us, helping the dying and offering comfort.

At Easter, a friend brought something wrapped in a twist of paper for Valeriu Gafencu, a former Iron Guard trooper. They came from the same town. "It's been smuggled in," he said. "Open it!"

Gafencu undid the paper and revealed two lumps of a glittering white substance - sugar! None of us had seen pieces of sugar for years. Our wasted

bodies craved for it. All eyes were on Gafencu, and the prize in his hand. Slowly he wrapped it up again.

"I shall not eat it yet," he said. "Someone might be worse off than I during the day. But thank you." He put the present carefully beside his bed, and there it stayed.

A few days later, my fever increased and I became very weak. The sugar was passed from bed to bed until it came to rest on mine.

"It's a gift," said Gafencu. I thanked him, but left the sugar untouched in case someone needed it more next day. When my crisis passed, I gave it to Soteris, the elder of two Greek Communists whose condition was grave.

For two years the sugar went from man to man in Room Four (and twice it returned to me); each time the sufferer had the strength to resist it.

Soteris and Glafkos were Communist guerrillas who had fled to Rumania at the end of the Greek civil war. They had been arrested, like many of their comrades, for fighting poorly; now they never tired of boasting of their exploits before the tide of battle turned against them. They had raided the famous monasteries of Mount Athos, looting all they could carry, smashing what they had to leave. Women are forbidden on Athos and many of the 2,000 monks

had not seen one for years. "We took a band of girl partisans with us," Soteris said. "You should have seen those old boys run!"

Soteris was proud of his atheism while he could joke and hope for life: but as death approached he cried out for help from God. Only the priest's murmuring voice, promising heavenly forgiveness could quieten him. Then he, too, found the great moral force to renounce the two pieces of sugar.

His body was prepared for burial by a prisoner from outside who often came to help us. He was known, respectfully, as "The Professor" and his name was Popp. Rarely did his stooped and scholarly figure appear unaccompanied by someone to whom he was teaching history, French or some other subject.

I asked once how he managed without writing materials. He explained: "We rub the table with a piece of soap and scratch the words with a nail."

When I admired his persistence, the innocent blue eyes sparkled. "I used to think I taught for a living. In prison I've learned that I teach because I love my pupils!

"You have a vocation, as the priests say?"

"Well," he replied, "here we are shown what we are worth."

When I asked if he was a Christian he looked upset. "Pastor, I have had too many disappointments. At my last prison, Ocnele-Mari, the church was turned into a storeroom and they asked for someone to tear down the cross on the steeple. No one cared to do it. In the end it was a priest who volunteered."

I said that not every man in holy order has a priestly heart, nor were all who called themselves Christians disciples of Christ in the true sense of the word. "A man who visits a barber to be shaved, or who orders a suit from a tailor, is not a disciple, but a customer. So one who comes to the Savior only to be saved is the Savior's customer, not his disciple. A disciple is one who says to Christ, 'How I long to do work like yours! To go from place to place taking

away fear; bringing instead joy, truth, comfort and life eternal!'"

Popp smiled. "But what of those who become disciples at the eleventh hour? I have been puzzled to see so many convinced atheists turn into believers at the end."

I said that our minds do not always work on the same level. "A genius can talk nonsense at times or bicker with his wife, but he is not judged by that. We should respect our minds, like his, when they are at their best - when they are straining to find a way out at the moment of supreme crisis. It is when the mind has to pass through the gap of death that the facade of atheism nearly always collapses."

"And why do you suppose that a man like Sergeant Bucur longs to confess his crimes publicly?"

I said, "Once I lived near a railway and never noticed the trains by day because the town was noisy. But at night I heard their whistles clearly. So the clamor of life can deafen us to the quiet voice of conscience. It is when death approaches in the silence of the prison, where there are no distractions, that men hear the voice who never have before.

The Abbot said: "In my last prison, at Aiud, there was a poor murderer in solitary confinement. He kept waking in the night and shouting, 'Who's that in the next cell? Why doesn't he stop knocking on the wall?'"

"Well?" said Popp.

"The next cell was empty."

"I can cap that," offered Moisescu. "In my last place there was an Iron Guard who had killed a rabbi. He was sure the rabbi was riding on his shoulders and digging spurs into his flesh."

8

Since I had no strength to wash myself, Professor Popp took on the task. I asked whether there were showers in his part of the prison.

"Yes!" he said. "In the People's Republic of Rumania we have the most modern equipment. Only it doesn't work. The showers have been dry for years." He straightened his back and went on:

"Have you heard of the Communist and the Capitalist who died and met in Hell! They found two gates. One was labeled 'Capitalist Hell' and the other 'Communist Hell.' Although the men were class enemies they put their heads together to decide which would be better. The Communist said, 'Comrade, let's go into the Communist department. There, when there's coal, there'll be no matches. When there are matches, there'll be no coal. And even when they have both coal and matches, the furnace will break down!'"

The professor continued to wash me while the others laughed. Aristar the farmer said, "The first Communists were Adam and Eve."

"Why?" asked the obliging Popp.

"Because they had no clothes, no house, they had to share the same apple - and still thought they were in paradise."

The telling of jokes and stories was important to us. Men lay all day with only their miseries to think of, and anyone who could help them to forget was doing an act of mercy. I talked often for hours on end, although ill and dizzy with hunger: a story, as much as a piece of bread, could sustain the life of man.

When Popp urged me to save my strength, I said I had enough for one more anecdote that morning.

"The Talmud tells us of a rabbi walking in the street when he heard the voice of the prophet Elijah saying, 'Although you fast and pray, never have you deserved the high place in Heaven which awaits those two men on the other side of the road.' The rabbi ran after the strangers, and said, 'Do you give much to the poor?'

"They laughed. 'No, we are beggars ourselves.'

"'Then do you pray continuously?'

"'No. We are ignorant men. We don't know how to pray.'

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"Then tell me what you do."

"'We make jokes. We make people laugh when they are sad.'"

Popp looked surprised. "Are you telling us that those who make men laugh may have greater honor in Heaven than those who fast?"

"That is the teaching of the Talmud, which is a book of Jewish wisdom. But we can also read in the Bible - the second Psalm - [PSA 2:4] that God himself laughs sometimes."

Popp said, helping me back into my clothes, "He wouldn't find much to laugh at here - but where is God, Pastor, and why does He not help us?"

I said, "There was a pastor called to a man's deathbed. He found the mother trying to comfort her sobbing daughter. The girl said, 'Where is the protecting arm of God you preach about, Pastor?' He replied, 'It is on your shoulder, in the shape of your mother's arm.'

"Christ is with us in prison in many ways. Firstly, he can be seen in our Christian doctors, who are beaten and bullied but go on helping us. Some official doctors in Vacaresti have also smuggled in drugs and earned themselves ten years in jail.

"Secondly, Christ is here in the priests and pastors who work to ease others' burdens, and in the form of all Christians who give food, clothes and help to men worse off than themselves. Thirdly, He is with us in the form of those who teach about God, and also of the story-tellers. And you have Him with you not only in the person of those who serve you, but also in the shape of those whom you can serve.

"Jesus tells us that, at the Last Judgment, God will separate the good from the bad, on His right hand and His left. Jesus will say to those on the right, 'Come, enter and possess the kingdom that has been ready for you since the world was made. For I was hungry and you gave me meat; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you clothed me; sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me.' The good will ask, 'Lord, when did we do all

this?' And Christ will reply, 'Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of my brethren, you have done it for me.'" [Read MTT 25:34-40]

9

Gafencu had spent his whole adult life in prison, but like other Iron Guard followers in whom Christian belief had prevailed, he could not do enough to make up for his mistakes. Every day, he set the example of putting aside part of his meager ration to help build up the weakest among us. His anti-Semitism had been left behind, and when some of his old Fascist friends came to see him in Room Four, he suddenly came out with a remark which shocked them: "I'd like to see the country ruled entirely by Jews."

His comrades stared at him in horror.

"Yes," said Gafencu calmly, "Prime Minister, legislators, civil servants - everyone. I'd make only one condition. They must be men like the old Jewish rulers, like Joseph, Moses, Daniel, St. Peter, St. Paul and Jesus himself. Because if we have any more Jews over us like Ana Pauker, then Rumania is finished."

Gafencu had been jailed when he was nineteen. His youth had gone by without his ever knowing a girl. When others talked about sex, he asked, "What is it like?"

He told me one day, "My father was deported from Bessarabia by the Russians. We never had enough to eat. I was beaten in school, then put in jail for running away and joining the Iron Guard. I'd never met a single good, truthful, loving person. I said to myself, 'It's just a legend about Christ. There isn't anyone in the world like that today and I don't believe there ever was.' But when I'd been in prison

a few months I had to say that I was wrong. I met sick men who gave away their last crust. I shared a cell with a bishop who had such goodness that you felt the touch of his robe could heal."

Gafencu had been in Room Four a year, and

in all that time he had not been able to lie on his back. It gave him too much pain. He had to be propped up continually. Every day he had a little less control over his body, often fulfilling his necessities where he lay; then having to wait, sometimes at night for hours, until someone came to clean him.

Stronger patients from outside had to take over the washing for those of us who could not help ourselves, scrubbing shirts, underwear, pillow-cases, sometimes twenty sheets a day, although they had to break ice in the yard to reach the water. My own things were always stiff with pus and blood, but when I tried to stop a friend from washing them he was angry.

Gafencu never complained. He sat very still in bed, sometimes moving his head a little to nod agreement or convey a word of thanks. When it was known that he had not long to live, his old friends and new ones gathered around his bed with tears in their eyes. His last words were, "The spirit of God wishes us jealously for Himself."

When he had gone, the others knelt and prayed. I said, "Jesus tells us that if a seed does not fall into the earth and die, it cannot bring forth fruit, and that as a seed is reborn in a beautiful flower, so man dies and his mortal body is renewed in a spiritual body. And his heart which has come to be filled with the ideals of Christianity will surely bear fruit."

After a priest had said a prayer, Gafencu was wrapped in his sheet and carried to the mortuary. During the night he was buried in a common grave by criminal convicts, who always performed this task.

10

A steady flow of new arrivals at Tirgul-Ocna kept us informed of events outside, and sometimes it seemed that we in prison were hardly worse off than the "free" workers and peasants. Wages had

never been so low. An eight-hour day had been proclaimed, but you might work twelve before

completing your "norm," and then "voluntary" work and Marxist lectures left no time for family life, in any case, every apartment housed two or more families.

Strikes were illegal. One newcomer, a gnarled old trade unionist called Boris Matei, told me: "It's forty years since I was jailed for fighting for the eight-hour day, and now that there's a Communist government I'm working fourteen hours in prison." His crime was to write an anonymous letter to Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej, the Party boss, protesting on behalf of his workmates against the severity of their conditions and saying they would be entitled in any capitalist state to withdraw their labor. The Secret Police came to his rolling-stock depot and took handwriting samples from the 10,000 workers. After weeks of investigation, Boris was accused of trying to foment a strike and given fifteen years for attempted sabotage.

Boris remained unshaken in his Marxist creed. He had no sympathy for the dissenting groups who had been herded with him into prison: freemasons, rotarians, theosophists, spiritualists. Nor could he feel for the poets and novelists who had been locked up for their independent outlook: they had been summoned in turn to Party H.Q. to be given their orders, and should know better than to chase the will-o'-the-wisp of objective truth.

Boris argued that Lenin had underlined in his books the importance of finding and clinging to one point of view in life.

"The Party line?" I said. "But this doctrine reverses all philosophical concepts. If I look at the cell from my bed I see only the window. If I look from where you're sitting, I see the door. If I look at the floor, the room has no ceiling. Every viewpoint is in reality a point of blindness, because it incapacitates you totally from seeing other points of view. It is only when we abandon all 'points of view' and accept our intuition of the whole that we find truth. St. Paul says 'Love believes everything' - not just the creed of this group or that."

But talk of religion made Boris angry. "There is

no God, no soul! Only matter exists. I defy you to prove otherwise."

I said he must take his arguments from a Communist textbook in which I had seen the following definition of a kiss: "'A kiss is the approach of two pairs of lips, with reciprocal transmission of microbes and carbon dioxide.' The love, the longing, or the falsity of the kiss has no place in your philosophy. This impoverishment of spiritual values affects the material side of life, which you consider all-important. It takes the heart out of the workers, so that the poor quality of goods from Communist countries has become a byword."

Boris said, "I know the saying that the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath, but we all exist to benefit the State. The loss of individual liberty and private property are steps on the way to world freedom.

I thought that even a dog will fight with anyone who tries to take his bone, but if a fifteen-year sentence had not cured Boris of his illusions, arguing was unlikely to do so. He might also be one of the latest crop of informers.

Informing had spread like a disease. You might be denounced for speaking of God or praying aloud; even for learning or teaching a foreign language. Often the man who pointed the finger might be friend, inside or outside prison, a son, father, wife, husband. The pressure to inform was cruelly strong. Indeed, the informer was probably a worse menace for "free" men than for those already behind bars, and in Room Four we exercised more free speech than was heard anywhere else in Rumania, since none of us was going to live.

11

It was the anniversary of the "ten days that shook the world" - the Russian revolution of November 1917 - and Professor Popp commemorated it with an anecdote.

"On the first anniversary of the triumph of Bolshevism," he said, "the new rulers held a hunting

party in the forest outside Moscow. Later, they rested by the fire and Lenin asked, 'Tell me, comrades, what you consider the greatest pleasure in life?"

"'War,' said Trotsky.

"'Women,' said Zinoviev.

"'Oratory - the power to hold a vast crowd under your spell,' said Kamenev.

"Stalin, as always, was taciturn, but Lenin insisted: 'Tell us your choice!'

"At last, Stalin said: 'None of you knows what real pleasure is. I will tell you. It is to hate someone, and to pretend for years that you are his best friend, until one day he rests his head trustingly on your breast. And then to plunge the knife into his back. There is no higher pleasure in the world than this!'"

There was a long silence. Already, at that time, we knew something of Stalin's ruthlessness: the rest, to be made known after his death by his own companions, proved the truth of this chilling story.

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PART THREE

For some time there had been frightened talk of a system of "re-educating" prisoners, which was practiced at Suceava and Piteshti jails. It was carried out not with books, but by beating. The tutors were usually turncoat Iron Guards, who had been formed into an "organization of prisoners with Communist convictions" (PCC). We heard the names of Turcanu, Levitkii and Formagiu as the organizers of these groups. They seemed to be behaving like savages.

We feared that the process would be introduced among us; but Boris scoffed. He could not believe that his former associates of the Left would allow atrocities.

He said, "They know that 'terror can never uproot ideas.' That's what Karl Kautsky, the Social Democrat thinker, wrote at the start of the Russian revolution."

I said, "Yes. I remember what Trotsky, who was War Minister, replied: 'Mr. Kautsky, you do not know what terror we will apply.' It's ironic that Trotsky's own ideas have been as effectively uprooted by terrorism in Russia as has Capitalism."

The Abbot said, "I fear that terror and torture, applied ruthlessly and long, may crush any man's resistance, without a miracle of God."

"I don't believe in miracles," said Boris. "I'll get along without them, thanks. Nothing has touched my convictions yet."

The prison's atmosphere grew worse after a brief

visit by the "re-education" leader Formagiu, from Piteshti, with instructions to inaugurate the system. Up to now, although you were tormented for most of the day, you knew that sooner or later the guards would go to eat or sleep. Now the "prisoners with Communist convictions" moved in with us. They had the power to beat and bully at will, and had rubber truncheons for their work. They had been handpicked by the authorities from the worst and most violent prisoners, and there was no escape from them: to every fifty prisoners there was a group of ten or twenty "PCC" men, and the number grew steadily. Those who declared themselves ready to become Communists had to prove their conversion by "converting" others in the same way.

Crude violence has punctuated by sessions of more refined cruelty, under medical supervision to ensure that prisoners did not die. Doctors were often PCCs themselves. I knew a Dr. Turcu who, after examining a cellmate, would advise a pause, give the man an injection to increase his resistance and tell the re-educators when to start again. It was Turcu who decided when the man had reached his limit and might be thrown back into his cell until next day.

A wave of madness swept the prison. Tuberculosis patients were stripped, laid on the stone floors and drenched with buckets of freezing water. Pigs' swill was thrown on the ground before men who had been starved for days; with hands tied behind their backs they were forced to lick it up. No humiliation, however vile, was spared. In many prisons men were made by the PCC bullies to swallow excrement and drink urine. Some wept and begged at least to be given their own, not that of others. Some went crazy and began to scream for more. Convicts were also made to perform sexual perversions publicly. I had not thought that such mockeries of body and soul were possible.

Those who clung to their faith were the worst treated. Christians were tied for four days to crosses, and daily the crosses were placed on the floor. Then

the other prisoners were ordered to defecate on their

faces and bodies. After this, the crosses were put up again.

A Catholic priest brought into Room Four told us that in Piteshti jail, on a Sunday, he had been pushed into the latrine cesspit and ordered to say Mass over excrement and give men Communion.

"Did you obey?" I asked.

He buried his face in his hands and wept. "I've suffered more than Christ," he said.

These things were done with the encouragement of the prison administration, on orders from Bucharest. Turcanu, Formagiu and the other specialists were taken from jail to jail, recruiting PCCs and seeing that the campaign did not flag. Party leaders, even men from the Central Committee, like Constantin Doncea and the Under-secretary of the Interior Ministry, Marin Jianu, came to watch the sport. Boris, who had worked with Jianu, broke through the guards to protest, but if Jianu recognized his former colleague he did not admit it. "We don't interfere when one swine beats another!" he said; in other words, the Party dissociated itself from the torturers, but allowed them to torture. "Take him away," said Jianu. Boris was beaten until he screamed for mercy.

The old union fighter broke down completely. Exposed to humiliation and torture day and night, something had burned out in him. He crawled to kiss the hands of the men who beat him.

"Thank you, comrade," he said. "You have brought me to the light." Then he began to prate about the joys of Communism, and how criminal he had been to persist in error. After such a collapse his self-respect demanded a total shift of loyalty; otherwise he would have appeared ridiculous in his own eyes. Boris joined the PCC group. One of the first he used his truncheon on was Dr. Aldea.

The re-education system - imported from Russia - brought incredible results. Victims blurted secrets they had kept back under months of interrogation. They denounced friends, wives, parents. So thousands more arrests were made.

2

During this time a group of six men from the lead-mines were brought to a special cell at Tirgul-Ocna. They were joined by other prisoners who, finding that some of the newcomers were priests, confessed to them and so gained their confidence. The men from the mines spoke freely of their secret religious and political activities. Then they were moved to a larger cell, for re-education - and learned that they had been talking to informers.

One of them was carried bruised and bloody into Room Four. He told us that the "re-educator" in charge was a well-built young man with a set smile, who made jokes all the time. "Does that hurt?" he would ask. "So sorry! Let's try something new. Did you enjoy that?"

"If I ever get my hands on that man," said the victim, "I'll skin him alive."

"That's right," crackled the old farmer Badaras. "Put salt and pepper on, that's the spirit!" Badaras had a daily prayer: "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, God destroy the Communists, make them suffer, hurt them, the pigs!"

"Why say such things?" I asked him. "That's not what is expected of a Christian."

He shook his fists to Heaven in invocation. "I say them because God will not let anyone into paradise who does not curse the bastards!"

Many like Badaras lived for the day on which they could torture their torturers, believing in Hell, so that the Communists might fry there.

"We mustn't give way to hatred," I said. "These men like Boris have broken under terrible pressure."

But Boris was now a sore topic in Room Four. An attempt to prove his Communist conversion by beating Dr. Aldea - who made very plain his contempt for Turcu and the other PCC doctors - had made Boris one of the most hated men in prison. Aldea suffered great pain from boils on his back and

shoulders, and Boris had beaten him on the back. Prisoners would have given their lives for Aldea, who was giving his for them. After the beating, the doctor was found a bed in Room Four. Then someone came to say that a seriously-ill prisoner was asking for him.

"The doctor is too sick to move," said the Abbot.
Aldea asked, "Who is it?"
"Boris," said the man.
Aldea climbed painfully out of bed and no one spoke as he walked from the room.

3

Abbot Iscu spoke sometimes of his experiences in the slave camps at the Danube-Black Sea canal, where thousands were dying of ill treatment and hunger. The canal had been begun largely on Russian instigation - since it would help to drain Rumania of her produce even faster than they were already doing - and also as a prestige project for our government. It was an immense scheme, and it had become such a symbol of Communist achievement that when a group of engineers warned that the river was unlikely to supply enough water for both the canal and its irrigation network, they were shot as "economic saboteurs." Rumania's resources were thrown prodigally into the plan, and over 200,000 political and common-law prisoners labored to build it between 1949 and 1953.

The Abbot found himself at Poarta Alba, one of the penal colonies along the route. Living in ramshackle barracks, behind wire, 12,000 people had each to move by hand eight cubic meters of earth a day. They pushed wheelbarrows up steep inclines, under the blows of guards. Temperatures fell to minus 25 Centigrade in winter, and water, brought in barrels, froze solid. Disease was rife. Many prisoners broke through into the forbidden areas around the camp, hoping to be shot.

The most brutal criminals were put in charge of "brigades" each of a hundred or so prisoners and

paid on results, in food or cigarettes. Christians were herded into a so-called "Priests' Brigade" where, if a man as much as made the sign of the cross - a reflex action among the Orthodox - he was beaten. There was no day of rest, no Christmas, no Easter.

Yet at Poarta Alba, the Abbot said, he witnessed the most noble acts. A young Catholic, Father Cristea, incurred the hatred of an Orthodox priest turned informer, who asked him, "Why do you close your eyes

so often? Is it in prayer? I challenge you to tell the truth: do you still believe in God?"

To answer "yes" would mean, at least, a flogging.

Father Cristea considered. "I know, Andreescu, that you tempt as the Pharisees tempted Jesus, to accuse me. But Jesus told them the truth and I will tell it to you. Yes, I believe in God."

"Well! Do you believe in the Pope, too?" Andreescu went on.

Cristea replied, "I believe in the Pope, too."

Andreescu hurried to the political officer, who came over and called the young man out before the others. Cristea was thin, exhausted; he shivered in his rags. The officer was well-fed, wrapped in a greatcoat and wearing a Russian fur hat. "I hear that you believe in God," he said.

Father Cristea opened his mouth to answer, and in that moment one could understand why it is written in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, before the Sermon on the Mount, that Jesus "opened his mouth and spoke" - surely a strange thing, for no one speaks with a closed mouth. Now Cristea had only parted his lips to speak, but everyone sensed that a great pearl could come from his mouth at this moment of decision. The Christians there were overcome with awe.

Cristea said, "When I was ordained, I knew that thousands of priests, throughout history, had paid for their faith with their lives. And as often as I went to the altar I promised God, 'Now I serve Thee in beautiful robes, but even if they should put me in prison,

I will serve Thee still.' And so, lieutenant, prison is no argument against religion. I believe in God."

The silence that followed was broken only by the sound of the wind. The lieutenant seemed at a loss for words. At last he said, "And do you believe in the Pope?"

The answer came, "Since St. Peter there has always been a Pope. And until Jesus returns there will always be one. The present Pope has made no peace with Communism; and nor will his successors. Yes, I believe in the Pope!"

The Abbot ended his story and said, "I found it hard to forgive my Orthodox brother who had turned

informer, and I am no follower of Rome, but at that moment I felt like crying 'Viva il Papa!'"

"What happened to Father Cristea?" someone asked.

"He was locked for a week in the carcer, where you stand and never sleep: then beaten. When he still refused to deny his faith, he was taken away. We never saw him again."

4

Re-education was claiming new victims every day, and the feeling grew that unless something was done soon we should all be "converted" or killed. A rumor reached Room Four that some kind of protest was brewing among the Communist prisoners, who were the boldest among us: the guards were more careful with them, for those who were in jail today had been in power yesterday and might again be tomorrow.

Christians debated what we should do: if there were a riot, should they join in? Or was it a time to "turn the other cheek"? Several prisoners argued against a fight.

I said, "Jesus is usually portrayed as 'meek and mild' - but he was a fighter, too. He drove the merchants from the temple with a whip and gave as guide

to his first followers the Old Testament with its fire and fierceness."

We decided to work with the rebels. Little could be done in secret because of the many informers among us and the suspicions between anti-Semite and Jew, peasant and landowner, Orthodox and Catholic.

In the town of Tirgul-Ocna, the one relaxation was a weekly football match in a stadium which was near the prison. On May 1, which coincided with a savage new outburst of re-education, we heard that a Labour Day game would be played in the stadium, at 5:00 P.M, and the whole town would be there. It was our chance for a demonstration. The signal was to be the smashing of a window.

Soon after the game began there was faint tinkle of breaking glass somewhere, and the whole prison burst into bedlam. Windows shattered. Plates and mugs were hurled out. Chairs were smashed.

Someone started a steady chant: "Help us! Help us!" From higher windows overlooking the stadium men cried, "We are tortured here! Your fathers and brothers and sons are being murdered!"

The game came to a stop. The crowd was on its feet and soon hundreds had gathered in the road below the walls. Inside, one of the prisoners had cut his wrists and the guards began lashing out with clubs. The crowds in the street were quickly driven away by troops wielding riflebutts. There remained the task of putting the prison to rights and counting the casualties. Among them was Boris, who had been knocked down and badly hurt while trying to rescue another prisoner from under the feet of the guards. Again Dr. Aldea had to tend him. We sent friendly messages, but there was no reply. Then we learned he had been moved to another jail.

News of the revolt spread rapidly through the country. There were no outright reprisals; only a stiffening of the regime. Those suspected of being ringleaders were moved out to other prisons; deprived of such medical attention as they received at Tirgul-Ocna, many of them died.

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5

Abbot Iscu was coughing for longer spells each day. His body, wasted by years of starvation and exposure at the canal, was racked by terrible bouts. We lay and watched him dying. Sometimes he did not recognize friends who came to help him. When he was conscious he passed hours in whispered prayer, and always he had words of comfort for others.

Other survivors from the canal had come to Tirgul-Ocna, and their stories of its horrors made it sound like the slavery of Israel in Egypt, with the added bitterness that the oppressed had to praise their oppressors. A famous composer among the prisoners had been forced to write hymns exalting Stalin, and to their accompaniment the brigades marched to work.

Once, when a man collapsed and a doctor pronounced him dead, Colonel Albon, the hated Poarta Alba commandant, shouted, "Rubbish!" He gave the corpse a kick. "Put him to work!"

My bed was between those of the Abbott and

young Vasilescu, who was a canal victim of a different kind. Vasilescu was a common-law criminal who had been put in charge of the Priests' Brigade. He had worked them until they dropped. But for some reason Colonel Albon took a dislike to him and he was treated in turn so brutally that he was also dying. His tuberculosis was well advanced.

Vasilescu was not an inherently bad young man. He had a rough-hewn, square face with dark curly hair that grew low on his forehead, making him look like a bewildered young bull. Tough, ignorant, he was too fond of what he thought the good things in life to settle down to a steady job; and he had had a hard life. He was like the hired murderer in ~Macbeth~ - "One whom the vile blows and buffets of the world hath so incensed that I am reckless what I do to spite the world."

He told us, "Once you get in those camps you'll do

anything to get out, anything! And Albon said if I did what he told me, they'd let me go free." He wanted clothes, a girl to take to a dance. And the Party offered him the choice of joining the tortured or the torturers.

"They took a crowd of us to a special camp where they train secret police," he said, "and one of the things we had to do was shoot cats and dogs and then finish off the ones still living with steel spikes! I said, 'I can't do that!' And the chap said, 'Then we'll do it to you!'"

Vasilescu was sorry for himself now. He told me again and again of the terrible things he had done at the canal. He had not spared the Abbot. Vasilescu was obviously dying and I tried to give him a little comfort; but he couldn't rest. One night he woke up gasping for breath. "Pastor, I'm going," he said. "Please pray for me!" He dozed and woke again, and cried, "I believe in God!" Then he began to weep.

At dawn Abbot Iscu called two prisoners to his bed and ordered, "Lift me out!"

"You're too ill to move," they said. The whole room was upset. "What is it?" said voices. "Let us do it!"

"You cannot do this," he said. "Lift me out!"

They picked him up. "To Vasilescu's bed," he said.

The Abbot sat beside the young man who had tortured him, and put a hand gently on his arm. "Be calm," he said soothingly. "You are young. You hardly knew what you were doing." He wiped sweat from the boy's forehead with a rag. "I forgive you with all my heart, and so would other Christians too. And if we forgive, surely Christ, who is better than us, will forgive. There is a place in Heaven for you, also." He received Vasilescu's confession and gave him Holy Communion, before being carried back to his bed.

During the night both the Abbot and Vasilescu died. I believe they went hand in hand to Heaven.

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6

Dr. Aldea said I should have a pneumothorax. It could be done in a few minutes and consisted of running a hollow needle into me which allowed air to enter and cushion the lung. It was relatively painless and afterwards I fell asleep. When I awoke I was very happy to find Professor Popp sitting by my bedside. He had been away for months in Jilava prison, and he too had suffered much under the "re-education" system. We talked for hours.

The professor told me that there had been many suicides at Jilava. It was the same in other prisons. At Gherla and Piteshti men threw themselves down from the upper floors until the spaces between the landings were covered with wire to stop them. Some cut their wrists with glass, some hanged themselves, some died after drinking cleaning fluid. One poor old Orthodox father had thrown himself down from a top bunk to the floor, cracking his skull. He had done this several times before he succeeded in killing himself.

"He'd been tortured," the professor said. "He was afraid that if the re-educators started on him again he would break down and betray his faith. He was a very rigid man - a prisoner confessed to him that he'd once worked for the Communists, and Father Ioja forbade him to take Communion for fifteen years!"

Some of the suicides were famous men, like George Bratianu, a great pre-war figure in Rumanian politics. He found no other means of taking his life than to starve himself to death, unnoticed among prisoners who neither knew nor cared. The leader

of the Liberal Party, Rosculet, had killed himself at Sighet jail: he was one of those who had thought that "local" Communists were not like the Russian variety, but after using his name as Minister of Cults, the Party imprisoned him as a counter-revolutionary.

The brutalities of "re-education" caused unrest in many prisons, and rumors spread across the country.

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Then two unconnected incidents brought the truth into the light of day.

During an inspection at Tirgul-Ocna, a hated Secret Police colonel, Sepeanu, spotted a new fence. 'Why did you build this?' he asked Commandant Bruma. "The wood might have been better used to beat these counter-revolutionaries." He laughed heartily.

The story caused wild rage. The atmosphere of revolt was still simmering in Tirgul-Ocna. A former major shouted, "Something must be done!" And he decided that he was the man to do it. When Sepeanu had gone, the major asked that an interrogator be brought specially from Bucharest to hear a secret which he had failed to confess.

The interrogator came. The major told him, "You know that I am serving twenty years as a war criminal for executing Russian prisoners. As Brigade Major, I did not shoot these men myself. I can tell you who did. He was a lieutenant named Sepeanu, who today is a Secret Police colonel."

So Sepeanu was also tried for war crimes and sentenced to twenty years. During the trial he spoke about what was happening in the prisons under the "re-education" system.

The second incident involved another Secret Police chief. Col. Virgil Weiss had been a friend of Ana Pauker and others in the Government. Then he fell foul of them, and at Piteshti jail he came into the hands of Turcanu, leader of the "Prisoners of Communist Convictions."

A man who helped Turcanu to torture victims told me later that Colonel Weiss fainted three times in an hour while they worked on him. They brought him round with cold water. He said, "All right - I'll tell everything I kept back - and let us see if your bosses can stand it." Turcanu believed he had stumbled on secrets that would bring him at last the

release he had been promised. "If you lie now, I'll kill you," he warned. Weiss said, "I have important things to say, but not to you. They concern traitors in high places."

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He was taken to Bucharest, where he spent several weeks in hospital. Members of the Party's Central Committee, rivals of the Pauker clique, interviewed him there. He revealed that Pauker, Luca and Georgescu, the ruling ministers, had enlisted Weiss's aid in obtaining false passports, with which they could, if need be, leave Rumania quickly. They had also transferred large sums of money to Swiss banks.

The information was passed to the Party Secretary-General, Gheorghiu-Dej, chief schemer against the Pauker group.

Colonel Weiss told the story of re-education and showed Dej's friends its effects on his own body. They were alarmed. Another reversal of Party fortunes lay ahead: they might soon face the same treatment. Some had been unaware of the excesses, and others pretended not to have known; but now inquiries were begun. The leading "re-educators" were interrogated at Secret Police headquarters and several of them, Turcanu included, were sentenced to death.

The re-education scandal was used as a weapon against the Ministry of the Interior, which was headed by Theohari Georgescu, and in the political purge of 1952 the triumvirate which had ruled Rumania since the Communist take-over was overthrown. The other Ministers involved in Colonel Weiss's charges, Vasile Luca and Ana Pauker, were made scapegoats for the catastrophic inflation and the disasters brought by collectivization.

7

Many of those who came to help us in Room Four were farmers who had rebelled against forcible collectivization of their land. The prisons of Rumania were full of them. Thousands more had been put before firing squads.

They told some terrible stories. Their property had been seized, and under the 1949 "land reform" law, they received no compensation. Turned overnight

into vagabonds who had nothing to lose, they fought back. Officials were liable to be shot, beaten or burned alive with petrol. It was all for nothing. The farmers lacked organization. Their rebellions occurred at different times and in different regions so the government could always stamp them out.

A leathery old sheep farmer called Ghica told me, "The Secret Police showed me two rusty rifles. 'We dug them up in your barn,' they said. 'If you join the collective, you might avoid a trial.' Well, I agreed. But when they came to take my animals, I lost my head and tried to stop them. They beat me up - and here I am serving fifteen years. I've lost everything. Land, sheep, wife, children!" All farmers lamented their losses in that order.

Another told how he had been deprived of his flock. He begged at least to keep the bells from their necks. The officials laughed but let him have his way. He took the bells up to his loft and tied them to a rope. All night, he sat there, ringing the bells from time to time. When morning came, he ran through the village to the Party headquarters, and stabbed the secretary to death.

A third farmer had two plough-horses. His greatest pleasure was to feed and groom them. When they were taken he burned down the stables of the collective farm.

That year, fewer countryfolk came into prison. Gheorghiu-Dej, while retaining the Party leadership, made himself Prime Minister in 1952, and sought popularity by slowing down collectivization. Luca, Pauker and Georgescu were all dismissed from their posts.

Winter came on, with heavy snowstorms. Thick icicles hung from the roof, and hoar frost patterned the window-panes. Outside the cold made you gasp. By December the snow was six feet deep. It was the coldest winter for a hundred years, so they said. There was no heating, but until now we had two or three blankets each, instead of the regulation one, for every time a man died in Room Four we took his bedclothes. Then there was a check - and we were

left with a single covering each. We slept in our clothes all winter. Often we were without bread. The soup, made of carrots too rotten to be sold, became still thinner.

On Christmas Eve, prison talk became more serious. There were few quarrels, no swearing, little laughter. Every man thought of those he loved and there was a feeling of communion with the rest of mankind, which was usually so remote from our lives.

I spoke of Christ, but all the time my feet and hands were cold as steel, my teeth chattered, and an icy lump of hunger in my stomach seemed to spread through my body until only the heart lived. When I stopped, a simple farming lad took up where I had left off. Aristar had never been to school. Yet he talked so naturally, describing the scene of the nativity as if it had happened in his own barn that week, that there were tears in the eyes of all who listened.

Someone began to sing in the prison that evening. At first his voice was quiet, and hardly came in among the thoughts that occupied my mind, of my wife and my son. But gradually the voice swelled wonderfully in the crisp, clear air until it echoed through the corridors and everybody stopped what they were doing.

We were very quiet when he ceased. The guards, huddled in their quarters around a coke stove, did not stir all evening. We began to tell stories, and when I was asked for one, I thought of the song, and told them this old Jewish legend:

King Saul of Israel brought David, the shepherd honored for killing Goliath, to his court. David loved music, and he was delighted to see a harp of great beauty standing in the palace. Saul said, "I paid much for that instrument, but I was deceived. It gives forth only ugly sounds."

David took it up to try, and drew from it music so exquisite that every man was moved. The harp seemed to laugh and sing and weep. King Saul asked, "How is it that all the musicians I called brought

discord from this harp, and only you could bring out music?"

David, the future king, replied, "Before me, each

man tried to play his own song on these strings. But I sang to the harp its own song. I recalled how it had been a young tree, with birds that chirped in its branches and limbs green with leaves that blossomed in the sun. I reminded it of the day when men came to cut it down, and you heard it weep under my fingers. I explained then that this is not the end. Its death as a tree meant the start of a new life in which it would glorify God, as a harp; and you heard how it rejoiced under my hands.

"So when the Messiah comes, many will try to sing on his harp their own songs, and their tunes will be harsh. We must sing on His harp His own song, the song of His life, passions, joys, sufferings, death and resurrection. Only then will the music be true."

It was a song like this we heard that Christmas in the jail of Tirgul-Ocna.

8

Aristar died in February. We had to dig through deep snow and break ground like iron to bury him in the prison yard, alongside Abbot Iscu, Gafencu, Bucur and a score of others he had known in Room Four. His bed was taken over by Avram Radonovici, who had been a music critic in Bucharest.

Avram knew long passages from the scores of Bach, Beethoven and Mozart, and could hum them for hours - it was as good as a symphony concert. But he had brought a more precious gift with him. Because of his tuberculosis, which had affected his spine he was encased in a plaster cast when they brought him to Tirgul-Ocna, and as we watched he pushed a hand into the breast of this grey shell and extracted a small, tattered book. None of us had seen a book of any kind for years. Avram lay there quietly turning the pages, until he became conscious of the eager eyes fixed on him.

"Your book," I said. "What is it? Where did you get it?"

"It's the Gospel according to St. John," said Avram. "I managed to hide it in my cast when the police came for me." He smiled. Would you like to borrow it?"

I took the little book in my hands as if it were a

live bird. No life-saving drug could have been more precious to me. I, who had known much of the Bible by heart and had taught it in the seminary, was forgetting it every day. Often I had tried to remind myself of a great advantage in this lack of a Bible while reading what God told prophets and saints, we may forget to listen for what He has to say to us.

The Gospel went from hand to hand. It was difficult to give it up. I think prison was harder for educated men. Factory workers and farmers found more varied society than they had known before, but the reading man was like a fish thrown on the sand.

Many learned the Gospel by heart and we discussed it every day among ourselves; but we had to be careful which prisoners were let into the secret. This Gospel helped to bring many to Christ, among them Professor Popp, who, by being near to many living Christians, had come steadily closer to faith. The words of St. John were completing the work, but there was a last barrier.

"I've tried to pray again," said the professor. "But between reciting the Orthodox formulas I learned as a boy and demanding favors of the Almighty to which I have no claim, there is nothing much to say. Like the king in ~Hamlet~, my words fly up, my thoughts remain below."

I told him of a pastor who was called to an old man's deathbed. He went to sit in an armchair close to the bed, but the old man said, "Please don't sit there!" So the pastor pulled up a stool, heard his confession and gave him Holy Communion.

The old man revived and said, "Let me tell you the story of that armchair. Fifty years ago, when I was a lad, the old pastor here asked if I said my prayers. I replied, 'No. I have no one to pray to. If

I shout at the top of my voice the man of the floor above doesn't hear, so how will God in Heaven?' The old pastor replied mildly, "Do not try to pray then! Just sit quietly in the morning with another chair before you. Imagine that sitting in it is Jesus Christ, as he sat in so many homes in Palestine. What would you tell him?' I said, 'If I were honest, I'd say I didn't believe in him.' 'Well,' said the pastor, 'that shows at least what's really in your mind. You could go further and challenge Him: if He exists, then let Him give

proof of it! Or if you don't like the way God runs the world, why not tell Him so? You wouldn't be the first to complain. King David and Job told God they thought He was unjust. Perhaps you want something? Then say exactly what it is. If you receive it, give Him thanks. All these exchanges are in the realm of prayer. Don't recite holy phrases! Say what is really in your heart!'"

The dying man went on. "I didn't believe in Christ, but I did in the old pastor. To please him, I sat before that armchair and pretended Christ was in it. For a few days it was a game. Then I ~knew~ that He was with me. I spoke to a real Jesus about real things. I sought guidance and received it. Prayer became dialogue. Young man, fifty years have passed and every day I speak with Jesus in that chair."

The pastor was there when the man died, stretching out a hand with his last gesture towards the unseen friend in the armchair.

The professor asked "Is that how you pray?"

I said, "I like to think that Jesus stands near me, and that I can talk to Him as I do to you. People who met Him in Nazareth and Bethlehem didn't recite prayers to Him. They said what was in their hearts, and so ought we."

Popp said, "Why do you suppose that many who did talk to him in Palestine two thousand years ago didn't become his followers?"

I said: "For centuries the Jews prayed for the coming of the Messiah, and none more loudly than the Sanhedrin, the supreme council. But when he came, they mocked and spat and sent him to his

death, for the last thing they wanted was someone who would upset their comfortable routine. That's true of many of all nations today."

Professor Popp became a Christian. He told me, "When I first saw you I had a premonition that you had something to give me." Such intuitions are not uncommon in jail. When the outer world is cut off from sight, a new sense opens for the unseen.

We became very close. Sitting together in silence sometimes, he would say the thought that was stirring in my mind. So it should be, but rarely is between friends, and between man and wife.

9

A thaw came in March. The icicles melted and the snow lay in patches against the wall. Buds appeared on the bare trees and we heard the birds sing. Through our chilblained hands, our feet wrapped in rags, our faces stiff with cold, we felt life start again.

News galvanized the prison. A prisoner had been taken to the hospital in town, where a woman scrubbing the floor had wept. "What's wrong?" he asked. "Our father Stalin is dead," she sobbed. "It's in the newspapers." We shed no tears. Everyone speculated excitedly on what it would mean.

Popp said, "If Stalin is dead, so is Stalinism; a dictatorship doesn't survive its dictator."

"But Communism has survived Lenin," said someone.

A few days later we heard train whistles blowing and bells tolling to mark Stalin's funeral in Moscow. The prison echoed with laughter and curses. The guards looked surly and the officers were nervous. No one knew what might happen next.

After weeks of uncertainty, a high official came from the Legal Department and we understood that he had been sent to study prison conditions. Silence greeted him as he went from cell to cell asking for complaints. Many thought it was a trick. When he

reached Room Four, I said, "I have something to say, but I won't start unless you promise to hear me to the end."

"That's what I've come for," said the official politely.

I said, "Prosecutor, you had a renowned predecessor in history, called Pontius Pilate. He was asked to handle the trial of a man he knew to be innocent. 'Never mind,' said Pilate to himself. 'Am I to risk my career for a Jew and a carpenter?'

"Although two thousand years have passed, this betrayal of justice has not been forgotten. In my church you enter throughout the world you hear it said in the Creed, that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate."

The others in Room Four were looking worried for me.

I said, "Look into your heart and you'll see that we are the victims of injustice. Even if we're guilty in the Party's eyes, we were to purge our crimes in prison - but this is a long-drawn death sentence. Before you make your report, look at our food, the lack of heating and simple medicine, the dirt and disease. Ask about some of the barbarities we've suffered. Then write the truth. Don't wash your hands of helpless men as Pilate did."

The prosecutor looked at me somberly, turned on his heel and left without a word. The news that he had heard me out spread through the prison and encouraged others to speak. Before he left, we heard that there had been angry words in the commandant's office. Later that day the guards became polite, almost apologetic. A week afterwards the commandant was dismissed.

With the improvements in prison routine I began to get out of bed and walk a few paces each day. Dr. Aldea brought the official doctor to see me.

Aldea said, "We can't make you out. Your lungs are like a sieve, the spinal vertebrae are affected, couldn't put you in plaster and there's been virtually no surgical intervention. You're no better, but you're

getting no worse, and so we're going to move you out of Room Four."

My friends there were very happy. They took courage from the fact that, after two and a half years, I was the first man to leave the cell alive.

"How's it done, Pastor?" said one, jokingly. "Why doesn't that old body of yours obey doctor's orders and die?"

I said, "I expect you could find a medical reason if you tried. But in the war I learned a lesson about looking for explanations. I met some Party men who had been in Russia. When I asked why the Soviet Union had eased its campaign against religion at the time, one man said, 'You tell us.' I replied that I thought it was a concession to Britain and America, who were helping to keep Russia in the war. The official smiled. 'That's the explanation which I would give, as a Communist. If I were a Christian I'd say it was God's answer to prayer.' I was silent, because he was right. In the Bible, it is said that an ass once reprimanded a prophet. So I say to you now, that if

I have recovered, it is a miracle of God and an answer to prayer."

I knew that many people – prisoners I had met, as well as my congregation - prayed for me; but not for many years did I learn how many thousands around the world had joined in their prayer.

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PART FOUR

Room Four had been like an altar on which men were transformed and transfigured for their faiths. I was glad to be still alive, but leaving it was a descent. From an atmosphere of nobility and self-sacrifice, I returned to the world of quarrels, vanity and pretenses. It was sad and comic to see how many of the old upper-class clung to their illusions. Grubby "excellencies" wished each other good-day. Starved "generals" inquired after one another's health. Endlessly, they discussed the return of their vanished affluence.

One of these, Vasile Donca, accepted from me a piece of string to hold up his trousers. String was a precious thing in jail. But when, next day, I spoke to him I was ignored – I had failed to address him as "brigadier."

Donca, like many others, would do anything for a cigarette. The guards were the only source of tobacco, and although they were forbidden to hand it on, they smoked a lot at night, littering the yard with butt-ends. Cell leaders and informers were let out first in the mornings so that they had a monopoly of butt collecting. But sometimes another prisoner would make a find, and his friends would stand in a circle with him, smoking it on the end of a pin.

One morning a guard lit a cigarette as he lolled by the cell door near my bunk. Donca edged his way

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round the cell and began to talk to him in a low, urgent voice.

"Guard! What do you want for that cigarette?"

The guard grinned. "What have you got to offer,

Brigadier?"

Donca had nothing, but he tried to bluff. "I am not without friends in high places. You shall be rewarded for any attention you show me!"

"Influential friends?" said the guard. "So you are really a Communist after all, Brigadier?"

"I am a loyal Rumanian, Sergeant."

"Well, if you were a loyal Rumanian Communist, Brigadier, I might give you this cigarette."

Donca hesitated and looked furtively around. The guard moved as if to go away,

"Wait! Of course I'm a loyal Rumanian Communist!"

The guard beckoned to his comrades to come and share the joke.

"So you dance to a Russian tune, Brigadier? Give us a dance! Dance like a Russian bear!" He held out the cigarette.

With his arms spread and a pained grin on his face, Donca began to hop from foot to foot; The guards collapsed into laughter. The prisoners averted their faces as Donca rooted among their legs for the discarded cigarette.

When Donca moved elsewhere, his bunk was taken by another former member of the Staff, General Stavrat. Epaulettes no more make the officer than the habit makes the monk, and Stavrat was everything that Donca was not. Though short in stature, he dwarfed his fellow-prisoners by sheer strength of personality. Crusty, quick to despise weakness, yet full of kindness and good sense, he liked to address the cell at large as "Men!"

Juliu Stavrat was a general without boots. He had given his away. We shared my pair, going out in them on alternate days for exercise in the yard. Soon after his arrival, the first food parcels were allowed and one was delivered to General Stavrat. He opened it before an excited audience. A gasp went up. Ham,

smoked sausage, fruit-cake, chocolate - what sacrifices his wife must have made to buy such things! Stavrat, who had lived on scraps for eight years, wrapped up the parcel again and came over to my bed. "Pastor," he said, "be good enough to divide this among the men."

Stavrat was a Christian before he was a soldier.

When we heard that Russia had exploded her first A-bomb, he said, "Then we must no longer look for full-scale American military intervention: it is better for us to rot in jail than for millions of people to die in an atomic war."

"You think it would destroy humanity?" I asked him.

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"The future of humanity and its past as well," he said. "There will be no one left to know our struggle and progress through the ages." Stavrat had a deep feeling for history. He could talk eloquently of Rumania's past.

"But if nuclear war solves nothing," he added, "and civilization and Communism cannot live together, I don't know what the answer is."

"It's Christianity," I answered, "in a vital form. It can change the lives of great men and lesser. Remember the many barbarian rulers like Clovis of France, Stephen of Hungary, Vladimir of Russia, who were converted and made their countries Christian. It can be done again. Then we'll see the Iron Curtain melt."

"Shall we start with Gheorghiu-Dej!" smiled Stavrat. "A tall order!"

2

Gheorghiu-Dej, his rivals all eclipsed, was now our dictator. He admitted freely that grave mistakes had been committed, and among the gravest was the Danube-Black Sea Canal project. After three years in which millions of pounds had been wasted and thousands of lives lost, only five of its projected forty miles had been completed. Leading engineers and

camp administrators were accused of sabotage. Three were sentenced to death, two summarily executed. Thirty others were given prison terms from fifteen years to life. A fresh survey now proved that the Danube could not supply sufficient water for the project - exactly what the engineers consulted at the start were shot for saying. The canal was abandoned. All that remained of use in Rumania's major investment of time and money in the first decade of Communist rule were the labor camps. These could not

accommodate the overflow from the prisons.

While we were talking about the fiasco, Professor Popp took me aside. He said, "I have been keeping something from you since my return to Tirgul-Ocna. Dr. Aldea thought it might be too much of a shock for you in your condition. Your wife is now in prison, and she has been at the canal."

Popp had pieced the facts together from various prisoners who had worked there. Sabina had been arrested two years after me. No charge was brought against her. She led the women in the church as a deaconess and was told what to preach, but that was not her way. At Poarta Alba, she was put among women who had to shovel earth into wheelbarrows and cart it great distances. Those who did not fulfill their quota were kept without bread. There were schoolgirl patriots and prostitutes, society women and women suffering for their faith. At Camp Kilometre 4, Commandant Kormos was later sentenced to hard labor for raping thirty girl prisoners: the charge was "damaging the prestige of the regime."

My wife came under the orders of a notorious figure, Colonel Albon, the Poarta Alba chief. She ate grass like an animal: rats, snakes, dogs, everything was eaten. Some of those who had eaten dog said it was good. I asked them, "Would you eat it again?" "Oh, no!" they said. Sabina was tiny and fragile, so a favorite joke of the guards was to throw her into the freezing Danube and fish her out again. But she survived. Her life was saved by the collapse of the project. She was sent with other prisoners to a state farm

where pigs were bred, and there, too, the work was hard.

The professor said that a prisoner from Vacaresti had spoken with my wife in the hospital there.

"She has been very ill," said Popp, "but she will live. She knows that you are safe. The women around her spoke of a pastor who was supposed to be dying, and who preached from behind the walls. They told your wife that they stopped hearing your voice in 1950 - that you must have died. But she said no, that she believed you to be alive, whatever the evidence against it."

This news almost shattered my self-control. I tried to pray, but a black gloom settled on my mind.

For days I spoke to no one. Then one morning in the prison yard I saw a very dignified old priest by the guard-room, his white beard blowing in the cold wind. He had just arrived and they had left him there. Several officers were standing about.

"What's this old priest doing here?" asked one of them.

"He's come to confess them," mocked another.

That is what Father Suroianu soon did. There was such an aura of holiness around him that you felt a great impulse to tell this man the whole truth. I, too, although not believing in sacramental confession revealed to him my sense of despair, and sins which I had never told before. The roots of evil are not often laid bare in the confessional. But the more I accused myself, the more Father Suroianu looked at me not with contempt but with love.

Suroianu had more reason to mourn than any of us. Tragedy had struck his whole family. One of his daughters, a cripple, had been deprived of her husband, who was in Tirgul-Ocna with us. Another daughter, and her husband, had been sentenced to twenty years. One of his sons had died in prison. The second, on whom Suroianu had set great hopes as a priest, had turned against him. His grandchildren had been driven out of school or had lost their jobs because of their parents' "anti-Party activities." Yet

Father Suroianu, a simple, self-educated man, spent his day encouraging and cheering others.

He never greeted people with "Good morning," but always with the Biblical "Rejoice!" He told me, "The day you can't smile, don't open your shop. It takes seventeen muscles of the face to smile, but forty-three to frown!"

I asked him, "You've had so much misfortune how can you 'rejoice' always?"

"Why, it's a grave sin not to do so," he said. "There's always a good reason to rejoice. There is a God in Heaven and in the heart. I had a piece of bread this morning. It was so good! Look now, the sun is shining! And so many here love me! Every day you do not rejoice is a day lost, my son! You will never have that day again."

3

I, too, could rejoice, in the sense at least that I was now fulfilling the wish I had cherished since being ordained - to be a prison pastor. In everyday life one rings the bells and waits for people to come to church; but here my parishioners were "in church" with me, not on one morning in the week, but all day and every day. They had to listen, if not always willingly.

Lazar Stancu, a clever linguist whose crime had been to work for a foreign news agency, broke in to say, "Not more about Christianity, please! There are other interesting religions."

"Well," I said. "I know something about Confucius and Buddhism." And I told one of the lesser-known New Testament parables.

"Fascinating!" Stancu exclaimed, and praised its beautiful and original thought.

"I'm glad you think that," I said, and explained that it was really Christ's teaching. "Why do you run after other religions?" I asked. "Was it the case of an old Rumanian proverb, 'Your neighbor's hen is

always a turkey?' Or simply the restless intellectual's search for novelty?"

Stancu said, "Bernard Shaw once suggested that people are so inoculated in childhood with small doses of Christianity that they seldom catch the real thing."

One evening, a young prisoner jumped up and cried, "Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!" There was a silence. He was a new arrival and the others looked at him surprised. He turned and ran to his bunk, where he flung himself down. I went over to him. He had a fine sensitive face, but his jaw and neck were covered by improvised bandages. He gave me a tearful glare and turned his back. Feeling that I would only upset him further by trying to talk - at the moment, I did not persist.

Dr. Aldea told me his name was Josif. "A nice lad," he said, "but he'll be scarred for life by an ulcer on the face. He's another bone tuberculosis case." He told me that four years before, when only fourteen, Josif had been arrested while trying to reach Germany, where his sister was living. The Secret Police put him under the guard of trained dogs, which

leaped at him if he moved, snapping at his throat. Shock and fear had filled his mind: he talked again and again of the hours he had spent on the frontier at the mercy of the dogs. "Next, suspected of being a pawn in some political game, Josif was taken to Bucharest and tortured for information which he did not possess. Then he was sent with a forced labor gang to the canal, where he starved and fell victim to T.B.

I watched Josif as he settled down among us. He had a native honesty and openness that life had not corrupted. At times, forgetting his troubles, he threw back his dark shock of hair and roared with laughter at some ancient prison joke. But often his hand went to his damaged face. It hurt him: but worse was the thought that his good looks were gone for life.

Sure that I could help him, I bided my time.

4

For a few months after Stalin's death, monthly parcels from home were permitted. We looked forward keenly to these. On the postcards they gave us I wrote asking, in addition to food, for cigarettes and "Doctor Filon's old clothes."

Smoking I dislike, but since men were so desperate for cigarettes I always asked for my full quota to give away. The result was that those for whom I had none were resentful and those to whom I gave often suspected me of giving more to others.

The request for Dr. Filon's clothes puzzled my family. The doctor was a small man. I was very tall. I hoped that they would guess that what I really wanted from him was streptomycin. Aldea told me that Socialist medicine now conceded that the drug, discovered in America ten years before, had value. If I received some, he could treat me; but we were not allowed to ask for it in our parcels.

Apart from tuberculosis, I was suffering also from one of the frequent bouts of toothache which plagued us all. Teeth decayed quickly for lack of food and treatment, or were broken in beatings. Sometimes I had fifty-pound chains around my ankles and could not even walk a few steps to ease the pain. But never was it worse than during this spell at

Tirgul-Ocna. An upper tooth had me in agony all day; then at sunset the pain moved down to the lower jaw. We had no dentist and no hope of relief. Pascal is said to have combated toothache with mathematical problems, so I tried to compose sermons; but pain must be more amenable to calculation than composition, for they were miserable sermons. I began poems, but they were poems of desperation.

I tried to forget the pain by talking to Josif. I sat by him and asked why he had been so angry when I spoke.

He said, "I hate God! If you go on I'll call the

guards." His eyes began to fill with tears. "Leave me alone!"

But the boy's good nature always broke through, and a day or two later he was telling me of his hopes of meeting his sister in Germany and going on together to join relations in America.

"You must start to learn English, then," I said.

"I'd love to, but who'll teach me here?"

I said I could give him lessons if he wished.

"Could you? Really?" He was overjoyed, and proved a bright pupil, although we had no books, paper or pencil.

I told him of books in English I had read, and had him repeat after me passages which I knew by heart from the Bible.

5

Josif was not the only prisoner who threatened to report me, but the real danger in our midst was the hidden informer. Often such men used the pretense of patriotism to serve their purpose, especially with the young.

The partisans who held out for years in the mountains of Rumania inspired many youngsters to form their own anti-Communist groups, so that boys and girls of seventeen and eighteen were arrested and herded into jail: there was even a fourteen-year-old with us at Tirgul-Ocna. They loved to hear the stories which a former intelligence colonel called Armeanu used to tell of our King Stephen the Great and other patriot-heroes who had struggled against foreign domination.

General Stavrat, who had known Armeanu before, said, "I don't trust that man. We must keep an eye on him."

Later that day, I walked by slowly while Armeanu was with a young partisan called Tiberiu. "They got me," Tiberiu said, "but others are carrying on the fight...." When I walked past again, I

heard him say that a young girl was among them. Armeanu, seeing me near, clapped him on the shoulder and went off.

I asked Josif to listen; Armeanu would take even less notice of him. Indeed, a few evenings later, he heard snatches of conversation.

"Hasn't a good-looking chap like you got a girl?" Armeanu was asking Tiberiu. "Of course you have - I bet she's pretty, too. What's her name?... Maria... - and where does she come from?... Yes, I know the place. In fact, I was friendly with a family called Celinescu who had a daughter of the same name... Ah, your Maria is a Miss Cuza. And her father? An army captain, eh? Not in the 22nd regiment by any chance?... Oh, the 15th. Yes, yes."

After this report, I agreed that Armeanu was probably an agent and that the girl Maria would be arrested in a few days. General Stavrat wanted to confront him at once, but I knew that we could prove nothing against the man. When next I found Armeanu alone, I struck up a conversation. He asked why I was in prison and I saw a desperate chance.

"For spying," I said, adding that I knew I could speak freely to a nationalist like him. "My arrest doesn't matter. I'm only a minor dog in the organization." I dropped further hints and allowed him to wheedle names and addresses of my "contacts." I saw a look of cunning triumph in his face: he thought he had the information which would secure his release.

As soon as the cells opened next day, Stavrat saw Armeanu whispering to the guard. Immediately afterwards the colonel was called for a "medical inspection" - this was a frequent pretext for consulting informers. Then I was sent for by the political officer. He must have imagined an extra star on his shoulder already, for without any attempt to shield Armeanu he at once demanded the full story of the great

international spy-network I had mentioned.
"Lieutenant," I replied, "if you pass on the information which I gave Armeanu yesterday it will start

a furor in Bucharest. That's why I advise you not to do it. You'll only harm yourself."
"What do you mean?" he asked.
I said, "I invented the whole thing. I wanted to check my suspicions about Armeanu. Now I know."
The officer stared at me in disbelief. Then, he burst out laughing.
I went back and told Stavrat. He tackled Armeanu. "Brave men have died under your command," he said, "and now you turn to treachery!"
Armeanu tried to bluster, but he was an outcast from that day. I heard years later that he had died in prison. All his betrayals brought him only shame.

6

My next month's parcel included 100 grams of streptomycin. The hint had been taken! Thinking of the men I had left behind in Room Four, I asked General Stavrat to offer it to the most serious case there.
"That's Sultaniuc," he said with distaste. "A thorough-paced Iron Guard Fascist. He's at death's door, though he won't admit it. Much better take the stuff yourself.... Very well, if you insist."
Stavrat was soon back. "He wanted to know where the drug came from, and when I told him it was yours he said he wouldn't take anything from an opponent of the Iron Guard. There's nothing to be done with a fanatic like that."
I thought there might be a way around. When Stavrat had left, I asked Josif - whom no one would suspect of duplicity - to act as a go-between.
"Tell Sultaniuc the general was mistaken. Say it's a gift from Graniceru. He's an Iron Guard man, too, and I hear he recently received some drugs."
Josif was unsuccessful. "Sultaniuc doesn't believe that Graniceru would give him anything. He won't look at the powder unless you swear on your oath that it doesn't come from you."

"Why not?" I said. "I've given him the drug and I can give him an oath to go with it. The streptomycin is really not mine, but God's. I gave it to Him the moment it arrived."

Dr. Aldea, who was busy elsewhere when the streptomycin arrived, was speechless when he heard what had become of it. Even Stavrat was puzzled at my giving "a false oath." He said, "I thought you clergy always insisted on the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

Stavrat soon had an example of what "the whole truth" can cost when two new prisoners, one of whom had testified against the other, were put into our cell. The first was a Catholic bishop, who wanted Rome to know how bitterly his Church was being persecuted. The second was a lawyer who delivered the bishop's letter of complaint to the Papal Nuncio - when there was still one in Bucharest - for transmission to the Vatican. As the lawyer left the Nuncio's palace, he was arrested and, having denied delivering a letter, was confronted by the bishop. The bishop said, "I cannot lie. Yes, I did give him a letter."

Both men were tortured and ended up in Tirgul-Ocna, where they argued over which was right. The bishop expected my support, but I could not give it. I said, "If a man refuses to tell a lie, well and good, but then he should keep dangerous questions in his own hands. If he decided to risk someone else's safety, he must defend him at all costs."

The bishop protested, "The whole affair has brought me much sorrow, but how could I say something which was untrue?"

I replied that if we do good to our enemies, surely we should help our friends. "If my hostess has spent all day preparing a disastrous dinner, I still feel obliged to compliment her: that's not a lie, it's simple courtesy. When men here ask, 'When will the Americans come?' I tell them, 'It can't be too long now.' It's not the truth, I'm afraid, but it's not a lie either. It is word of hope."

The bishop was unconvinced. I continued, "If you submit to the purists, all art becomes a lie. Faust

didn't really sign a contract with the devil, you know; it's just that liar Goethe at work. Hamlet never

existed - that's a Shakespearean lie. The simplest jokes (I hope you laugh at jokes) are a fabrication."

"That may be so," the bishop replied, "but here is a personal issue. When ~you~ are interrogated by the Communists, Mr. Wurmbrand, do you not feel that you must tell the truth?"

"Of course not. I have no qualms about saying the first thing that comes into my head, so long as it misleads those who are trying to trap my friends. Am I to give these people information which they can use to attack the Church? I'm a minister of God!

"The world uses fine words for ugly things. Fraud becomes cleverness. Meanness is called economy. Lust wears the crown of love. Here the ugly word 'lie' is used for something which instinct tells us is right. I respect truth, but I'd lie' to save a friend."

When we were alone, Josif asked me, "What do you call a lie, then?"

"Why should you expect a definition from me? Your own conscience, if guided by the Holy Spirit, will tell you in every circumstance of life what to say and what to leave unsaid. You don't think the oath you carried to Sultaniuc about the streptomycin was a lie, do you?"

"Oh no," said Josif, with his sweet smile. "That was an act of love."

7

Josif's bitterness was eased, and one day after our English lesson I asked him, "Why do you say that you hate God?"

"Why?" he echoed. "You tell me first why God created the T.B. microbe." He considered that that should end the conversation.

"I can explain," I said. "If you will listen quietly."

He replied woefully, "I'll listen all night if you can do that."

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I warned him that I would keep him at his word. It was a problem, I said, which went to the root of human suffering, and evil. Josif was not the only one to ask why such things could happen under the eye of a merciful God - probably all of us in prison had asked the same question, and there was not one

answer, but several.

"Firstly, we tend to confuse the unpleasant with the bad. Why is the wolf bad? Because it eats sheep and this upsets me. I want to eat the sheep myself! And whereas the wolf must eat the sheep to live, I have no need to do so, for I can eat other things. Worse still, the wolf has no duty towards the sheep, whereas we rear it all its life, feed and water it, and when it puts its full trust in us, then we cut its throat. No one thinks we're bad."

Josif sat watching me, his head propped in his hand.

"It's the same with bacilli. One bacillus lives - and makes dough ferment; another lives - and damages a child's lung. Neither germ knows what it does, but I approve one and condemn the other. So things are not good or bad in themselves - we label them according to whether they are convenient to us. We want the whole universe to conform to us, although we are an infinitesimally small part of it."

The cell was dark and unexpectedly quiet. "Secondly," I said, "what we call 'bad' is often simply unfinished good."

"That will take some proving," Josif put in, "in my case."

I said, "You had a namesake four thousand years ago, who was sold into slavery by his brothers, and suffered many other injustices in Egypt. Then he rose to be Prime Minister and so he was able to save the land, and his own ungrateful brothers, from starving in a famine. So until, like Joseph, you reach the end of the story, you can never know if what has happened so far will prove good or bad. When a painter starts a portrait, all you see is a blur of color. It takes time for the sitter to emerge. Everyone admires the portrait of Mona Lisa, but it took Leonardo

forty years to finish. The ascent of a mountain is hard going before you can enjoy the view from the summit."

"But the men who die here in prison," Josif said, "may never see the view."

"On the other hand, a spell in jail may help them to the summit. Would Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej have come to power in Rumania if he hadn't been in prison like us?"

"And those who don't live to see freedom again?"

"Lazarus died in poverty and sickness," I said, "but Jesus tells us in a parable that the angels took him into eternal blessedness. After death there comes to all of us a compensation. Only when we see the end of everything can we hope to understand."

Josif promised to think about it.

8

One rapid cure for toothache is good news, and the letter which came for me raised my spirits to the skies, for it said my wife was free. She was still confined to Bucharest, but my son would shortly be allowed to visit me! The letter ended there: it was all the information they allowed.

I had left Mihai at the age of nine, and now he was fifteen. I could not imagine my son so grown up. We had always been so close. I began to worry about the meeting day and night. At last they led me into a large hall, where I had to sit in a box with a window blocked by three iron bars, so small that the visitor opposite would see only a small part of my face. The guard shouted, "Mihai Wurmbrand!" and he came and sat down before me. He was pale and thin and hollow-cheeked, with the beginnings of a moustache.

He said with a rush, in case he was cut off, "Mother says even if you die in prison you must not be sad because we'll all meet in paradise."

Consoling first words! I did not know whether to laugh or cry. I pulled myself together. "How is she? Have you food at home?"

"She's well again," he said. "And we have food. Our Father is very rich."

The guards assigned to listen to us grinned. They thought my wife had re-married.

To every question, Mihai found some reply in a verse from the Bible, so that in the few minutes which were allowed I received little family news; but he did tell me he had left a parcel with the guards at the gate.

I received the parcel next day, in excess of my allowance, because Mihai had addressed it to "Richard Wurmbrand." The others had gone to my prison self, Vasile Georgescu. Shortly afterwards, restrictions were

fully restored: no visits, no parcels, no letters.

9

Before the easier times ended, a warder dragged a basket into the cell. It contained sheets and towels, and more than enough of these unimaginable luxuries for all.

"There's been a miscount," said Emil, a tailor. "Let's cut up the extra ones for clothes! I can run up some warm shirts out of this stuff."

Ion Madgearu, a lawyer, said uneasily, "It would be stealing state property."

"Who's to know? There's no inventory!"

"I'm a political prisoner, not a criminal."

"You're a fathead!"

Sides were taken and the argument raged. Josif appealed to me.

I said, "All this 'state property' is stolen from us. We've been reduced to rags and we are entitled to take back what we can. We owe it to our families to do all we can to survive the winter. It's just the same as when the guard comes in half asleep in the morning to ask, 'How many are you in this cell today? We try to exaggerate our numbers to get a little extra bread - and quite right too!"

Madgearu said, "I prefer to abide by the law."

"But every law is unfair to someone," I replied. "The law tells a millionaire who lacks nothing not to steal, and it says the same to you and men who have nothing. Jesus excuses David for doing unallowed things when he was very hungry."

Madgearu fell in with the rest of us eventually, but later he told me he had a special reason for wishing to make no compromise of this kind.

"I used to be a state prosecutor and in my time I've sent hundreds to jail. I thought, 'Well, it makes no difference what I say; the Party will send them to prison in any case.' When later I became the scapegoat for some mistake and received a fifteen-year sentence myself, I was stunned. They sent me to the lead-mines at Valea Nistrului. There, a Christian prisoner befriended me. He shared his food and was my good shepherd. I felt we'd met before, so I asked

why he was in jail. 'Oh,' he said, 'I helped a fellow in trouble, like you. He came to my farm, seeking food and shelter. Then he was arrested as a partisan and I got twenty years,' I said, 'Disgraceful!' and he gave me a strange look.... Then it came back to me. I had been the prosecutor in his case. The man never reproached me, but his example of returning good for evil decided me to become a Christian."

10

Josif sang as he tried on the shirt which Emil had made him out of the surplus toweling. It was like a tunic, with a hole for his head, but he was happy to have something fresh near his skin. "State property! Everyone steals these days," he said cheerfully

Stavrat said, "He takes it for granted. In ten years we've turned into a nation of thieves, liars and petty spies. Farmers steal from land they once owned; farm-workers steal from the collective, even the barber steals a razor from his own shop which the cooperative has seized. Then they have to cover their thefts. Did you, pastor, make absolutely accurate tax returns?"

I admitted that I saw no reason to give the parishioners' money to the atheistic Party.

"Stealing will be a subject taught at school, next," said Stavrat.

Josif put in, "I didn't listen to anything at school. The teachers said that Bessarabia, which everyone knows was stolen from us, had always been part of Russia."

"Good lad!" said the general.

"I hope you'll reject their teaching against religion, too, Josif," I added and told him about a professor I knew who had to lecture regularly on atheism. "After crossing himself alone in his room asking God's forgiveness, he would go out and tell the students that God did not exist."

"Well, of course," said Josif, "they would be spying on him." He could not imagine a world in which you did not have to look around before opening your mouth.

The talk turned to a new informer called Jivoin

who had deserted from the Yugoslav army and had been arrested on the border as a spy. Now, to ingratiate himself with the prison authorities, he played the anti-Titoist and got the guards into trouble by reporting them if they relaxed the rules.

"Some of us have decided to give Jivoin a shock," Josif said. "If we all jump on him together they can't punish us too badly."

"Wait a day," I said. "I've an idea which may work better."

Since Jivoin was used to the cell turning its back on him, he was flattered when I sought him out and asked about his homeland. Soon he was repeating Croat jokes and Serbian proverbs, and recalling the beauty of Montenegro, its songs and dances. He grew steadily more excited under my prompting.

"And what's your new National Anthem?" I asked.

"Oh, it's magnificent - haven't you heard it?"

"No, I'd like to, very much."

Delighted, Jivoin jumped up and raised his voice in song. The guards outside did not recognize the

Titoist hymn until he came to the chorus. Then Jivoin was seized and rushed off to face a wrathful political officer.

"Well, that's the end of him," said Josif. We began to laugh.

Not long after Jivoin was neutralized, a former Iron Guard man, Captain Stelea, was moved to our cell from one further down the gallery. There he had left, with regret, an old wartime comrade.

"What was his name?" General Stavrat asked.

"Ion Coliu," Stelea replied. "He was put in with me the night after my arrival at Tirgul-Ocna and we had a wonderful talk about old times."

Stavrat asked whether Stelea had told Coliu any secret which he had held back under interrogation and torture.

"Yes, everything," said Stelea. "He's been my closest friend for years. I'd stake my life on him."

When Stavrat told Stelea that Ion Coliu had become the most reviled stool-pigeon in Tirgul-Ocna, he could not believe it. I was asked to confirm the fact. For hours Stelea sat on his bunk like a shell-shocked soldier. Then he leaped up and began to

shout and fight with us hysterically, until the guards carried him off.

A room is set aside in every prison for those who break down. They are left to rave and scream, excrete on the floor and fight among themselves, sometimes to death. Food is pushed through a hatch and left. No guard risks his life among them.

11

Josif's sentence had only weeks to run. He was planning for the future, he told me. "My sister in Germany will work for a permit for us to go to America. I'll perfect my English and learn a trade!"

But still he hated his disfigured face. One evening, I told him how Helen Keller, although blind, deaf and dumb, became one of America's great personalities. He was fascinated as I described how she

taught herself to become a fine pianist, aided only by a piece of sounding wood held in her teeth, the other end of which was fixed in the piano; and how her work brought Braille to thousands of blind people.

"She wrote, in one of her famous books, that although she had never seen the starry Heaven, she had Heaven in her heart. That is why she could spread before a world that has these senses, but often fails to use them, the beauty of God's creation."

I told him that Helen Keller came from a wealthy family. If she had been "lucky" like other girls in having all her senses, she might have frittered away her life in trivialities. Instead, she used what men called "evil" as a stimulus to reach new heights of achievement.

Josif pondered. "Helen Keller must be a case in a thousand," he said.

"No. There are many like her. The Russian writer Ostrovsky was blind, paralyzed, and so poor that he had to write his novel on wrapping paper. It is world-famous today. Great men have often been sick men. Schiller, Chopin, Keats were tubercular like us. Baudelaire, Heine and our own poet, Eminescu, had syphilis. Scientists tell us that the microbes of such diseases excite our nervous cells and so they heighten our intelligence and perception, although they may

bring madness or death in the end. T.B. may make a bad man worse, but good ones become better; they see their lives running out and want to do all the good they can in the time left to them."

Josif helped often in Room Four. I said, "Haven't you seen the special serenity, gentleness and lucidity which comes to some of those who suffer from tuberculosis?"

His eyes lit up. "That's true. How strange!"

I said, "For thousands of years men regarded fungus - mold that grows on walls - as bad. Then twenty-five years ago Sir Alexander Fleming found the good in it, and penicillin, which heals so many diseases, was discovered. Until its real use was known, this mold was evil. It may be that we have yet to

learn how to put the T.B. microbe to work for us. When once this incurable disease of ours has finally been conquered, our children will perhaps be inoculated with small doses of the germ to enliven their intelligence.

"God made Heaven and earth, and your life, and so much beauty, Josif! There is sense in your suffering, as there was in Jesus's, for it was His death on the cross which saved mankind."

Josif was shivering in his new shirt, which was already growing threadbare.

I took the woolen jacket which my relatives had sent and tore out the lining, for myself. I persuaded him to take the jacket. He clasped his arms over his narrow chest to show how warm he was.

Josif's conversion began on that day. Yet something was needed to lift him into faith.

It happened during the distribution of the bread rations. They were laid in rows on a table each morning. Each portion was supposed to be three and a half ounces, but some were a shade larger, some smaller. There were often disagreements over whose turn it was for first choice, and quarrels over who had to be last. Men asked each other's advice: which was the biggest portion left? Having acted on it, they suspected they were being misled, and friendships turned sour over a mouthful of black bread. When a surly prisoner called Trailescu tried to cheat me, Josif was watching.

I told Trailescu, "Take mine, too. I know how

hungry you are." He shrugged and stuffed the bread into his mouth.

We sat translating New Testament verses into English that evening and Josif said, "We have read nearly everything Jesus said now, but still I wonder what He was like to know as a man."

I said, "I'll tell you. When I was in Room Four there was a pastor who would give away everything he had - his last bit of bread, his medicine, the coat from his back. I have given these things also sometimes, when I wanted them for myself. But at other times when men were hungry and sick and in need I

could be very quiet, I didn't care. This other pastor was really Christ-like. You felt that just the touch of his hand could heal and calm. One day he talked to a small group of prisoners and one asked him the question you have asked me: 'What is Jesus like? I've never met anyone like the man you describe, so good and loving and truthful.' And the pastor replied, in a moment of great courage, simply and humbly, 'Jesus is like me.' And the man, who had often received kindness from the pastor, answered, smiling, 'If Christ was like you, then I love Him.' The times when one may say such a thing as that, Josif, are very rare. But to me that is what it means to be Christian. To believe in Him is not such a great thing. To become like Him is truly great."

"Pastor, if Jesus is like you, then I love Him, too," Josif said. There was innocence and peace in his gaze.

The moment passed and we went on with our lesson. I told him how Jesus answered the Jews who asked for a sign so that they might believe him. "Our ancestors," they said, "had bread from Heaven. Moses got it for them." And Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall never be hungry or thirsty. Your forefathers ate, and are dead. I speak of bread which comes from Heaven, which a man may eat and never die."

Next day Josif worked in Room Four, as he often did now. When we met in the evening, he said, "I want to be a Christian more than anything." I baptized him with a little water from a tin mug, saying, "In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Ghost." The bitterness left his heart completely

before he was released.

On the day of his departure, he embraced me. There were tears in his eyes. He said, "You've helped me as though you were my own father. Now I can stand by myself, with God."

Years afterwards we met again. He was a Christian. But now he was proud to bear the scar he had hated once.

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12

Our prison administrators soon got over their fright at Stalin's death. There had been serious trouble in the slave-camps of Siberia, and they were determined to show no weakness. Old restrictions were revived, new ones created. The windows were closed and painted over, despite the doctor's protests, and we could open them only an inch at night when the guards were not looking. In summer the heat and stench were horrible.

Outside, too, the sufferings of the Church increased. We heard, from newly arrested Orthodox priests, how Patriarch Justinian had become wholly a tool of the Party.

One of his worst acts was his treatment of Mother Veronica, a nun venerated throughout Rumania. Years before, as an unlettered peasant girl, Veronica claimed to have had a vision of the Virgin Mary, who appeared to her in a field and said a convent must be built on the spot. After several such apparitions had been recorded, contributions poured in, and 200 young girls took the veil. In the years that followed the Holy Virgin's shrine became a place of pilgrimage like Lourdes, and after the Communist take-over the legend that she would redeem Rumania acquired a new meaning. One day Justinian arrived in a glossy black car and began his ministrations by excommunicating the priest of the convent church. Then, as head of the Church, he told the nuns that they were wasting their time preparing for an after-life; much better go out and take their pleasures in the world - why should they forego their sexual rights for an illusion of future bliss? The nuns closed their ears to him. They refused to leave their refuge. So Justinian's visit was followed by a Security Police raid. The sisters who would not break their vows were shamefully

ill-treated, and finally the convent was shut down.
The news shocked Rumania: for a time the Party

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was worried. Mother Veronica was subjected to intense pressure in a secret prison and made to confess that her vision had been a delusion. After her release she married and had children. That was the end of the Rumanian Lourdes.

Another blow for the faithful was the fate of Petrache Lupu, known as "the shepherd saint" from Oltenia. While tending his flock many years before, he had seen the figure of an old man. The old man introduced himself as God, declaring that more churches must be built and money given for the poor. Although Lupu was a hereditary syphilitic who could hardly speak intelligibly, his story was believed. Thousands came to see him. When war broke out, and he was flown to the front to inspire the troops, the soldiers competed to kiss his hand. He went from one sector to another telling them that God wanted them to kill more Russians. On his arrest by the Communists, Petrache Lupu asked his fellow-prisoners when the Americans would rescue them. "Why wait for the Yanks?" they said. "Your 'Old Man' will surely free you soon enough!" Lupu cackled, "He'd like to, but he hasn't got a gun!"

The Orthodox priests sadly quoted another instance: that of a wonder-working monk, Arsene Boca, whose followers said they did not need to confess to him because he knew their sins at a glance. Boca spent a spell in prison. Then he gave up his habit, married and lived as other men.

Many of the blows the Party struck at religion simply lopped off branches of credulous superstition, leaving true faith sounder than ever. But human nature is such that if religious superstition is too drastically shorn it may be replaced by atheist superstition. Instead of excessive veneration for holy images we then have the idolatry of Stalin, the mass murderer, and the second devil is worse than the first.

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13

A new batch of prisoners came in and one of

them who had been beaten badly asked for me. I went with Professor Popp along the passage.

It was Boris. The old trade unionist had been in several prisons since re-education ended. He lay on the stone floor where the guards had thrown him. The others from the cell were out on exercise and no one had given him any help until Popp came past. We eased him on to a plank bed. His grubby shirt was stuck to him with congealed blood. Slowly and painfully we soaked it off, revealing a back criss-crossed with lash strokes, fresh and old. It was his reward for co-operating with the re-educators, and the reward of all his companions who had thought to win favor with the Party by wielding a truncheon.

The prisoners began to file in from exercise and many cast looks of hatred and contempt at Boris.

"I asked for it," said the old fellow as Popp and I cleaned the wounds.

"You got it!" said someone.

Boris clutched my arm. "I met someone you know. Patrascanu gave me a message for you."

Boris said that Lucretiu Patrascanu, the former Communist Minister of Justice who had shared my cell after our arrest in 1948, was dead. During the year of uncertainty which followed Stalin's end, the Party bosses were as fearful as our guards that they might be submerged in a counter-revolution. They saw the imprisoned Patrascanu as a man with a popular following who might lead a liberalizing movement and take revenge on them. After six years in jail, he was given a rushed trial and death sentence.

Boris had been with him briefly. He said that Patrascanu, who had done so much to bring Communism to power, was tortured before he died. He complained of the cold and they gave him heavy clothes and put him in chains. "Still cold?" they said, and heated the cell until, gasping and soaked in

sweat, he begged them to turn off the steam heat. They did so, after stripping him to his shirt, and then let the cell temperature fall to freezing. So Patrascanu was alternately roasted and frozen, and since he did not die, he was taken out and shot.

Boris said, "He told me, 'If you meet Wurmbrand again, tell him he was right.'"

Dr. Aldea came. "We'll have to take you to Room

Four," he said to Boris.

14

I spent all the time I could with Boris in the "death room," and after a few days he seemed to be on the mend. Although his pride would not let him admit it, he was happy to be back in an atmosphere of human kindness.

He nodded towards his neighbor, a Jehovah's Witness. "Old Losonczi's praying for me. He says enough prayers for both of us." Raising his voice, he said, "Losonczi, you tell God everything, don't you?"

The old fellow said, "I ask good for us all."

"You haven't had an answer yet," said Boris. "He's pulling your leg, perhaps; trying you out, like Job!"

He caught hold of my wrist. "It's something to explain, isn't it? Year after year, men pray for liberty, for news of their families, for one single meal they might enjoy. What do they get? Nothing!"

Boris went on. "I was in Jilava, the worst prison in Rumania. My friends were praying, 'God, if you love us, give us something to eat without worms in it.'"

"And did the food get better?" Losonczi asked.

"No, it got worse!"

I said, "When the doctor treats you, doesn't he often have to cause you pain? Think for a moment of animals that die in scientific experiments. If there were a dog that knew what it went through might save the lives of millions of higher beings, might it not accept pain willingly, even death? I believe that what we suffer may be serving future generations.

Jesus bore His pain, knowing that it would save mankind."

Losonczi intervened. "All over the world, every day, people say 'Our Father' and declare that His Kingdom shall come, and it does not come. But I think I know why. It's because the people who pray don't really want it to! They say, 'Thy Kingdom come' but it's not a prayer from the heart. What they really want is the Iron Guard back, or the Americans to come, or the King to return, or anyone else to come who will help them."

Boris was listening seriously.

"But the last thing in their minds, be sure, is the Kingdom of Heaven, though they could have it for certain if they thought and worked for it. In my village we had a service to pray for the poor. Everyone was there except one rich farmer, whose pew was empty. While we were thinking how much better we were than he, his son arrived with four sacks of wheat. He put them down at the church door, and said, 'My father has sent his prayer.' That man did something to create the Kingdom of God."

I said, "You're answered, Boris! The Bible promised that the Jews would come from the ends of the earth and be given their kingdom in Palestine – but the prophecy might not have come true for another thousand years if men like Herzl and Weizmann had not worked and struggled to fulfill it."

Others nearby, gaunt, earnest men in this room of death, asked me questions about the meaning of prayer and how it could help. I spoke aloud my thoughts. "Many look on God as if He were a rich man to whom they appeal for favors. Many cling to superstition. But Christians in prison know that we must try to achieve a purer form of religion, even though it is not for everyone. Our prayers take the form of meditation, acceptance, love.

"Millions call on the Father daily. But since we on earth are the children of God, and children share their father's responsibilities, then these prayers are turned to us, too. Is not the Father to whom all pray in my heart?

"So, when I say 'Hallowed be Thy name,' I must hallow God's name. 'Thy Kingdom come,' so I must fight to end the rule of mad beasts over a great part of the world. 'Thy will be done,' and the will of good men, not bad. 'Forgive us our sins,' so I must also forgive. 'Lead us not into temptation,' so I must keep others from being tempted. 'Deliver us from evil,' so I must do all I can to free man from sin."

Losonczi and I became friends. He was an interesting man, a farmer, whose simple good sense shone through the strange views he held as a Jehovah's Witness. I found that the sect had chosen him, not he the sect. Disillusioned with the Orthodox Church, and seeking religion because of a personal crisis in his

life, he had embraced the first faith he met. There were many of these "refugees" from the larger confessions. Had Losonczi been drawn into a legally approved sect such as the Baptists or Adventists he would not have been serving a twenty-year sentence as one of the outlawed Witnesses.

One day, as I was talking to him, he asked me, "Do you know why I am really here?" It was not, he said, only because the Party hated the Witnesses for their rigid attitude. "Years ago I committed a great sexual sin. I repented and asked God to let me suffer and atone for it. I am still atoning."

Losonczi was not in a state to listen to another doctrine now. He was dying.

"Even the saints had difficulty in subduing their carnal nature," I said. "Jesus knew this. He has atoned for our sins, and there's no need for you to go on atoning by yourself." He replied, "I can't forget."

A few days later I came into the room and found Losonczi's bed empty. He had died during the night.

15

The old man had died thinking of a sexual sin in his youth, and here he did not suffer alone. Sex was an abiding torment to everyone in jail. Prisoners sat gazing at nothing, their heads filled with fantasies of

men and women in the act of sex, and in every perversion of it. They tried to find relief in endless talk and often in baiting me with provocative questions.

Married men, thinking of what their wives were doing, suffered most of all. A good half had already been divorced in their absence; the pressure to divorce "counter-revolutionaries" was strong, and wives who had left their imprisoned husbands for other men had no reason to resist it.

A leader in the obsessive sex-talk had once owned a department store and - according to his own account - seduced many pretty girl assistants. A fleshy man of middle age, Nicolas Frimu took pride in his prison nickname, "The Great Lover." He boasted often of the young actress wife who, he said, adored him.

When he was called to the Commandant's office, he expected to hear the result of his appeal against

sentence. "I'll soon be out now," he said. "And then - !" he kissed his fingers loudly.

He was back soon, flushed with rage. "My appeal's been rejected - and she's divorced me and remarried!" he exploded. For several minutes, without pause he described the revenge he would take on the woman and her new husband - a director of the State theater. Other discarded husbands urged him on, shouting and laughing bitterly as they invented still more atrocious punishments.

I said, "But how many of us would be faithful to our wives if we were free and they in jail?"

"Don't start lecturing!" shouted Frimu.

I said: "I'm sorry about your bad news. But you're always talking about the girls you've led astray: how can you expect women to be pure, with men like you about!"

Novac, a dean who was usually reserved and shy, surprised us by saying, "The husband is not always to blame. I tried to make my wife happy. I thought I had. When I went home after my first prison term, my front door was opened by a stranger. My wife came out and said, 'I'm married to him - so please go!' I tried to speak to her, but she wouldn't listen. 'I've had enough trouble, I want no more

revolutionaries in my home,' she shouted. So I spent my first night of freedom in a railway station waiting-room."

"More fool you!" said Frimu.

Petre, an airman, asked, "How about the second night?"

The dean flushed and turned away.

Emil, a farmer, trembled with anger as he told how he had returned after a previous sentence. "My dog scented me from half-way down the street. She tore her chain from the fence and rushed to greet me, and when I bent down she jumped up to lick my face. Then I went into the house, and found my wife in bed with another man."

He glared round at us. "Which of the two was the dog, Pastor?"

16

The Communist Party worked deliberately to

corrode morality. But, putting this factor aside, was Christian teaching in sexual matters respected? It seemed unlikely from the talk in prison, and a handful of Christian prisoners tried to find out by asking for a truthful answer to a simple question: "Have you always obeyed the basic rule of the Christian church in remaining chaste in word, thought and deed before marriage, and faithful thereafter?"

Of 300 prisoners, all nominal Christians, two men answered yes. One was saintly old Father Suroianu, and the other a boy of fifteen.

We sat comparing notes. General Stavrat said, "The Church will have to think again. An army cannot go into battle with orders which no one obeys."

"To preach what nobody practices devalues all a priest may have to say," remarked Stancu, the journalist.

"We cannot go against the Bible," objected Dean Novac.

"Surely not," I said. "But though we cannot compromise with sin, we must have more understanding

for the sinner. In Biblical times women wore veils and dresses like tents. You had to be a virtuoso of vice then to lead a girl astray. Nowadays their clothes are designed to lure the male, and opportunities abound.

"We can remember how Jesus treated the woman taken in adultery. Nobody there could cast the first stone. They crept away and Jesus asked, 'Woman, has no one condemned you? Go, and sin no more.'" [JHN 8:3-11]

The dean was worried. "Young people have so much license today. They need guidance."

I agreed, but added, "We must also teach that sex is a gift that God gives mankind. We must tell the whole truth to free it from any taint of obscenity. There is divinity here. The world's oldest religious book, the ~Maneva-Darma Sostra~, says: 'Woman is an altar to which man brings as a pleasing sacrifice to God, his seed.'"

"Most of us look at a woman in a more humdrum way," complained Stancu. "She's something to be used. An object of pleasure, or a well-dressed doll to be seen about with. A slave to clean and cook, or an idol in whose service a man can lose himself. Nobody

seems to regard her as an equal, even in sexual enjoyment."

"The main thing is to choose a partner who can make you happy," said the dean.

"Or vice-versa," I suggested. "One of the happiest men I knew chose the plain girl of the village because he thought she would find no one else to marry."

"What a romantic!" scoffed Stancu. "Marriage is only a contract. When my parents found a nice girl with the right size of dowry, the deal was done. We've been quite content, going our own ways."

"So you're not really married at all," I said.

"The knot was tied in church!"

"I consider a marriage for material interest is invalid in God's sight, even if it's blessed by the Pope in Rome."

Stancu laughed. "Then there must be plenty of invalid marriages about. Boys sell themselves to rich

girls, just as poor girls are sold to rich men. Isn't it more unreasonable to be valued for good looks, which don't last, than a solid bank balance, which does?"

I answered by telling Stancu about a young woman whose parents had made her marry a wealthy man. After years of unhappiness she fell in love with the tailor who made her clothes, and went to live with him. Many churchgoers would have nothing to do with her. To live with a man out of wedlock is sin, but I tried to understand her position. Her parents, by beatings and other means, had forced her into this marriage. The best thing was not to despise this woman, but to help her by encouraging her to put things which were irreversible in order legally. I asked my people not to judge her hastily.

"The young woman came in tears to thank me. I said that the register of church members was not the same as the register God keeps in Heaven. 'God has understanding even if not approval for the feelings which brought you to the arms of another man. God continues to love you.' She flung her arms round my neck and kissed me, and at that moment my wife came in."

The others roared with laughter. Stancu asked, "And how did you explain the situation to her?"

"There was nothing to explain," I said. "The

woman lived happily with the tailor, and when he died, years later, I told my wife what had happened."

17

Prisons are supposed to encourage homosexuality, but we saw no evidence of this, perhaps because of the illness, the exhaustion, the overcrowding we had to live with. Professor Popp spoke strongly against one or two suspected instances.

I said that we should condemn the sin, but try to understand these often unhappy men and forgive their failings, as we did other human faults, and try to cure them. Many great men had been homosexual – Alexander, Hadrian, Plato, Leonardo; and many

had shown a deep Christian feeling in their work, from Socrates – who was called, "a Christian before Christ" – to Michelangelo and, in our own time, Oscar Wilde and Andre Dunant, who founded the International Red Cross.

"Yes, I know their honors list," said Popp, "but so many of them, in the theater and so on, flaunt their problem and turn a private matter into a public one. Since society condemns this tendency, they should at least practice a little prudence."

A rabbi recalled a word of advice from that book of great practical wisdom, the Talmud. "It says that if a rabbi cannot conquer a bad impulse, he should at least avoid scandal, put on a veil and go to another town; and then return to preach the law."

Paul Cernei, a young man who had once been in the Iron Guard, had been lying on a nearby bed. Now he swung his feet to the floor and said, "I'll put a real problem to you. One that wrecked my life.... Some years ago I met a girl – let's call her Jenny. We fell in love. She would never let me take her home, so in the end I decided to ask her father's approval of our marriage. When I found the house and gave my name, he came out and said, 'My son, Jenny has told me all about you!' I looked at him in horror. He was a rabbi with a Star of David on his breast. I was an anti-Semite, I didn't know what to do. I mumbled that I had no idea Jenny came from a Jewish family, and walked away."

He paused. "I never saw the girl again. I never

married. I couldn't forget her. I've heard that she's still single, too."

Cernei told the story movingly. Stavrat said, "When you get out, it may not be too late...."

"But if we could get married," Cernei asked, "who should change religions? I'm Orthodox and she's a Jewess."

I said, "Either your faith has meaning for you, and then you can't change it for anything in the world; or it doesn't, and then you might as well abandon it. But since you love each other, why can't you both keep the religion of your choice?"

"I'd want children," he replied. "We should have to bring them up in one religion or another."

I thought that as the children grew up, Cernei and his wife could both explain their beliefs - each respecting the other's - and let the children choose for themselves later on. "You could make your love a means to bring her, with meekness, to the truth."

"Her parents would never approve her change of religion," Cernei said.

"She should listen to them, certainly, but she shouldn't submit if she knows they're wrong."

Stavrat shook his head. "Honor thy father and thy mother," he quoted.

"But, general," said Cernei, "my father left the house while I was still in the cradle. My mother went off with someone else. I was brought up in an orphanage."

No one could find an answer to that.

"I wish I'd stopped to think before I walked away that day," Cernei said.

How often I heard prisoners speak words like that. We are like cars with headlights behind. Looking back, we see the damage we have done and the people we have hurt. We realize too late that if we had only stopped to count the cost to our families, our health or simply our self-respect, we would not have acted as we did.

When Cernei left us, the general said, "He's a decent young man. People always blame a bad upbringing when men go wrong these days, but bad blood matters too. We take care in breeding animals, but degraded, worthless criminals are not discouraged from breeding their kind."

Christians cannot ignore this fundamental problem of heredity. We try to reform the adult, or punish the criminal, but we never ask would-be parents to consider whether something in their descent may harm the unborn. Sex does not exist only to bring babies into the world: it has its own value in making life nobler and happier. And this is our excuse when we bring children into the world casually, for a

moment's pleasure, and forget that procreation is a sacred act.

Most prisoners, who are always short of food, put sexual need on an equal footing. At the Last Judgment men will be reproached for failing to feed the hungry; and they will be reproached, too, some say, if they have not satisfied their partners' thirst after love, whenever they could have done, ennobling their partners and making them happier.

There is sexual injustice, of course, just as there is social and economic injustice. It is one of the great causes of human suffering. But then every law, even divine law, has unavoidably an element of injustice in it in giving the same tasks to unequal men living in unequal conditions. The law lays down the same rules for rich and poor, for under-sexed and over-sexed, for the ignorant and the intellectual.

Marriage must be a question of honor. It is a duty you take upon yourself - to be faithful. Love is a sentiment, and all sentiments change, nobody loves or is angry forever in equal measure. It is a law of nature that passion lowers in intensity as one grows older, so it cannot be a guarantee of a happy marriage, either. There must be something else: the decision to be loyal, the decision to make the other happy.

Since it is obviously impossible to satisfy everyone's sexual need, we discussed chastity as an alternative. The Catholics spoke up in favor of celibacy for the priesthood.

I said, "If celibacy is imposed, and marriage forbidden by vow, then failure to abstain may damage a priest's faith."

"It can become a great creative force," the professor said. "It's doubtful whether Spinoza, Kant, Descartes, Newton, Beethoven ever knew a woman in the Biblical sense."

I thought the chief aid to be given was to teach men to sublimate this natural drive into works useful to society and God. Chastity, in my view, was for the few. Yet we must understand more and more that our

bodies are not ours to misuse for selfish pleasures, but temples of God, to be consecrated to His service.

18

Popp and I took turns to look after Boris, who lay in Room Four, coughing weakly. Dr. Aldea said, "If he eats, he may last ten days. My visits are not really helping him. He's filled with remorse over that beating he gave me. It harms him to see me."

I asked if the man could be moved into my cell. Aldea arranged it. So Boris was carried to the bed next to mine, and I nursed him through the last week of his life.

He withered away under our eyes. His hair was reduced to a few strands, his cheeks were sunken. He sweated feverishly, as I sponged him down, day after day.

"All over soon," he murmured. "A priest once told me 'You'll rot in hell.' So be it!"

"What made him speak like that!" I asked.

"I was cursing God for my sufferings. He said I'd be punished for eternity."

A pastor named Valentin intervened: "Men curse the Communist Party, but eventually it may release them. If hell were endless, then God would be worse than our Secret Police."

Boris opened his eyes. "Do you mean you don't believe in Everlasting Fire?"

"The Biblical doctrine of the endlessness of hell is true subjectively, no doubt, but what is hell? Dostoevsky calls it a state of conscience, and he was an Orthodox believer. In the ~Brothers Karamazov~ he wrote of hell, 'I believe it is the suffering of being unable to love.'"

"I don't think I'd mind that sort of hell," said Boris.

I said, "Perhaps you've never known what it may be to live where there is no love. When the bad have only the bad for company, imagine what it will be

like! It is said that when Hitler went to hell he

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looked about until he found Mussolini. 'What's it like down here?' he asked. Mussolini replied, 'Not so bad, but there's a lot of forced labor.' Then he began to sob. 'Come, Duce,' said Hitler, 'let's know the worst.' 'Well, then, it's this - Stalin's in charge of the working party!'"

Boris smiled. "I'd certainly hate to find my old boss Ana Pauker down below." He lay thinking. "That Catholic priest who told me I'd burn for blasphemy was a good man. He never harmed anyone, but he still thought that, simply for revenge, God would torture me endlessly. The God he believed in was worse than he."

Pastor Valentin said, "I don't doubt that those in hell feel it as an eternal punishment. In this sense the Bible calls it endless, as prison seems endless to us. But even under the worst conditions, we see men coming to love God and to realize they have done wrong. Dives, in Jesus's parable of poor Lazarus, shows signs of a change of heart in hell! He had been an egotist, now he is concerned about his brothers. Nothing is fixed anywhere in nature. If there is some evolution in hell towards goodness, then it opens a door to hope!"

Boris called weakly to prisoners on bunks nearby, "Good news, my lads! Pastor Valentin says we may not fry for ever, after all!"

There was laughter. Frimu, Stavrat and others came across to us.

"Well," asked Frimu, "what's going to be my punishment?"

Frimu was a gluttonous man. I said, "The early Christians used to tell of a man who went to hell and was surprised to find a banquet laid. He recognized many historical figures around the table. 'Do you always feast like this?' he asked. 'Certainly, we may order whatever we wish!' 'Then what is your punishment?' 'It is that we can never bring the hand which holds the food to our mouths.' The newcomer saw a way out. 'But can't each of you feed your neighbor and let him feed you?' 'What!' cried the other. 'Help him? I'd rather go on starving!'"

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General Stavrat said, "I was taught at school and in church that God will punish eternally those who die unrepentant and without faith. It is the received dogma."

"Received in your mind, but not, perhaps in your heart, General. We see men around us cursing God and denying his existence because they suffer unjustly. They will surely be judged according to their deeds and words and thoughts. And then? Suppose you see a stranger in danger of being killed - you'd be the first to run and help him. And if a Christian really believed that his neighbor will be tortured in all eternity in hell, he should try day and night to persuade him to repent and believe. How sad that this doesn't happen."

19

Boris's old prejudices fell away one by one, but instead of becoming cheerful he grew depressed. "I feel I've wasted my life," he said. "I thought myself clever. I've misled a great many people in the last fifty years. If your God exists, he won't want me in Heaven! So down I go to join that old sow Pauker - I'm really scared now!"

Often when he could not sleep he asked me to talk to him.

"Who's going to pray for me when I'm gone?" he asked. He thought Lutherans forbade prayer for the dead. I said that Luther simply did not want people to suppose that, however much they sinned, they might pay a priest to pray them out of purgatory.

Pastor Valentin said: "We pray for our fellow-prisoners, who are dying every day. It wouldn't be an act of love to stop praying just when the soul leaves the body - because Catholics and Protestants quarreled about public prayer four hundred years ago.

"And does prayer help them?"

"Yes," he said. "Before God all are living - and so they are for me. And if they are living, I am sure prayer can help them."

"If I were you, I wouldn't waste prayers on me." He laughed a little at this, and brought on a fit of coughing.

Valentin said, "I'm sure you've done much good. There are certainly many worse men. But I pray for the worst of all - Stalin, Hitler, Himmler, Beria."

"What do you pray?" Boris asked me with a weak voice.

I said: "God, forgive the great sinners and criminals and, among the worst of men, me also."

I sat with Boris a long time. It was so quiet that we could hear Frimu's boastful voice in the next cell. There was laughter and giggling over his sexual exploits.

For some hours, Boris was silent. I thought he was asleep. Suddenly he murmured, "What can it be like?"

"What?" I asked him.

"The judgment of God. Does he sit on a tall throne, saying 'Hell, Heaven... Hell, Heaven' as the souls come before him? I can't see it, myself."

I told him how I imagined it.

"God sits on a throne with a great curtain behind Him and, one by one, we come before Him. Then God makes a sign with His right hand, and from behind the curtain come beings each more beautiful than the other; so splendid that we cannot bear to look at them. Each of these beings stands before one of those to be judged. We who are accused ask, 'Who is this beautiful being with me?' God answers, 'That is you, as you would have been if you had obeyed Me.' And then comes, for the disobedient, the eternal hell of remorse."

"Remorse," Boris whispered.

During the night he had a hemorrhage. I had a difficult time with him, then he fell into a coma. He lay quietly, his eyes staring blindly at the ceiling for an hour. His pulse was weak but still present under my fingers. Suddenly he pulled his hand away and half sat up. He gave a cry which seemed to tear soul from body, "Lord God, forgive me!"

Some of the prisoners around us awoke and muttered angrily, before going back to sleep.

When dawn came, I began to wash the body and prepare it for burial, and while I was doing this, someone informed the Orthodox bishop in a cell down the corridor that a man had died. He came along and began the ritual. I went on with my work. Now and

then the bishop interrupted himself to hiss at me, "Stand up! Show some respect!" but I did not look up. When the ritual was finished, the bishop upbraided me again.

I said, "Where were you when this man was dying all last week? Did you hold a cup to his mouth when he wanted water? Why do you come only now to perform a ceremony which meant nothing to him?"

We were both angry. His ritual seemed such a hollow thing beside that simple cry from the depths of the heart, "Lord God, forgive me!"

20

Spring, 1955, brought signs of a political thaw. A number of prison commandants were arrested for "sabotage." To Tirgul-Ocna came many of the slave workers who had been victims of the "saboteurs." Beds had to be found for them, and I was among a group who were ordered in early June to get ready for transfer to another jail.

Dr. Aldea said, 'You're not fit to move, but there's nothing we can do. Take care of yourself. And if you lay hands on any more streptomycin - don't give it away!"

I said goodbye to my friends amid many tears.

"We'll meet again: I know it," said Professor Popp.

I heard my name shouted, and joined a line of men out in the yard. We were a bizarre gathering, with our shaven heads and suits of many patches, each clutching a bundle of rags - all that we possessed. Some could hardly walk, nevertheless, those of us serving long sentences were ordered to march a step

forward and then sit on the ground while our ankles were chained.

The political officer stood over the blacksmith as he moved from man to man. When my turn came, the officer smiled unpleasantly.

"Ah, Vasile Georgescu! Surely you have something to say about being put in irons?"

Lying on my side, I looked up and replied, "Yes, Lieutenant, I can answer you in song."

He folded his hands behind his back and said,

"Oh, please! I'm sure we'd all like to hear you."
I sang the opening words of the Republic's anthem, "Broken chains are left behind us..." The blacksmith's hammer finished the task in a few more blows, and in the uneasy silence I added, "You sing that broken chains are left behind - but this regime has put more people in chains than any other."
The lieutenant had not found a reply when a shout from the guard-room announced the arrival of transport. We were taken to the station and herded into wagons. There we lay for hours before the train began to creak and rattle across country. Through holes in the tiny, painted-out windows, we glimpsed forest land and mountains. It was a warm and beautiful summer's day.

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PART FIVE

The journey across the plains westwards from Bucharest was about 200 miles, but there were so many stops and starts that it took almost two days and nights. Word of our destination went round even before the thick, 100-year-old walls of notorious Craiova Prison came into sight.
Our chains were struck off in the stone-flagged courtyard, and we were goaded with blows along dark passages thick with dirt. We were thrust, in small groups, into cells along a gallery. Loud protests came from inside them: "There's no room here! We're suffocating already!" The guards squeezed the new arrivals in forcibly. It was like rush hour on the underground railway, with the porters wielding truncheons.
A push in the spine sent me stumbling forwards and the door banged behind me. The stench in the cell made me feel sick. At first I could see nothing. I felt about, and my hand drew back from an almost naked, sweating body. Slowly, as I grew used to the dim light from a ceiling bulb, I saw rows of bunks rising in tiers, packed with men who lay gasping for breath. More men, also half-naked, sat on the floor, or leaned against the walls. No one could move without waking a neighbor, whose curses aroused everyone else.
My stay in this cell over the next two months was

broken only by journeys to the stinking sump outside, carrying lavatory pails.

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I told the prisoners I was a pastor, and said a brief prayer. A few swore at me, but many listened quietly. Then someone called my name from an upper bunk hidden in the darkness.

"I recognize your voice," he said. "I heard your speech at that Congress of Cults many years ago."

I asked who he was. He replied, "We'll speak tomorrow."

The long night ended at 5:00 A.M., when reveille was sounded by a guard who beat on a dangling piece of railway line with an iron bar. The man from the upper bunk, a little fellow with a twist of cloth around his head, came down to shake my hand.

"It's as well I knew your voice in the dark," he said, gazing at me with bloodshot eyes. "I wouldn't have recognized you by sight. The Party has had its revenge for your protest, I see. How thin you are!"

He was a hodja called Nassim, who had represented the small Moslem community at the 1945 Congress of Cults.

Our friendship began while I was trying to eat my first meal at Craiova. The vile, greasy smell of the soup preceded its arrival in the cell. Shreds of rotten cabbage and unwashed offal floated in a scum. But to eat was a duty and I emptied my dish.

"How can you?" asked the hodja, whose stomach had revolted.

"It was a Christian secret," I said. "I think of St. Paul's words 'Rejoice with those that rejoice.' Then I remember friends in America who are now eating grilled chicken, and I thank God with them as I take the first mouthful of soup. Next, I rejoice with friends in England who may be eating roast beef. And I get down another mouthful. So, by way of many friendly countries, I rejoice with those that rejoice - and stay alive." [ROM 12:15]

The hodja and I had to share a bunk through the hot, stuffy nights. I was lucky not to be on the floor.

"You lie very still," he said as others coughed and fidgeted around us. "What are you thinking? Does St. Paul help you now, too?"

I replied, "Yes, for now I rejoice with those in the

West by thinking of their comfortable homes, and the books they have, the holidays they can plan, the music they hear, the love they have for their wives and children. And I remember the second part of the verse, from the Epistle to the Romans, 'And weep with those that weep.' I am sure that in the West many thousands think of us and try to help us with their prayers." [Rom 12:16]

2

All men in prison feel a need to assert themselves. They like to argue. They flare up at a word. And when they find someone who does not return insult for insult, they torment him all the more. In the conditions of Craiova the difficulties I faced were almost insuperable. When I preached I had to raise my voice over groans and pretended snores. The prisoners were desperately bored. They had no inner resources and they longed for their familiar distractions. I found that sermons turned into discussions, and then into quarrels. But anyone who could tell a story, particularly a crime story, was sure of an audience. So I told them thrillers of my own invention, in which the Christian message played a central but inconspicuous part.

My most popular hero was a bandit called Pipa, whose name everyone in Rumania knew. I described how my mother, as a girl, had once seen him in court and had never forgotten his savage, hunted looks.

Pipa's parents were wealthy. They died while he was still a boy, leaving him in the care of a guardian, who cheated him of his property. Pipa took work at an inn, where the owner promised to keep his wages for him until he returned from military service, so that he could set up his own business. When Pipa returned from the army, the inn-keeper denied their agreement, and in blind fury the youth stabbed him to death.

Pipa became an outlaw. From his mountain lair he made a series of raids - all on inns. Over the years

he killed thirty-six inn-keepers. (Amazed whistles from my listeners at this point.) He did not lack

company. With two other outlaws, all in their best stolen clothes, he went down to a village and persuaded three girls to dine with them. They drugged the wine and carried the girls to their cave.

So much was fact; but at this point in my version the girls, awakening, kept their captors at arm's length by telling them stories, in the style of the ~Thousand and One Nights~. These romances ended with the prettiest girl relating the story of the Gospel and winning the outlaws over.

"Pastor," said a forester called Radion, "I've heard many crime stories, but none like yours, which always end with the criminal, the victim and the policeman all going to church together."

Well received also was an epic account of Dillinger, whose progress from hungry down-and-out to America's worst gangster was the pattern for many lives in the cell. A ruined childhood, or social injustice, are the usual preludes to a criminal career, and Dillinger had begun his by robbing a cinema cashier of a few dollars.

When we understood how Pipa and Dillinger had become what they were we could pity them, I said; and from pity came love, and love among mankind was the chief aim of Christianity. We condemn men, but how rarely we offer the love which might save them from crime.

I could have spoken for twenty-four hours a day without exhausting the demand for stories. I began to draw on classics with a Christian viewpoint: Dostoevsky's ~Crime and Punishment~, Tolstoy's ~Resurrection~, told in episodes.

Often the other prisoners told their own stories, farcical, tragic or both. Radion, tall and lean as the trees he used to tend, had led an uneventful life, until the day when he passed through a wood with two friends and looked back to see the forest in flames.

"When we reached the next village we were arrested and charged with starting the fire," he said. "We were beaten until we confessed that we'd done

it to sabotage the local 'collective.' But at our trial the real culprit came forward, and we were acquitted.

"We were not freed. They took us back to the police station and said, 'Now confess what else you

have done!' Under torture, we confessed to a sabotage plot that was a complete invention. I would have said anything to stop the pain!" They were sentenced to fifteen years each.

There were many stories like this at Craiova. Before long we knew each other inside out. It was a nervous, highly-charged atmosphere. No one could bear contradiction, and all sense of proportion or logic was lost.

When I re-told Knut Hamsun's novel ~Hunger~, many eyes were bright, and a prisoner called Herghelegiu told me, as the group broke up for supper, how touched he had been. I suggested that he might offer a little of his bread to the hodja, who feared that the food might contain pig-fat, forbidden by the Koran. But if Herghelegiu was moved to the heart, he was not moved to the stomach. My proposal was ignored.

The intellectuals were prisoners of words. If someone mentioned an American scientific discovery, it was scoffed at as U.S. propaganda. If someone talked of a modern Russian writer, he would be dismissed as a state-subsidized hack. Catholics rejected unheard the wisdom of Jewish philosophers. The Jews knew little of the thought of the Church.

Once I described a religious book I had been thinking out at nights. Judgment was instantly passed. "Riddled with Lutheranism!" cried one Orthodox listener. "It's easy to see you're a Protestant," said another. Some days later, during a conversation with the same couple, I quoted extensively from ~The Problem of Truth~, by a "great Rumanian writer" called Naie Ionescu. The reception was rapturous. I decided that if ever I wanted a fair hearing for my views, they had better be published anonymously, since both books were the same.

Alexandru, a student, raised patronizing smiles

when he recited some verses of his own. I quietly suggested that he should read another one, which was announced as a Shakespearian sonnet. "Superb!" the critics chorused. Without revealing Alexandru's secret, I told them one should not be over-awed by famous names. Shakespeare, Byron - to take English poets only - often exalted unworthy ideas.

An old cavalry officer disagreed. "I'm no literary

man," he said, "but I've always admired Gunga Din. Kipling created a soldier's hero there!"

I said, "Gunga Din may have been a better man than I am, but he gave his life fighting for the British against his own people. What would you say of a Rumanian who died fighting for the Russians against his countrymen?"

An English scholar championed Shakespeare's nobility of thought.

I answered that when Shakespeare was writing, the problems of the Reformation and Puritanism were drawing even street-sweepers into excited argument - yet a historian who had only Shakespeare's plays to read would hardly know that Christianity had reached England.

"In all his plays there is not a single Christian character," I said, "except, perhaps, for poor Cordelia. Claudius slays his rival. The Queen weds her husband's murderer. Hamlet dreams of revenge, will not act and cannot forgive. Polonius is an intriguer. Ophelia's only escape is into insanity. Othello is a professional killer. Desdemona merely plays cow to his bull. Iago is a monster of cynicism and deceit.... Shakespeare was a magnificent poet and a born psychologist, but he had no idea of Christian character."

The scholar said, "Perhaps there's really no such thing as 'Christian character' to describe."

I told him that I knew he had been in prison only a few weeks; when he had been there longer, he would know better. He would see some of the goodness which I had experienced: the sinners who confessed with their last breath, the saints who forgave their murderers, as we hope to be forgiven in the end.

And I quoted to him some lines which showed how great a Christian poet was lost in Shakespeare:

> They say the tongues of dying men enforce
> attention like deep harmony.
> Their words are scarce, they're seldom spent
> in vain
> For they breathe truth that breathe their words
> in pain.

How well he could have applied this passage to the last words of Jesus on the Cross.

3

The little hodja had much to teach about submission to the will of God. He often reminded us that every chapter of the Koran, the most widespread book in the world after the Bible, begins with the invocation, "In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate," and he tried to make this precept a part of everyday life. Five times a day, Nassim knelt on the hard floor and made obeisance in the direction of Mecca.

Men made fun of him, I told them: "When an Englishman asks for bread, a German for brot, and Italian for pane, they are all asking for the same thing. Gheorghe is a Catholic, so he makes the sign of the Cross like this. Carol, an Orthodox believer, makes it like that. Ion, a Baptist, clasps his hands. So why shouldn't Nassim address his prayers to the East? We all approach God differently, but He sees past our gestures of love and honor into the heart. That is where we should look, too."

Nassim and I had many talks, sitting alongside on a low bunk amid the squalor and confusion of the cell. He spoke of his faith which Moslems believe was revealed to the Prophet by the Angel Gabriel - with a fervor that momentarily transformed that dismal place. To my surprise, he talked of Jesus with great love.

"Jesus is for me a most holy and wise prophet, who speaks the language of God himself. But he cannot in our view be the Son of God. I hope I haven't offended you."

"By no means," I replied. "In fact I agree with you.

"How can a Christian say that?"

"I say it because a son results from a man and a woman making love. No Christian believes in that sense that Jesus is the son of God. We call him 'Son of God' in another, unique sense, as an emanation from the Creator. He is the Son because he bears the very stamp of God, as a man does of his father. He is the Son in the way he brims over with love and truth. In those ways we have no doubt of it."

"In that way I, too, can accept," said Nassim, with

his grave Muslim smile.

Jesus turns away nobody who loves him, even if a man does not know the true title of the One he loves. The penitent thief spoke of Him only as a man, but Jesus promised that he should sup in paradise.

4

Prisoners came and went; only the air never changed. Each time men left, others took their place, and I started my "parish work" again.

Among newcomers was General Calescu, a former head of Military Justice who loved to fight his battles over again. Most had taken place, he admitted, in the "boudoir," and his best days were during the war. "So many pretty spies - I always tried to let them off if they were kind to me!"

When Calescu was not talking of women, it was food. One evening, he announced, "Today's my birthday: I invite you all to dinner!" And since he had spent many happy anniversaries in Paris as a young man - "We shall repair to Maxims. Be my guests!" For an hour or two, regardless of expense, he regaled us on the best the house could offer. "Maitre d'h‟tel!" he called. "What do you recommend? A ~bouillabaise~ of

every fish, swimming in rich saffron sauce? Perhaps too much to start with? How about ~foie gras~, with truffles, from P,rigord, with hot toast and fresh Normandy butter? All quite simple! Then ~canard … l'orange - you like duck, don't you, pastor? Or a ~coq au vin~? And, for the hodja, ~shaslik~ on a flaming sword!"

Each dish was accompanied by an elegaic list of wines: Burgundy and Hock, a magnum of champagne, a golden Chateau Yquem, liqueurs and old brandy. Cigars were chosen: Henry Clay, Romeo y Julietta. There was no stopping this panorama of pleasures. Then the door opened, and in came the usual barrel of rotting tripe and cabbage.

In this talk of food, as in day-dreams of sex, imagination took over. Simpler souls than Calescu invented fantasies of chicken stuffed with bananas, potatoes piled with strawberry jam and many other dishes now fortunately lost to mind. In fact, the food at Craiova was the worst I encountered

anywhere except for one day, when to our complete and unbelieving surprise, the guards brought in a canister of onion soup, another of stew with real meat, white mashed potatoes, fresh carrots, two bread rolls for each man and a big basket of apples. We almost expected one of Calescu's cigars to complete the meal.

What did it mean? Prisoners see great significance in the slightest change in their routine, and we hoped for new wonders. During the afternoon General Calescu called excitedly from the window, "Women, dammit - and they're leaving!" A crowd gathered round the bars and peered down. Half-a-dozen well-dressed women were being led towards the gate by the commandant. They were, said a guard, a delegation of "democratic women" from the West, leaving after an hour, with comments on the excellence of the food.

The meals were even worse during the following week. Later we heard that the visitors' eye-witness reports on Rumania's model prisons were circulated in Britain, France and the United States.

5

There were several of these guided tours at the time. When the Russian leadership changes hands there is usually a brief thaw, and now, after a hidden struggle among Stalin's successors, Marshal Bulganin emerged as Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

Calescu said that the rise to power of this former War Minister means that "the Americans would have to fight at last." Prison rumor supported his opinion. President Eisenhower's "very words" on the question were quoted: "I have only to do up the last button on my uniform and the captives of Eastern Europe will be free!"

Calescu's dream was that once the Red armies had been routed, the king would return to his throne. This faith in the monarchy was shared by the majority of farmers and landworkers. Their reasoning was simple: 'When the king was here, I had my field and my cattle. Now he's gone I have nothing."

On Rumania's former national day, many in the cell joined in a service which included prayers for King Michael and the Royal family. The informers decided that it would be safer to look the other way. But our cell republican, the schoolmaster

Constantinescu, argued against the monarchy and its "futile ceremonial."

Radion, the forester, said, "Pomp and glory may mean nothing to you, but to a king they come naturally. He doesn't need to strive for them. He's not like a politician, who has to make a name with wars and revolutions, and does so always at our expense. He leaves us in peace. That's why I'm for the king!"

Radion also bested General Calescu, who liked to joke about religion.

"If Jesus could really turn wine into water," Calescu said, "why didn't he set up shop and make a fortune?"

Radion said, "No one alive can prove that the Savior performed this miracle, surely. But I can give

you the evidence of my own eyes that He can turn wine into furniture."

"Amazing!" tittered Calescu.

"Yes," said Radion. "Before my conversion I used to spend every penny on drink, and my wife didn't have so much as a chair to sit on. When I gave it up, we saved the money and furnished our home instead."

The spring brought news, this time official, which put an end to General Calescu's war games. The Russians had promised to withdraw their troops from Austria, and the first "summit meeting" between East and West after ten years of cold warfare was to take place in Geneva.

Soon "peaceful co-existence" was all the rage. Constantinescu was full of it. "Why shouldn't the West live harmoniously with the Communist East?" he demanded.

I said, "I'm no politician, but I know that the Church, at least, can never make peace with atheism, any more than police can make peace with gangsters, or disease with health."

"You hate atheists, then?" said Constantinescu.

I replied, "I hate atheism as a creed, but I love atheists, just as I hate blindness, but love the blind. Since atheism is a form of spiritual blindness, it must be fought."

Constantinescu's long face registered mock surprise. "You talk of fighting, pastor? I thought Christians turned the other cheek. Didn't St. Francis save a wolf from those who wanted to kill him, and say,

'Don't kill brother wolf, he is one of God's creatures.'"

"I admire St. Francis deeply," I replied, "but if I don't shoot brother wolf he will eat sister sheep. My duty to kill the wolf if I can't control him is inspired by love. Jesus told us to love our enemies, but He himself used force when there was no other way. God takes thousands of lives daily: it is in His nature to give death, as well as life."

A newcomer to Craiova, the engineer Glodeanu, said he had heard BBC broadcasts which took the line that the Western powers should no longer try to

interfere in the internal affairs of the Communist bloc.

I objected, "But if I start to knock a hole in a boat which we are sharing, and say, 'Don't interfere - this is my side of the boat,' will you agree? No! The hole in my side will end by drowning us all!" The Communists, I went on, had seized whole countries and tried to poison youth with hatred. Their plan to overturn the established order all over the world was not an internal affair.

"It's international banditry!" said Calescu.

Constantinescu rallied. "The West can't always be right, general," he said, "and Stalin wasn't wholly evil. He could say, 'Man is our most precious capital.'"

"So that's why we're kept locked up," snorted Calescu. But Constantinescu insisted that there had been industrial, and even cultural, progress under Communism. "You can't deny that," he said.

I replied, "A visitor to Egypt in ancient times would have been amazed by Pharaoh's monuments, but God did not admire them. They were the work of slaves, whom God sent Moses to free. In Russia and the satellites today, slave labor is building the houses, factories and schools you talk about. And what is being taught in the schools? Hatred of everything Western."

"The Communists say they plan for the future!" said Constantinescu. "A generation or two may be sacrificed, but the basis is being laid for the future good of mankind."

I said, "To make future generations happy, men must be good themselves. But Communist leaders are constantly denouncing one another as the worst of criminals. The most powerful men in the Soviet Union

have been murdered by their own comrades. What Communist can be happy, knowing he may fall in the next Party purge?"

"There is good in them," Constantinescu objected. "No man is entirely bad, and Communists are men, who keep something of God's image."

My reply was: "I agree. There was even good in Hitler. He improved the lot of most Germans. He made his country the strongest in Europe. His death

with Eva Braun in the bunker, his marriage with her at the last moment, might be considered moving. But who would make this point, when he murdered so many millions? Hitler gained the world for Germany, and destroyed its soul, even before his defeat. Communist successes have also been made at the expense of the soul, by crushing man's most vital element, his personality."

"You cannot tar all Communists with the same brush," said Constantinescu. "Tito, for instance, is regarded as a mild dictator."

"But they all have one aim: to carry the Communist revolution through the world, and uproot religion. 'Mild' Tito has killed thousands of enemies, and jailed his friends."

"I still say there's been progress," said Constantinescu.

"For my part, I admire no progress that is bought with tears and blood, however impressive it may look from outside. Never has any people chosen Communism in a free election, or got rid of it with another."

"The world wants peace; what's your alternative - atomic war?"

I said, "Nuclear war is not the alternative; nobody wants that. The world has a great problem with drug addiction, but we don't think of adopting Hitler's solution of herding the addicts into gas chambers. All the same, we can't settle down to 'peaceful coexistence' with the dope traffic; a solution must be found, even if we have to struggle for fifty years. How can we live peacefully with people who cannot stay at peace among themselves, because all their leaders want is power and then more power? The Communists lull our suspicions while they plan their next grab."

I could make no impression on Constantinescu's resolve to take Soviet gestures at their face value. Leaning out from my bunk, I snatched his pillow - the small, lumpy bundle of personal things he used as a head-rest. His skull hit the wall. He was furious.

"But why can't you co-exist peacefully with me?"

I asked. "I'm ready to be friends, now I've stolen all you have."

But I had to restore his property before the talk turned to other things.

Constantinescu was a victim of wishful thinking about Communism. Men trained in the school of Lenin and Stalin see goodwill as weakness to be exploited. For their own good we must work for their defeat. Love is not a universal panacea, it does not take the place of corn plaster. Communist rulers are criminals on an international scale, and only when the criminal is vanquished does he repent; only then can he be brought to Christ.

In the Roman Senate, whenever a problem was raised, Cato would reply, "First destroy our enemy Carthage and then all things can be arranged! ~Delenda est Carthaga!~" I was sure that the fate of the West was either to destroy Communism or be destroyed by it.

6

A desire to show Communism in a better light before the summit meeting diminished some of the worst excesses in the prison system. At Salcia, where punishments had included hanging prisoners by the heels and plunging women in icy water for hours, the whole staff was arrested. Official evidence said fifty-eight people had died in the competitions between "brigade leaders" to see who could work to death the most prisoners - in fact, Salcia survivors who came to Craiova said there had been at least 800 deaths.

With a show of judicial indignation, the Salcia staff were given long sentences, and the purge had a chastening effect in other jails. Beatings stopped. Guards became carefully polite. When the Jilava commandant, Colonel Gheorghiu, asked for complaints, and had a plate of barley thrown at him, the culprit

suffered nothing worse than a day in solitary confinement.

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The reforms were short-lived. Soon beatings and insults became routine once more; and a year or so later, when the trials had been forgotten abroad, the mass-murderers of Salcia were reinstated, with promotion. Only the common-law prisoners, who had acted as their tools in torturing others, stayed in prison.

During this shake-up in the jails, I was moved several times. These nightmare journeys have merged into one in my mind. I close my eyes and see a frieze of stubble-chinned, shaven-headed convicts, jogging gently with the movement of the train. Always we wore fifty-pound chains, which chafed us through our clothes and made sores that took months to heal in our under-nourished state.

On one journey we came to a halt during the night, and the silence was broken by a wail of anguish: "I've been robbed!"

I sat up to find little Dan, a petty crook from Bucharest, moving from one prone figure to the next, shaking everyone awake. Dan was cursed and cuffed, but he went on howling, "I had five hundred lei hidden away and it's gone! It's all I had in the world!"

In the hope of quieting him, I said, "My friend, I hope you don't suspect a pastor of stealing, but if you do you may search me to the skin."

The others also allowed Dan to search them for the sake of peace, but nothing was found. The train moved off at last and, one by one, we fell asleep. I was awakened at dawn by a new and worse uproar. All the other eighteen prisoners had been robbed as well.

"I knew we had a thief among us!" Dan cried.

Days later, at Poarta-Alba, our next stop, I told the story to a man serving a year for theft. Bursting with laughter, he said, "I've known Dan for years. He simply wanted to find out where each of you kept anything worth lifting!"

There were many "Dans" at Poarta-Alba, where "politicals" and common criminals were held together. Once I dozed off while a group were playing with

home-made dice. A tickle on my foot awoke me. I sat up rubbing my eyes, to find a prisoner unlacing one of my shoes. The other was already off.

"What are you doing with my shoes?" I demanded.

"I've just won them at dice," he grinned, and was offended when I would not give them up.

It is a world apart, the world of thieves. I found that they like to talk of their exploits, the riskier the better. They loved the excitement as other men love drink, gambling or women. I wondered at the dedication they brought to their work.

One evening, when most prisoners were outside, the door crashed open and the guards flung in a pickpocket, known to everyone as "Fingers." He rolled on the floor, gasping and groaning, as I helped him to his bunk. Soaking a rag in water, I began to wash the blood from his swollen mouth. It seemed he had been pilfering from the kitchen.

"You're not a bad sort, Pastor," Fingers said. "When I get out and make my next good haul, I won't forget your share."

I said I hoped he would find a better means of living. He laughed. "They're wasting their time beating me," he said. "I love my work. I'll never give it up."

I put my arm around his shoulder and told him, "Thank you. You've taught me a great lesson."

"What do you mean?" Fingers asked.

"If beatings don't persuade you to give up your ways, why should I listen to those who want me to change mine? I must put at least as much thought into winning a soul as you do into pulling off your next coup. The more I listen to the stories which you and your friends tell, the more I learn."

He grinned painfully, "You're joking, Pastor."

"No," I said. "For example, you work at night, and if you fail the first night, you try again the next. So I, as a pastor, should spend my night in prayer, and if I don't get what I want, I shouldn't give up. You steal from others, but there is honesty among thieves: we Christians should be as united among

ourselves. And although you risk your liberty and

lives for money, as soon as you get it you throw it right and left; we should not overvalue money, either. You thieves don't let punishment deter you, nor should we shrink from suffering. Just as you hazard everything, so too, should we, knowing there is a paradise to win.

The prison at Poarta-Alba consisted of the remains of the labor camp beside the canal project on which my wife had been forced to work. I knew that now she was living somehow in Bucharest. No hour passed without thoughts of her. We lived in long, bare huts which held fifty men each. All around were derelict barracks and vegetable patches which Sabina must have known. This melancholy comfort was taken from me when, after a few weeks, I was told to prepare for another move.

Fingers came up to say goodbye. With him was an associate called Calapod, a villainous bandit who had been feared throughout the countryside. He slapped me on the back, shouting, "So this is the Holy Reverend who likes thieves and robbers!"

"Mr. Calapod," I said, "Jesus did not mind comparing himself with a thief. He promised, 'I will come as a thief in the night.' Just as those whom you have robbed never knew you were coming, so one night Jesus will come for your soul, and you will not be ready."

7

Weeks in the dank chill of Craiova and Poarta-Alba, and on journeys in chain-gangs, worsened my tuberculosis. I arrived at my next prison at Gherla, in the Transylvanian mountains, in such a state that I was put into one of a group of cells known as "the hospital." Our doctor, a young woman called Marina, said this was her first post. Other patients told me that on her first day she had turned pale as she went from cell to cell. Nothing in her training had prepared her for the dirt, the hunger, the lack of simple

medicines and equipment, the uncaring cruelty. They thought she was going to faint, but she carried on.

Marina was a tall, fragile girl with fair hair framing an exhausted face. After an examination, she told me, "You need good food and plenty of fresh air."

I could not help laughing. "But don't you know where we are, Dr. Marina?"

Tears rose in her eyes. "That's what I learned at medical school."

Some days later, high-ranking officers came on a visit. Dr. Marina tackled them in the gallery outside our cells. "Comrades, these men haven't been sentenced to death. The state pays me to keep them alive, just as it pays you to keep them safe. I only ask for conditions which will allow me to do my job."

A man's voice said, "So you side with convicted outlaws!"

"They may be outlaws to you, Comrade Inspector," she replied, "but to me they are patients."

Conditions got no better, but instead we had news that was worth all the drugs in the pharmacopoeia to me. Before the summit meeting at Geneva, visits by relatives were to be allowed.

Excitement mounted high. We were all nervous. At one moment a man would be filled with joy; at another, near to tears. Some had been ten or twelve years without news of their families. I had not seen Sabina for eight.

The day came, and when my name was called I was marched into an echoing hall and made to stand behind a table. Some twenty yards further on, I saw my wife, behind another table. The commandant, flanked by officers and guards, stood near the wall between us, as if ready to umpire a tennis match.

I gazed at Sabina, and it seemed to me that in the years of her suffering she had achieved a peace and beauty such as I had never seen before. She stood there with folded hands, smiling.

Gripping the table, I called, "Are you well at home?"

My voice sounded strange in the room. She replied, "Yes, we are all well, thank God."

The commandant broke in, "You are not allowed to mention God here."

"My mother is still alive?" I asked.

"Praise God, she is alive."

I HAVE TOLD YOU THAT YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO MENTION GOD."

Then Sabina asked, "How is your health?"

"I am in prison hospital -"

The commandant: "You are not allowed to say where you are in prison."

I tried again, "About my trial, is there hope of an appeal?"

The commandant: "You are not allowed to discuss your trial."

So it went on, until I said, "Go home, Sabina, dear. They won't let us speak."

My wife had brought a basket of food and clothes, but she was not allowed to give me as much as an apple. As they took me away I looked over my shoulder and saw her being escorted by armed guards through the door at the further end of the hall. The commandant lit a fresh cigarette, his thoughts elsewhere.

That evening, Dr. Marina stopped at the foot of my bed. "Oh dear!" she said, "and I thought your wife's visit would do you so much good."

We became friends. She told me that she had been taught nothing about religion, but supposed herself to be an atheist. "Isn't everyone, these days?"

One day, when alone with Marina and another Christian prisoner in the little cubicle which served her as a surgery, I mentioned that it was the day of Pentecost.

"What is that?" she asked. A guard on orderly duties was going through the files, so I waited until he left with the card he wanted. Then I replied, "It's the day on which God gave us the Ten Commandments, thousands of years ago."

I heard the guard's returning footsteps and added loudly, "And it hurts here, doctor, when I cough."

The guard returned the card to the files and moved off again, so I continued, "Pentecost is also the

day on which the Holy Spirit came to the Apostles.

Again the warder's footsteps, so I continued hastily, "And at night the pain in my back is terrible."

Dr. Marina bit her lips to stop laughing. I went on with my interrupted sermon, while she tapped my chest, and told me to cough and peered down my throat, until at last she burst into laughter. "Do stop!" she gasped, holding a handkerchief to her mouth as the guard's stolid face again appeared in the doorway. "Tell me later."

I told her the story of the Gospel in the weeks

that followed, and when I, and others at Gherla, had brought Dr. Marina to Christ she took even greater risks to help us.

Years later, in another prison, I heard that she had died of rheumatic fever which had affected her heart. She had always overworked herself.

8

I was moved back to Vacaresti, the prison-hospital where I had spent a month after my solitary confinement in the cells beneath the Ministry of the Interior. The place was more crowded than ever. Tubercular patients had to share rooms and exchange infections with sufferers from other diseases.

Two Secret Police officers who came to interrogate me asked quizzically what I thought of Communism now. "How am I to say?" I replied. "I know it only from the inside of its prisons."

They grinned, and one said, "Now you can learn about it from a VIP; Vasile Luca - the old Minister of Finance - is in your cell."

Luca's dismissal for currency scandals in March 1953 had helped to bring down the Ana Pauker clique. With Theohari Georgescu, Minister of the Interior, he had been expelled from the Party, and now all three were in various prisons with the victims of their five-year reign. In his days of power, Luca was much flattered, but little loved. Now guards and

prisoners took the chance to show their contempt. Luca sat alone, in a corner of our cell, biting his knuckles and muttering to himself; old, ill, and unrecognizable as the man whose photograph had appeared so regularly in the newspapers.

Luca could find no relief from his sufferings. A Christian, whatever his troubles, knew that for his faith he was treading the road that Christ had trod, but Luca, who had worked all his life for Communism had neither hope nor belief left. If the Nationalists came to power, or the Americans arrived, Luca and his comrades would be the first to hang. In the meantime, they were punished by their former Party friends. Luca was close to the breaking point when we met.

After his political disgrace, he told me, he was

forced to confess under torture to absurd charges. A military court condemned him to death, but the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment.

"They knew I wouldn't last for long," he said, coughing.

He was given to outbursts of rage against his Party enemies. One day, when he could not eat the food pushed into our cell, I offered him my bread. He took it hungrily.

"Why did you do that?" he growled.

"I've learned the value of fasting in prison."

"And what might that be?"

I said, "Firstly, it shows that the spirit is master of the body. Secondly, it saves me from the quarrels and hard feelings over food which are so common. Thirdly - well, if a Christian does not fast in jails, what means has he of helping others?"

Luca admitted that the only help he had been given since his arrest had come from Christians. Then his bile rose again.

"But I know far more clergymen who are first-rate scoundrels. As one of the Party's Central Committee I kept a firm hand on sects and religions. My department had a file on every priest in the country including you. I began to wonder if there was a

priest in Rumania who wouldn't soon be knocking at my back door after dark. What a band of brothers!"

I said that man might degrade religion, but religion ennobled man much more. This was shown by the host of saints: not only those of old, but the many great Christians who could be met today.

Luca grew angry. His spite against the world would not allow him to admit goodness in anyone. He recited familiar atheist arguments about the Church's persecution of science. I reminded him of the great scientists who have been Christians - from Newton and Kepler to Pavlov and the discoverer of anaesthetics, Sir James Simpson.

Luca said, "They conformed to the conventions of the time."

I said, "Do you know the declaration of Louis Pasteur, who discovered microbes and vaccination? 'Je crois comme une charbonniŠre le plus que je progresse en science.' He believed like a coalminer, like a woman coalminer of the last century. This man

who spent most of his life at the head of a body of scientific studies had the faith of the simplest human creature."

Luca said indignantly, "What of all the scientists the Church has persecuted?"

I asked if he could name them.

"Galileo, of course, who went to prison. Giordano Bruno, whom they burned..." He stopped.

I said, "So you can only find two cases in two thousand years! That's a triumph for the Church by any human standards. Compare the Party record in the last ten years, here in Rumania alone. Many thousands of innocent people,shot, tortured and imprisoned; you yourself sentenced on the strength of perjured evidence obtained by threats and bribes! How many miscarriages of justice do you think there have been in all the countries under Communist rule?"

One evening I spoke of the Last Supper, and Jesus's words to Judas, "What you have to do, do quickly."

Luca said, "Nothing will make me believe in

God, but if I did, the one prayer I'd make to Him would be, What you have to do, do quickly.'"

His condition worsened. He spat blood, and in his fever a cold sweat broke out on his forehead.

At this time I was moved to another prison. Before I left, he promised to give thought to his soul. I have no way of knowing what happened, but when a man starts to argue with himself, the chances of finding the truth are small. Conversions are usually instantaneous. The message pierces the heart, and from its depths something new and healing breaks out at once.

I met many like Luca at that time, and often discussed with friends how Communist leaders and their collaborators should be dealt with when Communism fell. Christians opposed revenge but were divided among themselves: some who thought that forgiveness should be complete, and those who said that Jesus - in telling Peter to forgive men who had wronged him "Not seven times, but seventy times seven" - had fixed a limit which the Communists had long overstepped.

My view is that, having judged each man singly,

with understanding of the evil forces that made him, we have only the right, without being vindictive, to put the wrongdoer into a position where he can do no further harm. Communists already spend much time and effort in punishing each other. Stalin poisoned Lenin, it is said. He had Trotsky murdered with an ice-pick. Khrushchev so hated his "comrade" that he destroyed his reputation and despoiled his tomb. Luca, Theohari Georgescu, Ana Pauker and so many more were victims of their own cruel system.

9

My next journey was by road, in a truck labeled "State Food Trust." Security vans often bore such signs so that people should not know how many were on the move, and perhaps also for fear of rescue attempts. Two men were with me. One was a former

Iron Guard leader serving a twenty-year sentence. The other, a minor thief, was due to be freed shortly after doing six months.

"I won't see these again," said the Iron Guard cheerfully, shaking his shackles. Then, turning his back to me, he told the thief that it had been agreed to free all "politicos" before the summit meeting, and that he would be among the first to be released. The thief explained in turn that all he wanted was a decent job, but nobody would give him one.

The Iron Guard sympathized. Then, seizing his neighbor by the sleeve, he said, "I've an idea! Why can't we help each other? Now the Russians have given way, the Americans will be here within the month. I have influential friends among them. Supposing we changed identities - at the next stop, you answer to my name and I to yours. As soon as they let me go in your place, I'll start preparing the way for the American take-over. You, bearing my name, will be released as a political prisoner on the day they arrive. Leave the rest to me - your future will be made!"

The thief was enraptured. When the van pulled up in the prison yard, the two men answered to each other's names and were marched to different compounds. Ten days later, the Iron Guard who had gone to the short-service section was released. The thief saw weeks and months go by without news of the

Americans. Faced by the prospect of fulfilling the other man's sentence to the end, he told the commandant the truth. The Iron Guard was hunted down, and the thief expected to be freed at last. Instead, he was tried for helping a Fascist criminal to escape and was given a twenty-year sentence of his own. So the two men had to go on living together - like so many others who had wronged one another.

The new prison was called Jilava, which means "wet place" in Rumanian. It was justly named. To enter it, the truck drove down a steep ramp, and we sank below the earth into darkness. The deepest levels of Jilava were more than 30 feet below ground. It had been designed as a fortress, with trenches around, and strangers could pass by unaware of its existence.

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Sheep grazed above it, and we felt buried alive, under thousands of tons of earth. Jilava was intended to hold 500 troops, but now it had to keep 2,000 prisoners in a series of ill-lit cells and tunnels which now and then widened out into small courtyards where men exercised. At some points streams ran down the walls, which were stained with great patches of green damp.

The man in the next bunk to me, a former police chief from Odessa, Colonel Popescu, said conditions were far worse when he arrived. A hundred men had been crushed together in our small cell with the windows boarded up, and some had died from suffocation.

Popescu told me he had hidden from the Russians for twelve years after the war in a cave with the entrances blocked up. He slept on straw and ate what friends pushed in through a small hole. But in the end, the Secret Police found him. Crouching in that cramped space so long, his legs had become paralyzed. It was months before he could walk.

It was plain from Popescu's ribald talk that religion had been outside his thoughts for many years. I asked how he had passed the time in his lonely cave.

"I composed a novel," he said. "If I wrote it down, it would run to five thousand pages. But no one would dare to publish it."

I saw why, when Popescu recited bits of it. Never have I heard such a torrent of obscenity.

Our meal was announced by a shout from the corridor. I took my rotten-carrot soup over to a

neighbor's bunk, and we sat talking for a while. He was a young radio engineer who had sent information to the West for a patriotic group, and he mentioned that he had been brought to Christ through his knowledge of Morse.

"It happened five or six years ago. I was interrogated in the cells of the Ministry of Interior and, while I was there, an unknown pastor next door tapped Bible verses to me through the wall."

When he told me the position of his cell, I said, "I was that pastor."

With his help I built up a nucleus of Christians

who spread their influence through the prison. But there was one man whom everyone left alone.

Gheorge Bajenaru was the son of an Orthodox bishop. He was known as "the wickedest priest in Rumania." He forged his father's signature to honors and degrees. He embezzled the funds from a school where his wife was headmistress. When she committed suicide to conceal his guilt, Bajenaru showed no remorse. He even informed on his own father for money. Then he went to the West, posing as a refugee. He was made a bishop, with charge over all Rumanian Orthodox exiles. He obtained funds from them, and from the World Council of Churches. Meanwhile the Communists waited.

Bajenaru had been a worldly, arrogant man, built like a bull, but now he was thin and shrunken. He told me what had happened. He had gone to Austria for the wedding of a wealthy Rumanian, and stayed on a few days. Leaving a restaurant in the French sector one night, he heard steps behind him. A club came down on his head. Bajenaru recovered in a moment, and turned to fight. Four men grappled with him. He felt a needle jab into his leg.

"I woke up in the Soviet zone. There was a looking glass on the wall, and I didn't know the man who looked back at me. My black beard had gone. They had cropped my hair and dyed it red. I was flown to Moscow. Interrogators in the Lubianka prison thought I might be a key figure in the Anglo-American spy world. They wanted to know what the World Council of Churches was planning to do behind the Iron Curtain and about the intrigues of Rumanian exiles in the West. I could tell them nothing. I had merely been

enjoying myself. The Russians wouldn't believe me. 'Very well, Your Grace,' they said, 'we shall stimulate your memory in the surgery.'"

Bajenaru held up his hands to show that nearly all the fingernails were gone.

"They broke them one by one," he said. "The doctor was in white. So were the two nurses. There was every scientific aid you can think of, except anaesthetics."

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Bajenaru was tortured for weeks. He was close to insanity when the Russians, deciding that he had nothing for them at all, passed him on to the Secret Police in Bucharest. There he was again tortured.

At Jilava his interrogation was still going on, and when he returned to our cell from questioning, prisoners accused him of informing. In fact, he wished only to atone for what he had done. Suffering had purified him. But the others could not believe it, although Bajenaru showed his change of heart in many ways. Once, when he held a public liturgy, praying aloud for the king and the royal family, someone told the guards. He was sent to the "Black Room" with myself and some other clergy who were among the informer's victims.

We were driven down a steep flight of steps to a windowless, underground chamber in the depths of the fort, which was probably an old ammunition store: no shell could penetrate there. Water, dripping from the roof, kept the floor of the "Black Room" awash, and even in summer it was bitterly cold. "We must keep moving," said a voice in the pitch darkness. So we began to walk in a circle, slipping on the slimy floor, and we kept on until many hours later, exhausted and bruised from falls, we were let out.

Others said we had been lucky. Men were often stripped to the skin before being locked in the "Black Room." The story of how one group of eighteen had survived in it for two days was still told. They were all middle-aged or elderly members of the National Peasant Party. To avoid freezing to death they formed themselves into a human snake in the darkness. Each man clung to the one in front for warmth as they stamped around in an endless circle, splashed from head to foot in filth. Often a man collapsed, but the others always dragged him up from the water and

forced him on.

Bajenaru continued to pray for the king. When at last he was sent for trial, he returned to say calmly that he had been sentenced to death. He had achieved humility. I have noticed that humble men, who had sinned grossly, can often resist persecution

better than Christians of high spirituality. St. John Chrysostomos, who lived in the days of the Roman chariot races, once said, "If a car drawn by the horses of Righteousness and Pride were matched with another drawn by Sin and Humility, I believe the second chariot would reach Heaven first."

Colonel Popescu suggested to Bajenaru that he should appeal for mercy. Bajenaru replied, "I do not recognize these judges. I obey God and the king."

When Bajenaru had been moved to the condemned cell, Popescu said, "Perhaps we were wrong in trying to be his judges, too."

We heard nothing of him for four months; then he returned to our cell, his sentence commuted to life imprisonment. Although his whole character had changed, the majority of prisoners would not accept him. "Another trick, you devil!" they said. It was unjust. Bajenaru had been offered release if he agreed to work for the Secret Police. He replied, "I'll leave prison when the last priest goes free."

His reprieve was regarded as suspicious because it was more common for a sentence to be increased than lessened. At any time, under Communism, the State can obtain a more severe penalty for a sentenced man. In fact, a prisoner who had served twelve years of a life sentence had been told, without explanation, that his sentence had been reviewed. He was shot next day.

Bajenaru was shifted to another cell, where he was kicked and beaten by the prisoners. Twice he attempted suicide. Then he was transferred to another jail, where he died.

10

The first execution while I was at Jilava was of two brothers, named Arnautoiu. They had lived in the forest for years as partisans, until a woman who visited their hideout was trailed by soldiers and they were caught.

Executions were conducted with grim ceremonial.

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Before midnight, guards lined the corridors, and from the cells hundreds of eyes watched through cracks and spy-holes as the commandant led a small procession out into the yard. Two senior officers came first; then the brothers carrying their chains, each gripped by a guard on either side, and followed in turn by a doctor and guards with machine guns. We heard the clang of hammer blows in the cold morning air, as the men's chains were struck off. Sacks were pulled over their heads and they were pushed into the car which drove them a short distance to a field, where they were shot in the back of the head at point blank range. We heard the shooting.

The executioner was a man of gypsy blood called Nita, who received a bonus of 500 lei on each occasion. He was the best-mannered guard we had: they called him the Black Angel of Jilava.

"I always give them a last cigarette in the cell before their time comes," he told us. "I try to keep their courage up, and it's not so hard as you might suppose, because every one of them thinks to the last moment that he'll be saved."

This happened in the instance of a youth of nineteen, called Lugojanu. His father, a former government minister, had been tortured to death in prison. The boy, aided by some friends, made a series of attacks on militiamen in revenge. One of the raiders talked, on being captured, so Lugojanu and eight accomplices were sentenced to die.

The first two were marched out into the yard, then a second pair. The others heard their chains being removed. They heard the shots. They heard the guards coming to fetch the rest. One of them told me later, "I felt perfectly calm. I saw the Holy Virgin and she spoke to me so gently. I was confident that I should be reprieved." The door of the cell opened. It was the commandant. Word had come from Bucharest that the sentences on the remaining men had been commuted. Many times in jail I saw at work this mysterious power which sustains men in their last moments.

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The Black Angel's politeness was by way of an apology for his hideous job. "I'm no monster," he said, in effect. The other guards, and their trustees among the prisoners, felt no such need.

The spirit in Jilava was particularly bad. It was a transit jail, where men often met old enemies. Many prisoners were former policemen. The old police hands, even those who had worked against Communism, had been kept on for two years to train the Party's candidates. These experienced men were then ordered to arrest some of their own comrades. Then they, in turn, were arrested by the men whom they had trained. After sentence, scores of these police had to share the same cell, for in the end no officer of the old regime escaped the purge.

One day, recriminations were suspended in favor of a new focus for the hatred which festered in them all.

He was thrown into our cell from another - bruised, disheveled, dirty, his jaw hanging loose. He gazed around in terror. Then a roar went up: "Albon!"

The commandant of Poarta-Alba, who was responsible for the deaths of thousands, had been made a scapegoat for the failure of the canal. We remembered how Colonel Albon had greeted new arrivals at his camp. "Professors, doctors, lawyers, priests - all my clever friends! Here we've no use for brains; only for hands, your gentlemanly hands! For your labor, you are paid with the air you breathe. Don't think you'll be freed except by death - or when they stop work on the canal and lock me up!"

Now Albon looked at us like a hypnotized rabbit. A prisoner seized him by the collar and dragged him to his feet. Another swung him round. A third kicked him in the groin. Albon went down under a torrent of blows, shrieking hysterically.

I tried to save him. The men turned on me: "So you side with this murderer!"

Albon struggled up, streaked with blood and dust, amid laughter, jeers and boos. He fell again on his way to the door, cutting himself on the sharp

corner of a bunk. In a fresh scrimmage, the shirt was torn from his back. He held his hands before his face to shield it. Finally, he collapsed and lay still on the floor.

Albon was treated like this in cell after cell until he was moved to Ocnele-Mari prison, which the authorities reserved for disgraced officers and officials.

Days later, I recognized another familiar face. Colonel Dulgheru, who had questioned me for a week in solitary confinement, had landed in jail. I told him what happened to Albon, and he tried to keep out of trouble, but it was inevitable that someone else would soon spot him.

He told me he had been accused of being a police spy in pre-Communist days - the usual charge when the Party wanted to incriminate one of its own men - and described how he had been arrested. He went to the cells to interrogate someone, with his retinue of three subalterns. They opened a cell door politely and ushered the colonel in, then closed it again behind him. Dulgheru found himself locked in an empty cell. He banged on the door demanding to be let out. His men laughed. He heard one of them say, "This time, you're the one to stay there!"

When Dulgheru's identity was discovered at Jilava, he also was set upon by the prisoners and had to be removed to Ocnele-Mari. The Party prison soon became as overcrowded as the rest.

Soon after his departure, I was sent for interrogation to Bucharest. Shields like motor-goggles were placed over my eyes before I was taken by car the few miles to the capital. At Secret Police H.Q. the questions of a uniformed colonel seemed designed to sound out my attitude to the regime rather than to get information. He gave me no clue to his real purpose in seeing me.

The place was crowded and "secret" prisoners were sharing cells. I was put with a thick-set, sullen man. He was Vasile Turcanu, the chief "re-educator," who had been sentenced to death by the regime which had once given him license to kill. The Party

had kept him alive for three years, intending, in the usual way, to announce his execution when some need for a political distraction arose.

Turcanu described how they had arrested Theohari Georgescu, Minister of the Interior, during the 1953 purge. He was sitting in his office before a row of telephones when three of his own security officers stalked in with revolvers. They made Georgescu

face his own portrait, hanging on the wall in its gold frame, while he dropped his trousers for a search.

I tried to bring some Christianity into Turcanu's life in the few hours I was with him, but little could be done for a man so deeply ensnared in doctrines of violence.

The most startling news I gleaned from the cells at Secret Police H.Q. was that Stalin had been denounced as a murderer and tyrant by his successor Khrushchev. The first reports of how Beria and six of his top men were executed on Christmas Eve, 1953 - along with thousands of lesser Soviet secret agents - had just been published, and the process of discrediting Stalin had begun in Rumania. Gheorghiu-Dej, the new Rumanian dictator, was introducing a more popular policy. Dej liked to live well himself, and his temperament, at least, was an improvement on that of the Pauker circle.

11

The news I took back to Jilava threw the cell into uproar. Everyone was delighted that Stalin had been pushed from his pedestal. They hoped it would hasten their own release.

But Popescu said, "I know the Party. They'll denounce the robber - and they won't repay the robbed."

"Anyway, Stalin's finished," another prisoner said.

"May he burn in hell!" shouted a second.

Amid laughter, cheers and jeers, two prisoners waltzed round together, screaming obscene remarks about "Uncle Joe." Only the guards were silent. Stalin's denunciation left their future unsettled.

Popescu called to me, "You're not looking so happy, pastor!"

I said, "I can't take pleasure in explosions of hatred towards anyone. We do not know Stalin's fate. He may have been saved at the last hour, like the thief on the cross."

"What! After all the crimes Stalin had committed?" asked someone.

"Perhaps he is like the rich man who had only moments of repentance in his life, and yet ended in Heaven," I said.

I told them how a man who had lived by exploiting

the poor developed a great hatred for the village minister, simply because he was good. When they met in the street, the man spat in the minister's face - and he let him do it, thinking, "This is a pleasure for the poor creature." Once a year, however, the rich man, who was called Bodnaras, went to church. It was always on Good Friday, and as he heard the story of the Crucifixion, two tears would roll down his fat cheeks. He wiped them away quickly and left before the collection was taken.

One Good Friday, a large congregation waited for the service to begin. The minister did not appear, nor did Bodnaras. An hour passed. At last someone looked behind the altar. There was the pastor, stretched on the floor, breathing calmly, his eyes closed and with such a look of bliss on his face that the people saw he was transfigured by a holy ecstasy.

That morning Bodnaras had died and gone to judgment and when the devils placed all his bad deeds upon the scales, his guardian angel had nothing to put on the other side except the two tears he had shed every year. Yet those tears weighed exactly as much as all the evil deeds together.

What could be done? Bodnaras began to sweat and tremble. But just at that moment God looked away and the rich man snatched a few bad deeds off the scale. The balance swung up on the side of Good.

But God sees even when he looks away. He said

sadly to the rich man, "Never in all creation has anyone tried to cheat Me on the Day of Judgment." And looking around Heaven, he asked, "Who will defend this man?"

The angels were silent. "Come," said God, "this is not the People's Republic of Rumania. We can't condemn someone without a defense."

Even the rich man's guardian angel shrank from the task. "But," he added, "there is a minister in his town of so saintly a character that he might be willing to speak for him."

So the minister was brought to Heaven, while his body remained below. Bodnaras thought his last chance had gone when he saw the man he had often humiliated, but the pastor accepted the brief at once.

"Heavenly Father," he began, "which of us is better, you or I? If I'm better than You, come down from Your throne and let me take Your place, for every day I allowed Bodnaras the joy of spitting on me, and was free of bitterness. Certainly if I can forgive him, so can You.

"My second plea is that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of man, and although in our unhappy country we may now be punished many times for the same crime, it is not right that Bodnaras should suffer again for his sins, when they have been punished already in Jesus's body.

"And thirdly, God, a practical question - what do You lose if he goes to Heaven? If paradise is too small, You can enlarge it. If You do not wish to put evil among the good, then make another Heaven for lost souls - give them a little happiness, too."

These words were so pleasing to God that He called at once to Bodnaras, "Go now to Heaven!" The rich man scuttled off. Then God turned to the minister, deeply moved, and said, "Stay here a while, and talk with Me."

"Thank You," said the pastor, "but I haven't taken service yet, and everyone in church is waiting to get home to dinner. I must go back and do my duty, and tell men to beware of sin. But I shall teach them also that You fulfill your duty, forgiving us, for Your

love is given even to the worst of sinners. If You began to judge man according to his deserts, none of us would escape."

The cell heard this story in silence.

"And would you," Popescu asked, "defend Stalin before God?"

"Who knows if Stalin has not wept over his sins?" I said. "Psychologists say that the worse a man's crimes, the less he is responsible for them. A maniac like Hitler, who burns in ovens millions of harmless people he has never met, a mass-murderer like Stalin who kills thousands of his own comrades - such men are not normal, and we cannot judge them by standards we apply to others."

Colonel Popescu said, "I've heard many Christian teachings in this cell, but this is the best - and the hardest to put into effect."

12

In the spring of 1956 some swallows nested high up in the roof of the cell, near the window. One day a chirp announced that the eggs had hatched. A prisoner stood on another's shoulders and peered in. "Four of them!" he called. The parent birds never seemed to rest. It made a change from talk about our release to count the times they darted in and out to feed the chicks - 250 trips a day! An old countryman said, "They'll fly in twenty-one days." The others laughed. "You'll see," he said. On the twentieth day nothing had happened, but on the twenty-first, with cheeps and flutterings, the young birds flew. We were so pleased. "God has arranged their schedule," I said. "He can do as much for us."

The weeks passed, and it seemed that the denunciation of Stalin did indeed herald another "thaw." It could not last; yet many prisoners were being released under the terms of an amnesty. Would I be one of them? The thought only saddened me: if they let me go now, what use would I be? My son had grown up and could hardly remember his father.

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Sabina was used to going her own way. The Church had other pastors, who made less trouble.

Early one morning a voice broke into these thoughts: "Interrogation, at once! Move!"

Back to the bullying, the fear, the questions to which I had to find false answers! I started to gather my things, while the guard bellowed, "Come on, come on! The car's waiting." I hurried with him through the corridors and across the yard. One after another the steel gates were unlocked as we climbed the steps. Then I was outside.

There was no car in sight, only a clerk who handed me a slip of paper. I took it. It was a court order and it declared that, under the amnesty, I was free.

I stared at it stupidly. All I could say was, "But I've only done eight and a half years and my sentence is for twenty."

"You're to leave at once. This comes from the highest tribunal."

"I've got nearly twelve years yet to serve."

"Don't argue! Get out!"

"But look at me!" My ragged shirt was gray with dirt. My trousers were a map of colored patches tacked together. My boots might have been borrowed from Charlie Chaplin. "I'll be arrested by the first policeman."

"We've no clothes here for you. Do get off!"

The clerk turned back into the prison. The gate glanced and its bolt was driven home. Outside the prison walls there was not a soul to be seen; I was alone, in an empty, summery world. The warm June day was so quiet that I could hear insects buzzing about on their business. A long, white road stretched away under trees of an amazing deep green. In the shade of a grove of chestnuts, cows were browsing. How still it was!

I called out, so that the guards could hear behind their walls, "God, help me not to rejoice more because I'm free than because You were with me in prison!"

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It is three miles from Jilava to Bucharest. I heaved my bundle on my shoulder and set off across the fields. It was only a collection of smelly rags, but they had been so precious to me in jail that I never considered leaving them. Soon I left the crown of the road to walk in the deep grass and touch the rough bark of the trees as I went along. Sometimes I stopped to gaze at a flower or a budding leaf.

Two figures came towards me - an old country couple. They stopped me and said curiously, "You come from there?" The man brought out a leu, a coin worth about a penny, and gave it to me. I looked at it in my hand, and almost wanted to laugh. No one had ever given me a leu before.

"Give me your address, so that I may repay you," I said.

"No, no, keep it," he urged me, using "thou," as people do in Rumania to children and beggars.

I went on with my bundle. Another woman stopped me. "You come from there?" She hoped for news of the priest of Jilava village, arrested months before. I had not met him, but explained that I was a pastor myself. We sat on a wall by the roadside. I was so happy to find someone who wanted to talk about Christ that I felt in no hurry to get home. When

I went on at last, she, too, brought out a leu: "For the tram fare."

"But I have a leu already."

"Take it for Our Lord's sake, then."

I walked on until I reached a tram stop on the outskirts of the capital. People crowded around me, knowing at once where I had come from. They asked after brothers, fathers, cousins - all had someone in prison. When I boarded the tram, they would not let me pay. Several stood to offer me a seat. Released prisoners in Rumania, far from being outcasts, are highly respected men. I sat with my bundle on my knees, but just as the car started I heard cries from outside. "Stop! Stop!" It was my heart that nearly stopped. We jerked to a halt as a militiaman's motorcycle swerved in front. There had been a mistake -

he was coming to take me back! But the driver turned and shouted, "He says there's someone standing on the steps."

Next to me was a woman with a basket of fresh strawberries. I looked at them unbelievingly.

"Haven't you had any this year?" she said.

"Not for eight years," I replied.

She said, "Go on, take some!" and filled my hands with the soft, ripe fruit. I ate them in hungry mouthfuls, like a child.

At last I reached my own front door and hesitated a moment. They were not expecting me, and I was a fearful sight in my filth and rags. Then I opened the door. In the hall were several young people, among them a gawky young man who stared at me and burst out: "Father!"

It was Mihai, my son. He was nine when I left him: now he was eighteen.

Then my wife came forward. Her fine-boned face was thinner, but her hair was still black; I thought she was more beautiful than ever. My eyes blurred. When she put her arms around me, I made a great effort and said, "Before we kiss, I must say something. Don't think I've simply come from misery to happiness! I've come from the joy of being with Christ in prison to the joy of being with Him in my family. I'm not coming from strangers to my own, but from my own in prison to my own at home." She sobbed, and I said, "Now if you wish, you may kiss

me." Later, I sang softly a little song I had made for her years before in prison to sing if we ever met again.

Mihai came to say that the place was full of visitors who would not leave without seeing me. Members of our church had been telephoning all over Bucharest; the doorbell rang continuously. Old friends brought new ones. People had to leave so that others could find standing room. Every time I was introduced to a woman, I had to bow politely in my absurd trousers, held up by string. By the time all were gone it was nearly midnight and Sabina pressed me to eat something, but I felt no hunger. I

said, "Today we have had happiness enough. Let's make tomorrow a day of fasting in thankfulness, with Holy Communion before supper."

I turned to Mihai. Three of our visitors – one a philosophy professor from the university whom I had not met before – had told me that evening that my son had brought them to faith in Christ. And I had feared that, left without father or mother, he would be lost! I could find no words for my happiness.

Mihai said, "Father, you've gone through so much. I want to know what you've learned from all your sufferings."

I put my arm around him and said, "Mihai, I've nearly forgotten my Bible in all this time. But four things were always in my mind. First, that there is a God. Secondly, Christ is our Savior. Thirdly, there is eternal life. And, fourthly, love is the best of ways."

My son said, "That was all I wanted." Later he told me that he had decided to become a pastor.

In my clean, soft bed that night, I could not sleep. I sat up and opened the Bible. I wanted the Book of Daniel, which had been a favorite, but I could no longer find my way to it. My eye was held instead by a line in the Epistles of St. John. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." [3JN 1:4] I had this joy, too. I went into my son's room, because I had to be sure that he was really there. In prison I had dreamed so often of this, only to wake in my cell.

It was two weeks before I could sleep regularly. By then I was being treated in the best-placed bed

of the sunniest ward of the best possible hospital. As an ex-prisoner, everyone wanted to help me - in the streets, the shops, everywhere - and the stream of visitors began again.

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PART SIX

Now that I was free, I longed in the depths of my heart for quietness and rest. But Communism was working everywhere to complete the destruction of the Church. The peace I desired would have been an escape from reality and dangerous for my soul.

I returned to a poor home, but I was luckier than many. We had a tiny two-roomed attic, with hardly any furniture. I slept on an old wooden bed with a soft mattress lent by a neighbor; the bed had a cushion to extend it for my length. Water came from the basement, three floors down, and the nearest lavatory was in another building. I expected nothing better. We all knew in prison of the housing and food shortages, and of church buildings closed or taken over, as ours had been.

Our comfortable flat had been confiscated on my wife's arrest. Because she refused to divorce me after her release, she could not get work and lived in extreme poverty, darning women's stockings and living on the kindness of friends. She said that it would have gone hard for them but for Mihai.

When he was thirteen, Mihai had been allowed to visit his mother during her three years of forced labor on the canal. Deprived of both parents, living on charity, he felt bitter.

"I borrowed the money to go to the camp," he said. "We met in a place where there were two sets of iron bars dividing us. Mother was in prison uniform,

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dirty and thin. She was half-crying, and had to shout to make me hear. She said, 'Mihai, believe in Jesus and be faithful!' I answered, 'Mother, if in a place like this you can still believe, then so must I.'"

On her return to Bucharest Sabina found that Mihai had become a piano-tuner after being taken on

as an apprentice by a tuner at the Opera House: his ear was so true that he was able to work at his craft by himself from the age of eleven. Soon he earned enough to help his mother and send himself to school. It was a poor life, but he had bread.

Mihai's troubles with the Party began early when he won the right granted to model pupils to wear a red tie - and refused to do so because it was "the symbol of the oppressors." Publicly expelled, he was quietly taken back to the school when the fuss died down because his teachers gave only lip-service to the regime. At fourteen, he was expelled again for saying that he had read the Bible for himself and that attacks on religion in the school books were based on falsehoods. Now he was trying to continue his studies in evening classes.

Mihai was a Christian, with no love of Communism. But a song-bird with a nest near a family of crows will fall into discordant notes, and Mihai had heard little else. On the day after my return I had to tell him that he was mistaken in believing that the workers in capitalist countries were dying of hunger. His student friends took it for granted, and one girl told me that she had wept in school over the starving children of America.

Even the best young people seemed confused and disorientated. Not only were they deprived of the chance of reading great Christian authors, but you could not buy the works of thinkers like Plato, Kant, Schopenhauer and Einstein. Mihai's friends said their parents told them one thing, their professors another, and often they asked for my advice.

A young theology student from the university of Cluj wanted help in his thesis.

"What is the subject?" I asked.

"The history of liturgical song in the Lutheran church."

I said, "You should begin by writing that we should not be filling young men's heads with historical trivialities, when tomorrow they may face death for their faith."

"What should I be studying, then?" he asked.

I replied, "How to be ready for sacrifice and martyrdom."

I told him some of the things that I had seen in prison, and soon he was bringing his friends. All had the same trouble as they tried to chart a course. I questioned them about their studies.

One of them said, "Our theology teacher says that God gave three revelations. The first was to Moses. The second was to Christ. And the third was to Karl Marx."

"What does your pastor think of that?"

"The more he talks, the less he seems to say."

The upshot of these conversations was that I agreed to go to Cluj and preach in the cathedral there. The students wanted my books, but all my writings had been banned.

Before I went I had a call to pay, in fulfillment of a promise made in prison to members of the Army of the Lord, a sect which is not unlike the Salvation Army and which was being harassed unrelentingly by the Secret Police. It was several years since I had met the Patriarch Justinian Marina, and I thought that he might help. The harm he had done to the Church was great; it was also in his power to do some good.

I found him walking in the grounds behind his palace. I suspect he chose to see me in the garden because it was free from microphones and away from his eavesdropping clerks. I said, "You are Patriarch and men come to you for places and pensions, and everywhere you must preach and sing - so I thought that I should come and sing to you. It's a song of the Army of the Lord, which I learned in prison." I sang it, and asked him to do something for these good and

simple people: "They must not sit in prison for ever, merely because they belong to a certain sect." He said he would try, and we had a long talk.

I tried to call him back to God. I said, "In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus called even Judas 'friend,' opening the way to salvation." I wanted to plant a seed from which a change of heart might grow. He listened quietly, and even with humility, but said he could do little because at his side had been put the Metropolitan of Iasi, Justin Moisescu, if he went too far or resigned, Moisescu would replace him as Patriarch and things would be worse. Justinian had kept a kind of respect for me, but although his divided heart did not love what his hand did, his

waverings always ended in submission to the Party's demands.

Later I heard he had raised the matter of the "Army" in the Holy Synod, where he was opposed by the Metropolitan – who (above all men in Rumania!) had become accepted as Orthodox representative for the World Council of Churches. Next, he was reproved by the Ministry of Cults for receiving me – his secretary, of course, had reported my visit, just as the Patriarch always reported on his secretary. Justinian had agreed to meet representatives from the "Army," but when they arrived he sent them packing, "So Wurmbrand told you to come, did he? It's time he was back in jail again!"

2

The news that I had promised to deliver a series of talks at Rumania's ancient university town was at once reported to the authorities, with the warning that my real purpose was to attack Marxism and make trouble among the students under the guise of lecturing on Christian philosophy. The zealous informer in this case was a Baptist minister, who told me to my face what he had done.

His action did not surprise me. I had met many of his colleagues since my release – priests, pastors, even

bishops, who put in such reports to the Ministry of Cults. Usually, the reports concerned their own flocks, and usually the clergy were ashamed and sorrowful at what they did. They said it was not so much for their own safety, but to save their churches from being closed down. Every town had its Secret Police representatives from the Ministry of Cults, who questioned ministers regularly on the conduct of their congregation; quite apart from politics, they wanted to know which parishioners were frequent communicants, which of them tried to obtain converts, which sins people confessed. Those who refused to answer such questions were dismissed, and if there was no one "suitable" to take over, their churches were shut. So by now Rumania had four categories of ministers: those in prison, those who informed under pressure and tried to keep things back, those who shrugged and did what they were told, and those who had

acquired a taste for informing. These were only a few. The more honorable official pastors who did not collaborate soon lost their license to preach. But traitors, like street-walkers, thrive by being brazen, and my Baptist colleague was such a man.

His warning was taken up at once by an official spy called Rugojanu. The Ministry of Cults, too, had its categories. Some of the employees were slack, others used their power to extract "protection money" from the clergy, but Rugojanu was a fanatic who went from church to church, tirelessly sniffing out "counter-revolutionaries." He attended my lectures himself.

At Cluj, on the first evening, there was a group of fifty students and a few teachers of theology. As Darwin and his evolutionary theories were always to the fore in theological classes, I tried to deal with them. I said that the new Rumania, advanced and Socialist, rejected all capitalist ideas; was it not odd that an exception was made for the English bourgeois, Sir Charles Darwin?

Rugojanu, hunched forward in a pew, was staring at me. I looked back at him as I went on. "A doctor's son wants to be a doctor, a composer's son a musician, a painter's son an artist, and so on. If

you believe you were created by God, then you will try to become Godlike; if you prefer to believe that you spring from a tribe of apes, you are in danger of turning into a beast."

I started my lectures on a Monday. On Tuesday the audience had doubled. By the end of the week more than a thousand faces looked up at me - the whole university, it seemed, was crowding into the cathedral. I knew that many of them were eager to hear the truth, but feared the consequences of embracing it, so I told them of the advice given me by a pastor who died for his faith at the hands of the Fascists. He said, "You give your body as a sacrifice to God when you give it to all who wish to beat and mock you. Jesus, knowing his crucifixion was near, said, 'My time is at hand.' His time was the time of suffering, and it was His joy to suffer for the salvation of mankind. We, too, should regard suffering as a charge given us by God. St. Paul wrote, in the Epistle to the Romans [ROM 12:1]: 'My brothers, I implore you by God's mercy to offer your very selves

to Him: a living sacrifice dedicated and fit for His acceptance.'"

I looked out at the silent congregation. It was, for a moment, as if I were back in my church during the war on the day when the Iron Guard bullies filed in with their guns. Menace was around us; not only in the place where Rugojanu was taking notes.

I continued: "Don't let suffering take you by surprise! Meditate on it often. Take the virtues of Christ and His saints to yourself, by thought. The pastor I spoke of, my teacher who died for his faith, gave me a recipe for a tea against suffering, and I will give it to you.

I told them the story of a doctor of early Christian times who was unjustly imprisoned by the emperor. After some weeks his family were allowed to see him, and at first they wept. His clothes were rags, his nourishment a slice of bread with a cup of water every day. His wife wondered and asked, "How is it you look so well? You have the air of one who has just come from a wedding!" The doctor smilingly replied

that he found a remedy for all troubles, and his family asked him what it was. The doctor told them, "I have discovered a tea which is good against all suffering and sorrow. It contains seven herbs, and I shall number them for you.

"The first herb is called contentedness: be satisfied with what you have. I may shiver in my rags as I gnaw on a crust, but how much worse off I should be if the emperor had thrown me naked into a dungeon with nothing at all to eat!

"The second herb is common sense. Whether I rejoice or worry, I shall still be in prison, so why repine?

"The third is remembrance of past sins: count them, and on the supposition that every sin deserves a day in prison, reckon how many lives you would spend behind bars - you have been let off lightly!

"The fourth is the thought of the sorrows which Christ bore gladly for us. If the only man who ever could choose his fate on earth chose pain, what great value He must have seen in it! So we observe that, borne with serenity and joy, suffering redeems.

"The fifth herb is the knowledge that suffering has been given to us by God as from a father, not to

harm us, but to cleanse and sanctify us. The suffering through which we pass has the purpose of purifying us, and preparing us for heaven.

"The sixth is the knowledge that no suffering can harm a Christian life. If the pleasures of the flesh are all, then pain and prison bring an end to a man's aim in living; but if the core of life is truth, that is something which no prison cell can change. In prison or out of it two and two make four. Prison cannot stop me from loving; iron bars cannot exclude faith. If these ideals make up my life, I can be serene anywhere.

"The last herb in the recipe is hope. The wheel of life may put the emperor's physician in prison, but it goes on turning. It may put me back into the palace, and even put me on the throne."

I paused for a moment. The crowded church was still.

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"I have drunk barrels of this tea since then," I said, "and I can recommend it to you all. It has proved good."

As I finished speaking, Rugojanu stood up and pushed his way out of the cathedral without a backward glance. I came down from the pulpit and the audience broke into a babble of talk. Outside, students applauded and cheered and tried to take my hands. I telephoned Sabina, who was glad at what I had done, although she knew reprisals would follow.

Next day I was summoned by my bishop, who told me that Rugojanu was making trouble. While he was telling me about protests from the Ministry of Cults, Rugojanu himself strode into the room. "Ah, you!" he cried. "What excuses are you trying to make? A torrent of sedition - I heard it!"

I asked the man what in particular had displeased him. Everything had - but particularly my cure for suffering.

"But what was wrong with my poor tea?" I asked. "Which herb did you not like?"

He said violently, "You told them the wheel always turns. But in this counter-revolutionary outburst, you are mistaken. The wheel will not turn, my friend - Communism is here for ever!" His face was distorted with hatred.

"I didn't mention Communism," I replied. "I said

simply that the wheel of life keeps turning. For instance, I was in prison, now I am free. I have been ill, now I am better. I lost my parish, now I may work..."

"No, no, no! You meant that Communism would fall, and they all knew what you meant. Don't imagine you've heard the last of this!"

Rugojanu called church leaders to a meeting at the bishop's palace in Cluj, where I was denounced for trying to poison youth with concealed attacks on the government. "You may be sure that he will never preach again," shouted Rugojanu, working himself into an ugly rage. At the end he cried, "Wurmbrand is finished, Wurmbrand is finished, Wurmbrand is finished!" He gathered up coat and hat and walked out of the building.

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A hundred yards from the door a car, swerving to avoid a dog, mounted the pavement and crushed him against the wall. He died on the spot.

The story of Rugojanu's last words and their sequel spread through the country. Often during these years God showed His sign.

The revocation of my license as a pastor did not stop me from preaching, but now I had to work as secretly as I did among Soviet soldiers after the war. A new danger was presented by visits from old prison friends asking for advice and help. Some of whom, having turned informer, were trying to provoke me. These unhappy men had expected too much from release, on finding their domestic world turned upside down, they had turned to the pursuit of sexual pleasure to win back their lost youth. This usually cost more than they could afford, and the short cut to a new start with the regime and quick profits lay in providing the Party with information. Their freedom was more tragic than their confinement.

Our best safeguard against informers lay in the warnings we received from friends in the Secret Police. Many of our followers held Party jobs of one kind or another. One young couple who spent their days in the propaganda department passed their evenings praying with us, and more than once we met in the home of a leading Secret Police officer while he was away, his maid being one of us. At other times we met in basements attics, flats, country homes. Our services were as simple and as beautiful as those of

the first Christians 1900 years ago. We sang aloud, if questions were asked, it was a birthday celebration; Christian families with three or four members had thirty-five birthdays a year! Sometimes we met in open country. The sky was our cathedral; the birds supplied our music, the flowers our incense, the stars our candles, the angels were the acolytes who lit them, and the shabby suit of a martyr just freed from prison meant far more to us than the most precious priestly robes.

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3

I knew, of course, that sooner or later I would be re-arrested. After the revolution in Hungary the situation grew more difficult with every month. Khrushchev announced a new Seven-Year Plan, "to eradicate the vestiges of superstition." Churches were closed or converted for use as Communist clubs, museums, grain stores. Those whom the Party newspapers reviled as "swindlers in black soutanes" were rounded up in thousands.

I prayed, "God, if You know men in prison whom I can help, souls that I can save, send me back and I will bear it willingly." Sabina sometimes hesitated, then said, "Amen." There was at this time an inner joy about her, which came from knowing that we would serve Christ more fully soon. Once more, I wondered if our image of the Mother of the Lord, standing grief-stricken by the Cross, is not mistaken; was she not also filled with joy that her son would be savior of the world?

They came for me at 1 A.M. on January 15, 1959. Our little attic was turned inside out in a search that lasted four hours. My son saw a belt of his behind a dislodged cupboard. "And yet people say the Secret Police are useless!" he remarked. "I've been looking everywhere for that." Next day he was barred from night-school for his insolence.

When they had taken me away, Sabina picked up my Bible. She found, on a scrap of paper, a sentence I had noted down from the Epistle to the Hebrews (xi.35) which said "through faith... women received back their dead raised to life." I had written below it, "I have such a woman for my wife."

4

It was still dark and the streets were covered with icy slush when we reached Police Headquarters

in Bucharest. I went through the familiar reception processes before guards led me to a cell. Here I found a man of about thirty named Draghici, one of the hated re-education leaders at Piteshti. Each time the cell door opened he jerked round. He said, "I'm sorry to be so jumpy. I never know if they're coming to take me out for a bath or to be shot. I've been under sentence of death for four years."

Draghici told me his life story. As a boy he had revered the local priest, who one day said, "Your father's a watchmaker - ask him to repair the church clock, cheaply." Draghici persuaded his father to do the work for nothing. The priest then asked for a receipt for 500 leu, so that he could pocket the money, which he debited to the church. Draghici sneered as he added, "I might have grown up as a Christian and given the Church a lot of money over the years, except for that."

His father, a drunkard, disappeared with the family savings, and at fourteen the boy enlisted in the Iron Guard for the sake of the green shirt, the marching songs, the admiration of the girls. A few months later, the Guard was overthrown. Draghici went to prison, and when the Communists took power was automatically sentenced to eleven years as an active Fascist. After serving seven years he was promised at Piteshti, "Beat the other prisoners, and you'll be freed."

He told me, "I was now twenty-one. I didn't want to stay in jail, so I did what I was told. I believed them, and now I have to die for it."

It looked to me as if he were dying already, of tuberculosis. "It's no more than I deserve," he said.

I lay awake, listening to Draghici coughing and I thought: if God called me now and asked, "After fifty-six years on earth, what do you think of man?" I should have to reply, "Man is a sinner but the guilt is not his. Satan and his fallen angels are at work to make us as wretched as they are themselves."

For ten days and nights I reasoned with Draghici. "It is not of your free choice that you became a

criminal," I said, "but your sense of guilt demands

atonement. Jesus has taken on himself this punishment you feel that you deserve."

On the tenth evening, Draghici broke down in tears. We prayed together, and his remorse and fear were lifted. So my request to be allowed to help other prisoners was answered in my first days back in prison.

5

I was taken next for interrogation at Bucharest's Uranus jail. A Secret Police major tried to make me name "counter-revolutionaries" I had met.

I said that I should be glad to name counter-revolutionaries: in Russia as well as at home. Several thousands of them had been killed in the Soviet Union during the 'thirties by Yagoda, then Minister of Interior, but in the end the real counter-revolutionary was revealed as Yagoda himself. Then, under his successor, Beria, the Soviet secret police drove hundreds of thousands to their death, until Beria, too, was shot. I added that the supreme enemy of the revolution, the killer of millions, was Josef Stalin, who had since been turned out of his tomb in the Red Square. So it would be best, I suggested, to look elsewhere than in my poor church for counter-revolutionaries.

The officer ordered me to be beaten and kept in solitary confinement. There I stayed until my trial. It was a ten-minute re-hearing, in secret session, of the previous trial ten years before. My wife and son were present this time to hear me denounced.

I waited in a cell later for transport to the next prison. While I spoke to the others about Christ, an officer came in to announce the new court decision. I thanked him, and went on with what I was saying. The sentence had been increased from twenty years to twenty-five.

PART SEVEN

There were other newly-sentenced clergy with me in the Secret Police truck. After a short journey it descended a steep ramp and halted. My heart sank, for I knew that I was back in the underground prison of Jilava. Voices shouted, "Get them out!" and the van doors burst open.

A party of baton-swinging guards drove us with blows along the passage. They had been drinking and at the sight of priests there was a whoop of joy. Gray, grubby prison uniforms were flung at us. Those who were slow in changing had the clothes torn from their backs. Beards were cut off amid roars of laughter. Heads were roughly shaved. Bleeding and half-naked, we were driven into a large cell.

We sat on the stone floor, huddling together in the February cold. Presently a guard lurched in, bawling, "All priests outside." There were suppressed giggles and snorts from beyond the door. We filed out, and into another gauntlet of baton-blows, through which we ran, protecting our heads with our arms as best we could. Those who fell were kicked by heavy boots, and spat on.

Half an hour later all priests were again called out. No one moved. Guards rushed into the cell, lashing out indiscriminately.

I tried to comfort those near me. One man had lost some teeth and his lip was badly split. As I

cleaned the blood from his face he said, "I'm Archimandrite Cristescu."

We had met, years before. I had been waiting to see the Orthodox patriarch. Miron Cristescu was working in his office, so I had told him about our troubles. He had placed his hands on my shoulders and said, "Brother, Christ will come again: we hope for it" - something a man of God should say often, yet rarely does. I did not forget him. But shaven, with his face streaked by blood and dirt, he was unrecognizable.

The hours passed as we sat and shivered. Miron Cristescu talked of how he and others around the Patriarch had tried to save the Church from becoming an instrument of the State. They thought they could work on the Patriarch's better nature. But Gheorghiu-Dej had chosen well. Justinian was sent on a visit to Moscow, where his head was further turned. He

delivered blow after blow at the Catholics, the Uniates and all within his fold who would not compromise.

"Here I am like all the rest," said Archimandrite Cristescu. "I was mistaken to try - I should have resisted from the start."

"Don't let such thoughts sadden you too much," I said.

He raised his fine eyes to my face and answered, "Brother Wurmbrand, I know only one sadness, the sadness of not being a saint."

Spoken from a pulpit this would have been just a beautiful phrase; in that horrible cell, after a ferocious beating, the words showed his true greatness.

2

Miron was with me when a few days later I joined a convoy that headed into the mountains. After many hours the Transylvanian town of Gherla, and its largest building, the prison, came into view. Here my wife had visited me during my two-months' stay in 1956. It had other memories for me, too. From the upper windows of the jail, which was built during the reign

of Empress Maria Theresa in the eighteenth century, you could see the old gallows, now no longer used; for the Communist method of execution is a shot in the back of the head. Beyond the high walls we saw life going on in the town. Prisoners gazed out at the passing scene and dreamed. But at noon no one could bear to watch. It was then that the children came from school, shouting and laughing as they chased each other home, and every man thought of his own family.

Some 10,000 prisoners were packed into primitive accommodation intended for 2,000, and the regime was as harsh as in the worst days of the re-education campaign. The previous summer there had been serious rioting at Gherla. Prisoners had barricaded themselves into a wing in protest at the nailing up of shutters which kept out light and air. The doors were smashed down by warders. A running fight began. The militia were called in and opened fire, killing and wounding many prisoners. As a punishment food was reduced to starvation level; and hundreds of convicts were dispersed to other jails.

We, priests and pastors, soon took their place, along with thousands of other political prisoners caught in the new wave of arrests - landowners, army officers, doctors, shopkeepers, artisans who would not be herded into co-operatives, farmers who opposed the final seizures of land which the Party was then preparing. After two disastrous Five-Year Plans, Dej had announced a Sixteen-Year Plan, which would last until 1975 - "If anyone remains at liberty to operate it," a prisoner said to me.

The cells were long, dark, echoing barrack-rooms, each containing 80 to 100 men but only 50 to 60 bunks. Many shared a bed. Sleep was difficult. Apart from the usual night-long procession to the lavatory buckets, which soon overflowed, we had a dozen regular snorers: each performed an individual tune; and if one stopped another joined the resonant chorus. Nor could you rest by day, when discipline was enforced by whips and studded boots. The guards made surprise "security visits" to the cells, banging the iron

bars across the windows with their batons to ensure that they had not been filed. At the same time the prisoners lay face down on the floor in rows, to be counted. The guards walked on each man in turn as his name was called.

The slightest breach of the rules brought a minimum of twenty-five lashes, with a doctor standing by - for men had died under such castigation. There was scarcely a man in the prison who had not been flogged, and some had received "the twenty-five" several times. We agreed that rods hurt more than sticks or batons. The blows burned like fire: it was as if your back were being grilled by a furnace, and the shock to the nervous system was great. Very noticeable, too, was the brutalizing effect these floggings had on the guards, our masters. Blood and power seemed to affect even the best among them, like drink; and they carried the poison of cruelty from the jail out into society every day.

There was one flush-toilet on each landing and to this Miron and I carried the lavatory buckets every day. We had to queue with other prisoners waiting their turn to pour the contents down the drain. The Archimandrite was a fastidious and cultured man, but he forced himself to these chores. One morning he

slipped on the greasy stone floor and some liquid splashed a warder's boot.

"Cretin!" the man yelled, striking Miron a vicious blow on the shoulder. "You'll end up in Rozsa Sandor!"

As we spooned up our gruel later, he asked me what this meant.

"The graveyard," I replied. "They always say that - take no notice."

Rozsa Sandor was the prison cemetery; its gray headstones, deep in weeds, could also be seen from the windows. It was named after a murderer who, during the last century had been sentenced to twenty years, when he was nineteen years old. Looking down through the bars of Gherla he saw in a garden a woman with a baby in her arms. Day after day he watched them. The priest called to baptize the girl

child; her first communion party was held; she went to school, and grew into a young woman. All the time Rozsa Sandor watched. She became his life: he decided that they would marry when he was free. At last the day came and he emerged from jail. He hurried over the road and found a party in progress - a wedding feast. She had thought to receive him in this way! He ran up to her and said, "I cannot tell you how happy I am that you will be my wife today." The girl stared at hideous, toothless Rozsa Sandor and began to laugh. "What can the silly old man mean?" she asked. Then, taking the hand of the young man beside her, she said, "This is my bridegroom." Rozsa Sandor gaped at the couple. In a fit of rage and madness he snatched up a carving-knife and stabbed them both to death. He was hanged for the murders and buried in the prison cemetery which was called now after his name.

"You'll end in Rozsa Sandor!"

The shouted threat was a daily reminder that we were growing older. Prisoners never realize how time is passing. To themselves they remain the same age as when they entered prison; they dream of the young wives and sweethearts they have left, never the careworn women to whom they will return.

Even the clock over the main gate at Gherla had stopped. It never moved in the six years I was to spend there.

3

The prison commandant was a gross, red-faced little Nero who could not stop eating. Prisoners brought before Major Dorabantu were startled when, in the middle of some tirade, his hand burrowed into a drawer and emerged clasping a garlic-sausage roll or an apple.

My first meeting with him was typical. I stood at attention listening to a rambling, muddled hymn of hate. It seemed that there were only two things

Dorabantu did not hate: food and the sound of his own voice.

"So, Wurmbrand!" he cried, showering the table with a mouthful of cakecrumbs. "A monk, huh!"

I said that I was a pastor.

"Pastors, priests, monks! All the same to me. Grinding the faces of the poor to feather your own nests. I know!" He waved his arms clownishly as he told stories of his wretched boyhood. He had kept his father's sheep near one of the richest monasteries in Rumania; when they strayed on to Church land, the monks had thrashed him brutally.

"Ever seen a priest firing a double-barreled shotgun at a hungry child, Wurmbrand? A pretty holy picture!"

Dorabantu also complained that he had been exploited as a factory worker in later life. So now he was making good use of his opportunity to pay back the capitalists and priests.

There were some tough characters in my cell, murderers and thieves who were nominally political prisoners because they had killed a Communist or because thieving was something called economic sabotage. Others were war criminals serving life sentences for massacring Russians and Jews. They were bitter, angry men, and all my attempts to offer religious consolation were shouted down. Those in particular who had killed Jews were very bitter against me, because I am myself of the Jewish race. I never hid this fact, and often when I was questioned about it, I expressed the natural love I had towards my nation, although using every man's right to choose his faith. I have chosen another faith than that of most

of my people. When I began speaking quietly to a single man in a corner, others formed a menacing circle around us.

"We told you to shut up!" snarled the leader. I stood up and someone pushed me. Another put a leg out and I landed on my face. I felt a violent kick in the ribs. But as the pack fell on me, there was a shout of warning.

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A warder, peering through the peep-hole, had seen the struggle and was calling for help. The crowd scattered. When the cell door opened everyone was in his bunk.

"Wurmbrand!" The commandant, prowling the corridors, had heard the story. The guard had recognized me as the tallest in the room, but in the half-darkness he could not identify the attackers.

"Wurmbrand, who did it?"

Nursing a cut lip, I said I could not answer.

"Why not?"

"As a Christian I love and forgive my enemies, I don't denounce them."

"Then you're an idiot!" snapped Dorabantu.

"There you are right," I said. "Anyone who is not a Christian from all his heart is an idiot."

"Are you calling me an idiot?" thundered the commandant.

"I didn't say that - I meant I was not as good a Christian as I should be."

Dorabantu smote himself on the forehead with the palm of his hand. "Take him away. Thirty strokes!"

He waddled off, growling, "Crazy monks!"

When I returned the guards were still questioning prisoners. Since no information was forthcoming, no one else was punished. But after this there were few interruptions when I tried to preach.

4

At times, prison quarrels were comic, although those involved rarely thought so. I lived in several different cells, never with less than sixty men, always with two narrow, barred slits for windows. Should they be open, so that we lay freezing in our beds, or

dosed, making the air stuffy and evil-smelling, so that we woke each morning with a headache? The topic was debated, literally for hours, day after day, as though we were in Parliament. There were two parties.

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Those away from the window said, "Fresh air harms no one." Those near it replied, "Thousands die from pneumonia every year."

"If powerful material interests dictate that twice two should be something other than four, then it will be," is an axiom of Lenin. We saw this proved in prison. The guards grew bored as we exercised. "The hour's up - everyone inside!" they shouted. We protested, "We've not had fifteen minutes yet." Both sides believed they were right; self-interest dictated our sense of time.

The common criminals quickly settled in, as much at home here, almost, as outside. They had their routine, their order of precedence, their own slang. They were wonderfully clever at smuggling scraps of food. They called the warders by nicknames and tried to cadge cigarettes through the spy-hole in the door. They got the positions of trust, leaving the dirty work to the politicals - and the dirtiest to the priests and practising Christians.

Owing to the overcrowding, I was edged in a bunk between two men who quarreled like moulting birds of prey locked in the same cage. Tall, emaciated ex-Sergeant Grigore had shot Jews by the hundred, in obedience to orders. His enemy Vasile, an "economic saboteur," made Grigore the scapegoat for all his wrongs. Vasile, who was small and scrawny, quickly found his adversary's weak spot. His face contorted with triumph as he spat out the word, "Murderer!" Grigore cringed and could not answer.

I told Vasile, "Why say this? He's old and ill, and we don't know where he will spend eternity: if it's with Christ you're abusing a future citizen of Heaven; and if it's in hell, why add curses to his suffering?"

The thief looked surprised. "Don't you know how many Russians and Jews that rat killed?"

"That happened during a horrible war twenty years ago," I replied, "and he's paid for it with fifteen years of hunger, beatings and prison. Do you call me a clown because I used to turn cartwheels in the

middle of the room when I was three? Or illiterate

because I couldn't read when I was four? Those days are past."

Vasile was annoyed. Next day, a group began talking dose to me of how they would treat the Russians if they had the chance.

"Hanging's too good for them," Vasile screeched. "They should be flayed alive..." Eventually I could not bear it any longer and objected that neither Russians nor anyone else should be treated thus.

"But yesterday," protested Vasile, "you defended a man who killed hundreds of Russians, and now you say killing Russians is wrong!"

Grigore was deeply unhappy over the memory of his crimes, and he asked me, "Have I atoned if I suffer like this... when suffering is forced on me?"

"Yes - the Bible says that he who has suffered in the body has finished with sin." I told him of poor Lazarus who suffered and went to Heaven. "If you believe in Christ, you will be saved," I said.

"People think different," he said. "Look at Eichmann, the man they want to hang in Israel."

"There's no evidence that he's suffered - but in any case I don't think a man should be accused of crimes committed so long ago. He may not be the same man. I know I am not," I said. "And I'm sure that many Jews would agree." (It was not until years later that I heard that Martin Buber, the great Jewish thinker, had objected to Eichmann's sentence.)

Grigore said, "I'm not the same because I've repented for what I did; but others might be ready to do it again."

"Nobody can be punished for what he may possibly do wrong in the future. Wickedness is only a part of us all. Some of the worst men also have great virtues. And so have you, Grigore."

At this thought he cheered up a little.

There was no lack of laughter in the cell. Gladness, in the Acts of the Apostles, is called a witness to the existence of God; and without such a belief the presence of joy in prison is inexplicable.

Some could laugh at their sufferings. Major Braileanu was one: a short, spry ex-officer with a

boyish quiff of hair, he brought a new rumor to the cell. There was to be another summit conference that spring of 1959, between the Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko and Western representatives. It was said that the meeting would be held on May 10. Prisoners adopted a new greeting - they held up all ten fingers to indicate the hoped-for day of release.

On the day of the conference the guards did, in fact, open the cell and call out four men, Major Braileanu among them. Were they the first to be released? We watched them enviously. But soon we heard shrieks of agony coming from the small recess at the end of the corridor where floggings took place. It was impossible to shut out the sound. Three men were beaten; but when the fourth's turn came he did not utter a murmur under the usual twenty-five blows. Braileanu followed the others back to the cell, pale and unable to speak. He pulled himself up. "Gentlemen," he said. "I give you our new salute." He held up two fingers of his right hand, five of his left, to signal twenty-five.

Stories and riddles were told by the hour. Everyone had to contribute. There was a certain kind of nonsense that made us laugh better than anything.

"What has three colors, hangs on trees and sings tara-boom-cha-cha?" asked Florescu, a half-gypsy thief. No one could answer. "A herring." "A herring hasn't three colors!" "If I paint it, it has." "They don't hang on trees, either." "They do if I tie them on." "They don't sing 'tara-boom-cha-cha'!" "I only said that so that you wouldn't guess."

Gaston, a thin-faced Unitarian pastor who wore thick spectacles, posed another riddle: "A man traveling on a train has a wife called Eve and they live in a red house: what's his name?" There was puzzlement on all faces - if a man went by train and shared a red house with his wife Eve, how did that help to know his name? "Easy," said Gaston, "it's Charles." "But how do you know?" "I've known him for years, he's my best friend."

Archimandrite Miron told what he swore was a true story - about the commandant: strolling down a

line of convicts on parade, he asked each man the same question: "What is your crime?"

"I've done nothing sir, and I've got ten years."
Dorabantu moved on. "And what is your crime?"
"Nothing sir, and I've got twenty years."
"Lying swine," said Dorabantu indignantly.
"Nobody in the People's Republic gets more than ten years for nothing!"

The small thieves and pickpockets were the best storytellers. They lived, outrageously, on their wits. Florescu said he had robbed a jeweler in Carol Street, Bucharest, which was lined with jewelers' shops. He told the story like this:

Mr. Hershcovici, courtliest of jewelers, welcomed an elegant young couple to his premises. "Good morning," said the man, who was, of course, Florescu. "This is my fiancee, the sweetest girl in Bucharest!" And one of the richest, too, according to their chatter. "We've come to choose the ring - diamonds, of course... Oh no, those are too small." From rings they proceeded to a jewel-faced watch for the girl's mother, an alligator dressing-case for her father, and then the girl broke in with, "Oh dear, we mustn't forget the bishop. He's my uncle, so he won't accept a fee for the service and you know our tradition: a service not paid for is not acceptable to Heaven." "True, true, but what does one give a bishop?" And at this moment the eyes of both turned to a showcase which held a complete set of gilded episcopal robes. "Just the thing!" cried Florescu. "But, dear," said the girl, "we don't know whether they'll fit him." Florescu looked the jeweler up and down. "They're just the same build!" And Hershcovici, hoping to sell the costly robes, allowed himself to be draped in a golden cassock. They tied the belt around his waist and jammed a glittering miter on his head. "A perfect fit!" said Florescu. "Just hold this scepter!"

With that, the couple swept the jewelry into the alligator case and ran from the shop. Hershcovici was paralyzed with shock; then he followed, screaming, "Thieves! Stop them! Help!" The Jewish merchants ran to their doors and saw Hershcovici

galloping down an empty street in the full regalia of an Orthodox metropolitan. "Hershcovici's gone mad!" they shouted. Three of them brought him down and held him as he struggled and protested. "No, no! What are you doing? The thieves are escaping!" So they

did, up a side street, never to be caught.

When the laughter stopped, Pastor Gaston said, "But they caught you in the end, Florescu." The thief did not want to discuss that episode.

"Well, suppose you tell us why you're here, Pastor," he said.

"Very well," said Gaston. "It's a funny story too. I was given seven years for a Christmas sermon on the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt."

Gaston had been denounced by one of his congregation. At his trial it was said that in deploring Herod's attempt to kill the child Jesus in the massacre of the innocents, Gaston was really attacking the Communist campaign against religion; while his references to Egypt revealed too his hope that Nasser would join the imperialist camp.

Pastor Gaston asked an interrogator afterwards what he had really done to upset the Party. "I always sided with the workers," he protested. "I started a school and a co-operative. I doubled my congregation."

The officer laughed. "The kind of priest we want is the man in the next parish to yours - a lecherous old drunkard whose church is always empty."

Gaston sometimes spoke to me about his poor childhood. He was always hungry, and he had stolen when there was nothing to eat. "Once I raided a hencoop," he said. "They paraded me through the village with a notice round my neck saying 'Thief!'" He grew up "wanting to overturn the world."

He studied various systems of politics and philosophy and joined the Unitarian Church. When the police came, they found among his hundreds of books a copy of Adler's ~Individual Psychology~.

"Aha!" said a detective. "An individualist!" and carried the book off as evidence.

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5

In a batch of new prisoners I was shocked to see Professor Popp. He looked ill, and he moved like an old man. We had not met after the amnesty of 1956 and my letters had gone unanswered. Popp explained why that evening.

Like many other released prisoners he had plunged into a hunt for pleasure. "I felt starved," he

said. "I was afraid life had passed me by. I had to prove that I could enjoy myself again. I spent lavishly, I drank too much, I left my wife for a younger woman.

"Then I was sorry. I hadn't forgotten my Christian vows. I wanted to see you, but you were far away. I told everything to another pastor, and blamed Communism for destroying the country. He listened - and then denounced me."

Popp had been given another twelve-year sentence. His first prison term had brought out all the strength and goodness in him. He had been like a sea-bird that rises highest on its wings in the face of the wind, and falls as the wind falls. Now his will was weak. I tried to bring him back to God, but life seemed empty of meaning to him.

He said that, soon after his sentence, he had been informed of his "civic burial." This was a new feature of life in the People's Republic. When a counter-revolutionary went to jail, his colleagues, friends and family were gathered together by a Party official who told them, "Comrades, this man is dead for ever and for everyone. We are here to bury his memory." One by one, his offences against the State had to be denounced by the "mourners." Popp's widowed daughter spoke with the rest. Had she refused, she might have lost her job, and she was the mother of two young children.

Popp was put to work with me on the second day. We had to clean the floor of the large cell, scrubbing it from end to end. A prisoner elected by

the guards as a room leader walked up when we were almost finished and kicked over the bucket of dirty water, saying, "Now do it again!" Finally a guard came to inspect. He grabbed the room leader, bringing his face down towards some mud he had brought in on his own boots. "Filthy!" he yelled. We scrubbed for another hour, to the accompaniment of kicks and insults from the room leader. There is no oppressor worse than the oppressed.

This experience left Popp shaking with exhaustion. As a distraction, I introduced him over the meal to Pastor Gaston. A look of shock passed over Gaston's face. Popp simply turned away and closed his eyes.

As the days passed, the professor withdrew further into himself. We had to urge him to eat and help him get ready each morning. He neither laughed, nor wept, nor joined in the life of the cell. But one morning, stung by some jeering remark from the room leader, he seized the man's throat, clinging to it like a madman until two guards clubbed him down. He was carried unconscious to the hospital wing; next day we heard that he was dead.

6

The tragedy filled the cell with sorrow. While others prayed for Popp's soul, according to the Orthodox habit, Gaston lay in silence on his bunk, and when I spoke of eternal life he rose and moved away.

There was talk in the cell that evening of life after death. Gaston was asked what he thought on the question. "Progressive Unitarians don't believe in a supernatural survival," he said.

"But we are not talking to Progressive Unitarians," I replied. "We are talking to you. Let's have the courage to be ourselves. Not always 'we Catholics, we Protestants, we Rumanians...'"

"Speaking personally, then, I don't believe in it."

"If you are speaking personally," I said, "that is the first step to believing, for personality is - God's

greatest gift to man, the one thing that remains as your body changes. The atoms of oxygen and hydrogen in my body are the same as in yours. My body's heat can be measured on the same instrument as yours. All bodily energies - chemical, electrical - are alike from man to man. But my thoughts, my feelings, my will are my own. Physical energy is like a poker chip, which has no mark on it. Spiritual energy is like a coin that bears the head of a king. Why, then, should it share the body's fate?"

- Florescu, who had drawn up a stool, said - with an obscenity, "I believe in what I can see, taste and feel. We're all matter, like this bit of wood I'm sitting on, and when you're dead, that's it."

I went over and kicked the stool from under him. It shot across the floor, and Florescu went down with a bump. He scrambled up furiously and made for me, but the others held him. "What's the idea?" he

snarled.

I replied mildly, "But you said you were matter like the stool. I didn't hear the stool complain!"

There was some laughter, in which even Gaston joined.

"I'm sorry, Florescu," I said. "I just wanted to prove that since matter does not react with love or hate, it is, after all, different from us."

Florescu sulked for a while, then interrupted again:

"I might believe if the dead ever came back to talk to us."

"I am sure that men have been in touch with the dead," I replied. "Great scientists from Newton to Sir Oliver Lodge have believed in spiritualism. The Bible describes the evocation of the dead King Saul. Scriptures forbid it but say it is possible."

The row over the stool had brought others to listen, and I began to preach earnestly about life after death. It was for us no academic matter, but a topic of burning and immediate interest. Men died every day in Gherla.

"If God had made us for this life only," I said, "he would first have given us age with its wisdom,

then youth with its vigor. It seems senseless to gather knowledge and understanding simply to take it to the grave. Luther compares our life on earth to the life of an unborn child: he says that if the embryo could reason in the womb it would wonder why it grew hands and feet, and it would surely come to the conclusion that there must be another world to come in which it would play and run and work. Just as the embryo is preparing for a future state, so are we."

I forgot the guards and raised my voice to preach to prisoners lying in bunks that rose in tiers to the ceiling. Eyes watched me in the dim light which the weak bulb hanging above us seemed to make still more dismal.

I said, "Suppose I argue that there is room in a pint bottle for ten pints of milk. You would say I am mad. Yet I can have together in my head thoughts of an event like the Flood, which happened thousands of years ago, of my wife and son in the room where I left them, of God and the devil. How does it happen that within the narrow limits of my head there are

encompassed the daily things of life, and the infinite and the eternal? The illimitable must be contained by something illimitable: this is the spirit. When your unfettered spirit can go anywhere in time or space, do you believe that it can share the fate of this husk which is the body?"

While I spoke of these things there was a silence such as there never is in church. No one yawned or fidgeted, no thoughts strayed. The prisoners, in soiled clothes, their cheeks hollow and their eyes big with hunger, received the thought of survival after death as thirsty soil receives rain.

7

Next day before reveille I awoke to find Gaston's bunk empty. Then I saw the outline of his frail body at the window. I threw a blanket round my shoulders and joined him. We looked down through the bars. The light was ashen. Mist hung in the yard, but we

could see a row of black coffins lying by the main gate. They contained men who had died in the last twenty-four hours: one would be Popp. This was a daily scene at Gherla, and I wondered why Gaston had chosen this day to rise and watch. I tried to get him back to bed, but he would not move.

Under our eyes, a guard crossed the yard and raised the lids of the coffins, exposing the bodies. Behind him came a hulking figure with a steel stake in his hand. He lifted it and plunged the steel into each corpse in turn.

"God rest their souls," I said.

The guards were making sure that no life remained and that no would-be escapees had replaced the bodies. Gaston was trembling. I put the blanket around him, but he continued to stand watching while the coffins were closed and loaded on to the lorry which would take them to Rozsa Sandor cemetery.

For days after this, Gaston brooded. Whatever was on his mind he would not reveal it to us. He rebuffed all my attempts to break into his misery. In the evenings he would listen to the others

exchanging stories, but only once did he contribute one himself.

The prisoners exchanged glances, he had been silent and morose so long that they did not know what to expect.

He said: "I was sitting in a restaurant just before my arrest. I thought it would raise my spirits to have a good meal. So I hung my overcoat by a corner table and ordered all the things I liked. Another customer nearby looked at me in a worried way and rose to speak, but I waved him away. 'Please,' I said, 'We all have our troubles and I should like to dine in peace.' The meal was good. I lit a cigar and I thought I should apologize for being uncivil: I asked the man's pardon and said perhaps he would like to tell me the trouble now. 'Too late,' he said, 'the stove's burned a hole in your overcoat.'"

Gaston's story won some laughter, but he went

back to his bunk and lay down in the darkness. At one period Gaston had spent hours telling us how he honored Christ as the greatest teacher, but not as God, and what the Unitarians accepted as true in the Bible and what not. Their reappraisal did not leave much to hold on to. They were not over-concerned with eternal life, he said. But now he began to talk again about Professor Popp. What proof was there that anything remained after the horrible scene we had watched together that dawn? The male human creature, he said, needed four things to survive: food, warmth, sleep, a woman companion. "And the last can be dispensed with," he added. "My wife's gone to live with another man. Our two children are in a state home."

"You yourself don't believe this," I said. "We live here on the very minimum of these things, yet every day you hear laughter and men singing. Their bodies have nothing to sing about. It's something else in them that sings. You believe in the soul, don't you? What the ancient Egyptians called ~kaa~, the Greeks ~psyche~, the Hebrews ~neshama~? Why else do you worry about your children's upbringing? If it will be over for them in a few decades, what do any of us want with religion, morals, or decency?"

"It's too late," he said. "I can't change now. My life has been smoldering away, like my coat in that

restaurant, and people have tried to warn me before; but it's gone too far at last. I've nothing to live for, and the only thing that keeps me from suicide is that I'm scared of dying. I kept a piece of glass the other day - I meant to slash my wrists; but I didn't have the courage."

I said, "Suicide proves nothing except that the soul is strong and independent enough to kill the body for its own reasons. Even if you were free and had all you wanted, you might feel this way. It's terrible about your wife and children: but I feel there is something else troubling you, something you have not told anyone."

Gaston was silent

I continued, "I knew a prisoner who knowingly

starved himself to give bread to his son who was in jail with him, until he died of malnutrition. That's how strong the soul is. A man like Kreuger, the Swedish match millionaire who had everything the body can possibly need, killed himself, leaving a note that spoke of 'melancholia.' He had had something else than the body, the soul for which he had not cared. But you have inner resources, you have Christianity, to help you. Speak to Jesus: He will give you comfort and strength."

Gaston sighed in the darkness. "You make it sound as if He was here with us, alive."

"Certainly he's alive," I said. "Don't you believe even in the Resurrection? Tomorrow I'll prove it to you!"

"How you persist!" he said. "You're worse than a Communist!"

8

While the prisoners were talking next evening I reminded him that Easter was approaching - my second in Gherla.

"If we had any hard-boiled eggs we could dye them red and crack them together, following the Orthodox custom," I said. I held out my hand as if offering an Easter egg, and said, "Christ is risen!"

Old Vasilescu, one of the farmers, hit my fist with his own and cried, "He is risen indeed!" A chorus of

voices echoed the traditional response.

"That's a strange thing to say!" I said, turning to the others. "Surely Christ died on the Cross? What proof have you that He is risen?"

There was a silence. Vasilescu tugged at his heavy moustaches. "I'm a simple farmer, but I believe it because my father and mother and his father and all our priests and teachers told me so. I believe it because I see how nature is resurrected every year. When the snow is on the ground, you can't ever believe that the fields will bear crops in spring. But the trees bud and the air grows warm, and the grass

green. If the world can come alive again, so can Christ."

"A sound answer," said Miron.

"But in a world where every Christian assertion is challenged, that's not enough," said Gaston.

"We need the strongest proofs, I agree," I said, "and they exist. Mommsen, the great historian of the Roman Empire, calls the Resurrection the best-proven fact in history. Do you believe the classical historians were largely truthful?"

No one argued.

"They were usually courtiers, the flatterers of kings, men who praised for profit or to please powerful protectors. How much more should we believe Paul, Peter, Matthew, Andrew, Apostles who died a martyr's death to spread the truth!"

I asked Major Braileanu, "When you served on courtsmartial, did you take account of a witness's character as well as his words?"

"Of course," he replied. "In a clash of evidence it is all-important."

"Then we must credit the Apostles on that ground, for they spent their time doing and preaching good."

"It's miracles like the feeding of five thousand with five fishes that stretch my belief," said the major.

"What is a miracle?" I asked. "Missionaries from Africa say they are at first received as miracle workers; the primitive tribesman is astounded to see a match struck. Pearl Buck told women in a remote part of China that in her own country carriages moved without horses. "What a liar!" they whispered. So a miracle is simply something a superior creature

can do, and Jesus was a man of exceptional powers."
"Gaston objected, "A primitive man might accept such a thing. It remains hard for a rationalist."
"It is rational to believe that Christ rose from the dead - otherwise we must accept the impossible - that the Church, which has survived the external assaults and internal corruptions of two thousand years, is built on a lie. Only consider that Jesus in his lifetime organized no church, wrote no books. He had a handful

of poor disciples and one of these betrayed him for money, while the rest fled or denied him when the test came. He died on the Cross crying, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' His tomb was closed with a huge stone."
"Not a hopeful start," said Braileanu.
"Then how do you explain that it led to a world religion?"
"The disciples came together again," said Gaston doubtfully.
"But what gave them the power to preach and to die for their faith?"
"They overcame their fear in time, I suppose."
"Yes, they say how they mastered it: on the third day Christ appeared in person and gave them courage. Peter, who had been frightened by a housemaid, stood in Jerusalem and declared that he and his brethren had seen and spoken with Christ, that He had risen indeed. Peter said they might kill him before he denied it again. So the Romans did."
"Was it rational to believe," I asked, "that Peter and the disciples went to be crucified for a liar? Peter gave his first sermon about the Resurrection five hundred yards from the empty tomb. He knew that the facts could not be contradicted, and no one among Christ's enemies attempted to do so."
"Why was Saul of Tarsus so easily converted by his vision of Christ reproaching him, on the road to Damascus? Saul was the scourge of Christianity," I said.
"It may have been an auditory and visual hallucination," said Braileanu.
"Paul knew about these things. An apparition is no argument to an expert like him. He yielded so quickly and completely because, as a member of the Sanhedrin, he knew the great secret - that the

tomb was empty!"
    Archimandrite Miron had sat sewing a patch on his trousers as we talked. He raised his intense luminous eyes to Gaston and said, "Years ago I had a postcard from my brother in New York, who had been to the top of the Empire State Building. He

didn't investigate the foundations first, Pastor Gaston. The fact that it had been there forty years is proof that the foundations are good. The same with the Church, which has rested two thousand years on the truth."
    Our arguments had an effect on Gaston. His pain was eased and his faith deepened. The wish to kill himself faded as the weeks passed; but still he seemed to carry a load of guilt.
    The summer brought a fresh influx of prisoners. We were moved into different cells, and I lost sight of him.

9

    Months went by, and I preached and worked in a dozen cells at Gherla. I was often punished, and it was because of a beating that I met Gaston again.
    We were playing chess in the cell with figures made out of pieces of bread one day when Dorabantu, who still prowled the corridors burst in. "I'll have no gambling!" he bellowed.
    I suggested that chess was a game of skill, not chance.
    The commandant expanded his chest, "Tcha! Ridiculous! Skill is also a matter of chance!"
    Pleased with this answer, he strutted away. When he had gone the prisoners burst into laughter and started to mimic his voice. The door crashed open again. Dorabantu had been eavesdropping.
    "Wurmbrand - out you come!" Others were ordered out with me.
    "You'll laugh on the other side of your faces this time," shouted the commandant.
    We received twenty-five strokes each and afterwards were moved to an isolation cell. There, alone on a bunk, lying face down, I found Gaston. He, too, had been beaten. His back was a mass of bloody

wounds. We tried to ease the pain with applications of a shirt soaked in water, and when the worst had passed, I examined the raw flesh for splinters of

wood. His body shook as if in a fever. He could not speak much at first, but slowly, in broken phrases, he explained that he had been punished for preaching. A prisoner had informed on him.

He said, "I want to tell you something..."

"You mustn't talk."

"Now or never. About Professor Popp... and the pastor who betrayed him..." He stopped, his lips trembling.

"You needn't tell me," I began.

"I couldn't stand the pressure! I've suffered. When he died..." He began to sob.

We prayed together. He said that he could never forgive himself.

"The professor didn't; how could anyone?" he asked.

"Of course they can. So would Popp if he had known everything," I said. "Let me tell you about a man who was far worse than you. It will help us to pass the night. He was the murderer of my wife's family. She forgave him, and he became one of our closest friends. There are only two men my wife kisses - her husband, and the man who murdered her family." I told Gaston the story.

When Rumania entered the war on Germany's side, a pogrom began in which many thousands of Jews were killed or deported. At Iasi alone 11,000 were massacred in a day. My wife, who shares my Protestant faith, is also of Jewish origin. We lived in Bucharest, from which the Jews were not deported, but her parents, one of her brothers, three sisters and other relatives who lived in Bucovine were taken to Transmistria, a wild border province which the Rumanians had captured from Russia. Jews who were not murdered at the end of this journey were left to starve, and there Sabina's family died.

I had to break this news. She recovered herself and said, "I will not weep. You are entitled to a happy wife, and Mihai to a happy mother, and our Church to a servant with courage." If she shed tears in private I do not know, but from that day I never saw Sabina weep again.

Some time later our landlord, a good Christian, told me sadly of a man who was staying in the house while on leave from the front. "I knew him before the war," he said, "but he's changed completely. He has become a brute who likes to boast of how he volunteered to exterminate Jews in Transmistria and killed hundreds with his own hands."

I was deeply distressed and I decided to pass the night in prayer. To avoid disturbing Sabina, who was unwell and who would have wished to join in my vigil in spite of that, I went upstairs after supper to the landlord's flat to pray with him. Lounging in an armchair was a giant of a man whom the landlord introduced as Borila, the killer of Jews from Transmistria. When he rose he was even taller than I, and there seemed to be about him an aura of horror that was like a smell of blood. Soon he was telling us of his adventures in the war and of the Jews he had slaughtered.

"It is a frightening story," I said, "but I do not fear for the Jews - God will compensate them for what they have suffered. I ask myself with anguish what will happen to the murderers when they stand before God's judgment."

An ugly scene was prevented by the landlord who said that we were both guests in his house, and turned the talk into more neutral channels. The murderer proved to be not only a murderer. Nobody is only one thing. He was a pleasant talker, and eventually it came out that he had a great love of music.

He mentioned that while serving in the Ukraine he had been captivated by the songs there. "I wish I could hear them again," he said.

I knew some of these old songs. I thought to myself, looking at Borila, "The fish has entered my net!"

"If you'd like to hear some of them," I told him, "come to my flat - I'm no pianist, but I can play a few Ukrainian melodies."

The landlord, his wife and daughter accompanied us. My wife was in bed. She was used to my playing softly at night and did not wake up. I

played the folk-songs, which are alive with feeling,

and I could see that Borila was deeply moved. I remembered how, when King Saul was afflicted by an evil spirit, the boy David had played the harp before him.

I stopped and turned to Borila. "I've something very important to say to you," I told him.

"Please speak," he said.

"If you look through that curtain you can see someone is asleep in the next room. It's my wife, Sabina. Her parents, her sisters and her twelve-year-old brother have been killed with the rest of the family. You told me that you had killed hundreds of Jews near Golta, and that is where they were taken." Looking into his eyes, I added, "You yourself don't know who you have shot, so we can assume that you are the murderer of her family."

He jumped up, his eyes blazing, looking as if he were about to strangle me.

I held up my hand and said, "Now - let's try an experiment. I shall wake my wife and tell her who you are, and what you have done. I can tell you what will happen. My wife will not speak one word of reproach! She'll embrace you as if you were her brother. She'll bring you supper, the best things she has in the house.

"Now, if Sabina, who is a sinner like us all, can forgive and love like this, imagine how Jesus, who is perfect Love, can forgive and love you! Only return to Him - and everything you have done will be forgiven!"

Borila was not heartless within, he was consumed by guilt and misery at what he had done, and he had shaken his brutal talk at us as a crab its claws. One tap at his weak spot, and his defenses crumbled. The music had already moved his heart, and now came - instead of the attack he expected - words of forgiveness. His reaction was amazing. He jumped up and tore at his collar with both hands, so that his shirt was rent apart. "Oh God, what shall I do, what shall I do?" he cried. He put his head in his

hands and sobbed noisily as he rocked himself back and forth. "I'm a murderer, I'm soaked in blood, what shall I do?" Tears ran down his cheeks.

I cried, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command the devil of hatred to go out of your

soul!"

Borila fell on his knees trembling, and we began to pray aloud. He knew no prayers; he simply asked again and again for forgiveness and said that he hoped and knew it would be granted. We were on our knees together for some time; then we stood up and embraced each other, and I said, "I promised to make an experiment. I shall keep my word."

I went into the other room and found my wife still sleeping calmly. She was very weak and exhausted at that time. I woke her gently and said, "There is a man here whom you must meet. We believe he has murdered your family, but he has repented, and now he is our brother."

She came out in her dressing-gown and put out her arms to embrace him: then both began to weep and to kiss each other again and again. I have never seen bride and bridegroom kiss with such love and passion and purity as this murderer and the survivor among his victims. Then, as I foretold, Sabina went to the kitchen to bring him food.

While she was away the thought came to me that Borila's crime had been so terrible that some further lesson was needed. I went to the next room and returned with my son, Mihai, who was then two, asleep in my arms. It was only a few hours since Borila had boasted to us how he had killed Jewish children in their parents' arms, and now he was horrified; the sight was an unbearable reproach. He expected me to accuse him. But I said, "Do you see how quietly he sleeps? You are also like a newborn child who can rest in the Father's arms. The blood that Jesus shed has cleansed you."

Borila's happiness was very moving: he stayed with us that night, and when he awoke the next day, he said, "It's a long time since I slept like that."

St. Augustine says, "Anima humana naturaliter

Christiana est" - the human soul is naturally Christian. Crime is against one's own nature, the result of social pressure or many other causes, and what a relief it is to cast it off as he had done!

That morning Borila wanted to meet our Jewish friends and I took him to many Hebrew Christian homes. Everywhere he told his story, and he was received as the returning prodigal son. Then, with a

New Testament which I gave him, he went to join his regiment in another town.

Borila later came to say that his unit has been ordered to the front. "What shall I do?" he asked. "I'll have to start killing again."

I said, "No, you've killed more than a soldier needs to already. I don't mean that a Christian shouldn't defend his country if it is attacked. But you, personally, shouldn't kill any more - better allow others to kill you. The Bible doesn't forbid that!"

10

As I told the story. Gaston grew quieter. At the end, he smiled and reached out to clasp my hand; and so he fell into an untroubled sleep.

In the morning we were moved back together into another cell. Among the prisoners, I found Grigore, who was also a war criminal responsible for massacring Jews. He knew Borila.

I told Gaston, "There's an epilogue to the story of the man who killed my wife's family. This man can tell you it."

Grigore explained how he had served with Borila in Transmistria, where they had massacred the Jews. "When we went to Russia again, he was a changed man," he said. "We couldn't understand it. He put aside his weapons and instead of taking lives, he saved them. He volunteered to rescue the wounded under fire, and in the end he saved his officer."

11

The months turned into years: two had gone by, and except that the faces came and went, all else remained the same. Prison made of some men saints, and of others brutes, and it was difficult to tell who would be saint, and who brute; but one thing was sure - that the majority of prisoners would go on living, as it were, in a vacuum. They sprawled on their bunks, hour after hour with nothing to do. Talk became the whole life. I wondered what would happen if science should ever make work unnecessary. There is a limit to innovation in sex, films, and other drugs; and so many have nothing else in their minds.

As my third year in Gherla progressed, things eased a little. We gained a little more freedom of speech, a few mouthfuls more of food. Conditions outside were changing again, we gathered. We did not know in what way, nor that the greatest trial still lay ahead.

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PART EIGHT

On a morning of March, 1962, the guards burst into the cells shouting "All priests outside!" The others gathered their few belongings and filed dutifully into the corridors. I did not stir.

We had a new commandant, a martinet called Alexandrescu. This move, whatever its purpose, meant more trouble, and I wanted to work and preach without fresh hindrance. It turned out that the whole jail was being divided into class groups: "intellectuals" in one cell, peasants in another, military men in a third, and so on. Overcrowding and the stupidity of the guards led to muddles. A member of a sect called "Students of the Bible" was placed in a cell of writers and teachers; he was an ignorant laborer, but to the officials, all "students" were intellectuals.

When the clergy had departed, a guard asked me what I was. "A pastor," I replied in a country accent. So I was placed in a cell with shepherds and farm hands. "Pastor" is the usual word for a shepherd in Rumanian.

I escaped segregation for a few weeks. Then an informer betrayed me, and I was taken, after a beating, to the cell in which priests had been gathered. It was to be my home for the rest of my stay in Gherla - cavernous, with walls of gray, dirty cement. The only light was from two narrow windows. Bunks were closely packed in tiers four-high. There were some low benches, and a table. The prisoners

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- mostly clergy, but with other Christian believers - numbered about 100. There was always a queue waiting to use the lavatory bucket.

As I entered, a deep voice cried, "Welcome, welcome!" It was old Bishop Mirza, an exemplar of the Orthodox faith and a man of great goodness. His

rusty black pullover was full of holes. He had sad gentle eyes and an aureole of white hair.

Heads were raised and I greeted men I knew - including Archimandrite Miron, who had a bunk above the bishop and Gaston.

That evening, in the hour which the priest's room had set aside for prayer, Catholics collected in one corner, the Orthodox occupied another, the Unitarians a third. The Jehovah's Witnesses had a nest on the upper bunks; the Calvinists assembled down below. Twice a day, our various services were held: but among all these ardent worshippers I could scarcely find two men of different sects to say one "Our Father" together.

Far from fostering understanding, our common plight made for conflict. Catholics could not forgive the Orthodox hierarchy for collaborating with Communism. Minorities disagreed about "rights." Disputes arose over every point of doctrine. And while discussion was normally conducted with genteel malice, as learned in seminaries on wet Sunday afternoons, sometimes tempers flared

When mass was celebrated a few feet from his bunk day after day, the evangelical pastor Haupt evoked some words of Martin Luther.

"What's that?" one of the Catholics demanded.

Haupt raised his voice obligingly: "I repeated the words of Luther. 'All the brothels which God condemns, all murders, thefts, adulteries do not make so much harm as the abomination of the Papal mass.'"

After the service had broken up, One of the Catholics, Father Fazekas, said: "Dear brother, have you not heard the saying, 'Mankind has suffered three great catastrophes - the fall of Lucifer, and of Adam, and the revolt of Martin Luther'?"

Father Andricu, an Orthodox priest, joined in the counter-attack: "Luther and Lucifer," he put in, "are one and the same!" So Catholic and Orthodox followers became temporary allies. But before nightfall, they were squabbling over the supremacy of Rome.

Fazekas was of Hungarian origin, and this was held against him even by his fellow-Catholics. When he prayed aloud to the Virgin Mary as "patron of Hungary," general displeasure was shown.

"Isn't the Blessed Virgin Rumania's patron too?"

asked a patriotic Orthodox priest.

"Certainly not, she is Hungary's patron."

Gaston ironically wondered if the Virgin was not patron of Palestine, since it seemed treacherous to leave the country of her birth to become patron of another.

"Perhaps you haven't heard that the Jews murdered her son?" said Fazekas.

Bishop Mirza, smiling gently, tried to calm everyone down. "The Virgin is not bound to any one country," he said. "She leads the Church, she is Queen of Heaven, she moved the planets and heads the choirs of angels!"

I said that didn't leave God much to do.

Other Protestants supported me but in a manner which I disliked. "Why should I venerate Jesus's mother like this?" said one. "She cannot save."

Fazekas replied, "Poor man! Do you venerate only those who will save you? The mother of the Lord sings in the Magnificat, 'All generations will call me blessed.' They do so because she was Jesus's mother, not because she distributes favors."

It was a good answer, yet, much as I honor the Virgin Mary, I believe her role has been exaggerated by her following, and that this distortion began in ancient times. When Christians first thought about Heaven, they had visions of an Oriental court: a place of luxury, music and sweet scents. A man requiring a favor from the sultan found a friend, who said a word to a vizier, who might pass it on to the sultan's favorite wife, and she to her husband. It created the

idea of a spiritual hierarchy, in which simple men put their requests to priests, priests to the saints, the saints to the Virgin.

The bedrock of my faith is that a man may speak directly to God, but there are times when argument only encourages anger. I told the others of the two martyrs of different confessions who were sent together to the stake. They were asked if they had a last wish before the fire was lit. Both said, "Yes! Tie us back to back so that I didn't have to see that damned heretic as I die."

Sometimes I too could not hide my feelings. For hours I listened to Father Ranghet, a Dominican in the bunk below, telling his beads.

At last I said, "Why do you have to appeal a thousand times a day to the Virgin? Is she deaf, or indifferent or reluctant to hear? When I ask someone here for a favor he grants it if he can - but I do not keep on asking, if he doesn't."

Ranghet was cross. "Since you Lutherans have no belief in the infallibility of the Holy Father, you have still less cause to believe in your own," he said. "What's wrong in your impaired sight is right in mine." And he went back to repeating "Hail Mary..." rather louder than before.

"You speak often of the 'Holy Father' - do you mean God?" I asked.

"I mean His Holiness the Pope!" he answered.

"To me it seems blasphemy to use divine titles for a human being," I replied. "You call him Christ's Vicar on earth, which means his substitute - but I cannot accept such a substitute, any more than I could allow my wife to have a substitute for me."

"You go too far!" he cried.

And I had thought it was he who went too far. Only that day Father Ranghet had said that all the sacrifices, of life, of liberty, offered by all men, were as nothing compared with the offering he made at the altar when he sacrificed the son of God. I could not accept that a priest made God from a piece of bread, or that there was any need for such a thing. I could not believe that my eternal destiny depended

on absolution from a man who might not be too sure of Heaven himself.

I looked for topics on which we could agree. When Pastor Weingartner, a modernist Protestant, took issue with Catholics on the Virgin Birth, I felt bound to take their side.

Weingartner said he could not accept such a scientific improbability.

I replied, "It is too late to make an historical inquiry into the Virgin Birth, but it is also too early to dismiss it as scientifically impossible. An American biologist called Loeb has already produced a birth without male seed in infra-organisms. What a biologist can do for a small being surely God can do for man?"

"But the history of religion is crowded with virgin births," said Weingartner. "It can only be a myth."

I answered by telling the story of a famous rabbi

who lived in the Ukraine in Czarist times, and was once called upon to give evidence in defense of a follower. The noble looks and spirituality of Rabbi Hofez Haim impressed the court, but the old man refused to take the oath; he was unwilling, he said, to involve God's name in his evidence. The prosecution protested, "We must have a guarantee that he is telling the truth."

The defense lawyer rose. "Your honor," he said, "may I mention something which will prove the character of my witness and show that we can accept his evidence, even if, for religious reasons, he cannot be put on oath? Rabbi Hofez Haim often goes from shop to shop collecting money for the poor. One day a thief knocked him down and snatched the purse containing the collection. The rabbi was upset - not so much at the loss of the money, which he instantly decided to replace from his own small savings at home - but at the harm done to the thief's soul. He ran after him calling, 'You have no guilt before God, it is my money and I give it to you freely! The money for the poor is safe at my house! Spend what you have taken with a clear conscience!'"

The judge gazed sternly at the lawyer. "Do you believe this story?" he asked.

"No, I don't."

"Then why tell us stories you don't believe?"

"Your honor, has such a story ever been told of you, or me or my friend, the prosecutor? They say instead - of course it's quite untrue - that we are too fond of women, or drink, or gambling. What a saint this man must be to have such legends woven around his name!"

Weingartner said, "Very amusing - but I don't know if the story about the rabbi was true, and I cannot believe the story of the Virgin Birth either."

"Christians believe the word of God," I said. "But if it were a myth, as you call it, don't scoff. Myths have a profound place in human thought. They are often the measure of a man's greatness."

"You mean that people must have thought Jesus very great to believe that he was not born like other men?" he said.

"My own son, when he was very young, asked me how Jesus was born," I said. "So I told him again

the story of the manger. 'No,' he objected, 'that's not what I want to know. Sometimes people say, "What's born of a cat eats mice," and if Jesus had been born like us, he would have been bad like us.'"

Bishop Mirza had been listening to us. "A child spoke like that!" he said.

"You have a point," admitted Pastor Weingartner. "We must try harder to understand each other's views."

I said, "I confess that I would have accepted Christianity in another form than Lutherism, if it had been so presented to me at the time of my conversion. What matters is respect for the Scriptures as the only rule, and salvation by faith in Jesus. The names and forms don't count."

Next morning a pleasing thing happened. Bishop Mirza came to me and said, "I thought in the night of the Lord's Prayer which tells us to say, 'Our Father which are in heaven... forgive our trespasses.' Jesus did not tell us to confess to a priest, or receive absolution from him - he told us to pray for it to the Father. Of course the question is not a simple one, but if

I were a Protestant, I should use this argument. So I thought that in friendship I would make you a present of it in exchange for your defense of the Virgin Mary."

The bishop had set us an example. If we failed to live in peace together, we fell into the trap which the Communists had laid: by locking us up together, they deprived the other prisoners of spiritual guidance while we vitiated our cause with quarrels. But what else did they have in mind?

Electricians had been working in the prison for some time, and in many cells loudspeakers had been fitted, one to each wall. So we were to have broadcasts.

Gaston said, "It won't be light music."

2

When the entire prison had been divided into classes, a series of lectures began. They seemed absurd. A brash young political officer would explain that an eclipse of the sun was about to occur, but there was no cause for alarm - socialist science had

freed us from superstition. He proceeded to explain the workings of a solar eclipse to a yawning audience of dons and doctors. The event was to take place on February 15, and since it was the duty of the People's Republic to broaden our views, we could watch from the courtyard.

Weingartner's hand went up. "Please, if it rains can we have the eclipse in the hall instead?"

"No," said the lecturer seriously, and began his explanation again from the start.

The indoctrination lectures lasted for hours. The same points were driven home over and over again. At the end of the day, exhausted and ill-tempered, we were left to our own disputes.

These were often started by Father Andricu, to whom Luther and Lucifer were as one. His extremism swung him between a crusade against the Russians during the war to championship of Communist ideas

after it was over. He had traveled the country preaching in favor of the Party until his former comrades decided that "the Red Priest" had outlived his usefulness, so he was arrested, beaten and sentenced to ten years for his wartime activities. Now he was an all-too-vociferous champion of the Orthodox faith. "It's the only true religion!" he would trumpet. "The rest are frauds and mockeries!"

Once I asked: "When you were baptized, Father Andricu, was it in the Orthodox Church?"

"Of course! By a bishop!" he answered.

"And you studied religious doctrine at an Orthodox school?"

"The finest in Rumania!"

"Then you won't be upset if I give you the one honest, logical reason why you're an Orthodox believer? It is that fifty years ago a Rumanian Orthodox man copulated with a Rumanian Orthodox woman."

Andricu was furious; but I said that this principle was true for most of us. We are put in a mold from earliest youth and taught only the arguments which favor our parents' religion. Yet we are convinced that we have thought it all out for ourselves.

I went on, "Once I overheard the inmates of a stable discussing their beliefs. The lambs said the only true religion was to say, 'Baa, baa!' Calves said the correct ritual was to say 'Moo!' Pigs asserted that the

right song of praise was 'Honk! honk!'"

"Don't put us on a level with the animals," Andricu protested. "I may be a simple priest, but I have studied other faiths besides my own."

I said that we had all done that, but from a viewpoint which is ours through the accident of birth. Turning to a group of Protestants, I asked at random, "How many of you know the ninety-five theses which Luther nailed on the church door at Wittenburg?"

They all did. Pastor Haupt quoted Luther's words, "Here I stand; I can do no other!"

I asked if the Protestants could also repeat from the Papal Bull the reasons for Luther's excommunication. "Leo X was no madman," I said, "we ought to

know his reasons." But not one of them had read that great historical letter.

Father Andricu was by now arguing with a rabbi who turned on him to say, "Are you by any chance acquainted with our Talmud?"

Andricu retorted: "Have ~you~ looked into our New Testament?"

The answer in each case was clearly "No."

To avert another clash, I asked the company, "Do you know Tolstoy's story of how he once explained his faith point by point to a rabbi: meekness, humility, patience... 'We don t need the New Testament for these virtues; we too honor them,' said the rabbi. Finally Tolstoy said, 'Jesus has taught us one thing which Jewish religion does not. He tells us to love our enemies.' 'This we do not practice,' the rabbi admitted, 'But neither do you Christians.'"

3

As the prison lectures continued, I saw that although they were in themselves ridiculous, there lay behind them a clever plan. The speakers turned from politics to appeals directed at the pleasure-seeking, irresponsible side in all of us which Freudians called the Id. They told us how much we were missing in the world. They talked of food, drink, sex - subjects with which they were more at home than Marxist dialectic, although that was not forgotten. One talk took us again among Darwin's apes. A young political officer worked his way through a brief on the theory

of evolution, and with mangled quotations from Marx, Lenin and Darwin progressed by way of conflict between Christianity and science to its sad consequences in America where millions were starving.

At first, we were encouraged to argue, and when a lecturer said that "only a handful of chemicals" remained of the body after death. I asked why, if that were so, some Communists had given their lives for their beliefs: "For a Christian to sacrifice himself,"

I said, "may be considered wise. To give up the transitory things of life to win eternity is like laying down ten dollars to win a million. But why should a Communist give his life - unless he too has something to gain for himself?"

The political officer could find no reply. So I suggested that the answer had been given by St. Augustine when he said that "the soul is naturally Christian."

"Atheism is a mask for your feelings. In the depths of your heart - which is never reached unless a man practices meditation or prayer - you, too, believe there is a reward for living up to ideals. Deep in your heart, you also believe in God."

"Let us see what Lenin has to say about that!" said the lecturer, and from a well-thumbed booklet, which had often given him inspiration before, he read, "'Even flirting with the idea of God is unutterable vileness, contagion of the most abominable kind. Filthy deeds, acts of violence and physical contagions are far less dangerous.'" He grinned. "Any more questions?"

"Have you a child?" I asked.

"I have a daughter in the Young Pioneers."

"And would you prefer that she should be stricken with a horrible disease rather than come to believe in her Creator? That is what Lenin says - that cancer is better than religion."

The political officer called me up and slapped my face.

Under this onslaught of indoctrination, a blow seemed a modest price to pay for upholding one's beliefs. Clearly, there was more to come. We had a sense of being constantly spied on. We puzzled over the silent loudspeakers.

Until recently we had been starved, beaten,

abused, but no one had cared what we thought. "Invent all the new Cabinets you like in your cells, you bandits - we have the Government in Bucharest!" Commandant Dorabantu used to say. But he had gone - removed for falsifying the accounts.

The lectures showed how this attitude had

changed, following the new policy of Gheorghiu-Dej, Rumania's dictator, who was trying to ease the Kremlin's grip and do business with the West. For this Dej had to show a more "democratic" facade. The army of political prisoners held in Rumania was an embarrassment to him, yet we could not simply be set free to spread "counter-revolutionary beliefs." Our ways of thought were to be altered, by mass brainwashing.

To prisoners in Gherla in 1962, this was one theory among many, and few believed it. There was uncertainty about what actually happened in brainwashing. Feelings were summed up by Radu Ghinda, a well-known author and Christian writer, who had recently joined us: "If they haven't changed me in fifteen years, how will they do so now?"

We were talking this over when the cell door opened to admit more new arrivals. Among them was a large hang-dog figure who took a few halting steps from side to side, as if to escape the stares of prisoners.

Radu Ghinda was the first to recognize him. "Daianu!" he cried.

The man shuffled over to embrace his friend. Nichifor Daianu had been a great figure in Rumania. Poet, Professor of Mystical Theology, leader of the anti-Semitic "National Christian Defence League," he had come to Gherla from Aiud jail to continue his twenty-five-year sentence.

At first I hardly recognized the man. His great belly had gone. The skin hung in folds at his chin like a turkey's. The ~bon viveur~ and lady-killer, whose face had once been slapped in a Bucharest restaurant, had become a trembling, spidery old man.

Fellow-prisoners from Aiud told us what had happened there. Daianu, who was used to plenty of food, had tried to get a second helping of barley gruel from the cooks. The prison governor had him turned away. On the following day the governor was there again. "Stop!" he said. "That man is too fat. Let him wait

until tomorrow." Next day, as Daianu's turn came, the governor said, "Tell me, Daianu, is there a God?" The cook held the ladle suspended, Daianu mumbled

something. "Speak up, let us all hear!" Daianu said, "There is no God." "Louder," said the governor. "There is no God!" shouted Daianu. The governor nodded for him to be served. Daianu stuffed the gruel into his mouth. This spectacle so pleased the governor that he had it repeated every day for the next week. The story was told all over Rumania, and later abroad as well.

But Daianu's gift for writing religious poetry remained. Friends from his Fascist days encouraged him to recite some of the verses he had composed at Aiud. They were songs of grief and repentance, more beautiful than any he had yet written. He had retained, too, his anti-Semitism, like his friend Radu Ghinda. Their following among ex-Iron Guard prisoners smuggled scraps of food and even cigarettes to them in the priests' room. Anti-Semitism dies hard, and Daianu and Ghinda were martyrs to the cause.

When theories about brainwashing were being discussed one evening, Ghinda scoffed. "Rubbish! Pavlov played tricks with the behavior-patterns of dogs, and the Communists in Korea adapted some of his ideas to make American prisoners change sides - but these methods won't work on people of education and intelligence. We're not G.I.s!"

"Nor dogs," said Daianu.

No one disagreed.

4

Pastor Weingartner told us of a simple personality test he had learned while studying psychology: you drew a line down the center of a card, then asked people to make of it the first thing that came into their heads. We used a soaped board and a nail.

One man drew a sword, another a helmet, others a flower, a crucifix, a book, a geometric figure. I said, "I need another board - this is too small for what I have to draw."

Not one in ten of us showed in our drawings the

touch of mysticism which is at the heart of a priestly nature.

Weingartner laughed. "No wonder they wouldn't let me try it at the seminary! Perhaps we should all learn to make shoes - for it's the shoemaker among us who seems to have a truly spiritual character."

He referred to Gelu, a sectarian believer who had a great knowledge of the Bible. This seemed to irritate Daianu.

"My dear man," he said, "if you want to tell us about shoes and how to mend them, well and good. But you are among men here who possess theological degrees from the great universities of Europe and need no Bible classes."

"You're right, professor," replied Gelu. "It's I who need instruction. Could you tell me what the Old Testament book of Habakkuk is about?"

"A very minor prophet," said Daianu. "Don't worry your head about him."

"Well, then, the Book of Obadiah?"

Obadiah was another prophet whom shoemakers did not need to know.

"Perhaps you can tell me about Haggai?"

Daianu could not. There was not a theologian in the room who could muster three sentences on the subject. Gelu astonished us by quoting whole chapters from these prophets by heart.

The clergy studied books about the Bible rather than the Holy Scriptures themselves. Another reproach that could rightly be made against them was that they were grounded in dogma and dialectic, but knew next to nothing of the Communist ideology that was working to destroy them.

During 1963 we had news of Pope John's appeal for a reconciliation between the "separated brethren," and soon we were quarreling over how unity might be achieved.

"We fight over the Kingdom of Heaven, which none of us has," I said. "If we possessed it, we should not dispute. Those who truly love Christ must love one another. Like so many blind men whom Jesus

has healed, we discuss how our sight was restored. One says, 'It was done by the power of faith.' Another, 'He touched my eyes.' A third, 'He rubbed clay

mixed with spittle on my eyelids.' If Jesus came among us, He would say, 'I have made you whole in different ways. Now you should not quarrel, but rejoice!'"

Goethe says that "color is the pain of light": passing through a prism, light is torn to pieces. I saw our division in the search for truth as a pain borne by Christ.

5

The loudspeaker on the wall at last crackled into life. "One-two three-four-testing," said a voice repeatedly. Then came the words: "Communism is good. Communism is good. Communism is good." A pause. More crackling. The voice returned with increased volume, resonance and authority:

Communism is good
Communism is good
Communism is good
Communism is goad

It continued all night and into the next day. Soon we were only intermittently conscious of the tape-recorded words, but still they penetrated our minds, and when finally the voice stopped, switched off at a control center somewhere in the prison, the words rang in my head: "Communism is good. Communism is good. Communism is good."

Weingartner said this was the first stage in a long process. "Our rulers have learned it from the Russians and the Russians from Peking. Next it will be public confession. Under Mao-Tse-Tung, the Chinese must attend lectures in their factories, offices and streets. Then they are made to denounce themselves, to say how they plotted against the proletariat, five,

ten or twenty years ago. If you don't confess you're imprisoned as a stubborn counter-revolutionary: if you do confess, you go to jail for what you have said. So people try to confess and yet not to confess, to admit to treacherous thoughts, while denying they have acted on them. One man denounces another. All trust between friends and in families is destroyed. The same procedure has begun with us!"

Father Fazekas said, "Satan always apes God.

It is a mockery of Christian confession."

"How long will it last?" asked Gaston.

"Until you believe that 'Communism is good,' perhaps for years," said Weingartner.

Our next lecturer was plump and jolly. He told us of the wonderful, new Rumania which was developing under Gheorghiu-Dej's Sixteen-Year Plan, and of the paradise which those whom the Party considered worthy were already enjoying. He described the privileges granted to loyal workers, the good food, the flowing wine, the glorious holidays at Black Sea resorts with girls in bikinis everywhere.

"But I forget!" he laughed. "Most of you fellows have never seen a bikini. You don't even know what it is, poor chaps! Let me explain. The best things in life are not left to the decadent West!"

His eyes gleamed and his voice became thick as he began a gloating description of breast and belly and thigh, and mixed the pleasures of wine and travel into his gross talk. I have never seen on human faces such hungry lust as I saw then on most of those around me in the big hall. They were ugly and frightening in their suggestion of animals in heat. Their human decency was stripped away by the man's unbridled talk, and only sensual greed remained.

So much pleasure waited for us outside, the lecturer said. "There's the door. ~You~ can open it, if you choose. Throw off the reactionary garbage of ideas which have made criminals of you! Come to our side! Learn to be free!"

Little was said after these talks. No one thought

now of the wives and hard work that awaited them outside. The raw desire which is part of our will to live had been skilfully revived.

Protestants and Orthodox priests who had been married suffered surely much more from this appeal to the sex instinct than the Catholic priests who had led a life of celibacy from their very youth.

We had been kept for months past on low rations, and weighed regularly to ensure that we remained forty pounds below normal. Now the food improved, but it had a strange flavor. I suspected the presence of aphrodisiacs, and imprisoned doctors later agreed with me that sexually-stimulating drugs had

been added to our meals. Many of the staff left and now the doctors, the clerks who came to read out an announcement or a court verdict were nearly always girls. They wore tight, teasing dresses and used scent and make-up. They seemed to linger deliberately in the cells.

"You've only one life," the lecturer said each day. "It passes quickly. How much time have you left? Throw in your lot with us. We want to help you to make the most of it!"

This appeal to the ego, the self-enhancing, self-protective side of one's nature, came when primitive emotions were well in ferment. Finally, as the veneer cracked, came the appeal to the super-ego, our conscience, social values and ethical standards. The lecturers said our patriotism had been false, our ideals a fraud, and in their place they tried to plant the Communist ideology.

"Struggle meetings" was the name given to these mass-suggestion sessions, and the struggle never stopped. "What are your wives doing now?" asked the jolly lecturer. "What you'd like to be doing yourselves!" We were exhausted, and hysteria was close. The tape-recorders ground out the message that Communism was good during every hour when lectures were not in progress. Prisoners quarreled among themselves.

Daianu the poet was the first to break. At the end of a lecture, he jumped to his feet and began

to babble about his crimes against the State. "I see it now, I see it all! I have thrown away my life for a false cause!" He blamed his land-owning parents for putting him on the wrong road. No one had asked him to attack religion, but he repudiated his faith, the saints and sacraments. He ranted against "superstition" and blasphemed against God. On and on he went.

Then Radu Ghinda stood up and continued in the same vein. "I have been a fool," he shouted. "I have been misled by capitalist and Christian lies.... Never again will I set foot in a church except to spit in it."

Daianu and Ghinda called on the prisoners to give up their old beliefs with greater enthusiasm than the lecturers themselves. Both were gifted speakers,

and many who heard their eloquent praises of the joy and liberty that Communism brings were deeply shaken, convinced that they spoke from genuine faith.

When Ghinda sat down, a gaunt, trembling old man shouted, "You all know me - Ceneral Silvianu of the Royal Army. I disown my rank and loyalty. I am ashamed at the role I played in making criminal war on our ally, Russia. I served the exploiting classes. I disgraced my country..."

The general was followed by an ex-police chief, who "confessed" that Communism would have come to power sooner had the police not hindered it; as if every man there did not know that Communism had been imposed by the Russians.

One after another, men stood and parroted their confessions. This was the first fruit of months of planned starvation, degradation, ill-treatment and exposure to mass suggestion. The first to give way were those, like Daianu and Ghinda, whose lives were already eaten by private guilt. Daianu had preached asceticism but practiced gluttony and pursued women. He told students to give up the world for God, and himself became a propagandist for Hitler. He said, "Love Jesus"; and he hated the Jews. He thought he was a believer, but what a man believes is shown in his daily life: his poems, fine as

they were, expressed aspirations, not fulfillment. Ghinda, too, was torn ideologically by anti-Semitism on the one hand, and his faith on the other. And both men were growing old: they had served more than fifteen years in prison, and faced many more.

Others in the priests' room did not yield so quickly, and for them further suffering lay in store. Our quarrels, at least, came to a halt. We learned that all our denominations could be reduced to two: the first is hatred, which makes ritual and dogma a pretext for attacking others; the second is love, in which men of all kinds realize their oneness and brotherhood before God. At times it had seemed that a mission to priests would be more valuable than any other. More often now it was as if the cell were ablaze with the spirit of self-sacrifice and renewed faith. In such moments the angels seemed all around us.

For the Communion service, bread was needed and many were ready to sacrifice their ration. But

the Orthodox ritual requires that the bread be consecrated over an altar containing a relic from the body of a martyr. There was no relic.

"We have living martyrs with us," said Father Andricu. They consecrated the bread and a little wine in a chipped cup, which had been smuggled from the hospital over the body of Bishop Mirza as he lay ill in bed.

6

Soon the prisoners who had been "converted" were asked to lecture in turn to the others, and they did so with passion, believing that their release depended on their efforts. Then word went around of a terrible sequel to the defection of Daianu and Ghinda. Two members of the Iron Guard stole a chisel from the carpenters' shop, opened their veins and bled to death as protest.

I found Daianu and Ghinda in a corner of the cell. "What do you think of yourselves now that your

betrayal has cost the lives of two men who believed in you?" I asked.

Ghinda said, "They died so that the people may live!"

"A week ago you were counted among the enemies of the people yourselves," I said.

Daianu burst out: "I mean to get out of here, whoever suffers!"

Feeling against them became so strong that they were taken to another cell. Miron said, "Strange that men who wrote with what seemed deep Christian faith should turn traitor so easily!"

Perhaps the answer was that in their writings Daianu and Ghinda praised Christ for the gifts. He gives us - peace, love, salvation. A real disciple does not seek gifts, but Christ himself, and so is ready for self-sacrifice to the end. They were not followers of Jesus, but customers; when the Communists opened a shop next door with goods at lower prices, they took their custom there.

7

I had become very ill again. During 1963 I was

moved to the prison hospital. I had been there one week, when every man was ordered up. Some could hardly walk, but we helped each other out into a big yard where the whole prison had been assembled. We stood while an hour-long play was acted by chosen prisoners. The play mocked Christianity and when the officers around the commandant clapped or laughed, the audience did the same.

When it was over, Alexandrescu raised his harsh voice to ask for positive or negative comments. It was not enough to show approval, reasons must be given. Daianu led the way. Ghinda followed. One after another men went up to repeat slogans against religion. As they rejoined the ranks, some embraced me tearfully, and said, "We ~must~ say these things until it is over!"

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When the commandant called me out, I remembered what my wife had said to me many years before, at the Congress of Cults: "Go and wash this shame from the face of Christ!"

I was well-known at Gherla; I had been in so many cells.

Hundreds of eyes were on me, and they all seemed to ask one question: "Will he praise Communism too?"

Major Alexandrescu called, "Go on! Speak!" He did not fear opposition. When the stubborn ones broke - and it was only a matter of time, they thought - it showed the Party's power.

I began cautiously, "It is Sunday morning, and our wives and mothers and children are praying for us, in church or at home. We should have liked to pray for them, too.... Instead we have watched this play."

As I spoke of their families, tears came into the eyes of prisoners. I went on, "Many here have spoken against Jesus, but what is it that you have against Him? You speak of the proletariat, but wasn't Jesus a carpenter? You say that he who doesn't work shall not eat, but this was said long ago, in St. Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians. You speak against the wealthy, but Jesus drove the moneylenders from the temple with whips. You want Communism, but don't forget that the first Christians lived in a community, sharing all they had. You wish to raise up the poor, but the

Magnificat, the Virgin Mary's song at Jesus's birth, says that God will exalt the poor above the rich. All that is good in Communism comes from the Christians!

"Now Marx has said that all proletarians must unite," I continued. "But some are Communists and some are Socialists and others Christians, and if we mock each other, we cannot unite. I would never mock an atheist. Even from the Marxist point of view this is wrong, for if you mock you split the proletariat."

I quoted what Marx says in his introduction to ~Das Kapital~, that Christianity is the ideal religion for

remaking a life destroyed by sin. I asked if there was anybody, even a Communist, who was without sin - for if he had not sinned against God, he had against the Party. I gave them many quotations from their own authors. Major Alexandrescu shifted in his chair, and kicked the ground with his toe, but did not interrupt.

The prisoners, too, were quiet, and seeing they were moved I forgot where I was and began to preach openly about Christ, and what He had done for us, and what He meant to us. I said that just as no one had heard of a school without examinations, or a factory where work was not scrutinized to see that it was good, so all of us would be judged, by ourselves, by our fellows, by God. I looked at the commandant and said, "You will be judged, too, Major Alexandrescu."

He let it pass again, and I told how Jesus teaches love and gives eternal life. At the end prisoners burst suddenly into cheers.

When I returned to my place Miron said, "You have undone all their work," but I knew this was untrue. Gaston whispered, "Did you hear the cheers?" I answered, "They were cheering what they had found in their own hearts, not me."

Until now only a noisy minority of priests had fallen under the influence of brainwashing. We who opposed it openly were also few, but our sympathizers were many, even if they lacked the courage or the wit to fight back.

It was not easy. As a result of this speech I lost my sanctuary in the prison hospital and was sent back to

the priests' room.

The political officers told us that Daianu and Radu Ghinda, in their private cells, had volunteered to write about the wonders of the People's Republic, which neither of them had set eyes on for some fifteen years. They were given pen and paper and all the Party literature and tourist propaganda they might need. The two men made full use of this chance to prove their new convictions, for some weeks later they were freed. It was a powerful blow against our

resistance. They were the first to be released under the new system, and we could not know that they were also to be the last.

Lieutenant Konya, the political officer, brought a newspaper into the priests' room and called to Father Andricu.

"Read this out," he said, "so that everyone can hear."

Andricu read the headline: "A COUNTRY THAT LAUGHS AND HEARTS THAT SING. It was an article by Radu Ghinda, with a smiling photograph taken before his arrest.

Lieutenant Konya said, "We want you to know that every one of you has the same chance of freedom and work, just as soon as you give up your nonsensical, out-of-date beliefs and join the people of the new Rumania!"

Hearts that sing! Everyone remembered Ghinda as a bag of bones. We knew that his family was in distress and his child had been refused education.

Daianu also lent his name to glorifications of freedom in Socialist Rumania, but, like the French medical students who blotted their copy-books and were marked down as ~bon pour l'Orient~ - "good for the East" - the output of Daianu and Ghinda was good only for the West. There they could trade on the ignorance of those who did not know the country. The articles they wrote appeared in special newspapers and magazines sent to thousands of Rumanians abroad, but nobody oould get them in Rumania itself.

Everyone was excited - at the two men's release. Many who had suffered cruelty and humiliation for years, without giving way, now began to waver. But those who did yield, instead of being freed, had to prove their conversion by volunteering to work

fourteen or sixteen hours a day. On returning to their cells they had to attend more lectures, or give them. They had to keep a "temperature chart of political health" - which meant that everyone had to write about his neighbors' attitude to Communism, whether it was lukewarm, or cold or even hostile.

The authorities cannot have received good

reports about me. Lieutenant Konya came to bring me two pieces of news. First, he said that my wife was in prison, and had been for some time. Second, that I was to be flogged at 10 P.M. that evening for my repeated defiance and insolence, culminating in my speech at the "play."

The news about Sabina was a terrible shock, and my pain at the thought of it added to my fear of the beating to come. We all dreaded this period of waiting. Time dragged, and then passed all too quickly when I heard footsteps coming down the passage. The tramping boots went by. Someone was taken from the next cell. Presently I heard blows falling and screams from the room at the end of the corridor. Nobody came for me that night.

Next morning I was again warned. For six days the suspense was maintained. Then I was led up the passage. The blows burned like fire. When it was over, Lieutenant Konya, who supervised, shouted, "Give him some more!" Then I was slow in getting to my feet. "Ten more!" said Konya. I was half carried back to the cell, where the loudspeakers were blaring:

Christianity is stupid
Christianity is stupid
Christianity is stupid
Why not give it up?
Why not give it up?
Why not give it up?
Christianity is stupid
Christianity is stupid
Christianity is stupid
Why not give it up...?

Sometimes beatings were administered by warders in the cell, for "minor irregularities."

"Drop your trousers for a beating!"

We dropped them.

"Lie on your bellies!"
We lay on our bellies.
"Turn over on your backs, hold your feet up."
We rolled over.
We went on trying to pray. Sometimes a priest

would say, "I call on 'Our Father' but what kind of father, what God abandons me to my enemies like this?" And we urged him, "Don't give way. Go on saying 'Our Father.' Be obstinate. By persisting you will renew your faith!" He could listen to us, because we shared his suffering.

When the guards became bored with beating, they grabbed a couple of prisoners. "Right!" they said. "Slap your friend in the face!" If the man failed to do so, they said, "You've lost your chance," and told the second man to strike the first. He hit out blindly. "Now slosh him back!" They struck at each other's faces until blood flowed. The guards roared with laughter.

One evening Lieutenant Konya told me to gather my things. Since I had not responded to treatment, a spell in the special block might help. There were many rumors about this section of the prison. Those who returned from it were few. They died, or they succumbed to brainwashing and were moved out. Some joined the indoctrination staff and learned to brainwash others.

We crossed the yard, turned several corners and stopped before a row of doors. One was opened and double-locked behind me.

I was alone in a cell walled in white tiles. The ceiling reflected fierce white light from concealed lamps. It was full summer, but the steam heating - which worked nowhere else in Gherla - was full on. Konya had left me in handcuffs, so that I could lie only on my back or side. I was soaked in sweat. The spy-hole clicked open, and the guard outside sniggered. "Something wrong with the heating?" My stomach ached. There had been a peculiar taste in the food, and I thought it was drugged again. The loudspeakers here had a new message:

Nobody believes in Christ now
Nobody believes in Christ now
Nobody believes in Christ now

No one goes to church
No one goes to church

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Give it up
Give it up
Give it up
Nobody believes in Christ now...

Konya was back in the morning, letting a flood of cool air through the open door. My handcuffs were unlocked. I stretched stiff arms and obeyed his order to follow him along the corridor.

A new cell awaited me, and fresh clothes. There was a bed with sheets, a table with a cloth, flowers in a vase. It was too much: I sat down and began to weep. When Konya left, I recovered. I looked at a newspaper on the table. It was the first I had seen in all my years of imprisonment. I tried to find in it news of a rumor going around Gherla that the U.S. Sixth Fleet had entered the Black Sea to demand free elections in the captive countries, but what I found was an item about a Communist dictator who had taken power in Cuba and was defying America on her own doorstep.

My first visitor was Commandant Alexandrescu. He said my new surroundings were a sample of the good life which was open to me. He began to attack religion. Christ, he said, was a fantasy invented by the Apostles to delude slaves into hopes of freedom in paradise.

I picked up the newspaper and gave it to him. "This is printed on the Party presses," I said. "It gives a date in July 1963. That means 1,963 years since the birth of someone who - according to you - never existed. You don't believe in Christ, but you accept him as the founder of our civilization."

Alexandrescu shrugged. "It means nothing; it's customary to count that way."

"But if Christ never came on earth, how did the custom arise?" I asked.

"Some liars started it."

I said: "Suppose you tell me that the Russians have landed on Mars, I need not believe you. But if I turn the radio-knob to hear New York and the Americans congratulate them, then I know it must

be true. In the same way, we must accept Christ's existence as a historical fact when it is recognized in the Talmud by his worst enemies, the Pharisees, who also give the names of his mother and some of his Apostles. And again, we must be impressed when the Pharisees attribute miracles to Christ, while protesting that they were worked by black magic. Many heathen writers also recognized Him. Only Communists deny this plain fact of history, simply because it does not suit their theory."

Alexandrescu did not pursue the argument. Instead, he sent me a book. It was wonderful to have a book in one's hands after all these years, even if it was only ~The Atheist's Guide~. This manual, unknown in the West, is essential reading for all who want to make themselves careers behind the Iron Curtain.

My copy was well-bound, illustrated and carefully argued. From the origins of religion it made its way through Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Islam. Then came Christianity, with a chapter for each confession. Catholicism came out badly, Lutherism much better (Luther had defied the Pope), but all were shown to be impostures. Science had proved this, so the Church had always persecuted science. A full chapter portrayed the Church as a tool of capitalism through the centuries; Christ's exhortation to love your enemies meant no more than to bow to the exploiter. A special section was devoted to the corruption of the Russian priesthood (the book had evidently been translated from the Russian). One picture after another was used to show misleadingly, that Christian rites were based on heathen superstition. A last chapter analyzed "Forms of Atheist Propaganda" and concluded with a list of Soviet decrees aimed against religion. Over this I fell asleep.

8

During the next few weeks I alternated between promises and threats, between my flowery private room and the blinding cell with loudspeakers,

between good, but probably drugged meals, and starvation, between argument and punishment. While

undergoing the heat treatment I was joined one morning by Father Andricu, the former "Red priest" who had repented. He sat panting until he could bear no more. Then he jumped up and hammered wildly on the door, begging to be let out. Presently the commandant appeared.

"It can be hotter yet," said Alexandrescu. Or we could be free men if we chose, he repeated. "But if you were released, how would you act and what kind of sermons would you preach? I want you to write a draft." He gave us pen and paper and went out.

We sat down and wrote. When I had finished, I gave Andricu my sheaf of paper and took his to read through.

"You can hear sermons like that every Sunday," he said defensively, "Progressive, in a scientific, Marxist way."

I said, "Don't deceive yourself, Father Andricu. You know this is a recantation of all that you believe. Even if a priest loses his faith, he should be silent. I don't speak of judgment before God. What would your parishioners, your friends, your family think if they heard you preach this stuff? Don't let the Communists cheat you again. They buy you with promises that they never keep."

I argued for a long time with Andricu, telling him that in his heart he knew still the truth of Christianity. At last he said, "Give me back the sermons," and tore them into pieces."

9

A new series of "struggle meetings" attended by hundreds of prisoners began in the main hall, and we were sent from the special block to hear them. Most lectures were now - being delivered by men who, not long ago, were our cell-mates. After instruction, they came back to declaim praises of the Communism that had given them years of suffering. Their attacks

on religion were based often on modern theologians who deny the Scriptures: propagandists like those of the "God is dead" school. "Study your own thinkers!" we were told. "They have proved that there is no objective truth in Christianity."

For ten to twelve hours a day we listened to

lectures, joined discussions, absorbed the tape-recorded slogans. The brainwashed lectures made the appeal to the Id more frequently and more grossly than the official speakers; and their visions of freedom, money, a job with standing - the assault on the Ego - were more convincing.

In each cell, a handful of men reported daily on the "political health" of the others. Those who truckled to them were fairly safe. Those who did not usually ended in the special block. Informing touched everyone like a fever. A man near me complained to an officer that a guard had searched his bunk without looking beneath it!

On August 23, the anniversary of the armistice with Russia, most prisoners were ready to believe whatever they were told. A large meeting in the hall was addressed by Major Alexandrescu. "We have good news," he started.

Peasants whose farms had been seized broke into smiles when he announced that their land was flourishing in the collectives. Former merchants and bankers applauded when he said that trade was beginning to boom.

"Some of you," said the commandant, "are seeing reason at last. Others are being very foolish. You idiots! You have sat in prison for ten or fifteen years, waiting for the Americans to come and free you. I have news for you. The Americans are coming - but not to release you. They are coming to do business with us!"

Alexandrescu said the Party, under Premier Gheorghiu-Dej, had taken steps to win commercial favor in the West. Loans were being raised, factories built, nuclear plants operated, all with Western aid.

"You fools!" he spat out the words again. "You've all been living in illusion. We know the Americans

better than you. If you beg, they give you nothing. If you insult and mock them, you get all you want. We've been cleverer than you."

Somebody laughed, high-pitched laughter, and others joined in. Soon the whole hall was rocking. The noise was becoming hysterical when, with a raised hand, the commandant quelled it. In good humor, he said that to compensate us all for being unable to join the "Freedom Day" celebrations, he

had arranged that we should watch them - television had been installed for the occasion.

The TV show began with speeches by Gheorghiu-Dej and others on the fall of the Fascist regime in Rumania. None of the orators, of course, mentioned the vital roles played on August 23, 1944, by young King Michael, nor by the National Peasant statesman Juliu Maniu and the Communist Minister of Justice Patrascanu, since the King had been exiled, and the other two had died in jail.

I remembered that during Communism's early days people tried to avoid the anniversary parade, but now when the march-past began I was astonished by the endless columns tramping past the portraits of Marx, Lenin and Dej among the red flags flapping in the breeze. We heard the brassy music, the crowds' cheers, the shouts, "August 23 brings us freedom!"

"It was never Like this in the past," I said to Father Andricu beside me.

He hissed back: "The first time a girl is violated, she struggles. The second time she protests. The third time she enjoys it."

When the performance ended, another began.

"We shall now discuss the celebrations," Alexandrescu said.

One after another, the audience testified. Ex-soldiers, former policemen, landowners, peasants, industrialists. Each ended his contribution with the cry, "August 23 has brought us freedom!"

My turn came. I started in the mood of the day.

"If there's anyone to whom August 23 had brought liberty, it is I," I said. The Fascists hated me, and if Hitler had won his war I should be a piece of soap by

now. But I'm alive, and the Bible has a saying, 'A live dog is better than a dead lion.'"

I continued to approving murmurs. "But in another way, I was free before August 23. Let me tell you how. In ancient times the Tyrant of Syracuse read the book of Epictetus, the philosopher-slave, and admired it so greatly that he offered to set him free. 'Free yourself!' replied Epictetus. His visitor protested, 'But I'm the king!' The philosopher answered, 'A tyrant ruled by his lusts is in bondage; a slave who rules his passions is free. King, free yourself!'"

The hall was quiet now. "Although I am in

prison, I am free. I have been freed by Jesus from my guilt, from darkness in my mind. I can thank the events of August 23 for freeing me from Fascism. But for the other freedom, the freedom from all that is transitory, from death, I thank Jesus."

The commandant was on his feet. "Tell that nonsense to Gagarin. He's been up in space, but he saw no sign of God!"

He laughed. The prisoners laughed with him.

I replied in a matter-of-fact way, "If an ant walked around the sole of my shoe, it could say it saw no sign of Wurmbrand."

10

I was punished by another spell in the Special Block, and I was there when Alexandrescu called specially to inform me that the American President had been assassinated.

"What do you think about that?" he enquired.

I said, "I can't believe it."

He showed me a newspaper which reported Mr. Kennedy's death in a single paragraph

"Well?" he insisted. Pursuing questions of this sort was part of the technique to discover how prisoners' minds were working.

When I replied that if Kennedy were a Christian, then he was happy now in Heaven, Alexandrescu walked out.

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Later I was in a cell with Father Andricu when the guards came for us. We were blindfolded and handcuffed before being led out - for all we knew, it might have been to execution.

The guards said, "Turn right here!" and "Now turn left!"

In a distant part of the prison our blindfolds came off. We were in a suite of clean, warm offices. Andricu was taken off to another part of what must have been the central administration section. I remained outside a door, alone with a guard who, in the past, had listened when I spoke quietly of Christ.

He whispered: "My poor friend! You're having a hard time, but in God's name, go on!"

He moved some paces away, his face blank, but

his words warmed me.

When the door opened, I was led into the presence of a man in general's uniform. It was Negrea, the Deputy-Minister of the Interior, whose intelligence was matched by the energy burning in his strong, gypsy face. The political officer and some officials from Bucharest sat beside him.

Negrea said politely, "I've been studying your case, Mr. Wurmbrand. I don't care for your views, but I like a man who sticks to his guns. We Communists are obstinate, too. I've often been in prison myself and plenty was done to make me change my mind, but I stood firm.

"I believe it's time we met half-way. If you're prepared to forget what you've suffered, we'd forget what you've done against us. We could turn the page and become friends instead of enemies. So far from acting against your own convictions, you could act upon them and still enter a period of fruitful cooperation."

A file lay open before him. "I've even read your sermons. The explanations of the Bible are beautifully put, but you must realize we live in a scientific age..."

"What now?" I asked myself, as Negrea went into the Party's science lecture. Had an important minister come 200 miles for this?

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Like the Danube, which twists and turns through the plains but reaches the sea at last, his discourse came to an end.

"We need men like you! We don't want people to join us out of opportunism, but because they see the fallacies in their past thinking. If you are prepared to help us in the struggle against superstition, you can start a new life at once. You will have a post with a high salary and your family around you again in comfort and in safety. What do you say?"

I replied that I found joy in the life I was already leading; but as for helping the Party, I had thought of a way of doing so if I were released.

The political officer sat up. Negrea said, "You mean you'll work for us?"

"I suggest that you send me from town to town and village to village along with the best Marxist teacher you have. First I shall expose my ignorance

and the stupidities of my retrograde Christian religion; then your Marxist can explain his theories and the people will be able to make up their own minds between the two."

Negrea gave me a hard stare. "You're provoking us, Mr. Wurmbrand. That is what I like about you. It's just the way we Communists used to answer the bosses in the old days. So let's not argue. I'll make you a better proposal still. Nobody wants you to become an atheist propagandist. If you're really so attached to an outworn faith – though I can't understand how a cultured man can accept such nonsense – then keep to it. But also keep in mind that we have the power! Communism has conquered a third of the world; the Church must come to terms with us.

"Let's put our cards on the table, for once. Frankly we're tired of Church leaders who do everything in the eyes of the people; they're no longer in touch with what's going on."

One by one, Negrea listed the remaining bishops. All were powerless, he said, or Party men; and everybody knew it.

"Now if a man like you became a bishop you could have your faith and still be loyal to the regime. Your

Bible says you should submit to authority because it comes from God, so why not to ours?"

I said nothing. Negrea asked the other officials to leave us alone for a moment. He was convinced that I would accept the offer, and gave me his confidence on something he did not want the others to hear.

"The Party made a mistake," he began, "in attacking your World Council of Churches. It began as a spy-ring; but the pastors concerned are often of proletarian origin; they aren't shareholders, so to speak, but superior servants. Instead of opposing such men we should win them over to our side so that the council itself becomes our instrument."

He leaned over the desk. "Mr. Wurmbrand, this is where you can help. You've worked for the World Council of Churches. You're known widely abroad: we still get many enquiries about you. If you became a bishop, you could help our other WCC allies to build a bulwark for us – not of atheism, but of Socialism and peace. Surely you recognize the universal idealism behind our campaigns to ban the bomb and

outlaw war? And you'll be able to worship to your heart's content: there we won't interfere."

I thought for a moment.

"How far must this co-operation go? Bishops who worked with you in the past have had to inform on their own priests. Will I be expected to do that, too?"

Negrea began to laugh. "You'd be under no special obligation by virtue of your office," he said. "Everyone who knows of any act which may harm the state is obliged to denounce the man who does, and as a bishop you'll certainly hear such things.

"The present Lutheran Bishop of Rumania is very old. You'd be Bishop-elect and effective Head of your Church in Rumania from the start."

I asked for time to reflect and Negrea agreed.

"We'll meet before I leave again for Bucharest to put your release papers through," he said.

I was taken back to an isolation cell and lay thinking for many hours. I remembered the old Jewish story of another man who asked for time to think: a rabbi, facing the Inquisition, who was asked to deny

his faith. Next morning the rabbi said "I will not turn Catholic, but I make one last request - that before I'm burned at the stake my tongue should be cut out for not replying at once. To such a question 'No!' was the only answer."

But that was only one side of the case: on the other, I knew that the official Church in a Communist country can survive only through some compromise; even by paying taxes to an atheist state a Christian compromises. It was easy to say the Church could go "underground," but an underground Church needs cover for its work. Lacking this cover, millions of people would be left with nowhere to meet for worship, no pastor to preach, no one to baptize them, marry them, bury their dead - an unthinkable alternative, when I could help to avoid it by saying a few words in favor of collectivization or the so-called peace campaigns.

And then, I had not seen my wife and child for years; I did not know if they were alive. The political officer had said that Sabina was in prison; what would become of her and Mihai if I refused this proposal?

I needed strength from above to say no, when doing so meant serving eleven years more, with the

sacrifice of my family and almost certain death under terrible conditions; but at that moment God's face was veiled and my faith failed me. I saw before me the huge shape of Communism which already covered so much of the world and threatened to cover the rest as well; and my imagination was overcome by the danger of dying, and being beaten again and again, and the hunger and privations to which I was condemning my wife and son. My soul was like a ship driven from side to side, rocked by a violent tempest, one moment plunged into the abyss, the next carried up to Heaven. I drank in those hours the cup of Christ, it was for me the Garden of Gethsemane. And like Jesus, I threw myself with face upon the earth and prayed with broken cries, and asked God to help me overcome this horrible temptation.

After prayer, I felt a little quieter. But still I saw before me Nichefor Daianu and Radu Ghinda and so

many more who had harmed the faith, including the Patriarch; they numbered thousands, and now I had become a man mean in faith, and I would be swallowed up like them for my weakness of the flesh. I began to think carefully of all the times I had argued the truth of Christianity. I repeated to myself the simplest questions. Is the way of love better than hatred? Has Christ lifted the burden of sin and doubt from my shoulders? Is He the Savior? There was no difficulty eventually in answering "Yes." And when I had done so, it was as if a great weight had been removed from my mind.

For an hour I lay on my bed, saying to myself, "I shall try now not to think of Christ." But the effort failed: I could think of nothing else. There was a void in my heart without Christianity. For a last time my mind went to Negrea's proposal. I thought of the tyrants from Nebuchadnezzar who set a king over the Jews, to Hitler who set his puppets over Europe. My visiting card would read "Richard Wurmbrand, Lutheran Bishop of Rumania, by appointment of the Secret Police." I would not be a bishop of Christ in a holy place, but a police spy in a state institution.

I prayed again, and afterwards I felt tranquillity of soul.

Next day I was called again. Commandant Alexandrescu was there, among several others around

Negrea, and when I said I could not accept, the whole question was argued again. Only when we reached the subject of the World Council of Churches did Negrea once more ask the rest to leave. Then he urged me to reconsider my refusal.

I said, "I don't feel worthy to be a bishop - I wasn't worthy to be a pastor, and even to be a simple Christian was too great for me. The first Christians went to their deaths saying ~Christianimus sum!~ - 'I'm a Christian!' - and I haven't done that; instead, I considered your shameful offer. But I cannot accept it."

"We'll find another who will," he warned.

I replied, "If you believe you can prove that I'm wrong, bring me your atheist arguments! I have the arguments for my faith and I seek only the truth."

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He asked me, "You know, of course, what this will mean for your future?"

"I have considered well, and weighed the dangers, and I rejoice to suffer for what I am sure is the last truth."

Negrea gave me the look of a man who realizes he has been wasting time. Polite to the last, he nodded to me, closed his briefcase, stood up and crossed to the window, where he stood looking out while the guards handcuffed and led me away.

For a long time I remained in the "special block"; how long I am not sure. Time has telescoped all days of certain periods in my prison life into one enormous day. The brainwashing increased in its intensity, but changed little in method. The loudspeakers now said:

Christianity is dead
Christianity is dead
Christianity is dead

I recall one day clearly. They had given us postcards to invite our families to come and bring parcels. On the day named, I was shaved and washed and given a clean shirt. Hours passed. I sat in the cell, staring at the glittering white tiles, but no one came. Evening brought only a change of guard. I was not to know then that my postcard had never been sent, and the same trick was played on other stubborn prisoners. The loudspeakers said:

Nobody loves you now
Nobody loves you now
Nobody loves you now

I began to weep. The loudspeaker said:

They don't want to know you any more
They don't want to know you any more
They don't want to know you any more

I could not bear to hear these words and I could not shut them out.

Next day brought a brutal "struggle meeting,"

confined to the disappointed men. Plenty of other wives had come, the lecturer said. We were the fools. We had been abandoned. Our womenfolk were in bed with other men - at that very moment. He described what was happening between them with all the obscenity at his command. And where were our children? Out in the streets, atheists every one! They had no wish to see their fathers. How stupid we were!

In the special block I listened to the speaker, day after day.

Christianity is dead
Christianity is dead
Christianity is dead

And in time I came to believe what they had told us for all those months. Christianity was dead. The Bible foretells a time of great apostasy, and I believed that it had arrived.

Then I thought of Mary Magdalene, and perhaps this thought, more than any other, helped to save me from the soul-killing poison of the last and worst stage of brainwashing. I remembered how she was faithful to Christ even when He cried on the Cross, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" And when He was a corpse in the tomb, she wept nearby and waited until He arose. So when I believed at last that Christianity was dead, I said, "Even so, I will believe in it, and I will weep at its tomb until it arises again, as it surely will."

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PART NINE

In June 1964 all prisoners were gathered in the main hall. The commandant entered with his officers, and we prepared for a new stage in the "struggle campaign." Instead, Major Alexandrescu announced that under the terms of a general amnesty granted by the government, political prisoners of every category were to be freed.

I could not believe it. Looking around, I saw blankness on every face. Then Alexandrescu shouted an order, and the entire hall broke into cheers. If he had told them, "Tomorrow you will all be shot," they would still have cheered, and cried, "Quite right! We don't deserve to live!"

The announcement was not, as we first thought, another trick. The summer of that first year saw the release of innumerable thousands of prisoners. For this we had to thank another so-called "thaw" between East and West, and also - though I did not know it at the time - a true change of heart in our Prime Minister, Gheorghiu-Dej. After many years of doubting Communist dogma, he had returned to the faith in which his mother had raised him and kept all her life. Dej had been converted through a maidservant in his home and her uncle, a good old man who often spoke to him of the Bible. Christianity, although he did not confess it openly, gave him the strength to defy his Soviet masters. Ignoring their threats, he opened new relations with the West, and in doing so

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set an example to other captive countries. Unhappily, he died a few months later, his end being hastened, it is said, by Soviet agents.

My turn came for release. I found myself among one of the last groups of a hundred or so men gathered in the big hall. We were almost the last prisoners left in Gherla. A strange silence had descended on the

corridors. Our hair was cut and we were given worn but quite clean clothes.

While I wondered what had become of the original owner of the suit I wore, I heard a man call, "Brother Wurmbrand!" He came up and said he was from Sibiu, so I supposed that he was a member of our church there.

"I've heard so much of you from your son," he added. "We shared a cell together."

I said, "My son - in prison? No, no; you're mistaken!"

"You mean you didn't know?" the man went on. "He's been in jail six years now."

I turned away and he left me. The blow was almost more than I could bear. Mihai's health had not been good; it would never stand up to the strain of prolonged prison life.

My mind was still frozen with pain and shock when Commandant Alexandrescu came up. "Well, Wurmbrand," he asked in a curious tone. "Where will you go now that you are free?"

I replied, "I don t know. I've been told officially that my wife is in prison, and now I hear my only son is, too. I have nobody else."

Alexandrescu shrugged. "The boy, too! How do you feel, having a jailbird for a son?"

"I am sure he is not in jail for theft or any other crime, and if he is there for Christ's sake, then I am proud of him."

"What!" he shouted. "We spend all this money keeping you for years, and you think it's something to be proud of to have a family in prison for such things!"

"I did not want you to spend anything on me," I said.

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So we parted. I walked out of prison, in another man's clothes. The streets of Gherla seemed dazzling. Cars roared past and I started nervously. The colors of a woman's coat, of a bunch of flowers, shocked my eyes. Music from a radio, coming through an open window, had a texture rich as over-sweetened coffee. The air smelled clean and new, as if the hay was being carted beyond the confines of the little town. But everything was saddened by the thought of my wife and son in prison.

I went by bus to the nearby town of Cluj where I had friends, but they had moved. I tramped from one house to another in sweltering midsummer heat, until I found them at last. They brought out cake and fruit, all manner of good things. But there was a beautiful brown onion on the table, and it was that I wanted. I had hankered so often for an onion to take away the taste of prison food. Now I did not like to ask for it.

I made a telephone call to a neighbor of ours in Bucharest. The voice that answered was Sabina's!

"It's Richard," I said. "I thought you were in prison!"

There was a confused noise. Mihai came on the line. "Mother's fainted - hold on!" There were more strange sounds. Then he said, "She's all right. We thought you were dead!"

Mihai had never been in prison. The false news I had been given was a last turn of the screw to test my reactions to brainwashing.

I took the train to Bucharest. As it drew into the station, I saw a crowd of men, women and children. Their arms were full of flowers and I wondered what lucky person was receiving such a welcome. Then I recognized faces, and leaned from the window of the carriage to wave. As I climbed down, it seemed as if all the people of our church were running to meet me, and then my arms were around my wife and son.

That night Sabina told me that she had been given news of my death years before. She refused to believe it, even when strangers called on her who claimed to be ex-prisoners who had attended my burial.

"I will wait for him," she said.

The years passed and no word came, until my telephone call. It was for her as if I had been resurrected from the dead.

2

One Sunday, months after my release, I took a group of schoolchildren for a walk. The Secret Police dogged us first but seeing that we went into the zoo they left us.

I led the children to the lions' cage and gathered them around me so that I might speak quietly.

I said, "Your forefathers in the Christian faith were thrown to wild beasts like these. They died gladly, because they believed in Jesus. The time may come when you also will be imprisoned, and suffer for being a Christian. Now you must decide whether you are ready to face that day."

With tears in their eyes, each in turn said "yes." I asked no other questions in this, the last confirmation class I held before leaving my country.

I have described in the preface why I decided that I must leave my country, and how I came to the West. Now I have only this to add. On the wall of a civic building in Washington, D.C., there is a large plaque containing the Constitution of the United States, skilfully engraved in copperplate. When you first look at it, you see only the engraved words of the Constitution; then, on stepping back, so that the angle of the light changes, the face of George Washington appears, carved into the text.

So it should be with this book, which contains episodes from a man's life, and the story of those who were with him in prison. Behind them all stands an unseen being, Christ, who kept us in faith and gave us strength to conquer.

Acknowledgment

I cannot name all those to whom I am indebted from their kindness and help since my release from prison and my arrival in the West. But I do wish particularly to thank the Rev. Stuart Harris, director of the European Christian Mission, and now Chairman of the British Mission to the Communist World, a mission which works to propagate the Gospel in countries under Communist rule, secretly sending in Bibles and other Christian literature, helping underground pastors and families of persecuted Christians. It was late in the night when he came first to the tiny attic in Bucharest where I lived with my family after release from jail. He brought us our first news from the West - that Christians there had not forgotten us, but included us

daily in their prayers; and he brought the first relief for needy families. I, and many others, owe him much.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RICHARD WURMBRAND began a secret, "underground" ministry both to captive Rumanians and to Soviet soldiers in the invasion force following the Communist seizure of Rumania in 1945.

Arrested in 1948, he was committed to prison where, according to his testimony before the U.S. Internal Security Subcommittee in May, 1968, he served three years in solitary confinement and five additional years in "mass" cells, during which time he was subjected to medieval tortures. As proof of these tortures, he bared his body above the waist, where committee members viewed more than a dozen of his Communist-inflicted scars.

His wife, Sabina Wurmbrand, was also arrested in 1948 and separately imprisoned for three years, during which time she served as a slave laborer on the never-completed Danube Canal.

Following his 1957 release, Wurmbrand resumed his underground work; rearrested in 1959, he was sentenced to twenty-five years in prison. A general amnesty in 1964 again brought his release and resumption of his underground work. Finally, in 1965, in great danger of a third arrest and imprisonment, he was "ransomed" out of Rumania by Christian friends in Norway, who paid $10,000 to the Rumanian Communist authorities for his release.

In the United States, Wurmbrand is pursuing his support of the Underground Church activities, which are being continued vigorously in Communist countries.

Through the international Christian Missions to the Communist World and its U.S. affiliate, Jesus to the Communist World, Inc., of which he is general director, he helps the Underground Church by smuggling Bibles, Christian literature, and relief to families of martyrs through secret couriers.

In August, 1967, Wurmbrand testified before the U.S. House Committee on Un-American Activities, bringing to light new evidence of continued persecution in the Communist-dominated countries.

The End of "IN GOD'S UNDERGROUND"

Jesus (Friend to Terrorists)

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by Radu Valentin

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A Friend to Terrorists?

THE PERSON writing this is a Christian pastor. For decades I have followed the actions, pronouncements and, where they existed, the publications of terrorist groups in different countries.

Today, I realize that mankind has entered a new age. The era of Fascist domination has passed. The age when the Soviet dictator representing the Eastern Communist bloc could tell Americans "We will bury you!" has also passed. The cold war has passed to the history books. We have now entered the age of terrorism.

Terrorist groups have mushroomed on all continents and claim dedicated supporters and sympathizers.

Most people react to them with horror as headlines assault them from all over the world. How should Christians react?

I tell my fellow Christians that we should consider terrorists our friends. To the terrorists themselves who read this, I say, "I am your friend and the friend of those who think like you."

Most Christians will disagree strongly, saying, "We've never heard anything like this. Should we be the friends of murderers? So many were killed or wounded in the attack on the

World Trade Center in New York. So many are killed in Peru, Egypt, Algeria, Israel, India, South

Africa, the United Kingdom, Latin America, and (other countries. Why should we call the terrorists 'friends'?"

The devil plays the role of accuser. ("Devil" comes from the Greek ~diabolos~, which means "to hurl accusations against.") It is written that Jesus is "the friend of sinners" (MTT 11:19), including thieves, adulterers, traitors, and murderers.

The night before His crucifixion, Jesus called His disciples "friends," then went out of His way to confer this title also on Judas Iscariot, who had departed the group to betray Him. He called Judas "friend" when Judas already had the price of betrayal - 30 pieces of silver, his traitor's reward - in his pocket and came with soldiers to arrest Him (MTT 26:48-50).

We don't know much about Judas, some believe "Iscariot" is from the Hebrew ~Ish Kerioth~, which means "man of Kerioth." But there is another possibility. In Jesus' time was a group of Jewish terrorists called ~Sikkarim~, which means "men of the dagger." They used this weapon against their Roman oppressors and also against Jewish collaborators. Iscariot could have belonged to this group.

Had Judas been a terrorist who was received kindly by Jesus, but later had a controversy with Him that led him, in a moment of extreme anger, to play the part of traitor? When Jesus was convicted in a mock trial, Judas regretted his rash act and, full of remorse, committed suicide.

So for a brief period at least, a terrorist emotionally identified with Jesus.

This explanation might seem far-fetched if it were not for the fact that Jesus had named as an apostle a man called Simon the Zealot. Zealots too were extreme Jewish nationalists who resorted to the use of force against the Roman

oppressors. Also, the apostle Peter in Gethsemane was armed, and he was not the only armed apostle (LUK 22:38) . Although Simon may have been a terrorist, he was not a terrorist during his discipleship, and was approached by Jesus as a friend. And so Christians, thinking about these parts of the Bible, might not be surprised that I address this book to "terrorist friends."

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Are Terrorists Totally Wrong?

I BELIEVE IT is totally wrong to consider anyone totally wrong.

Jesus, referring to those who would persecute believers down through the ages, said, "Those who kill you will believe that they are serving God" (John 16:2). Many inquisitors of different confessions (Catholics were not the only ones to use inquisitorial methods against believers with whom they differed) adored the Savior and intended to please Him with their acts.

We should not wonder about this. Many personalities of the Old Testament acted in a strange manner that no Christian would imitate and with the firm conviction that they were doing God's will. Perhaps this was the case with those who built the Tower of Babel, whose objective was never possible (GEN 11:1-9).

Jesus makes a difference between the "why" and the "what" of a person's actions. Some persecute Christians because they erroneously believe that Christians are wrong. The Christian New Testament, part of our holy book, tells about a Jew full of zeal for God who participated in the stoning of a Christian named Stephen. Both heartily loved God but had different levels of knowledge of Him. Later, Saul of Tarsus

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accepted the religion of his victim Stephen and also died as a martyr for Christ. They must have

met again in the same beautiful heaven.

Today's terrorists are convinced that they serve well their nation, religion, race, or party. We may wholeheartedly agree with them that one should do his utmost in the service of these entities. Thus we have a point of contact.

In differences between men it is good to stress the points that unite them. When Christians confront the thinking of those with other convictions, they should not always ask themselves first, "What separates me from the other man?" but "In what ways are we in agreement?"

On a certain occasion, the apostle Paul, a dedicated Christian, spoke in Athens, Greece to a crowd of men who worshiped gods that he despised as idols. Yet he does not begin by telling them what was wrong about their beliefs. Instead he says, "I found you to be very religious" (Acts 17:22). Paul had something in common with those he wished to criticize. The Athenians knew ~correctly~ that there was something superior to be worshiped.

Knowing that every point of view is a point of blindness because it incapacitates one for every other point of view, we should keep an open mind even for those with whom we disagree. All of us, Christian and non-Christian alike, know only in part. Therefore, we can't speak to one another condescendingly as the wise to the ignorant. And so we ask you to

recognize your own limitations, as we do ours, and listen to a voice different from what you are accustomed to hearing.

Are you a terrorist because you consider your cause the best? Do you say to yourself, "There is no better cause for which I can give my life and, if necessary, take another's life?"

I once spoke with a fanatical Zionist who was ready to shoot hostile Arabs. I asked him, "Suppose you had been born an Arab, what would be your ideal?" He laughed, embarrassed, realizing that if his mother had conceived him by a different man, he might have killed Jews. What is the value of an ideal that depends on the

circumstance of partners in the sexual act?

I was acquainted with a young lady who had not known her father and presumed he was an Indian. In her youth her heart glowed for India's fight for independence. She was unable to agree with Gandhi that it should proceed at his slow pace. It had to be achieved immediately, even at the cost of shedding British blood. Then she found out that her father had actually been a Jew. From that moment she became a Zionist fighter.

Isn't this tragic? But isn't it the history of each one of us? Should not some of the impressive personalities of the liberation movements take themselves less seriously? They are ready to shed blood for an ideal, not because after calm reflection they have decided it is the highest, but

just because they were born on one side of a border or social pyramid instead of the other.

We agree with terrorists in their readiness to sacrifice themselves for the highest cause they know. The Latins had a proverb: ~Dolce et decorum est pro patria mori~ - "It is sweet and beautiful to die for the fatherland." The same can be said of other high ideals.

Let us never think about terrorists as just killers, ignoring the fact that they are also ready to suffer in jail and even to die for the cause they serve. We are united with them in hatred for unjust structures. It is wrong for one nation to oppress another. Those who fight against this are right. It is wrong for privileged nations, races, or classes to exist at the expense of others. It is wrong to be a dictator and amass great wealth while others suffer. It is also wrong to slaughter embryos indiscriminately. Terror against unborn children and the killing of abortionists are also wrong.

Lenin started the Russian Communist revolution, and as a result tens of millions of innocent people died. He had no scruples about sentencing not only individuals but whole categories of people to death - because he claimed to want a better future for mankind. It was said

that "he loved mankind so much that he was ready to kill all men for the benefit of humanity."

Lenin's older brother had been hanged for his attempt to kill the Russian emperor. Lenin shared his brother's ideal to get rid of oppressors,

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but he thought that individual acts of terror would not achieve this end. He says in his writings that a party of well-trained professional revolutionaries have to seize power in the state. These will kill their opponents wholesale, after which, in time, the happy Socialist society will arise. He died disillusioned.

Stalin had been a terrorist. Together with a few comrades he attacked a big transport of state money en route from one bank to another and plundered it. He took not one cent for himself but gave all he had stolen to the Communist party, then called Bolsheviks, to be used for revolutionary purposes. He was thrown in jail and deported for twelve years. He suffered for what he considered right. His purpose had been to do good to the poor and downtrodden people. We share this sentiment.

Stalin was not totally wrong, nor are any of the terrorists. The tragedy is that, when he later came to power, he jailed and killed wholesale not only the rich exploiters and tyrants but also millions of peasants in order to collectivize agriculture. He also killed his own comrades, those with whom he had previously fought and suffered. He even killed his own family.

Hitler had no selfish motives. He really loved the German nation, though he himself was Austrian. For the good of the fatherland he was ready to kill millions of Jews, gypsies, and people of other nations he considered a hindrance to

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Germany's progress. He killed even German dissidents. He loved - but with what limited love!

There was something terribly amiss about these characters, as well as other terrorists who participated in crimes though not to such a

horrendous extent. We cannot say that they were totally wrong. The point of departure - the desire to help the poor and downtrodden - was right.

I cannot totally reject a Muslim terrorist either. He kills, but he also sacrifices his own life with the shout ~Allahu akbar!~ - "God is great!" In my homeland of Romania, Fascist terrorists called "legionnaires" were fanatical Orthodox Christians. Before killing the prime minister, Calinescu, they spent a whole night stretched out on the floor of a church praying that God might bless their endeavor. Their zeal for God was commendable. What they knew about God and His will was insufficient.

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Take Time for Reflection

TERRORISTS are wrong in being led by passion. They do not meditate thoroughly about their ways.

In Hebrew, one of the languages of the Bible, the word for "to think" is ~lekhshov~. The root of this word, ~kheshbon~, reveals that in the Hebrew mentality "to think" means "to calculate." In all major aspects of life, we have to calculate the possible profits or losses resulting from an action. Jesus asks men, "What does it profit to gain the whole world and lose your own soul?" (MRK 8:36).

The prophet Isaiah writes, "God teaches you to profit" (ISA 48:17), not in the ugly sense of exploiting poverty and ignorance, but in order to engage in activities that lead to a noble aim. Anyone inclined toward terrorist acts should calculate the chances of success, learning from the history of terrorism. By the same token, he should calculate whether the overthrow of an unjust structure would lead to a better one.

The Nazis used terror. Hitler summarized their intent by saying they were building a "thousand-year empire." His "empire" lasted a mere fifteen years and left Germany in shambles. It was the same with Italian fascism. In Russia, communism had as its predecessor the terrorist organization ~Narodnaya Volya~ (The People's

Will). This began what the Communists practiced

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for decades: terrorist attacks against the royal family and political leaders. The Communists succeeded in gaining power, which they retained for seventy years, even exporting it to many other countries.

The result? The Russian Empire is a basket case. Socialism appears to have been only a mirage. Communism deprived a whole nation of liberty. The people are now far poorer than in capitalist countries. Was it worthwhile for the terrorists to give their blood and shed the blood of others? Did they serve the people?

Yugoslavia has experienced decades of terrorism. Serbian terrorists killed the Austrian Prince Ferdinand. A Croatian killed the Serbian King Alexander I. These are only the most illustrious victims. The Communist Tito and the Fascist Ustashi killed wholesale. Yugoslavia is in ruins.

The intentions of the terrorists might have been right, but isn't it time to learn from the past that terror does not pay?

How much terror had been exercised in the violent French Revolution, which overthrew the monarchy in 1789 with the slogan "Liberty, equality, fraternity"? After the bloody Reign of Terror, the revolutionists celebrated their victory under this banner. Do equality and fraternity reign in France?

In the nineteenth century, France expanded its hegemony over vast African and Asian territories and became an empire by oppressing the

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indigenous peoples. From among these, terrorist groups arose and succeeded. In our century, French power was overthrown on both continents. Algeria was freed, but Islamic fundamentalist terrorists arose against the new Algeria government and then were hanged without any mercy. Likewise, in Egypt, revolutionists overthrew King Farouk. Now a democratic republic,

Egypt has produced a new type of revolutionist adversary. These too are hanged. If they came to power, they would hang others.

The Vietnamese fought to free themselves from France, after which followed a cruel Communist dictatorship. Now their government is begging for help from capitalists.

But haven't there been useful armed fights against injustice? Who can say? Perhaps American independence could have been attained without war. Almost all British colonies and those of other empires obtained their freedom without war and its destruction. King George II, against whose injustice the American colonists rebelled, did not live forever. Perhaps under another king the immediate cause of the rebellion would have disappeared and the painful separation between two English-speaking peoples could have been avoided.

America's war of secession was not absolutely necessary. Slavery had been abolished in the British Empire without the shedding of blood.

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For the same reason, it is questionable if armed fighting of governments against terrorists will make them disappear.

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Enlarge Your Love

TERRORISTS are idealists, usually with beautiful concepts of liberty, justice, a readiness for self-sacrifice, a willingness to go to the uttermost in the service of what they consider a worthy cause, and also loyalty, measured by the severe punishment they mete out to disloyal comrades.

We are wrong to think there is little love in the world. Tigers kill to provide food for their cubs. I knew a man who killed for money to buy his little son a costly toy the boy had seen in a shop window. The father was poor and could not

bear the tears of his child, who knew other boys received toys from their fathers. This man committed a crime prompted by love.

Tigers and men (even the worst) have some love, however instinctive or misguided, for their young. There is love in the world. But it needs to be enlarged to embrace wider spheres and to be channeled toward better causes. Wolves kill men; dogs defend men to the death. Yet both wolves and dogs have common ancestors.

God enabled me to bring to Christ a mass-murderer who, during World War II, had killed many Jews, even children, and boasted of what he had done. He had been told that Jews were a threat to his fatherland, which he loved. God gave him the grace to see that love limited to one's fatherland can be enlarged. It can

comprehend men of other nations and other social groups. Later I had written proof that this criminal became a savior of men, saving the lives of many who were condemned to death.

In the thirties, Germany had a Jewish secretary of state. A young fanatical German nationalist, unable to bear the shame that a Jew should be a government official, shot him. Mrs. Rathenau, a Christian, visited the murderer in jail and taught him to enlarge his love to include all men because all are creatures of the same God. During World War II, this murderer became a high-ranking officer in the German army stationed in Marseille, France and used his position to save many Jews from death. The Nazis discovered this and hanged him. He died for the right cause - a superior love. Everyone desires higher positions, greater revenues, more influential friendships. Why not a higher quality of love?

Love is a better counselor than hatred. William Wilberforce achieved his goal of abolishing slavery in the British Empire without shedding one drop of blood. He did so with loving words. Mahatma Gandhi was appalled at the injustice Indians suffered under British rule. He obtained his country's liberty through ~ahimsa~,

non-violence. His adherents did not commit any acts of violence.

When Gandhi's ideal - freedom from British rule - had been achieved, millions of innocents died in violent fights between Hindus and

Muslims. Instead of the one free country Gandhi dreamt of, there are now three: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, which are at loggerheads with one another. Was the fight worthwhile?

When a white racist attacked the black American Baptist pastor Martin Luther King as he was preaching, members of the congregation quickly leaped to his defense. But King deflected them, saying, "If I had been educated like this man, I would also have acted like him. Understand and forgive him! Let him go."

In 1917, there was a prolonged battle at the river Isonzo between Austrian and Italian troops. It was a battle of position. For many months the warring troops fought from trenches only a few yards apart. At Christmas a group of Austrian soldiers, wishing to mock the enemy, filled a soldier's boot with dirt, wrapped it nicely like a gift, then had a powerful man hurl it directly into the Italian trench. Some Christians among the Italians decided to reciprocate. After washing the boot thoroughly, they filled it with oranges and candy, wrapped it, and threw it back to the Austrian trench. When the soldiers there unwrapped it, they found a brief message that read, "Everyone gives what he has."

Since some oppress others and commit injustice, should we act at their low level? Can't we do better?

Though Christians comprise less than one percent of Japan's population, it was a Christian who organized their trade union movement:

Toyohiko Kagawa. He taught workers to obtain their rights while avoiding violent conflict. The Japanese were not aware of massive strikes and lockouts in other industrial countries.

At a certain point, a large manufacturing company decided to lower salaries. Some workers, revolted by this injustice, proposed a violent reaction – a strike – which would have paralyzed the factories. "Don't do it," Kagawa advised. "Rather, send a delegation to the president of the company, bow politely before him, and say, 'We regret that we were so heartless as not to realize the difficulties through which you are passing. Our children are used to deprivations, while yours aren't. We will gladly work for you without taking any salary just to show you our faithfulness to the enterprise.'"

They accepted no further salary, but in the evening workers would station themselves on Tokyo's great boulevards carrying baskets with a large inscription: "Give for our poor company," which they named. They also explained matters to passers-by, thus engaging the sympathy of the public.

No longer were salaries lowered; rather, they were increased.

On the other hand, Kagawa organized a strike of the employees on trams. However, they continued to run the trams regularly so as not to paralyze the life of a big city. The only difference was that they refused to collect the fare, allowing people to ride free of charge. In the end, this

original kind of strike was successful. Love and goodness are not doomed to failure. They can win.

In South Africa, apartheid – which made nonwhites second-class citizens – has been abolished, but not as a result of an armed fight, terrorist acts, or rebellion, which had proved ineffective. Apartheid bowed to pressure applied by the Western powers, mobilized by a wave of sympathy on the part of those who favored racial justice.

One thought would restrain me from committing violent acts: the one I injure is my brother. He may not suffer like me, but he has his own sufferings. There exists much pain among the ruling classes of a nation. Proof of this is the fact that depression and suicide are

as frequent among the rich as among the poor. I have known well a multitude of men on both sides of the social spectrum: on the whole, one class is no happier than the other.

Among Christians are adherents of what is called Liberation Theology. This philosophy originated within the Catholic Church and extended into the Protestant camp belonging to the World Council of Churches (WCC). They went very far by providing support to many terrorists in the armed fight. Some priests were even known to set aside Bibles for guns.

The Liberationists did not consider those they helped "terrorists" but "freedom fighters." I too don't like to call people by names they

abhor. It is all right to call them freedom fighters if you make it clear that they fight heroically for their concept of how they think freedom can be attained. Others, just as well-intentioned as these freedom fighters, think otherwise. Catholics used to call Protestants "heretics." Now they say "separated brethren," which is much nicer. William Shakespeare wrote, "That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

However, the adherents of Liberation Theology showed a bias that excluded truth. They supported only leftist fighters against tyrannies, ignoring the millions of innocents who were killed at the same time by Communist regimes. Russian, Romanian, and similar newspapers now reveal this about governments that recently have fallen from power. The U.S. also supported guerrilla movements, but only those that suited their interests. South African governments supported such movements in Mozambique and Angola that fought against communism to the exclusion of others.

As a well-motivated "freedom fighter" willing to shed blood for a noble cause, are you also willing to be used as a pawn by others not honest in their intentions? Ponder this.

One of the most violent terrorist groups in the world is the Irish Republican Army (IRA). It is composed of Catholics who fight to have Northern Ireland, which is now under the British

Crown, reunited with Ireland. But the English and the Irish speak the same language and

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share the same culture. The old Irish language is virtually obsolete. English is the language spoken in the Irish parliament, government, and universities. The religious cleavage also belongs to the past. Church attendance is very low in both countries, and the respective religions are mostly hereditary.

In the South, Catholics and Protestants get along well. There is not the slightest discrimination. Why should the Northerners be adamantly opposed to uniting with the South? Why should the Southern terrorists be just as determined that the North leave the British Empire?

This fight, like so many other battles between humans, has no reasonable motives. The reasons invoked by each side are rationalizations arising from the impulse to rebel for rebellion's sake. The ideal proclaimed is a pretext.

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Is Terrorism a Universal Remedy?

DO TERRORISTS think about the effect their fight will have on the social group to which they belong?

In Romania, three Jewish Communists - Goldstein, Osias, and Lichtblau - placed a bomb in the Senate. Two men died and others were wounded. In Bulgaria, a terrorist group led by a Jewish Communist named Friedman put a bomb in the cathedral of Sofia. Many died. A Jew, Grunspan, killed a German diplomat in Paris in Nazi times. The result was a strengthening of anti-Semitism, which is also completely unreasonable. In (Germany, the result of the one killing of a diplomat was what was called "the crystal night." All Jews had to pay a fine of one billion marks. Jewish properties were confiscated and destroyed. Uncounted Jews were put in

concentration camps where many died.

The Latins used to pose the question, ~Cui prodest?~ - "Who profits?" Surely not the cause for which terrorists stand.

When Arabs plotted terrorist acts in the U.S., anti-Arab sentiment arose among Americans. The terrorists are Muslims, but the resentment extends beyond Muslim Arabs to include Christian Arabs. They too are shunned.

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Around the globe there are countless terrorist movements with widely divergent and even contradictory aims. With such diversity, can terrorism be a universal panacea able to cure all social ills of whatever stripe? Consider just a few: The African National Council (ANC), fighting apartheid in South Africa; the opposition of white Afrikaaners to the abolition of apartheid; the IRA, fighting to incorporate Northern Ireland into the Irish Republic; Protestant terrorists in northern Ireland who kill IRA members; the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Hamas (whose slogan is "Only a dead Jew is a good Jew"), which planned the destruction of the State of Israel; the fanatical Zionist organization "Kach," whose aim is to drive all Arabs from Israel; the "Opposition of White Aryans," fighting to deprive American Blacks and Asians of their rights; the Communist organization "Sendero Luminoso" (Shining Path) in Peru, which kills recklessly; "Tupamaros," active in several Latin American countries; the Islamic organizations Hezb Islami, Jamiat Islami, and Ettchad Islami, which fought in Afghanistan against their former comrades in arms who have come to power in the capital of Kabul; Kamredine Kherbane fighting in Algeria for the introduction of Sharia, the Islamic law (members of this organization are often hanged by the government); Jamiat Islami and Hizbul Mujahideen in Kashmir (India), as well as the organization of rebellious Sikhs in Punjab (India); Islamic Liberation

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Front of Ormya in Ethiopia; Abou Sayaf in the Philippines; All-Ittihad-al-Islami in Somalia; the Party of Islamic Renewal and that of Islamic Resistance in Tadjikistan; the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia; the ETA, Basque terrorists fighting the Spanish government. I could go on and on.

Would you have confidence in a medical school that offered one pill to cure tuberculosis, syphilis, malaria, stroke, and toothache? It is just as unreasonable to believe that one method - killing all adversaries or overthrowing them from power - will cure all social ills.

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What Will You Think About Your Deeds After Committing Them?

ALL SUCH organizations fight for power without considering that the possession of power is useful only if one has the capacity to rule a nation. Lenin once wrote that "under communism a cook will be able to rule a country." As a result, under communism men without a knowledge of politics, economics, and social problems ruled a huge state. The result was predictable: the bankruptcy of Communist governments in the whole of Eastern Europe. Similarly, nazism and fascism led to the ruin of Germany and Italy at the end of World War II.

Terrorism starts with a limited purpose - but who is master of his will? Tempted by increasing power, who sticks to his original intent? Political and religious power is addictive, like gambling. Many gamblers can't stop until they have lost everything. Terrorists begin by aiming at certain individuals or categories of men they consider dangerous to their cause, but soon they degenerate.

Racist terrorists desecrate Jewish cemeteries. In Yugoslavia there have been directed attacks against cultural objects. South African terrorists entered a church and shot worshipers indiscriminately during a religious service. Why did

they pick a church, and why did they decide to kill victims as they worshiped? One man of the organization "Kach" shot Muslims while they prayed in a mosque in Israel. So often terrorism resorts to acts that no longer correspond to its primary purpose.

When you think about defining your ideals and the methods for achieving them (the details of some terrorist acts are elaborated with remarkable efficiency), evaluate your thinking. What kind of mind do you have? The Romanian word for "mind" is the same as the one for "to lie." The mind can be a liar. The mind calculates all of your attitudes, but how good a calculator is your mind? Consider only the fact that the mind can fool us in some of our dreams. Then why always trust it when you are awake?

Terrorists do not practice self-criticism. They are absolutely sure they are right. Without this conviction they could not kill. But at a certain time they thought otherwise, never planning to kill or even having a revulsion to killing. How will they feel after their first murder - or the tenth?

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, the renowned Russian writer, was a terrorist in his youth. He and a few comrades were sentenced to die. While waiting his turn, he looked down at the crowd that had assembled to enjoy the spectacle and realized the vanity of the aim he had set for himself. He had desired to help free these people, but they did not wish to be helped or freed by him. They

preferred the macabre amusement of watching him die, knowing they too would someday die. All his grandiose plans and futile endeavors for his brief life now seemed plain stupid. Doesn't religion speak about eternal life? If indeed it exists, would it not be much more important than being concerned about the merits of monarchy, democracy, or socialism?

This was the beginning of Dostoyevsky's conversion. Just before he was executed, his sentence was commuted to four years in a labor

camp. Once freed, he became one of Russia's most important Christian writers.

No individual knows what he will think the very next day. Since this is true, should I kill today when I may spend the rest of my life regretting what I have done? By way of contrast, Christian martyrs say with the apostle Paul, "I am nothing" (1CO 13:2). He also writes that all true Christians "are nothing" (GAL 6:3). Christ requires that Christians deny themselves so that He may live in them and direct every step of their life. Christians walk with secure steps. Even when they do something very different from what they previously thought, they are at peace. Yesterday was ordered by the same One who orders today. It was a preparation.

The elementary, childish things you are taught in school in the first grade are not wrong. At that stage of development, they are the right thing. First a child learns the alphabet, then he

is taught to write words, then sentences. So it is with other matters in life.

Our lives as Christians are governed by the One who created life; therefore, we can be serene, without the terrible crises of unbelievers. We know God's love to be the thread that ties together the events of our lives like a string of pearls.

The Positive Side of Terrorism

THERE IS not only a negative side to terrorists, but also a positive. There is a basis on which we can try to build friendship, if only they will agree to enlarge their capacity for love and loyalty. A man can do better than to love just one race, one party, one nation, one culture, one class, one ideology. So we say to you, our terrorist friends, don't keep to your narrow loves and loyalties. Enlarge them, expand them.

We appreciate the fact that, since you are

ready to suffer greatly for an ideal, you have freed yourselves from much selfishness.

One song often sung in churches is "Hosanna [in Hebrew, "Save, please"] in the highest." We urge you to aim for the highest. Allow yourselves to be saved in the highest sense of the word. Grasp the all-embracing love, and all-embracing ideals of God, which should multiply what Jesus did two thousand years ago. The Christian ideal lies beyond what was expressed in the limited Hebrew language during His earthly life.

Paul said, "You are a new creation" (2CO 5:17), just as you would say to a caterpillar, "You are not meant to crawl on the ground; you are called to be a beautiful, multicolored butterfly that flits from flower to flower giving joy to

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children." You have the possibility of overcoming sin, temptation, all human pettiness. You have the possibility of sitting with Jesus and His Father, the supreme God, on His throne to reign with Him (REV 3:21).

We admire you for your readiness to sacrifice yourselves; but don't do it in the service of too narrow a cause. Jesus offers you an ideal worthy of this supreme sacrifice: life eternal.

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Side-Effects of Terrorism

RIGHT JUDGMENT demands an analysis of all the aspects of an action, without neglecting any. A terrorist act is planned. It will kill an important enemy. But this enemy has innocent children or an old mother whose heart may break. Have you taken this into consideration?

In Dostoyevsky's novel ~Crime and Punishment~, we are told about a poor student who could not bear the thought that his sister was ready to give herself to a disgusting old rich man only to enable her brother to continue his studies. He knew an old lady who lived by letting students

pawn their little valuables for small loans. She knew they would not be able to pay back the money plus the enormous interest she charged, so the precious objects would remain hers.

He asked himself, "What good is it that such a bedbug should live? She serves no one. She only does harm. If I kill her and take her money, I can save my virtuous sister from prostituting herself."

He thought about every detail of the murder he would commit and was satisfied. He could not fail. But just as he was killing her, the old woman's sister, generally known to be a good Christian, entered the room. To keep her from denouncing him, he had to kill her too.

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A newly discovered medicine might cure an illness but might also have dangerous side-effects. Do you think about all the side-effects of a terrorist act?

In many countries under a dictatorship and in the third world, when terrorists are caught, the whole family goes to jail. Do you ever think about how your mother weeps to know you're a terrorist, to know you're in jail or sentenced to death, or even executed? Is it right to expose to such an ordeal the one who gave you birth and nursed you as an infant?

Terrorist friends! Just think of your mothers. What pain and irreparable harm you cause them. Is it right to do so? Should mothers be made to weep?

Libyan terrorists blew up a plane over Lockerbie, Scotland, causing the death of a hundred innocent people. What was their guilt and what good resulted for the cause of the terrorists? In Lebanon, 220 U.S. marines were killed in a car-bomb explosion. What guilt did these men bear, and what did the cause of Palestinian liberty win by this act?

And what is the end result of terror? Look at the many countries recently freed from communism. The Communists used terror to gain power, then used terror to "liberate" the population from poverty. Contrary to all promises and

expectations, the population became poorer, not richer. Only a very small percentage profited from the revolution. In Russia, Stalin jailed or

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shot all the former terrorists who had somehow escaped the Czar's gallows. In the end, commmunism collapsed.

While we as Christians do not agree with much of the terrorists' agenda, can we look upon them with less than love? They are the natural product of the society we have built. On American television programs for children, 32 acts of violence are shown per hour. By the time a child is twelve, he has viewed 18,000 murders. What results could such an education give? We instilled in the younger generation the spirit of destruction. We reap what we have sown. Some of them find delight in setting forest fires, others in wanton murder. Such things happen in the U.S. as well as in Mediterranean lands.

In some American and Western newspapers, Fidel Castro and Mao Tse-tung have been hailed as valuable reformers. Mao taught that "power lies in the barrel of a gun."

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Think Now About What You Will Say on Your Deathbed

DEAR TERRORIST friends, we tell you frankly that we have no illusions. We know that the chances of convincing you to forgo your ways and become disciples of love are very slim. But perhaps you will have a moment of illumination.

Andropov succeeded Brezhnev as dictator of the USSR. As a young officer of the Secret Police, Andropov was once confronted with the prisoner Nikolai Hrapov, a Christian pastor, for interrogation .

Hrapov argued his case with the dictator: "I have read atheist books; I suppose you must have read Christian books. Can you tell me what is

wrong about our convictions?"

Andropov with a smile - it is said he always smiled - put a bullet in his revolver and told Hrapov, "You see, a bullet costs only fifty cents. This is enough to overthrow all the proofs you have that God exists."

Such men who worship violence exclude themselves from the realm of reason. But we rely on the fact that they cannot forgo reason totally. Andropov left a notebook at his death in which he had written, "The world existed millions of years without me. I have lived a very short while. Soon I will die. And the world will continue to

exist for more millions of years. I will be completely forgotten. It is terrible to think about this."

Atheists too have moments of light, if not earlier, then on their deathbed. We rely on miracles. We believe that our weak challenge will be heeded by the best and wisest of you.

Andropov had not been a fool to trust in the power of bullets. Almost all those who instigated the Russian Revolution of 1917 were shot by their own comrade Stalin. Even more, they consented to declare at public trials, after being tortured by their own comrades in the Secret Police and threatened with guns that had bullets in their barrels, that they had never been revolutionists but agents of Western imperialism. They believed the promise that they would escape the death sentence if they gave this testimony. The promise was not kept.

After this, all heads of the Soviet Secret Police were arrested by Stalin and tortured - Yagoda, Ezhov, Beria. They also confessed in public that they had never been true Communists but spies of capitalists. Together with them thousands of officers of their Secret Police were killed by the same Secret Police.

Was the fight of Russian terrorists to overthrow the unjust czarist regime worthwhile if what followed - the cruel Soviet regime - was the result? Should one escape from a bear only to be torn by a lion?

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My heart breaks thinking about the many terrorists hanged in such countries as Algeria, Egypt, and Iran, and about the tortures they must have endured in some countries before their execution.

Are states unable to find another way to handle their young citizens who have gone astray?

Look at those who are hanged. The great majority of terrorists come from the poorer class. They have known unemployment, hunger, despair. Those of the wealthier classes had no moral education in schools and no examples of morality in public life. In school I learned trigonometry and Latin, which I never had to use. I never learned what life was all about, what my duties were and where I could obtain the spiritual power to fulfill them.

I have shown you, my terrorist friends, that I have understanding for you. Until now we have reasoned. But is reason alone enough to give us truth and guide us in life? Reason helps us sort out and react rightly to the realities of our life in the world we know. But what part of the world do we know? And how much do we know about the world we do know?

Astronomy tells us that there are millions of galaxies containing countless billions of stars. Our sun is one of them in a corner of one medium-size galaxy. This is the macrocosm. What and who is in these galaxies and beyond them?

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But there is also the microcosm, composed of trillions of elementary particles in constant movement, colliding with each other, with a lifespan of a billionth of a second! As they disappear, others are formed. There is not one cubic inch of matter that is not the theater of such clashes between elementary particles.

Is there any sense in the tremendous events

that take place in the macrocosm and microcosm?

We live on the earth, a speck of dust in an infinite universe or perhaps multiverse. Who knows? Much of the universe is constituted of what astronomers call dark matter. We know it exists because it exercises attractions that we can measure, but it does not give signals that make it perceptible. What is happening in that arena?

We live in a world that turns on its axis and revolves around the sun, then moves with the whole solar system around the galaxy center, and finally moves with our galaxy through space.

The rotation of the earth sometimes experiences sudden stops or slowdowns. You have never sensed it. Perhaps there are some other very important things that you do not sense.

In addition to the material universe, there is also the universe of thoughts, sentiments, emotions, passions, desires, aspirations, hopes, inclinations. There are not only jails and gallows where men suffer and die. There is also the hell of remorse, guilt, fear, and anxiety; the fixation on the retina of scenes of horror either endured

or perpetrated; the nightmares of evildoers whose sins have never been discovered by society; horrible sufferings in dreams, described by the prophet Daniel (The book of Daniel chapter 7).

Therefore the political and economic changes envisioned by terrorists are not sufficient because they don't address the inner man, the burdened conscience. They don't take into account the unconscious, the subconscious, and the superconscious aspects of a man's being. There are intuitions, not learned, of things you never perceived. There exist high ideals. Where do they come from? Are they from our material structure?

I know I have lungs although I have never seen them. The fact that I breathe is proof enough for me that I have lungs. Sometimes thoughts occur to me that did not originate solely within my brain. I feel an ardent love for ideals that surprise me in their ability to inflame me when usually I am entirely otherwise than the

ideal Richard Wurmbrand I wish to realize. Why?

If breathing is proof enough that I have lungs, these high thoughts - like the thoughts of terrorists to sacrifice themselves for what they consider a noble cause - indicate that there must be a higher intelligence and a higher love that inspires them, even if dimly perceived. In English, we believe that the source of all that is most beautiful, right, good, and loving is "God" - this word evokes in our minds a mighty and benevolent person.

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Whatever image you have of the source of all power, there is surely a supreme Being who created, rules, and has put in us tremendous possibilities to be grand for all eternity ourselves.

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The Justification of Unbelief

I DO NOT HOLD it against you, my terrorist friends, that you do not entrust your life to God or to His messenger Jesus. I realize that it may be difficult for you to believe in a supernatural Being.

The story is told of a Chinese gentleman who sat in his home quietly sipping his tea. A knock came at the door. It was the police.

"You are sentenced to twenty lashes. Quick! Bare yourself and stretch out to receive them."

He did so, and the police left. Then he returned to the table to finish his tea. He knew he lived under a dictatorship where this was a common occurrence.

The next day, as he sat at the breakfast table, again someone knocked at the door. Again it was the police. "You are sentenced to receive twenty lashes."

Without uttering a word, he bared himself and received them. On the third day the ritual was repeated. On the fourth day again there was a knock at the door as he drank his tea. Baring himself, he called, "Enter."

Instead of the police, beloved friends walked

in. "Have you also come to beat me?" he asked, unable to believe that people could come to his house with good intentions.

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So many have lied to us and led us astray that we have come to the point where we can't even believe God. Our total capacity to believe has been thwarted. God does not complain. He is not the only one who is not believed. We no longer believe in the stranger who knocks at our door.

Nazi terrorists were lied to by Hitler, who had promised a thousand-year Aryan Empire. Communist leaders promised an earthly paradise - another lie. So many comrades of the terrorists proved to be agents of the Secret Police infiltrated into their ranks. Even parents, children, and spouses prove to be denouncers. For terrorists it is simply difficult to believe unknown persons. No wonder they cannot believe God.

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How Is It That Belief Exists?

TERORISTS surely do well to count on the fact that people are often unreliable. That being so, why in the world do we have within us the ability to believe and to trust? We must find it useful. We have the ability to breathe, to smell, to taste, to think, to work, because these are useful activities. Why the ability to believe?

We have hands because they are needed for work. We have feet because they are needed for transport. We have the ability to believe and to trust because there is One worthy of being trusted and believed in: God, the all-loving Creator. It is God who revealed to us the sense of life. Through all His prophets and through Jesus, He revealed that this topsy-turvy world, whose injustices you do well to hate, is not the whole world. It is the preparatory stage for a world of truth, justice, light, love, and joy.

What good are the puzzles you find in

magazines? They stimulate your mind to find a solution. What good are obstacle races? They challenge you to develop your athletic skills. Just so, the intricate world into which we have been born has stimulated the human mind to create and develop in the arts and sciences. As a result, we now have fast travel by land, sea, and air; amplified hearing through microphones, hearing

aids, stereo systems; extended vision through space telescopes, electronic microscopes, and X-rays.

Why do we have such brains and such minds? What need was there for mankind to have a brain that would search out distant galaxies and explore the past looking for a beginning of the universe? What need was there for a Shakespeare or a Beethoven? A simple "human organism" would have fared well without compositions.

We have a higher calling that tells about another world.

Suppose an unborn child could think. Doubtless it would regard as "stupid religion" the idea that it would eventually have a life outside the womb. Can a child conceive of what awaits him as an adult? I am now 85. In my youth I knew thousands of old people, but it was beyond me to understand the life and thinking of an old man. So we cannot imagine our next stage as being in eternity.

Now supposing a child in the womb could think rationally, it might ask, "How come I have eyes? I live in complete darkness. Am I being prepared for another existence where there is light and color? Why do I have legs? They embarrass me. Since I can't even stretch them out, might they serve me in another world where I will have to walk or run? What good are my arms and hands? They crowd my body uselessly. Perhaps someday I will need them to work, to grasp,

to build. Why do I need a tongue? I cannot speak

or eat. This too must serve a future purpose."

But adults are in the same predicament. Just when they have accumulated knowledge, wisdom, and experience in life, the hearse awaits them. It would seem that all is in vain. But just as the embryo has a sequel, even so our earthly life has a sequel: eternal life, life after death.

Every seven years all the cells in my body are replaced. By the age of 85, I have exchanged all my cells twelve times. Only nerve cells are permanent, but they too have a metabolism. The molecules of which they are constituted change continually. I can say, without the slightest exception, that I have not one molecule left of those I had seven years ago, and at that time I had none of those I had fourteen years ago.

Who is the "I" who had these different bodies that are replaced continually? One cannot bathe twice in the same river. The water you see in it today is not the same you saw yesterday. Likewise I am not the same entity I was yesterday. I am in a process of becoming. Becoming what?

People believe that man is a body that has a soul. The inverse is the truth: we are eternal souls that during their earthly life don different bodies, from that of an embryo to that of an old man.

Our mental structure also changes constantly. Do you still think like a child or a lad of fourteen? Do you have the same affections? Do you like or dislike the same persons, books, games, food? Then who is the "I" who changes

your mentality? Has anybody ever seen this mysterious "I" dying?

Man needs very few basic things to be fully satisfied: food, clothing, housing, health, some possibility of intellectual preoccupations, little pleasures, and a sexual partner. Yet there have been millionaires with access to all these things who committed suicide. The cause: deep depression. What depressed them, since they had everything a person could need or desire? The soul that inhabits the earthly body.

On the other hand, when I was in jail with men imprisoned for their convictions, I saw

them sing though they were beaten, hungry, trembling with cold, separated from all they loved, with no books. What caused them to be happy? Their soul.

The amazing thing is that the soul can be independent of external circumstances and events. It can remain unaffected by death, which is an advancement to a higher sphere where earthly quarrels seem like child's play.

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The Challenge of Evil in the World

ALL THE EVILS you see in this life are challenges. Everything that is wrong in the world - and it is much - should be a calling not to become angry but to do better than others. The apostle Paul wrote, "Run so as to get the prize" (1CO 9:24). In a world of hate, injustice, and greed, be an example of love, mercy, and goodness! Among the haughty, shine with the power of good character, while at the same time exhibiting modesty. Be the servant of all! This is the secret of real power.

Hear what Jesus said about the ideal life to lead:

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder,' and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Idiot!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

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"Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over

to the officer, and you are thrown into prison."
"I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.
"If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.
"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.
"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."
"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth

nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
"Why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
"Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?
"Therefore do not worry, saying 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles

seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

"And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck out of your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye,

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and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye."

"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

Later the apostle Paul summarized some of Jesus' teachings:

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

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What Happens After Death?

DURING THE period of harsh dictatorship in the former Soviet Union, I met an important person from its bureaucracy who wanted to talk politics. I replied, "I have something more

important to say. I am an old man, and you too are advanced in age, though younger than I. One day I will no longer be a pastor and you will no longer represent your government, which opposes religion. One day we will both be dead.

"For a while, family and friends may come to put flowers on our graves. Then they too will die. We will be forgotten, as are most of the dead. We may lie undisturbed for a long time, but someday our graves may be plowed. It will be as if we had never been. What happens after death?"

Then I told him something about my life. I had been a sickly child. When I was very small, I overheard a doctor telling my mother, "This child cannot be cured. He will die." When he left, I asked Mother, "What does it mean to die?" She began to weep and left me without reply.

Soon after this my father died. At the funeral I saw Father lying in a coffin, then watched as the earth was shoveled over him. No Father any more? Will earth be shoveled over my corpse someday too?

In school, I was considered a good student and did well on my exams. But school did not

really interest me. Why should I learn algebra, trigonometry, and Latin when I saw adults who never made use of them? The main subject that interested me was what happened after death.

I liked to take walks through cemeteries and read the tombstones. Highly valuable literature! I take such walks even now. One inscription says the person buried there was a general. There exists no higher rank. But he died. Another was a renowned millionaire. He died too. What happened to his millions? A third was a famous poet. He no longer enjoys the fame. Some were saints, others criminals; some revolutionists, others police officers who arrested them.

Later, when I was mature, I was shown the grave of the colonel of the Secret Police who had had me arrested, and I put a flower on it. If, as he believed, there is no life after death, he did not enjoy the flowers.

It seems that at death the curtain falls, and

what had once been tragedy or comedy is ended. But in the theater, when the play is finished, the actor who died onstage arises and goes home. So it happens also at death.

I told the official that after many years of desiring an answer, I was given a Gospel. In it I read the story of One who had been, so to speak, thrice dead: first, crucified on a rude cross, then speared in the region of the heart, then immured in a rock-hewn tomb with a stone rolled against a door that was sealed and guarded by soldiers to make sure He stayed dead.

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Did Jesus Arise from the Dead?

BUT THIS Man, Jesus the crucified, was resurrected on the third day. Unbelievable? So is our universe - except for the hard fact that it is there. This Man whose corpse was guarded by Roman soldiers met, walked, talked, and ate with His disciples.

This happened two thousand years ago. But down through the centuries thousands upon thousands of people in all walks of life have experienced His presence. You can too.

Consider impartially, as if you were on a jury, the following proofs of Jesus' resurrection:

What is the source of our knowledge of ancient history? The historians of their age, among them men like Homer, Herodotus, and Julius Caesar. What is the source of our knowledge of the activities of Jesus? Contemporary historians: their names are Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and so on. Why should we believe some historians and not others?

Our intelligence should behave like an impartial court of law, carefully and competently weighing the statements of witnesses. In evaluating evidence we must consider not only what the witness says, but also his character and his trustworthiness. The credibility of the historians who described the life of Jesus is undoubtedly much

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greater than that of other historians. Who were the latter? Generally, they were paid to write by a royal personage, and their aim was not to make known the truth but rather to flatter their master, their people, or the social class to which they belonged.

By contrast, the historians who wrote the Gospels are of an entirely different stature. They risked loss of liberty and death for what they wrote. Matthew died as a martyr in Abyssinia, John was condemned to slave labor on the island of Patmos, and Paul was beheaded in Rome. Peter was crucified upside down.

No impartial court would lightly dismiss the evidence of witnesses ready to suffer such hardships for what they assert. All of them declare unanimously that they were convinced, by seeing, hearing, and touching, of the reality of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

I know that this argument can be contradicted. What the other historians relate are things that can easily be understood and believed. They write about court intrigue, kings' favorites, plots, murder, war, things that happen even today, whereas the writers of the Gospels tell us of things that run counter to our human experience.

Among other things, they write of a virgin birth, of the healing of lepers by a simple touch, of walking on water, of the feeding of a great multitude with a few loaves, of men rising from the dead, and finally of Jesus' own resurrection,

which was followed by His ascension into heaven. All these things come into the category of miracles, whereas today some "enlightened" people no longer believe in miracles.

The miracles that Jesus performed occurred in the sphere of the exceptional, whose existence cannot be denied. In everyday life it is not only ordinary things that occur. A man who does not believe in miracles is not a realist.

Furthermore, men consider as miracles things that a person with greater than average

intelligence or muscular power can do and that a weak person with an ordinaly intelligence is incapable of doing. Missionaries who have worked among primitive tribes record that the savages regard them as miracle-workers. This is not surprising since primitive people spend hours rubbing two pieces of wood together in order to produce a spark, whereas the missionary knows how to produce fire from a box of matches. He can even make stinking water burn. How is the savage to know that this "water" is gasoline?

The writer Pearl Buck informs us that when she told peasant women in backward parts of China that in England there were houses built on top of one another and that carriages moved through the streets without being drawn by horses, one of the women whispered, "What a lie! That sort of thing is impossible."

With sixty Spaniards under his command, Cortez conquered the powerful Aztec kingdom

because he appeared to the people he conquered to be a miracle-maker. In the first place, the very appearance of the Spaniards was miraculous. Never before had the Aztecs seen white men. Secondly, the newcomers possessed miraculous things that the Aztecs had never seen before: horses and firearms. And so a huge kingdom fell without a struggle into the hands of a few adventurers.

Jesus had a spiritual force such as no other person has ever possessed. It is not surprising that He was capable of performing miracles. Being exceptional, He could do unique things that would be impossible for ordinary men.

It is foolish to be prejudiced, declaring that miracles are impossible and rejecting them without carefully examining the evidence of people as trustworthy as the apostles. Either you can believe in Jesus' miraculous resurrection from the dead, or you have to believe in another miracle that is still greater: that an effect exists without a cause, because if Jesus did not arise from the dead, the existence of the universal

Church would be such a miraculous happening.

Let's examine the evidence: Jesus wrote no book, and while He lived on earth He did not establish anything but a very small sect within Judaism, a sect consisting mostly of unlearned people who were not considered reputable citizens - sinful men, publicans, and fallen women. Finally, one of His closest followers betrayed Him, another denied Him, and the others

deserted Him. He died on a cross, abandoned and apparently despairing, because as He hung on the cross He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?"
[PSA 22:1; MTT 27:46; MRK 15:34]

After His death, He was buried, a large stone was placed in front of His sepulcher, and guards were posted. Meanwhile, His former disciples remained in hiding behind locked doors, and their only concern was to escape a death similar to that of their Master. This was how Jesus' life on earth ended. If He did not arise, how has the Christian Church come into being?

We have an explanation. On the third day, Jesus came back to life from the dead and appeared on numerous occasions to His apostles, assuring them that it was really Himself they saw, touched, and dined with. They came together again as they had previously, and the risen Jesus spent time instructing them, giving them guidance, and providing the power to do signs and wonders.

The very same cowardly Peter who had denied any knowledge of Jesus with curses and oaths stood up in the marketplace in Jerusalem and courageously testified that he had seen the risen Jesus. The other apostles did so too. Risking death, they traveled from one country to another, sealing with a martyr's death their conviction that Jesus had risen. In this way, the universal Church was born, it has grown, and it has survived, despite persecution and the unworthiness of its members.

If you are not prepared to admit that Jesus has risen from the dead, then this tremendous effect represented by the Christian Church - a Church that has survived for two thousand years and has millions of members - is an effect without a cause. It takes a greater naivete to accept the existence of such an effect without cause than to admit that Jesus Christ has really risen.

When a man enters a tall building, it might be a good idea, before climbing the stairs to the tenth floor, to go down first into the cellar and make sure that the foundations are sound. But why should it be necessary to do this? The fact that the building is standing is proof of the strength of the foundations.

The foundation stone on which the Christian Church was built is the resurrection of Jesus. The large, well-known building founded on this stone has stood for two millenniums and has resisted tremendous earthquakes. The existence of the Church is a proof that Christ has risen.

Another argument: Nowhere do we find that the enemies of the primitive Church at any time denied that the sepulcher of Jesus was found to be empty on Easter morning. It would have been quite natural for an investigation to be set on foot to discover whether the body had been stolen or desecrated. The reaction of the Jewish priests does not contradict the assertion that the grave was empty; they merely told the soldiers who had guarded the sepulcher to spread the rumor that His disciples had come during the

night, while they were asleep, and stolen the body.

Now, if they were asleep, how could they have identified the thieves? Augustine rightly asks: "Does the synagogue introduce us to witnesses who were asleep when this deed was carried out?" If the Jewish priests really believed that Jesus' disciples had stolen the body, why were they not arrested, interrogated, and punished?

A strong movement must be carried forward by a strong impetus. The strong movement that

has lasted for two thousand years and has had a worldwide effect, based on the belief in the resurrection of Jesus, cannot have been the product of hallucination. None of Jesus' disciples were men who suffered from hallucinations, certainly not doubting Thomas and the practical businessman Matthew, nor such men of the sea as Andrew, nor the cautious Nathaniel, nor Peter with his weak character. Only an event as tremendous as a real resurrection could have produced an impetus capable of starting a movement of this kind.

Nor must we forget that during the first thirty years after this event, most of Jesus' disciples suffered a violent death, and many of them were condemned to death precisely because they maintained that Jesus had risen from the dead. These things cannot have been invented.

Under the very noses of the Jewish priests, Jesus' apostles started to preach to the Jewish people, declaring that Jesus was the Messiah, a

fact proved by His resurrection. In this way they came into conflict with the authorities. Any sensible person might ask, "Would it be possible to launch a movement of this kind and recruit thousands of supporters in a single day if the dead body of Jesus had really existed?" Peter preached his first sermon only a few hundred yards from His sepulcher. If Jesus' enemies had been in a position to prove that His body was still there, the sermon would have been a failure and would never have persuaded thousands of people to be baptized. But Jesus was not in the tomb. His enemies were powerless.

The apostles did not visit the tomb of Jesus because it had no significance as far as they were concerned. (Saul of Tarsus, after he was converted, came to Jerusalem and met the apostles but was not concerned with visiting the tomb, not even out of mere respect.) Nor did His enemies investigate the tomb to convince themselves and others that Jesus was still there. This is yet another proof that Jesus really rose from the dead. A great many people undertake

pilgrimages to the tombs of minor saints. Even though the first apostles knew of this custom in Israel (MTT 23:29), they were not interested in visiting Jesus' tomb because they knew it was empty.

All this was so universally accepted that the disciples started preaching, not in a provincial town where it would be difficult to check their statements, but in Jerusalem itself, arousing the

enthusiasm of thousands of people and - what was still more remarkable - facing enemies who were impotent, because they were not in a position to deny that Jesus' tomb was empty. When the priests maintained that the body of Jesus had been stolen by the apostles, anyone could have answered them, "Why don't you arrest and sentence the men who have carried out this theft?"

The suggestion that Jesus did not actually die on the cross but merely fell into a deep swoon and recovered consciousness in the cool tomb is still more ridiculous. The soldiers saw that he was dead. Furthermore, how could He have pushed aside the stone, which had been sealed by the Roman authorities, and overpowered the guards after so much suffering? Could He have gone anywhere, naked as He was, with only a winding sheet for cover? He could have sought shelter only with one or more of His disciples. Had He done this, however, His disciples would have realized that He had not risen from the dead. Would they have been willing to give their lives for a lie they themselves had hatched?

We are compelled to believe what the Gospel writers say because they reveal such naivete when relating unflattering things about themselves. What induced them to spread abroad by word of mouth and in their writings that Peter, one of Jesus' closest friends, had been called "Satan" by his Master and had denied Him three times on the night that He was betrayed? The only motive I can discover is that they showed an

uncompromising regard for the truth. The band of apostles was a collection of men who were guided by the truth. We can trust their evidence.

The remarkable thing is that when the apostles affirm the resurrection of Jesus to an audience of doubters (even in those days people were skeptical about stories of angels, resurrections, and so on), they merely affirm, without producing a single confirmatory piece of evidence. This was possible because what they maintained was a well-known and undisputed fact among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. After all, the risen Jesus had at one time appeared to five hundred persons, who must have had several thousand relatives with whom they shared their story.

The resurrection of Jesus can also be proved by two very famous conversions that could not be explained in any other way.

The first was the conversion of James, the brother of Jesus, to a faith in Him as the Messiah. While Jesus lived on earth, James did not believe in Him but considered Him to be out of His mind. The historian Josephus Flavius describes James as a very upright man. How was it possible that he became an apostle and martyr after the death of Jesus? Anyone reading James' letter will note that this is a Jewish letter, without any Christian characteristics. This leads us to realize that it was not the teaching of Jesus that made an impression on James and brought about his conversion.

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What was the cause? It can only have been what we are told in the New Testament, that Jesus after His resurrection appeared to His brother and that the latter admitted his mistake and in remorse wrote the chapter in which he condemns his own former sin of judging and speaking against Jesus.

The second conversion was that of the rabbi Saul of Tarsus. This man had a vision on the road to Damascus in which Jesus appeared to him and spoke to him, whereupon Saul immediately became a disciple. Would this have been possible

on purely psychological grounds? Even though Mohammed were to appear to me ten times, I would tell myself that I was suffering from hallucinations, and I certainly would not become a Mohammedan. Why should things have turned out so differently for the man who was to become the apostle Paul?

The truth is that he knew Jesus' tomb was empty, without being able to find a plausible explanation for this fact unless he admitted to himself that Jesus had risen. This was the crux of the matter: when he encountered Jesus, the last shred of doubt disappeared. He was converted. He later made his way to Jerusalem, but he had not the slightest intention of going to the tomb in order to shed tears of remorse there. He knew it was empty. He surely discussed with the apostles how to preach the resurrection. It would have been a psychological impossibility for the

apostles, being the sort of men they were, to discuss how best to preach a lie.

Probably the most telling proof of the resurrection is the fact that millions of sinners in the history of mankind have changed their mind and become holy people. This miracle is happening daily in the Church. If you ask these people how this miracle of rebirth happened, their answer is always that Jesus did it. It is certain that it is a living Jesus, not a dead one, who has brought about these new births. I am one of these people.

The cumulative force of these arguments compels me to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. But let me turn to an argument from a person of real authority. Professor Theodor Mommsell, the great historian of the Roman Empire, wrote: "The resurrection of Jesus is the event in ancient history which has been more conclusively proved than any other event."

There is something more. If a woman's husband is missing in a war and believed to be dead, and then one, two, three, four people, in fact countless people, come and tell her that they have seen him in a prisoner-of-war camp, then

the wife will trust those people. We are in the same situation. Those who believed that Christ was dead heard the witness of the women, of the apostles, of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, of five hundred people who had seen Him on the same day. After this it was only normal for them to believe that Jesus was no longer dead, but alive.

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How Can You Contact Jesus Personally?

WHEN I FIRST heard sensible arguments for the existence of God and the resurrection of Jesus, I decided to find out for myself. I said, "I will pray - or rather un-pray - to the non-God."

I said in effect, "God, I know for sure that you do not exist. It would be nice to have somewhere a loving, almighty father. It is sad that You are only a figment of the imagination, a fancy of ignorant believers. But supposing that perchance You exist, it is not my duty to believe in You. It is Your duty to reveal Yourself to me. I have done many vain things in life. This prayer is one more link in the chain of stupid things I have said. I'm sorry about that, God. I would have preferred that You exist."

Well, this un-prayer was accepted. I read the Bible. I spoke with believers, not about their creeds but about their real experiences. Afterwards, I experienced some encounters myself. I am as sure that I have seen Jesus and heard Him speaking to me as I am sure of having spoken to my wife, though a tape recorder would have registered nothing. But have you never heard voices of persons who love or hate you much, encouraging and strengthening, or warning or threatening you? Aren't our perceptions broader than the sound-range of a machine?

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Since every individual is different, encounters with Jesus also take different forms. I encourage you to try. If you wish, you can succeed.

I will tell you how one person came to have a personal fellowship with Jesus.

A pastor once asked a young man from a godly family who had drifted away from church, "Do you ever pray?"

He answered, "Never. I don't have anyone to pray to. No matter how loudly I shouted, those in the floor above me would not hear. I never had any sign that anyone in the air or beyond would be interested in listening to me."

The pastor told him, "I know you are interested in many sports, as well as art and science. You must also have many hobbies. I propose that you make an experiment. If it does not succeed, you have lost nothing except a few moments of your life - if one can say that an experiment with negative results is lost time. Dr. Wassermann made 605 negative experiments to find a remedy for syphilis. On the 606th he succeeded. Therefore the medicine against syphilis is called 606. The 605 negative experiments were not squandered efforts, but rather steps toward the discovery of truth.

"Tonight before going to bed, sit in a comfortable chair with an empty chair before you and imagine that Jesus sits in it. You know He is not there and consider Him long since dead, but you also know from general culture what He is believed to have been: a powerful, all-loving Son

of God who came to earth to die for the sins of all mankind. It is a matter of record that He died on the cross. His adherents believe that He was resurrected and is alive. If - as I believe - He is God, He is omnipresent and can hear you.

"Never mind that you don't believe this. When Marco Polo returned from his travels in Asia in the fourteenth century and said he had been in places where men are yellow and have slanted eyes, that they write vertically instead of horizontally, he was called 'Marco Polo the liar.'

"There may be a grain of truth even in what everyone considers a lie.

"If the experiment has no result, you will have an amusing story to tell and will be more

confirmed in your unbelief.

"Now, imagine that this Jesus, who is only a fancy, sits before you. What would you say if He were really there? Each of us leads imaginary conversations with members of our family who are not present or friends and loved ones far away. There is no one without such imaginary discussions.

"So imagine you are talking to Jesus. Don't use religious phrases. He is weary of religious cliches uttered by people without conviction. Those who sentenced Him to death had uttered beautiful prayers the night before. If you think His teachings are wrong, tell Him so. Tell Him that you consider Him a figment of your imagination and that you only amuse yourself, that you wish to lead a life of self-fulfillment in your

trade and leisure. He has heard worse words. When His own people swore at Him, He was not angry at them. He knew their stage of spiritual development.

"I can assure you that what you say the first time will be just a monologue. But do it again the next day and say to Him, 'If you had a real existence, which I contest, I would have some earnest questions to put to you. What kind of God are You? You are said to be almighty and good. Then why all the tragedy and suffering in the world?'

"Tell Him the worst things you have endured in life. Carry on a monologue, with the other chair before you, about the evils in this world. By the way, you might remember to tell Him about some evils you yourself have done. There is no one else in the room. Just recount the evil done to you and by you. Such an emptying of the mind from the things that burden it is very useful, even if there is no one to listen." (In Freudian psychiatric sessions, the psychiatrist sits behind the patient so that he sees nobody.)

"On the third day, still with the armchair opposite you, speak to Him about the good and beautiful things you have encountered. You might remember that you have often neglected

to show thankfulness. You have seen lovely flowers. You have met or read about great and good men. You wonder how such splendid characters and so many geniuses have developed in an evil world. Tell Him how amazed you are at the

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vastness of the sky and the multitude of stars. Mention the sun that gives light and life to evil and good alike.

Think of how nice it would be if you could also be like them spreading around you the light of joy, truth, and love. Ask Jesus how to be such a model of life.

If you succeed in following all my suggestions and earnestly ask the question, "How can bring happiness into the lives of those I encounter and bring a smile to their lips?, your monologue will become a dialogue.

I cannot tell you specifically what He will reply to you because I am not Jesus. He knows that each person is unique and tailors His answer accordingly. But He will speak to you.

I know about one unbeliever who acted just as I have described above and came to converse with Jesus. He did so daily for many years. One present at his death recounted that his last gesture before dying was to stretch out his hand to his unseen Friend in that armchair which he always kept near his bed.

I have already given you proofs of Christ's resurrection. You can have one proof more, a decisive one: that you have talked with Him yourself.

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Does God Have a Son?

JESUS ACCREDITED Himself as God's messenger. He is acknowledged by Christians to be God's Son, which should not offend Muslims or Jews who believe in God but claim that He has

no wife and does not procreate. If you are among these, understand that the appellation "Son" was never meant to be understood biologically.

The Jews of old had a language of few words. The Hebrew Bible has only 6,500 words, in contrast to the massive vocabulary of the English or German language. The word "Son" was used for many notions, for which we today have different words.

Son was used for "descendant." Jesus was called the Son of David though He was twenty-eight generations removed from him. It was also used for "disciple," as in the Biblical expression "sons of the prophets."

The Hebrew language was especially limited in adjectives. The Jews called hot-tempered people "sons of thunder" (MRK 3:17), and peaceful men "sons of peace" (LUK 10:6). Generally male believers are called "sons of God" (2CO 6:18).

Don't be offended at expressions used thousands of years ago by men of an entirely different culture. Simply understand that believing souls

who met Jesus experienced an encounter with God. They said to themselves that if God were to walk on earth as a man, He would be like Jesus. They knew they had met God.

Can God's Existence Be Proved?

ISN'T THE notion "God" false?

Well, I never had any proof that I exist, that I have a brain or lungs. But surely I do exist. If not, who is the one who asks the question? I breathe, therefore I have lungs. I think, therefore I have a brain.

I perceive a reality apart, which in religion is called "God."

Do I perceive Him as I perceive other realities? Would video cameras record this presence? No. Then doesn't this make me doubt what I experience? No, because it is a perception much

more intense than everyday realities I experience. The power with which this presence impacts me goes beyond all the limits of human technique. It also exceeds the very limited power of the human mind. The apostle Paul, a deep thinker in matters of religion, calls man's wisdom "the foolishness of God" because God goes beyond human reason. He also belongs to another sphere.

Columbus discovered a world unknown to Europeans. God's children have also discovered a reality unknown to others.

We cannot put much of this experience in human words, because the vocabulary of all languages comes from sense perceptions. But there

is also a supersensory reality. We had a glimpse of the Creator and then received through Jesus His revelation for mankind.

No arguments for the existence of God are needed. What argument do we need for the existence of existence?

Make Great Plans

YOU ARE right to desire changes in society. The best revolutionaries are those who start on themselves. Therefore become a light yourself.

You wish the good of your race, religion, class, party, country, but you use your energy within the limits of only a small portion of reality. Other races, classes, nations, religions, and parties have their own agenda, and you will find yourself in conflict with them. The end result will be as much unhappiness as before. Therefore don't make small plans.

Jesus lived as a Man among men. He was a poor, unknown carpenter. What if He had applied His power to save the Jews from Roman oppression? The Jews were a small people. If they had defeated the Romans, the Greeks or another

empire would have oppressed them. What if Jesus had fought the existing religious institutions in which truth had been corrupted? More recent history provides an example. Centuries ago there was a struggle to overthrow Catholicism, which had suffered corruption. As a result, Protestantism arose, which has gone the same route of corruption.

A small group of Serbian terrorists wanted a free Serbian state of their own, without belonging to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Therefore they killed the Austrian crown prince.

The result was World War I, in which all continents were involved and ten million died. The whole political structure of the world was altered. Seventy years have passed since the incident. Today Serbia is much worse off than it once was. In retrospect, was it wise for the terrorists to murder the Archduke Ferdinand?

Jesus says that His intention is "to save the world" (JHN 3:17), not to destroy it. If His purpose is achieved by us, there would be true peace and happiness. It would be wise to make Jesus' universal plan of salvation your own.

There exists in the universe the law of unintended consequences: in a complex system it is not always possible to predict what the consequences of any change will be.

Terrorists use stone-age methods in twentieth-century society. Savages knew only how to throw a stone or hurl a spear at the enemy. They had no language skills for negotiating with an adversary. In fact, even today there are primitive tribes with a vocabulary of only a few hundred words. Without such words as sympathy, tenderness, compromise, how could they come to an understanding with their fellow men?

Today most nations have a rich vocabulary and various means of communication: the printed word, radio, TV, even a knowledge of psychology. Talk is a much more efficient means of solving problems than violence.

The heart of many men is like a dark cellar full of cockroaches, termites, and snakes. We

men are limited and therefore can never find a solution valid for all the problems of the world. Jesus is an exceptional being. He demonstrated a truth adequate under all circumstances and in all ages. It is love and faith.

With his limitations man can only provide remedies of limited value. But Jesus has the key to the kingdom of eternal peace and holiness because He is both human and divine. He has been rightly identified as the Son of God.

The majority of those who knew Him when He walked on earth refused His message. They preferred their sins and their petty enmities to divine love. Sin crucified Jesus two thousand years ago. Sin still kills today.

You will agree with the Bible when it speaks about the evil in men. You rightly consider your adversaries to be evil. But the Bible also asserts that "the best of men are like a briar" (MIC 7:4). You too need repentance and forgiveness.

In our knowledge of the universe and of man himself, we have only scratched the surface. About our own selves we have scant knowledge. One virus or one sudden burst of unreasonableness - and who does not have such? - can destroy all our plans. To serve mankind successfully, we need God's wisdom.

Who Is Your Adversary...Your Friend?

WHILE in prison in Nuremberg, Goering (Hitler's right-hand man) was asked before being sentenced to death, "How is it that the mightiest German army, with the best generals and finest armaments, has suffered an unprecedented total defeat, surrendering unconditionally?"

He replied, "We did not know how powerful the Soviet army was or that the Western armies

would ally themselves with it." Lack of knowledge ruined Hitler's plan to erect his thousand-year empire.

How much do you really know? Won't you end up on the gallows like the Nazi leaders or in jail hecause you did not know well your adversaries, or even the head of your own trusted organization? And what if he proves to be unreliable?

In the Bible we read that the eyes of God run to and fro over all the earth. He is the only One who has foresight, insight, hindsight, throughsight, the only One who sees all aspects of a thing or situation. If you take God as your guide, you cannot fail.

Since man was created for a Christlike life, it is our duty to live this life. Because we have not lived up to this ideal it does not mean that we have lost all chance for change. When Jesus died

on the cross, He prayed that His crucifiers might be forgiven. In the history of mankind there has never been a sin greater than this: to kill the One who has come to save. But if even this sin can be forgiven, then all of our sins can be forgiven. When one of the thieves crucified near Him entreated for forgiveness, Jesus readily forgave him and promised him a place in paradise. [LUK 23:43]

One can object that if the worst of criminals can be so easily forgiven, justice is no longer possible. If a person is obliged to give to whoever asks - without discerning if he is entitled to ask - then one has no defense against a robber. If everyone turned the other cheek when physically abused, if thieves who stole one thing were recompensed with something even more precious, society would soon disintegrate. In fact, criminals would flourish in a society where evil deeds are rewarded.

We understand that you would have a hard time adapting to such all-forgiving and all-embracing love. But Jesus knew that mankind, as it is, could not live according to these laws.

These are precepts for a special category of people who are spiritually beyond the average person. They have passed through a new experience:

they have received a new heart. The very seat of sentiments, emotions, and high thoughts has been changed. Such individuals are spiritually born again, though physically they continue to be citizens of this world.

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But just as geniuses are beyond the intellectual level of their fellows, so Jesus' disciples are qualitatively beyond other men, because in them the character of their Master is embodied. They have identified with Him as His body. He works through them. They have a calling different from the rest of the world.

The marrow of Jesus' teachings is the idea of substitution. In crucifixion, He substituted Himself for sinners. He identified with them. He bore the punishment for our sins and thus obtained forgiveness and cleanliness for us. He has risen from the dead and ascended to heaven, but the world is not without His visible presence. We are now called to do His exceptional works - yea, even greater ones than His - [JHN 1:50] to speak His words, to bring His peace to a troubled world.

He is our substitute before the heavenly Father. We identify with the Holiest of all, and He identifies with us because we are one with Him. All of His righteousness is attributed to us. We bring into the world His love. In exchange, He has taken upon Himself all of our sins as if He had committed them. He became the personification of human sin, enduring on the cross the punishment we deserved. Our ugly past is washed away. Through Him we become white as snow.

We can have fellowship with God as with a loving father; we have angels as our ministers. We are called upon to be lights in the world. The rules in the Sermon on the Mount are for us.

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Only we can accomplish them. We will work on ourselves more and more as Christ leads us in order to obtain His character. This can be the

content of our whole earthly life.

Other men's striving for self-improvement is vain. For what purpose is all of their effort? To prepare for the grave? But we know that this life is only an episode preparatory to an eternal one. It is a prologue. We prepare ourselves for blessings without end.

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The Real Revolution

MICHELANGELO was opposed to painting a portrait of a maid if she lacked classic beauty. In his works of art he eliminated the imperfections of nature. So we must allow Jesus to eliminate from us everything that is imperfect. This is the revolution to be accomplished.

Terrorists are opposed to rulers, governments, rich men, captains of industry, and so on. Christians desire to be men "after God's own heart" - men of love. We recommend this to you as well.

Terrorists are not isolated individuals or groups. They express very widespread feelings. In Italy, a certain Pietro Maso killed his parents. While in jail, he received hundreds of letters of solidarity for his revolutionist courage, despite the fact that he belonged to a dangerous species. Civilization has at once reached the highest peak of artistic sensibility and the lowest depth of mindless bestiality.

We call you, our friends, to the highest: to be Christlike. We pray you may accept this calling. But there is an old maxim of wisdom: "What cannot be turned to good must at least be kept from being very bad."

Francis of Assisi was told that bandits had settled in the forest near his monastery and that

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they were a threat to the lives of worshipers. He was asked, "Should we call the police?"

He answered, "No. Instead, go to them with some food and wine and tell them, 'Francis

blesses you and asks one thing of you. He understands that you cannot change your lives all at once. He understands that you cannot do without stealing. But promise at least not to kill.'" This they promised. After a time, he asked them not to steal at least on Sundays and on great feasts because then many worshipers came to church. Thus successively he convinced them to give up stealing.

I knew a wise Christian mother whose son had become a robber. She was unable to bring him to conversion, but he listened to her when she advised him to change from robber to pick-pocket. "Robbers can be shot when they break into houses and can also be tempted to shoot. A pickpocket's life is safer," she told him. He was convinced. Later he also gave up being a pick-pocket.

It is always good to make worthwhile steps to improve yourself a step at a time. But there exists also the possibility of a total inner revolution.

You can have complete forgiveness in a moment for every wrong you have ever done. You can also obtain a new character that will make you a blessing to others and will fit you for a beautiful life here and in eternity.

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Jesus, Your Friend

I END WITH the thought with which I began.

Many look at terrorists with fear, others with hate. Jesus fears and hates no one. Like God who gives sunshine and rain to all, so He loves and desires to forgive and save all. You can rely on Him as on a friend.

The story is told of two brothers who once lived completely opposite lives. The older was a God-fearing man, good to everyone. The younger was rebellious, even violent. The older brother tried to influence him, but in vain.

One evening, while the older sat quietly in his home, the brother stormed in with blood on his clothes, shouting, "Save me if you can! I have killed a man and the police are after me!"

The older replied, "Quick! Let's change

clothes."

They did so. The murderer donned the white garment, and the innocent put on the blood-stained one.

Scarcely had they finished when the police arrived. Seeing the older brother in bloody clothes, they knew they had found their man and dragged him from his home. They had no doubt that he was the one they sought.

Brought to court, the accused admitted his guilt. The judge bowed to what seemed clear evidence and sentenced him to death.

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He had one last wish: "At the moment of my execution, please give my brother this letter." His wish was granted.

Later, when the brother opened the letter, he read: "I died in your place, in your bloody garment, for your guilt. I was happy to make this sacrifice for you and ask only one thing, that you live a life of love and goodness."

The innocent was dead. Nothing could change that fact. But as often as former comrades asked the younger to participate in an act of violence, he replied, "I cannot do it in the white garment I received from the brother who died for me."

This is exactly what Jesus did for each one of us. He Himself was without any sin. But He took upon Himself the sins of us all and bore our punishmeut as He expired on the cross. His blood can cleanse you from all of your sins, just as He cleansed me from mine. Believe in Him and you will be saved from hate and despair. He will make you a child of God who will spread love and light.

So says God in His holy book, the Bible.

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A Law of the Other World

BESIDES THE visible, palpable world, there also exists a world of ideals, aspirations,

hopes, sentiments, reason, and intuition. There is the world of the spirit, which is different from the material world.

The metaphysical realm has laws very different from those of the world we perceive with our senses.

In this world everyone has to deal with the consequences of their own decisions. Not so in God's world where love reigns. Love always identifies with the beloved. Jesus, the perfect Son of God, became sin out of love for sinners. For their part, sinners who love Him to the point of receiving Him become sons and daughters of God in His image. It is an exchange of garments.

In the spiritual world, a Lover can take upon Himself the guilt of others just as if it were His own. In return, the guilty obtains the lily-whiteness of the Lover, who is Jesus.

You might be burdened with the remembrance of some very evil deed you have committed, and you might ask yourself if God's pardon extends to someone like you.

Be confident! No human sin can be greater than God's grace.

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Once a very poor girl from a small town went to the big city to earn some money to support her old mother. Soon after her arrival, she realized that an attractive girl can earn more money without working than by honest work.

Recognizing her own assets, she became all too .successful. She pleased men and soon had money, jewels, and a life of revelry. Her mother was forgotten. What does a mother count when one dances to popular tunes?

Years passed by. One day she was stricken with remorse and asked herself, "I wonder how my mother is. I have neglected her completely."

She took the first train to her old village, arriving late at night. To her amazement, she found the gate of her house wide open. Her mother was always careful to lock it at night. Then she saw a light burning in the window of her mother's bedroom. A lamp burning so late? Mother usually went to bed early. Might she be

sick?
     When she crossed the threshold, she heard her mother's voice: "Joan, is that you?"
     "Yes, mother," she replied. "But how is it that the gate is wide open so late at night?"
     "Since you left, the gate has not been closed."
     "But why is the light burning so late? Why aren't you asleep?"
     "Since you left, it has never been extinguished. A loving mother's heart waited for you."

The end of "Jesus: Friend to Terrorists"

Marx & Satan

Richard Wurmbrand
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Introduction

This work started as a small brochure containing only hints about possible connections between Marxism and the Satanist church.

No one had ventured to write about this before. Therefore I was cautious, even timid. But in the course of time more and more evidence has accumulated in my files, evidence I hope will convince you of the spiritual danger part and parcel of communism.

Marxism has governed over one-third of mankind. If it could be shown that the originators and perpetrators of this movement were indeed behind-closed-doors devil-worshipers, consciously exploiting Satanic powers, would not such a startling realization require action?

If some were to reject my thesis out of hand, it would not surprise me. Science and technology advance at a rapid pace because we are always ready to scrap obsolescent machinery in favor of new conveniences. It is quite different in affairs of sociology or religion. Ideas die hard, and a mindset, unlike a computer chip, is not easily altered or replaced. Even fresh evidence may fail to persuade. The doors of some

minds have rusty hinges. But I offer credible proofs to support my thesis, and I invite you to carefully consider them.

The Communists certainly took note of this book which has been translated into Russian, Chinese, Romanian, German, Slovak, and other languages, and was smuggled into Iron Curtain countries in great quantities. For instance, the East Berlin journal ~Deutsche Lehrerzeitung~, under the heading "The Killer of Marx," denounced my book vehemently, calling it "the most broadly based, provocative, and heinous work written against Marx."

Can Marx be so easily destroyed? Is this his Achilles' heel? Would Marxism be discredited if men knew about his connection with Satanism? Do enough people care?

Marxism is the great fact of modern life. Whatever your opinion of it, whether or not you believe in the existence of Satan, whatever importance you attach to the cult of Satan practiced in certain circles, I ask you to consider, weigh, and judge the documentation I present here.

I trust it will help you orient yourself to the problems with which Marxism still confronts every inhabitant of the globe today.

The majority of the members of the Russian Parliament remain Communists. Russia and its surrounding area remain on the brink of Civil war. -Ed. Notes 1993

Richard Wurmbrand

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Marx's Christian Writings

Today much of the world is still Marxist. Marxism in one form or another is embraced by many in capitalist countries, too. There are even Christians, and amazingly, clergymen, some in high standing, who are sure that while Jesus might have had the right answers about how to get to heaven, Marx had the right answers about how to help the hungry, destitute, and oppressed here on earth.

Marx, it is said, was deeply humane. He was dominated by one idea: how to help the exploited masses. What impoverishes them, he maintained, is capitalism. Once this rotten system is overthrown after a transitional period of dictatorship of the proletariat, a society will emerge in which everyone will work according to his abilities in factories and farms belonging to the collective, and will be rewarded according to his needs. There will be no state to rule over the individual, no wars, no revolution, only an everlasting, universal brotherhood.

In order for the masses to achieve happiness, more

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is needed than the overthrow of capitalism. Marx writes:

The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of man is a requisite for their real happiness. The call to abandon their illusions about their conditions is a call to abandon a condition which requires illusions. The criticism of religion is, therefore, the criticism of this vale of tears of which religion is the halo. [1]

Allegedly, Marx was antireligious because religion obstructs the fulfillment of the Communist ideal, which he considered the only answer to the world's problems.

This is how Marxists explain their position, and sadly there are clergymen who explain it in the same

way. Rev. Oestreicher of Britain said in a sermon:

Communism, whatever its present varied forms of expression, both good and bad, is in origin a movement for the emancipation of man from exploitation by his fellowman. Sociologically, the Church was and largely still is on the side of the world's exploiters. Karl Marx, whose theories only thinly veil a passion for justice and brotherhood that has its roots in the Hebrew prophets, loathed religion because it was used as an instrument to perpetuate a status quo in which children were slaves and worked to death in order to make others rich here in Britain. It was no cheap jibe a hundred years ago to say that religion was the opium of the masses.... As members of the body of Christ we must come in simple penitence knowing that we owe a deep debt to every Communist. [2]

Marxism makes an impression on people's thinking because of its success, but success proves nothing. Witch doctors often succeed too. Success confirms error as well as truth. Conversely, failure can be constructive, opening the way to deeper truth. So an analysis of

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some of Marx's works should be made without regard to their success.

Who was Marx? In his early youth, Karl Marx professed to be and lived as a Christian. His first written work is called ~The Union of the Faithful with Christ~. There we read these beautiful words:

Through love of Christ we turn our hearts at the same time toward our brethren who are inwardly bound to us and for whom He gave Himself in sacrifice.

Marx knew a way for men to become loving brethren toward one another Christianity.

He continues:

Union with Christ could give an inner elevation, comfort in sorrow, calm trust, and a heart susceptible to human love, to everything noble and great, not for the sake of ambition and glory, but only for the sake of Christ. [3]

At approximately the same time Marx writes in his thesis ~Considerations of a Young Man on Choosing His Career~:

Religion itself teaches us that the Ideal toward which all strive sacrificed Himself for humanity, and who shall dare contradict such claims? If we have chosen the position in which we can accomplish the most for Him, then we can never be crushed by burdens, because they are only sacrifices made for the sake of all. [4]

Marx started out as a Christian believer. When he finished high school, the following was written on his graduation certificate under the heading "Religious Knowledge":

His knowledge of the Christian faith and morals is fairly clear and well grounded. He knows also to some extent the history of the Christian church. [5]

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However, in a thesis written at the same time he repeated six times the word "destroy," which not even one of his colleagues used in the exam. "Destroy" then became his nickname. It was natural for him to want to destroy because he spoke about mankind as "human trash" and said, "No man visits me and I like this, because present mankind may [an obscenity]. They are a bunch of rascals."

Marx's First Anti-God Writings

Shortly after Marx received this certificate, something mysterious happened in his life: he became profoundly and passionately antireligious. A new Marx began to emerge.

He writes in a poem, "I wish to avenge myself against the One who rules above." [6] So he was convinced that there is One above who rules, but was quarreling with Him. Yet, the One above had done him no wrong. Marx belonged to a relatively well-to-do family. He had not faced hunger in his childhood. He was much better off than many fellow students. What produced such a terrible hatred for God? No personal motive is known. Was Karl Marx in this declaration only someone else's mouthpiece? We don't know.

At an age when most young men have beautiful dreams of doing good to others and preparing a career for themselves, the young Marx wrote the following

lines in his poem "Invocation of One in Despair":

So a god has snatched from me my all,
In the curse and rack of destiny.
All his worlds are gone beyond recall.
Nothing but revenge is left to me.

I shall build my throne high overhead,
Cold, tremendous shall its summit be.

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For its bulwark – superstitious dread.
For its marshal – blackest agony.

Who looks on it with a healthy eye,
Shall turn back, deathly pale and dumb,
Clutched by blind and chill mortality,
May his happiness prepare its tomb. [7]

Marx dreamt about ruining the world created by God. He said in another poem:

Then I will be able to walk triumphantly,
Like a god, through the ruins of their kingdom.
Every word of mine is fire and action.
My breast is equal to that of the Creator. [8]

The words "I shall build my throne high overhead" and the confession that from the one sitting on this throne will emanate only dread and agony remind us of Lucifer's proud boast, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God" (ISA 14:13).

Perhaps it was no coincidence that Bakunin, who was for a time one of Marx's most intimate friends, wrote,

One has to worship Marx in order to be loved by him. One has at least to fear him in order to be tolerated by him. Marx is extremely proud, up to dirt and madness. [9]

The Satanist Church and ~Oulanem~

Why did Marx wish such a throne?

The answer is found in a little-known drama which he also composed during his student years. It is called ~Oulanem~. To explain this title, a digression is needed.

One of the rituals of the Satanist church is the black mass, which Satanist priests recite at midnight. Black candles are put in the candlesticks upside down. The

priest is dressed in his ornate robes, but with the lining outside. He says all things prescribed in the prayer book, but reads from the end toward the beginning. The holy names of God, Jesus, and Mary are read inversely. A crucifix is fastened upside down or trampled upon. The body of a naked woman serves as an altar. A consecrated wafer stolen from a church is inscribed with the name Satan and is used for a mock communion. During the black mass a Bible is burned. All those present promise to commit the seven deadly sins, as enumerated in Catholic catechisms, and never to do any good. An orgy follows.

Devil worship is very old. The Bible has much to say about and against it. For example, the Jews, though entrusted by God with the true religion, sometimes faltered in their faith and "sacrificed unto devils" (DEU 32:17). And King Jeroboam of Israel once ordained priests for devils (2CH 11:15).

So from time immemorial men have believed in the existence of the Devil. Sin and wickedness are the hallmark of his kingdom, disintegration and destruction its inevitable result. The great concentrations of evil design in times past as well as in modern communism and nazism would have been impossible without a guiding force, the Devil himself. He has been the mastermind, the secret agent, supplying the unifying energy in his grand scheme to control mankind.

Characteristically, "~Oulanem~" is an inversion of a holy name. It is an anagram of Emmanuel, Biblical name of Jesus which means in Hebrew "God with us." Such inversions of names are considered effective in black magic.

We will be able to understand the drama ~Oulanem~ only in the light of a strange confession that Marx

made in a poem called "The Player," later downplayed by both himself and his followers:

The hellish vapors rise and fill the brain,
Till I go mad and my heart is utterly changed.

See this sword?
The prince of darkness
Sold it to me.
For me he beats the time and gives the signs.
Ever more boldly I play the dance of death. [10]

These lines take on special significance when we learn that in the rites of higher initiation in the Satanist cult an "enchanted" sword which ensures success is sold to the candidate. He pays for it by signing a covenant, with blood taken from his wrists, agreeing that his soul will belong to Satan after death.

(To enable the reader to grasp the horrid intent of these poems, I should mention - though with natural revulsion - that "The Satanic Bible," after saying "the crucifix symbolizes pallid incompetence hanging on a tree," calls Satan "the ineffable Prince of Darkness who rules the earth." As opposed to "the lasting foulness of Bethlehem," "the cursed Nazarene," "the impotent king," "fugitive and mute god," "vile and abhorred pretender to the majesty of Satan," the Devil is called "the God of Light," with angels "cowering and trembling with fear and prostrating themselves before him" and "sending Christian minions staggering to their doom.")

Now I quote from the drama ~Oulanem~ itself:

And they are also Oulanem, Oulanem.
The name rings forth like death, rings forth
Until it dies away in a wretched crawl.
Stop, I've got it now! It rises from my soul
As clear as air, as strong as my bones. [11]

Yet I have power within my youthful arms
To clench and crush you [i.e., personified humanity]
with tempestuous force,
While for us both the abyss yawns in darkness.
You will sink down and I shall follow laughing,
Whispering in your ears, "Descend,
come with me, friend." [12]

The Bible, which Marx had studied in his high school years and which he knew quite well in his mature years, says that the Devil will be bound by an angel and cast into the bottomless pit (~abyssos~ in Greek; see REV 20:3). Marx desires to draw the whole of mankind into this pit reserved for the Devil and his

angels.

Who speaks through Marx in this drama? Is it reasonable to expect a young student to entertain as his life's dream the vision of mankind entering into the abyss of darkness ("outer darkness" is a Biblical expression for hell) and of himself laughing as he follows those he has led to unbelief? Nowhere in the world is this ideal cultivated except in the initiation rites of the Satanist church at its highest degrees.

When, in the drama, the time comes for Oulanem's death, his words are:

Ruined, ruined. My time has clean run out.
The clock has stopped, the pygmy house has crumbled.
Soon I shall embrace eternity to my breast, and soon
I shall howl gigantic curses on mankind. [13]

Marx had loved the words of Mephistopheles in ~Faust~: "Everything in existence is worth being destroyed." Everything, including the proletariat and the comrades. Marx quotes these words in ~The 18th Brumaire~. [14]

Stalin acted on them and destroyed even his own family.

Satan is called in ~Faust~ the spirit that denies everything. This is precisely Marx's attitude. He writes about "pitiless criticism of all that exists"; "war against the situation in Germany"; "merciless criticism of all." He adds, "It is the first duty of the press to undermine the foundations of the existing political system." [15] Marx said about himself that he is "the most outstanding hater of the so-called positive." [16]

The Satanist sect is not materialistic. It believes in eternal life. ~Oulanem~, the person through whom Marx speaks, does not question this. He asserts eternal life, but as a life of hate magnified to its extreme.

It is worth noting that eternity for devils means torment. Note Jesus' reproach by demons: "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (MTT 8:29).

Marx is similarly obsessed:

Ha! Eternity! She is our eternal grief,
An indescribable and immeasurable Death,
Vile artificiality conceived to scorn us,
Ourselves being clockwork, blindly mechanical,
Made to be the fool-calendars of Time and Space,

Having no purpose save to happen, to be ruined,
So that there shall be something to ruin. [17]

We begin now to understand what has happened to young Marx. He had had Christian convictions, but had not led a consistent life. His correspondence with his father testifies to his squandering great sums of money on pleasures and his constant quarreling with parental authority about this and other matters. Then he seems to have fallen in with the tenets of the highly

secret Satanist church and received the rites of initiation.

Satan, who his worshipers see in their hallucinatory orgies, actually speaks through them. Thus Marx is only Satan's mouthpiece when he utters in his poem "Invocation of One in Despair" the words, "I wish to avenge myself against the One who rules above."

Listen to the end of ~Oulanem~:

If there is a Something which devours,
I'll leap within it, though I bring the
world to ruins -
The world which bulks between me
and the abyss
I will smash to pieces with my
enduring curses.

I'll throw my arms around its harsh reality,
Embracing me, the world will dumbly
pass away,
And then sink down to utter nothingness,
Perished, with no existence - that would be
really living. [18]

Marx was probably inspired by the words of the Marquis de Sade:

I abhor nature. I would like to split its planet, hinder its process, stop the circles of stars, overthrow the globes that float in space, destroy what serves nature, protect what harms it - in a word, I wish to insult it in my works.... Perhaps we will be able to attack the sun, deprive the universe of it, or use it to set the world on fire. These would be real crimes.

De Sade and Marx propagate the same ideas!

Honest men, as well as men inspired by God, often seek to serve their fellowmen by writing books to increase

their store of knowledge, improve their morality, stimulate religious sentiments, or at least provide relaxation and amusement. The Devil is the only being who consciously purveys only evil to humankind, and he does this through his elect servants.

As far as I know, Marx is the only renowned author who has ever called his own writings "shit," "swinish books." [19] He consciously, deliberately gives his readers filth. No wonder, then, that some of his disciples, Communists in Romania and Mozambique, forced prisoners to eat their own excrement and drink their own urine.

In ~Oulanem~ Marx does what the Devil does: he consigns the entire human race to damnation.

~Oulanem~ is probably the only drama in the world in which all the characters are aware of their own corruption, and flaunt it and celebrate it with conviction. In this drama there is no black and white. There exist no Claudius and Ophelia, Iago and Desdemona. Here all are servants of darkness, all reveal aspects of Mephistopheles. All are Satanic, corrupt, doomed.

Satan in Marx's Family

When he wrote the works quoted in the last chapter, Marx, a premature genius, was only eighteen. His life's program had thus already been established. He had no vision of serving mankind, the proletariat, or socialism. He merely wished to bring the world to ruin, to build for himself a throne whose bulwark would be human fear.

At that point, correspondence between Karl Marx and his father included some especially cryptic passages. The son writes,

A curtain had fallen. My holy of holies was rent asunder and new gods had to be installed. [1]

These words were written on November 10, 1837 by a

young man who had professed Christianity until then. He had earlier declared that Christ was in his heart. Now this is no longer so. Who are the new gods installed in Christ's place?

The father replies,

I refrained from insisting on an explanation about a very mysterious matter although it seemed highly dubious. [2]

What was this mysterious matter? No biographer of Marx has explained these strange sentences.

On March 2, 1837, Marx's father writes to his son:

Your advancement, the dear hope of seeing your name someday of great repute, and your earthly well-being are not the only desires of my heart. These are illusions I had had a long time, but I can assure you that their fulfillment would not have made me happy. Only if your heart remains pure and beats humanly and if no demon is able to alienate your heart from better feelings, only then will I be happy. [3]

What made a father suddenly express the fear of demonic influence upon a young son who until then had been a confessed Christian? Was it the poems he received as a present from his son for his fifty-fifth birthday?

The following quotation is taken from Marx's poem "On Hegel":

Words I teach all mixed up into a
devilish muddle.
Thus, anyone may think just what he
chooses to think. [4]

Here also are words from another epigram on Hegel:

Because I discovered the highest,
And because I found the deepest through
meditation,
I am great like a God;
I clothe myself in darkness like Him. [5]

In his poem "The Pale Maiden," he writes:

Thus heaven I've forfeited,
I know it full well.
My soul, once true to God,
Is chosen for hell. [6]

No commentary is needed.

Marx had started out with artistic ambitions. His poems and drama are important in revealing the state of his heart; but having no literary value, they received no recognition. Lack of success in drama gave us a Goebbels, the propaganda minister of the Nazis; in philosophy a Rosenberg, the purveyor of German racism; in painting and architecture a Hitler.

Hitler was a poet too. It can be assumed that he never read Marx's poetry, but the resemblance is striking. In his poems Hitler mentions the same Satanist practices:

On rough nights, I go sometimes
To the oak of Wotan in the still garden,
To make a pact with dark forces.
The moonlight makes runes appear.
Those that were sunbathed during the day
Become small before the magic formula. [7]

"Wotan" is the chief god of German heathen mythology. "Runes" were symbols used for writing in olden times.

Hitler soon abandoned a poetic career, and so did Marx, who exchanged it for a revolutionary career in the name of Satan against a society which had not appreciated his poems. This is conceivably one of the

motives for his total rebellion. Being despised as a Jew was perhaps another.

Two years after his father's expressed concern, in 1839, the young Marx wrote ~The Difference Between Democritus' and Epicurus' Philosophy of Nature~, in the preface to which he aligns himself with the declaration of Aeschylus, "I harbor hatred against all gods." [8] This he qualifies by stating that he is against all gods on earth and in heaven that do not recognize human self-consciousness as the supreme godhead.

Marx was an avowed enemy of all gods, a man who had bought his sword from the prince of darkness at the price of his soul. He had declared it his aim to draw all mankind into the abyss and to follow them laughing.

Could Marx really have bought his sword from Satan?

His daughter Eleanor says that Marx told her and her sisters many stories when they were children. The one she liked most was about a certain Hal R”ckle.

The telling of the story lasted months and months, because it was a long, long story and never finished. Hal R”ckle was a witch ... who had a shop with toys and many debts.... Though he was a witch, he was always in financial need. Therefore he had to sell against his will all his beautiful things, piece after piece, to the Devil.... Some of these adventures were horrifying and made your hair stand on end. [9]

Is it normal for a father to tell his little children horrifying stories about selling one's dearest treasures to the Devil? Robert Payne in his book ~Marx~ [10] also recounts this incident in great detail, as told by Eleanor - how unhappy R”ckle, the magician, sold the toys

with reluctance, holding on to them until the last moment. But since he had made a pact with the Devil, there was no escaping it.

Marx's biographer continues,

There can be very little doubt that those interminable stories were autobiographical. He had the Devil's view of the world, and the Devil's malignity. Sometimes he seemed to know that he was accomplishing works of evil. [11]

When Marx had finished ~Oulanem~ and other early poems in which he wrote about having a pact with the Devil, he had no thought of socialism. He even fought against it. He was editor of a German magazine, the ~Rheinische Zeitung~, which "does not concede even theoretical validity to Communist ideas in their present form, let alone desire their practical realization, which it anyway finds impossible.... Attempts by masses to carry out Communist ideas can be answered by a cannon as soon as they have become dangerous..." [12]

Marx Will Chase God from Heaven

After reaching this stage in his thinking, Marx met Moses Hess, the man who played the most important role in his life, the man who led him to embrace the

Socialist ideal.

Hess calls him "Dr. Marx – my idol, who will give the last kick to medieval religion and politics." [13] To give a kick to religion was Marx's first aim, not socialism.

Georg Jung, another friend of Marx at that time, writes even more clearly in 1841 that Marx will surely chase God from His heaven and will even sue Him. Marx calls Christianity one of the most immoral religions. [14] No wonder, for Marx now believed that

Christians of ancient times had slaughtered men and eaten their flesh.

These then were the expectations of those who initiated Marx into the depths of Satanism. There is no support for the view that Marx entertained lofty social ideals about helping mankind, saw religion as a hindrance in fulfilling this ideal, and for this reason embraced an anti-religious attitude. On the contrary, Marx hated any notion of God or gods. He determined to be the man who would kick out God – all this before he had embraced socialism, which was only the bait to entice proletarians and intellectuals to embrace this devilish ideal.

Eventually Marx claims not to even admit the existence of a Creator. Incredibly, he maintained that mankind shaped itself. He wrote,

Seeing that for the Socialist man all of so-called world history is nothing other than the creation of man through human work, than the development of nature for man, he has the incontestable proof of his being born from himself.... The criticism of religion ends with the teaching that man is the supreme being for man.

When no Creator is acknowledged, there is no one to give us commandments, or to whom we are accountable. Marx confirms this by stating, "Communists preach absolutely no morals." When the Soviets in their early years adopted the slogan, "Let us drive out the capitalists from earth and God from heaven," they were merely fulfilling the legacy of Karl Marx.

One of the peculiarities of black magic, as mentioned earlier, is the inversion of names. Inversions in general so permeated Marx's whole manner of thinking that he used them throughout. He answered Proudhon's

book ~The Philosophy of Misery~ with another book entitled ~The Misery of Philosophy~. He also wrote, "We have to use instead of the weapon of criticism, the criticism of weapons." [15]

Here are further examples of Marx's use of inversion in his writing:

Let us seek the enigma of the Jew not in his religion, but rather let us seek the enigma of his religion in the real Jew. [16]

Luther broke the faith in authority, because he restored the authority of faith. He changed the priests into laymen, because he changed the laymen into priests. [17]

Marx used this technique in many places. He used what could be called typical Satanist style.

Shifting gears somewhat, men usually wore beards in Marx's time, but not beards like his, and they did not have long hair. Marx's manner and appearance was characteristic of the disciples of Joanna Southcott, a cultist priestess of an occult sect who claimed to be in contact with the ghost Shiloh. [18]

It is strange that some sixty years after her death in 1814,

the Chatham group of Southcottians were joined by a soldier James White, who, after his period of service in India, returned and took the lead locally, developing further the doctrines of Joanna ... with a Communistic tinge. [19]

Marx did not often speak publicly about metaphysics, but we can gather his views from the men with whom he associated. One of his partners in the First International was Mikhail Bakunin, a Russian anarchist, who wrote:

The Evil One is the satanic revolt against divine authority, revolt in which we see the fecund germ of all human emancipations, the revolution. Socialists recognize each other by the words "In the name of the one to whom a great wrong has been done."

Satan [is] the eternal rebel, the first freethinker and the emancipator of worlds. He makes man ashamed of his bestial ignorance and obedience; he emancipates him, stamps

upon his brow the seal of liberty and humanity, in urging him to disobey and eat of the fruit of knowledge. [20]

Bakunin does more than praise Lucifer. He has a concrete program of revolution, but not one that would free the poor from exploitation. He writes:

In this revolution we will have to awaken the Devil in the people, to stir up the basest passions. Our mission is to destroy, not to edify. The passion of destruction is a creative passion. [21]

Marx, along with Bakunin, formed the First International and endorsed this strange program. Marx and Engels said in ~The Communist Manifesto~ that the proletarian sees law, morality, and religion as "so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests."

Bakunin reveals that Proudhon, another major Socialist thinker and at that time a friend of Karl Marx, also "worshiped Satan." [22] Hess had introduced Marx to Proudhon, who wore the same hair style typical of the nineteenth-century Satanist sect of Joanna Southcott.

Proudhon, in ~The Philosophy of Misery~, declared that God was the prototype for injustice.

We reach knowledge in spite of him, we reach society in spite of him. Every step forward is a victory in which we overcome the Divine. [23]

He exclaims,

Come, Satan, slandered by the small and by kings. God is stupidity and cowardice; God is hypocrisy and falsehood; God is tyranny and poverty; God is evil. Where humanity bows before an altar, humanity, the slave of kings and priests, will be condemned.... I swear, God, with my hand stretched out towards the heavens, that you are nothing more than the executioner of my reason, the scepter of my conscience.... God is essentially anticivilized, antiliberal, antihuman. [24]

Proudhon declares God to be evil because man, His

creation, is evil. Such thoughts are not original; they are the usual content of sermons delivered in Satanist worship.

Marx later quarreled with Proudhon and wrote a book to refute his ~Philosophy of Misery~. But Marx contradicted only minor economic doctrines. He had no objection to Proudhon's demonic anti-God rebellion.

Heinrich Heine, the renowned German poet, was a third intimate friend of Marx. He too was Satan-fancier. He wrote:

I called the devil and he came,
His face with wonder I must scan;
He is not ugly, he is not lame.
He is a delightful, charming man. [25]

"Marx was a great admirer of Heinrich Heine.... Their relationship was warm, hearty." [26]

Why did he admire Heine? Perhaps for Satanist thoughts like the following:

I have a desire ... for a few beautiful trees before my door, and if dear God wishes to make me totally happy, he will give me the joy of seeing six or seven of my enemies hanged on these trees. With a compassionate heart I will forgive them after death all the wrong they have done to me during their life. Yes, we must forgive our enemies, but not before they are hanged.

I am not revengeful. I would like to love my enemies. But I cannot love them before taking revenge upon them. Only then my heart opens for them. As long as one has not avenged himself, bitterness remains in the heart.

Would any decent man be an intimate friend of one who thinks like this?

But Marx and his entourage thought alike. Lunatcharski, a leading philosopher who was once minister of education of the USSR, wrote in ~Socialism and Religion~ that Marx set aside all contact with God and instead put Satan in front of marching proletarian columns.

It is essential at this point to state emphatically that Marx and his comrades, while anti-God, were not atheists, as present-day Marxists claim to be. That is, while

they openly denounced and reviled God, they ~hated a God in whom they believed~. They challenged not His existence, but His supremacy.

When the revolution broke out in Paris in 1871, the ~Communard Flourens~ declared, "Our enemy is God. Hatred of God is the beginning of wisdom." [27]

Marx greatly praised the Communards who openly proclaimed this aim. But what has this to do with a more equitable distribution of goods or with better social institutions? Such are only the outward trappings

for concealing the real aim - the total eradication of God and His worship. We saw the evidence of this in such countries as Albania, and today in North Korea, where all churches, mosques, and pagodas have been closed.

Marx's Devilish Poetry

We see this clearly in Marx's poetry. In "Invocation of One in Despair" and "Human Pride," man's supreme supplication is for his own greatness. If man is doomed to perish through his own greatness, this will be a cosmic catastrophe, but he will die as a godlike being, mourned by demons. Marx's ballad "The Player" records the singer's complaints against a God who neither knows nor respects his art. This emerges from the dark abyss of hell, "bedeviling the mind and bewitching the heart, and his dance is the dance of death." [28] The minstrel draws his sword and throws it into the poet's soul.

Art emerging from the dark abyss of hell, bedeviling the mind ... This reminds us of the words of the American revolutionary Jerry Rubin in ~Do It~:

We've combined youth, music, sex, drugs, and rebellion with treason - and that's a combination hard to beat. [29]

In his poem "Human Pride," Marx admits that his aim is not to improve the world or to reform, revolutionize it, but simply to ruin it and to enjoy its being ruined:

With disdain I will throw my gauntlet
Full in the face of the world,
And see the collapse of this pygmy giant
Whose fall will not stifle my ardour.

Then will I wander godlike and victorious
Through the ruins of the world
And, giving my words an active force,
I will feel equal to the Creator. [30]

Marx adopted Satanism after intense inner struggle. He ceased writing poems during a period of severe illness, a result of the tempest within his heart. He wrote at that time about his vexation at having to make an idol of a view he detested. He felt sick. [31]

The overriding reason for Marx's conversion to communism appears clearly in a letter of his friend Georg Jung to Ruge: it was not the emancipation of the proletariat, nor even the establishing of a better social order. Jung writes:

If Marx, Bruno Bauer and Feuerbach associate to found a theological-political review, God would do well to surround himself with all his angels and indulge in self-pity, for these three will certainly drive him out of heaven.... [32]

Were these poems the only expressly Satanist writings of Karl Marx? We do not know, because the bulk of his works is kept secret by those who guard his manuscripts.

In ~The Revolted Man~, Albert Camus stated that thirty volumes of Marx and Engels have never been published and expressed the presumption that they are not much like what is generally known as Marxism. On reading this, I had one of my secretaries write to the Marx Institute in Moscow, asking if this assertion of the French writer is true.

I received a reply.

The vice director, one Professor M. Mtchedlov,

after saying Camus lied, nevertheless confirmed his allegations. Mtchedlov wrote that of a total of one hundred volumes, only thirteen have appeared. He offered a ridiculous excuse for this: World War II forestalled the printing of the other volumes. The letter was written in 1980, thirty-five years after the end of the war. And the State Publishing House of the Soviet Union surely has sufficient funds.

From this letter it is clear that though the Soviet Communists had all the manuscripts for one hundred volumes, they chose to publish only thirteen. There is no other explanation than that most of Marx's ideas were deliberately kept secret.

Marx's Ravaged Life

All active Satanists have ravaged personal lives, and this was the case with Marx as well.

Arnold Knzli, in his book Karl ~Marx - A Psychogram~, [33] writes about Marx's life, including the suicide of two daughters and a son-in-law. Three children died of malnutrition. His daughter Laura, married to the Socialist Lafargue, also buried three of her children; then she and her husband committed suicide together. Another daughter Eleanor, decided with her husband to do likewise. She died; he backed out at the last minute.

Marx felt no obligation to earn a living for his family, though he could easily have done so through his tremendous knowledge of languages. Instead, he lived by begging from Engels. He had an illegitimate child by his maidservant, Helen Demuth. Later he attributed the child to Engels, who accepted this comedy. Marx drank heavily. Riazanov, director of the Marx-Engels

Institute in Moscow, admits this fact in his book ~Karl Marx, Man, Thinker and Revolutionist~. [34]

Eleanor was Marx's favorite daughter. He called her Tussy and frequently said, "Tussy is me." She was shattered when she heard about the scandal of illegitimacy from Engels on his deathbed. It was this that led to her suicide.

It should be noted that Marx, in ~The Communist Manifesto~, had railed against capitalists "having the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal." Such hypocrisy was not out of character for Karl Marx.

There was an even darker spot in the life of Marx, the great revolutionary. The German newspaper ~Reichsruf~ (January 9, 1960) published the fact that the Austrian chancellor Raabe donated to Nikita Khrushchev, then director of Soviet Russia, an original letter of Karl Marx. Khrushchev did not enjoy it, because it was proof that Marx had been a paid informer of the Austrian

police, spying on revolutionaries.

The letter had been found accidentally in a secret archive. It indicated that Marx, as an informer reported on his comrades during his exile in London. He received $25 for each bit of information he turned up. His notes were about the revolutionary exiles in London, Paris, and Switzerland.

One of those against whom he informed was Ruge, who considered himself an intimate friend of Marx. Cordial letters between the two still exist.

Rolv Heuer describes Marx's ravaged financial life in ~Genius and Riches~:

While he was a student in Berlin, the son of papa Marx received 700 thalers a year pocket-money. [35]

This was an enormous sum because at that time only five percent of the population had an annual income greater than 300 thalers. During his lifetime, Marx received from Engels some six million French francs, according to the Marx Institute.

Yet he always lusted after inheritances. While an uncle of his was in agony, Marx wrote, "If the dog dies, I would be out of mischief." [36] To which Engels answers, "I congratulate you for the sickness of the hinderer of an inheritance, and I hope that the catastrophe will happen now." [37]

"The dog" died, and Marx wrote on March 8, 1855,

A very happy event. Yesterday we were told about the death of the ninety-year-old uncle of my wife. My wife will receive some one hundred Lst; even more if the old dog has not left a part of his money to the lady who administered his house. [38]

He did not have any kinder feelings for those who were much nearer to him than his uncle. He was not even on speaking terms with his mother. In December 1863 he wrote to Engels,

Two hours ago a telegram arrived to say that my mother is dead. Fate needed to take one member of the family. I already had one foot in the grave. Under the circumstances I am needed more than the old woman. I have to go to Trier about their inheritance. [39]

This was all he had to say at his mother passing.

In addition, the relationship between Marx and his wife was demonstrably poor. She abandoned him twice but returned each time. When she died, he did not even attend her funeral.

Always in need of funds, Marx lost much money at the stock exchange, where he, the great economist, knew only how to lose.

Marx was an intellectual of high caliber, as was Engels. But their correspondence is full of obscenities, unusual for their class of society. Foul language abounds, and there is not one letter in which one hears an idealist speaking about his humanist or Socialist dream.

Since the Satanist sect is highly secret, we have only reports about the possibilities of Marx's connections with it. But his disorderly life is undoubtedly another link in the chain of evidence already considered.

Engels's Counter-Conversion

Since Friedrich Engels figures prominently in Marx's life, I will give brief material about him. Engels had been brought up in a pietistic family. In fact, in his youth he had composed beautiful Christian poems. After meeting Marx, he wrote about him:

Who is chasing wild endeavor? A black man from Trier [Marx's birthplace], a remarkable monster. He does not walk or run, he jumps on his heels and rages full of anger as if he would like to catch the wide tent of the sky and throw it to the earth. He stretches his arms far away in the air, the wicked fist is clenched, he rages without ceasing, as if ten thousand devils had caught him by the hair. [1]

Engels had begun to doubt the Christian faith after reading a book written by a liberal theologian, Bruno Bauer. He had had a great struggle in his heart. He wrote at that time,

I pray every day, indeed almost all day, for truth, and I have done so ever since I began to doubt, but still I cannot go back. My tears are welling as I write. [2]

Engels never found his way back to the Word of God, joining instead the one whom he himself had called "the monster possessed by ten thousand devils." [3] He had experienced a counter-conversion.

What kind of person was Bruno Bauer, the liberal theologian who played a decisive role in the destruction of Engels's Christian faith and who endorsed Marx in his new anti-Christian ways? Did he have any connection with demons?

Like Engels himself, he started life as a believer and later as a conservative theologian, even writing against critics of the Bible. Afterward he himself became a radical critic of the Holy Scriptures and creator of a materialistic Christianity which insisted that Jesus was only human, not the Son of God. Bauer wrote to his friend Arnold Ruge, also a friend of Marx an(Engels, on December 6, 1841:

I deliver lectures here at the university before a large audience. I don't recognize myself when I pronounce my blasphemies from the pulpit. They are so great that these children, whom nobody should offend, have their hair standing on end. While delivering the blasphemies, I remember how I work piously at home writing an apology of the holy Scriptures and of the Revelation. In any case, it is a very bad demon that possesses me as often as I ascend the pulpit, and I am so weak that I am compelled to yield to him.... My spirit of blasphemy will be satisfied only if I am authorized to preach openly as professor of the atheistic system. [4]

The man who convinced him to become a Communist was the same Moses Hess who had previously convinced Marx. Hess wrote, after meeting Engels in Cologne,

He parted from me as an overzealous Communist. This is how I produce ravages.... [5]

To produce ravages was this Hess's supreme purpose in life? It is Lucifer's, too.

The traces of having been a Christian never disappeared from Engels's mind. In 1865 he expressed his admiration for the song of the Reformation, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," calling it "a

triumphal hymn which became the Marseillaise of the sixteenth century." [6] There are also other such pro-Christian statements from his pen.

The tragedy of Engels is moving, and even more gripping than that of Marx. Here is a wonderful Christian poem written in his youth by the man who would later become Marx's greatest accomplice in the attempted destruction of religion:

Lord Jesus Christ, God's only son,
O step down from Thy heavenly throne
And save my soul for me.
Come down in all Thy blessedness.
Light of Thy Father's holiness,
Grant that I may choose Thee.
Lovely, splendid, without sorrow is the joy
    with which we raise,
Saviour, unto Thee our praise.

And when I draw my dying breath
And must endure the pangs of death,
Firm to Thee may I hold;
That when my eyes with dark are filled
And when my beating heart is stilled,
In Thee shall I grow cold.
Up in Heaven shall my spirit praise
    Thy name eternally,
Since it lies safe in Thee.

O were the time of joy but nigh
When from Thy loving bosom I
Might draw new life that warms.
And then, O God, with thanks to Thee,

Shall I embrace those dear to me
Forever in my arms.
Ever, ever, ever-living,
    Thee abiding to behold
Shall my life anew unfold.

Thou camest Humankind to free
From death and ill, that there might be
Blessings and fortune everywhere.
And now with this, Thy new descent,
On Earth all shall be different;
To each man shalt Thou give his share. [7]

After Bruno Bauer had sown doubts in his soul Engels wrote to some friends,

It is written, "Ask and it shall be given unto you." I seek truth wherever I have the hope of finding at least a shadow of it. Still I cannot recognize your truth as the eternal truth. Yet it is written, "Seek and ye shall find. Who is the man among you who would give to his child a stone, when it asks for bread? Even less will your Father who is in heaven."

Tears come into my eyes while I write this. I am moved through and through, but I feel I will not be lost. I will come to God, after whom my whole soul longs. This, too, is a witness of the Holy Spirit. With this I live and with this I die. ... The Spirit of God witnesses to me, that I am a child of God. [8]

Engels was very well aware of the dangers of Satanism. In his book ~Schelling, Philosopher in Christ~, Engels wrote:

Since the terrible French Revolution, an entirely new, devilish spirit has entered into a great part of mankind, and godlessness lifts its daring head in such an unashamed and subtle manner that you would think the prophecies of Scripture are fulfilled now. Let us see first what the Scriptures say about the godlessness of the last times. The Lord Jesus says in MTT 24:11-13: "Many false prophets shall rise, and shall

deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." And then in verse 24 [MTT 24:24]: "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." And St. Paul says, in 2TH 2:3ff.: "That man of sin shall be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is God, or that is worshipped.... [The coming of the Wicked] is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ~And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie~: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Engels quotes Scripture after Scripture, just as the most Bible-believing theologian would do.

He continues:

We have nothing to do any more with indifference coldness toward the Lord. No, it is an open, declared enmity, and in the place of all sects and parties we have now only two: Christians and anti-Christians.... We see the false prophets among us.... They travel throughout Germany and wish to intrude everywhere; they teach their Satanic teachings in the market-places and bear the flag of the Devil from one town to another, seducing the poor youth, in order to throw them in the deepest abyss of hell and death.

He finishes this book with the words of Revelation:

Behold, I come soon. Keep what you have, that nobody takes away from you your crown. Amen. [9]

The man who wrote such poems and such warnings against Satanism, the man who prayed with tears to

beware of this danger, the man who recognized Marx as being possessed with a thousand devils, became Marx's closest collaborator in the devilish fight, "for Communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality...." [10]

Liberal theology had accomplished this monstrous change. Thus it shares with Marx and Engels the guilt for the tens of millions of innocents killed by communism to date. What spiritual tragedy!

Marx Hates Whole Nations

Shifting now from Engels to Marx, Marx's whole attitude and conversation were Satanic in nature.

Though a Jew, he wrote a pernicious anti-Jewish book called ~The Jewish Question~. In 1856, he wrote in ~The New York Tribune~ an article entitled "The Russian Loan," in which we read:

We know that behind every tyrant stands a Jew, as Jesuit stands behind every Pope. As the army of the Jesuit kills every free thought, so the desire of the oppressed would

have chances of success, the usefulness of wars incited by capitalists would cease, if it were not for the Jews who steal the treasures of mankind. It is no wonder that 1856 years ago Jesus chased the usurers from the Jerusalem temple. They were like the contemporary usurers who stand behind tyrants and tyrannies. The majority of them are Jewish. The fact that the Jews have become so strong as to endanger the life of the world causes us to disclose their organization, their purpose, that its stench might awaken the workers of the world to fight and eliminate such a canker.

Did Hitler say anything worse than this?

(Strangely, Marx also wrote to the contrary, in ~The Capital~, Volume I, under the heading "The Capitalist Character of Manufacture": "In the front of the chosen

people it was written that they are the property of Jehovah.")

Many other Jewish Communists imitated Marx in their hatred of Jews. Ruth Fisher, renowned German Jewish Communist leader and a member of Parliament, said: "Squash the Jewish capitalists, hang them from the lamp posts; tread them under your feet." [11] Why just the Jewish capitalists and not the others remains an unanswered question.

Marx hated not only the Jews, but also the Germans: "Beating is the only means of resurrecting the Germans." He spoke about "the stupid German people ... the disgusting national narrowness of the Germans" and said that "Germans, Chinese, and Jews have to be compared with peddlers and small merchants." [12] He called the Russians "cabbage-eaters." [13] The Slavic peoples were "ethnic trash." [14] He expressed his hatred of many nations, but never his love.

Marx wrote in his new year's roundup of 1848 about "the Slavic riffraff," which included Russians, Czechs, and Croats. These "retrograde" races had nothing left for them by fate except "the immediate task of perishing in the revolutionary world storm." "The coming world war will cause not only reactionary classes and dynasties, but entire reactionary peoples, to disappear from the face of the earth. And that will be progress." "Their very name will vanish." [15]

Neither Marx nor Engels were concerned about the destruction of millions of people. The former wrote,

A silent, unavoidable revolution is taking place in society, a revolution that cares as little about the human lives it destroys as an earthquake cares about the houses it ravages. Classes and races that are too weak to dominate the new conditions of existence will be defeated.

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In contrast, Hitler, who desired only the enslavement and not the destruction of these nations, was much more humane than Marx.

Engels wrote in the same vein:

The next world war will make whole reactionary peoples disappear from the face of the earth. This, too, is progress. [16]

Obviously this cannot be fulfilled without crushing some delicate national flower. But without violence and without pitilessness nothing can be obtained in history. [17]

Marx, the man who posed as a fighter for the proletariat, called this class of people "stupid boys, rogues, asses."

Engels well knew what to expect from them. He wrote, "The democratic, red, yes, even the Communist mob, will never love us."

Marx identified black people with "idiots" and constantly used the offensive term "nigger" in private correspondence.

He called his rival Lassalle "the Jewish nigger" and made it very clear that this was not intended as an epithet of disdain for just one person.

It is now absolutely clear to me that, as both the shape of his head and his hair texture shows, he is descended from the Negroes who joined Moses' flight from Egypt (unless his mother or grandmother on the paternal side hybridized with a nigger).... The pushiness of the fellow is also nigger-like.

Marx even championed slavery in North America. For this, he quarreled with his friend Proudhon, who had advocated the emancipation of slaves in the U.S. Marx wrote in response,

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Without slavery, North America, the most progressive of countries, would be transformed into a patriarchal country. Wipe North America from the map of the world and you

will have anarchy – the complete decay of modern commerce and civilization. Abolish slavery and you will have wiped America off the map of nations. [18]

Marx also wrote, "The Devil take the British!" [19]
In spite of such denunciations, there are plenty of British, as well as American, Marxists.

Satan Is in the Family

Marx's favorite daughter, Eleanor, with her father's approval, married Edward Eveling. He lectured on such subjects as "The Wickedness of God." (Just as Satanists do. Unlike atheists, they do not deny the existence of God, except to deceive others; they know of His existence, but describe Him as wicked.) In his lectures he tried to prove that God is "an encourager of polygamy and an instigator to theft." He advocated the right to blaspheme. [20] The following poem describes the attitudes of his movement toward Satanism:

To thee my verses, unbridled and daring,
Shall mount, O Satan, king of the banquet.
Away with thy sprinkling, O priest, and
    thy droning.
For never shall Satan, O priest, stand
    behind thee.

Thy breath, O Satan, my verses inspires,
When from my bosom the gods I defy.
Of kings pontifical, of kings inhuman:
Thine is the lightning that sets minds
    to shaking.

O soul that wanderest far from the
    straight way,
Satan is merciful. See Heloisa!

Like the whirlwind spreading its wings,
He passes, O people, Satan the great!
Hail, of reason the great Vindicator!
Sacred to thee shall rise incense and vows!
Thou hast the god of the priest
    disenthroned. [21]

A Housemaid's Revelation

An American, Commander Sergius Riis, had been a disciple of Marx. Grieved by the news of his death, he went to London to visit the house in which the admired teacher had lived. The family had moved. The only one whom he could find to interview was Marx's former housemaid Helen Demuth. She said these amazing words about him:

He was a God-fearing man. When very sick, he prayed alone in his room before a row of lighted candles, tying a sort of tape measure around his forehead. [1]

This suggests phylacteries, implements worn by Orthodox Jews during their morning prayers. But Marx had been baptized in the Christian religion, had never practiced Judaism, and later became a fighter against God. He wrote books against religion and brought up all his children as atheists. What was this ceremony which an ignorant maid considered an occasion of prayer? Jews, saying their prayers with phylacteries

on their foreheads, don't usually have a row of candles before them. Could this have been some kind of magic practice?

We also know that Marx, a presumed atheist, had a bust of Zeus in his study. In Greek mythology Zeus, a cruel heathen deity, transformed himself into a beast and took Europe captive - as did Marxism later.

(Coincidentally, the naked figure of Zeus, known for his ferocity, is the only religious emblem in the main lobby of the United Nations building in New York.)

Family Letters

Another possible hint is contained in a letter written to Marx by his son Edgar on March 31, 1854. It begins with the startling words, "My dear devil." [2] Who has ever known of a son addressing his father like this? But that is how a Satanist writes to his beloved one. Could the son have been initiated as well?

Equally significant, Marx's wife addressed him as follows, in a letter of August 1844,

Your last pastoral letter, high priest and bishop of souls, has again given quiet rest and peace to your poor sheep. [3]

Marx had expressed, in ~The Communist Manifesto~, his desire to abolish all religion, which one might assume would include abolishing the Satanist cult too. Yet his wife refers to him as high priest and bishop. Of what religion? The only European religion with high priests is the Satanist one. What pastoral letters did he, a man believed to have been an atheist, write? Where are they? This is a part of Marx's life which has remained unresearched.

Biographers' Testimonies

Some biographers of Marx have undoubtedly had a suspicion about the connection between devil-worship and the subject of their book. But not having the necessary spiritual preparation, they could not understand the facts they had before their eyes. Still, their testimony is interesting.

The Marxist Franz Mehring wrote in his book ~Karl Marx~:

Although Karl Marx's father died a few days after his son's twentieth birthday, ~he seems to have observed with secret apprehension the demon in his favorite son....~ [4]

Henry Marx did not think and could not have thought that the rich store of bourgeois culture which he handed on to his son Karl as a valuable heritage for life ~would only help to deliver the demon he feared.~ [5]

Marx died in despair, as all Satanists do. On May 25, 1883, he wrote to Engels, "How pointless and empty is life, but how desirable!" [6]

Marx was a contemporary of great Christians: the composer Mendelssohn, the philanthropist Dr. Barnardo, the preachers Charles Spurgeon and General William Booth. All lived near him in London. Yet he never mentions them. They went unobserved.

There is a secret behind Marx which few Marxists know about. Lenin wrote, "After half a century, not

one of the Marxists has comprehended Marx." [7]

The Secret Behind Lenin's Life

There was a secret behind Lenin's life too.

When I wrote the first edition of the present book, I knew of no personal involvement of Lenin with any

rituals of the Satanist sect. Since then, I have read ~The Young Lenin~ by Trotsky, who was Lenin's intimate friend and co-worker. He writes that Lenin, at the age of sixteen, tore the cross from his neck, spat on it, and trod it underfoot, a very common Satanist ceremony.

There is not the slightest doubt that Lenin was dominated by Satanist ideology. How else could one explain the following quotation from his letter to the Russian writer Maxim Gorki, dated 13-14 November 1913:

Millions of sins, mischiefs, oppressions, and physical epidemics, are more easily discovered by the people, and therefore less dangerous, than the thinnest idea of a spiritual little god, even if disguised in the most decorous garb. [8]

In the end Satan deceived him, as he does all his followers.

Lenin was moved to write as follows about the Soviet state:

The state does not function as we desired. How does it function? The car does not obey. A man is at the wheel and seems to lead it, but the car does not drive in the desired direction. It moves as another force wishes. [9]

What is this other mysterious force which supersedes even the plans of the Bolshevik leaders? Did they sell out to a force which they hoped to master, but which proved more powerful than even they anticipated and drove them to despair?

In a letter of 1921 Lenin wrote:

I hope we will be hanged on a stinking rope. And I did not lose the hope that this would happen, because we cannot condemn dirty bureaucracy. If this happens, it will be well done. [10]

This was Lenin's last hope after a whole life of struggle for the Communist cause: to be justly hanged on a stinking rope. This hope was not fulfilled for him, but almost all of his co-workers were eventually executed by Stalin after confessing publicly that they had served other powers than the proletariat they pretended to help.

What a confession from Lenin: "I hope we will be hanged on a stinking rope."

It is interesting to note that at the age of thirteen, Lenin wrote what could be called prophetic poetry foretelling the bankruptcy in which his life would end. He had decided to serve mankind, but without God. These were his words:

Sacrificing your life freely for others,
It is a pity you will have the sad fate
That your sacrifice will be completely fruitless. [11]

What a contrast to the words of another fighter, St. Paul the Apostle, who wrote toward the end of his life:

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course.... henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day (2TM 4:7, 8).

There exists a "too late" in our spiritual affairs. Esau repented with many tears for having sold his birthright, but the deal could not be undone. And Lenin, founder of the Soviet state, said on his deathbed,

I committed a great error. My nightmare is to have the feeling that I'm lost in an ocean of blood from the innumerable victims. It is too late to return. To save our country, Russia, we would have needed men like Francis of Assisi. With ten men like him we would have saved Russia.

Bukharin, Stalin, Mao, Ceaushescu, Andropov

It might be instructive at this point to take a look at some modern Marxists. Bukharin, secretary general of the Communist International and one of the chief Marxist doctrinaires in this century, as early as the age

of twelve, after reading the Book of Revelation in the Bible, longed to become the Antichrist. Realizing from Scripture that the Antichrist had to be the son of the apocalyptic great whore, he insisted that his mother confess to having been a harlot.

About Stalin he wrote, "He is not a man, but a devil." [1]

Too late Bukharin realized into whose hands he had fallen. In a letter which he made his wife memorize just before his arrest and execution, he said:

I am leaving life. I am lowering my head.... I feel my helplessness before a hellish machine.... [2]

He had helped erect a guillotine – the Soviet state – that had killed millions, only to learn in the end that its

design had been made in hell. He had desired to be the Antichrist. He became instead a victim of the Enemy.

Similarly, Kaganovitch, Stalin's brother-in-law and closest collaborator, writes about him in his diary (soon to be published):

I started to understand how Stalin managed to make himself a god. He did not have a single human characteristic.... Even when he exhibited some emotions, they all did not seem to belong to him. They were as false as the scale on top of armor. And behind this scale was Stalin himself – a piece of steel. For some reason I was convinced that he would live forever.... He was not human at all....

Rosa [his wife] says he makes her climb a tree wearing nothing but stockings. I have a feeling he is not human at all. He is too unusual to be a regular human being. Although he looks like an ordinary man. Such a puzzle. What is it I'm writing? Am I raving mad, too?

Stalin described to Kaganovitch his spiritual exercise. Believers of various religions engage in the practice of meditation on what is beautiful, wise, and good, to help them become more loving. Stalin indulged in just the opposite practice.

He told Kaganovitch:

When I have to say good-bye to someone, I picture this person on all fours and he becomes disgusting. Sometimes I

feel attached to a person who should be removed for the good of the cause. What do you think I do? I imagine this person shitting, exhaling stench, farting, vomiting - and I don't feel sorry for this person. The sooner he stops stinking on this earth, the better. And I cross this person out of my heart.

One of Stalin's amusements was to put green glasses on the eyes of horses to make them see hay as grass. Even worse, he put dark glasses of atheism on the eyes

of men to keep them from seeing God's pastures, reserved for believing souls.

The diary contains many revealing insights:

Many times Stalin spoke of religion as our most vicious enemy. He hates religion for many reasons, and I share his feelings. Religion is a cunning and dangerous enemy.... Stalin also thinks that separation from children should be the main punishment for all parents belonging to sects, irrespective of whether they were convicted or not.

I think he secretly engaged in astrology. One peculiar feature of his always astonished me. He always talked with some veiled respect about God and religion. At first, I thought I was imagining it, but gradually I realized it was true. But he was always careful when the subject came up. And I was never able to find out exactly what his point of view was. One thing became very clear to me - his treatment of God and religion was very special. For example, he never said directly there was no God....

People ceased somehow to be their own selves in his presence. They all admired him and worshiped him. I don't think he enjoyed any great love of the nation: he was above it. It may sound strange, but he occupied a position previously reserved only for God.

Part and parcel of the tragedy of human existence is the fact that one has enemies and is sometimes obliged to fight them. Marx took delight in this sad necessity. His favorite saying, which he often repeated, was, "There is nothing more beautiful in the world than to bite one's enemies." [3]

No wonder his follower Stalin said that the greatest joy is to cultivate a person's friendship until he lays his

head confidently on your bosom, then to implant a dagger in his back a pleasure not to be surpassed. [4]

Marx had expressed the same idea long before. He wrote to Engels about comrades with whom he disagreed:

We must make these rogues believe that we continue our relationship with them, until we have the power to sweep them away from our road, in one manner or another. [5]

It is significant that many of Stalin's comrades-in-arms spoke about him as demonic.

Milovan Djilas, prominent Communist leader of Yugoslavia who was personally well acquainted with Stalin, wrote:

Was it not so that the demonic power and energy of Stalin consisted in this, that he made the [Communist] movement and every person in it pass to a state of confusion and stupefaction, thus creating and ensuring his reign of fear...? [6]

He also says about the whole ruling class of the USSR:

They make a semblance of believing in the ideal of socialism, in a future society without classes. In reality, they believe in nothing except organized power. [7]

Even Stalin's daughter, Svetlana Alliluyeva, who never learned about the depths of Satanism, wrote,

Beria (the Soviet minister of interior affairs) seems to have had a diabolic link with all our family.... Beria was a frightening, wicked demon.... A terrible demon had taken possession of my father's soul.

Svetlana further mentions that Stalin considered goodness and forgiving love to be worse than the greatest crime. [8]

Such is the Satanic priesthood that rules almost half of mankind and which orders terrorist acts all over the world.

Stalin was the illegitimate child of a landlord by a servant-maid. His father, fearing notoriety, bribed a

cobbler to marry the pregnant girl, but the affair became known. During his childhood Stalin was mocked as a bastard. During Stalin's teen years, his real father was found murdered. Stalin was suspected, but no proof could be found against him.

Later, as a seminary student, he joined Communist circles. There he fell in love with a girl named Galina. Since the Communists were poor, Galina was given the assignment to become the mistress of a rich man and so provide the Party with money. When Stalin himself voted for this proposal, she cut her veins.

Stalin himself committed robberies for the Party, and in this he was very successful. He appropriated none of the stolen money for himself.

He was also assigned the duty of infiltrating the Czarist police. He had to play a dual role, denouncing secondary Party members in order to find out police secrets and protect more important Communists.

As a young man, therefore, Stalin had the worst possible heredity, education, and development. Thus he was easily susceptible to Satanist influence. He became what his name, Stalin, means: a man of steel, without the slightest human emotion or pity.

(Andropov, late premier of the Soviets, produced the same impression as Stalin. The French minister of external affairs, Claude Cheysson, who met him, described Andropov in ~Le Monde~ as "a man without warmth of soul, who works like a computer.... He shows no emotions.... He is extremely dispassionate.... He is accurate in words and gestures like a computer.")

Stalin, like Marx, Engels, and Bauer before him,

started out as a believer. At fifteen, he wrote his first poem, which begins with the words, "Great is the Almighty's providence." He became a seminarian because he felt it his calling. [9] There he became first a Darwinist, then a Marxist.

When he began to write as a revolutionary, the first pseudonyms he used were "Demonoshvili," [10] meaning something like "the demoniac" in the Georgian language, and "Besoshvili," [11] "the devilish."

Other evidences of Satanist persuasion among Marxist leaders are also significant. Troitskaia, daughter of the Soviet marshal Tuhatchevsky, one of the top men of the Red Army who was later shot by Stalin,

wrote of her father that he had a picture of Satan in the east corner of his bedroom, where the Orthodox usually put their ikons.

When a certain Communist in Czechoslovakia was named head of the State Council for Religious Affairs, an institution whose purpose is to spy on believers and persecute them, he took the name "Hruza," which means in Slovak "horror," an appellation used for "devil."

One of the leaders of a terrorist organization in Argentina took upon himself the nickname "Satanovsky."

Anatole France, a renowned French Communist writer, introduced some of the greatest intellectuals of France to communism. At a recent exhibition of demoniac art in Paris, one of the pieces shown was the specific chair used by that Communist writer for presiding over Satanist rituals. Its horned armrests and legs were covered with goat's fur. [12]

Britain's center of Satanism is Highgate Cemetery in London, where Karl Marx is buried. Mysterious rites of

black magic are celebrated at this tomb. [13] It was the place of inspiration for the Highgate Vampire, who attacked several girls in 1970. [14] Hua Kuo-Feng, director of Red China, also paid it his respects.

Ulrike Meinhof, Eselin, and other German Red terrorists have also been involved in the occult. [15]

One of the oldest devil-worshiping sects, the Syrian Yezidi, was written up in a Soviet atheistic magazine, ~Nauka I Religia~ (July 1979). It is the ~only~ religious sect about which the magazine wrote not one word of criticism.

Furthermore, Mao Tse-Tung wrote:

From the age of eight I hated Confucius. In our village there was a Confucianist temple. With all my heart, I wished only one thing: to destroy it to its very foundations. [16]

Is it normal for an eight-year-old child to wish only the destruction of his own religion? Such thoughts belong to demonic characters.

At the other extreme is St. Paul of the Cross, who from the age of eight spent three hours in prayer every night.

Cult of Violence

Engels wrote in ~Anti-Duhring~, "Universal love for men is an absurdity." And in a letter to a friend he said, "We need hate rather than love - at least for now."

Che Guevara learned his Marxist lessons well. In his writings he echoes Engels's sentiments:

Hate is an element of fight - pitiless hate against the foe, hate that lifts the revolutionist above the natural limitation of man and makes him become an efficient, destructive, cool, calculating, and cold killing machine.

This is what the Devil wishes to make of men. He has succeeded all too well with many notorious leaders of the human race. In our lifetime we have witnessed more than our share: Hitler, Eichmann, Mengele, Stalin, Mao, Andropov, Pol Pot.

Marx writes in ~The Communist Manifesto~:

The Communists despise making a secret of their opinions and intentions. They openly declare that their aims can be reached only through the violent overthrow of the whole existing social structure.

Further:

There is only one method to shorten the murderous pains of death of the old society, the bloody birth pangs of a new society; only one method to simplify and concentrate them, that is revolutionary terrorism. [18]

There have been many revolutions in history. Each had an objective. The American revolution, for example, was fought for national independence, the French revolution for democracy. Marx is the only one who formulates as his aim a "permanent revolution," terrorism and bloodshed for revolution's sake. There is no purpose to be attained; violence to the point of paroxysm is its only objective. This is what distinguishes Satanism from ordinary human sinfulness.

Marx called terrorists executed for murder in Czarist Russia "immortal martyrs" or "amazingly capable fellows." [19]

Engels wrote, too, of the "bloody revenge we take." This expression occurs often. "In the interior (of

Russia), what a splendid development. The attempts at murder become frequent." "Leaving aside the problem

of morality... for a revolutionist any means are right which lead to the purpose, the violent, as the seemingly tame." [20]

The Marxist Lenin, while living under the democratic rule of Kerensky in Russia, said,

What is needed is wild energy and again energy. I wonder, yea more, I am horrified that more than half a year has passed in speaking about bombs and not one single bomb has been fabricated. [21]

A further insight into the fundamental attitudes of Communists can be gained from a few brief quotes.

Marx: "We make war against all prevailing ideas of religion, of the state, of country, of patriotism. The idea of God is the keynote of a perverted civilization. It must be destroyed."

~The Communist Manifesto~: "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their aims can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all the existing social conditions. Let the ruling class tremble at a Communist revolution."

Lenin: "We have to use any ruse, dodge, trick, cunning, unlawful method, concealment, and veiling of the truth. The basic rule is to exploit the conflicting interests of the capitalist states."

Lenin: "Atheism is an integral part of Marxism. Marxism is materialism. We must combat religion. This is the ABC of all materialism and consequently of Marxism."

Lenin in an address in 1922: "First we shall take Eastern Europe, then the masses of Asia. After that, we shall surround and undermine the U.S.A., which will fall into our hands without a struggle - like an overripe fruit."

Khrushchev: "If anyone believes our smiles involve abandonment of the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, he

deceives himself. Those who wait for that must wait until a shrimp learns to whistle."

Satanist Cruelty

Solzhenitsyn reveals in his monumental ~Gulag Archipelago' [17] that the hobby of Yagoda, the Soviet Union's minister of interior affairs, was to undress and, naked, shoot at images of Jesus and the saints. A couple of comrades joined him in this. Another Satanist ritual practiced in Communist high places!

Why should men allegedly representing the proletariat shoot at the image of Jesus, a proletarian, or the virgin Mary, a poor woman?

Some Pentecostal Christians recall an incident that took place in Russia during World War II. One of their preachers had exorcised a devil who threatened, upon leaving the possessed, "I will take revenge." Several years later the Pentecostal preacher who had performed the exorcism was shot for his faith. The officer who executed him said just before pulling the trigger, "Now we are even."

Are Communist officers sometimes possessed by devils? Do they perhaps serve as Satan's instruments of revenge against Christians who seek to overthrow his throne? There is no doubt.

In Russia, in Stalin's day, some Communist killed a number of innocents in the cellars of the police. After their bloody deed, one of the henchmen had second thoughts and went from corpse to corpse, apologizing: "I did not intend to do this. I don't know you. Speak to me, move, forgive me." One of his comrades then killed him. A third was converted and later related the incident.

~Russkaia Misl~, a Russian-language magazine in France, reported (March 13, 1975) the following from the Soviet Union:

D. Profirevitch, in Russia, had a daughter and a son whom he brought up in the faith. Naturally, they had to attend Communist schools. At the age of twelve the daughter came home and told her parents, "Religion is a capitalist superstition. We are living in new times." She dropped Christianity altogether. Afterwards she joined the Communist Party and became a member of

the Secret Police. This was a terrible blow to her parents.

Later the mother was arrested. Under Communist rule no one possesses anything, whether it be children, a wife, or personal liberty. The state can take them away at any time.

After the mother's arrest, the son exhibited great sorrow. A year later he hanged himself. D. Profirevitch found this suicide letter:

Father, will you judge me? I am a member of the Communist youth organization. I had to sign that I would report everything to the Soviet authorities. One day the police called me, and Varia, my sister, asked me to sign a denunciation against Mother because as a Christian she is considered a counter-revolutionist. I signed. I am guilty of her imprisonment. Now they have ordered me to spy on you. The consequence will be the same. Forgive me, Father; I have decided to die.

The suicide of the son was followed by the jailing of the father. [22]

Priest Zynoviy Kovalyk was arrested by the Bolsheviks in the year 1941 and was confined in the Brygidka jail in Lviv, Ukraine. When the Germans put the Bolsheviks to flight that same year, the people of the city found the priest's blood-stained body nailed to the wall

by the arms and legs, as if it were the crucified Lord. They also found about six thousand massacred prisoners, shot in the nape of the neck, whom the Bolsheviks had piled on top of each other in the cellars and covered over with plaster.

Dr. O. Sas-Yavorsky (U.S.A.), after the capture of Lviv by the Germans near the end of June 1941, went searching for his imprisoned father and saw in the jail a priest nailed to a cross. Into his slashed stomach the Communists had placed the body of an unborn baby, taken from the womb of its mother, whose corpse lay on the blood-soaked floor. Other eyewitnesses recognized that this was the body of the renowned missionary Father Kovalyk. [23]

Generally, to the Communists human life is cheap. Lenin wrote during the civil war,

It would be a shame not to shoot men for not obeying the draft and avoiding mobilization. Report more often about

the results. [24]

During the Spanish civil war, Communists killed four thousand Catholic priests.

A renowned Russian Orthodox priest named Dudko reported that six Communists entered the house of Father Nicholas Tchardjov, pulled out his hair, gouged out his eyes, made many cuts on his body, passed a pressing iron over it, then shot him with two bullets. This happened on the Eve of St. Nicholas. It was not only a crime against the priest, but also a mockery of the saint.

The Western press reported on March 10, 1983, that in Zimbabwe three thousand of the Ndebele tribe were killed by the soldiers of the Communist dictator

Mugabe. The army had been trained by North Korean instructors. Tribe members were asked to shoot their grown-up sons themselves; if they refused, they were shot along with their sons.

The Devil apes God by promising still waters and green pastures which are not his to give. Therefore he must pretend. And the less he can offer, the more he must pretend. To gain a foothold, he puts on a false front (did you ever wonder about Communist front organizations?) and makes benevolent gestures. But he delivers only misery, death, and destruction - "awful, complete, universal, and pitiless."

The Devil is jealous and becomes enraged at spiritual beauty. It offends him. Since he cannot be beautiful he lost his primal beauty because of his pride he does not want anyone else to be. If it were not for the saints' spiritual beauty, the Devil would not seem so ugly. Therefore he wishes to deface all beauty.

This is why Christians in the Romanian Communist prison of Piteshti, as well as other Communist jails, were tortured not only to betray the secrets of the underground church, but to blaspheme.

Regimes under which such horrors occur again and again, regimes that turn even Christians into murderers and denouncers of innocent victims, can only be abhorred by the children of God. Whoever bids them Godspeed is a partaker in their evil deeds (2JN 11).

Satanic Sin

I have written that Marxism is Satanic. But is not every sin Satanic by its very nature?

I pondered long about this. Then I had a dream one night that clarified my thinking.

In my dream I saw a prostitute hooking young men who were just leaving church. I asked her, "Why did you choose this particular place to work?"

She replied, "My delight is to lead young men into sin just as they come from worship. The Greek word for worship in the New Testament is ~proskune~, which means etymologically 'to kiss.' The worshiper stepping out of the house of prayer still has the imprint of Jesus' kisses on his mouth. What a satisfaction to defile him just then, to make him wallow in the bed of lasciviousness and then say to him, 'You see, Jesus to whom you prayed could not keep you from sin for even five minutes. He is not your Savior. My master is more powerful than He.'"

Sexual impurity is a common human sin. Mephistopheles asks Faust to seduce Gretchen just as she is walking to church with a prayer book in her hand. This is Satanic.

To write, read, or view pornography is another common sin. But it is a characteristic of American pornography, which promotes incest, pederasty, and perversion, that it is full of the names of God, Christ, and Mary. With every obscenity there is a sacred word, with every ugly gesture a heavenly expression, to defile and profane the holy. This is Satanic.

To slay the innocent is a very common sin as well. To crucify Jesus, the Son of God, between two thieves in order to suggest guilt by association is Satanic.

To kill political enemies, to make war and stir up revolution even with mass killings proves human sinfulness. But the Russian Communists, having killed millions of their enemies, turned their violence against even their friends, including their most illustrious comrades, the chief perpetrators of their revolution. This is

the seal of Satanism. It is revolution not for attaining goal, but revolution and killing for killing's sake, what Marx called "the permanent revolution."

Of twenty-nine members and candidates in the Central Committee of the Soviet Communists in 1917 the year of the revolution, only four had the good fortune to depart this life before being deprived of it. One of the four was posthumously declared "an enemy of the revolution." Thirteen were sentenced to death by their own comrades or disappeared. Two were so persecuted by Stalin that they committed suicide. [25]

To be a criminal or a Mafioso is a heinous human sin, but the Satanic goes beyond even what the Mafia allows.

Tomasso Buscetta, a representative of the Sicilian Mafia, who became a police informer and revealed the crimes of that organization, said:

Crime is a necessity that one cannot avoid, but that always has a reason. With us gratuitous crime, which is an end in itself or the result of an individual impulse, is excluded. We exclude, for example, "transversal vendetta," i.e., the calculated killing of someone near the target of our crime, such as a wife, children, or relatives.

Satanic crime is of another order. Hitler killed millions of Jews, including babies, with the excuse that Jews had done harm to the German people. For the Communists it was a matter of course to imprison and torture the family members of a person they considered guilty. When I was jailed, it was taken for granted that my wife must be jailed too, and that my son must be excluded from all schooling.

Marxism is not an ordinary sinful human ideology. It is Satanic in its manner of sinning, as it is Satanic in

the teachings it purveys. Only in certain circumstances has it openly avowed its Satanic character.

One can judge a teacher by his disciples. The painter Picasso said, "An artist must discover the way to convince his public of the full truth of his lies." [26]

Who was the man who wrote this monstrosity? The same who wrote, "I came to communism as one comes to a fountain.... My adherence to communism is the logical consequence of my entire life and work." [27]

So one becomes a Marxist because his ideal is a lie. How sad!

To gain an insight into the life and thinking of a Satanist, one need only read a few mild excerpts from the writing of Alister Crowley (1875-1947), notorious for his involvement in occult practices:

Pity not the fallen. I never knew them. I console not. I hate the consoler and the consoled. [28]

The wolf betrays only the greedy and treacherous, the raven betrays only the melancholy and dishonest. But I am he of whom it is written: He shall deceive the very elect....
I have feasted myself on the blood of the saints, but I am not suspected of men to be their enemy, for my fleece is white and warm, for my teeth are not the teeth of one that tears flesh, and my eyes are mild, and they know me not as the chief of the lying spirits....[29]

Beautiful art thou, O Babylon, and desirable.... O Babylon, Babylon, thou mighty mother, that ride upon the crowned beasts, let me be drunken upon the wine of your fornication; let your kisses wanton me unto death. [30]

Crowley quotes a multitude of sayings like this from completely unknown older Satanist works, unavailable to the uninitiated.

Blasphemous Versions of the Lord's Prayer

The Soviet newspaper ~Sovietskaia Molodioj~, February 14, 1976, added a new and shattering proof of the connections between Marxism and Satanism. I described how militant Communists stormed churches and mocked God under the Czarist regime. For this purpose the Communists used a bLasphemous version of the "Our Father":

Our Father, which art in Petersburg
[today, Leningrad],
Cursed be your name,
May your Kingdom crumble,
May your will not be fulfilled,
yea, not even in hell.
Give us our bread which you
stole from us,
And pay our debts, as we paid
yours until now.

And don't lead us further into temptation,
But deliver us from evil - the police of Plehve
    [the Czarist prime minister],
And put an end to his cursed government.
But as you are weak and poor in spirit
    and in power and in authority,
 Down with you for all eternity. Amen. [31]

The ultimate aim of communism in conquering new countries is not to establish another social or economic system. ~It is to mock God and praise Satan.~

The German Socialist Student Union also published a parody of the Lord's Prayer, indicating that the "true" meaning of the prayer upholds capitalism:

Our Capital, which art in the West,
May your investments be sure,
May you make a profit.

May your shares increase in value,
On Wall Street as in Europe.
Our daily sale give us today,
    and extend our credits,
As we extend those of our debtors.
And do not lead us into bankruptcy,
But deliver us from the trade unions,
For thine is half the world and the power,
    and the riches, for 200 years.
                Mammon. [32]

The identification of Christianity with the interests of capitalism is outrageous. The true church knows that capitalism, too, is stained with blood, for every economic system bears the marks of sin. Christians oppose communism not from the viewpoint of capitalism, but of the kingdom of God, which is their true social ideal. The above is nothing less than Satanic mockery of Jesus' most holy prayer, as is the one published by the Soviets.

Mockery of the Lord's Prayer is customary in many Communist lands. Ethiopian children were taught to pray as follows:

Our Party which rulest in the Soviet Union,
Hallowed be thy name,
Thy Kingdom come,

Thy will be done in Ethiopia
    and in the whole world.
Give us this day our daily bread,
    and don't forgive the trespasses
    of the Imperialists as we will not
    forgive them.
And may we resist the temptation
    to abandon the fight,
And deliver us from the evils of
    Capitalism. Amen.

Over an Ethiopian Lutheran radio station confiscated by the Communist government, a Satanist version of the Bible was broadcast. First Corinthians 13 [1Co 13] sounded like this:

Though I speak all the languages and have no enmity toward the landlords and capitalists, I have become as sounding brass.... Class hatred suffers no exploitation and is brutal. Class hatred envies their riches and vaunts itself with the successful revolutions in many Socialist states.... And now abide faith, hope, and class hatred, but the greatest of these is revolutionist hatred.

During the general strike organized by the French Communists in 1974, workers were called to march in the streets of Paris shouting the slogan, "~Giscard d'Estaing est foutu, les demons sont dans la rue!~ (Giscard d'Estaing [then French president] is done with. Demons are now in the street)." Why not "the proletariat" or "the people"? Why this evocation of Satanic forces? What has this to do with the legitimate demands of the working class to have better salaries?

Deification of Communist Leaders

Communist leaders have been and are deified. Listen to the following poem honoring Stalin in ~Pravda~ (Moscow, March 10, 1939). (~Pravda~ is the central organ of the Communist Party in the USSR)

The sun shines mildly and who would not know that you
    are this sun?
The pleasant noise of the sea waves sings an ode to Stalin.
The blinding snowy peaks of mountains sing the praise of

Stalin.
The millions of flowers and meadows thank you.

Likewise the covered tables.
The beehives thank you.
The fathers of all young heroes thank you, Stalin;
Oh, Lenin's heir, you are for us Lenin himself.

Thousands of such poems have been composed. Here is another hymn to Stalin of extraordinary fervor and beauty, reminding one of Eastern Byzantine Christianity in the fourth and following centuries:

O great Stalin, O leader of the peoples,
Thou who broughtest man to birth,
Thou who purifiest the earth,
Thou who restorest the centuries,
Thou who makes bloom the Spring,
Thou who makes vibrate the musical chords.

Thou, splendor of my Spring, O Thou
Sun reflected from millions of hearts.

The foregoing hymn was published in ~Pravda~ in August 1936. In May 1935 the same official Party newspaper had published the following extraordinary effusion:

He commands the sun of the enemies to set.
He spoke, and the East for friends became a great glow.
Should he say that coal turns white,
It will be as Stalin wills....
The master of the entire world - remember - is now Stalin.

A much later composition by a leading Soviet poet shows development in style but hardly in subject matter.

I would have compared him to a white mountain - but
the mountain has a summit.
I would have compared him to the depths of the sea - but
the sea has a bottom.

I would have compared him to the shining moon - but
the moon shines at midnight, not at noon.

I would have compared him to the brilliant sun - but the sun radiates at noon, not at midnight.

Mao Tse-Tung has been hailed as the one "whose mind created the world." Kim Il-Sung, dictator of North Korea, is also deified, as was Nicolae Ceaushescu, Communist dictator of Romania.

Ceaushescu was another Stalinist figure. He was the object of a personality cult and was likened to Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Pericles, Cromwell, Napoleon, Peter the Great, and Abraham. This distinguished roster, it seems, is not enough. So he was also called "our lay God."

(By the way, post-Communist Romania, which did not allow international religious conventions, permitted a witches' convention in the spring of 1979 in Curtea-de-Argesh.)

In Bucharest there was a museum containing gifts brought by the people to Ceaushescu. In it was a watercolor painted by a blind man who regained his sight through a miracle. He attributed it to the fact that "he concentrated all his thoughts on the President, who not only can make the blind to see but can move the Carpathian mountains."

Another portrayal showed Ceaushescu with King Vlad Tsepesh, who was known as "the vampire Dracula" because he used to impale his adversaries. In similar fashion, Stalin magnified the personality of Czar Ivan the Terrible.

The administrators of Romania today were Communist party members. The Leopard has not changed its spots.

The Little and the Big Devils

According to current official Marxist doctrine, which, as has been illustrated, is only a disguise, neither God nor the Devil exists. Both are fancies. Because of this teaching, Christians are persecuted by the Communists.

However, the Soviet newspaper ~Kommunisma Uzvara~ (April 1974) reported that many atheist circles were created in Red Latvia's schools. The name given the children in the fourth through sixth grades was "little devils," while seventh graders were called "servants of the Devil." In another school eighth graders had the name "faithful children of the Devil." At the meeting the children came clothed as devils, complete with horns and tails.

Thus, it was forbidden to worship God, though devil-worship was openly permitted and even encouraged among children of school age. This was the hidden objective of the Communists when they seized power in Russia.

In Vitebsk (USSR), Zoia Titova, a member of the Communist youth organization. was caught practicing

black magic. When her case was brought before the assembly of Communist youth, there was unanimous refusal to punish her, though members who decided to worship God were expelled. The Communists consider it wrong to believe in God. For this "crime," many children were separated from their families and kept in special atheist boarding schools.

Incredibly, the Communists even wanted to make Satan-worshipers of church leaders. A Russian Orthodox priest named Platonov, an anti-Jewish agitator, went over to the side of the Communists when they came to power in Russia. For this, he was made a bishop and became a Judas who denounced members of his flock to the Secret Police, well knowing they would be severely persecuted.

One day, while on a bus, he met his sister Alexandra, an abbess who had been arrested many times, apparently with her brother's knowledge. He asked her, "Why don't you speak to me? Don't you recognize your brother?" She answered, "You ask why? Father and Mother would turn over in their graves. You are serving Satan." Though an official Orthodox bishop in the Soviet Union, he replied, "Perhaps I am Satan myself." [2]

~Pravoslavnaia Rus~ writes,

The Orthodox cathedral in Odessa, so much loved by the Odessites, became the meeting place of Satanists soon after the Communists came to power.... They gathered also in Slobodka-Romano and in Count Tolstoy's former home.

Then follows a detailed account of Satanist masses said by deacon Serghei Mihailov, of the treacherous Living Church, an Orthodox branch established in connivance with the Communists. An attendant describes the Satanist mass as a "parody of the Christian liturgy, in

which human blood is used for communion." These

masses took place in the cathedral before its main altar.

Also in Odessa, a statue of Satan used to be exhibited in the Museum of the Atheists. It was called Bafomet. At night, Satanists would gather in the museum for prayer and chanting before the statue. [3]

Religious Obscenities

It might be in some sense "logical" that Communists would arrest priests and pastors as counter-revolutionaries. But why were priests compelled by the Marxists in the Romanian prison of Piteshti to say Mass over excrement and urine? Why were Christians tortured into taking Communion with these as the elements? Why such an obscene mockery of religion? Why did the Romanian Orthodox priest Roman Braga, whom I knew personally when he was a prisoner of the Communists, and who presently resides in the U.S.A., have his teeth knocked out one by one with an iron rod in order to make him blaspheme?

The Communists had explained to him and others: "If we kill you Christians, you go to heaven. But we don't want you to be crowned martyrs. You should curse God first and then go to hell."

In the prison of Piteshti the Communists would force a very religious prisoner to be "baptized" daily by putting his head into the barrel in which his fellow-sufferers had fulfilled their necessities, meanwhile obliging the other prisoners to sing the baptismal service.

A theology student was forced to dress in white sheets (in imitation of Christ's robe), and a phallus

made out of soap was hung around his neck with a string. Christians were beaten to insanity to force them to kneel before such a mocking image of Christ. After they had kissed the soap, they had to recite part of the liturgy. [4]

Some prisoners were compelled to take off their trousers and sit with their naked bottoms on open Bibles. [5]

Such blasphemous practices were perpetrated for at least two years with the full knowledge of the Party's top leadership. What have such indignities to do with socialism and the well-being of the proletariat? Were their

anticapitalist slogans not merely pretexts for organizing Satanic blasphemies and orgies?

Marxists are supposed to be atheists who believe in neither heaven nor hell. In these extreme circumstances, Marxism has lifted its atheistic mask to reveal its true face, the face of Satanism. Communist persecution of religion might have a human explanation, but the fury of such perverse persecution can only be Satanic.

In Romanian prisons and in the Soviet Union as well, nuns who would not deny their faith were raped anally, and Baptist girls had oral sex forced on them. [6]

Many prisoners who were so treated died as martyrs, but the Communists were not satisfied with this. Using Luciferian techniques, they made martyrs die blaspheming because of the delirium provoked by torture.

Only once in all his works did Marx ever write about torture. During his own lifetime, many of his followers were tortured by Russian Czarist authorities. Since Marx is usually described as a humanist, one

would expect him to write with horror about such an abominable practice. But his only comment was,

Torture alone has given rise to the most ingenious mechanical inventions and employed many honorable craftsmen in the production of the instruments. [7]

Torture is productive, it leads to ingenious inventions – this is all Marx had to say about the subject. No wonder Marxist governments have surpassed all others in torturing their opponents! This alone displays the Satanic nature of Marxism.

Marxism also is based on a hatred for God. In 1923, in the Soviet Union, mock trials of God were held in the presence of Trotsky and Lunacharsky. [8] But such opposition to God and His people do not belong only to the past.

Satanist desecrations of Catholic churches occurred in the 1970s in Upyna, Dotnuva, Zanaiciu, Kalvarija, Sede, etc., localities in Lithuania. One about which we know happened in Alsedeai on September 22, 1980. [9]

In his book ~Psychiatric Hospital 14, Moscow~, Georgi Fedotov tells of his conversation with the psychiatrist Dr. Valdimir Levitski about a Christian named Argentov who was detained there. The physician

says, "You are pulling your friend Eduard toward God and we toward the Devil. So I'm using my rights as a psychiatrist to deny you and your friends access to him."

The Christian Salu Daka Ndebele was interrogated by the Secret Police of Maputo in Communist Mozambique. The officer said to him, "We want to kill your God." He raised his gun toward the head of the prisoner and declared, "This is my God. With this I have the

power of life and death. If your God comes here, I will shoot Him dead myself." [10]

In Chiasso, Communist Angola, Communists slaughtered animals in a church and placed their heads on the altar and pulpit. A poster proclaimed, "These are the gods whom you adore." Pastor Aurelio Chicanha Saunge was killed, together with one hundred and fifty parishioners. [11]

When the Catholic Lithuanian priest Eugene Vosikevic was killed, his mouth was found to have been filled with bread, an apparent Satanist ritual. [12]

~Vetchernaia Moskva~, a Communist newspaper, let pass a Freudian slip of the pen:

We do not fight against believers and not even against clergymen. We fight against God to snatch believers from Him. [13]

A "fight against God to snatch believers from Him" is the only logical explanation for the Communist fight against religion.

We do not wonder at these words in a Soviet newspaper. Marx had said it already in his book ~German Ideology~. Calling God "the absolute Spirit," as his teacher Hegel had done, he wrote, "We are concerned with a highly interesting question: the decomposition of the Absolute Spirit."

It was not a fight against false belief in a nonexistent God that preoccupied him. He believed that God does exist and wanted to see this Absolute Spirit decompose, like many prisoners of the Communists who were made to rot in jail.

In Albania a priest, Stephen Kurti, was sentenced to death for having baptized one child. Baptisms must be

performed in secret in many Communist lands, including North Korea.

The prosecutor at the trial of Metropolitan Benjamin of Leningrad said,

The whole Orthodox church is a subversive organization. Properly speaking, the entire church ought to be in prison.

The only reason all Christians are not in jail in the Soviet Union is that the Communists are not quite powerful enough. But the will to destroy is there. Unrestrained by the Spirit of God and empowered by the forces of evil, they would indeed destroy the whole earth, including themselves.

In the former Soviet Union baptisms could be officiated only after registration. Persons wishing to be baptized or to have their child baptized presented their identity cards to the representative of the church board, who in turn reported them to the state authorities. The result was persecution. Kolkhozniks (workers on collective farms) had no identity cards and could therefore baptize their children only secretly. Many protestant pastors received prison sentences for baptizing people.

The Communist fight against baptism presupposes belief in its value for a soul. Religious people in Israel or Pakistan or Nepal oppose baptism in the name of their own religious outlook, because it is a Christian seal. But for atheists - as Communists clearly declare themselves to be - baptism should mean nothing. Supposedly it neither benefits nor harms the baptized. Why then do these Communists fight against baptism? It is because Communists "fight against God to snatch believers from Him." Their ideology is not really inspired by atheism, but by a fervent hatred for God.

"Among other purposes," said Lenin, "we created our party specifically for the fight against any religious deceiving of the people."

Occult Practices

More about the relationship between Marxism and the occult can be found in ~Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron

Curtain~ [15] by Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroder. It is highly significant that the Communist East had been much more advanced than the West in research about the dark forces manipulated by Satan.

Dr. Eduard Naumov, a member of the International Association of Parapsychologists, was arrested in Moscow. The Moscow physicist L. Regelsohn, a Hebrew-Christian who took his defense, tells us the reason for his arrest: Naumov endeavored to keep the psychic sphere of life free from the domination of evil forces that used parapsychology as a new weapon for the oppression of the human soul.

In Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, etc., the Communist Party spent huge sums on secret investigation into this science. They hid from the West information about what happened in the twenty parapsychological institutes located in the Soviet Union.

~Komsomolskaia Pravda~ (Moscow) published a lengthy article about hypnotists who help people "regress to past lives." For the induction process they use the following suggestions:

You descend into earth, deeper, even deeper. You and the earth become one.... You are deep in the earth. You are surrounded by thick darkness.... Around you is eternal night....

Now we approach a spot of light far away... nearer and

nearer. We sneak through a small hole to the sky, leaving our own body deep in the earth.... We overcome the frontiers of time ... and we return to your past...."

In such articles the Soviets used intentional double-talk. Aware that some might become frightened, they were purposefully reserved, claiming they only inform without agreeing. But what would readers think of an editor who reprinted provocative articles and lustful pictures endlessly from ~Playboy~ while claiming that he did not agree fully with what he was purveying to the public?

Soviet writers said clearly that this "time machine" was not science fiction. "Transpersonalism" offered this voyage in time.

In the Satanist black masses, all prayers are said from the end to the beginning, and the priestly robe is

worn inside out. Inversion is the Satanist rule, and this is applied even to the doctrine of reincarnation. Whereas Indian devotees are concerned about their future reincarnations and try to better themselves by obeying what they believe to be God's commandments, the Satanists offer a return to former incarnations. They care nothing about a better future in eternity.

Marxism as a Church

Just as Satan came to Jesus with Bible verses, so Marx used texts of Scripture, though with much distortion.

Volume 2 of ~The Works of Marx and Engels~ opens with Jesus' words to His disciples (JHN 6:63), as quoted by Marx in his book ~The Holy Family~: "It is the spirit which gives life." Then we read:

Criticism [his criticism of all that exists] so loved the masses that it sent its only-begotten son [i.e., Marx], that whosoever

believes in him should not perish but have a life of criticism. Criticism became masses and lived among us, and we saw its glory as the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father. Criticism did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made itself of no reputation, taking the form of a book-binder, and humbled itself up to nonsense - yes, critical nonsense in foreign languages. [17]

Those knowledgeable in Scripture will recognize this as a parody of Biblical verses (JHN 3:16; JHN 1:14; PHP 2:6-8). Here again, Marx declares his own works to be "nonsense," as well as "swinish books."

Marxism is a religion, and it even "uses" Scripture. Its main work, ~The Capital~ by Marx, is called "the Bible of the working class." Marx considered himself "the Pope of Communism."

Communism "has the pride of infallibility." [19] All who oppose the Communist "creed" (this expression is used by Engels) [20] are excommunicated. Marx wrote, "Bakunin should beware. Otherwise we will excommunicate him." [21]

Those who die in the service of Marxism are feasted as "martyrs." Marxism also has its sacraments: the solemn receptions in the toddlers' organization called "the Children of October," the oaths given when

received as "Pioneers," after which come the higher grades of initiation in the Komsomol and the Party. Confession is replaced with public self-criticism before the assembly of Party members. [22]

Marxism is a church. It has all the characteristics of a church. Yet, its god is not named in its popular literature. But, as seen by the proofs given in this book, Satan is obviously its god.

It is strange that though Marxism is clearly Satanic, it is not seen as a threat by many churches in the free

world. Some illuminating statistics on this are available.

Seminary professors in the U.S.A. were asked, "Can an individual consistently be a good member of your denomination and adhere to Marxism?"

Below are the percentage figures of those who answered Yes: [23]

Episcopalian	68%
Lutheran	53
Presbyterian	49
Methodist	49
Church of Christ	47
American Baptist	44
Roman Catholic	31

How sad that those who follow the Truth are duped by those who serve the father of lies.

What was the specific contribution of Marx to Satan's plan for mankind?

The Bible teaches that God created man in His own image (GEN 1:26). Up to the time of Marx, man continued to be considered as "the crown of creation." Marx was Satan's chosen tool to make man lose his self-esteem, his conviction that he comes from high places and is meant to return to them. Marxism is the first systematic and detailed philosophy which drastically reduces the notion of man.

According to Marx, man is primarily a belly which has to be filled and refilled constantly. The prevailing interests of man are economic in nature; he produces in order to satisfy his needs. For this purpose, he enters

into social relationships with others. This is the basis of society, what Marx calls the infrastructure. Marriage, love, art, science, religion, philosophy, everything other than the needs of the belly, are all superstructure, determined in the last analysis by the state of the belly.

No wonder Marx praised Darwin's book

~The Descent of Man~, another masterstroke which makes men forget their divine origin and divine purpose. Darwin said that man springs from the animal world.

Man was dethroned by these two. Satan could not dethrone God, so he devalued man. Man was shown to be the progeny of animals and a mere servant to his intestines.

It is a strange coincidence that the nineteenth century gave the world three leading personalities opposed to Christianity, all bearing the name of Charles: Karl (German for Charles) Marx, Charles Darwin, and the French poet Charles Baudelaire. The latter wrote in "Abel and Cain":

Race of Cain, ascend to heaven
And throw God to the earth.

Marx wrote to Ferdinand Lassalle on January 16, 1861, "Darwin's book is very important and serves me as a basis in the natural sciences for the historical class struggle."

Marx's son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, in ~Socialism and the Intellectuals~, says,

When Darwin published his ~Origin of Species~, he took away from God his role as creator in the organic world, as Franklin has despoiled him of his thunderbolt.

(It was not Darwin's original intent to harm religion. He had written, "There is a grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one." In order to make his position more emphatic, Darwin inserted the phrase "by the Creator" after "breathed" in the second

edition. It remained there in all the succeeding editions he published.)

Later Freud would complete the work of these two giants, reducing man basically to a sex urge, sometimes sublimated in politics, art, or religion. It was the Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung who returned to the Biblical doctrine that the religious impulse is man's basic urge.

The age of Marx was a time of Satanist ferment in many spheres of life. The Russian poet Sologub wrote, "My father is the Devil." Another Russian poet, Briusov, said, "I glorify equally the Lord and the Devil."

Marx was a child of the time that gave us Nietzsche (Hitler's and Mussolini's favorite philosopher), Max Stimer, an extreme anarchist, and Oscar Wilde, the first theoretician of freedom for homosexuality, a vice which today has met with acceptance even among the clergy.

Satanic forces prepared Russia for the victory of Marxism. The time of the revolution was a period when love, goodwill, and healthy feeling were considered mean and retrograde. Girls hid their innocence and husbands their faithfulness. Destruction was praised as good taste, neurasthenia as the sign of a fine mind. This was the theme of new writers who burst on the scene out of obscurity. Men invented vices and perversions, and were fastidious in their avoidance of being thought moral.

How was it that Stalin became a revolutionist after reading Darwin? [1] As a student in an Orthodox seminary, he obtained from Darwin the concept that we are not creatures of God, but the result of an evolution in which ruthless competition reigns. It is only the strongest

and most cruel who survive. He learned that moral and religious criteria play no role in nature and that man is as much a part of nature as a fish or an ape. Long live ruthlessness and cruelty!

Darwin had written a scientific book setting forth his theory of origins. It had no economic or political implications. But though many might go so far as to concede that God created the world through a long process of evolution, the end result of Darwin's theory has been the killing of tens of millions of innocents. He therefore became the spiritual father of the greatest mass-murderer in history.

Beyond the intellectual turmoil of the nineteenth century can be traced the influence of the French

Revolution, which was spiritually very much akin to the Russian cataclysm of the twentieth century.

During the upheaval in France, Anarchasis Clootz, a leading French revolutionary and Illuminatus, declared himself to be "the personal enemy of Jesus Christ." He proclaimed before the Convention of November 17, 1792, "The people is the sovereign and the god of the world.... Only fools believe in any other God, in a Supreme Being." The Convention then issued a decree proclaiming "the nullification of all religions."

For those of us who take seriously the words of the Lord's Prayer, "Deliver us from evil," the meaning is clear: we implore a loving God to protect us and society around us from false doctrine, from pernicious art that accustoms us to evil under the guise of beauty, and from immorality in life. Then we need have no fear of the Devil's snares.

You have a choice: Do you want to become like the Devil, cruel and vicious, or like Jesus, the God-man of holy love and peace?

Moses Hess's False Zionism

To complete the picture, we will consider Moses Hess, the man who converted Marx and Engels to the Socialist ideal.

There is a tombstone in Israel inscribed with the words, "Moses Hess, founder of the German Social-Democrat Party." Hess expounds his beliefs in the ~Red Catechism for the German People~:

What is black? Black is the clergy.... These theologians are the worst aristocrats.... The clergyman teaches the princes to oppress the people in the name of God. Secondly, he teaches the people to allow themselves to be oppressed and exploited in God's name. Thirdly and principally, he provides for himself with God's help a splendid life on earth, while the people are advised to wait for heaven.

The Red flag symbolizes the permanent revolution until the completed victory of the working classes in all civilized countries: the Red republic.... The Socialist revolution is my religion.... The workers, when they have conquered one country, must help their brethren in the rest of the world. [2]

This was Hess's religion when he first issued the Catechism. In the second edition, he added a few chapters.

This time the same religion, i.e., the Socialist revolution, uses Christian language in order to accredit itself with believers. Together with the propaganda of revolution, there are indeed a few nice words about Christianity as a religion of love and humanity. But its message must be made clearer: its hell must not be on earth and its heaven beyond. The Socialist society will be the true fulfillment of Christianity. Thus Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

After Hess convinced Marx and Engels of the Socialist idea, claiming from the very beginning that its purpose would be to give "the last kick to medieval

religion" [3] (his friend Georg Jung said it even more clearly: "Marx will surely chase God from his heaven" [4]), an interesting development took place in Hess's life. He who had founded modern socialism also founded an entirely different movement, a specific brand of Zionism.

Thus Hess, founder of a socialism whose aim was to "chase God from heaven," was also founder of a diabolic type of Zionism that was to destroy godly Zionism, the Zionism of love, understanding, and concord with surrounding nations. He who taught Marx the importance of class struggle wrote in 1862 these surprising words: "Race struggle is primary, class struggle is secondary." [5]

He had lighted the fire of class war, a fire never extinguished, instead of teaching people to cooperate for the common good. The same Hess then breeds a distorted Zionism, a Zionism of race struggle. As we reject Satanic Marxism, so also must every responsible Jew or Christian reject this diabolical perversion of Zionism.

Hess claims Jerusalem for the Jews, but without Jesus, the King of the Jews. What need has Hess of Jesus? He writes,

Every Jew has the making of a Messiah in himself, every Jewess that of a Mater Delorosa in herself. [6]

Then why in the world did he not make of the Jew Marx a Messiah, a God-anointed man, instead of a hater bent on chasing God from heaven? For Hess, Jesus is "a Jew, whom the heathen deified as their Savior." [7] Neither Hess nor the Jews seem to need

Him for themselves.

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Hess does not wish to be saved himself, and for an individual to seek personal sanctification is "Indo-German," he says. The aim of the Jews, according to him, must be "a Messianic state," "to prepare mankind for the revelation of the divine essence," [8] which means, as he acknowledges in his ~Red Catechism~, to wage the Socialist revolution through racial and class struggle.

Moses Hess, who allotted to his idol Marx the task of putting an end to medieval religion, replacing it with the religion of Socialist revolution, writes these amazing words: "I have always been edified by Hebrew prayers." [9] What prayers do those who consider religion the opiate of the people say? We have seen already that the founder of scientific atheism prayed while wearing phylacteries before burning candles. Jewish prayers can be misused in a blasphemous sense, just as Christian prayers are perverted in Satanist ritual.

Hess had taught Marx that socialism was inseparable from internationalism. Marx writes in his ~Communist Manifesto~ that the proletariat has no fatherland. In his ~Red Catechism~ Hess mocks the fatherland notion of the Germans, and he would have done the same with the fatherland notion of any other European nation. Hess criticized the Erfurt program of the German Social-Democrat Party for its unconditional recognition of the national principle. But Hess is an internationalist with a difference: Jewish patriotism must remain. He writes,

Whoever denies Jewish nationalism is not only an apostate, a renegade in the religious sense, but a traitor to his people and to his family. Should it prove true that the emancipation of the Jews is incompatible with Jewish nationalism, then the Jew must sacrifice emancipation.... The Jew must be, above all, a Jewish patriot. [10]

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I agree with Hess's patriotic ideas to the extent that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. I am for every kind of patriotism - that of the Jews, the Arabs, the Germans, the Russians, the Americans. Patriotism is a virtue if it means the endeavor to promote economically, politically, spiritually, and religiously the

welfare of one's own nation, provided that it is done in friendship and cooperation with other nations. But the Jewish patriotism of a revolutionary Socialist who denies the patriotism of all other nations is highly suspect. This seems to be a diabolical plan to make all peoples hate the Jews.

If I were a non-Jew who saw the Jews accept Hess's plan of unilateral patriotism, I would oppose it. Fortunately, no Jews have accepted this Satanic plan. In fact, it was Herzl who gave a sane turn to Zionism. In its modern form no trace of Satanism has remained.

The race struggle proposed by Hess is false, as false as the class struggle he enjoined.

Hess did not abandon socialism for this specific kind of Zionism. After writing ~Rome and Jerusalem~, he continued to be active in the world Socialist movement.

Hess does not state his thoughts clearly; therefore it is difficult to evaluate them. It is enough to know that according to him, "the Christian world views Jesus as a Jewish saint who became a pagan man." [11] It is enough for us to read in his book, "We today long for a far more comprehensive salvation than that which Christianity was ever able to offer." [12] From ~The Red Catechism~ it follows that this more comprehensive salvation is the Socialist revolution.

It could be added that Hess was not only the original source of Marxism and the man who attempted to

create an anti-God Zionism, but also the predecessor of the liberation theology currently endorsed in the World Council of Churches and Catholicism. One and the same man, who is almost unknown, has been the mouthpiece of three Satanic movements: communism; a racist, hateful brand of Zionism; and a theology of revolution.

No one can be a Christian without loving the Jews. Jesus was Jewish, as were the virgin Mary and all the apostles. The Bible is Jewish. The Lord has said, "Salvation is of the Jews" (JHN 4:22). Hess, on the other hand, exalted the Jews as though he consciously wanted to create a violent anti-Jewish reaction. He said that his religion was that of Socialist revolution. The clergy of all "other" religions were crooks. Revolution was the only religion for which Hess had a high regard. He writes,

Our religion (the Jewish) has as its point of departure the enthusiasm of a race which from its appearance on the stage of history has foreseen the final purposes of mankind and which had a foreboding of the messianic time in which the spirit of humanity will be fulfilled, not only in this or that individual or only partially, but in the social institutions of all mankind. [13]

This time – which Hess calls "messianic" is the time of the victory of the Socialist world revolution. The idea that the Jewish religion had as its point of departure the concept of a godless Socialist revolution is an ugly joke and an insult to the Jewish people.

Hess speaks persistently in religious terms, but he does not believe in God. He writes that "our God is nothing more than the human race united in love." [14] The way to arrive at such a union is the Socialist

revolution, in which tens of millions of specimens of his beloved mankind will be tortured and killed.

He makes no secret of the fact that he wishes neither the domination of heaven, nor that of earthly powers, which are both oppressive. There is no good in any religion, except that of social revolution.

It is useless and inefficient to elevate the people to real freedom and to make them participate in the goods of existence, without freeing them from spiritual slavery, i.e., from religion. [15]

He speaks in one breath about "the absolutism of celestial and earthly tyrants over slaves." [16]

The Satanic depths of communism can be understood only by knowing the kind of man Moses Hess was, for he influenced Marx and Engels, with whom he founded the First International, as well as Bakunin. Without a knowledge of Hess, Marx is unintelligible, because it is he who brought Marx to socialism.

Consider Marx's words already quoted:

Words I teach all mixed up into a devilish muddle. Thus, anyone may think just what he chooses to think.

Marx wrote in such a manner. Hess's writings are an even more devilish muddle, which are difficult to untangle but which must be analyzed for possible

connections between Marx and Satanism.

Hess's first book was called ~The Holy History of Mankind~. He proclaimed it to be "a work of the holy spirit of truth," [17] saying further that as the Son of God freed men from their own slavery, Hess would free them from political bondage. "I am called to witness for the light, as John has been." [18]

At that time Marx, who was still opposed to socialism

and had not known Hess personally, started to write a book against him. For unknown reasons, this book was never completed. He later became Hess's disciple. [19]

As previously indicated, Hess's avowed aims were to give a last kick to medieval religion and to produce ravages. In the introduction to his book ~Last Judgment~, he declares his satisfaction that the German philosopher Kant had allegedly "decapitated the old Father Jehovah together with the whole holy family." [20] (Hess covers his own ideas with the name of the great philosopher. Kant had had no such intentions. He had written to the contrary: "I had to limit knowledge to make place for faith." [21]

Hess declares the Jewish as well as the Christian religion to be "dead," [22] which does not prevent him from writing in ~Rome and Jerusalem~ about "our holy writings," "the holy language of our fathers," "our cult," "the divine laws," "the ways of Providence," and "godly life." [23]

It is not that at different stages in life he held different opinions. In his pseudo-Zionist book he declares that he does not disown his former godless endeavors. No, this is an intentional "devilish muddle." [24]

Hess was Jewish and a forerunner of Zionism. Because Hess, Marx, and other people like them were Jewish, some people consider communism a Jewish plot. Yet Marx also wrote an anti-Jewish book. In this respect, too, he has simply followed Hess.

This "Zionist," Hess, who elevates Jewry to heaven, wrote in his book ~About the Monetary System~:

The Jews, who had the role, in the natural history of the social animal world, to develop mankind into a savage animal, have fulfilled this, their professional job. The mystery of

Judaism and Christianity has been revealed in the modern Judeo-Christian. The mystery of the blood of Christ, like the mystery of the old Jewish worship of the blood, appears here unveiled as being the mystery of the predatory animal. [25]

Don't worry if you fail to understand these words. They were written "mixed up into a devilish muddle," but the hatred for Jewishness contained in them is clear. Hess is a racist, Jewish as well as anti-Jewish, according to the needs of the spirit which inspired his works and which he calls "holy."

Hitler could have learned his racism from Hess. He who had taught Marx that social class is a decisive factor also wrote the contrary: "Life is an immediate product of race." [26] Social institutions and conceptions, as well as religions, are typical and original creations of the race. The problem of race lies hidden behind all the problems of nationalities and freedom. All past history was concerned with the struggle of races and classes. Race struggle is primary; class struggle is secondary. [27]

How will Hess manage to have so many contradictory ideas triumph?

I will use the sword against all citizens who resist the endeavors of the proletariat. [28]

We will hear the same from Marx:

Violence is the midwife which takes the new society out of the womb of the old one. [29]

Marx's first teacher was the philosopher Hegel, who merely paved the way for Hess. Marx, too, had sucked poison from Hegel, for whom Christianity was wretched in comparison to the glorious past of Greek culture. Hegel wrote: "Christians have piled up such a

heap of reasons for comfort in misfortune ... that we ought to be sorry in the end that we cannot lose a father or a mother once a week," while for the Greek "misfortune was misfortune, pain was pain." [30]

Christianity had been satirized in Germany before Hegel. But he was the first to satirize Jesus Himself. He also wrote nice things about Christianity, the same

"devilish muddle."
We are what we feed upon. Marx fed upon Satanic ideas; therefore he set forth Satanist doctrine.

The Organization "Hell"

Communists have a habit of creating front organizations. All of the above suggests the probability that Communist movements are themselves front organizations for occult Satanism. The means to fight Satanism are spiritual, not carnal; otherwise, while one Satanist front organization, such as nazism, is defeated, another will rise to greater victory. Himmler, the minister of interior affairs of Nazi Germany, thought himself to be King Henry the Fowler's reincarnation. He believed that it was possible to harness occult powers to serve the Nazi army. Several Nazi leaders were involved in black magic.
What was mere supposition when I published the first edition of this present book is now a proven fact. The proof has been given by the Communists themselves. The story begins with the Netchaiev case, which prompted Dostoievsky to write his renowned novel ~The Demons~.
Netchaiev, called a "splendid, young fanatic" [31] by

Bakunin, Marx's collaborator in founding the First International, wrote ~The Catechism of the Revolutionist~ as the guide for the Russian organization "Popular Revenge." It appeared around 1870.
The purpose of this organization was formulated as follows.

Our cause is terrible, complete, universal, and pitiless destruction.... Let us unite with the savage, criminal world, these true and only revolutionists of Russia. [32]

The first man the Netchaiev group killed was one of their founding comrades, Ivanov, who dared to criticize his leadership. No criticism was permitted.
Netchaiev's plan was to divide mankind into two unequal parts.

One tenth gets personal liberty and unlimited rights over the other nine tenths. These must lose their personality and turn

into a kind of herd. [33]

They will engage in spy work. Each member of society will spy on the other and will be obliged to denounce.... All are slaves and are equal in slavery. [34]

Netchaiev wrote in his Catechism:

A revolutionist must infiltrate everywhere, in the upper and lower classes ... in churches ... in literature.

His disciple Peter Verhovensky commented:

We are already terribly powerful.... Jurors who acquit criminals are completely ours. The district attorney who trembles in courts not to be considered liberal enough is ours. Administrators, men of letters, we are many, very many, and they don't know they belong to us. [35]

On the basis of such a program an organization with an impressive name was formed – the World Revolutionist League. Its constitution was signed by Netchaiev and Bakunin, Marx's intimate collaborator. [36] In the beginning the League consisted of only a handful of men.

The revolutionist Duke Peter Dolgorukov wrote on October 31, 1862:

In London I met Kelsiev (who belonged to the above organization), a narrow-minded but good man, terribly fanatical, with the face of a soft man. Kelsiev told me softly, with a benevolent look: "If we have to slaughter, why not slaughter, provided this is useful?" ... All these London men speak continually about "burning down, slaughtering, cutting in pieces." These words have never left their tongue since Bakunin came to England....

In 1869, in Geneva, Netchaiev wrote a proclamation in which, referring to the man who shot Emperor Alexander II, he advises:

We must consider what Karakazov did as prologue. Yes, this was a prologue. Let us see to it that the drama itself begins soon. [37]

Another proclamation says,

Soon, soon the day comes when we will unfurl the great flag of the future, the Red flag, and we will attack with great noise the Imperial palace....

We will have one shout, "To the axes!" and then we will kill the party of the emperor. Do not pity.... Kill in public places if these base rascals dare to enter them, kill in houses, kill in villages.

Remember, those who will not side with us will be against us. Whoever is against us is our enemy. And we must destroy enemies by all means. [38]

p098 Chapter 7: Marx, Darwin, and Revolution MARX & SATAN

In 1872, a revolutionary society was formed under the simple name "The Organization," which had a super-secret circle chillingly called "Hell." Though its goals have continued to be pursued for well over a century by groups which continually change their names, its existence has been unknown to the outside world.

Soviet historians have dared to write about the activities of "Hell," a forerunner of the Russian Communist Party, only as recently as 1965, ninety-three years after its formation.

In ~Revolutionist Underground~ in Russia, E. S. Vilenskaia wrote:

"Hell" was the name of the center above the secret organization, which not only used terror against the monarchy, but also had punitive functions toward the members of the secret organization. [39]

In ~Tchernishevsky~ or ~Netchaiev~ [40] we read that one of the members (Fediseev) of "Hell" took it upon himself to poison his own father in order to give the organization his inheritance.

Tchernishevsky, who belonged to this movement, wrote,

I'll participate in revolution; I am not frightened by dirt, by drunkards with sticks, by slaughter. We don't care if we have to shed thrice as much blood as the rebels in the French revolution. So what if we had to kill a hundred thousand farmers? [41]

Here are some of the expressed aims of this Satanic organization:

Mystification is the best, almost the only means to impel men to make a revolution.

It is enough to kill a few million people and the wheels of revolution will be oiled.

Our ideal is awful, complete, universal, and pitiless destructlon.

And again:

Mankind must be divided into two unequal parts. One tenth receives personal liberty and unlimited rights over the other nine tenths. The latter must lose their personality and become a kind of herd. [42]

In their writings we constantly find the words, "We are not afraid." A typical example is the following proclamation:

We are not afraid that we might find out three times more blood will have to be shed for the overthrow of the existing order than the Jacobins (French revolutionists) had to shed in their revolution in 1790.... If for the fulfillment of our objectives we had to slaughter one hundred thousand landlords, we would not be afraid of this either. [43]

In reality, the number of victims was much greater. Churchill says in his ~Memoirs of World War II~ that Stalin confessed that ten million people died as a result of the collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union.

The important fact to remember is that the Communists have now confessed, after a delay of almost a hundred years, that at the inception of their movement was a circle called "Hell." Why "Hell"? Why not "The Society for the Betterment of the Poor" or "... of mankind"? Why the stark emphasis on hell?

Today the Communists are more cautious. But in the beginning their very name revealed that their avowed aim was to recruit men for eternal damnation.

The Satanist Mass

Dr. Lawrence Pazder, in ~Michelle Remembers,~ [1] gives us the exact words of a highly secret Satanist mass, obtained through regression analysis from a girl who had attended such some twenty years before.

In the mass Satan appears and says:

Out of dark and fire red
Comes a man of living dead;
I only walk the earth at night,
I only burn out the light.
I only go where everybody's afraid;
I go and find the ones who've strayed.
All the darkest forces they are mine.

Turn a light, make it night.

Satan is obviously personified by the high priest of the sect. Then Satan takes a Bible in his hand and says:

No eyes can see what this book said.
What's written in the book is dead.
No eyes can see, not even a friend.
The books are mine in the end.

You can write all day, you can write all night,
But writing won't bring light.
I'll burn it out, I'll make it black.
I'll burn your words from front to back.
I'll burn each page, I'll eat each word
And spit it out never to be heard.
The fire will grow, their eyes will see.
The book of words can't stand up to me.
When they grow old, they'll know and tell.
The only power comes from Hell.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
Burn in the fire and then you're gone.
Their words were lies,
My children will see.
In the fire their word dies.
The only thing left burning true

Is the light that shows me to you.

I'll be back, you wait and see.
I'll be back to take the world for me.
Everything that's gone must return.
I was thrown out, but I can burn.

Turn, my children, turn around.
Touch every piece of ground.
Touch everyone you can.
Make a beast of every man.

Then follows the chant of the congregation:

It's time to change from black to red.
It's time to change from alive to dead.
Prince of darkness ...
Help us celebrate the feast
Of the coming of the Beast.

Satan speaks again:

The Holy One, the One most high -
Ha, not for long, pretty soon it will be I.

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All the countries you see, I put my traps,
Waiting for the boot to collapse.
Money and numbers and the power of hate,
These are the things on which I relate.
Numbers of people - so many, each one small,
Then, with so much money, the small are tall.

Friedrich Nietzsche, in the fourth part of ~Thus Spake Zarathustra~, under "Awakening," provides the text of another black mass he himself composed. Its spirit does not differ much from the one above. [2]

Tragically, it has come to light that black masses have infiltrated the lives of many Americans, especially children. [3]

"Satan, Satan, Satan. He is God; he is God; he is God." These blasphemous words are hidden in the lyrics of rock records that youth listen to by the hour, many with no awareness of what they are being subjected to. The words are hidden in the lyrics through "backward masking."

A number of rock groups have used this technique.

Led Zeppelin's best-selling record "Stairway to Heaven," which admittedly makes little sense as written, contains the masked message, "I will sing because I live with Satan." Another song contains the words, "I decide to smoke marijuana." Subliminal persuasion is more powerful, and therefore more dangerous, than conscious influence.

Public black masses are rare today, but Stefan Zweig in his biography of Fouch, describes one held in Lyon during the French Revolution.

A revolutionary, Chalier, had been killed, and the black mass was celebrated in his honor. On that day crucifixes were torn from all the altars and priestly robes were confiscated. A huge crowd of men carrying

a bust of the revolutionary descended on the marketplace. Three proconsuls were there to honor Chalier, "the God-Savior who died for the people."

The crowd carried chalices, holy images, and utensils used in the mass. Behind them was an ass wearing a bishop's mitre on its head. A crucifix and a Bible had been tied to its tail.

In the end, the Gospel was thrown into the fire together with missals, prayer books, and ikons. The ass was made to drink from a Communion chalice as a reward for its blasphemous services. The bust of Chalier was put on an altar in place of the smashed image of Christ. Tens of former Catholic priests participated.

A medal was issued to commemorate this event. Secret black masses do not take this shape, but the spirit is basically the same.

The Russian magazine ~Iunii Kommunist~ describes in detail a Satanist mass in which bread and wine, mixed with dung and tears taken from operating on the eyes of a living cock, are "transubstantiated" into the alleged body and blood of Lucifer.

During this ceremony the words of the mass are read from the end to the beginning, as is customary in Satanist rituals. Then a covenant is concluded between Satan and his worshipers. The points of the contract are: renunciation of Christian teachings; new baptism in the name of the Devil, with a change of name; renunciation of godparents, with the substitution of other protectors; bringing some personal clothing as a gift to Satan; swearing loyalty to Satan while standing in a magic circle; inscription of the new member's name in

"The Book of the Dead," as opposed to Christ's Book of Life; the promise to consecrate one's children to the Devil, as well as gifts and deeds pleasing to him; an

oath to keep the secrets of the witches' coven and to demean the Christian religion.

Why would Communists dig out such teachings from old books of demonology and recommend them to the youth, saying, "they are rich food for thought"? Is that all that Marxism has to offer the human mind?

The Communist magazine continues:

In this devilish antiworld, which externally is completely like ours, man must reply with evil to every success in life.

Then it brazenly affirms the following as the slogan of Satanism: "Satan is not the foe of man. He is Life, Love, Light."

The article ends with a quotation from Uspenskii expressing the hope of the Communists:

There are ideas which touch the most intimate corners of our lives. Once these are touched, the marks remain forever. ... They will poison life. [4]

This insidious material is presented in a subtle manner as if to provide information, but its real aim is to arouse the reader's morbid curiosity, with ravaging effects.

During the initiation ceremony for the third degree in the Satanist church, the initiate has to take the oath, "I will always do only what I will." In other words, there is no authority beyond the polluted self. This is an open denial of God's commandment, "... seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you used to go a whoring" (NUM 15:39).

Marxists appeal to the basest passions, stirring up envy toward the rich and violence toward everyone. "It

is the evil side which makes history," wrote Marx, and he played a major role in shaping history.

Revolutions do not cause love to triumph. Rather, killing becomes a mania. In the Russian and Chinese revolutions, after the Communists had murdered tens of millions of innocents, they could not stop murdering

and brutally killed one another.

Is Everything Permitted?

The Satanist cult is very old, older than Christianity. The prophet Isaiah might have had it in view when he wrote, "We have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him (the Savior) the iniquity of us all" (ISA 53:6).

True religious feeling is at the opposite pole. Certain Hassidic rabbis never said "I," because they considered it a pronoun that belonged only to God. His will is binding on human behavior.

By contrast, when a man or woman is initiated into the seventh degree of Satanism, he swears that his principle will be, "Nothing is true, and everything is permitted." When Marx filled out a quiz game for his daughter, he answered the question "Which is your favorite principle?" with the words, "Doubt everything." [5]

Marx wrote in ~The Communist Manifesto~ that his aim was the abolition not only of all religions, but also of all morals, which would make everything permissible.

It was with a sense of horror that I read the mystery of the seventh degree of Satanism inscribed on a poster at the University of Paris during the 1968 riots. It had been simplified to the formula, "It is forbidden to forbid,"

which is the natural consequence of "Nothing is true, and everything is permissible."

The youth obviously did not realize the stupidity of the formula. If it is forbidden to forbid, it must also be forbidden to forbid forbidding. If everything is permissible, forbidding is permissible, too.

Young people think that permissiveness means liberty. Marxists know better. To them, the formula means that it is forbidden to forbid cruel dictatorships like those in Red China and the Soviet Union.

Dostoievsky had said it already: "If there is no God, everything is permitted." If there is no God, our instincts are free. The ultimate expression of this kind of liberty is hatred. Whoever is free in this sense considers loving-kindness a weakness of the spirit.

Engels said, "Generalized love of men is absurdity." The anarchist thinker Max Stimer, author of ~The I and Its Property~ and one of Marx's friends, wrote,

"I am legitimately authorized to do everything I am capable of."

Communism is collective demon-possession. Solzhenitsyn in ~The Gulag Archipelago~ reveals some of its horrible results in the souls and lives of people.

The Mythical Marx

Let me say again that I am conscious that the evidence I have given to date may be considered circumstantial. But what I have written is enough to show that what Marxists say about Karl Marx is a myth. He is not prompted by concern for the poverty of his fellowmen, for which revolution was the only solution. He did not love the proletariat, but called them "nuts," "stupid," "asses," "rascals," even obscenities. He did not even

love his comrades in the fight for communism. He called Freiligrath "the swine,"[6] Lassalle "Jewish nigger," [7] Bakunin "a theoretical zero." [8]

A Lieutenant Tchekhov, a fighter in the revolution of 1848 who spent nights drinking with Marx, commented that Marx's narcissism had devoured everything good that had been in him.

Marx certainly did not love mankind. Giuseppe Mazzini, who knew him well, wrote that he had "a destructive spirit. His heart bursts with hatred rather than with love toward men." [9]

Mazzini was himself a "Carbonari." This organization, founded in 1815 by Maghella, a Genoan Freemason, declared its "final aim to be that of Voltaire and of the French Revolution the complete annihilation of Catholicism and ultimately of Christianity." It began as an Italian operation, but subsequently developed a broader European orientation.

Though Mazzini was critical of Marx, he maintained his friendship with him. ~The Jewish Encyclopedia~ says that Mazzini and Marx were entrusted with the task of preparing the address and the constitution of the First International. This means that they were birds of the same feather, though they sometimes pecked at each other.

I know of no testimonies from Marx's contemporaries that contradict Mazzini's evaluation. Marx the loving man is a myth constructed only after his death.

In fact, his favorite bit of verse was this quotation from G. Werth: "There is nothing more beautiful in the world than to bite one's enemies." In his own words, he said outright, "We are pitiless. We ask for no pity. When our turn comes, we will not shun terrorism."

These are hardly the sentiments of a lover.

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Marx did not hate religion because it stood in the way of the happiness of mankind. On the contrary, he simply wanted to make mankind unhappy in this world and throughout eternity. He proclaimed this as his ideal. His avowed aim was the destruction of religion. Socialism, concern for the proletariat, humanism - these were only pretexts.

After Marx had read ~The Origin of Species~ by Charles Darwin, he wrote a letter to Lassalle in which he exults that God - in the natural sciences at least - had been given "the death blow." [10] What idea, then, preempted all others in Marx's mind? Was it the plight of the poor proletariat? If so, of what possible value was Darwin's theory? The only tenable conclusion is that Marx's chief aim was the destruction of religion.

The good of the workers was only a pretense. Where proletarians do not fight for Socialist ideals, Marxists will exploit racial differences or the so-called generation gap. The main thing is, religion must be destroyed.

Marx believed in hell. And his program, the driving force in his life, was to send men to hell.

Robin Goodfellow

Marx wrote,

In the signs that bewilder the middle class, the aristocracy, and the prophets of regression, we recognize our brave friend, Robin Goodfellow, the old mole that can work in the earth so fast - the revolution. [11]

Scholars who have read this apparently never looked into the identity of this Robin Goodfellow, Marx's brave friend, the worker for revolution.

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The sixteenth-century evangelist William Tyndale used Robin Goodfellow as a name for the Devil. [12] Shakespeare in his ~Midsummer Night's Dream~ called him "the knavish spirit that misleads nightwanderers, laughing at their harm." [13]

Thus, according to Marx, considered the father of communism, a demon was the author of the Communist revolution and was his personal friend.

Lenin's Tomb

In his revelation to St. John, Jesus said something very mysterious to the church in Pergamos (a city in Asia Minor): "I know... where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is" (REV 2:13). Pergamos was apparently a center of the Satanist cult in that period. Now the world-famous Baedecker tourist guidebooks for Berlin state that the Island Museum contained the Pergamos altar of Zeus until 1944. German archaeologists had excavated it, and it had been in the center of the Nazi capital during Hitler's Satanist regime.

But the saga of the seat of Satan is not yet over. ~Svenska Dagbladet~ (Stockholm) for January 27, 1948 reveals that:

1) The Soviet army, after the conquest of Berlin, carried off the Pergamos altar from Germany to Moscow. This tremendous structure measures 127 feet long by 120 feet wide by forty feet high.

Surprisingly, the altar has not been exhibited in any Soviet museum. For what purpose was it transported to Moscow?

We have already indicated that men in the top echelons of the Soviet hierarchy practiced Satanist rituals. Did they reserve the Pergamos altar for their private use? There are

many unanswered questions. Suffice it to say that objects of such high archaeological value usually do not disappear, but are the pride of museums.

2) The architect, Stjusev, who built Lenin's mausoleum, used this altar of Satan as a model for the mausoleum in 1924. [14]

Many visitors wait in line every day to visit this sanctuary of Satan in which Lenin's mummy lies in state. Religious leaders of the whole world pay their homage to the Marxist "patron saint" in this monument erected to

Satan.

The Satanist temple at Pergamos was only one of the many of its kind. Why did Jesus single it out? Probably not because of the minor role it played at that time. Rather, His words were prophetic. He spoke about nazism and communism, through which this altar would be honored.

It is worth noting with irony that on the grave of Lenin's father there stood a cross with the inscription "The light of Christ illuminates all" and a multitude of Bible verses.

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A Call for Action

This book has been written in an exploratory manner. Christian thinkers, like other scholars, often succumb to the temptation to prove preconceived ideas. They do not necessarily present only the truth as far as they have ascertained it. Sometimes they are prone to stretch the truth or exaggerate their argumentation in order to prove their point.

I do not claim to have provided indisputable proof that Marx was a member of a sect of devil-worshipers, but I believe that there are sufficient leads to imply this strongly. There are certainly enough leads to suggest Satanic influence upon his life and teachings, while conceding that there are gaps in a chain of evidence that would lead to a definite conclusion in this matter. I have provided the initial impulse. I pray that others will also continue this important inquiry into the relationship between Marxism and Satanism.

Meanwhile, how can the church defeat Marxism?

The secular anti-Communist world can use weapons of economic sanctions, political pressure, military

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threats, and broad-based propaganda. The church should certainly support any actions conscience can endorse in the battle against the enemies of God. But it also has a weapon of its own.

The Ukrainian Metropolitan of the Catholic Church, Byzantine rite, Andrew Count Sheptytsky, once requested that Rome order prayers of exorcism against the Communists, whose "regime cannot be explained except by a massive possession of the Devil."

Jesus did not tell His disciples to complain about demons, but to cast them out (MTT 10:8). I believe this can be effectively accomplished, though this book cannot enter into details about such prayer.

Readers React

The first editions of this book produced interesting responses. Many greeted it as a new discovery in the understanding of Marxism and gave me valuable hints as to where I could find new material.

On the other hand, a Dutch personality dedicated several columns of his theological magazine to minimizing the importance of the discovery. "Well," he says, "Marx may have indulged in black magic, but this does not count for much. All men are sinners, all men have evil thoughts. Let us not be alarmed at this."

It is true that all men are sinners, but not all are criminals. All men are sinners, but some are murderers and some are righteous judges who pass judgment on them.

The crimes of communism are unequaled. What other political system has killed sixty million men in half a century? Another sixty million have been killed in Red China. (Some estimates run much higher.)

There are degrees of sinfulness and criminality. The enormity of crime is a measure of the intensity of Satanic influence on the founder of modern communism. The sins of Marxism, like those of nazism, surpass the ordinary. They are Satanic indeed.

I have also had letters from Satanists offering an apology for their religion. One of them writes:

A defense of Satanism needs only the Bible for documentary evidence. Think of all the thousands of earthly people, created in God's own image, mind you, destroyed by fire and brimstone (Sodom and Gomorrah), a lethal miscellany of plagues, and, to top everything off, the drowning of the earth's population, except for Noah's family. All of these devastations brought about by a "merciful" God/Lord/ Jehovah. What could a merciless god have done?

But in all the Bible there is no record of even one death being brought about by Satan! So, let's hear it for Satan!

This Satanist has not studied the Bible well. Death came into the world through Satan's deceit, his luring Eve into sin. This Satanist has also drawn his conclusions too soon. God has not yet finished with His creation.

Initially every painting is a senseless, often ugly mixture of lines and dots of many colors. It took da Vinci twenty years to make of these the beautiful Mona Lisa. God also creates in time. In time He shapes beings and destroys them to give them a new form. The seed which has neither beauty nor fragrance dies as seed in order to become a splendid, perfumed flower. Caterpillars have to die as such in order to become beautiful butterflies. Men are allowed by God to pass through the refining fires of suffering and death. The apotheosis of creation will be a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness will triumph. Then those who

have followed Satan will have to suffer an eternity of regrets.

Jesus endured flogging and crucifixion. But whoever wants to know God must look beyond the tomb to Jesus' resurrection and ascension. In contrast, the enemies of Jesus who plotted His death brought their people and their temple to destruction and lost their own souls.

Our critic wished to comprehend God through reason, which is not the right instrument for a creature. God cannot be comprehended by the mind, but only apprehended by a believing heart.

A Jamaican asked if the America that exploits his country is not as Satanic as Marx. It is not. Americans are sinners, as are all men. America has a small group of devil-worshipers. But the American nation as such does not worship the Devil.

~Nauka I Religia~, the principal atheist magazine of Moscow, contained a long article written by two philosophers, Belov and Shilkin. They said that

Wurmbrand's temperament might be envied by the greatest football players. His shouting is savage. This fighter calls for a crusade against socialism, which he calls an offspring of Satan. He was imprisoned in Romania for distributing religious literature instigating revolt against the government! [2]

In this article two things are to be noted. First, I am called a "devilish pastor" for my book

~Was Karl Marx a Satanist?~ though the authors cannot produce one single fact to refute the documentation supporting Marx's links with a Satanist sect. Second, the article congratulates Christian leaders, even anti-Communists, who have taken a stand against me. They might be adversaries of communism, but as

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long as they oppose Wurmbrand, chief enemy of communism, they were approved by Moscow.

One remarkable letter came from a Nigerian who had been a Marxist labor union leader for twenty years. My writings helped him to see that he had been led astray by Satan. Furthermore, he has become a Christian.

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A Word to Marxists ...

If I were to address a rank-and-file Marxist, I would express the following concerns:

Many Marxists today are not animated by the spirit that controlled Hess, Marx, or Engels. They really love mankind; they are confident they are enrolled in an army fighting for universal good. It is not their desire to be tools of some weird Satanist sect.

Sadly, Satanic Marxism has a materialistic philosophy that blinds its followers to spiritual realities. But matter is not all that exists. There is a reality of the spirit, of truth, beauty, and ideals.

There is also a world of evil spirits, whose head is Satan. He fell from heaven through pride and drew down with him a host of angels. Then he seduced the progenitors of the human race. Since the Fall, his deceit has been perpetuated and increased through every conceivable device, until today we see God's beautiful creation ravaged by world wars, bloody revolutions and counterrevolutions, dictatorships, exploitation, racism of many kinds, false religions, agnosticism and atheism,

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crimes and crooked dealings, infidelities in love and friendship, broken marriages, rebellious children.

Mankind has lost the vision of God. But what has taken the place of this vision? Is it something better?

Man must and will have some kind of religion. It is

his nature to worship. If he has not a God-fearing religion, he will have the religion of Satan and will persecute those who do not worship his "god."

Presumably only a few top leaders of communism have been and are consciously Satanists, but there is also an unconscious Satanism. A man can be a Satanist without being aware that such a religion exists. But if he hates the notion of God and the name of Christ, if he lives as though he were only matter, if he denies religious and moral principles, he is in fact a Satanist. Those who delve into the occult are in the same class.

On Sundays in Frankfurt, West Germany, more people go to spiritualist meetings, where the dead are allegedly called up, than to church services. There are known Satanist churches in Munich and Dusseldorf, for instance. [1] There are many such churches in France, Britain, the U.S.A., and other countries as well.

In Great Britain there are thirty-five thousand practicing witches. American universities and even high schools offer courses in witchcraft, astrology, voodoo, magic, and ESP. In France forty thousand black masses are conducted annually.

Human beings may forsake God, but God has never forsaken His creatures. He sent into the world His only Son, Jesus Christ, to save the race of man. Incarnate love and compassion lived on earth in the life of a poor Jewish child, then of a humble carpenter, and eventually of a teacher of righteousness. Downtrodden man cannot save himself, any more than a drowning

man can fetch himself out of the water. So Jesus, full of understanding for our inner conflicts, took upon Himself all our sins, including the sins of Marx and his followers, and bore the punishment for what we have done. He expiated our guilt by dying on a cross on Golgotha, after suffering the most terrible humiliation and agonizing pain.

Now we have His word that whoever puts faith in Him is forgiven and will live with Him in eternal paradise. Even notorious Marxists can be saved. It is worth noting that two Soviet Nobel prize winners, Boris Pasternak and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, both former Communists, after describing the extremities of crime to which Satanic Marxism leads, have confessed their faith in Christ. Svetlana Alliluyeva, the daughter of Stalin, the worst of the Marxist mass-murderers, also

became a Christian.

Let us remember that Marx's ideal was to descend into the abyss of hell and draw all mankind in after him. Let us not follow him on this vicious path, but rather follow Christ who leads us upward to peaks of light, wisdom, and love, toward a heaven of unspeakable glory.

The Great Gulf

It is manifestly impossible to compare Jesus with Marx. Jesus belongs to an entirely different realm altogether.

Marx was human and probably a worshiper of the Evil One. Jesus is God and reduced Himself to the level of mankind in order to save it.

Marx proposed a human paradise. When the Soviets tried to implement it, the result was an inferno.

Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. It is a kingdom

of love, righteousness, and truth. He calls to everyone, including Marxists and Satanists:

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (MTT 11:28).

All who believe in Him will have eternal life in His heavenly paradise.

There is no possibility of agreement between Christianity and Marxism, just as there can be no agreement between God and the Devil. Jesus came to destroy the works of the Evil One (1JN 3:8). As Christians follow Him, they strive to destroy Marxism while retaining love for the individual Marxist and trying to win him to Christ.

Some proclaim that they are Marxist Christians. They are either deceivers or are deceived. One cannot be a Marxist Christian any more than one can be a devil-worshiping Christian.

Over the years, the Satanist aims of Marxism have not changed one bit. The Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch writes in his book ~Atheism in Christianity~ that

the seduction of the first human couple by the serpent opens the way of salvation for mankind. So man starts to become a god; it is the way of rebellion. Priestcraft and the possessors

of goods repressed this truth. The original sin consists in the fact that man does not wish to be like God. Man must conquer the power. The theology of revolution wills it that man should conquer the power of God. The world must be changed in the image of man. There should be no heaven at all. The belief in a personal God is the fall into sin. This fall must be repaired.

There is a gulf between Christianity and communism that can be bridged only in one sense: Marxists

must abandon their devil-inspired teacher, repent of their sins, and become followers of Jesus Christ.

Marxists are concerned with social and political problems, but these will have to be solved outside the tenets of Marxism. For Marx, socialism was only a pretense. His aim was to ruin mankind for eternity, a diabolical plan. By way of contrast, Christ desires our eternal salvation.

In the fight between Christianity and communism, believers "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (EPH 6:12).

Each of us has to choose not only between abstract good and abstract evil, but between God and Satan. Marx believed in God and hated Him. Even in his old age he worshiped Satan.

The average Marxist and the sympathizer of Marxism should not follow Marx in this spiritual aberration. Let us reject the bourgeois Marx, bearer of darkness, and Engels, factory owner and therefore, according to Marxist dogma, an exploiter. Let us rather choose the Light of the World and mankind's prime Benefactor, Jesus the working man, the Carpenter, the Savior, Lord of all.

"Proletarians of the World, Forgive me!"

That Marxist Satanism has ravaged the world is terrible. That it has penetrated high places in the church is unthinkable. Yet such is the case.

To give just one example, the late Pope John Paul I praised Giuseppe Carducci, an Italian university professor, as an example of a good teacher of youth. [2]

Who is

the man recommended by no less than the Pope? Carducci became famous through his "Hymn to Satan," which begins: "My ardent verse is for Thee. I invoke you, Satan, king of the feast." It ends: "In holiness, incense and vows should ascend to thee, Satan. You have defeated Jehovah, the god of the priests." [3]

(I grant to this Pope that he might not have known whom he recommended, but it is wrong for a bishop to endorse an unknown.)

In 1949 a Soviet general said to a Catholic priest, Werenfried van Straaten, "We are Satan's elite, but you, are you God's elite?"

We must not remain silent about these matters.

We have seen in this book what length devil-worshipers are willing to go. May their dedication to evil be an incentive for us to behave like God's elect!

During the troubles in Poland in 1982, one could see mocking inscriptions on the walls. For example, "Marx said, Proletarians of the world, forgive me!" instead of the usual "Proletarians of the world, unite!"

I shuddered when I read these words.

It is said about Engels that he repented before his death. There is no such record about Marx. In 1983, many commemorated the centenary of his death. Might he have held this same commemoration in hell?

While writing this book, I have passed many a sleepless night, thinking of what Marx must endure viewing perhaps in hell the rivers of tears and blood that he has caused to flow.

Jesus told a story about a rich man in the eternal fire who expressed one ardent desire: his brethren should be warned not to end up in the same place of torment.

Does Marx also have the same desire that his

followers should be warned not to walk in his footsteps leading to perdition?

Are the Polish people right when they have Marx say "... forgive me"? Does he indeed cry out from the fire - as it might truly be - "Send someone to my house, for I have many comrades, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment"

(LUK 16:27, 28)?

The Soviet Communists did damage to their cause by disowning Stalin, who had become a popular idol. One can only speculate why they permitted such a reversal of policy, since it was certainly not in their best interests to remove Stalin's corpse from the mausoleum. Likewise, the Chinese Communists harmed their own cause by disowning Mao and jailing his wife.

Perhaps in the hidden depths of their souls, Soviet and Chinese Communist leaders felt what is now the burning desire of their former idols, who too late were remorseful about what they had done and taught.

As for me, I love every man, including Marxists and Satanists. If Marx and Engels and Moses Hess were alive today, my most ardent wish would be to bring them to Jesus Christ, who alone has the answer to man's ills and the remedy for his sins.

This is my wish for you, the reader. You have walked with me through the terrible pages of this book. Now I urge you to consider carefully your loyalties before it is too late. Abandon Satan and his evil cohorts. History proves he is never true to his own. Therefore, choose life and love and hope and heaven.

~Marxists and proletarians of the world, unite around Jesus Christ!~

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A P P E N D I X

Marxist "Christian" Theology

Ernesto Cardenal is a Catholic priest who is a self-avowed Communist and was active in the Communist government of Nicaragua. He is also one of the most prominent exponents of so-called liberation theology, which exists within both Catholicism and Protestantism and seeks to blend Christianity with communism.

Here are a few excerpts from his book ~The Zero Hour~: A world of perfect Communism is the kingdom of God on earth. They are the same thing for me.... Through the Gospel I have arrived at revolution; not through Karl Marx, but through Christ. The Gospel caused me to become a Marxist.... I have the calling of a poet and prophet....

Castro told me that the qualities of a good revolutionist are also the qualities of a good priest.... Let us not forget that the first Christians were the best Christians, i.e., revolutionary and subversive Christians....

Marxism is the fruit of Christianity; without Christianity, Marxism would be impossible; Marx would be unthinkable without the prophets of the Old Testament. Changing the system of production, we can create the new man of the Gospel....

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The Mexican Jesuit Jose Miranda says in his book ~Marx and the Bible~ that the Ten Commandments are Marxist, even the first commandment, to love God. For him, to love Jehovah above all means to love justice.... If the church ever asserted anything else, it was a monstrosity.

I believe that the Communists, too, belong to the church. I believe the true church includes many who don't perceive themselves as Christians, even those who consider themselves atheists. Many of these belong more to the church than some who sit in the Roman Curia.

Since Constantine, the church has always gone to bed with the state. If Christians and Marxists would read each other's writings, there would be no conflicts any more between Christians and Socialism.... It seems to me that worker-priests and revolutionists - the most progressive part of the church - are inspired directly by the Holy Ghost.

For me the God of the Bible is also the God of Marxism-Leninism.... The apostle John says, "No one has seen God." What the atheist Marxists say is very much akin to what Saint John says: "No one has seen God."

Another writer quotes Cardenal as follows:

I am above all a revolutionist and as such fight for a Socialist country which is in the course of passing through a dictatorship of the proletariat, in which surely it cannot show itself feeble toward the enemies of its fatherland, not even in moments when one comes to the point of having to execute men for this purpose. [1]

It is self-evident that a man who thinks like this has

no trouble praising the regime in Cuba as a model of liberty.

Liberation theology is not an isolated phenomenon.

It is the by-product of a general tendency to synthesize Marxism and Christianity; it is also seen in various

forms of compromise in politics, art, economics, and so on.

Two Jews, Bernstein and Schwartz, composed the musical ~The Mass~ for the inauguration of the John Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington in 1971. In it, during the singing of the Kyrie Eleison, the Gloria, and the Credo, a band of singers and dancers howl their doubts:

God made us the boss;
God gave us the cross.
We turned it into a sword
To spread the word of the Lord.
We use his holy decrees
To do whatever we please. Yeah.

Give us peace that we don't keep on breaking.
Give us something or we'll just start taking.
We're fed up with your heavenly silence,
And we only get action with violence.

The "Christian" multimillionaires present at the concert cheered. Their wives, appareled in slit skirts and decollete bodices, bejeweled and befurred, joined in the applause. The music is now standard repertoire.

I can understand men like the priest Cardenal. There is a ring of truth in the feeling he expresses of solidarity with the Communists, who appear to him as champions of the cause of the poor - always near to the heart of Christians.

In the Bible Job is called a righteous man. He describes to his dubious friends the program of his life:

... I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him.... I was a father to the

poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out. And I

broke the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth (JOB 29:12, 16, 17).

These words could be uttered by any revolutionist. Job continues:

Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor? (JOB 30:25). If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maidservant, when they contended with me, what then shall I do when God riseth up? (JOB 31:13,14).

True believers have always reacted like this.

Cardenal's assertion that "the church has always gone to bed with the state" is untrue. For example, the war of secession in the U.S.A., which led to the abolition of slavery, was influenced by ~Uncle Tom's Cabin~, written by a Christian lady, Harriet Beecher Stowe. She said simply, "The Lord wrote it."

During a Communion service she had a vision of an old slave being beaten to death by a white ruffian. This became the story of Uncle Tom's flogging. The book was a stick of dynamite driven into the foundations of slavery.

Charles Spurgeon, the greatest Baptist preacher of the last century, was also an ardent fighter against slavery. He wrote, "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong." Wilberforce, a Christian and a capitalist, caused slavery to be abolished in the British Empire long before America's Civil War. Lincoln, also a Christian, issued the Emancipation Proclamation that freed the slaves in the USA.

The theology of liberation, which ignores these facts, is widely urged in the Third World. Its theoreticians can call themselves Christian only because of the

chaos in thinking prevalent in the church at this moment.

According to the July 28, 1949 decree of the Holy Office of the Roman Catholic Church, the following categories of Catholics are to be excommunicated:

Whosoever belongs to the Communist Party;
Whosoever makes propaganda for it in any way;
Whosoever votes for it and its candidates;
Whosoever writes for the Communist press, reads and spreads it;
Whosoever remains a member in a Communist organization;
Whosoever confesses the materialistic and anti-Christian teaching of atheist Communism;
Whosoever defends and spreads it.
This punishment applies also to parties that make common cause with Communism.

Many of the revolutionist theologians belong only formally to the Catholic Church, and yet have a great influence among believers. In the Orthodox churches, too, there exists a tendency to exploit, for the benefit of communism, the spiritual energies that religion awakens and channels.

Liberation theologians proclaim an earthly paradise. Communism is this paradise, capitalism its foe. The church no longer waits for the coming of Jesus in the clouds of heaven. The triumph of communism will be equated with His coming. This explains why in Communist countries the God-hating Communist government has paid the clergy.

It needs to be said that among both Catholics and Orthodox, there are also bishops who fear absorption

into earthly pursuits and seek rather a deeper spiritual life. Not all have bowed to Baal.

As for Protestants, in hearings before the U.S.A. House Committee on Un-American Activities on February 26, 1966, Richard Arens, general counsel to the Committee, declared:

Thus far, in the leadership of the National Council of Churches, we have found over 100 persons in leadership capacity with either Communist-front records or records of

services in Communist causes. The aggregate affiliations of the leadership is in the thousands.

And the World Council of Churches for years has subsidized Communist guerrillas in Africa.

The Catholic Gustavo Gutierrez wrote in ~The Theology of Liberation~: "The church must place itself squarely within the process of revolution." The Lutheran theologian Dorothee Soelle, founder of ~Christians for Socialism~, wrote: "We are at the beginning of a new chapter in Christian history. It will not be written without Karl Marx."

These are the facts, open and uncontested, about what is happening in the church universal.

We did not heed the warning of the Lord to beware of wolves in sheep's clothing. If the clothing speaks to us about doing good to mankind, we get hooked, forgetting that the worst of men can speak beautiful things.

German Socialists in 1907 opened their convention with Luther's hymn, "A Mighty Fortress," replacing "God" with "Socialist League." Some revolutionist groups practiced baptism. One called for a new Communion service at which the pastor would proclaim, "This is the body of the bread which the rich owe to

the poor." Revolutionist groups spoke of "the holy Communist church," "the egalitarian church outside of which there is no salvation." Their "Lord's Prayer" said, "No masters and no servants - Amen. Money and property shall be abolished" (see James Billington, ~Fire in the Minds of Men~, Basic Books, 1985).

The Devil disguises himself as an angel of light. When the Communists came to power, unprecedented slaughters followed, which eclipse even Hitler's Holocaust.

Clergymen who had been on the side of communism also became its victims. If communism would conquer the countries of the Third World, the theologians of liberation would sit in jail together with those who opposed this ideology.

Perfect Communism: Kingdom of God on Earth?

Cardenal says, "Communism and the kingdom of God are the same thing for me."

The word "communism" in itself is vague. It is taken to mean only an economic system in which everyone will work according to his abilities and will receive according to his needs. There will be no state, no division of the world into countries, and no social classes, because the means of production will belong to all mankind.

Suppose this could be attained - where is God in the picture? Why should this be equated with the kingdom of God? A society of unbelievers, even of men who hate and scorn God, could choose or be forced to live in such a state.

Scripture says that when the kingdom is the Lord's, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn

unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee" (PSA 22:27).

The kingdom of God will not be a stateless society. The people of the saints of the Most High will have dominion over it (DAN 7:27).

It is not a kingdom brought about by a political party, but by Jesus, the Son of man (MTT 16:28).

Obviously, there will be none of the evils that plague society now, such as war, famine, pestilence, pollution, injustice, exploitation, racism, etc. The kingdom of God will be one of righteousness, peace, love, joy, and the right to possess one's own mansion and garden (JHN 14:2).

Father Cardenal, who claims that he is a prophet, must know what his Biblical predecessor Micah said: "In the last days ... they shall sit every man under ~his~ vine and under ~his~ fig tree" (MIC 4:1, 4). The prophet Isaiah reinforces this idea: "They shall not build, and

another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat" (ISA 65:22). Thus, Scripture endorses the notion of private ownership.

What would perfect communism look like in reality? Perfection as we humans experience it is the ultimate achievement of years of practice - in the field of sports, music, typing, or skills of any sort. A violinist perfects his performance of a Beethoven concerto by practicing his violin. A baseball pitcher achieves success by refining his technique through intensive, persistent effort.

Perfect communism, described as economic liberation, freedom, peace, and justice, could be attained only through the practice of such policies in the society it hopes to benefit.

But in actual experience Communists have jailed,

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tortured, and terrorized hundreds of millions of people for almost seventy years. How could such practice result in a just, mild, and loving society?

Christian communism is a utopian impossibility, a nightmare of exploitation. The theology of revolution is patent absurdity, a contradiction in terms.

What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believes with an infidel? (2CO 6:14, 15).

"You cannot serve God ~and~ mammon," said Jesus. Choose you this day whom you will serve.

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Abbreviations used in these notes include:

Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich, ~Historisch-kritisch Gesamtausgabe. Werke, Schriften, Briefe (Complete Historical Critical Edition. Works, Writings, Letters)~, on behalf of the Marx-Engels Institute, Moscow, published by David Rjazanov

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The End of "MARX & SATAN"

My Answer To The Moscow Atheists

Richard Wurmbrand
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[What follows is from the book itself.]

page 5 My Answer to Moscow's Atheists

Wherever people know how to write, they have a holy book.

The Communist world also has its Bible. It is called The Atheist's Handbook. It was first issued by Moscow's Academy of Science in 1961 (State publishing house for political science), as the collective work of a great number of specialists, such as the historians Beliaiev and Belinova and the philosophers Tchanishev, Elshina, and Emeliah. Its final redactor is the university professor, S. Kovalev. It has been reprinted many times since publication.

This book, which is a summary of atheistic creeds, has been translated into many languages and widely distributed in other socialist countries. From the primary grades through college, on radio and television, in films, and at atheistic rallies, the ideas contained in this book are propagated. And when an atheist dies, the funeral speech, in line with the teaching of the Communist Bible, assures his broken-hearted family that the dead are dead for ever, that there is no comfort for the bereaved, that those separated now will never more be reunited, that there is no God and no such thing as eternal life.

The primary purpose of the book is to show that there is no God.

We could answer very simply with a question. If there is no God, how is it that sheep exist?

The question was actually raised at an atheistic meeting in Russia. The lecturer had explained that life appeared spontaneously and developed through natural selection, and that in the cruel fight for survival only the animals which were stronger or quicker than their neighbours

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survived, while the weaker succumbed.

A believer asked, "But how is it that sheep survived, that they were not utterly destroyed by wolves? The female wolf produces five or six offspring a year, the sheep only one. The ratio is 5:1 for the destroyer, which has sharp teeth, claws, strength and swiftness in running.

The sheep has absolutely no defence. How is it that there still are sheep? Today man protects them. The animal world existed before man appeared. Who protected the sheep at that time? You can explain many things without resorting to the hypothesis that God exists. But sheep with four legs could not exist without him, any more than Christ's loving sheep, who have been defenceless against cruel persecutor's since the beginning of church."

The answer which this believer got was a few years in Soviet prisons.

The atheist book could get a very simple answer also on the subject of Christ.

At a party of Soviet intellectuals, Shakespeare was being discussed. Someone quoted Lady Macbeth's words after she had murdered King Duncan in his sleep. Looking at her blood-stained hands, she exclaims, "Out, damned spot! Out, I say."

A Christian put the question, "What are the possibilities of a Lady Macbeth being cleansed of her burden of guilt?" One Communist answered, "Man is a reasonable being. A proper education and good advice even at the last minute would have kept her from her ugly deed." The reply was of no help. Lady Macbeth had committed the murder, and philosophizing about the education she should have had was useless. Another Communist said, "I believe that murderers should get the death penalty." This proposal, too, was useless, because a man sentenced to death still dies with the consciousness of guilt. A third Communist assured those present that in the future happy Socialist society there would be no kings, no

selfish ambitions to be gratified, no need or desire to commit crimes. But the Communist society exists nowhere.

The believer then said, "The solution of the Bible remains the only valid one: The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sins."

But we cannot stop with such simple answers. Members of an Academy of Science have written over six hundred pages to prove that religion in general, and Christianity in particular, is false. Let us try to understand them and to answer all the points they raise. It is a duty of courtesy and love to accept the challenge.

The atheist's Bible is boring. In fact, it could not be otherwise. Nobody can be eloquent for atheism. Atheism

is a denial. Who can write enthusiastically about a negation? Who can address a sonnet to a negation, or dedicate a concerto to a negation, or sculpture a negation? Religion has inspired symphonies, paintings, statues, poetry. Atheism, by its very nature, could never have this impact. Atheism has no wings.

According to its own doctrine, men are only dust and shadow - mere matter. What impetus has matter to destroy religion? Can matter enlist passion in the fight for an ideal when ideals, not being matter, are by definition nothing?

Moscow's Bible also uses deceptive methods and a violence of speech which does not suit an Academy of Science well.

We propose to avoid as much as possible the tedium of pseudo-scientific arguments. We will respond, even in the face of irony and slander, with the sweetness of love.

We can afford to take this attitude because good anvils do not fear the blows of many hammers. In Paris there is monument to the Huguenots showing an anvil and a number of broken hammers, with the inscription, "Hammer away, ye hostile bands. Your hammers break; God's anvil stands."

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We can take this attitude because we ourselves sift our thoughts with severity and consider it an advantage to be criticized. It is to the detriment of atheism in Communist countries that it imposes a dictatorship. How can one who doesn't bear criticism know he is right?

In all the Christian countries of the West, atheism has full liberty for its propaganda. Christianity has not the slightest reason to fear it. In free debate, only Christianity can win. Imagine two rooms separated from each other by a thick curtain. In the one darkness reigns, the other is lighted by a candle. If the curtain is withdrawn, it is not darkness that prevails. Darkness cannot overcome the light from the candle, because it is not energy. It is the absence of light. Only light, being energy, can prevail. Thus, the room that was in darkness becomes visible, transformed by the burning candle.

Christians have not feared Communist prisons nor the implements of torture. Neither do we fear atheist books. In the struggle of ideas, the final victory can only be ours.

THE REASONABLENESS OF ATHEISM

Atheists should know, first of all, that we Christians are not their enemies but their best friends. We love atheists. And love understands.

We are not surprised that there are atheists.

In the twentieth century, when millions of innocent men have been burnt in furnaces or gassed and killed in concentration camps of different political regimes some of which proclaimed themselves Christian, it is difficult to believe in a God both almighty and good. If he is almighty, why did he not prevent the atrocities? If he is good, why did he create a world of such cruelty?

We cannot reproach someone for being an atheist when high prelates of the Christian church are often on the side of oppressors and exploiters, when they flatter

tyrants or fight together with rebels, among whom are those who dream of becoming the tyrants of tomorrow.

When Jesus hung powerless on a cross and cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" it must have been difficult to convince anyone that the Crucified was the hope of humanity or that the One who thirsted after water and received only vinegar, possessed all power in heaven and earth. It took a resurrection to make the proclamation of the truth possible.

In our day, those who call themselves after the name of the Son of God have killed each other in two world wars. A man baptized in the name of Christ gave the order to drop the first atomic bomb.

And then, even if prodigal sons would like to return to the Father's house, they would not know where to find it. In its stead are many divergent denominations, each claiming to have the truth. They are united in only one point; not to practise the all-embracing love for innocents still behind bars or who have died in concentration camps.

Furthermore, in the minds of multitudes, religion is tied up with superstition, backwardness, or strange dogmas.

Atheism is the effect of these as well as many other causes. We could not expect otherwise; it is only logical that many should be atheists.

God allowed room for atheism in the world. The Bible teaches that God created a material world with intrinsic

laws and an endless chain of causes and effects. He himself contracted to allow others than himself to exist. Therefore, the possibility of atheism was contained in the plan of creation, and when it was decided that Christ would atone by his blood for the sins of mankind, he agreed to atone for the sins of atheists too.

If God allows atheism to be, who are we to forbid it?

We have full understanding for atheists.

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But atheists, on the other hand, have to account for what is from their standpoint an anomaly: Many of those who suffer horribly in this world created by God, love him with all their heart. Tradition and custom can account for church-going and attendance at religious rituals. But how can atheists explain that burning love for God is sometimes seen precisely in men who suffer most? How can they explain what Christians call "joy in the Lord," felt by men who are beaten and tortured for their faith and who may have fifty-pound chains at their feet?

Religion is flourishing in some very poor countries. Hungry men gather on Sundays together with starving children and sing the glory of God. Why? How is it that widows with only "two mites" for their living gladly give their last coins in order that God may be served with greater pomp?

The questions put to Christians by atheists are reasonable. If God is almighty, why does he allow death to rule on earth? Why have I been bereft of my most beloved, asks the atheist? Why does my child suffer or my friend die young?

But how can atheists explain the fact that other men, similarly bereaved or themselves facing death, accept tragedy with serenity and even joy? For them death means to go to the Father.

From the time of building the pyramids, when slaves died under the whip, and denial of God or rebellion against Him would have seem normal, a poem has come down to us:

> Death is in my sight today
> Like the recovery of a sick man,
> Like going out into the open after a confinement.
> Death is in my sight today
> Like the odour of myrrh,
> Like sitting under an awning on a breezy day.

Death is in my sight today
  Like the odour of lotus blossoms,
  Like sitting on the banks of drunkenness.
Death is in my sight today
  Like the passing away of rain,
  Like the return of men to their houses from an expedition.
Death is in my sight today
  Like the clearing of the sky,
  Like a man fowling thereby for what he knew not.
Death is in my sight today
  Like the longing of a man to see his house again,
  After he has spent many years held in captivity.

Some men accepted death with serenity, others with joy, considering that to die meant to return to the world of the spirit.

Some plants are heliotropic. But there are also asphodels, plants which grow only in shade or darkness, just as there are men who love God in proportion to their suffering for him. These are the mystics, the ascetics, the martyrs. They lovingly bear all the hardships about which the atheists complain. Suffering does not make them swerve in their faith; on the contrary, some are brought to faith or strengthened by deep suffering.

Oscar Wilde cared nothing for God and led a life of depravity. In the end, this genius found himself in jail under most degrading accusations. Under these circumstances, he wrote: "If the world has been built of sorrows it has been built by the hands of love, because in no other way could the soul of man for whom the world was made, reach the full stature of its perfection."

In Dostoievsky's ~Crime and Punishment~, Raskolnikov has a discussion with Sonya, a prostitute. She took this profession because her father was a drunkard and her smaller brothers and sisters hungered. She suffered terribly under this condition imposed upon her by bitter

circumstances. Raskolnikov asked her, "You pray to God a lot, Sonya;" She answered in a whisper, "What would I be without God?" He, probing deeper, asked again, "But what does God do for you in return?" Her reply is, "Don't ask me. You don't deserve to know ... He does everything."

Raskolnikov also questioned her poor, miserable, younger sister Polenka: "Do you know how to say your prayers?" Her answer is, "Oh, of course, we all know; have for ages: and now that I am a big girl, I say my prayers to myself, but Kolya and Lida say them aloud with mama. First they say 'Hail Mary' and then another one, 'God, bless and forgive our sister Sonya,' and then 'God, bless and forgive our second father,' because our first daddy is already dead, and this one is our second one, and we pray for the other one, too."

How is it that the Sonyas and Polenkas love God? Could their religion be only a pain-reliever like drugs or alcohol? But drugs and alcohol destroy the minds of men. Her faith in God made Sonya so strong that she could bring to repentance the murderer Raskolnikov and lead him to become a new man. So there must be some kind of reality behind her faith.

Sonya gave to Raskolnikov a cross and read to him from the Gospel. This made an undiscovered murderer surrender himself to the police, go to Siberia, and start a new life. What would have happened if she had given him the hammer and sickle and had read to him one of Stalin's tedious speeches or Marx's ~Das Kapital~?

Sonya, caught in the tragedy of prostitution, and Raskolnikov, awakened from the tragedy of crime, believed.

For many, religion is just one of the many joys of life, a refinement like art or luxury. But there are those to whom it means everything, who pant after God as the hart pants after rivers of water. These claim to know God. They say that he is lovable and trustworthy, even if his ways are mysterious and if life is very hard on them.

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These understand the atheist phenomenon. But can you, atheists, understand them?

In September 1932, a Moscow magazine ~Molodaia Guardia~ (The Young Vanguard), announced that in accordance with the atheistic five-year plan, by 1937 every manifestation of religion must be definitely destroyed and the word of God must be silenced for ever. But this did not happen. On the contrary, Christianity is flourishing in many Communist countries, though long interdicted and threatened with persecution. Why?

Atheism is reasonable only when it discovers the reason for deep faith.

THE UNREASONABLENESS OF ATHEISM

Society is changing very quickly. Religious systems have not kept pace with the transformations. Often, preachers comment on debates which Jesus had with men two thousand years ago regarding problems of that time, instead of providing answers in the spirit of Christ, to the problems of modern man. Therefore, many come to the conclusion that religion is irrelevant.

In addition, many rituals are obsolete.

Further, churches assert their wish to save men from a future hell. Well, then they should prove their love towards men by helping to save the world from today's hell of illiteracy, hunger, misery, tyranny, exploitation, pollution, and war.

Christians accept all this criticism from atheists. "Charity believes all things." We can believe the reasons for being an atheist. We say with Hegel: "Everything which exists is reasonable." Even an atheist's attitude can have profound reasons. But atheists are at a disadvantage, when they refuse the criticism of believers.

Great mystics like Meister Eckhart have taught that the man united with God no longer has a God to worship. From this height, he can understand those who do not

worship because they know not God. The Christian mind mirrors the whole of reality, the atheist mind only part of it.

Atheists have a materialist philosophy which Christians share. The principal doctrine of our religion is that God has become flesh (i.e., matter), in Jesus Christ. The Christian God is not an idea, but a person. The aim of Christianity is not only the salvation of souls but the resurrection of the body in incorruptibility.

But we don't stop at materialism. Materialistic atheists are one-sided: they do not know about the Godhead and the Eternal Spirit of love and truth who rules this world.

Has anyone ever seen a coin with only one face? Or electricity with only one pole? Christianity embraces the realm of the spirit as well as the material. Because it is one-sided, atheism is false.

A fool was sent to buy flour and salt. He took a dish in which to carry his purchases. He was told not to mix the two ingredients but keep them separate. After the shopkeeper had filled the dish with flour, the fool, thinking of the instructions, inverted the dish, asking that salt be

poured on the upturned bottom. Therewith, the flour was lost, but he had the salt. He brought it to his boss, who enquired, "But where is the flour?" The fool turned the dish over to find it. So the salt was gone too.

Atheists sometimes act like this man. They bring very earnest and useful criticisms against religion. They have the salt. But do they not thereby lose the flour? Do they not throw away arguments ~for~ religion which may also be right? And in the end will they not have to shed the salt of atheism, too, in moments of deep crisis? It is the pride of true Christianity to have the flour and the salt. Its philosophy is what Soloviev called "Theomaterialism," comprehending matter and Theos (in Greek, God), its creator. Indeed, Christianity is so sure about the truth it possesses that it is open to all criticisms of this truth, yes, welcomes such criticism as a spur that ensures a better

ride on the horse of truth.

Faith lives by continual rejection of errors and continual acceptance of inspiration from quarters where new truths have been experienced.

Once the sun quarrelled with the moon. The sun said, "The leaves on trees are green," whereas the moon said that they are the colour of silver. The moon asserted that men on earth generally sleep, whereas the sun said that usually all men are moving.

The moon asked, "Then why is there such a silence on earth?" - "Who told you this?" the sun answered. "On earth there is much noise." The strife lasted for a long time.

And then the wind came, he listened to the debate and smiled. "Your quarrel is in vain. I blow when there is sun and when the moon shines. During the day, when the sun is in the firmament, everything happens just as the sun said. There is noise on earth and men work and the leaves are green. By night, when the moon rises, everything is changed. Men sleep, silence reigns, and the colour of the leaves changes to silver. Sometimes, when a cloud covers the moon, they even look black. Neither you, sun, nor you, moon, know the whole truth."

Atheists look at the material side of things and believe they encompass all reality. Buddhists believe that mind is the only reality and that the material world belongs to Maya, the sphere of illusion. But the Bible uses, in Hebrew as well as in Greek, the same word for "spirit" as for "wind." It blows at all times, from many quarters.

Those who have the spirit of God see the whole of reality. They cannot limit themselves to either the materialist philosophy or the idealist one.

As a matter of fact, the Bible warns us to be careful in philosophical matters, because most philosophers have individual points of view from which they look at reality. But every point of view is a point of blindness: it incapacitates us for every other point of view. From a

certain point of view, the room in which I write has no door. I turn around. Now I see the door, but the room has no window. I look up. From this point of view, the room has no floor. I look down; it has no ceiling. By avoiding particular points of view we are able to have a intuition of the whole. The ideal for a Christian is to become holy, a word which derives from "whole." In Russian the word "holy" (sviatoi) suggests luminosity. The same is true in the Germanic idioms. To be holy means to have abandoned points of view.

Feuerbach said: "It is clear as the sun and evident as the day that there is no God; and still more, that there can be no God." It is not religion which asserts absolute clearness, but atheism. If the non-existence of God is as "clear as the sun," how is it that all mankind (without exception) acknowledges the existence of the sun, but not all mankind subscribes to the assertion of Feuerbach that there is no God?

Not even Darwin, the great favourite of my opponents, could adhere to it. He wrote: "The impossibility of conceiving that this grand and wondrous universe with our conscious selves arose through chance, seems to me the chief argument for the existence of God."

For atheists, atheism is self-evident. Then why the need to propagate the obvious? Christians do not consider Christianity as self-evident as the fact that two and two are four. If it were so, there would be no atheists. We find some of the attitudes of our opponents sensible. There is a place in our understanding for them. Atheism has only atheism and denies to religion every right to exist. Therefore it is not sensible.

Max Stimer, the theoretician of individualist anarchism, rightly saw the evils of society. His solution was to liquidate human society. But he was a part of it. Schopenhauer's school recommended suicide to mankind as the answer to its problems. But when cholera broke out in

his town, he fled. He loved life. In the same category are those who wish to get rid of religion itself because of its great shortcomings in thought and deed.

Should we give up wearing coats because some have an unpleasant colour? Should we throw away the clean baby with the dirty bath water?

We have acknowledged what is reasonable in atheism. There is much besides. Now let atheists seek together with us what is reasonable in religion. Maybe we will arrive at a common denominator.

THE WRONG PERSPECTIVE OF MOSCOW'S BIBLE

Individuals gathered in Moscow have written a book about the greatest problems of life, problems over which the greatest minds have pondered since thinking began: the existence or non-existence of God, the sense of life, its hopes and sorrows, the role of religion, and so on.

Who are these individuals? It is much more important to know them than the contents of their book.

To know the teacher is much more valuable than to know his teachings. Knowledge always proceeds from "What am I?" If I do not know the answer to this, how do I know that what this "I" thinks is worth being shared with others? If the "I" is not great, everything it gives will be small change.

The authors of Moscow's Bible say that they were not created by any God. There was no design in the random processes of matter that produced them. Can the whirling of atoms and protons and their accidental coming together produce a brain that will distil pure truth?

I was a poor child. I would have liked to learn music, but my parents could not afford it. So I wrote music notes at random on a lined piece of paper. But they never produced a melody.

If, say, in the game of roulette there are two possibilities that a red or a black number will come out, the

chance of a number turning up in the same colour forty times in a row is perhaps one in one hundred million. This when there are only two possibilities!

How many chances were there that such a perfect

computer as the human mind should be produced by an accidental union of electrons and protons? I, the author of this book, speak many languages and know something like one million words, if I count all the inflections of the verbs and nouns. Like any cultured man, I have millions of bits of knowledge of mathematics, geography, physical science, art, etc., at my command. Yet at any given moment the mind can extract exactly the right word, with exactly the correct intonation, backed by the most suitable attitude expressive of character, that the occasion requires. The probability that this one phenomenon – let alone the organization of the whole universe – could be the product of an accidental coming together of elementary particles, arising from nothing, is mathematically impossible.

If I count three generations in a century and begin to calculate how many ancestors I have – two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, and so on – I quickly reach figures of tens of millions of men from whom I have inherited a genetic stock. I am the selected product of a struggle for life in which millions of predecessors were involved. What do I know about them? Nothing. What do I know about the heredity I have received from them? They formed the language in which I think, they created the institutions in which I was brought up. I do not know them, I do not know my own childhood, which is the most decisive period in the shaping of a future teacher of atheism or religion.

I live in an unspeakably small world. Our earth is a bit of dust in the universe. We consider it a noteworthy achievement to have reached a minuscule satellite of this speck of dust. On our small earth, the biosphere is a small thing; so also mankind that dwells in the biosphere.

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As for me, I am a most insignificant individual among billions.

Scarcely one in 10,000 will have ever heard the titles of the greatest books that have been written. Not one in a million will have read them. How many know about the existence of a most reverend bishop or about a member of the Soviet Academy, co-author of ~The Atheist's Handbook~?

I once had a lapse of memory. I could not remember who had written ~Crime and Punishment~. It was only the twentieth man I asked who could tell me that it was Dostoievsky.

We are infinitely small, and we know as much about what should rather be called the pluriverse than universe, as an ant knows about Marxism after walking over a book by Marx.

I enjoy the chirping of birds, not knowing which of them will be captured by an eagle this very day. I hear the wind passing through branches, but I do not know which tree is being eaten by a worm. We are greedy for fame, power, money, pleasure, knowledge. Those who had the same greed a couple of decades before us are now clay. The earth on your shoe-soles was once, perhaps, the beautiful face of a girl.

Bukharin was one of the greatest theoreticians of Communist atheism. In his book ~Dialectic Materialism~, he began by praising this philosophy because, he said, it allows for the possibility of foreseeing the future. The only thing the poor man did not foresee was that his own comrades would torture and kill him.

It is a daring thing to write a book, to become a teacher of humanity. Can one know what joys and tragedies will be experienced by future readers, and whether one's book will be helpful in moments of great trial?

Does a man know even one of the billions of cells that constitute his brain? A small disturbance in them can

make one write foolish things. This has happened to geniuses. Can it happen to you? You recognize madness in the writings of others. Can there be none in yours? You know nothing about your body. What do you know about the depths of your psychology? I am daily a surprise to myself.

We live mysterious lives in a mysterious world, of which we know only some fringes. We are imprisoned in the jail of our senses.

If there were on earth beings that could emit rays outside the spectrum of our vision, if they could communicate among themselves on a wave-length beyond those we hear or apprehend, then they could observe us and we would never know anything about their existence, just as we lived for millenniums without knowing about the influence of viruses and microbes on our lives. What if angels do exist and we are unable to perceive them?

Atheists assert that there is no God. How can they be sure?

The present book was conceived in a prison. The

guards regularly searched our cells for forbidden objects, such as chessmen, knives, needles, books, paper. They did not find them. We waited until they had left. Then we took them out of their hiding-places. You search a cell for an object and you do not find it. But is it right to maintain that it is not there? Who has searched the infinite universe to ascertain that there is no God?

Therefore, can you, atheist author, know for sure the things which you assert?

Until yesterday it was considered a certainty that the simple elements were immutable. This was an assertion based on thousands of years of experience, but nevertheless it was false. Men of considerable intellect were sure that the atom was indivisible and that man could not fly to the moon. These, who had the overwhelming experience of mankind on their side, erred. How many chances have you to be right, my atheist friend?

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The Christian teacher Tertullian has been much belittled for his words "Credo quia impossibile" (I believe because it is impossible). And now science makes real just what appeared absurd and impossible to reason.

We are small and insignificant. We do not know. "If any man think that he knows any thing, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know," says the Bible (1CO 8:2).

WHO ARE OUR OPPONENTS?

If a plain-clothes man asks me to show him my identity, my first reaction is to ask him who he is. He has to prove that he is from the police. Otherwise he has no right to question me.

If I confront the incomprehensible reality of the universe and ask the sphinx "Who are you? Is there a Godhead in you? Were you created by an artist or have you existed from eternity?" I might receive the reply: "Tell me first who you are, little man? Are you of such worth that the ultimate mysteries should be revealed to you? And if I were to share them with you, would you have the capacity to understand and to accept truth in all its purity, even if it were contrary to your own interests and to everything you believed and cherished till now?"

The authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ deny the existence of God. But do they themselves exist? Who are

they? Can they prove their own existence?

In order for an atheist author to pose daring questions, he has to posit, billions of years before his birth, the existence of galaxies and astral dust. There had to be stars and celestial mechanics and a sun to regulate the movement of the earth, without which life would have been impossible. The atheist can put daring questions precisely because there exist water, herbs, animals, and heat, risen bread and fermented wine, cosmic rays and

falling rain, and the overwhelming reality of human personality. There had to be a whole line of ancestors, and milk in his mother's breast, and love in her heart.

Even assuming the atheist's presuppositions, an unfathomable reality has produced, through the interaction of time and chance over an incomprehensible period of billions of years, both an atheistic lecturer and a Christian saint. Why? Who are they? Why are they? In fact, are they?

You know as much about this as you know why the earth, together with the whole solar system, runs uninterruptedly towards a certain constellation, as if it had an appointment. They are attracted. But what is this universal attraction? Attraction is a word which we use sometimes for lovableness. Who loves? Who is the beloved?

Atheists speak, as do preachers. How about leaving their confusing voices and listening to the voices of leaves, brooks, winds, storms, birds, little children? These might be more instructive than many of our words.

Those who live in tune with nature believe. Atheism started as an urban phenomenon in the distorted minds of those who had to live behind walls, social as well as structural.

And what about listening to the great silences? Whence the beauty of snowflakes, flowers, ferns, lichens, each a different piece of exquisite embroidery? Whence the wonderful arrangement of elementary particles in the atom?

How is it that the electron revolves in its orbit hundreds of millions of times every hundred-thousandth part of a second in order that what is in constant motion should give us solid objects to handle?

Did you ever hear about a machine with eighty trillions of electrical cells? One of its parts, weighing only

fifty ounces, is a mechanism consisting of ten billion

cells, which generate, receive, record, and transmit energy. This wonderful machine is your body. How grateful you would be if somebody presented you with a car. But you were given a much finer machine. By whom?

How is it that chemical changes in the neurons of the brain become, with a change of sentiments, another thought? How is it that a man exhaling the poison carbon dioxide transforms it into a word of love, or even a word carrying the message of eternal life?

How is it that when you wish to do an evil thing, it is as if an unseen hand would restrain you? Whose hand is this? Even if the voice of conscience is not powerful enough to make you abandon a wicked intention, you hear it later in the form of regret and remorse.

Who are you to ask reality's identity? What if this reality should answer: "Since in your arrogance you set yourself up as an authority, please indicate first who you are?" Could you indeed answer one of the thousands of questions that reality puts to you? The development of science has not so much increased the knowledge of facts as it has increased the number of questions, to which we must find the answers.

You question reality about its last mysteries, about its sense, about its design, about the existence of a Creator. To whom should reality answer, and in what language? Primitive tribes, to which the first missionaries went, had no words for such concepts as "love," "faith," "forgiveness," "spirit," "holy," "train." The missionaries were restricted in their ability to communicate their message or to share the realities of their own country. Have you a common language with the highest reality?

And again, to whom should this reality speak? You acknowledge only reason. But according to your materialistic doctrine, reason is the manner in which the human brain works. The elephant's brain is otherwise constituted. Its work is called instinct. To yours, you have

given a nicer name. And yet both brains, you insist, are accidents of evolution, the random agglomeration of atoms over eons of time, without the impinging of a designer.

You consider atheism to be the truth. But before applying the notion "truth" to atheism, you have to define what you mean by "truth."

Pilate asked, "What is truth?" Whoever does not know the answer to that question has no basis on which to assert that anything is true.

Sceptics have said that "truth is a suspicion that has endured" or "a hallucination agreed upon by a majority." But what they mock as hallucination might be error pointed in the right direction. Alchemy and astrology were just such fruitful errors, precursors of chemistry and astronomy.

What is your definition of truth?

A Marxist would say that truth is conditioned by social class. The economic conditions in which a man lives, determine his convictions.

In a letter to Cluss dated December 7, 1852, Marx describes his own economic condition. He says that he is as good as imprisoned because he lacks trousers and shoes and that his family risks being plunged into deep poverty. We are moved to feel sorry for him. But then Marxism is the mentality of men without trousers and shoes. Today, all proletarians, in the West, have trousers and shoes, more than one pair. So Marxism does not suit us. We have to have a truth of our own.

Marxism proclaims itself as truth and has no valid definition of the word.

It is interesting that Marxism, allegedly the doctrine of the proletariat, excludes proletarian thinkers from truth. Marx writes in a letter to Sorge, dated October 19, 1877: "The workers themselves when ... they give up work and become professional literary men, always breed 'theoretical' mischief and are always ready to join muddle-heads..."

The radical student movements also cannot have truth. Marx writes about "the stupid nonsense the Russian students are perpetrating which is worthless in itself." Apparently for Marxists there is only one valid definition of truth: "Truth is what you think when you have no trousers and shoes." For some mysterious reason trousers seem to be a terrible hindrance to the possession of truth. Let us leave all this.

We will serve our opponents with a current definition: Truth is the consistency of the object of thinking (reality) with its product, our own mentality. However, such a

consistency is no confirmation that you have apprehended reality rightly. Otherwise, how can you account for the existence of error? You assert that religion is error. But religion is the consistency between reality and another man's mentality. So a man can be very sure about the justice of his manner of thinking and still be mistaken. What if you were the victim of such a delusion?

Suppose a Christian became an atheist. He would then acknowledge his prior thinking to be false. With his mind open to error, he would embrace your ideology. How could he know for sure that he had not fallen into another wrong belief? He might feel sure his thoughts now correspond to reality. But thus he believed when he was still religious. Do you not see that there must be a light beyond reality and pseudo-reality, beyond what we call truth and error, to tell us with authority which is which? Even atheist convictions can exist consistently (how rare is consistency in human thought) only by acknowledging this supreme Light, which we adore in religion.

Should the Highest speak with you in the language of reason? But how much can reason comprehend? Reason justified slavery, absolute monarchy, superstition. It made us cheer dictatorships and justify world wars, which were mass-slaughters of innocent beings. Mephistopheles says: "He calls it reason and uses it only to be

more animalistic than any animal." Man must always rationalize, conceptualize, and intellectualize all things.

Goethe suggested two centuries ago that "our planet is the mental institution of the universe." We have the reason of a race that has flickerings of genius and truth but shows clearly that it has gone mad. Even with the wisest of us, reason is only a harmony among irrational impulses.

Reason, in order to produce right results, would have to be unsullied by low sentiments.

Is this the case with my opponents?

Does fear play no role in their thinking? In nonCommunist countries atheists often turn to religion. Now suppose that a member of Moscow's Academy of Science, after examining all the pros and cons, came to the conclusion that Christianity was right - as did Svetlana Stalina, Pasternak, Siniavski, Solzhenitsyn; one's convictions can change in any direction - what would be the result? He would immediately lose his membership

in the Academy, his professorial chair, the possibility of publishing any books. He would also lose his high standard of living. General-Major Grigorenko, member of Moscow's Academy, expressed on some political and military questions opinions different from those of the Soviet government. For this "deviation," he suffered in a mental asylum. Don't you, my opponents, fear at all? Without complete freedom of research and expression, whether your views prove true or false, reason cannot give right results. Your reason is biased by a sentiment fear.

I don't reproach you particularly. Everybody's reason is biased by sentiments of one kind or another. With some it would be the desire for fame or gain. Such sentiments are to be deplored, but in no case can reason alone give right results.

Why should you seek right results if you are not animated by a passion, the love of truth? So a passion, a

powerful sentiment, while sometimes a hindrance, can in other instances be a driving force for right reasoning. It is its very presupposition.

How do we know that syllogisms produce right thinking? Well, we just feel it. And we feel it not only in small things, but also in great ones. Einstein said of his famous theory, before it was ever submitted to the crucible of experiment, that he felt it to be true. What is this feeling? It does not belong to reason. Neither does intuition. But they satisfy an Einstein.

Evidence is not only external. There exists also inward evidence which sometimes contradicts our senses. This inward conviction, faith, is itself one of the great facts of the universe. It must be respected and explained like any other fact of nature.

The reasoning of Einstein was based on presuppositions outside of reason.

Atheism also rests on a faith. It too has its presuppositions. It rests on the feeling that it is worthwhile to spend life denying the non-existent. Nietzsche, the great prophet of the anti-Christ, had the honesty to acknowledge this. He wrote "Even we, devotees of knowledge today, we, godless ones and anti-metaphysicians, still take our fire, too, from a flame, which a faith, thousands of years old, has kindled: that Christian faith, which was also the faith of Plato, that God is truth, that truth is divine." Nietzsche was sorry about it, but he considered himself

"still pious."

If sentiments play such a big role in the convictions of believers and unbelievers alike, why should the Highest speak to you, proud reason, and not to these sentiments?

Lenin says in his ~Philosophical Copybooks~ that matter has the capacity for self-reflection. It reflects itself in thinking. In whose thinking? In that of a person. Now, if whatever we think is a reflection of reality and if all our thoughts are so very personal, the truth which they reflect must be a Person, whom we apprehend clearly or

dimly, or in a distorted manner, or even without knowing whom we really apprehend. Jesus said that the Truth is a person, himself. Just try to express this in a syllogism. You will come to the conclusion that Jesus's assertion must be true, a mysterious truth.

If you do not have the sentiment of mystery, you cannot arrive at the truth.

Why do you believe what your mind tells you? You know that it is unreliable. You just arose from hours of sleep in which this same mind tricked you with an illusory world. It lies to you every night. It lies in your daydreams and in your fancies. Is it reasonable to rely blindly on your mind?

Millions of men, relying on their minds, cheered a Hitler and a Stalin as great geniuses. These same minds later indicted them as mass-murderers. You have often discovered your mind to be in error. It does not even pretend to tell you the truth. It is a whore, telling you rather what you would like to hear. It tells the atheist that there is no God; it tells the religionist that he can be comfortable; it tells the member of any political party that its programme is the best.

We have all made great mistakes. The whole history of mankind is a big cemetery of ideas for which men were ready to die. Are you sure that your ideas will not one day be considered as stupid as the idea that the earth is borne by Atlas?

Relying on their minds, ninety-nine per cent of men even of our century believe in the absolute validity of the law of causality. But Heisenberg is right, along with the very few who understand his assertion: "The resolution of the paradoxes of atomic physics can be accomplished only by renunciation of old and cherished ideas. Most important of these is the idea that natural phenomenal obey exact laws - the principle of causality." I

Did you ever visit an asylum? Where is the barrier between an asylum and everyday life? It might lie in a

microbe of syphilis lodging in the brain of a genius or in an unbearable emotion that caused a brilliant mind to disintegrate. Do the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ know what spyrochete may have begun its destructive work in their brain? Khrushchev described Stalin's regime as a hell in which even Communist leaders had to tremble for their lives. Thus even the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ must have endured terrible trauma. Can they be sure they are completely sane? Is any one of us? We belong to a race which, while living on a rich earth, finds no other solution to its problems than a general massacre every thirty years. There must be something wrong with our minds. Are atheists justified in relying on their minds?

What man could not be categorized at least in part as a maniac, a neuropath, an addict, a man obsessed, a schizophrenic, a megalomaniac, a pervert, a man with confused mind? Where is the perfect, normal mind?

Who are you, mind? Show your identity! Who is your ultimate authority, whom you can question about reality and ask to reveal to you its final secrets?

There arises on the surface of the ocean of reality a minuscule drop - my being. It arises within the ocean. It cannot leave the ocean even for one moment. My being is a part of it, ravaged by its tempests.

As soon as my self poses as a king and wishes to judge the reality, instead of humbly feeding on it, I am no more a reality, but a nonentity, an illusion.

There exists only one reality - God. He has created, but within himself. In him we have our being, life, and movement. He engulfs all that he creates. Just as billions of cells, every one with a complete organization and having all the functions of life, receive their existence from the body, live by it and in it, so we are a part of a higher reality. We live in God. When we oppose ourselves to him, our existence loses its meaning.

Wise men know how to take a joke, even if they are its

subject. Without malice, we will tell our atheist friends a joke:

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of

the Soviet Union discussed the problem of Khrushchev. Brezhnev and others said: "He is an idiot. Let us get rid of him." Podgornyi intervened: "But now it is possible to transplant organs. Let us transplant in him the brain of a genius." The others consented. A surgeon was called The operation was successfully completed. But it did not provide the expected result. They had forgotten about the phenomenon of rejection. The brain of the genius rejected Khrushchev.

Take it as a joke! But an enlightened mind, a mind enlightened by its Creator and in harmony with him rejects atheist doctrine.

THE DIFFICULTY OF BEING AN ATHEIST

We have set ourselves to go as far as possible towards an encounter with our atheist friends.

Atheism can be the passage from false religion to spiritual truth. Atheism in one age is generally the result of the superstitions of a hypocritical religion in the preceding one. But then it is a passage. Do not stop in the passage!

We also know that not all who call themselves atheists really are. Baron Holbach, one of the eighteenth century's renowned atheist philosophers, called God his personal enemy. For him, nothing other than nature existed. Nature, according to him, creates everything, being itself uncreated. But this is exactly what we believe about God! Nature is infinite and eternal. Again, what we believe about God. In nature, there are laws, order, purpose, spirit. The more you read what Holbach understands by nature, the more you have the impression that he has only substituted the word "nature" for "God," for whom he had an aversion. This is not real atheism.

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For many, atheism is only a screen for the frustration of an unsuccessful religious search. Their atheism is repressed religiosity, and it is our fault that we do not know how to communicate with them. Christians should unlearn "Christianese" when they deal with unbelievers. Doctors use an idiom of their own when they are among themselves, but the wise physician, when dealing with a patient, uses a language understood by him. Not all teachers of religion nor all Christians know how to make their faith intelligible to those who are not used to

Biblical language. This keeps many away from religion.

Therefore, we must have understanding.

We also sympathize with the burdens of an atheist. To be an atheist is surely much more difficult than to be religious. Atheists have a very exacting belief. They reproach us for believing without proof. We will present the proofs of our faith in this book. But who will ever be able to prove the stupendous dogmas of atheism?

Its first dogma is: "From eternity there has existed matter in continual movement, which has created life."

How do atheists know this? The renowned astronomer Hoyle adduces proof to the contrary. In ~Nature of the Universe~ he writes:

> To avoid the issue of creation it would be necessary for all the material of the universe to be infinitely old. And this cannot be for a practical reason. For if this were so, there could be no hydrogen left in the universe. As I think I demonstrated when I spoke about the insides of the stars, hydrogen is steadily converted into helium throughout the universe, and this conversion is a one-way process, that is to say, hydrogen cannot be produced in any appreciable quantity through the breakdown of other elements. How is it then that the universe consists almost entirely of hydrogen? If matter were infinitely old, this would be

> quite impossible. So we see that the universe being what it is, the creation issue simply cannot be dodged.
>
> We also know that according to the second law of thermodynamics, in all observable physical processes in the universe, some energy becomes less available. The universe is running down. Since it is far from run down, it must have had a beginning.

The Bible speaks science when it says: "The things which are seen are temporal."

What proofs do atheists have to the contrary? What makes them believe that matter has existed for ever? What proof that it has always been moving? Yet you have to believe it, and believing it is very hard. It is hard to believe that there is no God, no loving Father, no purpose in things, no hope for our life which soon runs out.

Is everything a chance gathering of elementary particles? The Communist writer Anatole France wrote

"Chance is perhaps the pseudonym of God, when he did not wish to sign."

Therefore, men are not atheists in times of great crisis or danger, in moments of ecstasy from love or the contemplation of beauty. Rare are the atheists who remain godless on their deathbed. Some, it is true, continue to play their role to the last; they would not confess with their mouths, even in the last moments, the doubts by which they are assailed. But whenever a skilled religious personality is near the deathbed of such a man, he succeeds in bringing him to conversion.

A major crisis in life may also shake an atheist's convictions.

Lenin, when the Russian Revolution was in greatest danger, when Petersburg was surrounded by the troops of the anti-Communist general Kornilov, delivered a speech in which he exclaimed several times, "Dai Boje" - "May God grant that we escape." It might be objected that this is a common saying in the Russian Language.

But Lenin never used it except in this moment of deep crisis.

Three men led the war against the Nazis: Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin. The first two were Christians. Churchill has written six volumes of memoirs about this war. The name God never appears on the lips of the two believers. It is only Stalin who says, "May God give success to the operation 'Torch' (the invasion of North Africa)." "The past belongs to God," and so on.

Mao is a fierce atheist. But in 1936, when as a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party he fell very sick, he demanded to be baptized and received baptism from the hand of a nun. When his wife was shot by the troops of Chiang Kai-shek, he composed a religious poem "The Immortals." In an interview with the English newspaper ~Snow~ in 1971, he said, "Soon I will have to appear before God."

Now, such incidents are very instructive. If you are an engineer who has built a bridge, the fact that a cat passes over the bridge is not proof that the bridge is good. A train must pass over it. We cannot consider atheistic doctrine profitable if it is only a fair-weather teaching.

Zinoviev, president of the Communist International, died at the hands of Stalin. His last words were: "Listen, Israel, our God is the only God." Iagoda, Soviet Minister of Interior Affairs, also killed by Stalin, said:

"There must be a God, because my sins have reached me." Iaroslavski, president of the League of the Godless in the USSR, asked Stalin from his deathbed: "Burn all my books! Look, he is here! He waited for me. Burn all my books!"

Sitting in Communist prisons with Communists jailed by their own comrades in party purges, I have been witness myself to similar scenes.

I would recommend that our atheist friends ponder these things.

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And now as I enter into a closer analysis of their handbook, let me first express our gratitude to the Communists of the Soviet Union for putting their thoughts so clearly in writing. We have learned from them that any member of a Communist Party is intended to be an enemy of the Christian faith. Under capitalist rule, elsewhere in the world, Communists may pose as friends of Christianity and may ask for dialogue with our Christian brethren. However, it is clear to us that this is a tactical move. The real attitude of Communism towards Christianity is shown in ~The Atheist's Handbook~. It is one of enmity.

THE DEFINITION OF RELIGION

~The Atheist's Handbook~ begins with an analysis of different definitions of the word "religion" given by philosophers. I

But neither Plato, who said that religion is right behaviour towards the gods, nor Plutarch, for whom religion is midway between atheism and superstition, is mentioned.

The book begins with later thinkers and, sorry to say, with falsehoods. Not one of the quotations is correct.

Carlyle wrote: "A lie should be trampled upon and extinguished wherever found. I am for fumigating the atmosphere, when I suspect that falsehood, like pestilence, breathes around me."

Plato had taught that authors of books should consider themselves as priests. The evil of using falsehood consists not only in the lie that passes for truth, but in the fact that men eventually lose faith in other books.

The story is told of a Bedouin who once travelled on a

camel through the desert. A man stopped him asking: "Please, make a place for me on the back of the camel, as I have a long journey." The owner of the camel honoured the request, and the stranger mounted behind him. Suddenly, as they rode farther, the stranger with a skillful movement threw the owner from the camel and

fled. The owner cried after him: "I am not angry because you have stolen my animal. I have many more camels. But I am sad that you have made it harder for anyone in the future to be helpful to a man he meets on the road."

~The Atheist's Handbook~ cares nothing about truth or trust.

In the Soviet Union, books of philosophers who are not in the school of dialectic materialism are on the index. The average reader cannot find them. (One of the charges against me, which brought me to prison, is that I obtained such books and spread them illegally.) Thus an author can misquote his authorities, and the misguided reader has no recourse to the truth.

My opponents quote Immanuel Kant as having written that religion is the understanding by man of moral duty. Following are the words of this philosopher, quoted directly:

"Religion is morals in reference to God as legislator. It is the recognition of our duties looked upon as divine commandments."

My opponents say that Ludwig Feuerbach defined religion as the connection between men. This again is false. In his book ~The Essence of Christianity~, he says: "Religion is the dream of the human mind."

Even the definitions given by atheist authors are falsified. Salomon Reinach is quoted as having taught that religion is a system of contradictions. We find the correct text in his book ~Orpheus~. "Religion is the sum of superstitious beliefs which hinder the legitimate working of man's faculties."

That they found it necessary to falsify the words of William James is understandable. They could not quote his opinion: "A man's religious faith (whatever more special terms of doctrine it may involve) means for me essentially his faith in the existence of an unseen order of some kind in which the riddles of the natural order may

be found explained ... It is essential that God be conceived as the deepest power in the universe and that, secondly, he must be conceived under the form of a mental personality."

~The Atheist's Handbook~ is unjust also towards James Frazer. As quoted, he also appears to be irreligious, when his real words in his work ~The Belief in Immortality~ are: "The question whether our conscious personality survives after death has been answered by almost all races of man in the affirmative. At this point, sceptic or agnostic people are nearly, if not wholly, unknown."

Not even mentioned are the definitions of such men as Schleiermacher: "Religion is the feel of absolute dependence upon the unseen determiner of our destiny accompanied by the conscious desire to come into harmonious relations with it"; or Emerson: "Religion is communion with the Over-soul, the divinity within us reaching up to the Divinity above"; or Jacob Burckhardt: "Religions are the expressions of the eternal and indestructible metaphysical craving of human nature. Their grandeur is that they represent the whole super-sensual complement of man, all that he cannot himself provide. At the same time, they are the reflections upon a great and different plane of whole peoples and cultural epochs."

The authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ don't even try to get light about the word "religion" from its various etymologies which have been proposed. Cicero derived the word from ~relegare~ - "to consider." With Augustine it means the finding again of something lost. Lactantius sees in it a derivative of ~religare~ - "to tie" (to a higher power).

But the most curious thing is that the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~, while claiming to be Marxists, omit the saying of Karl Marx from the list of various definitions of religion, embarrassed, no doubt, because of the beauty of his definition and because of the compliment

which he pays to religion.

Christians at odds with each other about being Orthodox, Catholic, or Protestant, would feel reluctant to remind their listeners about the words of Jesus: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this

shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (JHN 13:34-35). So Marxists simply cannot quote Marx in matters of religion, because he wrote in ~Observations of a Young Man on the Choice of a Life Work~: "To men God gave a universal aim - to ennoble mankind and oneself." And much later in life, in ~Contributions to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right~ he wrote: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless society."

The importance of these words is increased when you realize what Marx had learned from Hegel. Heinrich Heine tells about the latter: "One beautiful starry evening, we two stood next to each other at a window and I talked of the stars with sentimental enthusiasm and called them the abode of the blessed. The master (Hegel) however grumbled to himself, 'The stars, hum, hum, the stars are only a gleamy leprosy in the sky.'"

To have for a teacher somebody with only this to say about the stars and then to give to religion such beautiful definitions is quite an achievement!

It is true that Marx adds, "Religion is the opiate of the people," but put in the context above, these words lose their anti-religious meaning. Opium soothes pain. There is nothing intrinsically evil in opium. Only the discovery of anaesthetics made possible the tremendous development of surgery.

Marx, generally, had a great weakness for religion. It was a favourite topic of his. In his monumental ~The Capital~, he simply says: "For such a society [he means a society based upon the production of commodities; every

society produces them], Christianity with its cultus of abstract man, more especially in its bourgeois development, Protestantism, Deism, etc., is the most fitting form of religion."

Thus, every Protestant Christian can prove his case from Marx. He can tell his "Marxist" opponents that they abuse the name of their teacher. A true disciple of Marx must be Protestant, if he wishes to have a fit religion. To think how many Protestants have been jailed and killed by allegedly Marxist rulers!

Though an atheist, Marx had a bias towards religion. His was a split personality. Only later did the disciples of Marx make of his words "religion is the opiate of the people' a terrible charge against us.

People have used many things besides religion as opiates. One man, in order to escape family grief, chooses chemistry as his opiate. He passes all his time in the laboratory and discovers a useful medicine. Is the value of the medicine diminished because the research for it was an opiate to a distressed heart? If one who has met with great adversities in life takes refuge in the quiet of an astronomical observatory, his work is for him an opiate, but the stars which he observes are real. So religion may be an opiate for many, but the Godhead to whom they appeal can be true.

Atheism and revolutionary activities are often an opiate for children of broken homes, a substitute for rebellion against parental authority. Atheism can be an opiate to soothe one's conscience, which otherwise would give pain for the commission of gross sins. Atheism stifles the reproaches of conscience, just as an opiate alleviates physical pain.

Marx's "religion is an opiate for the people" is something entirely different from Lenin's "religion is a sort of spiritual gin," or the inept conclusions of Bakunin: "If God exists, man is a slave; but man can and should be free; therefore God does not exist." It is like saying:

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"Atheists claim there is no God. But faith in him gives me relief. So atheists do not exist."

It would have been nice if the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~, writing so much about and against the Bible, had mentioned the definition of religion given by an apostle of Christ: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (JMS 1:27). Are our opponents really against religion thus defined? I contend that no sensible man can be other than charmed by this definition. Perhaps what our atheist friends are fighting against is not even religion but a falsification parading as such. Who can be against caring for the needy and being unspotted from the great filth of the world?

THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION

"Religion is not inherent to man. It is not an inalienable quality of human nature." Our honoured opponents say that science has proved this. "The archaeological

discoveries have shown that during hundreds of thousands of years, man did not have any religion."

I am not a member of an Academy of Science. In my ignorance, I have believed that archaeology could discover only things which existed in the past, not things which did not exist

Well, but there is no joking with academicians. They have a powerful argument. Caves have been discovered in which lived the Pithecanthropus and the Sinanthropus, the predecessors of modern man. There were plenty of stone-tools and bones of eaten animals. "But never have excavations from that time shown the least sign of some religious representation, even the most elementary, existing at that time."

This reminds me of a story. An Italian debated with a Jew: "You Jews are so proud. There is tremendous

propaganda claiming that you are the most intelligent people in the world. Sheer nonsense! In Italy, excavations have been made, and in some strata of the earth at least 2,000 years old, wire has been found, which proves that our Roman ancestors at that time already had the telegraph." The Jew answered: "In Israel, excavations have been made in parts of the earth 4,000 years old and nothing has been found, which means that we had the wireless before you had the telegraph."

What if the absence of any religious relics in the shelters of the earliest men were an indication that they had a spiritual form of religion without outward signs of cult; a religion consisting of meditation, contemplation, and worship in the truth? Let us be honest, comrades, academicians!

But to continue the argument, my opponents have to explain how it happened that at a certain moment man became religious. They say that religion appeared in the time of Neanderthal man for two reasons. First, primitive man's fear of death, coupled with the fear that deceased members of the tribe would come out of their graves and harm the living. Second, primitive man's impotence in the face of the elements of nature.

Now, Pithecanthropus was more primitive than the Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal. He was more impotent than the latter two. So, logically, he should have been more religious.

I appeal to common sense. I

My opponents are academicians, some of them

historians. What do they hold about the origin of the Russian people and state? Well, they orient themselves to the oldest written documents of our history.

Then this procedure must hold good also in the sphere of the origin of mankind. The oldest of documents mankind are the Maneva-Dharma-Sostra, the Gilgamesh epic, the Vedas, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the books of Moses, and so on. They are unanimous in

saying that we were created by a heavenly being, who disclosed to prophets of old the essential truths that different religions have in common. This would be the origin of religion.

If I am wrong in accepting the oldest written documents of mankind, Moscow's Academy is wrong in its history of Russia.

On no continent is there any cuneiform tablet, any inscription carved on tables, or any reminiscence that man originated from the ape. Men usually know something about their grandfathers. If men of old had sufficient fancy to invent a sophisticated religion, why did they not remember seeing their grandfathers swinging from trees by their tails?

Again, let us be serious, comrades, academicians! Religion comes from God. It is communion with God.

The most primitive man knows "I exist," and "the many objects around me exist." But if I and my fellow men and the things about us exist, there must exist one more thing: ~existence itself~. If I am and the world is, there is also the simple fact of "being." I get old, fellow men die, warning me that my turn will come, while my children grow up. All objects which surround me decay or wither away. But the simple fact of being never ceases. There exists a pure Being, independent of our coming and going. I have not always existed. The things around me have not always been. They are contingent. But the fact of being has always been. Primitive men could not put this in so many words. But they also knew about a Supreme, immortal Being, the One whose name will be revealed later as the God whose name is "I am." Belief in him and the desire to propitiate him have inspired every religion in its beginning. This is the basis of every religion even now.

If this is not true, why was your book written?

A Russian farmer was once asked by an atheistic lecturer if he believed in God. He answered affirmatively.

He was asked again: "Why should you believe in him? Did you see him?" - "No," was the reply. "But neither have I ever seen a Japanese. Notwithstanding I believe that Japanese exist. Our army fought against them in the last war. This is proof enough for me. If there were no God, why do you fight against him?"

Why do you write 700 pages against a non-existent person? ~The Atheist's Handbook~ also belongs to the category of "being" and presupposes an Eternal Being.

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY

~The Atheist's Handbook~ begins by complimenting us Christians. It says:

> At least in the initial period of its existence, Christianity not only renounced the offering of sacrifices, but likewise also all kinds of ritual. F. Engels asserted that this was a revolutionary step. Differing from the other religions of antiquity, Christianity refused categorically all ethnic delimitations in matters of faith, its sermons having been addressed to all tribes and peoples. In problems of creed, Christianity has categorically refused also the social barriers. Those who propagated the teaching of Jesus spoke to all men, without difference of ethnic origin or social position.

It is not true that the first Christians renounced the offering of sacrifices. True, they abolished the animal sacrifices. But they gladly sacrificed themselves.

In any case, for once our opponents say good words about us. No national or racial discrimination within Christianity, and this already 2,000 years ago! In Poland and in the Soviet Union, there is discrimination against the Jews. In Russia all the Tatars, the Chechen, the Ingush, the Kalmiks, the Balkar, the Volga-German peoples were deported for no other guilt than belonging to a certain nationality. In Red China, the Tibetans are

oppressed. In every Communist country, the first question you are asked is, "What is your social origin?" Woe to you if your father happened to possess a factory.

There were no social barriers in Christianity as Christ taught it.

~The Atheist's Handbook~ does not compliment us further.

It asserts: "The Greek, Roman, and Jewish authors of the first century give us absolutely no information about Christianity." Remark the nice word "absolutely." The denial is absolutely false.

ROMAN AUTHORS ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

The Roman historian Tacitus lived around the years A.D. 60-120.

Referring to the burning of Rome, which happened in A.D. 64, he writes (Annals XV, 24):

> All the endeavours of men, all the emperor's largesse and the propitiations of the gods, did not suffice to allay the scandal or banish the belief that the fire had been ordered. And so, to get rid of this rumour, Nero set up as the culprits and punished with the utmost refinement of cruelty a class hated for their abominations, who are commonly called Christians. Christus, from whom their name is derived, was executed at the hands of the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius. Checked for the moment, this pernicious superstition again broke out, not only in Judaea, the source of the evil, but even in Rome, that receptacle for everything that is sordid and degrading from every quarter of the globe, which there finds a following. Accordingly, arrest was first made of those, who confessed (to being Christians); then, on their evidence, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much on the charge of arson as because of hatred of the human race. Besides being put to death, they were

> made to serve as objects of amusement; they were clad in the hides of beasts and torn to death by dogs; others were crucified, others set on fire to serve to illuminate the night when daylight failed. Nero had thrown open his grounds for the display, and was putting on a show in the circus, where he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or drove about in his chariot. All this gave rise to a feeling of pity, even towards men whose guilt merited the most exemplary punishment;

for it was felt that they were being destroyed not for the public good but to gratify the cruelty of an individual.

So the "absolute" of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ is not absolute. We have one Roman historian of the first century witnessing to the existence of Christ.

We can serve our opponents with a second: Suetonius circa A.D. 75-160). He writes in ~Vita Claudii~ (XXV, 4):

"... Since the Jews were continually making disturbances at the instigation of Christus, he (Claudius) expelled them from Rome..."

So again the existence of Christ is ascertained, yea, more: under the emperor Claudius, this Christ already had a multitude of disciples in Rome. In the year A.D. 64, they were already fiercely persecuted, as the same author describes in ~Vita Neronis~ (XVI):

"In his (Nero's) reign many abuses were severely punished and repressed, and as many new laws instituted; ... punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a sect of men adhering to a novel and mischievous superstition."

There follows a third Roman historian, Pliny the Younger, A.D. 62-circa 113. He writes to the Emperor Trajan:

It is my rule, Sire, to refer to you in matters where I am uncertain. For who can better direct my hesitation

or instruct my ignorance? I was never present at any trial of Christians; therefore I do not know what are the customary penalties or investigations, and what limits are observed. I have hesitated a great deal on the question whether there should be any distinction of ages; whether the weak should have the same treatment as the more robust; whether those who recant should be pardoned, or whether a man who has ever been a Christian should gain nothing by ceasing to be such; whether the name itself, even if innocent of crime, should be published, or only the crimes attaching to that name.

Meanwhile, this is the course that I have adopted in the case of those brought before me as Christians. I

> ask them if they are Christians. If they admit it, I repeat the question a second and a third time, threatening capital punishment; if they persist, I sentence them to death.

We can serve our opponents with a fourth document. We possess the first letter of St. Clement, bishop of Rome, dating from immediately after the Neronian persecution or after that of Domitian. In any case it is from the first century. It also contains plenty of information about Christianity. From it we know the state of the church in Corinth at that time. It tells us that the apostle Peter died as a martyr, that Paul had been in prison seven times. We get the names of other martyrs, the Danaids and Dircae.

St. Clement, writing in the first century, knows Christ as a historical reality. He writes, "Christ is of those who are humble-minded and not of those who exalt themselves over his flock. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the sceptre of the majesty of God, did not come in the pomp of pride or arrogance, although he might have done so, but in a lowly condition, as the Holy Spirit had declared regarding him."

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A passage from Sulpicius Severus, a Christian writer of the fourth century, has also been critically examined and is judged to have been based upon an extract from a lost writing of Tacitus. It tells us about a council of war held by Titus after the capture of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Titus is reported to have expressed the view that the temple of Jerusalem ought to be destroyed in order that the religion of the Jews and of the Christians might be more completely extirpated. The Christians had arisen from among the Jews, and when the root was torn up, the stem would easily be destroyed. (~Early Christianity and Paganism~, by Donald Spence, Dutton & Co., New York.)

In A.D. 125 the Christian philosopher Aristides presented to the emperor Hadrian a full codex of the moral principles of the church, which must have been old already in order to have so elaborate a system of thinking. I quote from it:

> Those who oppress them [the Christians] they exhort [with the Word] and make them their friends. They do good to their enemies. Their wives, O King,

are pure as virgins, and their daughters are modest. Their men abstain from all unlawful sexual contact and from impurity, in the hope of recompense that is to come in another world.

As for their bondmen and bondwomen, and their children, if there are any, they persuade them to become Christians; and when they have done so, they call them brethren without distinction.

They refuse to worship strange gods; and they go their way in all humility and cheerfulness. Falsehood is not found among them. They love one another; the widow's needs are not ignored, and they rescue the orphan from the person who does him violence. He who has gives to him who has not, ungrudgingly and without boasting. When the Christians find a stranger,

they bring him to their homes and rejoice over him. When a baby is born to one of them, they praise God, If it dies in infancy, they thank God the more, as for one who has passed through the world without sins. But if one of them died in his iniquity or in his sins, they grieve bitterly and sorrow as over one who is about to meet his doom.

Such, O King, is the commandment given to the Christians, and such is their conduct. As men who know God, they ask from him requests which are proper for him to give and for them to receive; and because they acknowledge the goodness of God towards them, lo! on their account there flows forth the beauty that is in the world. The good which they do, they do not shout in the ears of the multitude, that people may notice; but they conceal their giving as a man conceals a treasure. They strive to be righteous as those who expect to behold the face of their Messiah and to receive from him the promises.

Truly this people is a new people, and there is something divine mingled in the midst of them. Take their writings and read them; you will find that I have not put forth these things on my own authority. The things I have read in their writings I firmly believe, not only about the present but about things to come. There is no doubt in my mind that the earth stands today by reason of the intercession of Christians. Their teaching is the gateway of light.

Let those approach, then, who do not know God, and let them receive incorruptible words which are

> from all time and eternity, that they may escape from the dread judgment which through Jesus the Messiah is to come upon the whole human race.

What has remained of the assertion that the first century gives us absolutely no information about Christianity?

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But I did not need to argue that it is not true that there are absolutely no documents about Christianity dating from the first century. The academicians, authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~, contradict themselves on succeeding pages. They say that the book of Revelation is dated A.D. 68. So we are in the first century. A Jew wrote it. And he begins by telling about an already existing and organized Christianity, even in places far away from Palestine. The Revelation begins with seven letters to the churches of Asia Minor.

THE WITNESS OF THE GOSPELS

That the Gospels were not written in the first century is an axiom for the atheist's Bible. They were written by late, clever forgers. The Gospel according to St. John was allegedly written only at the end of the second century. I

But Ignatius quoted from it, although he was martyred before the year 116. Justin the philosopher quoted it. He died around 140. Even Loisy, the French critic of the Bible, admits that this Gospel was already received in Rome by the year 130.

A simple analysis of the contents of the Gospels shows that they could not be late forgeries. (In asserting this, my opponents put themselves in opposition even to Engels, who ridicules the idea that Christianity is the work of deceivers. See F. Engels, ~Bruno Bauer and Ancient Christianity.~)

At the end of the second century, when the Gospels were allegedly invented, the names of the apostles were highly respected in Christian circles. Why then should a forger, who wished his writing to be accredited God-inspired, tell the churches that Jesus called Peter "Satan" and also rebuked the other apostles? Such words would never have appeared in the Gospel if they had not really been said. The apostles were highly esteemed in the

church. Deprecatory words about them would not have been invented by Christians.

At the end of the second century, Christ was worshipped as God in the whole church. Every forger foolish enough to attribute to him a narrow friendship with women or a weakness that made him cry on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" would never have had his book accepted as a holy book. The same applies to the description of Jesus's fear and anxiety in Gethsemane. Such incidents made the name of the Saviour open to attack.

Celsus, in a book dated A.D. 178, mocks Jesus because of his anguish on the cross, reminding us that his disciples endured suffering in brave silence. He must have known the facts about Jesus from the Gospels. The Evangelists did not write them down to accomplish their own self-serving purposes but simply because they had witnessed them; and they did not care if the sighs and tears, suffering and pain would degrade Jesus in the opinion of many. Such accounts are the proof of the genuineness and early age of the Gospels.

Late forgeries would have been full of adulation for Jesus. They would not tell us that he was considered by some of his contemporaries, by his own people, by people who knew him best, as a devil, that Jesus himself said to a young man, "Why callest thou me good?"

The Gospels and the Epistles retain some Aramaic words. Aramaic was the language spoken by the Jews in Palestine. If the Gospels were written at the end of the second century in the Greek-speaking world, why would the forgers have retained the Aramaic utterances? They made sense only in the first decades of Christian history, when the majority of Christians were Jews.

The Gospels contain big debates between Jesus and his adversaries about the right manner of keeping the Sabbath and about the value of Jewish ceremonies. For Jewish readers of the first century, these were important

Gentile Christians of the second century would not have understood or been concerned with what the discussions were about. A forger would have had to explain the meaning of phylacteries, tithe, the Jewish ablutions, and who the Pharisees and Sadducees, etc., were. But the

authors of the Gospels take this knowledge for granted, because they wrote very early and recorded the episodes of the life of Jesus exactly as they happened.

Nowhere in the New Testament do we find the slightest trace of a church in a village. Christianity must have been primarily an urban phenomenon. Why then should forgers have put in the mouth of Jesus continual allusions to country life, to birds and flowers and farming?

We have known in this century masters in forgery. They painted the nimbus of a saint around a man whom they themselves afterwards denounced as a criminal. Forgers must be clever men. If the Evangelists had been forgers, they would not have made such terrible mistakes, nor would they have succeeded in having their books accepted as sacred Scriptures.

A detail of the Gospel narrative which proves its historical accuracy, as well as its old age, is found in JHN 19:34. We are told that when one of the soldiers pierced the side of our crucified Lord with a spear, "forthwith there came out blood and water." The reason is not given. But the Evangelist John had been an eye-witness, and he wrote what he had seen. Neither he nor anybody else at that time could explain what happened. Only after eighteen centuries did a Doctor Simpson, discoverer of chloroform, show that Jesus Christ died from what is called in scientific language extravasation of the blood, or in modern language, a broken heart. When one dies in this way, the arms are thrown out (of course, Jesus's arms were already stretched out on the cross); there is a loud cry, such as Jesus uttered; and "the blood escapes into the pericardium and prevents the heart from beating.

There the blood stands for a short time; it separates into serum (the water) and clots (the red corpuscles in the blood). When the soldier pierced the back (pericardium), the blood and water flowed out."

Is it conceivable that a writer would have made up an account of facts which never occurred, but for which a strictly scientific explanation, fitting precisely the facts, could be given only after nearly two thousand years?

The story about the Gospel being a late forgery is in itself a late forgery.

Is it conceivable that a non-existent, mythical personality was the Creator of the whole Christian civilization, the citizens of which outnumber those of any earthly

empire?

No empire has existed for two thousand years as has the Christian empire, which has survived the persecution, hate, and privations of twenty centuries.

Christianity is the greatest fact in the world - and this greatest fact was produced by a non-existent personality? Sheer nonsense! Who can believe such a thing?

John Stuart Mill wrote: "It is no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the gospels, is not historical. Who among his disciples, or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus or imagining the life and character revealed in the gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee and certainly not St. Paul."

Who could have invented the personality of Jesus - not only his goodness and meekness, but his genius in dealing with people and problems, his insight and ability as an evangelist?

And then who would be the inventors of Jesus? Jews could not have invented him, because in the first century their monotheism was so stubbornly maintained that they would never have invented a man as representing the incarnation of their unseen God.

Jews despised other nations. They would not drink a

cup of water from the hands of a Samaritan, so they certainly could not have invented Jesus, who made friends with foreigners. They believed in themselves as the chosen race: why should they have invented someone who obliterated all race distinctions and embraced all men?

Nor could the first Christians have invented him.

We see from the beginning that far from being able to invent a Jesus, they could only spoil his beautiful name.

St. Paul already writes that in his time the majority of those who preached did so out of greed, covetousness, a desire for fame, and selfish motives, and had distorted the word of God. Greedy and selfish preachers cannot invent a Jesus.

And even if men had succeeded in inventing an incarnate God, they would never have invented him as a Jew, a man belonging to a despised race, and a carpenter at that, a man without learning, who was born in a manger and died on a cross and who has not left one written sentence behind him.

Such things could not be invented.

Referring to the three questions spoken by the devil when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness "If thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread"; "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down [from the pinnacle of the temple]: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone"; and "[All the kingdoms of the world and their glory], all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me," Dostoievsky writes in ~The Brothers Karamazov~:

> If there has ever been on earth a real, stupendous miracle, it took place on the day of the three temptations. The statement of these three questions is itself the miracle. If it were possible to imagine simply for

> the sake of argument that those three questions of the dread spirit had perished utterly from the books and that we had to restore them and to invent them anew and to do so had gathered together all the wise men of the earth - rulers, chief priests, learned men, philosophers, poets - and had set them the task to invent three questions, such as would only fit the occasion, but express in three words, three human phrases, the whole future history of the world and of humanity dost thou believe that all the wisdom of the earth united could have invented anything in depth and force equal to the three questions which were actually put to thee thence by the wise and mighty spirit in the wilderness? From those questions alone, from the miracle of their statement, we can see that we have here to do not with fleeting human intelligence, but with the absolute and eternal.

Ingersoll, well-known atheistic writer, said about Jesus:

> With Renan, I believe Christ was the one perfect man. "Do unto others what you would that they should do unto you" is the perfection of religion and morality. It is the summum bonum. It was loftier than the teachings of Socrates, Plato, Mohammed, Moses, or Confucius. It superseded the commandments that Moses claimed to have gotten from God, for with Christ's "do unto others" there could be no murder, lying,

covetousness, or war.

The perfect man could not be invented by very imperfect apostles.

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ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE EARLY ORIGIN OF THE GOSPELS

Well, but let us not be unfair. We have brought so many arguments of our own as to forget the weighty arguments of the academicians against the early origin of the Gospels. They are three:

(1) The Gospels report the expelling of merchants from the temple. "But there has been no commerce in that temple." How the doctors in atheism know this, they do not say. But we will quote from the Talmud, which is surely an accepted reference on Jewish affairs and a higher authority in this matter than my opponents. In the treatise "Shabbat," page 15a, it says that forty years before the destruction of the temple, which means just within the lifetime of Jesus, there were shops in it.

(2) "The Bible writes about a flock of 2,000 pigs in the district of the Gadarenes in Palestine. But the breeding of pigs has been forbidden to the Jews from the time of the Old Testament. Therefore, in Palestine there could not exist flocks of pigs."

What opinion do you, dear reader, have about the conclusiveness of this argument? Be respectful! Academicians are speaking. There can be no criminality in our country because the law forbids it. There cannot be any quarrel between Chinese, Russian, and Yugoslavian Communists because proletarian Internationalism forbids it. Do these propositions sound plausible?

Besides, Moscow's Academy must have a geographical section, which should know that Gadara was in Peraea, east of the Jordan, a region which properly did not belong to Palestine and was not populated by Jews only.

(3) The authors of the Gospels could not be Jews because they do not mention animals native to Palestine at that time, such as wildcats, jackals, and panthers.

Another very convincing argument!

By the same token I might be led to believe that ~The

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Atheist's Handbook~ was not written in the Soviet Union because lice, bugs, and rats are not mentioned in it. But I

know how much Christians suffered because of these in prison, in the earliest years of terror.

I have done justice to my opponents. I have considered their arguments about the Gospels, too, not just mine. It is for the reader to judge their comparative value.

THE MESSAGE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The criticisms brought against the New Testament as being a phantasmagoric. late forgery are unfounded.

But if so, why were they brought?

Suppose that the New Testament was a bad book: why then are 700 pages written to refute it? Every year there appear in the Soviet Union good and bad sometimes very bad - novels. Nobody leads a world-wide crusade lasting decades against a bad novel. Readers themselves discard it. The line of the Communist Party keeps changing. Books considered great are suddenly banned. Twenty years ago who would have dared to have a library without the great genius Stalin's books? But one day an order came. The books simply disappeared. Nobody refutes them. They are buried in silence, as if they had not been written. Then Khrushchev began to publish his more modest collection of articles and speeches, well edited, so as not to remind the reader that he had been one of Stalin's flatterers. These books also disappeared. No refutations. Nobody refutes the tens of volumes of Trotsky.

Why is it that such a fight is led to criticize, to tear to pieces the New Testament, while at the same time the Soviet population is forbidden to have a copy of it, from which they might be able to form their own opinion?

Beliefs must rest upon evidence open to examination. What science implies is not so much the importance of

any particular truth as the right to seek truth and extend its usefulness unhampered by restrictions. Particular beliefs can survive only so long as they justify themselves against opposition.

Then why do you prevent people from having the New Testament?

It is because the Gospels and the New Testament as a whole contain a message of paramount importance for every man.

Can anyone imagine a good dinner without a cook? But nature is a banquet. There are in nature wheat and potatoes and milk and meat and fruits of many kinds. There are sunshine and rain, lovely flowers and the joyful chirping of birds. There are things useful and things beautiful, to satisfy your body and gladden your soul. Who is the cook at the banquet of nature? It is a wise Creator, God.

It is said that a scientist, coming home from his laboratory, was called to supper by his wife. A salad was set before him. Being an atheist, he said, "If leaves of lettuce, grains of salt, drops of vinegar and oil, and slices of eggs had been floating about in the air from all eternity, it might at last happen by chance that there would come a salad." "Yes," answered his wife, "but not so nice and well-dressed as mine." Atoms which have come together at random would not make such a beautiful universe.

The atom is mysterious. Life is mysterious. Scientists are far from having discovered their secrets. How much more then is God, the creator of matter and life, mysterious. The Gospel according to St. John says: "No one has seen God." When Moses once asked him: "Show me thy face that I may know thee," he received the categorical answer: "Thou canst not see my face, for man shall not see me and live."

No philosopher can comprehend him, but even the simplest man can apprehend him, just as no scientist comprehends yet the secrets of the atom, but every man

can handle matter constituted of atoms.

The New Testament tells us about this God, as does nature, too.

I once spoke with a prison officer, a member of the Communist party. He told me in a moment of confidence: "I looked one autumn day through the window at a bare tree. I knew that next spring it would again be full of leaves and buds, with birds chirping in its branches. And I adored the 'I do not know who' or 'I do not know what,' which gives me trees and wheat and flowers. I throw black coals into the fire and the fire changes it into beautiful white flames. I adore the Power or the Person, I do not know who or what he is, which rewards our evil with good and sometimes changes ugly lives, lives of former bandits, into beautiful lives of martyrs of a holy cause. I have known such men among you Christians." This Communist officer did not

comprehend God, but he had apprehended him.

It is easy for ~The Atheist's Handbook~ to ridicule primitive conceptions of God, the old man with a white beard sitting on a throne, as we see him on ikons.

When Christians are children, they are taught in a childlike way about God. Many of them, when they become older, fail to fulfill the Biblical injunction to put away childish things. They remain with these childlike conceptions, which are easily mocked by the atheists. But God is other than some immature conception of him.

These ikon images are surely not more ridiculous than the image of the atom drawn by the great physicist Niels Bohr. The atom is otherwise than we can draw it, and God is otherwise than what we think of him. But science could not do without its approximations. We Christians also use human words and human painting to express our feelings about God. But St. Thomas Aquinas, one of our great teachers, wrote: "God is not what you imagine or what you think you understand. If you understand, you have failed." Our mind is surely too small to

encompass the Infinite Being, but – as I said – we can apprehend him.

A Christian once asked an atheist, with whom he took a walk through the meadows: "Who made all these beautiful flowers?" "Forget it!" was the answer. "Do not come again with your stupid talk about God. The flowers exist by themselves." The Christian did not persist. After a few days, he was visited by this same atheist friend in his home. He had in his sitting room a beautiful picture representing flowers. The atheist asked him: "Who painted this?" The Christian said: "Do not begin with religious rubbish! Nobody painted these flowers. They came into the painting by themselves. Nature made the carved frame. Then by itself the picture jumped upon the wall, on to a nail which just happened to be there, driven by nobody. And that is all." The atheist took the joke badly. But then the Christian asked: "Is it logical to believe that these three flowers in the picture which have no fragrance and no life, must have been created by somebody, while believing that the millions of living flowers with their heady perfume in the valleys and on the hills have no Creator?"

God is a mystery. Jesus teaches us to say: "Our Father, who art in heaven," not "Our Father, who walks on the streets and can be met by everybody on any

corner." He is in the world incognito.

Pin a butterfly to a board and you have killed it. It is no more a butterfly, but its corpse. So we cannot pin down God in any definition. We use names for him, knowing that they are inadequate. The utmost that we can say about him is that he is the one beyond whom nothing greater can be conceived.

But God has revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who once came to this earth. About him the New Testament speaks. Millions have had their lives changed by him.

False is the assertion of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ that

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Christ's teachings destroy the joy of life. To renounce joy is un-Christian. Rejection of joy is a rejection of what we Christians consider the creation of God. Why should we refuse what a good Father has given us? The Old Testament provided that a man might vow to renounce for a short season all earthly pleasures. When this season was over, he had to bring a sacrifice to God as atonement for the sin of having disdained God's marvelous gift: pleasure. Christianity deprives nobody of joy. On the contrary, Christianity adds to pure earthly joys heavenly ones. What greater pleasure is there than to love?

Do not accept all these unproved falsehoods imputed to us, especially when Christian authors are not allowed to reply. The simple fact that atheists keep us gagged while they write shows that they are unfair and therefore not trustworthy.

Put your faith in God!

This God suffers with us. He shares all our sorrows. He sacrifices himself for us. He desires us.

Marx and historical materialism have deprived reality of its very soul, God, and have thus devastated it.

The knowledge of God is the key for knowing the world profoundly. We do not have reality plus God, but reality clothed in the beauty of God. Similarly, in a painting we don't have scenery plus a sunset; rather, all the hills and valleys and trees are bathed in its colours.

In some caves of Thailand were discovered prehistoric drawings showing men and fish in what one might call "X-ray style." The artist of not less than 3,000 years ago shows the details which he could not see, but about the existence of which he knew. Drawing a man or an animal, he included the skeleton and his organs as the stomach, the lungs, etc. Such drawings were found

earlier among the aborigines of Australia.
We consider such art primitive. It might not be as beautiful as our art, but it is nearer to reality. In a gallery of portraits what we see portrayed is not primarily the

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subjects themselves but rather the clothes made by their tailors. Of a subject we see only the face and the hands. If nudes are exposed, we see the skin. We are content with very little. The primitive artist wished more of reality, because in a sense he was closer to reality than we sophisticated, modern men.
The New Testament speaks about the universe and history in the same "X-ray" manner. The materialists see only the outside of things. The believers see all the outside things, plus what animates the universe and history, the inside, God working in his creation and manifesting himself as love in action.
God sent his own Son, Jesus Christ, on our behalf. As a baker takes upon himself your care for bread and the farmer your care for vegetables, as the shoemaker gives you his product, as a professor takes away your ignorance and gives you knowledge accumulated over the centuries, so Jesus, the Son of God, the only one who never committed any sin, has taken it upon himself to care for you. He gives you his righteousness. You become like a new-born babe, like a man who has never sinned. Life begins anew in union with God. As for your sinfulness, he has taken it upon himself.
You feel, somehow, that your sins have been very grave. They have produced suffering in others. Perhaps tears and blood have been shed, and you are guilty. Well, he bore not only your sins, but also the punishment for your sins. He bore it, dying on the cross on a mount called Golgotha near Jerusalem. Through his wounds we are healed.
The New Testament says: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3 16). Remark the word "whosoever" even the author of an Atheist's Handbook, anyone; even men who have committed the worst of crimes.
The New Testament teaches us that Jesus is standing

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at the door of our heart and constantly knocking. If

anyone hears him and opens the door, he comes in and talks with him heart to heart.

Life does not consist only in working for the state or in eating, drinking, and enjoying sex. Christ is a spiritual being. He desires to enable you to overcome sin and death and hell and only waits for your decision. And he promises not only a future heaven, but a heavenly life right now in your soul.

The New Testament tells us that Christ, the Son of God, loved men so much that he prayed for his murderers even while enduring the pains of the cross. You may have been a thief. Christ died among thieves and, while hanging on the cross, saved one of them, who repented, for paradise. He did not shun scoundrels or harlots. It was his greatest joy to forgive great crimes.

The New Testament is deprecated by atheists, because it proclaims love as the guiding principle of life and makes one's heart a corner of heaven. The mind begins to think truthfully, because errors in life are often nothing less than a lack of love. After you have once looked earnestly into the mirror of truth, which is Christ, great compassion towards all mankind will fill your soul and you will be wonderfully free.

The Soviet population is not permitted to know the message of the New Testament, because it would unite them with God. Therefore, the fierce but unfounded attacks upon it. But it is easy for us Christians, who have this deep insight into the great realities of sin and atonement, to understand why our atheist friends shudder before the cross and even write a book 700 pages long against it. With unwelcome intuition the atheists feel that the Bible contains the final truth.

Stalin is dead, but never will any Communist sing, "Stalin, lover of my soul"; nor is he apt to sing, "Khrushchev, my most beloved"; nor will his descendants a century

from now sing to Brezhnev, "I need thee every hour."

Yet these are sung about Jesus all over the world almost two thousand years after his crucifixion.

And try as they might, the Communists will never be able to silence these songs in holy Mother Russia!

About them no songs will be sung.

Already, jokes told about them today show what fame they will have in the future.

There is much sadness in the world. It needs laughter. I like it so much when people are joyful that I don't mind if they laugh at my expense. I hope that my opponents have the same feelings and that they will not take it amiss if I tell them two jokes which circulate in Russia.

The first: A high school pupil was asked in history class, "Who was Stalin?" He answered, "A man who, loving the cult of his own personality, became a murderer. He killed even his nearest comrades. This is the teaching about him of the Twentieth Congress of our Party."

"Bravo," says the professor. "Now, answer, please, who was Khrushchev?"

Promptly, the boy replied, "Khrushchev was an idiot, righteously removed from leadership by the vote of the Central Committee."

"Also very well. Now for the last question - Who is Brezhnev?"

"He is another idiot," came the answer.

The professor stopped him: "This will probably be true in a year or two, when a corresponding resolution is taken. For the time being, he is a genial leader, and I have to give you a bad mark."

And a second joke: In a school the teacher tells the children, "The Party is our father, and the Red Army is our mother." Then he asks one of the children, "What would you like to become?" The child answers, "An

orphan."

Men have loved Jesus. Others have hated him. Most have been indifferent to his message. But nobody has ever dared to make malicious jokes about him.

IRREVERENT ATTACKS AGAINST THE BIBLE

From criticism of the New Testament, ~The Atheist's Handbook~ passes to criticism of the whole Bible.

We are sorry that here also the attacks are vulgar, shallow. We could have expected otherwise. There is such a thing as an elegant, generous form of disbelief.

Such, for example, is the atheism of Ludwig Feuerbach. He did not believe in God but wanted to keep religion, which makes man noble, loving, and righteous. Feuerbach (The Essence of Christianity, vol. II) called

religion "holy" because it is "the tradition of the first consciousness," which to him meant childhood. Is it not beautiful to keep the memories of the childish period of mankind, he asks?

Jesus would not have objected to calling religion childish. He taught us to become like little children. We all value the remembrances of childhood. Why throw them out as brutally as the Communists do? Is it because they are reminded of a time when their souls were more beautiful than they are now?

We would recommend that our opponents read ~The Atheist's Mass~, by Honor, de Balzac. The chief character is an atheistic surgeon, Desplein. When he was a very poor and hungry student, a water-carrier named Bourgeat, animated by Christian love, had helped him, through hard work and personal sacrifice, to finish his studies, after which the latter became a renowned doctor.

Now Desplein was an infidel. But when Bourgeat, from his deathbed, requested him to say masses for the repose of his soul, the atheist professor, impelled by gratitude, agreed to comply. Thereafter, he regularly said

the required prayers for the deceased Catholic who had done him good.

We have attempted to show understanding for atheists, but we feel we have a right to expect cultured atheists to recognize the extent to which their culture depends on the Bible and to be at least decent in their attacks.

Friedrich Nietzsche was the first to declare that "God is dead." He was Hitler's favourite philosopher. Hitler drew the right conclusions. If God were dead, he, Hitler, need have no scruples about killing millions of innocent men and even children. But Nietzsche was far removed from his future disciple. Nietzsche spoke about the death of God with holy awe. His madman, after proclaiming the death of God, goes to different churches and sings a "~Requiem aeternam Deo~," a hymn of mourning for the dead God. To Nietzsche, God was dead. For him, this conclusion was a source of high drama. But one can sense that he was genuinely sorry that his god was no longer alive.

With the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~, it is just the opposite. They revel in the death of God. Now they no longer have to worry about conscience, truthfulness, and love. They can do what they like.

This atheism is indecent.

R. Garaudy, one-time member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of France, wrote: "We cannot disregard the essential contribution of Christianity without getting poorer" (From ~Anathema to Dialogue~).

Lunacharsky, once a minister of education in the Soviet Government, wrote: "The notion of God always contains something eternally beautiful ... Sorrow always dwells in men. He who does not know how to conceive the world religiously is condemned to pessimism ..."

Communist atheists begin the history of right thought with themselves, with catastrophic results. They end up

ignoring or seeking to obliterate truth acquired by mankind during millenniums of development.

Consequent]y, they make a caricature of religion. We regret this. Caricatures are always dangerous for those who draw them.

A young woman once had a discussion with the great satirist Hogarth while he was at the drawing board. She expressed a wish to learn to draw caricatures, to which Hogarth replied: "Alas, young lady, it is not a faculty to be envied. Take my advice and never draw caricatures. By the long practice of it, I have lost the enjoyment of beauty. I never see a face but what it is distorted. I never have the satisfaction of beholding the human face divine."

Those who caricature true religion are in the same situation. In the distorting mirror of their warped minds, even angels seem to have the devil's features.

They do not realize that if the Bible were set aside as a valueless book, all the famous literature of the world would perish with it. What would remain of Dostoievsky, Tolstoy, Milton, John Bunyan, Walter Scott, and Anatole France? Tennyson said that the book of Job was the finest poem he had ever read. There are three hundred quotations from the Bible in his works. Shakespeare used over five hundred ideas and phrases taken from it. Byron's poem "Darkness" was inspired by the Book of Jeremiah.

Even ~The Capital~ of Marx would have to be changed, along with his other writings and those of Engels, because they are saturated with references to the Bible.

If the Bible were taken away, the works of Michelangelo, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, and any other great painters of the world would be

unintelligible to us, as would many of the great pieces of music of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Brahms, and others.

Listen to the testimony of renowned men.

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William Gladstone, four times premier of Great Britain, said: "If asked what is the remedy for the deeper sorrows of the human heart, what a man should chiefly look to in his progress as the power that is to sustain him under trials and enable him to confront his inevitable afflictions, I must point him to something which in a well-known hymn is called 'The Old, Old Story' told in an old book, which is the greatest and best gift ever given to mankind." He referred to the Bible.

Jean Jacques Rousseau writes: "How mean, how contemptible are the words of our philosophers with all their contradictions, compared with the Scriptures. Is it possible that a book at once so simple and so sublime should be merely the words of man?"

Goethe writes: "The Bible becomes ever more beautiful, the more it is understood."

Heinrich Heine, who was very far from being a religious enthusiast, writes: "... The depth of creation written into the blue mysteries of heaven; sunrise and sunset; promise and fulfillment; birth and death; the whole human drama everything is in this book. It is a book of books, the Bible."

The English and German languages in a particular way would not be what they are if they had not been transformed by the Bible. It is the one book which has provided the impetus for giving hundreds of peoples and tribes their first alphabet. Through the labours of dedicated men and women, it is the first book they learn to read.

Garibaldi, the Italian patriot who politically liberated and unified his fatherland (finishing this work in 1870) said of the Bible: "This is the cannon that will make Italy free."

Below is the testimony of some of America's most renowned presidents:

Washington: "Above all, the pure and unbending light of Revelation has had illuminating influence on

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mankind and increased the blessings of society."

Lincoln: "I have always taken counsel of God and referred to him my plans and have never adopted a course of proceeding without being assured as far as I could be of his approval. I should be the most presumptuous blockhead upon this footstone, if I for one day thought that I could discharge the duties which have come upon me since I came into this place, without the aid and enlightenment of one who is wiser and stronger than others."

Grant: "Hold fast to the Bible as the anchor of your liberties. Write its precepts in your hearts and practise them in your lives. To the influence of this book, we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future."

Garfield: "Choose the undying Jesus as your everlasting friend and helper. Follow him, not simply as a Nazarene, the man of Galilee, but as an ever-living spiritual person, full of love and compassion, who will stand by you in life and death and eternity. The hopes of the world are false, but as the vine lives in the branches, so Christ lives in the Christian, and he shall never die."

McKinley: "We must be doers, not hearers only. To be doers of the word it is necessary that we must first be hearers of the word; yet attendance at church is not enough. We must study the Bible, but let it not rest there. We must apply it in active life."

Wilson: "If every man in the United States would read a chapter of the Bible every day, most of our national problems would disappear."

Franklin D. Roosevelt said: "I reiterate the statement which I have made times before - that a revival of religion is what this country most needs; that in such a revival we would find a solution of all our problems, whether political, economic, or social."

But what about the Communists themselves?

Marx wrote: "Luther, by giving the Bible to the

people in the vernacular language, put into their hands a powerful weapon against the nobility, the landlords, and the clergy."

Stalin and Mikoyan were both seminarians. The latter even has a degree in theology. It was the Bible which formed the beginning of their culture. Khrushchev confessed publicly that he learned to read from the Bible.

The essential idea of every socialist constitution - "If any would not work, neither should he eat" - is copied

textually from the Bible (2TH 3:10).

The whole idea of Communism is taken from the Bible, in which we are told:

> "The multitude of them that believed [in Jesus] were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common ... Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need" (Acts 4:32-35).

The first disciples of Jesus lived under communism, but a communism based on love and free will. Nobody was pressured, nor was anything expropriated. Love prompted everyone to share with his brother. In spite of dissimilarities, today's Communism is also of Biblical origin.

I can accept the fact that a person might not believe in the Bible, but that should not prevent him from respecting his heritage. Does it count for nothing that the Bible was the first book printed in Europe? Does it count for nothing that Christian missionaries taught the natives of Africa to give up cannibalism, to read, to behave as civilized men?

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A former cannibal once said to a Communist propagandist, "What? This book not true? I take it in my house and sit down and read it, and it makes my heart burst with joy. How can this be a lie? I was an eater of men, a drunkard, thief, and liar, and the book spoke to me and made of me a new man. No, this book is not a lie."

The Communist propagandists would have been eaten by the natives in many parts of the world if the missionaries had not taught them first the Christian religion. While spreading atheism, these propagandists should be thankful to Christianity for creating civilization and providing the freedom for them to operate.

An honourable atheist is one who bows before the church in gratitude for what mankind owes to Christianity. But to spit in the well from which you and the whole civilized world have drunk is terribly wrong.

In the seventeenth century, when atheism was rare among Jews, a Jew told a rabbi, "I don't believe in God." The rabbi embraced the man and said, "How I envy you, brother. You are in a much better spiritual state than I. When I see a man suffering, I say to myself, God will help him,' and don't give him assistance. You don't believe in the existence of God, so you have to help him. You have to do the deeds which God would do if he were to exist. Just go on like this: feed the hungry, comfort the distressed, give truth and joy to those in need, embrace everybody in love, and in general behave as God would behave if he existed. And then come back in a year and tell me if there is a God or not."

The rabbi could afford to take an elegant attitude towards the atheist, in order to encourage him to squeeze the best out of his atheism. You, my Communist opponents, do not behave like this towards a believer.

You live on a lower level and your whole stand is untenable.

~The Atheist's Handbook~ appeals to our reason, trying

with arguments to prove its points. Now, if the authors admit that we can reason, why is it impossible to find a Bible in any bookshop in the Soviet Union? The population should be able to read it for themselves, compare it with what its opponents have to say, and then draw their own conclusions. Why is the Bible banned? Do you not believe in man's power to reason "rightly"? Then why go to the trouble to adduce arguments? Just give the order "Disbelieve!" and be done with it.

DID THE CHARACTERS IN THE BIBLE REALLY EXIST?

Criticism of the Bible text is a legitimate concern of the human mind Christian theologians did not need to wait for the advice of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ to verify Biblical history, reconciling Biblical and secular chronologies and investigating archaeological data. The fact that we believe in the divine inspiration and the infallibility of Scriptures has never prevented us from examining minutely its text and its content, to be very sure we have the words as God inspired them, unmarred by later copyists or translators.

But Bible criticism as practised by our atheist opponents is of an entirely different type. They deny the most

important events of Bible narrative and relegate the principal Biblical personalities to the realm of myth.

Christians do not believe that the Bible is a scientific book. It is an oriental work thousands of years old, containing much poetry and symbolism, and it cannot be used as a modern textbook of science.

But the facts of the Bible remain, and science cannot confute them. It is a fact that the archaeologist's shovel always substantiates, never disproves, the Biblical narrative.

For the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ Adam and Eve are personalities of a myth.

There is no valid reason to deny the Biblical record

that Adam and Eve really lived on earth in the garden of Eden and were expelled from it, just as we do not uncritically discard other historical records kept by mankind.

But our opponents render us a service by calling the story a myth. A myth is not something unreal, but is, rather, highest reality expressed in images and symbols arising from, and appealing to, the depths of the human soul.

The story of Adam and Eve is more than history. It is history and myth at the same time.

Your own lives, my dear opponents, are a reproduction of what happened to Adam and Eve. There has been the innocence of childhood in a world untrammelled with worries and fretting about big problems. Perhaps you remember when sin, trespassing against the moral law you lived by, first invaded your life and made you hide from God. Later it may have taken the form of hiding some of your autobiography from the Party. We should not reproach our first forefathers. If Adam and Eve had not sinned, ~we~ would have eaten the forbidden fruit.

Adam and Eve are archetypes of general human experience, of what happens with every soul. Myths cannot be opposed to reality. They are very often a deepening of the sense of some isolated fact, showing it to be typical for the whole of mankind. You cannot disregard the value of the Mona Lisa by saying that it is only a portrait. It is the portrait of a living being. A portrait is as much a reality as the human being it shows. The Mona Lisa is, in a certain sense, even more real than the person it portrays. It is more beautiful, more permanent; it sums up

her best features. It corrects nature. The portrait does not contradict the person. The spiritual sense of Adam and Eve's story does not contradict their being historical beings.

What I said about Adam and Eve applies also to the

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remedy for sin, to the sacrifice of Christ. Every man who has done something wrong seeks a scapegoat, someone he can charge with his own offence. Knowing this psychological law embedded in the sinner, Christ offered himself as the scapegoat. He, being the Son of God, takes the whole responsibility for our entire life, good and evil. He has identified himself with us out of love and has borne our punishment. What he endured in crucifixion on Golgotha avails us as if we ourselves had passed through all his torments. We are free from our sins and guilt because Christ shed his blood for us. Then he rose from the dead, showing us that we who believe in him will also be resurrected to be with him in Paradise.

His death and resurrection are historic reality. But the myth about a god who dies as a sacrifice for sin and rises again goes back before Christ. ~The Atheist's Handbook~ is correct in reminding us that approximately the same things were believed about the god Horus of the Egyptians, of the god Mithra, and others. Unlike Christ, these gods were not historic, but archetypal realities. All these "gods" were counterfeits of the genuine Redeemer who had been promised to mankind and in that sense foreshadowed the coming of Christ. Horus and Mithra and Dionysus were names given to the Saviour from sins after whom mankind longed. And Kun-Yin and Isis and Diana, the goddesses, were foreshadowings of the mother of the Lord, expressions of the longing after a perfect ideal of purity, tenderness, self-sacrifice, and all the feminine virtues.

We will not worry, then, if our opponents call Adam and Eve and the Redeemer promised to them after the fall in Paradise myths.

A flood in Noah's time which destroyed the whole earth? Another legend, my opponents say.

But the Biblical narrative is corroborated by the Chinese, Greek, British, and Mexican stories of a deluge. Cuneiform tablets unearthed in Babylonia in 1870 also

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bore an account of the flood, striking because of its resemblance to the Bible record. Believed to date from 3000 B.C., these tablets must have been written when people vividly recalled the deluge.

Called the Gilgamesh epic, this narrative tells how the hero of the flood, Utnapishtim, escaped the general destruction of mankind. The great gods of the ancient city of Shuruppak (modern Fara) resolved to destroy the race by a flood. The god Ea disclosed the divine decree to Utnapishtim and saved him and his family.

Another story of the flood has been found written in Sumerian, a language which antedates both Assyrian and Babylonian.

The renowned anthropologist Sir James Frazer collected traditions about the flood from the most varied and remote places, such as the Leeward Islands, Bengal, China, and Malaysia. Everywhere peoples and backward tribes keep the memory of this tremendous event. They agree in the main that the flood was a punishment for grave sins and that only a few righteous people were saved.

Josephus Flavius is generally considered one of the most reliable historians of antiquity. He writes in ~Antiquities of the Jews~: "The Armenians call this place (where Noah and his family came out of the ark) ~Apobaterion~, the place of descent."

In the story of the flood, facts and myth merge again. Engraved in the deepest reaches of our mind is the truth that generalized grave sin will result in catastrophe. We know also that there have been many cases when the righteousness of a few has miraculously saved them from general destruction. The historical account of the flood was overlaid in the memories of many peoples with legends which express this truth. These legends are as real as the flood itself.

The flood in Noah's time was not a unique event. Jesus says, "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the

coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (MTT 24:37-39).

The world is now on the brink of a new catastrophe for sinners. The Bible says that this time it will be

destroyed by fire. ("The elements shall melt with fervent heat." These words were written two thousand years ago by Peter the fisherman long before anyone knew about chemical elements, the destructive power and annihilating capacity of atomic fission and its fervent heat.) As Noah had a warning from God, so the church has a warning today. The world in Noah's time was destroyed although its wickedness was not sufficient to forbid Noah's preaching. What judgment can today's world expect when it puts an interdiction upon the warnings! Mankind should not be aware of the dangers facing the world of today; therefore - in ~The Atheist's Handbook~ the denial of the flood of old – even at the price of denying historical evidence.

There is no proof for the existence of Abraham and his descendants, say our opponents further.

Has any historical excavation proved the existence of Spartacus, the leader of a revolt of slaves, a man who figures in all histories of Socialism? Surely not. It is taken for granted that Spartacus really existed because Roman historian wrote about him. Then why do the historians of socialism not apply the same yardstick to Biblical personalities, even if historical excavations should not prove anything about their existence? Why should they have spoken about Abraham who lived most of his life as a nomad? We believe in his historical existence, as we believe in the historical reality of Spartacus, because historians, the writers of the Bible, speak about his life and the lives of the other personalities of the Old

Testament.

Further, all the Jews of all times have known themselves to be the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. All the Arabs from time immemorial have known that Abraham was their father. All the Christians and all the Moslems of the world have always venerated Abraham as the ancestor of their faith in one single God.

Should all this count for nothing?

Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah for the burial of Sarah. Afterwards, this cave became a family tomb. There were buried Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, and Jacob. A mosque and a synagogue now stand above this cave, and it is one of the holiest places of pilgrimage for the Moslems.

Imagine that after a few hundred or thousand years someone seeing the mausoleum of Lenin should say that

Lenin was not a historical personality but a myth. The corpse of Lenin, it would be said, is only a wax figure. Suppose that after two thousand years archaeologists who had heard about Stalin should find nothing relating to him, not a corpse nor even so much as a wax figure. Surely they would deny his existence.

"How foolish," you say. But then the denial of Abraham's existence is also foolish.

A site in Israel indicates the historicity of Abraham's grandson: The well of Jacob, where Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman, still exists in Palestine and is covered by a little Greek church. The well itself is immediately below the high altar.

But Jacob and his descendants are also not historical personages, we are told by our opponents.

Either the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ are ignorant, which is not permissible for men who write a book of such responsibility, or else they are deliberately hiding the truth.

In Tell Hariri in 1933 excavations were made by the well-known archaeologist, Professor Parrot. Tell Hariri is

between Damascus and Mosul in the very place from which the family of Abraham is reported to have come to Canaan. Now the Mari civilization has been discovered there, and the Assyriologists were able to decipher a clay tablet. It was a report of Bannum, an officer of the desert police, which is dated around the seventeenth century B.C. The report has the following wording: "Say to my Lord this from Bannum, thy servant: Yesterday I left Mari and spent the night at Zuruban. All the ~Benjamites~ were sending fire signals. From Samanum to Ilum-Muluk, from Ilum-Muluk to Mishlam all the ~Benjamite~ villages in the Terqua district replied with fire signals; I am not yet certain what these signals meant."

In addition, the chronological tables discovered in that place thrice mention the Benjamites. "The year in which Iahdulim went to Hen and laid hands upon the territory of the Benjamites" is an inscription from the reign of King Iahdulim. From the reign of the last monarch of Mari, we have two inscriptions. The first one: "The year that Zimri-lim killed the Dawidum of the Benjamites." The second: "The year after Zimri-lim killed the Dawidum of the Benjamites."

Benjamin is, according to the Bible, Jacob's youngest son. How then can the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~

say that the sons of Jacob are not historical personages?
The first time that the name Israel occurs in non-Biblical documents is on an inscription, now in the Cairo museum, from a mortuary temple near Thebes, on which the victory of Pharaoh Mezemptah over the Libyans is commemorated. In order to augment his triumph, other notable victories which this ruler is said to have achieved are also mentioned. The end of the hymn of praise is as follows: "Canaan is despoiled and all its evil with it. Askelon is taken captive. Gezer is conquered. Yanoam is blotted out. The people of Israel are desolate; Israel has no offspring. Palestine has become a widow for Egypt."

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So the name of Israel is already historical by the year 1229 B.C.

The ruler of that time boasted of destroying the Jews, just as his follower Nasser boasted, before he was defeated by Israel, which will never be utterly destroyed.

It surely seems to be a very ridiculous thing to write a book of 700 pages to prove that over 4,000 years ago a man with the name of Abraham did not exist, that he had no descendants with the names of Isaac, Jacob, and Benjamin, and that the whole Biblical story about the people of Israel is untrue. Why should this be taught in all Communist schools, yes, even in factories and on collective farms? Russians are not interested in their own ancestors of 4,500 years ago. Why should they be interested in denying specifically that the Jews have a history dating from a man called Abraham?

The denial has a deep sense. It will best be explained by a joke, which must be Jewish, since we are discussing the Jews:

Goldstein was riding in a train. Opposite him was another Jew, Hershcovici. They did not know each other. Goldstein wanted to enter into a conversation, so he asked Hershcovici: "Comrade, tell me, please, what time it is." Hershcovici did not answer. The question was repeated several times, every time in a louder voice. It did not help. In the end, Goldstein asked: "But, comrade, I see that you have a watch on your wrist. Why don't you tell me the time?"

Goldstein replied: "Comrade, you are not interested in this. I surmise that you would like to chat a little bit. If I had told you that it was 9 o'clock, you would have asked: 'What brand of watch do you have?' I would have replied: 'It is a Swiss gold watch.' You would have

answered: 'Then you must have a high position. You could not afford such a watch otherwise.' I would have replied: 'Yes, I am a director in the Ministry of External Commerce.' Then you would have asked me where I stay

in Moscow. I would answer: 'On Street Artileriinaia.' You would have asked if I have a family. I would have told you that I have a wife and three daughters. You would have asked if by chance I had their picture with me. I would have said yes and would have shown you the picture. You would have liked my beautiful elder daughter Esther and would have asked me if I would allow you to visit me once. Politeness would have obliged me to answer yes. You would have fallen in love with Esther and would have asked her hand in marriage. And why should I give my daughter in marriage to a man who does not even possess a watch?"

The existence of Abraham and his descendants has to be denied, because if my opponents were to admit that Abraham existed, according to the Biblical record and all the traditions of hundreds of millions of Jews, Christians, and Moslems, we would have asked why Abraham was so conspicuous that his name should remain alive in history after four millennia. The only reply could be that he is famous because he believed God, followed his commands, and was ready to sacrifice even his dearest son for him. To which we would have put the question whether Abraham ever met God. The answer is that he often heard the voice of God speaking to him clearly. We would be interested to know what God told him. The answer would be that among other things God told him that he wanted to make a covenant with him. In his seed, that is, through one of his offspring, all nations would be blessed. Now, since everyone wishes to have a blessed lives we would have asked the name of this descendant of Abraham who was to impart happiness. The reply is simple: The New Testament begins by telling us that Jesus is this descendant of Abraham. We would have asked how anybody can receive blessings from him. And we would hear the message of the Gospel: Jesus died on the cross for us sinners. He bore the punishment for our offences. Whosoever believes in him is cleansed from all

his sins and has eternal life now and in Paradise.

The authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ therefore proceed carefully, as did comrade Goldstein in the joke. They cut the discussion short. The Biblical personalities never existed. They have the watch on the wrist but will not say what time it is.

This is their purpose also in their other denials of Biblical truth. This is their purpose in finding fault with the Bible and seeking contradictions in it.

THE DELIVERY OF THE JEWS FROM EGYPTIAN SLAVERY

The Bible says that the Jews were slaves in Egypt, but that God delivered them from bondage with a mighty hand, doing miracles for them. The Egyptians who pursued them were drowned in the Red Sea. This Biblical story is surely dangerous for slave-holders. It might suggest to slaves, to men who live under a dictatorship, that God is in favour of the emancipation of slaves.

Therefore, this page of history has to be wiped out, too. The authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ graciously assure us that all this is sheer fiction. They write:

"For a century and a half, there have been archaeological excavations in Egypt which were made with great thoroughness, but in a good number of monuments which were discovered, in the multitude of inscriptions which have been deciphered, in pictorial images and those of other nature, there is nothing found to confirm the Biblical legend about the Egyptian slavery."

Is it right for Communists to make such a criticism of the Bible?

The exodus from Egypt happened over thirty centuries ago. The Russian Revolution happened only sixty years ago. Now try to travel through the Soviet Union, go from bookshop to bookshop and find one single book

in which Trotsky is portrayed as having played any role in the bringing to power of the Bolsheviks. We of the older generation know that at that time Trotsky was the president of the Soviet of Petrograd and was the closest collaborator of Lenin; in truth it must be said that Lenin and Trotsky made the Revolution. But later, Stalin got angry at Trotsky and simply erased his name from history. Later on it was said that the Revolution was in reality the work of Lenin, with Stalin as his most intimate collaborator. The role of Stalin was portrayed as

the most important one - until some twenty years ago. Now try to find in any bookshop of Russia today a book in which Stalin has any valuable role in this Revolution and you will not find anything, because Khrushchev, turning against Stalin, has erased his name, too. More recently, the name of Khrushchev has been erased. Now, if political enmity can erase all written proofs of the role of men in the major historical events of today's world, with all the advantages of printing and photography and the tools of mass communication, it is not difficult to accept the gaps in Egyptian history.

But not all proofs could be wiped out.

My honourable opponents again show a lack of archaeological knowledge.

They do not know about the stele of the time of Ramses II, found at Beisan in 1923, stating that he employed captive Semites (in the Tell-el-Amarna tablets the Hebrews appear under the name "Khabiri") to build a city called after his name.

The sun-dried bricks of the store cities, which can be seen in the Cairo museum, are stamped with the words "Ramses." You can see that some of them are bound with straw, others only with stubble, and finally, some of them are made without any straw or other binding substance. All this corroborates the decree of Pharaoh as recorded in the Biblical book Exodus, giving the command

that the Israelites should no longer be supplied with straw.

The Bible says that ten plagues were sent by God upon the Egyptians to induce them to let the Jewish slaves go. The last plague was the death of all first-born, beginning with the first-born of Pharaoh, who sat on his throne.

If the assertion of the Bible is correct, the son of Amenhotep the Second, the Pharaoh of the Exodus, must have died in that judgment. Amenhotep the Second himself died in 1423 B.C., and he was followed by Thotmes the Fourth. On a large red granite block which is placed between the feet of the sphinx of Ghizeh is carved what is called the dream inscription of Thotmes the Fourth. In this, we are told that this future Pharaoh when young fell asleep and dreamed that a sphinx came to him and startled him with the prophecy that he would one day become King of Egypt.

Since the law of primogeniture held good in Egypt, he

could not have been Amenhotep's eldest son, or the hopes of his accession would not have been so remote that he would be amazed by the promise of the sphinx. So the first-born of Pharaoh must have died in the tenth plague.

Is this not a strange confirmation of the Biblical account?

Ancient Egyptian history is quite well known. There are many records. But not a one speaks about the disappearance of the Egyptian army and its king in the sea, our opponents point out.

I would like to know which nation has ever been keen about registering its defeats. When the Soviet army retreated from the borders to Stalingrad, Stalin did not publicize the defeats. Neither did the Germans publicize theirs when the tide turned. The Egyptian historians cared as little about objective truth as their modern counterparts.

In this matter we do not have the Egyptian side of the story. That is all. But we have the Bible, which tells not only the Jewish side, but God's words and God's wonders. There is no reason to disbelieve the wonderful deliverance of the slaves, though it may be unpleasant for slaveholders and their flatterers.

~The Atheist's Handbook~ says also that six hundred thousand adult Jews could not have come out of Egypt as the Bible asserts, because this would have made a total Jewish population of at least three million. Now, it is certain that three million men could not pass through the Red Sea in one night; neither could they have lived on the little peninsula of Sinai.

Here is a problem of the Hebrew language, in which the oldest part of the Bible is written. The word "alfot" which means "thousands" also means "houses." We are not sure if the Hebrew original of the Bible means that six hundred thousand Jews left Egypt or if it was only six hundred houses, six hundred big families. Language is subject to evolution. Words may not have had the same sense three or four thousand years ago which they have today. Generally, when the Bible uses hyperbolic language, such parts of Scripture may not be as easily understood by us as they were when written. But surely if it had contained enormous lies, the scriptures could not have been accepted at that time as a holy book, any more than an official history of the Soviet Union which would

claim that the Red army during the Second World War consisted of 20 billion men. The words must have had at that time another sense from that which they have today.

In the imperial palace in Tokyo are kept the three signs of the Japanese empire a very old sword, a diamond, and a mirror of the great king. On the back of this mirror are inscribed some letters which have only recently been deciphered in Japan. After the Second World War, a brother of the emperor, the Prince Takahito Mikasa, began to enquire into Judaism. When the

emperor was visited by Rabbi Goldmann of the Beth-Israel temple in Hertford, who was the executive chairman of the National Jewish Welfare Commission, the prince took care that the Rabbi should see this mirror of the great emperor. Without any difficulty the Rabbi was able to identify the letters as the Hebrew words ~Ehjeh Asher Ehjeh~ - I AM WHO I AM. The very words of the Bible, as found in EXO 3:14!

Immediately the prince and the rabbi began to speculate as to how these Jewish words recorded by Moses in the Bible came to be found on an ancient sacred object of the Japanese, and it was supposed that in times of old, during the Babylonian captivity of the Jews, members of the ten tribes of Israel had brought this mirror as a present to the ruling emperor.

In the year 1941, the Japanese bishop Jujai Nakada published a book called ~Japan in the Bible~. Relying on documents of ancient times, he says that in the year A.D. 216,100,000 men came from the Middle East to Japan. They are called in Japanese history the Hata tribe, and they won a very great influence over the economy and culture of Japan. The Hata called themselves Israj, which is much akin to Israel, and they spoke about a great leader, whom they called prince Hata Kawa Katsu, who as a babe was rescued from the water, was then brought up in the palace of the king, and eventually freed from the bondage of slavery. In this form the Biblical story of Moses came to Japan.

The extra-Biblical proofs of history as recorded by Holy Scriptures are too numerous to be mentioned. They certainly cannot be discarded.

CONTRADICTIONS IN THE BIBLE

~The Atheist's Handbook~ mentions contradictions in the Bible.

In 2SM 8:4 it is written that David, in a fight

with Hadadezer, took from him seven hundred horsemen, whereas in 1CH 18:4 it says that David took captive 7,000 horsemen. Our honoured adversaries cannot reconcile these two different statements.

What would they say if they found a history of the Second World War in which it was claimed that in the battle for Kiev a hundred thousand Russian prisoners were taken, whereas fifty pages later it was asserted that in the battle at Kiev only ten thousand Russians fell prisoner?

The explanation is simple. During the last great war there were three battles for Kiev. The number of prisoners differed in these battles. Why must we presume, then, that in these two different books of the Bible the same battle against Hadadezer is described?

Another criticism of the Bible: It declares that what King David did "was right in the eyes of the Lord, and he did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him, all the days of his life." ~The Atheist's Handbook~ asks: "But did he not sin?" The Bible itself records elsewhere what grave crimes he committed.

He surely did sin, but these sins were forgiven and atoned for, and therefore they did not count any longer before God. They were forgotten. The marvel is that a sinner who has repented is righteous before God, and therefore it is within the context of God's loving-kindness that the Scriptures record such beautiful words about David. The forgiven sinner is, in the sight of God, whiter than snow.

Let our atheist friends repent, and they too will be forgiven!

The authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ are very happy at having made the discovery that the apostle called Thaddeus in the Gospel according to Matthew is called Judas the son of James in the book of Luke. What a grave error! But let us turn the tables on them. How do they reconcile the fact that a certain Ulianov is

generally referred to as Lenin, and that the Djugashvili of one biographer is the Stalin of another?

Our opponents discover in the Bible a multitude of such "contradictions." They are not worth being considered.

Thus, for example, they point out that Jesus once told his disciples to sell even their clothes in order to buy themselves swords. On the other hand, when Peter tried to defend Jesus with his sword, he said to him: "Put your sword back in its sheath."

Now the words "sell your clothes and buy swords" were said by Jesus after the last supper when he was on his way to Gethsemane, knowing he would be arrested. Since it was late in the evening and the disciples had no opportunity to buy anything, he obviously was not telling them to purchase swords for immediate use. Instead, he is warning his disciples that for many centuries they will have great dangers to face and that they should be prepared to defend themselves and the cause of righteousness.

He who is not prepared to defend a righteous cause does not love it. Every mother who loves her child will fight tooth and nail to protect him against an intruder who plans to kidnap or kill him.

When one of the disciples seeks to reassure Jesus with the words, "We have two swords," Jesus replies with a touch of irony, "That is enough." The time will come for his disciples to understand him better.

"Put your sword back in its sheath" was a commandment given for a unique situation. Jesus did not wish to be defended. His desire was to die for the sins of the world.

The authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ have found another contradiction in the gospel according to St. Luke: It appears they note that since the people were on the side of Jesus, the chief priests had to think of ways to kill him secretly so that his sympathizers could not rally

to his defence, whereas a few days later, the mob cries: "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Our opponents say that such a radical change in the temper of the local populace virtually overnight was not possible; therefore, the story told by the evangelist Luke cannot be true.

What a pity that the members of an Academy of Science have learned nothing from the tragedy of their own people.

There was a morning in Moscow when all the radio stations began their programmes with the singing of

hymns of praise to Stalin, just as they had done for twenty years. The newspapers on that morning were also full of the same praises. It was the day when the twentieth congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union began. During that day, Khrushchev delivered a speech saying that Stalin, whom the whole nation and he himself had flattered for decades as the greatest genius, was in reality a mass murderer and torturer, not only of his adversaries, but even of his own comrades. In no time, the whole Russian people turned against the erstwhile providential leader and, instead of singing his praises, found ways to ridicule him. Soon even his corpse was removed from the tomb.

Is this a story the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ can believe? Or would they claim this is a legend?

The state of mind of the populace changes very quickly. So it was in the case of one of mankind's most degraded leaders, Joseph Stalin, and so it was in the case of the most beautiful exemplar of mankind, Jesus of Nazareth.

Do not the members of the Academy of Science remember that they themselves once sang praises to Stalin, and that they too have changed their tune?

Have they so soon forgotten how they demonstrated on the streets with slogans about the eternal solidarity of the Communist peoples, about eternal fraternity with the Chinese and Romanian and Yugoslavian Communists?

Do they realize how readily "eternal solidarity" has degenerated into petty quarrelling? Why are they unable to supply their own bitter experience to the events of two thousand years ago and recognize that human nature is the same in all ages, that the alleged contradictions exist not in the Gospels but in the minds and hearts of man?

The contention that Judas did not need to give the soldiers who had come to arrest Jesus a sign of recognition is ridiculous, even childish. Because Palestine is a very small country and Jesus had travelled widely throughout Galilee and Judaea, that is no reason to believe that his face was widely recognized. Today's major personalities are known because their pictures are published in the newspapers and they appear on television, but in those days no such mass media existed. So there must have been thousands of men who, while they had heard of Jesus, had never seen him face to face. The Roman soldiers and the servants of Caiaphas the high

priest had probably never been very keen to listen to Jesus's sermons any more than the officers of the Communist secret police would be anxious to hear today's preachers in Communist countries, except for sinister purposes. So it was only natural that someone should provide a sure sign of recognition of the person to be arrested. Furthermore, the encounter was in the dark of night, with only flickering torches to light the faces of a dozen weary, undistinguished men, and positive identification was required.

The authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ - "heroes" all Stalin's time who opposed his cruelties but who had the exceptional good fortune to escape prison (either they did ~not~ oppose Stalin, or they were mercifully protected by a God in whom they do not believe) - these very authors despise Jesus for exhibiting fear in the garden of Gethsemane, where he was arrested, and despairing on the cross!

To possess great virtues is surely very beautiful. To

hide these virtues as trees hide their fruit beneath the leaves is much more commendable. The aim of Christ was to open a way towards heaven for the weakest ones, to show that even they are acceptable to God. In order to build such a bridge, he must not play the hero. If his actions had appeared heroic and unattainable in all circumstances, we average and below-average men could never have taken him as a pattern of life. Therefore, he descended to the level of our human weakness, praying in Gethsemane, "God, take this cup from me," and crying on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?," in order that we, who often sink in despair and wish that the cup of bitter fate would be taken away from us, should find in him a trustworthy friend. That was the aim of Christ's behaviour. To call it cowardice is not right.

~The Atheist's Handbook~ speaks about some contradictions between the Old and the New Testaments.

Thus it points out that in the Gospel according to St. John, it is written that nobody has ever seen God, whereas in the Old Testament the patriarch Jacob says: "I have seen God face to face." (GEN 32:30).

The explanation is very simple.

The Hebrew language in Biblical times was very poor and therefore contained many homonyms. One and the same word had many senses. The word God in that time meant first of all the Creator of Heaven and Earth. The

word was used also for Christ. Angelic beings are several times called gods in the Old Testament, as are even men. The Creator says to Moses: "I will set thee as god over Pharaoh" and in one of the Psalms, the Jews, as members of a chosen people, are told: "Ye are gods." So when Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face," he meant an angelic being, whereas St. John speaks about God in the highest sense of the word, the last reality, the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

But enough!

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~The Atheist's Handbook~ looks at the Bible from below, from a human standpoint. From this angle, it is really a puzzle. Take some beautiful embroidery made by a woman, look at it on the wrong side, and it is a senseless zigzag of threads. You must look on the other side to find its beauty. So the Scriptures are not to be looked at from below, from the standpoint of man, who has rebelled against God.

Through the spirit Christians have direct communion with the unseen world. They look at the Scriptures from this perspective and are therefore enabled to catch its whole harmony and deep significance. They also understand the limitations of the Bible, in that it is the revelation of God within the framework of human language.

The story is told that when Robert Moffat, missionary South Africa, wanted to describe an English train to the local tribesmen, he laid down two iron tracks on the ground, then lined up several ox wagons one after another, and finally hung a large steam kettle around the head of the ox in front. No doubt, when Africans later went to Europe and saw a real train, they must have found Moffat's description ridiculous. But the language of the Africans did not allow him to tell them what a train really was. Similarly, God has to use a vocabulary drawn from earthly experiences in dealing with heavenly and spiritual things, for which there are no adequate words in the human language.

But still, how inspiring and uplifting is this book!

Voltaire wrote that in a hundred years' time the Bible would be an outmoded and forgotten book, to be found only in museums. But a hundred years after he wrote this, his own house was being used by the Bible Society.

The Bible has been translated into 1,300 languages, and millions of copies are sold every year - but who bothers to read Voltaire any more?

There can be no doubt, as far as natural abilities are concerned, that Plato is far above St. John, a humble

fisherman, or that Marcus Aurelius is far above Peter as thinker. But today hardly anyone reads Marcus Aurelius or Plato, whereas after two thousand years the writings of St. John and St. Peter are words of life to men all over the world.

Scientists are frequently at variance in their application of known data.

Facts about nature can also be misinterpreted. So too can this holy book be misconstrued or misapplied, but that does not diminish its intrinsic value.

My opponents have written hundreds of pages to refute the Bible, a book virtually unknown to them.

If I make the acquaintance of a man, I don't know the man. I see only his clothes and shoes. Of his body, only the head and hands are visible. If I see him naked, I still don't know him, because his soul remains a mystery. The literal text of the Bible is only an outward vestment. Its allegories are its body, its spiritual truths its soul. The beauty of its mysteries are revealed only to the lovers of God, who are willing to open their eyes and hearts to His divine Spirit. A beautiful landscape is perceived by the anatomical eye and interpreted by the brain. Just so, spiritual things, says St. Paul, are spiritually discerned and are mediated by the Spirit of God.

DOES CHRISTIANITY TEACH SERVILITY TOWARDS TYRANNICAL AUTHORITIES?

The words of Jesus "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's" are proof enough for the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ that he taught servility towards what we would call today a colonial ruler.

Now, first of all, Jesus never said these words to his disciples. He said them to his worst adversaries, the Pharisees. Their whole lives were a mockery of religion. So he told them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." He was sure that by striving to do

so, his opponents would soon find out that if they were complacent towards mad rulers (many Roman Caesars were mad), there would be nothing left to give to God.

The disciples of Jesus must have understood well what he meant by these words, which have been so often misused.

If somebody has been dishonest and wishes to make things right with those he has defrauded, he first has to establish as best he can what he owes and then pay it back. Now, what did a Jew owe to Caesar? What does a Czech owe to Kosygin? Nothing.

Even in Rome, nothing belonged rightfully to Caesar. Julius Caesar, a victorious Roman general, upon his return from a campaign in Gallia overthrew the Republic by military force. He was thus not a legitimate ruler. He was succeeded by tyrants, most of them more fit for an asylum than a throne. These tyrants robbed the population of the Roman Empire of its freedom. They gave nothing to it.

Even less did anything in Palestine belong to Caesar. Profiting from a division between Jewish factions, Guaeus Pompeius occupied by force this small country and imposed upon it a regime of terror and corruption.

Caesar never constructed a road in Palestine. The Jews did the work. He did not build a house. He did not plant a tree. "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's" is a revolutionary, patriotic sentence, which in essence denies any right to the usurper.

If any honest-thinking citizen in the Soviet Union had been told during the Nazi invasion, "Give to Hitler what is Hitler's and to God what is God's," he would have understood those words as meaning, "Give Hitler the boot and throw his troops out, because nothing belongs to him in the Soviet Union. He has no right even to be here." The same would apply to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

The Roman authorities, and the Jewish high priests

who were their stooges, evidently gave to the words of Jesus my interpretation. The proof is that they did not consider him a loyal citizen of the Empire but a rebel, and they crucified him.

~The Atheist's Handbook~ simply misrepresents the truth when it portrays the authors of the New Testament as flatterers of the Roman authorities.

"It contains no accusation against the Roman governor," they say. "All the guilt of the crucifixion is attributed to the Jews, while Pilate is described as a passive observer."

It is easy to make such assertions in a country where Bibles are scarce. In Acts of the Apostles, ACT 4:27, we read: "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together." A Jewish mob, incited by priests, had asked for the crucifixion of Jesus. But Pilate on his own initiative added cruelty to cruelty. We know it from the words, "Then ~Pilate~ therefore took Jesus, and scourged him." (JHN 19:1) The text implies the utter debasement of a Roman governor who finds pleasure in personally whipping a prisoner about whose innocence he is obviously convinced. Then the Gospel says very clearly that Pilate delivered him to be crucified.

By what right do the Communists claim that the first Christians, servile towards the Roman authorities, described Pilate as only a passive observer? Well, by the "right" of usurpers with a monopoly on publishing books and a proscription against Christians and the freedom of reply.

St. John is not the only one to accuse the Roman governor. All the Evangelists reveal him as a henchman. St. Matthew writes, "When Pilate had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified" (MTT 27:26). St. Mark writes: "Pilate delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified" (MRK 15:15). St. Luke

quotes Pilate explicitly as saying, "I ... have found no fault in this man ... I will therefore chastise him" (LUK 23:14,16).

The authors of the New Testament never whitewashed the Romans for their part in the crucifixion of Jesus. They share in the guilt. Later church historians reported with fidelity how Roman authorities threw Christians to the wild beasts and subjected them to all kinds of atrocities.

Far from being servile, as accused, true Christians in all ages have never recognized tyrants as their legitimate rulers. Neither did they consider it a duty to be submissive to them. The first book against Christianity of which we have any knowledge is ~The True Word~, by Celsus. Its date is around A.D. 175. It reproaches Christians for not defending the Emperor, fighting for him, participating in his military expeditions, or working. Christians of the Soviet Union look upon Communist leaders as oppressors. They will get no flattery from the

disciples of Christ.

~The Atheist's Handbook~ quotes another Scripture to show that Christianity teaches blind submission to unjust rulers and is, therefore, a hindrance to the progress of humanity. The text is ROM 13:1-3: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

But this same chapter defines what a Christian means by the "higher power" to whom he owes obedience. Only he deserves this name who, as the minister of God, gives praise to them that do good and executes wrath to him that does evil (ROM 13:3,4). If a ruler does the contrary, if he punishes good and rewards evil, we can no longer recognize his power as being from God.

Bible verses such as the foregoing made Christians

resist tyranny.

In the Middle Ages, Savonarola was burnt at the stake because he had said: "Nothing is more abhorrent to a tyrant than service to Christ and a virtuous Christian life. For these are diametrically opposed to his own habits."

I quote from a discussion between Mary Queen of Scots and the Protestant Reformer John Knox:

Mary: "Ye have taught the people to receive another religion than their princes can allow. And how can that doctrine be of God, seeing that God commands subjects to obey their princes?"

Knox: "Madame, as right religion neither took original strength nor authority from worldly princes, but from the Eternal God alone, so are not subjects bound to frame their religion according to the appetites of their princes ... If all the seed of Abraham should have been of the religion of Pharaoh ... what religion would have been in the world? Or if all the men in the days of the apostles should have been of the religion of the Roman emperors, what religion could there have been on the face of the earth?"

Mary: "Yes, but none of these men raised the sword against their princes."

Knox: "Yet, Madame, ye cannot deny, but that they resisted. For these that obey not ... in some sort resist."

Mary: "But yet they resisted not by the sword."

Knox: "God, Madame, had not given them the power

and the means."
Mary: "Think ye that subjects having power may resist their princes?"
Knox: "If their princes exceed their bounds, Madame .. it is no doubt but they may be resisted, even by power. For what if a father should go mad and try to kill his own children? Should they not seize him and take the sword or weapons from him by force? It is even so, Madame, with princes that would murder the children of God that are subject unto them. Their blind zeal is nothing

but a very mad frenzy ... and therefore to take the sword from them, to bind their hands and cast them in prison till that they be brought to a more sober mind is no disobedience against princes, but just obedience, because that it agreeth with the will of God."
What Communist dared to speak like this to Stalin?
The Bible inspired Lincoln and Wilberforce to fight for the abolition of slavery. Marx in his ~Capital~ acknowledges the role of the Christian Shaftesbury in introducing laws protecting labour in the United Kingdom. It was a Russian Christian, Count Leo Tolstoy, who denied any authority to the czar. Thomas Jefferson, president of the United States, wrote: "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every tyranny over the mind of men"; and "Rebellion against tyrants is obedience towards God."
Lincoln wrote: "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong."
Emerson wrote: "If you put a chain around the neck of a slave, the other fastens itself around your own."
The words of Emerson have proved to be prophetic. The Soviet Communist party has put a chain around the neck of its political adversaries: first, of the monarchy, then of the landlords, of the capitalists, of oppositionist socialists, of nationalist leaders belonging to the Russian nation, and of the nations oppressed, the Ukrainians, Bielorussians, and Gruzins. But then the other end of the chain fastened around the necks of the Communists, too. Comrade Khrushchev said as much in his speech at the Twentieth Congress of the Party. He pointed out that Stalin liquidated nearly all of the Central Committee in his infamous purges.
Christianity is not on the side of slavery, but Communism is.
Lincoln said in his message to the Congress on

December 1, 1862: "In giving freedom to the slaves, we give freedom to the free."

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Since the Second World War, Christian nations have freed all their colonies. On the other hand, the Soviet government has enslaved the Baltic peoples, Hungarians, and Czechs. The Chinese Communists have enslaved Tibet.

I would recommend that my atheist friends heed the old saying: "Do not speak about a rope in the house of one who hanged himself." It would be better for Communists not to mention slavery. I have myself been a slave in a Communist camp.

But all these arguments are not really necessary because, as usual, ~The Atheist's Handbook~ contradicts itself. In order to explain the miraculous growth and victory of Christianity, the atheists, who cannot admit that God was working in the church, claim that it proselyted mostly slaves "because slaves gained in Christian circles a position which they could not enjoy with others."

In the Epistle to Philemon, St. Paul urges a slave-owner to receive back one of his servants who had fled, not only without punishment but "as a brother beloved." This was the spirit of primitive Christianity.

Why then did the first Christians not abolish slavery? They were persecuted. They had no power in the state. The majority of them were slaves themselves. Only a short time before, the great revolt of slaves led by Spartacus had been bloodily suppressed and many tens of thousands of slaves crucified. Only fools rebel when the sure outcome of rebellion is defeat.

God has appeared only once on Mount Sinai, giving the Ten Commandments. The preamble to them is: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." In introducing himself to his people he chooses to characterize himself as the liberator of slaves, rather than the creator of heaven and earth. This is our God.

It amuses us to read in ~The Atheist's Handbook~ that

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the Christian religions "served and serve the dominant classes, they support and consolidate the social and political order based on exploitation and oppression, etc.,

etc."

We know that we don't have to worry about such accusations, because we know we are dealing with academicians. With characteristic myopia, they don't know how to write coherently. So we just read on, and we are not misled in our expectations. Listen to what the same authors have to say in another part of their book: "The leaders of the Reformation have translated the Holy Scriptures into the languages of different peoples, the Bible becoming for the first time accessible to large popular masses, which without delay discovered in some of its theses a justification of their fight for social equality."

There you have it. "The Bible justifies the fight for social equality." "The Bible teaches slavery and submission to tyrants." Two allegations made by the same group of authors within one and the same book!

The academicians who wrote ~The Atheist's Handbook~ may think what they like. Their superiors know better. They know that Christians are not servile to dictators. They have proved this by killing millions of our brethren and sisters in faith and by still keeping in jail tens of thousands of our fellow-believers.

Atheists had better be careful not to mention bowing before cruel rulers. Did they not deify Stalin, whom they now denounce as the greatest mass-murderer of history? Members of the Academy of Science cannot be very young. Therefore, they must have been among the adulators of Stalin yesterday, or they would not be alive today to denounce him!

I was in jail under Stalin and under his successors. Would the underground church of Russia not have more right than the atheists to speak about opposing tyranny?

What about the current deification of another murderer, Mao Tse-Tung of Red China? Chinese Communists, atheists all, bow to him. Over one million Chinese Christians have been murdered, but they preferred to die than to bow.

True Christians have been and are fighters for freedom. In this matter we have nothing to learn from our atheist friends. The United States, Great Britain, and Australia have no slave labour camps. The Soviet Union and Red China have.

To describe Christians as a bunch of sycophants to tyrants is only to caricature them. What atheists reject

therefore is not Christianity, but a travesty of it.

HEAVENLY OR AN EARTHLY PARADISE

~The Atheist's Handbook~ quotes Friedrich Engels as saying that Christianity's hope is in heaven, in eternal life after death. According to him, Christianity does not have the will to carry out a social transformation in this world.

By way of contrast, the Communist movement is aimed at the liberation of all working men on earth.

This is pure fiction.

It is not true that Christianity has only a heavenly goal. Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." In JHN 3:12 he reminds us, "I have told you earthly things..."

In the very beginning of the Gospel according to St. Luke, we are told that when people asked John the Baptist what to do, he did not answer, "Strive for eternal life." The Baptist's answers were very earthly: "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that has none; and he that has meat, let him do likewise." To publicans he said: "Exact no more than that which is appointed you." And to soldiers he did not say, "Seek heaven," but rather, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages,"

which were higher than those of the average population (LUK 3:11-14).

Jesus drove merchants out of the temple with a whip. He publicly accused scribes and Pharisees of devouring widows' houses. To a rich young man, he said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor" (MTT 19:21).

Christianity has in its programme a social transformation in this world, too. It is a curious fact that members of the Soviet government themselves say that we have to attain and surpass the economic level of countries with a Christian heritage, such as the United States of America. So they probably lead a much more opulent life in this world under the shadow of Christianity than Soviet citizens do.

In America and other Western countries, workers can drive their own cars to church, or to picket lines for higher wages. In the Soviets, workers do not have even bicycles with which to attend the Communist meetings

from which no one is allowed to be absent.

The opulence and freedom of the West have not been obtained without a struggle. However, if the reproaches brought by Engels against Christianity were just, this struggle would not have taken place. Engels wrote:

> The social doctrines of the Gospels represent a passive religious resistance against injustice, a revolt on the knees, which means in fact the justification of oppression and, in the first place, the justification of the principal social evil of antiquity, slavery. Christianity has not been the ideology of oppressed men who go to a revolutionary fight, but the ideology of oppressed men who have lost any hope in fight and seek an outlet in prayer in the hope of a miraculous salvation.

This is misleading.

The main teaching of the Gospel is that a Christian

must follow the example of Christ. Was Christ himself passive towards injustice? How did the merchants driven out with a whip feel about his attitude? Was it passive resistance when he confronted the priests and Pharisees in their own temple, calling them vipers and hypocrites?

Is the "Magnificat," the blessed Virgin Mary's song, song of resignation? She says that her Son will pull down the mighty from their seats and exalt them of low degree. He shall fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty. This does not sound like meek submission to exploiters.

Wisdom taught the disciples of Christ to be passive and meek where there was no hope of overthrowing a tyranny, but whenever the conditions for such an overthrow were ripe, Christians have always fought.

When the peasants rebelled against the landlords in the time of the Reformation, the principal arguments in favour of their cause were religious. Their revolutionary hymns were:

> When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman?

And

> A mighty fortress is our God,

A bulwark never failing.

When the movement of the industrial proletariat started in Britain, the song of the Chartists was:

Britannia's sons, though slaves you be,
God your Creator made you free;
To all he life and freedom gave,
But never, never, made a slave.

The first to organize the demonstration which led to the revolution of 1905 in Russia were not our Communist

friends, but Christian workers under the leadership of a priest, Gapon. The Communists profited from it and later hanged the priest.

Christianity is as revolutionary as Communism, but our revolutions differ.

Communist revolutions begin with the shedding of blood of its adversaries, innocent or otherwise. Then blood-letting becomes a habit, yes, even a pleasure, and in the end we have a tyranny worse than the one which has been overthrown.

Lenin once wrote, "Terror and the Tcheka are absolutely necessary." Czar Nicholas II would never have counted terror among the absolutes of politics.

How many people did he murder? How many did Kerensky murder? Then ask yourself, how many did Stalin murder?

It is highly probable that he himself poisoned Lenin, who had taught him the technique of terror. Then he killed nearly all the intimate friends of Lenin.

Even today, innumerable Soviet citizens die from starvation and overwork in the concentration camps of Russia. Communism kills millions of men in Red China. The terror there is acknowledged even by the Soviet newspapers. In Poland, Gomulka, exercising the dictatorship of the proletariat, shot proletarians. Communist revolutions are always negative and destructive.

We Christians are revolutionary in an entirely different sense. Christians use first and foremost the sword of the Spirit, which can kill sin without killing the sinner.

By the sword of the Spirit, Christians have corrected many abuses. Where Christian civilization reigns, men are free, free even to be atheists. I defy my honoured opponents to give me the name of a single man who is in

prison in the United States, Great Britain, or West Germany for being an atheist. But in Communist countries millions of my brethren and sisters in faith have passed through jails or have been killed. Who has

fought for freedom and obtained it - atheists or Christians?

Christians do not exclude the necessity of rebellion against tyranny. But when oppressors by their excesses force them to rebel and the circumstances are favourable, their aim is always to replace tyranny with a regime favouring peace and justice, whereas Marx advocated "permanent revolution," an expression he created. Permanent revolution for what? Revolution for revolution's sake? Never a goal to be reached? Never even a Utopia to aim for? This is sheer sadism.

Christians never forget that the first rebel was the devil. They do not resort to rebellion easily, not even to rebellion against the Communist regime.

But they are interested in earthly destinies, only that they have more than earthly aims. Men are like frogs living at the bottom of some dark well, from which they can see nothing of the outside world. Believers are men who, while living in such conditions, have heard the singing of a skylark. And miracle of miracles - they have understood the song! It speaks about sun and moon and stars and tree-covered mountains and hills and a wonderful sea. They have faith in this song. They have the assurance that there exists a heavenly paradise. Without neglecting their earthly duties, they strive towards it and call others to join them.

If there is anyone who believes in the possibilities of evolution even more than Darwin, it is the Christian. He believes in a new birth. He believes that a frog can become a lark, that a human being can become a partaker of the divine nature, and this not by a long process, but instantly by faith in Jesus Christ.

Believing all this, Christians fight for justice in this world while striving after the heavenly paradise.

IS THERE A GOD?

Until now I have followed in the present book the precept of Jesus: "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a

mile, go with him twain."

My opponents wanted to pursue a certain course of arguments. I have walked along with them. I have discussed their arguments even when the issues were not at all important.

But now I would rather concentrate on the principal question at issue between atheists and Christians: Is there a God to worship, to rely upon, to be protected by, to be comforted with, or not?

According to the French Communist theoretician R. Garaudy, totality and absoluteness is not God, but "the name man." There is nothing superior to man. Christians believe in God, his promises to assist them in this life and to provide life eternal. Garaudy writes: "To us atheists, nothing is promised and nobody waits for us." Sad words indeed! To atheists, not even the loyal friendship of their own comrades is promised. Garaudy, after having served the Communist party all his life, was expelled from it. Nobody waited to extend him a helping hand or a friendly gesture when he was in distress. He found himself alone.

A young composer was poor and had to live in a rented room. A friend encouraged him: "When you die, there will be an inscription on the wall of this house." The composer was enthusiastic: "You really mean it?" "Surely," was the reply. "There will be an inscription ROOM TO RENT." No more than this can Garaudy wait for after death. And even in this life, his expulsion from the Party only leaves a place for someone else to be duped as he was.

Man is God. The whole Communist creed breathes this belief.

Having in view this delusion one of the Soviet

underground poets, I. Gabai, was moved to write the following verses:

LATE CREDO OF JOB

I'm my own god. But what a weak, erratic god,
Irrational, insane, and feeble.
May God forbid that one love such a god
And be like him - may God protect you from it!

A god? - perhaps. A vicious, wretched god.
But if indeed I am the "Guileless Face,"

May God help you to be a peaceful atheist;
To be a god - from that may God protect you.

A god I am - but pow'rless in the tumult.
And by the logic of perverted borders,
Museums are now dwelling in the temples,
And gods are living in the midst of milling crowds.

Forgive me for my mania of grandeur,
But there is no God's greatness in my fate
Myself to punish and forgive myself my sins.
Forgive my mania of grandeur!

God's greatness - to chastise -
I would not wish to any of my neighbours,
I do not dare to wish him such command.
May God forbid that you should stoop to godhead,
To exculpate yourself or to absolve yourself from sin.

I'm what I am. God - only He is God.
What an enormous pride, what sorrow;
May God forbid that you should trust your conscience
And live defying it. May God forbid!

Is there a Being superior to man? Is there a God, in the usual sense given to this word, the Creator of heaven

and earth, the One whom Jesus taught us to call our Father?

In the temple of Jerusalem (as well as in many Egyptian and Mithraist temples), there was a most holy place in which only the high priest was allowed to enter once a year, in the framework of an impressive religious ceremony.

In the time of Jesus, this most holy place was empty. The so-called ark of the covenant, a gilded case containing tables of stone with the Commandments of God, had been carried away and hidden centuries before by Jeremiah at the time of the Babylonian captivity. (II Maccabees 2:1-7). When the temple was reconstructed after the release of the Jews from captivity, the sacred ark could not be found. There was absolutely nothing in the most holy place.

This emptiness had a symbolic significance.

The Kabbala, a holy book of the Jews which contains their ancient religious traditions, calls God "Ein" - the

non-existent. It might seem strange to find in a deeply religious book a name of God with which atheists would agree. But the sense is clear for those who know God.

"God is not" in the sense that "he is not what we consider him to be." His thoughts are not our thoughts, and his ways are not our ways.

Feuerbach was right when he said that men have created gods according to their own image. But Feuerbach was not original. He said this in order to deprecate God. Luther, one of the profoundest religious thinkers of history, had said three centuries before, "Fides est creatrix Dei" (Faith is the creator of God).

Man thinks about the causes and purposes of things, about the mysteries of nature and of life, and his mind gives birth to the notion of God. God is his son, the beloved child of his thought. But once he comes to this point, he immediately concludes that this God born in his mind is the creator of all things and also of his own

person, that he has an objective existence outside his own consciousness, that man owes him everything. So from God the Son, he arrives at the notion of God the Father. These two notions, we learn from the Bible, are united with each other in an ineffable, unspeakable love, the Holy Spirit. God created the man who has faith. Faith creates the notion "God."

Thus far we understand our notion of God.

But the God who created us far surpasses our understanding. He is not what our reason can conceive.

Theology has given many arguments that God exists. To this, adversaries of religion have brought counter-arguments.

I will not argue. Woe to a God who needs somebody to defend him. A God can reveal himself. You need bring no proof for the existence of the sun - how much less then for its Creator. There are moments when the sun is veiled by clouds. Then those who wish to see it have to wait. If God wishes to hide himself so as to be discovered only by those who seek him zealously, I have to respect his will.

God uses light to give life to every being, but both God and light are unseen. Who has ever seen light? In a tube completely empty of air, a ray of light remains invisible. What we call seeing light is seeing the objects, the air illuminated by light. Light as such is invisible.

So one has to override the senses and reason in order

to know God, though reason may point towards him.
You observe purposes in nature. The seed sown in the earth extracts from its surroundings just as much nitrogen, air, and water as it needs in order to become a flower. You can see a finality in its growth. It has a purpose to attain. The impregnated ovary takes from the womb of the mother just the food it needs to become a baby. Again the reaching towards a goal. But neither the seed nor the ovary can pursue aims. These must come from a wise Being, who imposes them upon his creations.

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Furthermore, we see man attuned to his environment, or he could not have survived so many thousands of years. That is, in spite of man's abuses, we live in a reality which, sometimes with and sometimes without our effort, gives us what is necessary for our existence. We are born as babes able to consume nothing but milk, and a short time before our birth, milk accumulates in our mother's breasts. As we grow, we need thicker and thicker milk, whereupon the milk in mother's breast changes according to our needs.
We are born with lungs and we find air. We need water and it is provided. After several months we need the nutrients found in vegetables and meat and the world contains these.
We are susceptible to sickness. But we know now that someone has prepared medicines for innumerable kinds of sickness from herbs, mushrooms, or crystals in the earth.
For every human need there is a corresponding reality to supply that need.
What arrogance or ignorance makes us suppose that for a very fundamental need, for the thirst of our soul after a God – a thirst which has created so many mythologies and religions – there should be no fulfilling reality?
One autumn day a crow spoke with a young swallow in its first year of life. The crow said to the swallow, "I see you preparing for a long journey. Where are you flying?" The swallow answered, "It is growing colder and colder here. I might freeze. I fly towards a warmer country." The wise crow mocked: "But remember well your birth. You were born here only a couple of months ago. How do you know that there is a warmer country to shelter you while it is cold here?" The swallow answered, "The One who has put in my heart the desire for

a warm climate cannot have cheated me. I believe him and depart." And the swallow found what it sought.

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That is how every faithful soul proceeds.

The human soul becomes an icicle in a world without God. You remember Homunculus - the artificial man created in a tube in the second part of ~Faust~. He always felt cold. You freeze when you think of yourself as only a complicated product of chemical reactions. We aspire towards a Father, source of warmth, love, light. As all fundamental human needs are fulfilled in reality, so also is this need of the soul. We can find God. We can know him.

However, no field of knowledge can be investigated without proper tools. You cannot see stars through the microscope or microbes through the telescope. Men who cannot think rightly come to the conclusion that God does not exist because they cannot find him through the senses, which are functions of life in the realm of matter. Senses are not the right means to see God.

As microbiology has its particular instrument and astronomy another, faith also possesses one by which it can see the Creator. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Have such a heart, and you will see!

The reader will surely understand that the word "to see" has many meanings. I see a material object because the photons reflected by it hit my eye. I see the righteousness of a cause by weighing arguments in my mind. I see the love of a person towards me by his behaviour. I close my eyes and can evoke the image of someone dear. He is far away. No photons from him reach my eye. But I see. I can tell my dream, my daydream, my fancies. Half of our lives, we see in this manner.

How do we see God?

In our imagination are stored images, and we can pick up the image we need as if from an album. But it is not only images from the material world that we have in this safe. My existence does not start on the day of my birth, nor on the day of my conception. I have existed for ever

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in the mind and plan of God. I have come on this earth for a short time as a pilgrim and foreigner.

I have lived through a stage as a suckling. I have in me

the images accumulated in that time, just as I have the later ones, except that I cannot evoke those of my life as a baby at will. But psychoanalysis or hypnosis can prove that they are there. They can be re-actualised.

So every cognition of God is only a re-cognition. The heart which has been cleansed of sins, passions, errors, fears, worries, and hatreds can see God again, from whom it comes.

But we have to qualify the words "to see" and "image" in this connection, because you see a reality for which there are no words in human language.

When Marco Polo, the first European ever to be in China, returned and told his fellows that he had met yellow men with slanted eyes and with hair tressed in tails, he was called "Marco Polo, the liar." What means did he have to prove his assertions? He could only say to men, "Go where I have been, face the dangers I faced, bear with the fatigues through which I passed, and you will know."

I cannot convince a sceptic that viruses exist. He himself has to look in a microscope.

Blessed are the pure in heart, because they will see God. The problem of knowing God is one of purity of character. The ultimate truth is the exclusive monopoly of the clean. Whenever somebody speaks to me about God, for or against, I ask him: "How pure are you that you may be considered reliable? Only those can know this subject who are whiter than snow."

WHO IS GOD?

Since atheists do not accept the sacrifice of Christ on the cross which cleanses us from sin, they cannot see God. But they are in the right to ask us: "You assert that you

see God. Tell us who he is!"

A very important question! It exists for both sides. Atheists must be able to say, "Who is the one whose existence we deny?," just as Christians must give an answer to the question, "Who is the one in whom we believe?"

Who is God?

De Broglie, the greatest contemporary theoretician in problems of light, wrote: "How much we would know if we knew what a ray of light is." The great biologist

Jacob von Uexkll wrote: "No one of us knows what life is." And we are asked to answer who the Giver of life and light is!

Where is the difficulty in answering? When you ask, "What is light or life?" or "Who is God?" the difficulty lies not in the words "What," "Who," "life," "light" or "God." Somehow we can say what we mean by these words. What spoils the intelligibility is the smallest word in the questioning proposition, the word "is." What does the word "is" mean? If we do not understand this, all the rest remains enigmatic.

A great division passes through Christianity. It centres around the word "is." According to the New Testament, which was actually written in Greek, at his last supper with the disciples before the crucifixion, Jesus had given them bread, saying, "This is my body," and a cup of wine, saying, "This is my blood." Orthodox and Catholic Christians believe that the word "is" in this context can mean only one thing: that Christians eat and drink at Holy Communion the real body and blood of Jesus. When the priests repeat the words of Jesus during the liturgy, a change takes place in the elements. Outwardly, they remain bread and wine. But the essence has been transformed. What were bread and wine have become the body of Christ. Protestants read the same Bible and interpret the word "is" otherwise. It means for them that the bread at Holy Communion symbolizes the body of

Christ, that whereas it is still only bread, it has another value, just as a ring has increased value for the receiver when it comes from the beloved.

The fact that thousands of books have been written on this subject and great institutions split apart shows that the word "is" is not as simple as it looks. You who wish to know "Who is God?" or "What is light?," tell me first what you understand by "is"

Christianity was not negative towards previous cultures. As we have said already, it incorporated in its thinking Greek philosophy, predominantly from Aristotle. Christianity took the concept of a God who, himself unmovable, produces all the movement in the world. He sits quietly on an unshaken throne and rules all things and men in their unceasing motion. Aristotle would have said that God "is" in the very strict sense of the word.

But an unmoved mover is inconceivable. What is static

cannot be active. A motor which moves a machine has its own movements. To a motor another notion applies beyond mere being - it moves.

Reality does not know a being. Kant wrote in ~Critic of Pure Reason~, "~To be~ is no real predicate ... In logical usage it is only the copula or link of a judgment." To say that God is good or righteous makes sense. To say that God or any other subject simply is, means to remain in the realm of vain words.

When we ask ourselves what Being means, the answer is that being exists only as a becoming, an evolving, a moving, a being changed. Heraclitus said: "~Panta rhei~" - "Everything flows." "You cannot bathe twice in the same stream." "You" cannot bathe in it even "once," because in this one period while you bathe, your body is changing, and the river too.

The elementary particles of which the world is composed, the chemical elements, as well as the spiritual realities, are not existences, but events, happenings. While I

pronounce the word "iron," the electrons in the atoms of iron will have revolved many thousands of billions of times around the nucleus. When I come to the last letter "n," the iron is no longer in the same state as it was when I pronounced the first letter "i." Descend into the realm of microphysics and you will see the importance of apprehending this. No elementary particle in its continual motion has patience enough to stay in its place at least long enough to give me time to say about it that "it is." While I say "The atom is," it has lived a history so rich that in comparison to it the whole history of mankind appears as a little thing. Sir James Jeans said: "Matter is not something which is, but which happens." Matter is not existence, but flowing. Everything - and especially living beings - is continually changing and being renewed.

How can the One who moves all be unmoved? If images of God were allowed and could convey reality, the most faithful image of God would be that painted by Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Capella Sistina, which shows God flying in the tempest. In the Biblical book of Ruth, we read about the wings of God.

My opponents say that God is not. They don't know that high-ranking Christian teachers said it long before, though they gave this negation the right meaning. The scholastic philosopher John Scotus Erigena wrote,

"Literally, God is not, because he transcends being." St. Thomas Aquinas says, "The divine 'being,' which is his substance, is not the common 'to be.' It is a be-ing distinct from any other being. The divine 'Esse' (Latin: to be) is not the common 'esse.'"

The word "being" is not only a noun, but also a verb. No created being is something which could be expressed only by a noun, because it evolves, it moves, it lives a history. You cannot apply the category "is" in the limited sense of having a fixed state to the creation, even less to the Creator. When you say "God is," you have

said much too little about him. God happens.

There exists an event, "Godhead." He is a huge coming and becoming. His name in Hebrew is "El," which expresses a relation: "El" means "towards," the movement from Alpha towards Omega.
The literal translation of his Hebrew name which he disclosed to Moses "~Ehjeh asher ehjeh~" is "I will be what I will be."

David the Psalmist asked himself who God was and answered: "He rode upon a cherub (an angelic being) and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." The Bible tells us that God rides on winged beings, or rather on winged events, because the angels also "are" not, but happen. In another psalm we read: "He makes the clouds his chariot. He walketh upon the wings of the wind."

Compare this oriental imagery, which is a genial anticipation of the modern scientific conception of the world, with the idea of an immobile motor of the universe and you will discover how right the Bible is. In God there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, as regards his fixed character of love. But the manifestations of this love are new every moment.

This creates the difficulty in answering the question, "Who is God?," because he sheds his goodness upon mankind in ever new forms. The flames of his love are changing continually, as do flames of fire. You cannot really make a portrait of a person. Every person is a succession of many facial expressions. You cannot really say a truth. Truth is always a whole chain of assertions about a changing object or person.

Therefore Hebrew, the language in which God first gave his revelation, does not have the word "face," but only "faces" - "~panim~." Every man and every object

changes its aspect continually. About God himself the Bible also uses this plural, "~panim~." He also changes

constantly his expressions of love and righteousness.

When you ask yourself "Who is God?," thousands of images pass like in a kaleidoscope before your eyes, each more beautiful than the other. Therefore it was forbidden to the Jews to make to themselves graven images.

The Hebrew language avoids the expression "is." Jesus, speaking Hebrew or its Aramaic dialect, never said: "This is my body" but simply: "This-my body." (Russians, as well as the Chinese, also omit the verb "to be.") If theologians had known the Biblical languages better, there would have been one quarrel less about what Jesus never said.

We know what God is, the Alpha, the Creator of heaven and earth. We know what he will be: The "all in all." What is he now? He is not an "is." God flies from one pole to the other.

The atheists have a point. We cannot say who God is, nor can they say what atheism is. This also is in continual evolution. The atheism of the fools of old who simply denied God, has passed through many stages to become the militant and scientifically substructured atheism ruling in Communist countries today.

But the fact that we cannot say who God is does not exhaust our thinking.

The apostle Paul wrote: "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead" (ROM 1:20).

Giordano Bruno is the author of the play on words that "intelectio" (the intellect) is "~interna lectio~" (the internal lesson) which nature gives us.

The more I know of a machine, the more I admire the engineer who conceived it. The more beautiful a palace, the more respect I have for the architect.

The list of atheist scientists given by my opponents is spurious.

Our universe bears the name of Einstein. He must

know something about it. He writes in ~The World As See It~:

> If one purges the Judaism of the prophets, and Christianity as Jesus Christ has taught it, of all subsequent additions, specially of priestcraft, one is left with a teaching which is capable of curing all the social evils of humanity. It is the duty of every man of good will to strive steadfastly in his own little world to make this really human teaching a living force, as far as he can. If he makes an honest effort in this direction, without being crushed and trampled under feet by his contemporaries, he may consider himself and the community to which he belongs lucky.

In a preface to his biography by Bernett, he says: "The cosmic living of religion is the most powerful and noble motive for the scientific research of nature."

Milner opens his book ~Relativity and the Structure of Stars~ with the words: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth."

The biologist Hans Speman writes: "I acknowledge that in my experimental works I had often the sentiment of a dialogue, in which my partner seemed to me to be the more intelligent."

Immanuel Kant wrote: "As a face is beautiful because it unveils a soul; the world is beautiful because you see through it a God."

Hegel, the founder of modern dialectic and the teacher of Karl Marx, asked philosophy to save religion.

Francis Bacon said: "Philosophy studied superficially estranges from God: studied in depth it brings you back to God."

There are many things which make believers of many scientists. They wonder about the concordance between the laws of nature and our possibilities of apprehension through the senses, reason, intuition, and faith.

Unbelievers, if they wish to be logical, should not be

atheists but agnostics. Is there no Creator? Well, then, the universe is the random agglomeration, unguided by any wisdom, of ions, electrons, photons, and protons. My brain is also the result of such random evolution, according to laws established by no law-giver. How is it, then, that my brain, which is not a willed organ, intelligently constructed, can rightly understand so many things in the universe? Stalin said that not all things are known, but all things can be known. How is it that I have a brain

which can know everything? Would lamps, batteries, and wires thrown together without a preconceived design be able to catch radio transmissions? Would wheels, screws, levers, and brakes come together to make a car in which one can drive?

The biologist Max Hartmann speaks about "the miracle of the harmony between the universe and our thinking." De Broglie says that there is more mystery than we believe in the simple fact that science is possible. Einstein wrote: "What is eternally unintelligible in the universe is that it can be understood."

Even Voltaire, whom the atheists wrongly consider to be one of their number, said these words: "The world is made with intelligence. Therefore it has been made by an intelligence ... The intelligence of a Newton comes from another intelligence."

Who can believe that there are watches but no watchmaker? Our watches tell time according to the movements of the earth. Who made this chronometer?

The second thing which strikes everyone who looks attentively at creation is the stern order in nature, which also cannot be the result of chance.

Uexkll says: "We read in nature a whole musical score." The geologist Cloos writes: "We hear the music of the earth."

Kant, who is very critical of many reasonable proofs brought by theology for belief in the existence of God, admits the validity of the so-called cosmological proof.

The order in nature points to a Creator.

Charles Darwin, victim of the mercantilist and utilitarian style of life in Great Britain of his time, thought nature also worked according to the utilitarian principle. But this is not so. In nature a great artist and architect with imagination is at work.

The exquisite beauty of the peacock's feathers cannot be explained as having evolved by the accumulation of small variations, because they provided the advantage of more easily attracting mates. A female crow also finds a mate, and wayside weeds as well as gorgeous lilies attract bees and wasps for fertilization.

Why are some tiny fish so uselessly beautiful? Well, it is art for art's sake. Why does the parrot have the capacity to speak? Why do bell-birds exist, whose chirping is like the ringing of little bells? It is just the fancy of an artist. How about the horns of the deer? Why does the

zebra have such regular stripes? Why does each flower have a different colour?

Nietzsche said: "In every one of us there is a child who wishes to play." Is there not something childlike in God which made him create all these things? Does it not belong to the very essence of Godhead that it must be expressed also in a babe born in a stable and in a little boy who plays with others on the streets of Nazareth?

Whence the precise angles and the symmetry and beauty of forms in crystals?

How is it that in the Far East there exists the tailorbird, which sows its nest of leaves with threads of cotton spun by itself?

How is it that the spiderweb surpasses the technical capacities of men? On astronomical lenses the thread of the spiderweb is used for measure. Men could not produce anything better or finer, which would last longer and not be altered by changes of temperature.

Men have invented radar. But they learned it from the

bats. We have wonderful optical instruments today, but which one surpasses the human eye?

I know about a Communist who became a Christian from looking at the delicate convolutions of his baby's ears. They were surely created by design. They could not have been created by any chance coming together of atoms.

How can you not believe in a wise Creator when you investigate further the human ear, in which 24,000 nerve ends are united and strung in order to bring messages to the brain?

Look carefully at a stalk of wheat: its height would be something like four and a half feet and the diameter would be a mere sixteenth of an inch. For comparison let us imagine a building 1,250 feet high. (It would be a building of something like 100 storeys.) And this on a surface of only one square yard. Now, just at the top of the stalk is the heavy fruit. It is moved by winds but does not break. The stalk contains a splendidly conceived mechanical system. It is still a mystery to men how the water ascends to the very top. We need pumps to provide water for the upper floors of our high buildings. We could not make something as marvelous as the stalk.

The physicist Urey, the discoverer of heavy water, wrote: "Not one of the existing theories about the origin of the world does work without the presupposition of a

miracle."
And because we spoke about water - let us stop to look at its wonders. All physical objects expand with heat and contract with cold; only water increases its volume when it cools down and forms ice. The ice, being lighter than water, remains on top. It forms a crust, which saves the fish from the cold of winter. Without this peculiarity of water, life in the rivers would be impossible, and primitive men who lived on fish would not have survived.
Whence this exception? Is it just an accident, or is it

something ordered by a wise Creator?
Let us allow a renowned technician, Werner Siemens, to speak:

> The more we penetrate in the sphere of the harmonic forces of nature, which are regulated by eternal, immovable laws, hidden from our full understanding by a thick veil, the more we are pushed towards humility, the more our knowledge appears small, the more our desire to drink from this unquenchable source of science and knowledge increases. And in the same measure also grows our admiration towards the infinite ordering wisdom, which is interpenetrating the whole creation.

it is true that we cannot say, "Who is God?" but his unseen power we can see if we look carefully at the things created by him. They speak about God as about a mighty ruler and a great artist. From them we know that God is a God of order.
Jesus, asked once by his disciples to show them the Father, answered: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? ... the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (JHN 14:9,10).
By these words, Jesus teaches us how we should think about His person, but he also teaches us how we should think about ourselves.
While maintaining a sense of proportion, let us note that whoever sees me or whoever sees you, even if you are the author of an atheistic book, sees the Father, because we were all created in his image and after his likeness.
St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote, "Man is the human face of God." St. Macarius wrote, "Between God and man

there exists the closest familial relationship." St. Basil noted, "Man is a being who has received the

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commandment to become god."

Man, every man, any man – an atheist, a criminal, a saint – is wonderful first of all because of his bodily structure. Even the worst and most despicable of men has a heart, which is a pump such as engineers are not able to construct – a pump which circulates the blood 600 times a day throughout the body. In a span of fifty years, this happens 1,840,000,000 times, and this without a single minute of interruption.

Secondly, man is a wonderful creature by virtue of his soul, another surprising entity, almost indefinable. It is so perfect that, in a certain sense, it can dispense with the body. It shows its independence in the Ninth Symphony of the deaf Beethoven; or in the dedicated life of Helen Keller, who, though deaf, dumb, and blind, became an author and a great philanthropist; or in the fact that Pascal at the age of nine rediscovered the axioms of Euclidian geometry; or in the life of Mozart, who began composing music at the age of five.

It also shows its independence from the senses in the experiences of clairvoyance, telepathy, and precognition, and also of hypnotism.

In the hypnotic state the beating of the heart becomes so slight that it is almost like fibrillation. The man scarcely breathes at all. The blood barely moves through the vessels of the brain. It might not reach the capillary vessels. Without proper oxygenation, it is clogged with the products of decomposition. The brain engages in a minimum of activity, but the mind of the hypnotized person becomes hyperactive. It is enough to read a long poem to him once. He will repeat it without a mistake. Read to him a page of the Hebrew Bible. He may not know the language, but he will echo it with exactitude. He will recall insignificant incidents from childhood.

So much lies within the province of the soul.

But man contains a third wonderful structure. If by his body he is akin to the animal world (this is nothing to

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be ashamed of, even if one is scientifically opposed to the theory of evolution. Saint Francis of Assisi spoke about "brother wolf" and would gladly have said "brother

monkey"), he has also a spirit, by which he is akin to God.

My adversaries would not even acknowledge its existence, because it cannot be verified by the senses. How can it when it is the verifier? The eye does not see itself, the nose does not smell itself. The spirit does not belong to the spectacle acted upon by the senses. It is the spectator and reacts according to its own taste to what comes within its purview.

Aristotle said: "If you recognize in man only the human, you betray man and wish him mischief, because by everything which is essential in his being - the spirit - man is called to something higher than just human life." It is inhuman to be only human. It is unworthy of a caterpillar to be considered only a caterpillar: he is also a butterfly in process. So we are not allowed to degrade man, to whom Jesus said, "You are gods" (JHN 10:34). In a seed there is more than the seed: it contains the potential flower.

Man is a being who bears the image of God. I cannot tell you what God looks like, but look to man, look at the best exemplars of mankind, and you will see something of Godhead: you will see the joy of living, of creative enthusiasm, the depths of knowledge, the taste for beauty, the exuberance of life, and the sheer ability to discern possibilities and choose to reach ever higher.

What a great being man is! He is in the likeness and image of God, because he is also the creator of a universe: of his own inner universe. Nature outside of me is a seething maelstrom of energy, a multitude of waves, radiations, and vibrations of electrons, protons, and elementary particles; but the wave which is dumb becomes audible in an ear, the unapprehended radiation becomes visible in an eye, and the unintelligible universe

becomes intelligible in the mind of a man.

Outside of me, there exists a reality. ~I~ order it in quantity, quality, causality, finality, modality. I catch this seemingly chaotic reality in a net, which has been woven by ~me~, and make out of it an ordered universe. It is in ~me~ that nature realizes its own beauty. When l look upon a rose, it comes to life in crimson splendour and yields its fragrance. If man did not exist, the rose would have no value and would be a mere congregation of atoms.

The only object in nature which I know intimately from the inside is myself. And in myself there is

something, the capacity to put order in chaos, to create my own universe, whether benevolent, to give me joy, or gloomy, to drive me and others to despair. In all spheres of knowledge we live by extrapolation. We proceed from the known to the unknown. If I myself am more than any outside observer can see, is it not possible that there is more to the world around me than what appears on the surface?

Lenin compliments Bishop Berkeley, the founder of Solipsist philosophy, by calling him the ideal philosopher most difficult to defeat, all because Berkeley provided a reasonable argument for faith in God, an argument which seems very powerful to me. He says that the universe can exist only in a mind; outside the mind reality is chaotic. It is a ~tohu va bohu~. It is the mind which organizes from it a universe, dictating its laws, putting it in the frame of order, and categorizing it. A universe can exist only in a mind; but men have not existed for ever, nor has the human mind. Therefore, before the appearance of man, there must have been another mind in which the universe existed. Man conceives of himself as part of an organized universe. The mind in which the universe always existed is called God.

I am also a creator of a universe, of an inner universe - but I ~am~ a creator! Therefore, whosoever sees me, sees the Father.

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I cannot tell you who God is, but you can understand something about Godhead by looking at man.

LOOK TO JESUS OF NAZARETH

Look to the highest and best exemplar of mankind that you know, to the most beloved being, and you will see in him, however dimly, something of the Father!

But there is a Son of man in whom you can see God in a special way. It is Jesus of Nazareth - because he was not only the Son of man, he was God incarnate.

God knows everything, but there are some things which he knew only from outside. A judge can know the whole penal code, the whole science of penitentiaries, and still not be able to judge righteously, because he has never lived the life of a prisoner. Five years of prison, lived day by day in a jail, are something entirely different from five years of prison prescribed for an offence in the

penal code and pronounced in a sentence.

God cannot lie, nor does he know by experience any other infractions of the moral code, whereas these sins are the very elements of life with which you are surrounded every day. Neither God nor holy angels can die. Death is for them only a spectacle, on which they look from outside.

Therefore Christ, the Son of God, became man with all the attributes and limitations of the human family. A male being, he knew the temptation of woman; a poor carpenter in an oppressed nation, he knew the temptation of rebellion or of dishonesty. A prisoner who was whipped and afterwards crucified, he knew the temptation of despair and of resentment. He knew, without committing sin, such depths of evil that the evangelists considered it wise not to record what happened in his life between the ages of twelve and thirty. But they did record that, during his three and a half years of public ministry, his enemies were frequently offended by his friendship with

scoundrels and with loose women.

Jesus, the Son of God, chose to partake of human nature with all its liabilities and to taste of death, thus enabling himself to be not only the righteous judge of man, but also his defender and Saviour. The life of Jesus and his death on Golgotha's cross - apart from its efficacy in the salvation of man - was God's way of obtaining a personal, intimate knowledge of human problems. Before the experience of Golgotha, God knew less than he knew afterwards. And now, having identified with us in the flesh, he understands us better and can forgive us better. The Kingdom of Heaven has come closer to us.

To what could we compare this great condescension of the Son of God?

We could liken it to the attempt on the part of Osborn to better the harsh conditions in U.S. prisons by having himself jailed and living for many years the tortured life of a prisoner - all to prepare himself for his valiant crusade afterwards.

We could liken it to the deeds of some doctors who have injected themselves with virulent microbes in order to help their fellowmen through the experiences thus gained.

But no! These likenesses do not tell us anything, because in these cases one man risked his life for other

men, his fellow creatures, whereas for Jesus Christ it was entirely different.

Christ is God, and in his sight our world is microscopic. All the nations are before him as a drop of water in a bucket and as a bit of dust on a scale. His great deed can be likened, rather, to the absurdity of love which a man should have for ill-smelling, blood-sucking insects. They tremble between the fingers of the man who wishes to kill them. But he would become a bug, live the life of a bug with its propensity to harm men, and die the death of a bug, in order that, having regained his former estate,

in the end he might be a just judge of insects, might protect them from their ruthless exterminators, might defend them with authority, and might make of them harmless benefactors.

I know that this example will offend many, but it must have seemed incomprehensible to angels that Christ should choose to be incarnate in an ugly, loathsome and sinful species.

Christ descended not merely to the level of man. In the body of the young virgin Mary, through a process of fertilization which remains ever a mystery, he was reduced to a mere embryo, received nourishment from inorganic as well as organic matter, and passed nine months ~in utero~ to become a babe, then a youth, then a man. And what kind of Man! He was incarnate not in a hero like Bar Kochbah, not in a great initiate like Appollonius of Tyana, not in a philosopher like Plato. In order to save man, every man, Christ had to be immersed in matter as deeply as mankind is drowned. Therefore, after subjecting himself to the normal processes of human development, he became a Jewish carpenter, member of a social class without culture. He had a poor language; he sometimes had to engage in discussions on a humiliating level, because this was the level of the men with whom he debated. He knew weakness, anger, hurt, fear, and he was put in a class with criminals.

Those things in Jesus Christ which are offensive to men become, to those who understand, added incentives to adore his magnificent humility and unfathomable love.

And if you ask Christ why he brought this sacrifice, he answers with majestic simplicity that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ~He~ says that the Father sent him.

We cannot say what God is, but looking to Christ, we understand something of his character. We see that what expresses God best is love, righteousness, and

loving-kindness towards mankind. We perceive that he has such love and that this love made him give his Son to die for us.

THE CREATION

But why this detour? Why must we see God in nature, in man, in Christ Jesus? Why can we not see him face to face?

In the Babylonian Talmud it is said that a heathen emperor asked a rabbi: "Show me God!" The rabbi answered: "You will see him with your eyes on one condition. First, you must look five minutes into the sun." The emperor looked at the sun but immediately had to lower his eyes. Then the rabbi told him: "You cannot look for one minute at the sun, which is an insignificant creation of God - and yet you wish to see the One who gives the stars their brilliance!"

Evidently, for a modern intellectual, faith has its difficulties.

He sees that in the world everything happens according to natural laws. From one thing, another develops according to precise laws, as the things which exist are the result of a former development. Mountains and valleys and rivers and living beings are not creations in the sense which is usually given to this word, as stars are not creations but developments from some former state. Some stars are old, ready to be extinguished, others are in full maturity, others are baby-stars. Stars of all ages coexist in the universe. Then - when did the creation take place? The number of species which have disappeared is estimated at half a million. The species which exist now may not always have existed. It is known that there can be evolution ~within~ the species. In this context, not every living being is a direct creation of God.

The difficulty disappears when we consider God not simply as a Being who ~has~ created a world. He is a ~living

and a life-giving~ God. He moves everything continually

according to physical laws, which are expressions of his fixed character. Therefore, it is so difficult to apprehend him.

Heraclitus said: "It pleases nature to hide itself." This is even truer about God, of whom Solomon says: "The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness" (I Kings 8 :12).

The finer a being is, the more it sheds blessings, itself remaining in the shadow. So is God, and therefore he remains unobserved. We have to seek the source of our blessings. Luther says: "Nothing is small without God, being even smaller, nothing is big without God being even bigger, nothing is short without God being even shorter, nothing is long without God having even longer, nothing is wide without God being even wider, nothing is narrow without God being even narrower." Elsewhere in his writings he adds: "Nothing can be more present a Being and more central than God and his might."

And we do not observe God except when his Spirit moves, as we do not observe the air except when the wind blows.

It is only through meditation and spiritual exercises, through the purity which faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ gives you, that in you are awakened the atrophied senses of the spirit, and you feel the presence of the Lord. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," says Jesus.

You see, you do know God, though you cannot say to those who are not pure how he is, because you yourself ~are~ no more, but ~become~. You are changed from glory to glory, into his likeness.

GOD IS

I have seen Christians dying in jail whose last words were, "God is." Were these wrong? Surely not. I would

also like to die with this last assertion on my lips

We live lives on different levels. A scientist knows that all material objects are whirlwinds of elementary particles, as distant from each other, proportionately, as the earth is from the sun. But he has no hesitation in sitting down on a chair, knowing that it is a very solid object. In one sense, every wall is a huge void within which electrons whirl in vast orbits. But considered on another

level, a wall is anything but a void. You have to be careful about this inoffensive wall. You may bump your head very badly if you walk towards it with the atomic theory in your mind.

The same is true of religion. There exists a high, philosophic level where, as we explained, you cannot apply to God the words "to exist" or "to be," because these are too simple. He is more than existing. We Christians have room in our minds to consider the atheistic denial of God. But atheists know reality only as it appears on one level, and therefore they know it falsely, thereby placing themselves in deadly danger. There is another plane on which God simply exists and is.

A partial truth is a dangerous thing. It is not without reason that we value "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Every cultured man knows that we live simultaneously in the Newtonian and in the Einsteinian universe, each with its own laws. Those who know only the Newtonian universe would not be able to fly to the moon nor have atomic energy. We live simultaneously in a world in which we may not meet God and in a second world, which atheists do not know, in which God simply exists, is, and allows us to hold communion with him.

It is the world of the spirit, of practical religion.

Chairs and walls and bread exist and are used as such in spite of molecular and atomic theories. Likewise, God simply exists.

On occasion, his presence breaks through self-conscious

barriers, especially in moments of crisis.

There are instances known from history, and I have personally known many such cases, of atheists – yes, of Communist leaders – who died in Communist prisons, victims of Party purges, and who in their last moment cried, "God, God! " or "Jesus!"

It would be profitable to ask from whence comes this belief in God in the minds of millions of men all throughout history? The atheists who deny God deny a notion that exists in their own mind. The English philosopher Locke has predicated the idea that there is nothing in our intellect except what has passed through our senses. A wild man in the jungle of New Guinea would not have in his mind the notion "television," because the respective object does not exist in his world. If mankind had never had any experience of God, how did such a

notion appear in its mind?

Engels in his day was ready with answer to this question, saying that our concept of God is a fantastic reflection in our mind of social realities. Christians then tried hard to prove that Engels was wrong, that God is not a fantastic reflection, but that the notion about him is an exact mirroring of divine reality. The time has come for another line of approach.

I admit that belief in God is a fantastic reflection, and I add that only the fantastic is real. All the "realism" that denied that men would ever be able to fly to the moon, or pilot a submarine under the ice of the North Pole, or annihilate distances by flying planes around the earth in a short time, or split the atom, or build houses with natural gases - all such "realism" has been proved wrong. Likewise, the "realism" of those who live in God's world and honestly assert that he does not exist is just as wrong. On the other hand, the fancies of Leonardo da Vinci and Jules Verne and others like them have become reality. And the dreamers of dreams who walk with a God you cannot see or touch, unless you develop the faculty of

faith, perceive the reality which pervades all creation.

Only the fantastic is the real in modern science. Niels Bohr asks, "Is anybody mad enough to have the truth?"

What is science? It is a discipline which makes the fantastic come true.

It has discovered that within the nucleus of a cell, in the DNA, is contained a code in which all former generations have transmitted to the new being their experience and their constitutional features. Now this knowledge had to pass outside the nucleus to where the proteins are built. So there is in the nucleus a kind of Xerox machine, which makes a photocopy of the DNA. And there is "somebody" who handles the Xerox machine. The copy is not absolutely faithful. The "one" who handles the machine is like a man who, while making a photocopy, covers part of the document or adds special data. And the RNA conveys this knowledge outside the cell.

A fantastic story! No novelist could have invented a better one. This fantasy is the truth about our organism.

Might religion also be a fantastic reflection? Then it is the right reflection of a fantastic reality and of its fantastic Creator.

Man's mind has a dualistic nature. It comprehends facts and it fancies. If it had not fancied, humanity would

not have developed. Civilization is the fulfillment of what were formerly dreams. I would refuse a religion that consisted only of facts. It would not satisfy my dualistic nature. It must fulfill my desire after fancy, after myth.

Marx and Engels described facts, the terrible exploitation that existed under early capitalism. But they did not stop at this, because they were men. After the analysis of facts, fancy began to work: the dream of a new society without exploitation or wars, and with social justice. The fantasies of science have been fulfilled. A holy life, which is sheer fantasy for one who starts a life of faith, is achieved by many. But the Marxian society is still a Utopia. So Engels had no right to cast reproach on

Christianity as belonging to fantasy - though we take this as a compliment.

You might reply that it is possible to imagine things that are beyond the realm of possibility. Thus you can fancy an island a mile square all made of diamonds in the midst of the ocean, yet such an island does not exist. But, everything you have "imagined" is real. In nature there are islands, there is the ocean, there are diamonds, and there exists the dimension of one mile square. Now, you have pieced together realities improperly, but it is only realities you could imagine. So in our mind the notion of God which we have can be associated with wrong ideas. I can believe in an evil God, a God in human form, a tribal or national God, and so on, but all the time I deal with realities, whether rightly or wrongly. God himself exists and is what he is, not what we consider him to be.

Engels did not have to tell us that our faith is absurd.

If God could fit within the frame of my reason, he would not be a God but a low being like myself. A philosopher whose philosophy could be understood by his five-year-old son would not be a philosopher. God to be God must transcend our reason by his deeds and his being. The atmosphere we breathe is a combination of nitrogen and oxygen perfectly suited to our lungs. The distance of the earth from the sun and the moon is just what is necessary for the maintenance of life, health, and happiness. The perpetual cycles of rain and snow make the earth fertile. The tides of the sea keep the shores clean and fresh. Vitamins necessary for bodily existence are provided in abundance. Laws and forces of nature stand ready to be harnessed for man's use. God has filled the earth with beauty and charm. There are majestic

mountains and fertile valleys, tall trees and carpets of grass, the moonlight, the stillness of the desert, the thrill of songbirds - all of which witness to the fact that God made the earth for our pleasure.

If a young man loved a girl and presented her with a

beautiful house surrounded by a splendid garden and told her, "This I have provided for you," the girl would have no doubt of the boy's love for her. This is just what has happened between God and us. He has made food to grow for us, and beneath the soil there are minerals and oil for tools and fuel. These are all evidences of God's provision for our needs and therefore of the actual existence of God.

Consider the bees, which organize a city with 10,000 cells for honey, 12,000 cells for larvae, filled with honey, and a place for the mother queen. When the bees observe that the heat is increasing and the wax may melt and the honey be lost, they organize the swarm into squads, put sentinels at the entrances, glue the feet down, and then with flying wings create a system of ventilation to cool the honey - something like an electric fan. Bees collect honey from an area of twenty square miles. Now, how can the tiny brain of a bee perform such wonders if behind it there is not a higher mind - the mind of God?

A group of scientists in Chicago did an experiment. A female moth of a rare species was placed in a room. Four miles away a male moth of the same species was released. In spite of the smoke of the city, in spite of the distance, and in spite of the fact that the female was in a closed room, within a few hours the male moth was found beating its wings against the window of the room in which the female was confined. Explain such a thing without an intelligent being - a God - who has created these things.

Fish lay their eggs in the fjords of Norway and from these eggs come a new generation of fish that somehow find their way across the ocean to the Caribbean Sea. When the time comes for them to spawn in their turn, they return to exactly the same fjords they had previously left. A man has to spend twenty years learning to become captain of a ship and to travel across the Atlantic Ocean. Who taught these fish to travel?

When we were in prison, the swallows made their

nests in our cells, and every autumn they left our country. Yet these same swallows came back from as far as Mozambique to our prison in Romania, exactly to cell number twelve which they had left half a year before.

For those who have their eyes open, the wisdom and power of God are revealed in a million ways.

Does God exist? The question should not even be asked.

In every true rendering of the subject-predicate form, the predicate is contained in the subject. God is the ideal being, the sum of all the highest qualities, such as love, goodness, righteousness, omnipotence, and so on. If he has all the perfections (which he must, or he would not be God), he must have existence, too. A non-existent God would not have the sum of perfections. To ask, "Is there a God?" is tantamount to asking, "Is the existent existing?"

God is. With this conviction I live, and with this assertion I hope to die. I use the expression that God is, only because I am dealing with atheists. Otherwise it is senseless, a tautology, like "All bachelors are male." When you have said "bachelor," you have already said "male." And when you have said "God," his existence is implicit.

Prayer simply exists. How did mankind come by it? Where did this phenomenon originate? Nowhere. Men have always philosophized about God and have always sought communion with him. Both philosophy and practical religion have been sometimes primitive, sometimes terribly false, but they were there.

An Indian tribe in North America prayed:

> O our mother earth, O our father heaven,
> we are your children.
> The sacrifices you ask for we offer
> with bent backs.
> Weave us a garment of radiant sunlight
> the white dawn the warp,

> the red evening the woof.
> Let the murmuring rain be the fringe
> and the rainbow the hem.
> Weave us a garment of radiant sunlight,
> we want to walk where the birds sing.
> We want to walk through the green grass,
> O our mother earth, O our father heaven.

St. Augustine describes his experiences of praying as a young child:

> I was sent to school to learn how to read a write, things the usefulness of which I had no idea. All the same, every time that I was slow to learn, I was beaten. God, my God, what misery I suffered there and how deceived I was!
>
> We did, however, come into contact, Lord, with people who prayed to you. From them we learned - while we were, to the best of our ability, forming an impression of you - that you were someone great and powerful, able to hear us and to come to our help, even without revealing yourself to our senses. And it is true that, even as a small boy, I began to pray to you, my refuge and my help, and, calling on you, I lost all control of my tongue and, although I was a little person, I asked you with no little fervour that I might not be beaten any more at school.

Soviet soldiers, brought up in atheistic schools, prayed on the battle-front. Not knowing anything better, many of them prayed: "God and mother's spirit, help!" Old-time members of the Communist Party, who fell victim to the purges in Stalin's time, shared prison cells with us and told us that in difficult moments they prayed.

This prayer is a far cry from such lofty prayers as that of St. Gertrude: "Jesus, I am you; you are I. I am not you; you are not I. We both are together an entirely new being."

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But men pray. I have known an atheistic lecturer who prayed to God for the success of his godless speeches, which were his means of earning a livelihood.

Dimly or consciously men seek communion with God who exists, who is, who can be met. And if they persist, they meet him.

PROPHECY

The authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ deny that any prophecy is possible. They dismiss prophecies "in the name of science." How is it then that Sir Isaac Newton, a scientist if ever there was one, the man who has been called "the father of reason," wrote a book called

~Observations of Prophecies~? He is the one who provided the first really scientific chronology of a history of Jesus.

But instead of arguing whether prophecy is possible, let us analyze the facts. Facts if proven speak for themselves. Are there facts indicating that prophecies have been fulfilled?

Even a superficial knowledge of the Bible reveals hundreds of prophecies which have been fulfilled and others which are being fulfilled under our eyes.

First of all, there are the prophecies concerning Jesus Christ, who is the great subject of the Bible.

In the Bible, it was prophesied that Christ would be descended from Abraham and would belong to the tribe of Judah. The prophet Micah predicted seven centuries before the actual event that Christ would be born in the town of Bethlehem. Around the same time Isaiah told about his ministry of service and suffering and gave an outline of his life's story. The prophet Zechariah predicted that Jesus would enter Jerusalem humbly, riding upon an ass. Psalm 41 predicted his betrayal by one of his disciples. Zechariah told how much this traitor would get for his betrayal and what would happen with the money. The fact that Jesus would be whipped and spat

upon was also predicted.

Some five centuries before Christ the prophet Zechariah wrote that people would gaze on him whom they had just pierced. David indicated that both his hands and his feet would be pierced. The resurrection of Jesus was predicted as well.

Granted that some of these prophecies can be ridiculed and written off by saying that their "fulfillment" was simply arranged by Jesus and his followers - such as his riding into Jerusalem on an ass, or his cry on the cross, "I thirst!" But did the Roman soldiers deliberately set out to fulfill the prophecy contained in a psalm: "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture"? What did a Roman soldier know or care about Jewish prophecies? Yet each chronicler of the crucifixion meticulously recorded the detail about the soldiers casting lots for his garments, John adding the detail that the seamless robe was too valuable to be torn in pieces and divided among the four soldiers.

But how about the greatest event of all, Jesus's resurrection from the dead? Could he have staged that?

Even if he had been a great deceiver, as atheists like to

allege, could he, under the watchful eyes of Jews and Romans alike, have arranged not to die on the cross, not to have his bones broken along with the thieves (in fulfillment of another explicit prophecy), not to succumb in the sealed, guarded tomb? And if he had managed thus far, could he have depended on his terrified, cowardly disciples to break through a band of soldiers, roll away the sealed stone, and release him without hindrance? It is unthinkable.

Mommsen, the renowned historian of the Roman empire, calls the resurrection of the Saviour the best established fact of Roman history. It could hardly have been staged by men. It was the fulfilling of a prophecy.

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PROPHECIES ABOUT THE JEWISH PEOPLE

"No prophecy," they say. Those whom we call prophets were just intelligent men and so were able to predict events.

According to ~The Atheist's Handbook~, the most intelligent geniuses of mankind were Marx, Engels, Lenin, and others like them. They had in their minds what ~The Atheist's Handbook~ considers the most powerful means of understanding political and social events – that is, historic materialism.

Marx wrote a book called ~The Jewish Question~. He obviously had the potential with which historic materialism endows a thinker. How is it that he, living in the second half of the nineteenth century, had no idea that the Jews, scattered as they were among the nations, would return to their land and have a country of their own? Lenin lived in the twentieth century. The Zionist movement was already in existence and was becoming stronger and stronger. He (the great genius of mankind) did not consider it likely at all that the Jews would be gathered together in their own land, nor did he, keen observer of everything in political life, armed with the powerful weapon of historical materialism, even mention the Zionists. He neither took note of this movement nor expected it to triumph.

Stalin wrote a book entitled ~The National Question~. In this book, which was written before the First World War, he who was once proclaimed by the atheists as the greatest genius mankind has ever had and will ever have, did not even acknowledge the Jews as a nation, because the Jewish people did not enter into his definition of

what a nation is.

But the Jewish nation in its development disregarded both the anti-Semitism of the book of Marx and the fact that they were ignored in the book by Stalin. The Jews created a state, fulfilling what was predicted in quite

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another book - the one book which atheists despise above all others - the Bible.

Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, once asked his chaplain: "Give me a sure proof of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures." The chaplain answered: "It is the Jew, Your Majesty." The Jews and their miraculous history are another proof of the truth of Biblical prophecy.

Strangely enough, several of the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ are Jews, fulfilling by this a Biblical prophecy that some Jews would be a curse for all peoples. But there are also Jews who fight atheism and spread abroad the knowledge of God, thus fulfilling another prophecy in the same Bible which says that a remnant in Israel will in the last days turn to their Saviour Jesus Christ and be a great blessing.

The prophecies about the Jews begin with a promise made to Abraham, the first Jew, some 4,500 years ago. Listen to it: "I will make of thee a great nation."

The Christian world bears the name of a Jew, Jesus Christ. The Communist camp bears the name of another Jew, Marx. The universe as a whole bears the name of yet another Jew, Einstein. Over sixty per cent of the Nobel Prize winners are Jewish, among them the lamented Soviet writer, Boris Pasternak. Jews played a tremendous role in the Communist revolution - men like Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev. Lenin was half-Jewish. Jews today play a big role in the anti-government fight within the Soviet Union. Litvinov, the writer Daniel, Krasnov-Levitin, and other freedom fighters who have suffered imprisonment, are Jewish. Jews are active in the economic and political life of the United States and many other countries. They hold government positions in many Western nations. The Jew Teller is called "the father of the nuclear bomb."

Dr. Sale Harrison in his book ~The Remarkable Jew~ writes: "No one will doubt that the Jews of today hold

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the money chests of the world. Wherever they have gone,

they have become the wizards of finance."

Basil Mowll says in his book ~Bible Light in Present Events~: "A careful computation of the university professors of Western Europe, apart from Great Britain before the First World War, showed that about seventy per cent were of Jewish birth and persuasion."

For the first time in history, a woman has been employed by the Roman Curia. She is a Christian of Jewish origin.

Simone Weil, a Jewess, is one of the most profound theologians of Catholicism today.

The Hebrew language is the only old language that has been revived and is now spoken currently in Israel. This has not happened with Latin, old Greek, Slavonic, Irish, Welsh, or any other old language.

Thus, the prophecy has been fulfilled. A small Bedouin tribe has become a great nation - great in all aspects, for good or for ill. Even Iaroslavski, founder of the International Association of the Godless and the great leader of this movement, was Jewish.

The prophecy continues: "Thou shalt be a blessing." Whoever feels blessed by Communism owes it to the Jew Marx. Whoever feels blessed by capitalism owes it to the Jews who were instrumental in creating this system. Whoever is blessed by Christianity owes it to a Jew, Jesus.

The Word of God says also in the same chapter: "I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee" (GEN 12:3). It is a simple fact that history has favoured the friends of the Jews. When Spain expelled the Jews, the sun set on its empire. Czarist Russia persecuted the Jews and has had its reward. So did Nazi Germany. Countries where the Jews are free enjoy freedom themselves.

Long after Abraham's day there were predictions that the Jews would be scattered among the nations. Today,

there are three scattered races, the gypsies, the Armenians, and the Jews, but it is the Jews who are the most widely scattered. There are few countries without Jews.

Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in the year A.D. 70. The prophet Hosea (HOS 9:17) predicted: "My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations"; and so they have become. In DEU 28:37 it was written: "Thou shalt

become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee"; and so they have become. It is a common form of mockery to say "Dirty Jews."

But the return of the Jews to Palestine was also predicted, and this has happened before our eyes. The tribe of the Book, of the wandering foot and the weary breast, again has its fatherland.

The Bible says repeatedly that the Jews are intended by God to remain a unique people and this they really are.

The origins of other peoples are wrapped in legends and myth. Can anyone tell who was the first Russian? Or who was the first German or Turk? Ask any Jew who was the first Jew, and he will unhesitatingly reply, "Abraham."

The Jews are unique as a witness to the reliability of the Biblical records. Unique is their dispersion among all the nations; equally unique is their development. The Jews are only one-half per cent of the population of the world, yet how disproportionate is their suffering, but also their deliverance, their return to their own country; they are unique by the fact that their whole history has been foretold. God said through Moses: "I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste": (LEV 26:33). "And the Lord shall scatter

you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you" (DEU 4:27).

Later, another prophecy foretells the gathering of the scattered people of Israel: "For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land" (EZE 36:24).

The Jews are unique in that they have remained apart, while scattered throughout the whole world. Wherever the Jew is found, he is a Jew. He is not a Jewish Russian, but a Russian Jew. The Jews remain Jews, although they have no concentrating force and no world-wide government.

They are the only people who could not be destroyed through unique sufferings. Egyptian pharaohs, Assyrian kings, Roman emperors, the Crusaders, the Inquisitors, and the Nazis have used against them expatriation, exile, captivity, confiscation, torture, the massacre of millions - all of which would have broken the heart of any other

people - but the Jews remain.

God promised that he would assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. This was said by Isaiah, who lived some 700 years before Christ and some 800 years before the dispersion of the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem. How could he have known that the Jews would be dispersed and then gathered from all the continents?

Very few of the Jews who have returned to Israel are religious. Most of them do not know the Scriptures and the prophecies, and of those who know them, a very limited number have faith in them. Yet they are brought back - you may call it by blind impulse, just as the birds are drawn to the south for the winter - or, to put it in other words, the power of God is driving them in order that his word may be fulfilled.

In another important prophecy in which the return of

the Jews to Palestine is mentioned, it is said that they will come by two methods (JER 16:14-16).

God will send "fishers" who will "fish" them, and the Zionist movement "fished" many thousands of Jews with the bait of a national home of their own.

The same verse also says that God will send many "hunters" who will "hunt" the Jews. The anti-Semitism in the whole world, especially under Hitler, has "hunted" the Jews, driving them towards Palestine.

Another startling prophecy about the Jews concerns their turning back to Christ in the end-time of the remnant of the people of Israel. This also is in the course of being fulfilled.

I have already quoted the Jew Einstein as an admirer of the Nazarene.

Franz Werfel, the famous Jewish poet, has written a renowned Christian book, ~The Song of Bernadette~. Sholom Asch, the great Jewish novelist, became a Christian and wrote the well-known book ~Jesus of Nazareth~. Martin Buber, the great Jewish philosopher, called Jesus "my great brother." Henri Bergson has proclaimed his Christian faith. Niels Bohr, the great physicist, was a Hebrew-Christian. So was Auguste Piccard, the man who first went into the stratosphere.

Let us pause to observe that the Communists have made prophecies, but these have not been fulfilled. Engels prophesied in a letter to Sorge of September 10,

1888, that in ten years' time Canada would be annexed by the United States. A century has passed, but there is no sign of such an eventuality.

Comrade Khrushchev prophesied in 1958 that in five years' time Russia would reach and surpass the material level of the United States. Now, here we are in 1975, and the Soviet Union still imports wheat from America! Men not specially endowed by God cannot foretell the future.

Our atheist friends had prophesied the eternal

solidarity between the Communist nations, and now we have the quarrel with Red China, Yugoslavia, and Romania. Reliable prophecy is the exclusive privilege of the Spirit of God, authenticated in the Word of God.

PROPHECIES ABOUT THE LATTER DAYS

~The Atheist's Handbook~ dismisses prophecy with these words: "Numerous Biblical prophecies have been made only after the predicted events have happened. The respective texts have been included in the Bible post factum - that is, after the consummation of the respective events."

Now, do our atheist friends really expect us to believe that the victory of Israel in history, the waving of the Zionist flag on Hitler's Brown House in Nuremberg, and the restoration of the Jewish state - all events of the twentieth century - have only recently been included in the Bible? Do not the Dead Sea Scrolls, dating from the century before Christ, testify to the great age of the prophecies? Do not New Testament manuscripts contain the prediction of the fisherman Peter that the elements will melt with great heat, thus foreshadowing nuclear destruction?

World wars were not possible 3,000 years ago, since communication among continents was non-existent, except perhaps on a very primitive scale.

But the prophet Jeremiah, who lived some six hundred years before Christ, predicted world wars. He did not know that America or Australia or Japan existed, but he wrote about "a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth ... evil shall go forth from nation to nation ... the slain ... shall be ... from one end of the world even unto the other end of the earth" (JER 25:27-33).

The prediction was fulfilled after twenty-six centuries. Thousands upon thousands of people were slain in a war which extended from Japan to Russia to France, a war in

which such people as Americans and Chinese and Germans and Jews all died. And these things are the forebodings of the next world conflagration.

Jesus said about the last days: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (MTT 24:21). And so it is. Never in the history of mankind have there been such tribulations as those created by the ovens and gas chambers of the Nazis and the mass-slaughter of Stalin or Mao Tse-Tung.

When Christ said, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved," there did not exist any means of destruction which could endanger all flesh. Men had arrows and spears. Nobody could endanger the existence of all mankind. Now the instruments of general destruction are available.

But why go so far? Communism itself is a fulfillment of prophecy. It is like the great Antichrist predicted in the Scriptures: "It was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority was given him over all kindreds and tongues and nations."

Another prophet has described powers like that of Communism. He says that they enlarge their desire as hell, and are as death, and cannot be satisfied till they gather unto themselves all nations and heap unto themselves all people.

We Christians find this ambition unreasonable. Was Stalin a happy man when he imposed his will on one billion men and was cheered as the greatest genius? His wife committed suicide. He jailed members of his own family. He had no confidence in anyone, not even in his nearest comrades, and this with good cause. His closest henchmen waited for his death to denounce him as a criminal. Khrushchev says that Stalin once exclaimed, "I don't have confidence even in myself!"

There is a story about a rich man who was very sick. He was told that he would recover only if he wore the

shirt of a happy man. So he sent his servants to find a happy man and buy his shirt at any price. But the

servants could find no happy man. Everyone was envious of somebody else's happiness, or coveted more than he had, or was consumed with unattainable ambitions. After much searching they at last found a woodcutter, naked to the belt, who cheerfully did his hard work, singing the while. They asked him, "Are you happy?" His answer was, "Perfectly." Then he was offered much money for his shirt. Unfortunately, he had none.

Happiness does not consist in dominating the world, but in uniting with God. Our Communist friends do not know this secret. Therefore they have vast ambitions, but are never satisfied and are ever further from the Utopia they claim to be creating.

Our atheist friends often complain about the slow progress of their cause in the Soviet Union. We can assure them: they will succeed! The Antichrist for whom they prepare the way will possess world-wide rule. Communism will triumph for what is, in history, a little while.

But in the end Jesus will return. His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives in Israel. The Bible writes: "Every eye shall see him." This again must have appeared incomprehensible when John the Evangelist wrote it. How could somebody in Spain or in Northern Africa have seen Jesus ascending from the Mount of Olives and how will they be able to see him descend again in like manner?

Well, television proves the prophecy of the Bible to be true. The whole world witnessed the Olympic games as they took place. The whole world will witness the return of Jesus.

And then, at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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The blessed day will come when all authority will reside in the hands of Jesus Christ, after his return to the earth, and under his total rule our poor planet will be rid of its sins and of its sorrows.

Before that time, we first have to past through terrible catastrophes. Among the signs of approaching calamity are the many peace conferences and talks about arms limitations, which are also predicted in the Bible: "When they shall say, Peace and safety: then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman

with child; and they shall not escape"
(1TH 5:3).

When the apostle Paul wrote this prophecy, men had no means to bring sudden destruction upon the earth. It could not be accomplished with swords or spears. Now nations possess nuclear weapons.

Prophecy becomes exceptionally important in these days. Jesus had predicted that the Gentiles will dominate Jerusalem "until the times of the Gentiles have been fulfilled." The fact that the Jews got in 1967 full sovereignty over all of Jerusalem and Palestine might be a first sign that the time of the Gentiles - that is, the time when the Gentiles (the non-Jews) can join the church of Christ and thus be saved for eternity - is near its end. It is most urgent that people should believe in Christ and should come to him while there is time. It is a satanic device that just in this epoch ~The Atheist's Handbook~ should spread doubt as to the validity and existence of prophecy.

In its attempt, this book is itself a tragic fulfillment of a Biblical prophecy: "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness..." (1CO 1:18).

Our atheist opponents often visit Orthodox churches in order to know their subject. Sometimes while there they utter a silent prayer, finding themselves overwhelmed by the sanctity of the place.

There they hear the old songs of the Russian people,

songs of praise to Virgin Mary; "Hail, Mary, full of grace; God be with you." If they knew Bible prophecies, they would find that the evangelist Luke recorded, in the song of Mary when she conceived Jesus, these words: "All generations shall call me blessed"
(LUK 1:48).

Christians never doubt the prophecies because they find that many apply to themselves and their lives. When we become Christians, we find that this was prophesied long ago. We read in the Bible that God chose us before the foundation of the world to belong to Christ Jesus. How far into the past this prophecy reaches!

Then we find our future prophesied: "That in the ages to come God might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus" (EPH 2:7). So we know what the meaning of our life is and that God's goodness is in store for us.

WHO MADE GOD?

There is a God. We can have communion with him. He has revealed himself through his prophets and his Son, Jesus Christ.

Nature is like a banquet. There are bananas and melons and tomatoes and wheat. But there can be no banquet without a cook. Nor can there be a world without a Creator. This is the best argument for the existence of God.

But our opponents have the right to answer with another question. If everything must have a cause and you call the cause God, God must also have a cause. Who created him? It would be a subterfuge to evade the answer by saying that the question blasphemous. I find it most legitimate. I myself have as it as a child.

All mass or matter is continually in movement. It is not now exactly the same as it was second ago. There is always a cause which has produced the change. The

movement of matter is measured by time. In time, some states of matter produce effects which, in their turn, become causes of new changes. Matter is inconceivable without a first cause.

But existence in time is not the only form of existence. There exists also timelessness, in which there is no before and no after; no cause and no effect. This is the realm of God. He has created everything. He belongs to a sphere of self-existence. Nobody created him.

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? This is the classic question. If the egg, who laid it? If the hen, whence did it come? You can discuss the dilemma for thousands of years without coming to any conclusion if you do not realize that the original question has three presuppositions:

(1) there is a hen;
(2) there is an egg;
(3) there is a "first" and an "after."

"First" and "after" are categories of our thinking, forms for our sensitivity, manners in which we apprehend the successive stages of matter in continual movement. But time is nothing apart from the movements it serves to measure. Time has no objective existence,

independent of bodies and phenomena; this is the ABC of Einstein's theory of relativity. Kinetic energy produces movement and gives birth to the notion of time. What about the huge realm of potential energy? It lies dormant. Imagine a world with only potential energy. There would not be the slightest movement, there would be nothing to measure. It would be a universe without time. Timeless is also the sphere of spirit, the realm of God. We call him eternal. Eternity is not endless time, but timelessness.

Let us try to exemplify the meaning of the above.

Suppose that on a planet some 2,000 light-years away,

there were beings of a much higher order than ourselves with telescopes that could enable them to see not only our earth, but also its inhabitants.

Suppose these super-beings should look today at Bethlehem. What would they see? The birth of Jesus Christ. They would see the shepherds, the Magi, Mary, Joseph, the Babe - this because it would take the light from these persons two thousand years to arrive at the distant planet. For us, the birth of Christ is a past event. For them, it would happen today.

Imagine such super-beings on a star 3,500 light-years away! They would see the children of Israel, under the leadership of Moses, approaching the borders of Palestine. They would see them rejoicing at the announcement that a Saviour would be born. For them, the birth of Jesus would be a future event.

One and the same event is past from the point of view of earth, present for one planet, and future for another. How is it for the spirit which can apprehend simultaneously what is happening on all three planets and read the minds of all? There is no past, present, and future.

The question "which came first, the chicken or the egg?" is solved. There is no first and no later. The problem has no sense in a realm where there is no past or future, cause or effect. The problem "Who was before God to create him?" cannot be posed. There is no before.

Our "now" has no value for cosmic phenomena, as it has no value for what happens within the atom. What we capture at this moment as stellar images in observatories, are rays of light from stars which might have disappeared ages ago. And the antiparticle omega-minus baron lives only 15 billionths of a second. We observe its trace only

long after it has disappeared.

Einstein writes: "Each frame of time or system of coordinates has its own time." And "Unless the body to which a statement of time refers is specified, there is no

significance in the statement of the time of an event." For the eternal spirit, there is no time. Here everything is interrelated and forms a unity. God is one. The whole of reality created by him is one single gravitational field. When we arrive at the point Omega, the continual agitation measured by time is changed into blessed contemplation, into the ecstasy and rapture of adoration.

There is a story about a monk who was sent by his abbot on an errand in the forest. There for a few seconds he heard a bird from Paradise. When he returned to the monastery, the doorkeeper did not recognize him. The abbot and the other monks were all foreigners to him. Nobody knew him. Finally, someone remembered that the monastery possessed an ancient record telling about a monk who had gone into the woods many centuries before and had never returned. For him only a few seconds had passed; he had caught something of the beauty of the music of Paradise. For the others, in the meantime, centuries had elapsed.

This medieval legend has become today strict scientific fact in the so-called paradox of Langevin.

It is obvious that the time which elapses during the passage of a train between two stakes is less for an observer who travels in the train than for an observer at rest alongside the track. For the former, time is shorter. The time is shorter not only for him, but for everything which is in the train, including his watch, which slows down.

Imagine now a rocket travelling at a speed near the speed of light. Earth dwellers recording the beating of the astronaut's heart would find that it had slowed down. The same would happen with the movements within the body of the astronaut, though for the astronaut himself, they would have remained the same.

According to Langevin's unchallengeable calculation, a man leaving the earth at a speed inferior to that of light by a twenty thousandth, travelling for a year of his own

time and returning at the same speed to land on the

globe (i.e., two years after his departure measured by his own clock), would return two centuries later according to our calendar. The great-grandson of his daughter, born on the day of departure when the astronaut was thirty years old, would be one hundred years old, whereas he himself would be thirty-two.

Such a rocket is not pure fancy. There exists one for which even the speed of light is child's play. It is the rocket of the spirit. In mere seconds, my thought passes from galaxies far away to my old mother, from there to Paradise, from Paradise to a cell nearby on the same prison-corridor, from there back to remote stars. Then I pass to communion with Adam and Abel, but I can leave them at once and pass my time in future millenniums, to return to my cell and eat the dinner which has just been served. The spirit is not bound by space or time. Death happens in time. In time events succeed one another. I have been born, I have developed, I will die, I will be resurrected. In the sphere of timelessness, things do not happen successively. There is no place left for a passing away of my personality.

If I travel in a train with uniform speed in a given direction, I have the impression that towns and villages pass near me. I can see them through the window as an endless stream of localities. But as a matter of fact, the localities coexist simultaneously. Only to me do they appear in succession. In the cinema, I see the lives of several persons developing from birth to death, with all their complications. But in the cabin of the operator, on a reel, these events coexist all together. Only for me do they happen successively in time.

We are used to the limitations of weight. It was quite a discovery when the first astronauts realized that they could also live in a state of weightlessness. We live in time, in which things appear and disappear. Therefore we believe in death and dissolution. But there exists the

sphere of timelessness as well, the sphere of God. He is the uncreated author of all creation. In him, we have from eternity to eternity our life, existence, and movement. While we are in time, we live reality as if it were composed of successive events. But to apply our notion of time to spirit is as foolish as to apply it to nuclear

physics.

According to the theory of relativity, at the speed of

light every clock stops, mass presenting an infinite inertia to every effort to accelerate it. Is it not therefore reasonable that in the Bible God is called "light" and Christians are called "the light of the world"?

Now, everyone simply bows when he hears the name of Einstein, but my opponents would do well to remember that Lenin assailed the principle of relativity, that Mach who inspired the works of Einstein had been denounced by Lenin as the Judas of science, and that for a long time Soviet philosophers discarded Einstein and the whole realm of cybernetics.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Marxists don't know what life is. The Russian academician Oparin says, "Life is one of the forms of movement of matter." What should a young man do with such a definition? He asks his Marxist father, "How should I believe in life? How can I best use my life?" But his father cannot possibly give him an answer, because he has really asked how one of the forms of movement of matter with its intrinsic, unalterable laws should behave. How much more powerful is the Christian's answer: "Life is a person, Jesus Christ, whose friendship you can accept and whose example you can follow, Life is an eternal boon. Its earthly span is to be used unsparingly for others, and its eternal aftermath in Paradise - to which earth is the anteroom - for one's enjoyment of his Creator and his glory."

Not knowing what life is, Marxists don't know what death is. Therefore death is a terror, devoid of the comforts and hopes of religion. It is cold comfort to say to the bereaved, "Well, one dies and disappears for ever. But Socialism is moving ahead, and soon we will walk on the moon."

In his own bereavement, Marx wrote in a letter to Lassalee: "The death of my son has shaken me deeply, and I feel the loss as keenly as though it were only yesterday, and my poor wife has completely broken down under the blow."

We sympathize with his feelings. He did not know the Christian's triumph over death.

The Soviet Christian Talantov died in prison for his faith. His oldest son continued the Christian fight. He

also died in prison. The younger son took up the fight. Now he too has died in jail. These did not fear death.

Skripnikov was shot in the Soviet Union for his Christian fight. His daughter Aida, undaunted by the fate of her father, made his cause hers. She is still young. She has been in prison four times already because she confesses her faith in Christ.

For atheists death is like the sword of Damocles hanging over their heads, reminding them that soon all their joys - or sorrows! - will be gone.

Death holds no fear for those who know.

Jesus asserted: "Whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (JHN 11:26). He said it near the grave of one who had believed in him. Jesus proved right. Birth and death are our manner of apprehending the reality of life from the perspective of time. Christians do not have to fear death.

During the Russian Revolution in the great terror under the Tcheka, a group of Christians were ordered to be drowned. One of them exclaimed: "We go to God! What difference if we go by land or sea?" They did not fear.

~The Atheist's Handbook~ denounces belief in life beyond

the grave as "the basis of the religious theory" and "extremely dangerous."

But what is life if nothing follows after death?

Let us suppose that the Communist ideal is accomplished. We will have a perfect society, without the distinction between rich and poor, without wars and revolutions, with wealth, culture, and happiness for everybody. But men will still have to die. Poor men die easily. There is not much to lose. For happy men death is a catastrophe. Kirov, general secretary of the Communist party of the Leningrad district, assassinated by Stalin, had a position of power. He enjoyed life. His last words were: "I wish to live and to live and to live." If Stalin had not killed him, he would have died a natural death a few years later and his last tragic words would have been the same.

We all have to die. The decision does not depend on us. If nothing follows, the most beautiful life is nothing more than a banquet offered to a condemned man before his execution. He gets dainties and then he is hanged. He may live in an ideal society, but eventually he will rot, forgotten for ever by everybody.

Go, comfort somebody who is dying in a cancer ward, or his family with these words: "We are building a happy Communist society"; or "Science achieves great things. We have been to the moon and soon we will be on Venus." There is not much consolation in this. But tell the dying and the bereaved about the heavenly Father and the Christian's hope of living eternally with him, and you will see the difference.

If the atheists are right and there is no life hereafter, "All our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death," and "life is but a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" (Shakespeare).

But life continues after death. The thought of eternity

and reward for good and evil is deeply inscribed in the human heart.

Christians sacrifice themselves because they believe in eternal life. But why do Communists sacrifice their lives? Communists died for their Marxist faith in czarist prisons. Nobody in the Party remembers them. The young generation of Communists do not even know their names. They are forgotten. Communists also die in prisons today in some non-Communist countries. Why do they give their lives? Christians believe in an eternal recompense. But what sense does it make for an atheist to give up this life, the only one he knows he has, for an ideal whose fulfillment he cannot check on, and whose beauties he will not enjoy? Under communism life will end exactly as under capitalism, in death and, in "a convocation of worms" (Shakespeare). Communists would never sacrifice their lives if, in the depths of their soul to which reason has no access, they did not know that the grave is not the end and that those who have spent their all for some great good will be rewarded.

All modern science is based on the law of conservation of energy, as expounded by Lavoisier. Nothing is lost, nothing is added, everything is conserved. (This law ceases to apply strictly only within the atom.)

Man is a bundle of energy in different forms: energy condensed in matter, heat, electricity, and spiritual energy. What happens to these different forms of energy at death? The energy condensed in atoms is not lost. The body decays and its atoms enter into new combinations. The heat of the body is not lost. When the oven

waxes cold, its heat has been communicated to surrounding atmosphere. By a minimal, immeasurable fraction of a degree, the temperature of the atmosphere around us increases when our bodies become cold corpses. The electricity emanating from the body re-enters into the general budget of electrical energy in nature. What happens to spiritual energy at death, to the

power to will, the capacity to think and to feel? Does this energy change at death, transformed into a lower form of energy, say, the mechanical? If so, we would be able after death to jump twice as high as we did before, which is ridiculous. No! Spiritual energy remains after death. Otherwise, the law of Lavoisier collapses. My spirit re-enters the general budget of spiritual energy; it returns to the eternal spirit, to God.

If our spirit is prepared for this event, if it has cultivated the things of value in that realm – love, truth, faith, hope, peace, gentleness, meekness (GAL 5:22-23) – it will be in its own element. The future life will be a paradise of enjoyment of things hoped for. If our spirit enters that realm completely unprepared, full of sins and a craving for lustful satisfactions which cannot be fulfilled, its life will be deeply unhappy. This will be hell.

As imperceptibly as vapour mounts in the air, the life expires. But the vapour does not cease to exist; neither does the spirit. The apostle James writes: "What is your life? It is even a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." But it does not go off into nothing. Steam turns into water. Nothing is ever lost. Earthly life passes away, but it does not become nothing. A caterpillar becomes a cocoon, a cocoon a butterfly. Dead men have passed out of our sight. It does not mean that they do not exist any more.

Suppose we could speak with an embryo and tell it that the life it leads in its mother's womb is only a preparatory one. The real life follows in another world unknown to the embryo, in conditions unimaginable to him. The embryo would answer like ~The Atheist's Handbook~, if it had the intelligence of an academician:
"Don't bother me with these religious superstitions! The life in the womb is the only one I know, and there is no other. Sheer inventions of greedy clergymen!"

But suppose this embryo could think with greater discernment than our academicians. It would say to itself:

"Eyes develop in my head. To what purpose? There is nothing to see. Legs grow. I do not even have room to stretch them. Why should they grow? And why do arms and hands grow? I have to keep them folded over my breast. They embarrass me and my mother. My whole development in the womb is senseless unless there follows a life with light and colour and many objects for my eyes to see. The place in which I'll spend this other life must be large and varied. I will have to run in it. Therefore my legs grow. It will be a life of work and struggle. Therefore I grow arms and fists, which are of no use here." Reflections on his own development would lead an embryo to the knowledge of another life, though he had no experience of it.

This is exactly our situation, too. The church of Christ teaches us that life in this world also has an embryonic character and is only a preparation for the real life which follows. How do we know that? If God (or nature, for the sake of argument) had created us only for this life, we would have been given first the wisdom and experience of old age and then the vigour of youth. We would have known how to live. But the fact is that while we are vigorous young men and women, we lack wisdom and more often than not throw away our years on nothing. When we have accumulated wisdom and experience, the funeral hearse is waiting outside our door. Then why do we accumulate wisdom? Well, why do eyes and legs and hands grow on the embryo? Only for what follows. Our development in this life points to a future one.

Body and spirits have not only separate but contradictory developments. As we grow in age, our body decays and our spirit is enriched. Spirit and body are like two travellers, one ascending a mountain, the other descending it. They travel in opposite directions. Which logic will make me believe that when the body has arrived at the bottom of the mountain, at the final decay, the spirit will decay with it? Is it not much more likely

that, after a steep ascension, it will soar to the heaven of heavens, as Mao Tse-Tung says that the spirit of his wife did at death (see his poem "The Immortals")?

I passed many years in solitary confinement, without books. I passed my time imagining all kinds of situations, that I was the president of the Soviet Republics, the

King of England, the pope, a millionaire, a beggar. I could imagine all such situations. They are imaginable because they are possibilities of life. Life is rich. It could make out of a corporal a French emperor and of this emperor a prisoner on an island. Poor men have become millionaires. Rich men have become paupers. Stalin, son of a heavy-drinking shoemaker, a Georgian and former seminarian, became dictator not only of the Soviet Union, but also of the whole Communist bloc. Shortly after his death, his name was erased from history. All such things are possible in life and therefore can also be imagined. But I tried to imagine that I was dead, and I never succeeded because death is not one of the possibilities of life.

If you try very hard to fancy yourself dead, the last thing you imagine is that you see yourself stretched out immobile in a coffin in a funeral chapel. The fact that you see yourself in the coffin shows that you are not dead. A dead man does not see himself. The unimaginability of death is no slight argument in favour of the eternity of human life.

The important thing is not to confound eternity with endless time, which is a contradiction in terms. Endless time does not exist! Eternity is timelessness.

We can have a glimpse of this in the possibilities of dream life, in which mental operations are sometimes performed with extreme rapidity. A series of acts which normally would occupy a great length of time pass through our minds in an instant during a dream. The relationships of space are also abolished. We can traverse huge distances in a second. We are not bound by space

and time in a dream and, pondering on the dream life, we realize that the walls of space and time which imprison us while we are awake, hide from us another quality of life beyond the limited sphere which we are wont to call "reality."

The human body to be fully satisfied needs very few things: food, clothing, shelter, rest, and at a certain age, a partner of the other sex. How is it then that capitalists or the Soviet upper class who have plenty of all of these are sometimes melancholy and dissatisfied? How is it that people imprisoned for their beliefs, hungry, shivering with the cold, in chains, separated for years from their beloved ones, can exult for joy? What is the mysterious entity which can be depressed while the body

has all good things and can rejoice while the body passes through sufferings? It is something other than the body. This is the soul.

It shows its interdependence on, but also its independence from, the body during our earthly life. It is so independent from the body that it can decide on suicide. The soul can decide to kill its own body for psychological reasons. There is no reason to believe that the death of the body must also imply the death of this strong-willed, independent entity.

In the Second Book of Kings (2KI 25:16) in the Bible, there is a curious expression. There are enumerated different objects which King Solomon had constructed for the temple. The enumeration ends with the words: "The brass of all these vessels was without weight."

Is there brass without weight? Even a feather has its weight. Only when we think about specific objects, we consider weight. That is, a specific piece of brass, a certain feather, each has weight. Brass as a generalization has no weight.

Scholastic philosophy was correct in distinguishing between the essence of an object and its accidents. The essence of bread is that it is an object made of dough

which serves for food. This essence has no weight. Bread can have different accidents. It can be barley bread, wheat bread, fresh or old bread, a small or a big loaf of bread. The weights will vary accordingly. The weight, the colour, the size are ascertained by the accidents. Essence has none of these. Bread is a notion in my spirit. There it is weightless, until it has taken a specific form. So is brass, if it does not have a certain size and shape.

Even then, objects have weight only under the pull of gravity. In a spacecraft, in a state of weightlessness, objects float around. Unaffected by gravity, they have no weight.

King Solomon had constructed a spiritual temple. No Babylonian soldier could carry away what he had constructed in his mind to the honour of the Lord.

In the Soviet Union, on September 1, 1968, a law was enacted according to which children can be taken away from parents and placed in atheistic boarding schools if they are taught the Christian faith. Christian parents endure this pressure. From the Sloboda family three children have been taken away; from the Malozemlov family seven. Who can separate a man with spiritual thinking

from his child?

There is the essence "child" and there are the accidents. The latter vary. My child has been an embryo, in the beginning much like that of an animal; then a baby; then a little girl who played with dolls. Now she is in school. I can hold a child in my arms. It can be far away. It can be an obedient child or a child who has gone astray. The accidents can change. The fact that it is my child never changes. The relationship of mother/child belongs to the realm of essence. We are not afraid of what the Communists do to the children, in the world of accidents. The relationship mother/child never changes.

The same applies to life. Which life can perish at death?

I have had a rich life and a poor one, a joyous life and

a sad one, the life of a free man and that of a prisoner, the life of a healthy man and that of a sick man. If I identify myself with one of the forms of life, my life ceases when that particular form of life ceases. For some men, life loses its value when they have no more luxury. But we Christians live in the essential.

Jesus says - "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (JHN 14:6). The word "am" is not used in Hebrew, the language which Jesus spoke, as it is not used in Russian. He said: "I - the Way, the Truth, and the Life." He identifies himself with abstract notions.

Nature knows only oaks and pines and apple trees. "Tree" is an abstraction formed in my mind. You can destroy all the trees of the world. The notion "tree" will not be touched by this catastrophe.

In nature, there are only real men, Grigoriev and Ivanov and Gherasimov, a Russian, a Ukrainian, an American, a poor man, a rich man, a female, a male. There are real lives spent selfishly or sacrificially. There can be active or contemplative lives.

Jesus does not identify himself with one certain kind of life, but with the abstract notion "life," with life containing all possibilities. He teaches us to do the same. I do not identify my life with Wurmbrand, born some sixty-five years ago and subject to death. I am the life, which has always existed in God, which has taken the form of human life with Adam and Eve, the life which will never end. My life, as a child of God, is indestructible. The body is not my "I." In a sense, I have had many bodies, that of an embryo, that of a babe, that of a child,

that of a young man. St. Peter writes: "I am in this tabernacle." He refers to his body at a certain stage. I have lived in several tabernacles, but there is a clear-cut distinction between me and the habitation in which I live for a time.

Jesus says in the Garden of Gethsemane: "My soul is

exceedingly sorrowful" (MRK 14:34). Pay attention to his expression! Everyone else could use it. He speaks about a soul and about a possessor of the soul who observes the soul and establishes that it is sorrowful. But I am not identical with a certain state of my soul either, as I am not identical with a certain state of my body.

I suffer in my body or in my soul. I know that I suffer. I know enough to know that I suffer. What is the last reality in me that observes everything that happens to what I consider "the real me"? He knows, "I am healthy now," or "I die now." Who is the one who knows and observes all these changes? He himself is unchanged. He is not a life, but the life, the Son of God within, the One who cannot die.

Jesus said: "I am the truth." How can a truth ever disappear? If I identify myself like him with truth, with all truth, the whole truth, who will be able to destroy me? It is axiomatic that 2 + 2 =4 whether I am in prison or at liberty, alive or dead. I become one with the truth, which is independent of external events.

If I unite with Christ, if I take for myself the words, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (JHN 14:6), I will live eternally.

The lowest organisms in the ladder of life are the uni-cellular beings. They multiply by division. One becomes two, two become four, and so on. There are now myriads of amoebas. But did the first amoeba ever die? It has changed its form of existence. Instead of being within one membrane, it has multiplied infinitely. Every day, millions of amoebas die, but they all are only parts of the first amoeba. The first amoeba thus lives on in them. Deathlessness appears already on the first step of the ladder of organism. And should the highest being we know on earth simply pass away?

We treasure with great care a painting by Leonardo da Vinci and a sculpture by Michelangelo. And should the Creator not keep with at least the same care the artists

who produced these works?

There is an eternal life, and as an unrepenting Hitler cannot very well pass it in the same place as the innocent children he killed, there must be a heaven for the just and a hell for the unjust.

Atheists do wrong to live as if they will never die. How do they know that at the last minute they will not regret having led astray millions of men by their godless teachings?

Let them learn from the dying words of great adversaries of the Christian religion. Talleyrand: "I am suffering the pangs of the damned." Mirabeau: "Give me laudanum that I may not think of eternity." Voltaire: "I am abandoned by God and man. I shall go to hell. Oh, Christ, oh, Jesus Christ!" Charles IX, King of France: "What blood, what murders, what evil counsels have I followed. I am lost, I see it well." Tom Paine: "I would give worlds, if I had them, if ~The Age of Reason~ (an anti-Christian book) had never been published. Oh, Lord, help me. Christ, help me. Stay with me. It is hell to be left alone."

I hope to have proved at least that belief in eternal life is not as ridiculous as the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ wished to indicate. They felt at liberty to do so because they have a monopoly of publishing.

There was an international symposium of doctors that discussed which operation is the most difficult. A German said that it was brain-surgery, a Frenchman heart-surgery. Our Soviet delegate said that the most difficult operation was a tonsillectomy. All laughed, but he said: "You consider my assertion stupid. You forget that since the Revolution, we have to extract tonsils through the brain, after trepanation of the skull, because we are forbidden to open the mouth."

I have opened the mouth without the permission of a Communist government. Once Christians speak out, it is seen that they are right.

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SCIENCE AND RELIGION

The Communist Secret Police are renowned for their ability to squeeze out confessions of imaginary crimes from innocent persons. Thousands of such "criminals" have been rehabilitated under Khrushchev. But the methods have not changed. Many Christians are in prison

in the Soviets for confessing to ritual murder. Russia has the privilege of being the only one where Christians are charged with such a stupid accusation and plead guilty.

Among the prisoners tortured by the Russian Secret Police is a certain comrade Science. Beaten, burned with red-hot iron pokers, or mistreated in some other manner, this prisoner with the name of Science has made sensational confessions, reproduced in The Atheist's Handbook. No real scientist would give a dime for them. Just listen to a few:

"Science has demonstrated in an unchallengeable manner that supernatural forces do not exist." (We poor, ignorant clods believed that science can demonstrate only existing things.) "Science demonstrates that life is largely spread in the universe ... The number of planets on which beings endowed with reason live is infinitely large. ... The scientific thesis about the multitude of inhabited worlds gives a mortal blow to the dogma of atonement, which is the essence of Christianity ... The non-existence of miracles has been fully demonstrated," and so on. We have to discard this whole section as rubbish. Let us pass to other assertions. It is an axiom for ~The Atheist's Handbook~ that between science and religion there is an irreconcilable conflict. Between which science and which religion? Both are entities in continuous development. Religion is no longer what it was five centuries or even one century ago. In the beginning, the Christians were convinced that

Jesus would return in their generation. They believed that the world is flat, that the earth is the center of the universe, with God sitting above, not very far away, having the events of the earth as his principal occupation. Christians don't think so any more.

What God has revealed is eternal. What men have thought about this revelation is transitory.

But science also changes. A secondary school boy today no longer accepts as definitive the science of Euclid, of Galileo, or of Newton.

Our opponents resort to an old trick: they compare modern science with primitive religion, science of the twentieth century after Christ with religious notions of the Jews of 3,500 years ago, when they had just escaped from centuries of slavery, were illiterate and lived on a much lower cultural level than the gypsies of today. But this is dishonest. It is like comparing the Soviet Union of today with America in pre-Colonial days, when only the

Indians inhabited the land, in order to show the economic superiority of the Soviet Union.

Science of today has to be compared with the highest religious thought of today, and then we will see coincidence rather than conflict.

And that is as it should be. We will again quote Einstein: "Most people say that it is the intellect which makes a great scientist. They are wrong; it is the character." Now, character is not a scientific but a religious and moral value. Nobody can be a real scientist without having a character based on honesty and integrity. These are the values which Christianity teaches.

A man who has only science is not reliable as a scientist. He must have sincerity; he must believe in what he discovers in his laboratory. He must have hope, because without this he would never devote his time to research. He must have enthusiasm, otherwise he would not spend countless hours in the laboratory. He must have the humility simply to accept the order of things.

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There must be singleness of purpose, because if he were to scatter his interests, he would discover nothing. A scientist must be able to co-operate with his fellow-scientists in the same laboratory. Patience is needed, like that of Mme Curie, who purified eight tons of pitch-blende to extract a few milligrams of radium. There must be judgment, right judgment. He must tell the world exactly what he has found without a bit of exaggeration. He must also be wise and self-sacrificing, hiding what is detrimental for mankind. A man who is only a scientist is not a scientist. He must first of all accept the ethical values which not atheism but religion has given to mankind.

Stalin proclaimed: "Science is the saviour of humanity." This he said just at the dawn of the atomic age, when science provided the tools for destroying in a moment whole cities, and the weapons by which humanity can be entirely blotted out. This, all because some of the scientists did not respect the values on which the whole edifice of science is built. Science must remain closely connected to religion, otherwise it will be impotent to help us achieve happiness. Because there has not always been this intimate collaboration between science and religion, humanity lives with less confidence in peace today than before the great discoveries of this modern age.

Even atheism is not possible without the ethical values of Christianity, as curious as this assertion may sound.

~The Atheist's Handbook~ writes: "The materialist conception says that in the world there exists nothing except eternal and infinite matter in movement." If there exists nothing but matter, then the materialistic philosophy, which says that everything is matter, must also be matter. "Nothing exists except matter." Then the atheistic convictions are matter, too. My opponents love atheism and hate religion. Are their love and their hatred matter? They fight for an ideal, they write for an ideal,

even while denying the existence of spiritual values. They themselves live on such values, even if they pervert them.

They write further: "The truth of dialectic materialism is confirmed by all the data of science and practice, whereas the justice of philosophic idealism and religion cannot be demonstrated by anybody."

So all the data of science and practice confirm that we are only matter! The authors of the book which I refute are also only matter. Does matter take the trouble to convince another quantity of matter? My opponents are a heap of matter; so am I. Why do they spend time and energy to change my opinions?

According to them, matter is in eternal movement, according to its own intrinsic laws. You cannot convince an atom to move other than its nature intends, as you cannot change the movements of a planet. Why do they then sit down to convince me?

Atheists are very often much better than their theories. Atheist soldiers died during the war to save the lives of their comrades. What idiot would die for the good of a wooden desk? Who would renounce any joy in order to make a piece of paper happy? Atheists, who give their lives for their comrades or who sacrifice their evenings to free others from religious superstition, do not themselves believe in the depths of their heart, that they and their comrades are only matter. Just as science cannot function without religion, so atheism and atheists cannot exist without respecting some of its basic values.

It is true that some scientists are in conflict with religion, but who knows how science will develop? It is also difficult to foresee the evolution of religion.

There is no reason to believe that the conflict even between certain scientists and religion is irreconcilable.

And supposing it were, science and religion may seemingly disagree and yet both be true, as is the case with the two theories of light, one maintaining that light is a

particle, the other that light is a wave. Both theories prove right in experiments. The idea that all truth must be synthesized in our mind is fallacious, since we are finite and can only know partial truths.

There is nothing threatening in the fact that two scientists, measuring accurately, arrive at different conclusions. Why then should it be distressing if a scientist on the one hand and a man of religion on the other hand, beginning with entirely different presuppositions, arrive at different results?

The case of Lord Rayleigh and Sir William Ramsay is known. They both found nitrogen by different methods, but there was always a slight difference between the atomic weights. They maintained their discordant results. They did not try to harmonize them; they saw no catastrophe in the disagreement. In the end, the conflict between the two results proved profitable for science. In the nitrogen of the one, Argon, an element unknown till then, was discovered.

We should not fear a conflict between religion and science as a whole. We have room in our hearts for all of reality. We would apply to this conflict the words of Jesus: "Let both grow together until the harvest" (MTT 13:30). We would grant freedom to two conflicting opinions.

All this is hypothetical, because there must be something wrong with the discovery by my opponents of the terrible conflict between science and religion. Most scientists know nothing about the conflict.

With all due regard for the academic degrees of my adversaries, they will have to admit that Einstein knew at least a little bit more science than they. The proof is that our universe bears the name of Einstein and not the name of the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook. Einstein speaks about a higher intelligence which reveals itself through nature.

Perhaps you would like to know what the great physicist

Max Planck says in his scientific autobiography. We quote his words:

> Religion and natural science are fighting a joint battle in an incessant, never relaxing crusade against scepticism and against dogmatism, against disbelief and against superstition, and the rallying cry in this crusade has always been and always will be "Unto God."

The authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ are men of science. Then let them give a scientific explanation of the fact that such great scientists knew nothing about a conflict between science and religion! Max Planck even calls the contradiction between science and religion "a phantom problem."

~The Atheist's Handbook~ makes this sweeping assertion: "Between science and religion there has always been an unceasing and implacable fight." They will never be able to substantiate this.

I quoted Einstein and Planck. What about other scientists? Did they know something about the conflict?

Sir Isaac Newton belongs to another century, but for all practical purposes we still live in the Newtonian universe. To mock his infidel friends, he made in his laboratory a solar system in miniature. An unbeliever asked him: "Who made it?" Newton answered: "Nobody." "Lies, stupidities!" the infidel answered. "Tell me the truth: who made it?" Then Newton replied: "It is nothing but a puny imitation of a much grander system, and I am not able to convince you that this mere toy is without a designer and maker! Did you profess to believe that the great original, from which the design is taken, has come into being without a maker? Tell me, by what sort of reasoning do you reach such an incongruous solution?"

The atheist professors acknowledge that Newton finishes

his fundamental scientific work ~The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy~ with words about "the ruling of a powerful and wise Being" and with expression of belief in an initial impulse, that is, a creation. They explain it by the fact that Newton lived in the beginning of the eighteenth century, when men were ignorant of many of the atomic and chemical and biological processes known today, when science was still tied up with theology. They also claim that the fact that Newton was religious was a hindrance to his science. But then remains the riddle that in the twentieth century the Newtonian universe has become the Einsteinian universe; Einstein knew at least something about the

atomic processes, about the most recent developments of science, and he who had begun as an atheist in his youth was brought to faith by the fact that he arrived at the pinnacle of science.

But let us hasten to note that Einstein does not worry my opponents. They profit from the fact that his books are forbidden in the Communist-ruled part of the Einsteinian universe. You can find them in no book shop. Even in academies, they are kept in the secret section of libraries. Nobody can check up on the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~, and so they can say that Einstein underlined consistently "the incompatibility between science and faith." I have already quoted his words to the contrary.

My opponents mention with satisfaction Laplace, who said that he had no need of "the hypothesis" God. First of all, God has been vindicated by the fact that the great Soviet astronomer Tihov begins his book of astronomy with the assertion that we have no more need of the hypothesis Laplace. But all apart from this, Laplace was a professing Christian.

The authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ are wrong in quoting Descartes in support of their doctrines. Descartes was also a professing Christian. They distort

the meaning of his words, giving them a materialistic sense. He wrote: "Give me matter and motion, and I will construct the universe! " The words are clear. The existence of the universe requires matter, motion, and an intelligent being to construct it. The words of Descartes are: "Give me matter and motion." Without this "me," matter and motion alone would not make a universe. It is only this "me," which comes from God, who can accomplish great deeds, because we have been created as creators.

One often wonders about the liberties academicians take in attributing to renowned authors ideas they never intended.

But let us leave these men of old and return to our own century.

Heisenberg, the great atomic scientist, could not have read ~The Atheist's Handbook~, because he launched an appeal for a union between science and religion! Sir James Jeans, the renowned astronomer, writes in his book ~The Mysterious Universe~:

> The universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine. Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder in the realm of matter. We are beginning to suspect, that we ought rather to hail it as the creator and governor of the realm of matter, not, of course, our individual minds, but the Mind in which the atoms out of which our individual minds have grown existed as thoughts ... We discover that the universe shows evidence of a designing or controlling power, that has something in common with our individual minds ... We are not so much strangers or intruders in the universe, as we first thought.

Newton had the disadvantage of belonging to a backward century. That is how ~The Atheist's Handbook~ explains his religiosity; it was only because of the pressure,

of his backward milieu that he wrote in his book ~Optics~: "Does it not appear from phenomena that there is a Being, incorporeal, living, intelligent, omnipresent, with infinite space, which sees things intimately and thoroughly perceives them and comprehends them wholly by their immediate presence to himself?" But James Jeans belongs to our advanced scientific century, as does Heisenberg.

Let us listen to the great psychologist, Professor Jung, who also belongs to our century:

> During the past thirty years, people from all civilized countries of the earth have consulted me ... Among all my patients in their second half of life, that is to say over thirty-five years, there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that everyone of them fell ill, because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook."

It is not the mentality of a century - it is science which makes men religious, science in all its spheres. Therefore, Kepler wrote centuries ago: "We are thinking God's thoughts after him." And Sir Allister Hardy, until recently head of Oxford University's zoology department, wrote: "Some power we call God is involved in the process of life"; and "I believe the living world is as closely linked with theology as it is with physics and chemistry, that the divine element is part of the natural process, not

strictly supernatural but paraphysical." He said something else that is very interesting: "Just as knowledge of the biology of sex does not destroy the lover, so a religion linked with science and natural theology need not destroy the rapture of communion with God. Let us go forward to reclaim the ground that has been lost in the world."

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I do not know how it happened that ~The Atheist's Handbook~ refers to Bertrand Russell as a scientist. We know no scientific discovery of his. He is an authority for our opponents because he subscribed to leftist policies. But because his name has been mentioned, I think we should tell what he wrote about Christianity:

> There are certain things that our age needs, and certain things it should avoid. It needs compassion ... It needs above all courageous hope and the impulse to create it ... The root of the matter is a very simple and old-fashioned thing, a thing so simple that I am almost ashamed to mention it for fear of a derisive smile, with which wise cynics will greet my words. The thing I mean - please forgive me for mentioning it - is love. Christian love or compassion. If you feel this, you have a motive for existence, a guide for action, a reason for courage, an imperative necessity for an intellectual honesty.

Now let us come back to genuine scientists. C. Chant, professor of astro-physics at Toronto University, says: "I have no hesitation in asserting that at least ninety per cent of astronomers have reached the conclusion that the universe is not the result of any blind law but is regulated by a great intelligence." As for the other ten per cent, many of them are our Soviet astronomers, and they are not free to say what they think.

We repeat that if there is an irreconcilable conflict between science and religion, as ~The Atheist's Handbook~ asserts, most of the scientists themselves know nothing about it.

~The Atheist's Handbook~ uses as an anti-religious argument the new science of cybernetics, by which they prove that all the workings of our mind are like the functioning of a machine; no spirit is implied in either.

It is truly marvelous that these cybernetics installations

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can reproduce or imitate nervous phenomena, that they translate, play chess, and solve problems of thought much more quickly than man can.

But - and this is the point so easily ignored - the cybernetics machine is produced by a mind. In the end, it is simply a reflection of the thought-processes of that mind and not something uniquely new.

Men can run, let us say, ten miles an hour. But they have invented jets and missiles which travel thousands of miles per hour. Men have eyes which perceive at a certain distance, but they have invented the microscope and the telescope to enable them to see what was hidden from the unaided eye. Men were created with the ability to make tools to extend their capabilities and enlarge their senses. The cybernetics machine belongs to this category, but behind every machine there is the mind which constructed it.

Who constructed the machine called "atheist author"? Let my opponents pause a bit and ponder the fact that every one of them has at his disposal around ten billion brain cells. What kind of Creator must he be who grants such a profusion of neurons to the one who wishes to mock him! Any brain cell can be in contact with 25,000 others. The number of possible associations is of the order of ten billion to the twenty-five-thousandth power, a quantity larger than the probable number of atoms in the universe known to us.

Think further: each atheist has a thousand miles of blood vessels in his body to supply his brain and organs. To defeat old and proven religion is not an easy task; our opponents sweat at it. Each atheist author has one and a half million sweat glands on his body's surface. He breathes as he writes against religion. He can breathe because he has lungs composed of seven hundred million cells. While he writes against the Creator, his heart beats steadily; it beats many billions of times during his life. In fact, during an average lifetime it pumps the weight of

some six hundred thousand tons of blood. Could my opponents believe that a crane which lifts such massive tonnage exists by itself without any involvement with an intelligent being?

The authors of the atheistic masterpiece have spent a tremendous amount of nervous energy on it. Now, the nervous system of every one of the authors has three trillion nerve cells, of which nine billion are in the cortex.

Furthermore, they could not have written the book if they had not been healthy. Their health was insured by the thirty million white corpuscles in their veins. They also have 130 quadrillion red corpuscles.

Doubtless they sometimes took a walk to stimulate their thinking before writing further. It rained; yet no drop of water fell into their nostrils, because the opening of the nostrils is downward, not upward. Who arranged for this small detail?

Oh, if these academicians only had the wisdom of the fisherman known as John the Evangelist! He wondered about the mystery of his heart, which was beating regularly, assuring the continuation of life. He lay down on the breast of his best friend, Jesus, heard the regular beatings of his heart, and so was reassured that there exists a God, just as the one who hears the regular ticking of a watch knows that there exists a watchmaker.

I hope with every fibre of my being that my opponents will also come to know this and to know it ~now~ - not in hell where the truth about God and his universe is finally realized, but too late!

From thinking about their own bodily machine, which is much more wonderful than the cybernetics one, let my opponents now turn to admire a long suspension bridge. Yet a spiderweb, strung across a garden path, suggested the first suspension bridge. But who gave the spider the intelligence which we admire in the engineer? And who provided it with a web of such remarkable tensile strength? Those who made the first aeroplanes from

Leonardo da Vinci to the Wright brothers, learned from the birds.

But my opponents may be sure that I understand them. They speak in the name of science, which is based on truth, and yet they themselves miss the one great condition of truth, which is free and fair discussion.

Suppose that several of the Soviet academicians had arrived at religious conclusions, as Einstein and Planck have done. Could they have published a work expressing their convictions? Surely they could have - but only secretly and at the risk of going to prison. We cannot demand much from authors who write under such conditions. Not every man is a hero or a potential martyr.

The rulers of the Communist countries are more in love with their own doctrine than with objective truth and therefore do not submit it to the only valid test, that

of free discussion; thus, they exclude their academicians from the right to speak in the name of science.

How can someone speak in the name of science when he abuses the monopoly of publication which the atheists maintain and attributes to religion what it has never asserted?

We will give below just a few examples, taken at random from ~The Atheist's Handbook~. I quote:

"According to the Bible, God has created all the stars, the sun, and the moon in the fourth day of creation." Here, my opponents have simply added the word "all." This one word does not exist in the respective verse of the Bible. The Bible teaches only this, that the stars were created by God; it does not exclude, as ~The Atheist's Handbook~ says, the appearance of new stars. God has created this universe according to laws established by him, laws which allow for the possible appearance of new stars, as in other spheres there appear new men, new plans, and new ideas.

Another quotation from ~The Atheist's Handbook~: "The preachers of religion declare that life has been

created by God only on our planet, but science has demonstrated that life is very largely spread throughout the universe."

When did the preachers of religion declare that life exists only on our planet? When did science demonstrate the second proposition?

Another quotation: "The transformation of nature by men shows obviously that the dogma, according to which the world created by God is invariable, has no foundation." The dogma of ~which~ religion ever asserted that the world created by God is invariable, or that men will not be able to transform nature? The Bible begins with the story that God put Adam in the garden of Eden to tend the garden, to work in it, which is to transform nature. Abel was already a shepherd who bred animals, and Cain was a farmer. Men were meant to influence nature and to change it.

In the part of their book with the sub-title "The bankruptcy of the dogma of atonement" these atheists write: "Clergymen try to convince us that as God is omnipresent, the word of God has been incarnated simultaneously as at an order, and in every one of the worlds inhabited by living beings. So Christ had to be born, to suffer and to die simultaneously on an infinite number of

planets." I defy my opponents to give the name of one single clergyman who has ever endorsed such foolishness. First of all, science has never established that there exist intelligent beings on millions and millions of planets; secondly, no church has ever said that Christ died on many planets.

But we do not need to insist on this, because a few pages later the atheist authors say just the opposite of what they invented before. Now, they put in the mouth of theologians (nobody knows which) the assertion that the earth is the only place in which mankind has committed sin, which required atonement, whereas other races on other planets have remained faithful. Invention after

invention! Never have theologians dogmatized about these questions!

With a smile, I give another quotation from ~The Atheist's Handbook~: "Religion admits only the natural modification of the geography of our planet, because it comes from God, but the creative intervention of man in the geographic process is completely excluded." They mean by this that religion does not allow the creation of canals for irrigation. That the very religious people of old, the Babylonians and the Egyptians, had a vast network of irrigation canals does not count for them. When has religion pronounced itself against canals? What religion?

Well, this time my opponents have proof. They quote prince Golifsin, governor of the province of Astrakhan of some 200 years ago, who opposed a canal uniting two rivers. But I for one have never known governors of a province to be representatives of religion.

Another quotation: "The clergymen have preached for thousands of years the idea that the flying of men towards heaven without the permission of God is inadmissible, profane, and have persecuted with cruelty and have exterminated the courageous men who have tried to fulfill such flights, not to speak about the cosmic travels of men; and in the present, all these religious principles have been destroyed."

I try to be polite, but I cannot say otherwise than that this is a patent lie. Nobody can give the name of one single man who has tried to fly and who has been exterminated because of this. Are astronauts exterminated in America? The first American astronaut asserted his faith in God, and the astronauts that followed read the Bible

while in orbit around the moon. They came back, they were feasted. Not one of them was killed. How can academicians write such lies?

I continue with these curious quotations from a book published by the Moscow Academy of Science: "Some

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preachers of religion say that the Most High has moved his inhabitants in the depths of the universe and that therefore the cosmic rockets and satellites do not reach as far as the kingdom of heaven. Why did God need to move into another apartment?" When did any preacher of religion ever propound such stupidity?

But the atheist authors very soon forget what they have said and fight against us with another argument: "The clergymen underline especially that men cannot find God or his supernatural servants, because these are immaterial, without a body, and belong to the spiritual world, not to the material world." This already sounds better, but they do not accept the fact that God, being spirit, is not meant to be seen by an astronaut who has gone only as far as the moon. They write: "The immaterial is also accessible to man." Poor materialists, who said only a few pages earlier that nothing exists except matter and movement! Now they acknowledge that the immaterial exists and is accessible to the human mind - which is true, if only they would use their minds to discover the Eternal Spirit and their own spirit.

Another gratuitous assertion of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ is that religion justifies ignorance. Who created the first universities in Europe? Was it not the Christians? Were not the monasteries the first centres of culture? Who would deny that the German and English languages - and many others - were formed by the Bible?

Well, my atheist friends can assert anything! They represent a dictator, and their opponents are muzzled.

Another assertion of ~The Atheist's Handbook~: "Religion condemns men to indifference towards events." The Communist Secret Police is not at all of the same opinion. Its agents know very well that Christians are not passive, and they put us in prison for our religious activities.

I think that the quotations given above are sufficient. They will make some readers so disgusted that they will

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ask themselves if it is worthwhile to answer a book written on such a low level. But it has to be answered, because the book is distributed by the millions in innumerable translations. It is inculcated in the minds of youth; it dominates by the power of the whip.

No, science cannot be opposed to religion. Science ~can~ be opposed only to a certain kind of backward religion.

If I pronounce the word "ship," this can awaken in your mind different images. You can have before you the ark of Noah, the primitive ship on which the Polynesians traversed the oceans, the ships of the Vikings when they first arrived in America, a steamer of a hundred years ago, or a modem trans-Atlantic luxury liner.

When I say "religion" or "God," again this awakens in the mind different images. Different men at different times, according to their powers of understanding, feeling and spiritual insight, have understood God differently. They interpreted his revelation differently also.

Some concepts of God are backward and undoubtedly contradict science. But this does not apply to all religion; nor does religion have to accept all science, because there exist many backward things in science too.

Science and religion belong to two different spheres. Science tells us only what the material aspects of things are. If a scientist were asked what a kiss is, he would say: "It is the approaching of two pairs of lips with a reciprocal transmission of microbes and carbon dioxide." But there is a "more" to the kiss. From the scientific point of view, any flower is the balance of a biochemical mechanism requiring potash, phosphates, nitrogen, and water in definite proportions; but every lover of flowers will contest that the scientist has said everything about a flower. Science goes only half-way. Part of the way is gone by art, part by philosophy, and the last mile by religion.

You know very little about life if you think of it only as a protoplasmic organism, forgetting what you have

learned about it from Shakespeare, from Dickens, from Michelangelo, from Raphael, from the great religious personalities of the world, and from the incarnation of God, Jesus Christ.

Would it be right to speak of a lover's embrace in terms of an accelerated release of adrenalin into the blood and say that this is an adequate explanation of everything that happens at that moment?

It is unscientific and therefore untrue to reduce life to science.

The authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ pass from theoretical considerations about the relationship between science and religion to the practical side of things. Luther allegedly asked for "fierce repressions against the heresy of Copernicus." It remains a mystery when Luther ever asked for these repressions. You would seek in vain for any such words in the works of Luther.

"But did Calvin not burn Servetus, the great scientist?" our opponents ask. Yes, he had him burned, unhappily. But the assertion of ~The Atheist's Handbook~ that he burnt him on the stake for his scientific discoveries is simply not true. He was sentenced to death for teaching a false religious doctrine. This was some five hundred years ago. and it is very regrettable, but it is not for our opponents to say a word about this. Not one Servetus, but tens of millions of men have been sentenced to death or killed slowly in Communist concentration camps for having dared to nurture a political doctrine other than that of a dictator later disowned by his own comrades.

Neither is another assertion of my opponents true, that the library of Alexandria was destroyed by Christian fanatics at the end of the fourth century. If they had done so, the Moslems would not have been able to destroy it, as they did in the seventh century.

Another ludicrous lie: ~The Atheist's Handbook~ says that in the United States, England, the Netherlands, and

other such countries, epidemics of smallpox erupt because the priesthood and the clergy are against vaccination on religious grounds. When did any of these countries have the last epidemic of smallpox? As a matter of fact, vaccination has been discontinued in the United States because the disease has been virtually wiped out.

Ah, yes, there is still a question: the index of the Catholic Church, which forbids the reading of certain books! The Catholic Church abolished the index at the Second Vatican Council. We still await the abolishing of the index in Communist countries. How they would like to read the books of Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn freely - or at least Plato, Newton, Bergson, not to mention the Bible and its commentaries! Even the books of Stalin are on the index; they cannot be found in any bookshop.

Neither what the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~

say theoretically about science and religion, nor what they say on the practical side of the matter, can stand investigation.

It is now an axiom of biology that function creates the organ. We have eyes to see light and colour. We have ears because there are sounds for us to hear, and hands because there are material things to handle. We are given a brain because there are things to think about. How is it that we have the curious capacity to believe, to have faith? Even a child has this capacity. So there must be a corresponding reality. Would it be logical in this world, where everything in us correspond to an external reality, for just this capacity of faith to be in us without something "out there" to be apprehended by faith? We have the capacity for belief because there is a God to believe in. There exists not only matter, but also a reality which cannot be explained in physical or chemical terms without exposing oneself to ridicule.

Science pleads for religion.

The earth is exactly at the right distance from the sun and has the right orbital velocity to make life possible on

it. If we had been a little bit nearer the sun, we would have been burnt by its fire. If we had been farther away, the earth would have been too cold for anything to grow. If the earth did not revolve around the sun, there would not be seasonal changes.

Proteins are a combination of five major elements: carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, sulphur, and oxygen. Within, every molecule of protein, there are probably something like forty to fifty thousand atoms. From roughly a hundred chemical elements which are distributed at random on our earth, only these five, and then only in fixed proportions, can form molecules of protein. Could this have happened by chance? The quantity of matter that would have had to be shaken up and the length of time required to finish this task in order to obtain proteins by chance, can be calculated according to the laws of probability. The Swiss mathematician Charles Cuye has made this calculation. He says: "The probability against such an occurrence by chance is 1:10 with 160 zeros following." It means that there is one chance in ten-with-160-zeros-following that out of a random shaking together of
matter, one single molecule of protein would be produced. The matter to be shaken would have to be greater

than that of the whole known universe. The time needed for this would be 10-followed-by-243-zeros billions of years!

Professor J. Leathes has calculated that the links of a chain in a very simple protein are combined in 10-with-48-zeros-following millions of ways. Chance cannot build such a molecule. Chance has never built the frame of a house or a piano, which are both very simple things compared to one molecule of protein.

When I was in prison, I heard quarrels between thieves. They played with dice. If a dice happened to turn up a six too often, the other thieves immediately suspected that the dice was loaded and that chance was not operating. It could not just happen that sixes should turn

up again and again. Neither could simple chance have given us the ordered universe that we have. A philosopher, even an atheist philosopher, cannot be the result of the development of matter at random. Simple chance would never result in an atheist thinker.

I quoted a mathematician to the effect that the chance for creating one protein molecule would be 1 to 10-with-160-zeros-following. Would any of my atheist opponents put a ruble in a lottery in which the chance for gain would be 1 to 10-with-160-zeros-following? It would be a stupid risk. It would mean throwing a ruble away. But they risk their mental sanity, they risk the eternal jewel of their soul, they risk the truth on a theory that has as many chances to be exact as the chance to win in our hypothetical lottery. Professor Edwyn Conklin, a well-known biologist at Princeton University, has said: "The probability of life originating from an accident is comparable to the probability of the unabridged dictionary resulting from an explosion in a printing shop."

But all our arguments are of no avail for confirmed atheists. They know about the skull of the Neanderthal and others like him to prove that Adam, who lived in Paradise in fellowship with God, could not have existed. The Bible begins with something unscientific; our predecessors were very primitive men, evolved from the animal world. There can be no question of any concordance between the Bible and science, they say.

Suppose that excavations will be made on our earth 5,000 years from now and archaeologists will find two or three skulls of Australian aborigines, or of men still living in the stone age in New Guinea. The anthropologists of

that day will say that in our time, there lived no civilized men. But men who launch rockets to the moon coexist with the pygmies. Why should not some of Adam's mentally developed descendants have coexisted with cave men?

I think I have said enough about this subject of science

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and religion.

What keeps these atheistic authors from claiming the right to speak in the name of truth is the complete lack of doubt in their book.

The authors of the Bible, though deeply religious people, never abstained from expressing their doubts. You find them in the Psalms and in the book of Job. Even St. John the Baptist had doubts when in prison about Jesus being the Messiah. Jesus himself cried on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

The authors of the guide for atheists express a cocksureness about everything. They are not permitted to doubt; they have to fulfill the assignment given to them by the Communist Party to write against religion.

No man is entirely religious. Religious men have their doubts. Likewise no man is always an atheist. Atheists have their moments of faith, but whereas authors of the Bible, David and Job, for example, sometimes have thoughts that almost seem blasphemous, our atheist opponents are always very predictable. They are all of a piece: atheists, and only atheists! This is not natural. They do not express all that they think.

It is as if they had never even heard about Heisenberg's famous uncertainty principle!

On your side, my atheist friends, lies political power. But scientific truth is on our side. Jesus can be considered the founder of scientific thought. He said: "Go your way and tell John what things you have seen and heard"; "We speak that which we do know and testify that which we have seen"; and "Behold, the fowls of the air ... consider the lilies of the field, how they grow." He teaches exact observation! Christians are taught to speak what they know, what they have heard and seen. Science is based on these same principles.

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ATONEMENT

~The Atheist's Handbook~ speaks about many other things, but I have to guard the length of this manuscript. It will have to be smuggled into Communist countries in printed form, and therefore it should not be too long.

But I owe my opponents something. Christ taught us to reward evil with good. They have slandered our religion; I must show them the way of salvation. Authors of an atheistic book of propaganda can be saved just as surely as those who have committed other sins.

We live with this terrible reality of sin. I have my sins; my opponents have theirs. Neither humanistic nor atheistic nor religious philosophy, nor speculations of clergymen or of their godless foes can do anything towards freeing a man from his sin. For this, God has done a mighty, efficacious work. I have sought to prove the reliability of Scriptures. My opponents can learn from Scriptures how to be cleansed from their sins, to become children of God and heirs of eternal life.

St. Paul writes: "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures ... he was buried, and ... he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1CO 15:3,4).

Nobody can understand fully what the death of Christ in Palestine two thousand years ago has to do with ~my~ sins, and how ~my~ sins can be removed by a sacrifice which ~he~ made at that time. But neither can we give a full explanation of the nature of electricity, or of gravity, or of our own physiological and psychological processes. We do not need a full explanation of the atonement in order to profit from it. It is enough to believe that Christ died for our sins, that he bore our punishment, and that our sins are no more imputed to us.

Christ is God incarnate. Yet he humbled himself and took upon himself the penalty of our sins in his own

suffering. St. Peter puts it in these words: "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver or gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1PE 1:18). And in heaven a song is sung to the praise of Christ: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth"

(REV 5:9, 10).

When Christ purchased by his blood men of every nation, he purchased also the Communists and the atheist.

As I have said: We cannot fully understand the atonement, but we can understand something of it. When we bear in mind that Christ is God and, as such, a person of infinite value and dignity, then (I know the assertion will shock, but still I do not hesitate to make it) the killing of Christ was a worse crime than that which would have been committed if the entire human race had been crucified. You will understand this better if you will meditate on the words of Isaiah: "The nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance" (ISA 40:15) before God.

A very simple illustration will show what we think. I am sick with tuberculosis, and I have killed millions of tuberculin microbes with medicines. I have also killed many other microbes and all kinds of insects; many animals have been killed for my food; I suffer no remorse for these. But my conscience accuses me of every wrong I have done to man, because man is so much higher than the insects - he bears the image of God. In the same way, Christ, who is God incarnate, is of infinitely higher value than the billions of beings who are only men, and therefore his crucifixion was fully sufficient to redeem the whole human race from all its sins - this on condition of

faith in what he has done for us. In his person, God suffered, God died for his people, appropriating to himself first a human body in which he should be able to die, because Godhead is immortal.

Therefore, Peter writes again: "Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God"(1PE 3:18). And St. John writes: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1JN 1:7). St. John the Baptist said, pointing to Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world" (JHN 1:29). St. Paul writes: "Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the wrath [of God] through him" (ROM 5:9). What wrath such a blasphemous work as ~The Atheist's Handbook~ must have provoked in God! But we can be saved from this wrath, because "in [Jesus Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (EPH 1:7).

The atonement has been the object of meditation on the part of Christians for two thousand years. It has been explained in diverse manners. There are many doctrines of the atonement.

Which of them should we choose?

St. Therese of Lisieux, when asked which Christian virtue she would like to practise most, answered: "All of them!" I would say the same thing about the doctrines of the atonement. They are all the result of deep meditation of believing and loving souls; there is no reason to put any of them aside.

True is the vicarious doctrine, that Jesus died as our substitute for our sins. True also is the moral influence doctrine, that Christ died in order that through the beauty of his gesture and of his sacrifice, he might influence us to adopt a new and godly manner of life. True is the governmental theory, according to which God freely forgives sinners but made Christ suffer in order to show us that every transgression incurs punishment, and that

we, looking at the great suffering of Christ, might see what we deserved for our sins. True is the mystical theory, according to which Christ and the believing soul are one, united by a love which makes them indissoluble. As a mother suffers with her sick child and as a loving bride suffers with her bridegroom who passes through pain, we have suffered together with our beloved Christ on Golgotha, and we ourselves have received in his body, wherewith we are one, punishment for our sins.

But I think that the most plausible explanation for a twentieth century man is the doctrine of transfer. We all have in our psychology the mechanism of transfer. When we cannot find something and we are upset about it, it is enough for us to blame someone else, our wife or our child, for misplacing the respective object. We have found a scapegoat on whom to put the guilt. If a child has banged himself against a stool, it is enough for the mother to "spank" the stool for the hurt it caused, and the child is immediately mollified. The mechanism of transfer is deeply rooted in us. Our heart finds peace if we can charge somebody else with our troubles: the monarchy, the bourgeoisie, the landlords, the Americans, the imperialists, the Communists, the Trotskyites, Stalin, the Jews, the Black, the Whites, anybody but myself.

Jesus consciously used this mechanism of transfer; therefore he came to mankind, presenting himself as the

Son of God. It was as if he said: "Now, if you have this tendency to transfer your sins to somebody else, the most normal thing is to transfer them to my shoulders; I bear the responsibility, because the whole creation was made through me. I am ready to take upon myself all the guilt and all the sin. You feel that your sins deserve a punishment. Kant said: 'The criminal has a right to punishment.' I will bear the punishment which you deserve, and you will be free."

I recommend to my atheist opponents, since they have done harm to so many millions of souls by writing slanderous

lies against religion, that they put this crime on the shoulders of Christ, whom they have attacked. Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the whole world; therefore, he takes away also the sins of the authors of ~The Atheist's Handbook~. Believe in Christ, and you will be saved!

You have tried to oppose religion with atheistic theories. This is childish. Critical analysis is impotent before interior anguish. Atheistic theories do not help a dying man or his bereaved family. Your own doctrines are of no value to you when you pass through the anguish of doubt and ask yourself if you have not committed a terrible offence by writing this book. You may not think about it today, but there will come a day when you will have to think, the day of your death.

Moscow, Peking, and Washington are competing to see which will be the city of greatest influence in the world. None of them will! The city with the mightiest population, the city where kings and republicans, capitalists and Communists, Stalinists and Trotskyites, atheists and religious people, clergymen and their enemies meet, is the city of the grave. And for the unbeliever beyond the grave lies only remorse.

Even at the moment before death, it will not be late. In that moment, you can say the prayer: "Lord Jesus, Son of God, pity me, the sinner!" Believe in the blood shed for you by Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.

My dear atheist friends, we have passed a few hours together. Now we part.

In the Bible the story is recounted that while the Jews were slaves in Egypt, for three days there was a spell of darkness. While the darkness surrounding the Egyptians was so dense they could not see one another, all the

children of Israel enjoyed light.
  This light is the Word of God. The people of God had this light, and it shone into their hearts.

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  It is told that when Palestine was under Turkish rule, a cruel pasha forbade the Jews to kindle lights at night. The cities were completely shrouded in darkness.
  But in Safed, the windows of the rabbi Joseph Caro glowed at night. The rabbi read the Scriptures. The guards reported to the pasha what was happening. He immediately rode to the rabbi's house and saw him ... leaning over the Bible, while the entire room was aglow with a luminescence coming from the walls, although no lamp was burning in the room. The walls were covered with fireflies. They gave him light.
  The rabbi explained to the pasha: "The law of God illuminates not only the lives of those who study it, but also the fireflies who listen."
  Some of you, my atheistic opponents, and those who have believed you will read these lines. I am sure that they will be illumined, though their minds have been darkened by your slanders against the Word of God, and that bright light, the light of Christ, will shed its warmth and beauty throughout the Communist lands.

A LAST WORD

We understand the poor atheists who have to speak as commanded. But if an innkeeper gives bad wine, he can ease his conscience by giving it in short measure.
  Seven hundred pages of denial after denial, denial of God, the Bible, eternal life, and humanity shows an excess of zeal.
  You have written a boring book. It is not your fault. You could not have done better. Every man has a God-shaped vacuum in his heart. Instead of filling the vacuum with God, you wrote a book about the structure and beauties of a vacuum.
  You had to write it. Atheist books are the only books about atheism, whereas Luther said: "Our Lord has written the promise of the resurrection not in books alone, but

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in every leaf of springtime."

Your book is boring, yes. But it is also poisonous for minds which don't have the liberty to read religious books and thus come to a knowledge of the truth. You are like someone who leads caterpillars astray by telling them that all their endeavours are in vain; they will never become beautiful butterflies. You tell buds that they will never become flowers. You kill the souls of men, telling them that they are not destined to be Christ-like in this life and in Paradise for all eternity.

I don't wish to insult you. I wish to help you realize your terribly dangerous state of heart. You are worse than murderers. They kill only bodies. You slay souls, incapacitating them for enjoying God.

Therefore I give you the advice which Sonya gave to the murderer Raskolnikov: "Get up. Go at once, this very minute, and stand at the crossroads; then bow down and kiss first the earth which you have defiled, and then bow to the whole world, to all four points of the compass, and say to them all aloud, 'I have killed.' Then God will send you life again. Will you go? Will you go?"

I myself bow before you, because I also have killed souls in the past.

Like you, I was an atheist, until the day I came to myself and did literally what Sonya advised. Now I shudder at the life of violence and suffering that awaits you if you continue in your atheism. I have been found by Christ and have been saved from atheism, from crime. This way is open for you, too.

Will you go? Will you go?

End Of Book

[The following is from the "jacket" of the Arlington House Publishers edition (1975) of the book.]

IS THERE A GOD?
Richard Wurmbrand erases any doubts.

ð "In the Babylonian Talmud it is said that a heathen emperor asked a rabbi: 'Show me God!' The rabbi answered: 'You will see him with your eyes on one condition. First, you must look five minutes into the sun.' The emperor looked at the sun but immediately had to lower his eyes. Then the rabbi told him: 'You cannot look for one minute at the sun, which is an

insignificant creation of God - and yet you wish to see the One who gives the stars their brilliance!'"

ð "Nobody can be eloquent for atheism. Atheism is a denial. Who can write enthusiastically about a negation? Who can address a sonnet to a negation, or dedicate a concerto to a negation, or sculpture a negation? Religion has inspired symphonies, paintings, statues, poetry. Atheism, by its very nature, could never have this impact. Atheism has no wings."

ð "Go, comfort somebody who is dying in a cancer ward, or his family, with these words: 'We are building a happy Communist society'; or 'Science achieves great things. We have been to the moon and soon we will be on Venus.' There is not much consolation in this. But tell the dying and the bereaved about the heavenly Father and the Christian's hope of living eternally with Him, and you will see the difference."

ð "There ~is~ an eternal life, and as an unrepenting Hitler cannot very well pass it in the same place as the innocent children he killed, there must be a heaven for the just and a hell for the unjust."

Richard Wurmbrand languished for fourteen years in Communist prisons. Though beaten and starved, he never broke. Having passed through hell on earth, this courageous Romanian pastor emerged with a burning love for God and his fellow man.

Today, a decade after his release, Rev. Wurmbrand is seeking to win his former persecutors to Christ. In this remarkable book, conceived while he was in solitary confinement, Wurmbrand demolishes the arguments for atheism as presented by the Soviet Academy of Science in its ~Atheist's Handbook~.

Throughout the Communist world, people who want to get ahead must master ~The Atheist's Handbook~. Its teachings are drilled into children at school. But Richard Wurmbrand demonstrates that the atheist creed leaves more questions unanswered than it professes to settle. On the positive side, he marshals the testimony of artists, musicians, writers, philosophers, scientists, statesmen, and saints - all of whom bear eloquent witness to the reality of God. Richard Wurmbrand is not an academic. He steers away from theological wrangling. With the sparkling sense of humor that helped sustain him through unspeakable sufferings, he tells the story of God's love for us in language anyone can understand. Is there a God? Does He care about man? Can we trust what the Scriptures tell us about Him?

Yes, says Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, in a ringing affirmation of faith that comes from the heart - ~and~ from the head.

The Case for God

ú Did the universe just "happen"?

ú Scientific findings that point to creation

ú Miracles: nature performs them every day

ú Why the Gospel narratives ring true

ú Does the Bible contradict itself?

ú The Fall, the Flood, and the Exodus: history or fancy?

ú Bible prophecies that came true - to the letter

ú Did cavemen have religion?

ú Does Christianity teach submission to tyrants?

ú Why Christians behind the Iron Curtain
willingly risk torture for their faith

ú Communism: a perversion of Biblical teaching?

ú Atheism: enemy of art and culture

ú Life after death: the atheist's darkest fear

Richard Wurmbrand, world-renowned spokesman for Christians suffering under Communist persecution, was born in Romania in 1909. When the Communists seized his native land in 1945, he became a leader in the underground church.

Arrested in 1948 along with his wife Sabina, he served fourteen years in Red prisons, including three years in solitary confinement where he saw no one except his tormentors. Christian friends in Norway purchased his freedom for $10,000 in 1964. He then settled in the United States.

Two years later, in sensational appearance before the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, Wurmbrand stripped to the waist, revealing eighteen ugly torture wounds inflicted by his brutal captors.

The End of "My Answer to the Moscow Atheists"

My Correspondence With Jesus

Richard Wurmbrand
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Front Cover:

In the pain and loneliness of solitary confinement only one thing kept him sane.

By the author of "TORTURED FOR CHRIST"

Back Cover:

'One does not put questions to God. We are not to write him letters or trouble him, but only to kneel quietly in adoration. However, I am far from perfect...'

For fourteen years Richard Wurmbrand, a Rumanian pastor, was imprisoned for his faith. He was tortured physically and psychologically. Only his relationship with Jesus kept him sane. In "My Correspondence with Jesus" he lays before Christ the anguish in his heart: above all, the thought that each falling away might crucify the Son of God afresh.

This is the work of a man on the borders of sanity. 'The moment I am alone, I am in prison. Every day, every night, I relive bodily and spiritual tortures. I hear the cries, the coarse words. I see the ashen faces of the sufferers.

In many respects this book is reminiscent of the Book of Job. Like Job, Richard Wurmbrand questions God bitterly. Like Job, he is stripped bare. Like Job, he finds profound comfort - in the costly love of Christ.

A book of great power.

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It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift ... if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame (HEB 6:4-6).

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Around the beginning of the nineteenth century, the American Methodist Church had a highly gifted preacher: one Lorenzo Dow.

A person who had been robbed came to him one day requesting that he find out who the thief was. Dow gathered all the suspected persons into a certain room. On the table was a black pot under which he put a rooster. After darkening the room, he made very person touch the pot with his fingers, explaining that the rooster would crow as soon as the guilty person did so. When the light was restored, it was seen that one person present had no soot on his fingers. He had been afraid to touch the pot. The guilty stood condemned.

We believers can speak freely about the events of Jesus' crucifixion 2,000 years ago. We were not there. But when we are reminded of his being crucified afresh today (Heb. 6:6), we prefer not to touch the subject. We are all too conscious of having fallen away from the light we have received, and the thought of crucifying Christ afresh makes us more than a little uncomfortable.

I can easily understand why no importance has been attached to this unsettling text of Scripture.

One can hear thousands of sermons and read innumerable books about the crucifixion on Golgotha; one can be

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a Christian all one's life and never hear about the many crucifixions that have followed because saints have not remained true to the light they had.

While in prison, I became oppressed by the thought of this possibility, especially when I saw Christians fall away (not everyone could bear the torture and suffering) and contemplated my own weaknesses. The pain of knowing that my Lord suffers repeatedly in heaven has filled me with a chronic sadness all these years, till I finally felt constrained to set my thoughts in writing.

Prisoners under Communism were forbidden either to write

or to receive letters. In fact, it was strictly forbidden to possess writing materials of any kind. It was next to impossible to obtain even a bit of paper or a pencil. I had none during my fourteen years in jail.

Notwithstanding, some of us wrote. We smeared soap on the sole of a shoe and wrote on it with a piece of wood. I possess 350 Romanian poems written like this that I learned by heart and later transcribed. Other prisoners learned from one another such things as foreign languages, mathematics and chemistry by writing their lessons like this. If caught doing so, they were harshly punished.

It did not matter. We needed some diversion in our monotonous lives. Even an earthquake would have been preferable to the dull greyness of our confined existence.

To understand what follows, the reader must also know that men practically never saw a woman, nor women a man, except for brutal guards with whom there was no communication on a human level.

In her book ~The Pastor's Wife~ my wife (who was also in jail) tells the story of an imprisoned teenager who would write passionate love letters to a boy she imagined to exist. Then she would write a letter as if from him reciprocating her love. The exchange of love letters became more and more burning. She would weep on receiving his letter, which she had written, and would

cherish and kiss it. Once, he wrote that he had found another girl, whereupon she wept bitterly. Then she entreated her imaginary but more-than-real lover to come back to her. His 'no' was definite, and the poor girl lost her mind.

In different ways many of us carried on such imaginary discussions. We came to believe in these creatures of our mind and did not doubt that the replies came from them rather than our own imagination. The voices we heard were from without, not within.

Psychiatrists would have concluded that we had become schizophrenic. Little wonder, for prisoners were sometimes kept alone in a subterranean cell for years on end, hungry, beaten, tortured, never hearing a human voice, not even a whisper. Or at

other times crammed together like sardines, a hundred in a room that might accommodate thirty, with people fainting for lack of air.

Perhaps it was sheer schizophrenia. I do not know. But I remembered at that time a biblical text, which I visualized in Hebrew script as contained in the holy scrolls. In it God called, 'Abraham, Abraham' (GEN 22:11). These two words occur in our translations. But in Hebrew there is one thing more: a disjunctive sign between the two Abrahams. This also appears in the Hebrew when the Lord called, 'Samuel, Samuel' (1SM 3:10). It did not have to be so. When we read, 'Moses, Moses' (EXO 3:4), the disjunctive line is not there.

The two 'Abrahams' with the disjunctive line between them should really be translated, 'You, the two different Abrahams co-existing in one person.' Like us, he also had the outward and the inner man, the manifest man and the hidden man of the heart, the id, with its impulses, instincts and low desires, and the ego, the super-conscious with high longings.

Psychologists speak about neuroses, psychoses and complexes. The Bible speaks about a hidden man - a whole man, with his own desires, thoughts, emotions,

will and love - who lives in the heart of the outer man, just as there are toy eggs that contain a smaller egg. This inner man is so hidden that men often live a lifetime without discovering him.

But when he is discovered - in my case, the Richard known only to me, distinct from the ordinary Richard known to others - real dialogue (or in prison circumstances, correspondence) between the two can arise.

Friedrich von Schiller once wrote, 'Two souls live within my breast.' They should be able to communicate. Gestalt psychology recommends that we arrange for dialogue between the two. They should at least know each other. 'Can two walk together unless they are agreed?' (AMO 3:3).

Usually the two 'Richards' are at loggerheads with one another. Therefore God speaks to them as with two different beings. In the case of Moses, a harmony had been established. Thus there is no disjunctive sign when God says, 'Moses, Moses.'

Men are commanded to love one another, which means that the different Richards in me should also love one another. The holy Richard should love the Richard who is still sinful in me, the Richard with worldly thoughts and inclinations to sin. (An analysis will show that the worldly Richard is softer towards the holy Richard than the holy Richard is towards the sinful one.)

Then there exists a third Richard who judges both with haughtiness.

It is desirable that we understand each other and love God with all our heart, which, the Kabbalah says, means to love him with both sides of our nature, good and evil. The Richard of only one aspect is nothing but a mask.

The different Richards in me must love one another. The good Richard must allow the bad Richard at least the right to self-defence. He must sometimes give him the benefit of the doubt. The good Richard must fight the bad Richard, but only with kindness and understanding.

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It becomes apparent that there is amply opportunity for rich discussion or correspondence between these different men in myself.

Thus arose the idea for this present book. Eventually I decided that I might better correspond with the One who bears the responsibility for the existence of all the Richards within. Hence I wrote to Jesus and 'received' replies.

When Theodor Herzl, founder of modern Zionism, wrote in one night his first book, "The Jewish State," he seemed to hear the fluttering of angel wings in the room. Uneasy about his sensations, he went with the manuscript to his friend Dr Max Nordau, a psychiatrist, and said to him, 'Judge if this is the work of a madman or the truth.'

There is no doubt in my mind that this book was conceived when I was at least on the verge of madness. But should not a Christian's thinking under such abnormal circumstances be made known?

The Bible speaks about the 'foolishness of God'

(1CO 1:25). St Laurence Justinian says, 'Wisdom has become infatuated by love,' by a completely unreasonable love for sinners. Hosea observes that 'the spiritual man is mad' (HOS 9:7). It is normal that he be abnormal. He bears the pain of the great iniquities and enmities in the world.

Whenever wrong is done to a little one anywhere in the world, it hurts me. The prophet says that whoever touches God's holy people touches the light of his eye. Somehow it touches mine too. I felt the pain of the world most intensely when in prison. It was a quasi-physical pain. I have known saints in prison who grieved unbearably over the sins of the world, as every member of the body of Christ should. If this is madness, so be it.

Perhaps the believer who is too intellectual to feel the pain of the foot or the hand is himself unbalanced. We are all part of the same body of Christ.

In fact, Christian books are usually too reasonable, too

logical, too concerned with being clear and intelligible. Therefore their influence is minimal. Life is not like this. It is tempestuous, as is the human mind. Lie down on a couch to daydream, observe the thoughts that pass through your mind, and see if they are reasonable and moral.

Formulated thoughts bow to standards and social conventions. Only the unbidden, the vague, the unformulated nuance reflects the real self.

Why should not the unreasonable in our relationship with God also have a voice? Job, David and Jeremiah, for example, expressed displeasure with God, some of which bordered on blasphemy. Yet God allowed these thoughts to be canonised in Scripture. He even complimented Job for speaking 'what is right' (JOB 42:7,8).

Everything should be committed to God. It is written, 'Love God with all your heart.' The Kabbalah asks, 'How can this be done? We have within the heart both good and evil.' The reply is: 'Love him also with your bad inclinations.'

This is what Job and David did. At one point Job says,

'What have I done to you, O watcher of men: Why have you set me as your target?' (JOB 7:20,21). Later he complains, 'He multiplies my wounds without cause; he will not allow me to catch my breath' (JOB 9:17,18). David says, 'God gave his people over to the sword' (PSA 80:5). Jeremiah is even less charitable: 'Standing like an enemy, God has bent his bow; with his right hand, like an adversary, he has slain all who were pleasing to his eye. He has poured out his fury like a fire' (LAM 2:4).

Moses, at a certain moment, had no doubt that God does evil, and he says as much, asking, 'Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people?' (EXO 5:22). Elijah

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asked God, 'Hast thou brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn?' (1KI 17:20).

Pastors may find occasion to comment on such verses in their pulpits and to explain them away. One can also publish books excusing them, but who among us dares to speak to God like this today? Who expresses to God any discontent over his ways? What publisher would print a Christian book with similar accusations against God?

Jeremiah aired his complaints and lamentations when the Jews were deported to Babylon. The Jews under Hitler and Christians under Communism have suffered more than the ancient Israelites. Should not their words of madness be known too?

This book can be understood only if, in imagination, you join your suffering brethren in prison and enter their tortured minds. We are enjoined to feel their chains 'as if chained with them' (HEB 13:2). We should feel not only their physical chains, but also their doubts, their moments of despair, their mental anguish, the tempests that pass through their souls.

This is the concern of the present book.

I had no Bible in prison. I lived only on what I remembered of it, which was much in the beginning, but very little afterward, when hunger and doping had taken their toll.

One verse of Scripture obsessed me all during those years. I saw some Christians, even some renowned ones, falling away and passing to the Communists because they were not able to

bear the torture. Some even became Judases.

Day and night I thought about the words in HEB 6:4-6:

"It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to

renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

Those who fell away had once been my friends. Now they assumed terrible roles, which they tried to play with bravado, justifying themselves by serving their new cause enthusiastically.

But the pain I felt most intensely was the pain of Jesus. ~Jesus crucified afresh~ was too much for me. This thought was the greatest single suffering that I endured.

It is the subject of my correspondence with Jesus.

It has been easy for me to reproduce the correspondence. I wrote the present pages without having notes before me or even a plan.

I acknowledge that I lead two different lives: one that is the usual life of a sinner who loves Jesus and strives in much weakness to serve him, and another that is hidden.

The moment I am alone, I am in prison. Every day, every night, I relive bodily and spiritual tortures. I hear the cries, the coarse words. I see the ashen faces of the sufferers. My dreams too are usually about prison. Therefore my books and my sermons are out of the ordinary.

I know of only two individuals with similar experiences: Dostoievsky, who all his life carried this same burden; and Erasmus of Rotterdam, who wrote the book "The Praise of Folly."

And so I did not have to remember what I thought and felt in prison. I relive the experience every day.

And now, the correspondence.

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My First Letter to Jesus

Dear Jesus,

God could have used any number of ways to communicate with mankind. I can very well imagine communication by means of alternating colours, or painting, or music, or variations in fragrance or even taste. Sex, of course, is a means of communication, wherefore it is written, 'Adam knew Eve his wife' (GEN 4:1).

Gestures, facial expressions, what we today call body language, are all splendid vehicles of communication. In fact, while watching church services on TV, I sometimes turn off the sound so as to concentrate on the physiognomy of the preacher and members of the congregation. When in church I am also very attentive to these changes.

It is almost as if the different words of God and of prayer take shape in the expression of the eyes and in the whole musculature of the face. When the congregation is made up of true believers, the changes are simultaneous, like the music of an orchestra.

If the words 'Blessed be ye poor' are read or chanted, one can see a hush of blessedness on the faces of the poor, who may have felt outclassed by the better-dressed believers. At the words 'Blessed are ye that weep,' tears come to the eyes of the sorrowful. Why lose this

p016 ..... My Correspondence with Jesus

blessedness? 'Rejoice ye in that day.' Smiles blossom as the meaning is communicated.

In a religious service, God intends to shine his face upon us, that we might see how he looks upon us. His expressions vary, too. He does not stare at us without sentiment or emotion. In fact, his expressions might range from wrath and disgust to passionate love and a longing to identify with us.

Well, Jesus, though you had the choice of so many means of communication, you elected to reveal yourself to us through the written word.

The written word! You even asked John to write to angels. You could have spoken to them directly, but you preferred to have John write letters to the angels of the seven churches (Rev 2 and 3). Perhaps you liked his manner of writing (though I don't know why, because his Greek is awful) and therefore assigned him this work. Perhaps his calligraphy pleased you. It is hard to say.

In my thoughts, Jesus, I have looked to you often. My eyes, my whole face, my bodily positions have all tried to communicate with you. I have spoken to you in words and in songs. Now I have decided to write to you, because this is the most exquisite manner in which you addressed yourself to me. Perhaps in this way you will understand me better.

I write to you on the presumption that you are alive and can read, as well as answer, my letters.

Please don't be offended. You would expect me to say that I "know" you are alive, not simply that I presume it.

You were once a reader, that I know. You read the book of Isaiah and praised it. Perhaps for variety you have spent some time on a Wurmbrand book, too. If so, you might have read my book ~Christ on the Jewish Road~, in which I prove your resurrection. So you see, I do not doubt it.

But ... there are a few 'buts.' I will mention just two of them.

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There is sufficient proof of the fact that you were resurrected after the crucifixion on Golgotha. But since that time you have been crucified many times afresh (HEB 6:4-6). This happens every time a man illuminated by the Spirit falls away, which means many times a day. The Bible does not tell us, but I imagine that you are also resurrected every time afresh.

How long will this go on? Can you bear an unlimited number of crucifixions, with attendant resurrections, and still be capable of reading and answering letters? We all have a

breaking point in suffering. Have you none at all? Are you still alive in the plain sense of the word?

The prophet says, 'Ye have wearied the Lord' (MAL 2:17). If God can weary of sins, can he not also get tired of crucifixions? Jesus, you sat by a well in Samaria, weary and thirsty. A peaceful journey from Judea had worn you out. Won't an endless crucifixion have an even worse effect?

A second 'but.' You are the living Son of a living God. How are we supposed to understand your being alive? We are confronted with the same problem we have with beauty. Plato believed that beauty is an inherent quality of persons or things. Hume objected. 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,' he claimed. 'Nothing is always beautiful and nothing is beautiful for all.'

Is being alive an objective notion?

You characterize certain men, whom everyone would consider very much alive, as being dead in trespasses and sins. You write to the angel of a certain church, 'You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead' (REV 3:1). Apparently what is considered life for some is death for others who see life differently or give it another meaning.

If you consider certain living men to be dead, surely you are not angry that Nietzsche and some modern theologians said, 'God is dead.' Perhaps they used the word 'dead' in a relative sense, as you do.

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I don't know what it's like to be a glorified Saviour, to sit with the Father on the throne from which universes are created and ruled, and then to be dragged away and crucified in heaven. On earth you were crucified near a garden, which must have heightened the pain.

Who can imagine the pain of being crucified in Paradise? Does your holy mother stand there, too, weeping near the foot of the cross, along with Magdalene and John and the others?

I don't know the answers. Therefore, I will presume that you are alive in the sense in which I am alive and can write and read.

I believe that there exists objective, real truth, that there are things intrinsically beautiful, and that you truly exist, a fact only madmen and nihilists can deny. I also believe that you are constantly resurrected, because goodness ultimately conquers, not only evil but also physical laws. Death cannot hold you.

Therefore, since you are and I am, we will now correspond.

In the USA, there is a tombstone with the following inscription: The body of Benjamin Franklin, printer [like the cover of an old book, its contents torn out and stripped of its lettering and gilding], lies here food for worms. Yet the work itself shall not be lost. For it will [as he believes] appear once more in a new and beautiful edition corrected and amended by the author.' If the work 'Benjamin Franklin' can appear in a new edition in heaven – whatever worms will have done to him – I certainly believe that you too appear again and again, whatever evil men do to you and however often they do it.

You can take cognisance of this letter.

The first thing I wish to tell you may sound banal, but it is the simple truth: I love you.

I love pudding, I love a dog, I love men, I love you. I have to use the same word because of the poverty of

language. There is simply no adequate expression for the sentiment I have for you. So let us conclude with this: you are my love.

I also trust in your immense power.

When the Wright brothers made their first flight, the engineer Octave Chanute wrote an article in ~Popular Science Monthly~ in which he said: 'This machine can even transport mail in certain cases, but also in limited quantity. It can become faster and then could be used for sport, but it is unimaginable that it will serve for commercial transport.' Eleven years later, in 1911, the regular air transport of passengers started. A short time before World War I, the astronomer William Pickering

wrote, 'Popular imagination fancies gigantic planes flying over the oceans and transporting crowds of passengers. It is scarcely necessary to say that these are only phantasmagoric visions. Even if we could suppose that such a machine could make the traverse with one or two passengers, the price would be such that only a millionaire could afford it, as he could afford his own yacht.' Today, even the speed of sound at high altitudes has been surpassed.

If men underestimated their own potential, no wonder they underestimate yours. You can do anything because you are God. In addition, nothing is impossible for you because, as man, you believed wholeheartedly in the Father.

Then why don't you do the many things we expect of you, that are the subject of our prayers - not to mention those you have promised expressly in your word?

Pascal would have an explanation for your negligence: 'Jesus will be in agony until the end of the world.' An agonising being might be a giant, but he is still helpless. When you had died on Golgotha, even the centurion said you were the Son of God, but then you were a dead Son of God. You could feed no hungry, wipe away no tears, caress no children.

p020 ..... My Correspondence with Jesus

Considering the many defections of believers over the centuries, Pascal, like me, would have meditated on the many crucifixions you have endured since Calvary. I believe that the respite between one crucifixion and another must be minimal. How aware are you between them? Certainly you are an agonising almighty Being.

If that is the case, then most of our prayers to you seem wrong, foolish. The Virgin Mary, John, and the woman who served you did not pray to you while you hung on the cross.

I wonder if it ever occurred to them to try to alleviate your thirst (even a Roman soldier did what he could), or bathe your bloody feet, or at the very least whisk away the flies from your wounds. I don't know why they did not try, even if the soldiers objected. However, the gospel records tell us nothing, one way or the other.

Your life as a servant ended with a painful, saving

death. You had desperately needed their services.

Since you are still in agony, our prayers should not make demands, not even claim the fulfillment of your promises. Rather, we should stand in mute adoration before the grandeur of your sacrifice and, if possible, help you.

If Pascal was right that you are in perpetual agony, and if you are crucified afresh daily, there is little chance you will be able to read the present letter. (How should men in agony, even if they are sons of God, too, read and understand?) I come back then to what I said in the beginning. I write to you on the presumption that you are alive, in a normal state, and that we can correspond like this.

These two ideas, one from the Bible that you are crucified again and again, the other from Pascal that for thousands of years you have been in agony, torment me.

When I look up to heaven I see you. Stephen saw you, too. What expression did he see on your face? Was it one of triumph or of atrocious suffering?

p021 ..... My 1st Letter to Jesus

At the end of a religious service I often hear the words, 'May God make his face to shine upon you.' I do not leave the church until I see a face. Usually, I see the face you had when you bowed your head in death on Golgotha, as painted by Fra Angelico. I know that the resurrection followed, but it was only to occasion your offering yourself in new crucifixions.

More than one-third of the earth's population lives below the poverty line; 570 million are undernourished, 800 million children are not enrolled in school, 1.5 billion have no access to effective medical care. Millions of innocents have been slaughtered in Nazi Germany, Russia, Red China, Cambodia, Lebanon. So many suffer in prisons and labour camps. You, an almighty Being, love them all, but you endure terrible suffering yourself. The reality of a suffering God is probably the best answer to the questions of why a good God allows such tragedy to befall his creatures.

I suppose that the heavenly Father shares your suffering. You and the Father are one, which means you are of the same essence, though you do not always share the identical suffering.

When you sweated blood in Gethsemane and begged the Father to spare you the bitter cup, 'it pleased the Lord to bruise [you]' (ISA 53:10). Strange thought!

Th,rŠse of Lisieux describes her joy when at the age of only twenty-three she first spat blood (she had tuberculosis), an experience she looked upon as one step nearer to heaven.

God can go beyond Th,rŠse. He can find pleasure in the painful death of his Son, knowing it was one step nearer to your own glorification and a giant step toward the salvation of mankind. But does he enjoy all your crucifixions? Do you suffer all the pain while he does all the rejoicing? It is difficult to accept. The Father must also feel intense sadness. Such tragedy incapacitates the whole of Godhead to relieve the groanings of unhappy mankind.

p022 ..... My Correspondence with Jesus

I have entered a risky path. Cardinal Newman once said, 'To write theology is like dancing on the tight-rope, some hundred feet above the ground. It is hard to keep from falling, and the fall is great. The questions are so subtle; the distinction so fine, and the critical, jealous eyes so many.' The last danger does not exist in my case. This letter is addressed to you. If you read it, it will not be with a critical eye.

I will leave all these considerations. I will simply tell you what I consider my main task in life: it is to decrucify you.

Surely, this task is not given by you. You called Peter 'Satan' when he advised you not to suffer. You willed the crucifixion. I imagine you will these new crucifixions, too. They must also play a saving - or at least a useful - role.

I suspect there is a deep, perhaps hidden, meaning to your new sufferings.

Much of Beethoven's beautiful music would not have been written if he had not gone deaf. John Milton wrote ~Paradise Lost~ as a blind man. With sight, he might have been distracted and even lost sight of Paradise himself. Louis Pasteur made great discoveries after suffering a stroke.

Many of the most beautiful songs in our hymnals were written by William Cowper between spells of insanity. Some of the greatest books - like Bunyan's ~Pilgrim's Progress~ - were written or conceived in prison.

We can see a connection between suffering and greatness, much as we recoil from the idea.

Well, in the end, Peter understood you, more or less. Please understand us too. You are God and your capacity for suffering might be unlimited, whereas our capacity for looking at it without intervening is limited.

David commented, 'I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous man forsaken' (PSA 37:25). It was because he had not see "the" Righteous.

p023 ..... My 1st Letter to Jesus

You were forsaken when you hung on the cross. Are you forsaken on your new crosses? Do you cry out again in agony and despair?

Sometimes I feel the temptation to give you complete peace and to discuss all matters with the holy mother or with saints, as Catholics do, except that I feel sure Mary stands weeping at the foot of heavenly crosses too. As for the saints, Rachel wept when a few children were killed in Bethlehem. Do the saints not weep for the many killed in world wars, revolutions, Auschwitz, Gulags and countries ravaged by famine and disasters of all kinds?

There was a time when I considered heaven a place of supreme joy. When I contemplate your repeated crucifixions there, I realize it is a place of supreme sadness. In the end, these two notions fuse in my mind and heaven remains only a place of supremeness in all things. And you are the most supreme among supremes.

I have to come back to you.

I desire one thing: to decrucify you. How? Well, I am very tired from writing such a letter. If you have read it, you must be very tired, too. I will write to you again.

p024

My Second Letter to Jesus

Dear Jesus,

I stumble at certain verses like 'Rejoice evermore' and 'In all things give thanks.' Did St Paul really mean 'always'? How much did the Virgin Mary and Magdalene and John rejoice standing at the foot of the cross? How many Hallelujahs of thankfulness did they shout when the nails were being driven into your hands and feet? Hearing you cry, could they rejoice?

With a stretch of the imagination, I might suppose that these heroes of the faith were able to sing praises on Golgotha - assuming they understood the necessity of your redeeming sacrifice and wanted to encourage you by their expressions of joy, even if partly feigned.

In Nazi and Communist prisons I have seen Christians acting. Though deeply troubled and even doubting their own faith, they encouraged fellow-believers who passed through torture by singing to them and quoting words of promise from Scripture. But I can see it would be much harder to do this when a God-man, a completely innocent person, dies an atrocious death on a cross.

Your pain on Golgotha had been predicted; it had meaning. For this you had come into the world. You yourself decided to lay down your life for the sheep. The blood shed on the cross saved mankind.

p025 ..... My 2nd Letter to Jesus

But with your crucifixions in heaven things are different. To my knowledge there has never been a prophecy that you will have to endure endlessly. What purpose do these new Calvaries serve? Could we not get to heaven without them? Can the saved enjoy heaven when, on inquiry, an angel informs them that you do not rule, you do not sit on a throne, but you are crucified afresh, age upon age?

Will those arrayed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, who themselves come out of great tribulation, hear

the news that you are entombed awaiting your resurrection, but that meanwhile the news of the falling away of another saint means you will be crucified again ... and again ... and again?

What are the nails made of in heaven? Perhaps there is iron there. The heavenly Jerusalem has an abundance of gold. Are the nails golden?

In Hebrews chapter 6 we are only told the cause of your new crucifixion, not the purpose, as in the case of your earthly Calvary.

A Chinese student suffering for his faith in a Communist prison composed a poem:

Lord, I am afraid of my fear,
I am afraid of deserting Thee,
Lord, I am afraid of my fear -
I am afraid of not holding out clear to the end.

I have held out in prison, but I wonder if I can stand the terrible suffering of your repeated crucifixions, especially since I myself, while enlightened, have yet fallen away several times. Your death on Golgotha is a fact of ancient history, but now I am a participant.

Cosmic rays from outer space can affect us here on earth. Likewise, what happens on earth can influence heaven. We are told that the conversion of a sinner gladdens the angels, and the spiritual decay of a sinner sets in motion events in other spheres that can crucify you anew.

p026 ..... My Correspondence with Jesus

When I was in solitary confinement, in great suffering I could dance, despising the things through which I had passed. After I was freed, I danced, though I was aware that other brethren and sisters were still enduring terrible tortures. But I comforted myself with the thought that they would soon be in heaven. I had been taught to think about heaven only as a place of comfort and gladness, except for the thought expressed in Hebrews that there you are crucified afresh over and over again. This image haunts me.

How does this crucifixion take place? Does it also start with someone selling you? On earth you were granted a trial by

both Caiaphas and Pilate. Does my sin simply crucify you without any sentence being passed upon you, without a court establishing first the reality of my guilt and accepting you as sin-bearer?

The Romans always flogged those who were to be crucified. Are the crucifixions in heaven preceded by floggings? I hope at least you are spared this indignity.

Do you hang on the cross alone or do some saints renounce the pleasures of heaven and share your sorrow? Do you endure only physical pain or do you again feel rejected even by the Father?

Do you utter the words, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'? If so, there exists the possibility of return even for those fallen after illumination, in spite of what the apostle says to the Hebrews. Do you cry out, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me'? And do you say the words again in the Aramaic language, in which ~sabachthani~, a homonym, has a double meaning and can also be translated, 'How much have you glorified me'?

Today some people talk in terms of a new black theology. (No wonder, the majority of Christians today are coloured; in fact, 40% of Anglicans are black.) Others embrace a theology of liberation. For myself, I am against anything new in theology. In Christianity,

everything that needed to be said has been said already. No new revelation has intervened, and I am not open to human speculations.

But I do believe that a new dimension must be added to our theological thinking: the fact of your crucifixions in heaven. This has been revealed to us in the Bible, but has passed unmentioned. It is of the utmost importance.

Goethe said to his friend Eckermann on 4th February 1829, 'If I work indefatigably until my end, then nature is obligated to offer me another form of existence when the present one can no longer endure my spirit.' I also believe in life after death. But I shudder when I read in the Bible such expressions as 'crucified with Christ,' 'sharing the passion of Christ,' 'being buried with him.' If the Bible is literally true, can it be that

these events, which have obviously not taken place during our earthly existence, will be relegated to the hereafter?

Once I baptized a Jew who was ninety-one years old. He told me he had a dream in which he saw heaven. Out of curiosity he asked an angel, 'Which is Wurmbrand's place?' But before receiving an answer, he awoke. Was the answer withheld because in heaven mine is the place of crucifixion? If so, do I strive for this, do I run to embrace it? I have fourteen years of Communist imprisonment behind me. How much more suffering will I have to bear?

Every one of us has passed through the prison of childhood, when our frame is small and weak, our powers of comprehension minimal, and all we say is treated lightly. Then comes the bondage of self imprisoned by wrong desires and stubbornness; sometimes there is the prison of bondage to evil spirits. Finally, there is the hardest prison of all - bondage to Christ. In this prison, we all undergo the torture of waiting to be holy and Christlike, while suffering the pain of frustration and failure.

In addition to the foregoing, I endured Nazi and

Communist prisons. For decades, I had thought about heaven as a place of release from all these things, but now I have discovered instead that heaven is a place of suffering, too. As it is on earth, so also in heaven: a servant cannot be above his master. If you must endure suffering, so also must we.

It is written in 1 John 3:2 [1JN 3:2] that when you appear, we will be like you. Does this mean crucified in heaven like you?

I am approaching death. Bede, the first translator of the New Testament into English, when almost blind asked his amanuensis to re-read to him carefully what he had translated. He said, 'I will not have my scholars read a lie after my death.'

Neither can I allow the many who have listened to my sermons and have read my books, which have been translated into more than fifty languages, remain with the impression I have called them to a paradise that is all joy and happiness, as Mohammed describes it in the Koran.

The Bible says it is the dwelling place of a God who knows sadness, of saints like Rachel weeping about greater tragedies than she had known on earth (MTT 2:18); it is the setting of a terrible war going on for ages (the sword is not a human invention; Eden was guarded by angels with a flaming sword (GEN 3:24). Now I learn that it also has a place of crucifixion, where you suffer anew.

The thought might not be pleasant, but it is true. The injunction 'Take up the cross and follow me' refers to a very long period, much longer than our earthly life.

I try to repress a question that arises in my heart again and again, but my efforts do not succeed. I am told that even in my dreams I shout loudly, ~Maduah~ ('Why?' in Hebrew).

An American newspaper published an article entitled, 'Conversion to Hindu Faith is Torturous.' It gave the following details: 'A West German businessman has completed his conversion to the Hindu faith by piercing

himself through the cheeks with a quarter-inch-thick, four-foot-long steel rod and pulling a chariot for two miles by ropes attached to his back and chest by steel hooks. ... Others walk through 20-foot-long pits of fire, don shoes with soles made of nails, or hang in the air spread-eagle from hooks embedded in their backs.'

We Christians would have told this German that all this suffering is not necessary. Salvation is easy, through faith alone. Some would have added that a few commandments have to be kept. But all the tortures are certainly senseless.

You are a Being apart. You had to endure suffering for us all. But is it really necessary for you to endure crucifixions endlessly? If we take up our cross, will we share them with you in the world to come? Then the Hindu way of salvation, so horrible to our minds, is still easier than ours.

One day, Bede's disciples read him the translation, 'It is finished.' He commented, 'Yes, it is finished,' and chanting 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost,' he died. I wish to finish these letters before I die. It is

good for us both to have come to a mutual understanding through correspondence before actually meeting in circumstances I presume will be dramatic.

God buries his workmen but carries on his work. Therefore, I do not have to worry about what will happen after my death to the specific work of Christ that you have entrusted to me - the Christian mission to the Communist world. Neither do I have to worry about my name after I die. Whose name does not enter into oblivion sooner or later?

As for my corpse, what of it? Wycliffe's bones were dug up and burned into ashes forty-four years after his death. Then the ashes were thrown into the River Swift, whose waters carried them into the Avon, which feeds

into the Severn, which empties into the ocean, which circles the globe.

My corpse will not have even this honour.

But it is about the future that I am really concerned. What kind of heaven awaits me? What kind of heaven awaits those converted under my ministry?

Since gaining my freedom, I have had many occasions to speak in churches. Once, after describing the humiliation and torture Christians are subjected to in Communist prisons, I spoke about heaven and asked, 'Would you come with me to paradise?' A lady answered loudly, 'No - in any case not your way, because it implies too much suffering.'

The renowned Swiss Protestant theologian Karl Barth said in a lecture, 'When the angels sing for God, they sing Bach; when they sing for pleasure, they sing Mozart, and God eavesdrops.' Mozart wrote an unfinished Requiem, the story of which may have a deeper significance than appears on the surface. Perhaps this Requiem is unfinished because it is for an infinite Being whose death never ends.

Experience is the one perch no one can be knocked off. Perhaps some of the information God obtains about our ordeal is distorted. Perhaps he sometimes descends to earth himself, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah (GEN 18:21), to ensure that what

is reported to him is correct. The rumours about their wickedness might have seemed exaggerated.

Reports and theories constructed on them often crack, like plastic wrapping; experience has the resonance of solid oak. Knowing this, you might have chosen to suffer with us all the way, for as long as we suffer. The best throne on which to rule over a crucified race is a cross. Then you appreciate all the sufferings mankind endures.

p031 ..... My 2nd Letter to Jesus

Perhaps you believe in our free will, though Luther, Spinoza and Einstein did not. But you are not a Lutheran. You consider us responsible for our sins. Bernard de Clairvaux said, 'Remove free will and there will be nothing to save; remove grace and there will be nothing to save with.' You believe that we often sin wilfully, that even our ignorance is wilful (2PE 3:5), and therefore punishable.

After the crucifixion on Calvary, many continued in rebellion. Some were enlightened, but even these sometimes fell away. Then you took upon yourself new crucifixions and the indignity of being put to shame again.

The best explanation for a man's action is found in the atmosphere in which he lives. In heaven, a place of supreme love, your reaction to an offence against you is to take upon yourself suffering for the offender. Do you hope that these new crucifixions will do what you yourself declare to be impossible - bring the once-enlightened but lapsed Christian to repentance?

I dreamt one night I was in an Orthodox church, where the priest had prostrated himself according to their ritual. I prostrated myself to the earth, too, and felt the sins of the whole congregation burdening me.

I imagine it is not easy for you to read such a letter in the state in which you are. Neither is it easy for me to write it. So I leave you for now. I will write again.

p032

My Third Letter to Jesus

Dear Jesus,

Only now do I realize that I have written to you twice without first introducing myself.

You might say it is not necessary to do so when you address a God. He knows everything.

I am not convinced that it is superfluous to introduce oneself to you. The Bible is surely true, and it says in various places that you forget some things, remember others and appreciate it when you are reminded of still others.

Unlikely as it may seem, there are some men, among them even individuals who have been very active in church life, whom you, though omniscient, have never known.

You once taught that on the Day of Judgement many will say to you, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?' And then you will profess unto them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity' (MTT 7:22,23). So you are a God who does not know and has never known many of his creatures.

I do not wonder about it. If we are created after God's image and in your likeness, he must have a subconscious

as well as a conscious. Therefore, you sometimes called the Father a power (MTT 26:64), like instinct and the unconscious complexes, and at other times a person, the heavenly Father. You called the Holy Spirit a power, but also described him as a person. If God has neither instincts nor a subconscious but only reason, then we were not created after his image.

God knows those he created and has led consciously but might not know what emanates from his subconscious, just as we do not know the persons of the unremembered dream life.

And so my name is Richard Wurmbrand, and I was born on 24th March 1909, in Bucharest, Romania. Now you will not be able

to tell me on the last judgment that you had not known me. I have introduced myself to you.

I will not tell you the many works I did for you. This was the mistake of those you rejected. I am simply a grievous sinner who has believed in your grace. I also believed that, having been washed in your blood, I would enjoy heaven with you for all eternity. But now I have grave doubts. I am deeply troubled because I have stumbled on a Bible verse that says you suffer many crucifixions in heaven, which makes me think that heaven is not at all a place of enjoyment (HEB 6:4-6).

Probably the best thing for me to do is to fulfill the most mystical exhortation every written: 'Be still, and know that I am God' (PSA 46:10). One does not put questions to God. We are not to write him letters or trouble him, but only to kneel quietly in adoration. However, I am far from perfect. Please do not expect me to have perfect attitudes.

I am a pastor. Close association with the clergy causes many people to become anti-clerical. I have been acquainted with pastors more than most; I am very well acquainted with one pastor - myself.

I believe that pastors, even the best ones, are less qualified than one might think for a life of perfection.

p034 ..... My Correspondence with Jesus

Wesley delivered some 40,000 sermons and travelled 250,000 miles on horseback to accomplish this. The end result today is empty Methodist churches. Luther and Calvin tried to reform Christendom. Later, others tried to reform the new institutions that had arisen, until today we find ourselves in a chaos of sectarian confusion. Vatican Council II will succeed as little as King Josiah of Judah's thorough purge of all religious practices.

Josiah destroyed all idolatrous altars and the renegade priests, but 'the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah' 2KI 23:26). It was because the changes were only external. Under Josiah's successor, three months were sufficient for the complete return of heathendom.

If only Wesley had ridden less and Luther preached less!

If they had been still and silent, the work of the Lord would have prospered. I know it to be so, but I am like them. I can restrain myself from outward activity only with great difficulty. Much of my outward activity may serve to suppress my Jewishness, which is a difficult burden to bear. Please bear with me, listen and reply.

What is heaven like? I know it is a storehouse of blessings, but Augustine said, 'God asks our leave to bless us.' Not many give him permission, but those who do bring him much fruit. They have what the Catholics call supererogatory works, that is, they have done many more holy works than would normally be expected even of a saint. God might have the problem of the rich man of your parable: 'I have no room in which to put my fruit' (LUK 12:17). Your Father might wish to apply the merits of the saints to others, but those keen to have them are rare. An overabundance of blessings in heaven is not desirable. It might produce a crisis like the overabundance of riches in America.

I have followed the advice of a sculptor who carved your likeness in a great statue. People admired it from

different angles, but the artist said, 'If you want to see it in its right proportion, you should kneel.' I knelt in the hope I would see a serene heaven. After years spent in a prayerful posture, I still see a heaven full of complicated problems.

Among them, the greatest concerns the crosses on which you are crucified again and again. The New Testament never uses the noun 'resurrection' about anyone but you. Jairus' daughter, the young man in Nain and Lazarus were all brought back to life and had to die again. You, on the contrary, were resurrected and ascended to heaven.

Your resurrection was an event apart, for time and eternity - but what about this crucifixion in heaven? Or do you not die on your heavenly cross? Do you just suffer on it endlessly, with every sin committed by an enlightened Christian being an additional wound? Or was this being 'crucified afresh' about which the author of the epistles to the Hebrews writes just a psychological experience, a figure of speech, not a physical reality in your glorified body?

I am confused. Every question is a hindrance to

obtaining an answer.

There is an old Muslim legend about a man who was stripped to the bone by robbers. He was asked, 'Why did you not defend yourself?' He replied, 'I could not because I had a dagger in one hand and a pistol in the other.'

There is a deep sense to this story that does not appear mystical on the surface. We have too many questions and therefore cannot receive light in our minds. We have so many arguments that we cannot be right. We cannot have happiness because the search for it is too intense. America could not defeat Vietnam because the USA had too many weapons, including the ultimate. Our reason is too well armed and therefore cannot fathom your depths.

If I allow the dagger and the pistol to fall from my

hands, if I abandon reasoning and follow the invitation given by Isaiah, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved' (ISA 45:22), I begin to see that heaven could not be without a crucifixion.

The French writer Rabelais said, 'I am prepared to stand for my conviction up to but excluding death.'

In heaven you represent eternal truth, not only on the basis of your passion on Golgotha, but also your readiness to be involved in new sufferings. On this earth, sufferers for your name have repeatedly exposed their lives for you in prisons and under persecution. In heaven, you must sustain truth even if it means being crucified afresh. Your new crucifixions are the guarantee that you hold eternal truth.

Therefore, St Paul hinted that something was lacking in the earthly afflictions of Christ on the cross (COL 1:24). It is only in heaven that you represent the real sacrifice. On Golgotha you yielded up the vile body of a Man of Sorrows who took upon himself the sin and sickness of mankind. Some of the church fathers say that you were very ugly, yes, even a leper. No wonder! You were the Messiah 'wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities' (ISA 53:5). But in heaven you yield to crucifixion the glorified body of the Son who was intended to sit on his Father's throne.

How could such a sacrifice not be efficacious? How should truth supported by such a sacrifice not persuade and convict?

I begin to realize that this being crucified afresh is absolutely necessary, just like the sacrifice on Golgotha, and that we have to resign ourselves to it as the Virgin Mary and Magdalene and John resigned themselves to what happened on Good Friday. They had a Saviour but one who could not be of any immediate help.

He could not caress children, not wipe away tears; he could not heal, nor feed the hungry. His hands and feet

were immobilised by the nails that pierced them. He could bring a thief into the kingdom, but no more. He had no power for lengthy and convincing sermons. He died and then became a corpse which others had to handle, wash, wrap and bury.

It seems that Bonhoeffer was right when he said in one of his prison poems that we are involved not so much with a Saviour to whom we can appeal in our needs, but one whose sufferings we have to share.

Five billion men live in the world today. After thirty years it will be 7 billion, unless nuclear weapons, which are already sufficient in number to kill every living man twelve times over, are put to use. Every day there are 180,000 more individuals to be fed, educated, instructed in spiritual matters, healed. Proportionally, the number of those who can meet such needs daily become less. Hundreds of millions go hungry, and their number will only increase. The rulers of mankind cannot solve this problem. To put a man on the moon or to construct bigger and better bombs has priority over famine.

They have not known the poverty of your childhood, nor the hunger and thirst and oppression of your adulthood.

It might just be chance, but I have never met a church leader deeply concerned about the fact that every day there are 180,000 more souls to be saved, that Communist tyranny closes churches in Communist countries, and that even more churches are closed in Britain by Christian apathy.

Your Father has given us a beautiful world with a natural abundance that we could have subdued and utilised to provide for all our needs. But in nature there is not one animal species that preys on its own. Man is the only exception.

Since Cain killed Abel, the envy, greed, exploitation and murder have continued. In the words of Shakespeare,

> (man's) ... offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
> It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't,
> A brother's murder. (~Hamlet~)

Einstein once remarked, 'I do not know with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with clubs and stones.' We desperately need an active Saviour, a Prince of Peace who will really rule.

We cannot afford the luxury of having a Saviour crucified even in heaven. Our most urgent task is to decrucify you, however important your cross might be.

I suppose if I had lived in Palestine 2,000 years ago I would have done what the prince of Saxony did to Martin Luther. Since Luther had boldly challenged the powers of the Inquisition, the prince had him kidnapped and kept forcibly in the Wartburg castle to save him from death. I too would have organized a group to take you in spite of yourself to a place where you would have been safe. Such a friend must not risk death, even if Isaiah did foretell it and he himself desires to sacrifice his life.

The secret Orthodox magazine "Nadezhda," which had been published in the USSR by Zoia Krahmalnikova (afterwards jailed for this 'crime'), tells the story of the conversion to Christianity of the Koriaks, a primitive tribe on the Kamtchatka peninsula in Siberia.

The priest Nestor opened the first church. The queen of the Koriaks, who had opposed the new faith violently, attended the inauguration. Among the Russians attending, Father Nestor was the only man who knew the Koriak language.

During the liturgy, as he walked through the church with the censer filling it with the smoke of incense, the queen began

to shout. With clenched fists, she threw herself toward the ikon of the Crucified, before whom stood the Virgin and St John. Suddenly aware of what was taking place, the priest interrupted the service

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to quiet the congregation, in which there were many Russian sailors.

'Silence!' he commanded. 'Here a work of God is going on. I will explain later.'

The Koriak queen continued to shout, 'What have you done? Why do you torture him? Take him down immediately.' She had seen him living.

Father Nestor had to explain that these two, his mother and a beloved disciple, were not at all guilty but sympathized with him.

The queen had had a natural reaction. She had not wanted him to suffer.

Peter once had a similar reaction and you called him 'Satan.' Later he tried to defend you against arrest with his sword. Again you chided him. You wanted to die, and you took pains to assure the disciples that after death a glorious resurrection would follow.

But did you know then that you would be crucified again after your resurrection? Would you have objected to Peter's attitude if you had known?

It is not simply that I love you. Your lover could allow you to be martyred if he realized that this is your strongest desire. But I repeat, mankind cannot afford this luxury anymore. Wars and famines in times past were trifles compared with modern holocausts. And though men might have had false religions, at least they believed in a Creator, which is less and less the case in the most civilized countries today. We need not only a living but a fulltime Saviour.

The Jews of 2,000 years ago could not accept the idea of a crucified Messiah. Only a short time was needed to prove how wrong they were. This Messiah was resurrected, and millions all

over the world have believed in God and have found peace of mind because of your death.

But must we rely on a Saviour who is crucified again and again? Which Bible verse compels us to do this? And

do you not believe that even the prolonged suffering of the greatest saints has a limit?

We can rationalise the terrible drama in heaven. I fear that by the end of this book I will find some rationalisation myself, but I know that man's reason – the 'beast' as Luther called it – is little more than the servant of his desire. We all want to escape nagging problems, so we find reasons for the most unreasonable things.

You are the only one who can save mankind. Since you cannot do so while eternally nailed to a cross, you must be decrucified. I have decided to undertake the task, with or without your consent.

When I had a heart attack, my son said, 'We must get him to the hospital right away.'

I said, 'No.'

He rejoined, 'You are not in any condition to make any decisions.'

I was transported to the hospital.

I do not believe that even a Saviour crucified again and again by human sin for 2,000 years can be allowed to make decisions independently. Your love and compassion are so great that you would continue to suffer endlessly in the hope that sinners might obtain eternal life in the hereafter.

They need a new kind of life now, materially and spiritually. A kingdom now – this is what the Jews expected from the Messiah two millennia ago. I do not agree with them. I understand why you desired to suffer and die, but enough is enough.

The bride says not only 'I am his' but also 'He is mine'

(SOS 2:16). I have to say something, too. Not only do you possess me; I possess you, as well.

Christians are usually satisfied with knowing you, the one. Eddington observed, 'We often think that when we have completed our study of "one" we know all about "two," because "two" is "one and one." It is not so. Two being "one and one," the knowledge of the "one" is

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not sufficient to understand it; we also have to understand the word "and."'

We know you in some measure; likewise, we know ourselves. The 'and,' the connection between us two, remains to be investigated. We give you all honour and praise for your readiness to suffer without limit. You will probably say, 'All honour and praise to those who wish to decrucify me.' We will have to find the missing link between these two attitudes.

I will write about this next time. I know there is little time. But a decrucifixion, to be successful, presupposes planning. I will take only the shortest possible time for reflection. You will hear from me soon.

p042 ..... My Correspondence With Jesus

Dear Jesus,

Dostoievsky wrote, 'Man needs the unfathomable and the infinite just as much as he needs the small planet which he inhabits.' I can prove this. I have plenty of trouble on earth, but I cannot remain quiet knowing that somewhere else very far away, the Son of God is crucified afresh.

I need not only daily bread and health; I also need your decrucifixion.

This task is not comprehended in the covenant you established with us through your blood. But if I limited myself

to what I owe you according to the Bible, I would judge like Portia, who told Shylock when he asked for the pound of flesh owed by his creditor:

> Tarry a little, there is one thing more -
> This bond does not give thee one jot of blood,
> The words expressly are 'a pound of flesh':
> Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh,
> But if in the cutting it, thou dost shed
> One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods
> Are (by the laws of Venice) confiscated
> Unto the state of Venice.

I owe you more than you ever asked or expected of me. I owe you more than what I understood at my

conversion. But I have not sought an object of love in vain; I found in you my heart's desire. Wherever I look, I see you, and I see you crucified and in pain.

As light belongs to the flame, so you belong to me. Between us there can be no bargaining about obligations. Your happiness is my only happiness. I am sure you would be much happier reigning steadfastly over mankind than suffering again and again on a cross.

I should think heaven would be the one place whose air is too pure for any sufferer to breathe. In heaven there should be no death penalty nor even vicarious death. Heaven is your dwelling place. It is imperative that your suffering cease.

The event on Golgotha, a hill where the innocent Son of God died after crying out, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' was already stranger than any man of any religion could ever imagine. But a Son of God crucified in heaven is stranger by far. That goes beyond the limit. Here faith comes to the end of its tether.

The farthest the telescope can reach out into the universe is ten billion light years. Your place of fresh crucifixions might be further still, but the cry from there has reached me and pierced my heart. It is too much.

For thirty-four years you were a man of sorrows on this

earth. I say thirty-four, not thirty-three. The Chinese calculate the age of man from the moment of his begetting. This is what the Bible teaches, too. Therefore your genealogy in Matthew says: 'Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob,' instead of 'Sarah gave birth to Isaac, and Rebekkah to Jacob.' The child exists from the moment of procreation.

If John the Baptist leaped for joy in his mother's womb, you probably felt the pain of sinners from the time you were an embryo.

I have suffered since before I was born. My father was far off in another country when I first saw the light of day. My mother told me that as a baby I cried the whole

time. So I did during my whole childhood, with or without a cause.

About St Sergius, called 'the Protector of Russia,' it is said that he cried so loudly while in his mother's womb during a church service that everyone heard.

Catherine of Siena said, 'There are moments when silence could accomplish anything.' Unfortunately, no one taught me this. How much energy for good I would have gathered as a child and a young person if I had not cried and later expressed rebellious thoughts! If only I had been silent!

You kept silent, but you suffered for thirty-four years. You had an exemplary mother, whose custom was to say to God, 'Be it unto me according to ~thy~ word,' when all around her lived by the motto, 'But it unto me according to "my" word.' How much your mother must have suffered because she was different from others.

People said about St Luitgard of Wittichen, 'She has the devil in her. She is a deceiver and a heretic.' They said the same things about St Joan of Arc and many others. Perhaps Mary was often mocked, too. But she would not have trembled; she would have kept her peace, and her joy.

She knew she had an assignment from God and did not allow herself to be disturbed by what others said. Archimedes, the Greek mathematician, would not allow himself to be upset, not

even when the Romans entered Syracuse. His only concern was, '~Noli turbare circulos meos~ - Do not touch my circles.'

Mary had been given the assignment from God to spread in this world the fragrance of heavenly roses and the beauty of heavenly violets. She remained quiet.

But your heart must have gone out to her, as you suffered for all sufferers.

In your childhood you surely knew about Herod and the children he had killed. When you visualized him in your imagination, you saw the shadow of death at his side and his blood-stained hands. He needed your crucifixion in order to be saved.

p045 ..... My 4th Letter to Jesus

You grew in stature and wisdom. You knew many sinners for whose trespasses you would have to atone. You would also have to atone for the goodness of saints.

Israel must have had many saints from whom no one ever heard an angry word, who were always patient, whatever evil befell them, who developed cheerfulness and equanimity under all circumstances. But goodness extended even to tyrants and religious charlatans usually results in cruelty to their victims. Such passivity makes crime and exploitation possible. And so saints need redemption as much as despots.

You were always humble. You asked John the Baptist to baptize you, and you washed the feet of the apostles, including Judas Iscariot. You maintained your purity though doubtless many girls loved you passionately because of your love and kindness. Perhaps you loved one, too.

Then came Golgotha. My beloved, you have suffered so much. Was all this not enough? You said about your crucifixion on earth, 'It must be so.' Is there a 'must' attached also to your heavenly sorrow? Is there no other option?

On earth there was not only a flogged and crucified man; there were also floggers and crucifiers, the henchmen. Without their complicity the whole event could not have taken place. If as a result of our sins you are crucified afresh now that you are in heaven, paradise must contain not only noble martyrs but also

cruel torturers, just like the garden of Eden, which was inhabited not only by the innocent pair but also by the evil serpent.

But how can there be crucifiers in heaven? Nazism, Communism and other similar regimes in the past have proved that it is enough to create hell; there will be no lack of devils to people it. Create a totalitarian regime, and it will have its butchers. But how can heaven produce them? Do they appear whatever the external environment?

I know I have put questions that no one has asked you before. Long before I wrote them down, I had them in my

mind. They have troubled me for many years in solitary confinement. But I understand why you do not answer.

I write, as I already said in my first letter, with the supposition that you do read. Even if this is true, the fact that I receive no answer is understandable.

A Swiss professor held a seminar in Japan and, as is customary, put questions to the students. No one answered. Taken aback, he asked why and was told that Japanese students take every question as a subject of prolonged meditation. A question that can be answered immediately is considered less than serious; so is the questioner.

Your own nature and your life is so deep that perhaps you yourself cannot fathom it. Therefore you said, 'No man knows the Son, save the Father' (MTT 11:27). It may take an eternity for an infinite Being to know himself fully. Perhaps you meditate on my questions.

The Dakota Indians consider it impolite to answer a question because by doing so they would show themselves superior in knowledge to the questioner. Since you are humble, it may be that you do not wish to assert any superiority over me. Perhaps this is the reason for your silence.

But we do not dwell in the sphere of philosophy, and it is difficult to wait for answers.

Your pain must be terrible, but it is far away from our

experience. I know what ours is.

I have just read the account of a Lithuanian lady who was deported to Siberia with her three children, ages three, five and seven, only because she is Lithuanian and the Soviets want to Russify her country. Unable to bear the hunger any longer, she threw herself and her children into a river. Meanwhile, in Britain charitable organizations like Oxfam and Christian Aid contributed about 64p per person a year compared with œ24 per person spent on tobacco.

p047 ..... My 4th Letter to Jesus

We need an immediate Saviour. You must be decrucified. There is no alternative.

You are God, but you yourself taught that God is not the only reality. You said there is also an enemy who sows tares among the wheat. It is perhaps not at all the will of your Father that you should be crucified afresh for the sins of the enlightened. Perhaps the Father has established a paradise only with good things in it and that your new crucifixions are from the devil, unlike the crucifixion on Golgotha, which was in God's plan.

Peter was called 'Satan' because he opposed your death as ordained by the Father. I am not at all in the same situation. I am against these new pains of yours because they are provoked by the devil.

The circumstances of my life are maddening. Perhaps all my reasoning is mad. Perhaps I have misunderstood everything.

It is written that you spoke with many parables, and you never spoke without a parable (MRK 4:33,34). Paul might have learned this manner of speech from you. He might have abhorred cool, academic objective speaking about matters that involve suffering. Loving the sufferer, one might fantasise his pain in extreme magnitude in order to communicate it to others and evoke their sympathy and love.

Can it be that in Hebrews chapter 6 Paul only desired to show the great disturbance produced by the sins of those once enlightened regarding the moral order of the universe and how great a crime they are against love and righteousness?

Since you, the Son of God, stand for everything that is good, beautiful, and lovable in the world, then every trespass against the light is like crucifying you afresh. Perhaps, after all, these words do not have a literal sense.

The words might have an altogether different meaning.

I was in the same prison cell with Christian Florea. Paralysed because of the many beatings he had received,

he could move only his neck. We had no water to wash him, no sheets to change his bed (a slatted bunk with a dirty pallet). He lay in his dirt, immobilised, and shone for joy in the Lord. When we took Holy Communion in the cell, we found his breast to be the most suitable altar on which to place the bread we had saved and the wine a sympathetic guard had smuggled in. After Communion, we asked him to say a word.

He had had no theological training. In fact, he must not have had more than a few primary classes. But he shared with us these profound sentiments: 'At every Communion we pronounce the words "This is my body." What body of Christ do we mean? Jesus is a being apart: one person with two natures, perfect God and perfect man. He is also the only being with two bodies: that of a Jewish carpenter of 2,000 years ago, who was crucified, resurrected, and now sits on God's throne; and another body, his church. We are as much his body as the one that walked through the villages of Palestine. We are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.

'Now, when we say, "This is my body broken for you," which body do we mean? Surely the body broken on Golgotha, but also his church which in every generation has given thousands of martyrs. Their bodies broken and their blood shed are also the body and blood of Christ. He is bodily in prison wherever a Christian is in prison.'

What Florea said was certainly true, but the conclusion is that when the sin of a brother hurts me, like the piercing of the heart with a dagger, it is - poetically speaking - permissible to say that your body suffers again the pain of crucifixion on Golgotha.

I don't believe we can really differentiate between you

and us, your church. We are one. When Paul writes that sinners crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, he probably means the crucifixion of your martyrs and of all those who suffer the pangs of death when they see or hear something evil. Not only the historical Jesus but also the saints are the Son of God since they are the body of Christ.

p049 ..... My 4th Letter to Jesus

So it is ourselves that we have to decrucify, which means we have to free the church from a despised, rejected situation and make it triumphant. We have to hasten your coming, when the church will be victorious.

There are laboratories that contain the cultures of micro-organisms for the purpose of experimentations. We in our turn belong to a micro-world for angels. They both learn from us and teach us. For them we are a laboratory. All my contradictory thoughts, which I have shared with you, have brought me to this conclusion.

It is written that the 'acts of Ahaziah which he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?' (2KI 1:18). Why is this simple statement put in the form of a question? It is to make us realize a dilemma is before us. The life of Ahaziah exists, and the chronicle that recounts it exists. Which came first? The whole Bible is witness to the belief that all our thoughts and deeds, yes, our whole lives were written before. 'In thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them' (PSA 139:16). 'Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate' (ROM 8:29).

For reasons known only to you, in my heart you raised a tempest, you brought me near to agony thinking about your being crucified in heaven, until you calmed me: you are glorious in paradise. It is your church which is crucified afresh in every century. Saints 'fill up that which is behind' of your afflictions in their flesh for your 'body's sake, which is the church' (COL 1:24).

So my next letter will be about how to decrucify your church.

Until then, good morning, my Beloved.

p050

My Fifth Letter to Jesus

Dear Jesus,

Some time has passed since I last wrote to you. The time was first spent in thinking about how to decrucify your church, which is the prolongation of your incarnation and in which you suffer crucifixion again. This is what I have learned about the church from Scripture.

But then I looked around, and somehow I could not find much of a church to be decrucified.

In the free world, there are millions of Christians who enjoy Christianity as people enjoy the other amenities of life. Some churches have evening dances, potluck dinners, social parties. They discuss whether women should be ordained, as if you never said long ago that we are a people of kings and priests, which means that every female believer is already a priestess and needs nobody's ordination. They debate the theology of liberation, the literal or general inspiration of the Bible, the rights of homosexuals, the permissibility of providing terrorists with church funds. All of these are discussions that crucified men cannot engage in.

What offends me most in these debates is the clarity of the arguments adduced by both sides. But purity of heart is not bought with the coin of clarity in philosophical and theological systems.

p051 ..... My 5th Letter to Jesus

The pure in heart live on earth for heaven. The brides prepare themselves for the encounter with the Bridegroom. His last judgement will not be an examination in dogma, but only a question about love, which does not think systematically.

I once spoke to a pastor of the Soviet underground church, who had suffered much. He had never studied theology. I was with him for only two days, during which time I had to teach

him everything I could. Among other things, I shared with him the tenets of systematic theology. He listened without understanding and finally asked, 'Did those who constructed the system ever bear heavy crosses, as Jesus commanded us? No one carrying a heavy burden with the prospect of imminent death nor anyone nailed to a cross can think systematically. Even Jesus thought unsystematically on the cross. In his seven words on Golgotha, he jumped from one subject to another. Systematic theology is the product of men who are not cross-bearers and therefore it is valueless.' I could not make him listen further.

His observation could apply to much of what is preached and debated in churches of the free world today.

There are some in these churches who sincerely confess their shame and failure. They regret the fact that they have hurt and disappointed and failed people who had hoped in them. The words are prescribed in the missal and the ~Book of Common Prayer~. But they confess their sins in such a nice, orderly manner, without even creasing their face muscles. They may suffer for their sins, but the suffering does not amount to a crucifixion. Therefore they do not need a decrucifixion.

Then there are other Christians, those persecuted in Muslim, Communist and animist parts of the world, who can be classified in two groups.

In some lands, but especially in European Communist countries, the fashion has arisen among Christians, as among political dissidents, to grumble and protest

publicly about any perceived injustice, great or small. Through my hands have passed thousands of pages of petitions to their own governments, to the United Nations, to the World Council of Churches - and the list could go on - about such grievances as house searches, confiscation of religious books and fines they are forced to pay. True, they also complain about the killing of believers, but their main concerns are personal. There are many such Christians.

I am reminded of the story of two men who were walking home together in bad weather. They had a long way to go, and the blizzard was fierce, blowing snow and sleet in their faces and chilling them to the bone. One mumbled continually, 'It is

terrible! I cannot bear it any more. Nobody could imagine anything worse than this.' His companion replied, 'I can. Just fancy walking in such weather with a complaining friend.'

Then there are other Christians who are crucified indeed. They suffer intensely, even unto death, for their beliefs. They take up their cross willingly, understanding its meaning. They bear their sorrows with serenity and patience. There are some who bear the pangs of crucifixion, but while the body may ache, the spirit seemingly feels nothing. As a mother ignores her own pain if her child is suffering, so these transcend their own horrible suffering in the fellowship of your passion. Their speech is not about the wounds they have, but about yours.

The Orthodox make the sign of the cross with three fingers. I saw them when they were subjected to atrocities in Communist prisons; some of them passed spontaneously to signing themselves with all five fingers, as the Catholics do, in remembrance of the five wounds you had when crucified, one at each hand and foot and one in the breast.

And it is not simply that these believers are crucified. Such a fate can befall a criminal too. But they are kind

and forgiving to their torturers, praying for them as you have done. They are blind to their faults, as you have been.

You knew long before Calvary the ugly role Pilate and Caiaphas would play in your death; you knew the Roman soldiers would drive nails into your body. Now, everyone in Palestine criticized them all for their exploitation and oppression, but you were the only one who never had a bad word to say about them.

Such modern saints have to be decrucified. Many have died already, and for them it is too late. But all your true followers under Islam, Communism and animism are in grave danger. The task is monumental.

The first difficulty is one you already mentioned 2,000 years ago: the job is formidable, but the labourers are few. Most of those we count on are greedy for the things of this world. They never have enough.

A girl was reproached by her mother: 'I left two cakes in

the cupboard yesterday. Now I find only one. How come?'

The child replied, 'I must have overlooked it in the dark. Otherwise I would have eaten it, too.'

Even Christians rarely refuse some pleasure that offers itself.

Rare are the believers who, like a seismograph, register the slightest quaking of another's soul and are ready to jump to his aid. They are so insensitive they would not register even the pain of the Son of God.

But enough about others. Cato said wryly, 'I can pardon everybody's mistakes except my own.' If there are not many labourers, the work has to be done by a few. And if I am the only one who thinks in terms of decrucifying the saints, I must not worry about others' neglect of duty while I fail to reproach myself for not doing ~my~ best.

'Well,' - I say to myself - 'I can't perform miracles. I can't turn the world upside down all by myself.' But then

I think 'How is it I can't do wonders? The first disciples could. I have the same Spirit they had. The Lord has promised he will be with us always and will enable us to do even greater works than he himself has done.' I have no excuse. I must decrucify your church, your body, through which you continue to bear crucifixion, though you are already in heaven.

I hear the voice of the Tempter: 'It is good that you demand great tasks. There is no greater one than to be a saint. So be one - cheerful like Francis when it is hard to be cheery, patient when it is hard to be patient, aggressive when you want to be still, silent when you want to talk, pleasant when you feel disagreeable, optimistic when you are down. The kingdom of heaven is within you. Don't look at what is happening to others. In this world, you are pilgrims and strangers. Those who pass through tribulation here will be comforted in heaven.'

'Get thee behind me, Satan,' I haste to reply. 'I refuse this consolation. If I prefer Rachel among the mothers of Israel, it is because, when she saw the slaughter of children in Bethlehem, "she would not be comforted" (MTT 2:18). Comfort is

the worst enemy when one is passing through a catastrophic experience. Rachel wanted the innocents restored to life. We also should never be content just to say nice words to those who mourn. The cause of the weeping should be eliminated. Jesus might have said that we must bear our cross daily and accept sorrow as our lot. And this is all right, as far as I am concerned. But the church has suffered enough. I have to decrucify her.'

In the other world I will live eternally. Through this world I pass but once. If I am to accomplish anything, it must be now. And the maximum of kindness is not to sympathize with sufferers, but to stop the suffering. If I cannot do this, life for me is not worth living.

Pessimists always see the worst in life; cynics find disappointment on every hand. Those who live on the

edge of a cliff, like me, are chronically tense. Jesus, I do not ask you for relief from tension, but rather its exacerbation until I achieve my goal.

A pastor was asked, 'Is it lawful for a Christian to smoke?'

He answered, 'It is altogether wrong for a Christian to smoke; he must be on fire.'

Lord, it is my desire to be, not simply a burning log in the fireplace, however warm and pleasant, but a flaming torch in your hand.

You once said, 'I have come to send a fire on earth, and how I wish it would burn (LUK 12:49). You meant a fire brought from other realms where even our suns are looked upon as dwarfs. All the evil should be burned; it has reigned enough. If am counted among the evil, I will burn too. But your bride, the elect saints, should be set free, should be decrucified.

Jesus, you have given me a mind and a will to think about nothing less than this. But you have not yet shown me the way to reach this goal of mine. Is it sufficient for me to repeat endlessly, 'Thy kingdom come,' without making it come? When I add, 'Give us ~this day~ our daily bread,' you might answer, 'Why

"this day" for your demands, and why do you show so much patience regarding the advent of my kingdom?'

I write to you in despair of my cause. Before addressing you, I tried to speak to many others but had only disappointments, bitter ones.

I once heard about a postman who, while delivering letters to everyone else, never received one himself. His great longing was for someone to write to him. After many years, he received a letter. It informed him that he was being made redundant.

An actor who suffered great heaviness of heart went to share it with pastors, with psychiatrists, with acquaintances. On meeting him, they all congratulated him for his roles and asked for free tickets to the theatre. He could

speak to no one. I can never speak to anyone about what torments me. Instead, people have the idea, for some reason, that I can give them advice. This is why I am writing to you.

How can I accomplish my task all by myself? You said that where two or three are gathered together, you are among them. But I was kept for years in solitary confinement. I was absolutely alone, without another for communion or fellowship. So you could not be with me if your minimum is two. I imagined your presence, I even experienced it, but it was all subjective. I knew the whole time that you do not share your fellowship with the solitary. I do not understand why some Christians of past eras chose to become hermits.

Now, while I embark on this enterprise, I will again be alone – alone in the absolute sense of the word. You are crucified one way or the other, either in your own person in heaven where you sojourn, or in the church whose suffering you share and whom therefore you are unable to succour properly.

But since you have given me relief in so many other things, you will give it to me again. You will help me live without anyone else, without the church, and without you, panting for you, burning for you, loving your church, and having one desire only – to decrucify you.

When you went to Calvary, the apostles forsook you and fled. When you died on Golgotha, you were almost alone. Yet Joseph of Arimathea, who till that time had managed without you, took you down from the cross and cared for your poor body, without any assistance from God, angels, or the church. So it will happen again.

I have not the slightest idea how to start so great a work. I am already on my fifth letter. The previous ones have remained without reply. There is no one to counsel me. The only thing I know is that doing little things well is a step towards doing big things.

So I have decided to begin with decrucifying little

beings who suffer. Perhaps this will eventually give me some idea of how to get to the point of decrucifying you.

There are so many unhappy beings around me. It is not that they are unhappy only on occasion. There are some who have never known a sunbeam. The Orthodox monk Michael Ershov was in Soviet prisons for forty years. I have known Indians and Africans who as children never had a toy or a piece of candy; they received no schooling and never had enough to eat all their lives. I have known men who were never loved, not even by their own mothers. They find no solace in their religion, for even that is only sadness. They bow before a statue of the goddess Kali, garlanded with the skulls of men. She speaks no word of comfort to their longing hearts.

And so I will practise decrucifixion on these to prepare myself for the great adventure of decrucifying you.

I shudder because of the terrible decision I have made. It is as if someone tried to help you by removing a nail from one of your hands while you hung on the cross. While relieving the pain of one hand, he would have made your situation worse, because your weight would now be suspended from a single nail. I do not believe in partial decrucifixions.

But it seems I have to pay my dues to what remains in me of human nature. As Christians we are partakers of the Divine nature. But still, the words spoken by Diogenes to Plato apply to us: 'I see the lion, but not the lion's characteristics.'

Without these, I can decrucify you only partially.

Perhaps your decrucifixion, the one noble task for which life is worth living, is a problem without a solution, like the squaring of a circle or perpetual motion. All that has been written about Christianity in the past fails to satisfy me. We seem to share the problem of youth down through the ages. We turn our back on the past and start from scratch, unwilling to build on the learned wisdom of previous generations.

p058 ..... My Correspondence With Jesus

Unlike Olympian runners, who pass on the flaming torch from one to another till the targeted site is reached, we begin our marathons alone and stumble along, learning as we go, falling and rising again, till finally we collapse, always short of the goal. Our children will do the same, in spite of our cautions. They too will start from square one.

And so we turn our back on theologians and philosophers. None has the answer, and your body remains crucified.

Should I begin with little tasks? What else can I do?

This is my fifth letter. Perhaps I will get an answer.

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My Sixth Letter to Jesus

Dear Jesus,

God has many sons and loves them all. About you he said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (MTT 3:17). He is not always pleased with the others. He uttered those words just after you had spoken on the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah about your death. Did you discuss with them all the details of this death? Was the Father pleased also with the despair you manifested on the cross? Does he continue to be pleased with your actual crucifixion?

To be pleased seems to be a characteristic of Deity. You

yourself, eager to create a worldwide church and to find a multitude of St Pauls and great teachers, nevertheless said, 'I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes (LUK 10:21). Whatever God decides, you accept as good, just because he has decided it, even if it crosses your desires.

And if God, who decides all and without whose will not even a sparrow falls to the ground, has willed your crucifixion and that of the church, which has lasted almost 2,000 years, I too should express thanks and find my pleasure in them.

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A concert pianist who was asked how much time it had taken him to become a virtuoso replied, 'Eight hours a day for twenty years.'

You have to be God for all eternity. And you have promised, 'To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me on my throne.' For all eternity we too will be on the throne from which universes are created and ruled; we will be virtuosos in being good.

To have been crucified for only three hours is not preparation enough for such a tremendous task. Perhaps this is why you had to be crucified again, symbolically in your new body, the church.

The Zohar, main book of the Kabbalah, which contains the mystic tradition of the Jews, asks why God led the chosen people for forty years through a terrible wilderness 'wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions' (DEU 8:15).

The explanation is that such wildernesses are the very realm of the devil. The Jews have to pass through it in order 'that the evil power might be broken and the ruler of the regions of darkness be crushed, that it might rear its head no more.'

Without Golgotha evil cannot be conquered. What really defeated Nazism once and for all were not the Allied armies, but the innocents who were gassed or burned in Auschwitz and Dachau and who there sanctified the name of God.

The Zohar adds these deep words: 'There can be no true worship except it issue forth from darkness and no true good

except it proceed from evil.'

St Paul would not have been the zealous apostle without his fervid, murderous past; St Mary Magdalene would not have stood faithfully at the foot of the cross without her sinful, adulterous youth. The ultimate triumph of good can come only from prolonged and repeated crucifixions.

If everything is predestined, then my desire to

decrucify you is also predestined. I have to go ahead with it; but since you are well pleased with all things, this must please you too. If only I knew how to start the decrucifixion.

As you were aware, John the Baptist lost his head because he spoke out against the king's sin. You knew that if you spoke against the sins of men, you too would be killed. But since you "are" the truth, how could you not have spoken? For you to try not to speak is like a man trying not to breathe. All your disciples are in the same predicament. They have to utter the truth, and therefore they have to suffer. The situation gets worse and worse instead of better.

But did John the Baptist do the right thing?

Historians tell us that Herod Antipas was guilty of terrible crimes. He killed and exploited savagely. His whole life was dissolute. It is strange that when John pointed out to the king his sinfulness and the means of salvation, he stressed only the one particular sin to which Herod was most attached: his illegitimate liaison with his brother's wife. Would it not have been wiser and more efficacious if John had chosen to expose the whole complex of Herod's sinfulness instead of hammering specifically on one area alone? John's insistence on this point might reflect the area of his own greatest temptation, since unlike Herod he lived the life of an ascetic. Listen to what a preacher criticizes most in others and you will know the preacher's most besetting sin.

Why did you say that, though John the Baptist is the greatest among those born of women, the smallest in the kingdom of God is greater than he? Is it because heirs of the kingdom refuse to become ensnared in details but maintain a vision of the whole?

You attacked evil on a variety of fronts, showing that ultimately the heart - the character - is the source of individual sins. You went beyond the Baptist, but I have to question you, too. I suppose that if you had been

low-key in condemning the hypocrisy and profit-seeking of the religious rulers, they might not have crucified you.

The Reformers would also have fared better if they had not pointed to the fat bellies and moneybags of the monks. So said Erasmus of Rotterdam.

Even without hitting where it hurts the most, the witnesses for truth have to suffer. The story is told of a rabbi who sought to retain his position in the synagogue after boasting that he had already served twenty-five years in that capacity. He was refused with the words, 'You look too healthy. Our tradition says that a true teacher of Scripture who works devotedly soon begins to suffer from heart disease, gall bladder trouble, ulcers and consumption.'

Perhaps the solution is to deal with generalities, to avoid what gives offence, to respect people's sensitivities, to be tactful, to remain silent about a few things that are touchy in order to be able to speak about all other things. So many Christians fare well in society, much better than you fared. Perhaps they know how to behave better than you did. Let us imitate them and there will be no more Golgothas.

As for pure truth, much of it would remain unsaid.

With whom should we share it? In New Guinea, there are men who worship in the 'cargo cult.' During World War II American battleships that landed there used the natives for unloading cargo. They memorised this word, which meant to them a multitude of dainties. When the Americans finally left, they continued to worship the cargo-god who came from afar. They expect him to come again.

Even some Christians have given up their beliefs and joined the down-to-earth cargo cult.

Many people in the civilized world also have a cargo

religion. They love you for what you promised them: forgiveness of sins, peace of mind, eternal life and material blessings as well. Suppose you had been only the

good teacher from Galilee with no paradise to grant, they would not have been your disciples.

Is it good to be crucified as punishment for having thrown pearls to swine?

You were happy when you found some young fishermen mending their nets, and you called them to be your disciples (MRK 1:16-20). Perhaps we also have to mend our nets. A breed of fishermen who for twenty centuries have been eaten by sharks instead of bringing home much fish are not only entitled to our compassion but must also be told they need to learn their trade.

Have we been so much concerned with logic, consistency, purity of doctrine and absolute truth that we fail to observe that they tear the nets and enlarge the holes?

Those who fight for principles will never be content to give up this 'holy' crusade. I myself prefer those who live according to principles rather than those who fight for them.

Herod did not object to John's living an ascetic life without women; the Pope did not object to Francis of Assisi's becoming a reformed man. The problem arose when John stepped on Herod's toes and when Francis tried to reform the church. Those who fight for principles without being thoroughly reformed themselves are often prone to crucifixion.

My conclusion is that we should make certain we have truth fixed as the multiplication tables and the axioms of geometry, along with ardent love, strong faith, gentility, the right intuition; then let us speak with great circumspection.

'A living dog is better than a dead lion,' said the Preacher (ECC 9:4). The rabbis maintain that almost anything is permitted when in danger of death; then why not silence?

This seems reasonable, but it is not reason that decides our attitudes. Bacteria lodging in my lungs are not aware that they belong to the inner world of a man who can

decide to kill them with some drug. We belong to your inner world, and it appears that you predestine some, the most beloved, to oppose evil openly and become crucified.

This opposition to evil is not a mere verbal battle. You did not preach against demons; you banished them, which is a terrible pain for demons, somewhat like that of a violinist who loses his Stradivarius. In centuries past, there were pastors who spoke out against slavery; there were others who worked to free the slaves. It is natural that slave-holders would resent the latter and seek revenge.

Buddha explained to lepers that their condition was the result of guilt in former incarnations and that contentment in present life would prepare them for nirvana. By way of contrast, you healed the lepers. It was the money-changers and merchants in the temple you took action against, overturning their tables and chasing them with a whip.

You and your followers are adamant about what you consider just, and you act accordingly. Crucifixion is the result. So my advice - how strange it is to give advice to you whom Isaiah called 'wonderful Counsellor' (ISA 9:6) - is for you to slow down.

It is all so tragic. When I was in jail, we were not allowed to correspond with our families. We also had no writing material. In quiet desperation we could scratch a love-letter to a sweetheart on a piece of soap and weep over its touching content. Then the futile message would be erased. No one but the author ever read it.

Is this true of our correspondence as well? Even if you do not reply, can you not give at least some little sign that you are aware of it, that I do not write in vain?

Perhaps the Sufite poet Gilt al-Halladah (surely you know him) was right:

> I saw my Lord with the eyes of my heart
> And said, 'Who are you?' He answered, 'You.'
> ...

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I am the one whom I desire lovingly,
And the One whom I desire lovingly is I.
We are two spirits inhabiting one body.
Who sees me, sees him.
Who sees him, sees us.
Your spirit has mixed with my spirit,
As the wine mixes with the clear water.
Whatever touches you, touches me.
You are me, in every situation.

Could it be that these are not even my letters to you, but letters that you write to yourself on the tablet of my mind? If so, then you are the one who will never have a reply. Perhaps there is no 'you and I.'

A chasm opens before me - or is it before you? My thoughts blur. It is enough for today. Goodbye until next time.

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My Seventh Letter to Jesus

Beloved Jesus,

I can admire the Sufite poet. But I wonder if he really meant what he wrote. If the oneness between himself and his Lord were truly perfect, why did he write his poetry.

When you asked your first disciples what men said about you, they disinformed you out of politeness. It was not true that their contemporaries considered you a prophet, John the Baptist or Jeremiah. Those who might have thought so were certainly an insignificant minority.

Even today, there are some for whom you do not exist, or to whom you are remote, like the China Sea, and therefore of no significance. To others you are a great man, an initiate, a revolutionist, a madman, a false prophet. To many you are the umbrella under which they propagate their own ideas. To Judas

you were a source of income. To a few you are the Beloved, their own true "I."

For some there exists only god. A Russian Orthodox priest asked that his tombstone bear the inscription 'Father Alexei is no more.'

It is not that he did not believe in eternal life, but he had learned the secret contained in the Hebrew of Solomon's Song: 'My beloved is mine, and I am his.' The words in Hebrew are ~Dodi li veani lo~. The last word,

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~lo~, has two meanings in the spoken language: 'not' and 'his.' The phrase could just as well be translated, 'My beloved is mine, and I am not.'

His love for his Saviour caused Father Alexei to be no more. For him there was only Jesus, only he.

For some there exists both God and the 'I.'

There is a sense in which I may speak about you as about another person, though you live in me. In cases of inner conflict between two powerful tendencies within a person, Gestalt psychology recommends an open discussion between them. Set an armchair before you, imagine your other personality sitting before you, and talk things over.

This is particularly wholesome when God and a human being co-exist in one person. I imagine you communed with yourself many times in this manner.

'You in me' does not comport with 'me in me.' You did not come to be ministered unto - not even with a decrucifixion - but to minister.

Caesar Augustus was the richest man of his time, while you did not own so much as a coin. But you told clergymen accustomed to taking from God and from Caesar, 'Give to both.' Your live consisted of giving, and you gave all.

But if you delight only in giving, should I then become only a taker, or should I learn from you to be, like you, only a giver?

Or should we both forget about giving and taking, about the practical aspects of life, where crucifixion can be elaborated?

A peasant dug in his field and discovered a jar containing what he believed to be peas. He tried to cook them, but they remained hard. Being a practical man, he went to a neighbour and exchanged his find for peas that were edible. As for the neighbour, he had recognized that the supposed 'peas' were pearls.

On a practical level, we must seek the most edible peas,

the most comfortable situation. Thus decrucifixion becomes the main order of business.

But what if I were to deprive you of jewels by decrucifying you? St Ignatius begged the early disciples to do nothing to keep him from being thrown to the lions, because he did not want to lose the martyr's crown. You yourself told Peter to put his sword back in the sheath when he tried to defend you.

The best do not seek liberation.

I will remind you about one of your most beloved saints, Mina, the only girl who was a 'male' saint.

A Christian, whose wife had died, decided to become a monk. His only daughter, unable to bear the thought of abandoning him in his old age, obtained his permission to enter the order with him, disguised as a young man. She served all monks, washed and cooked for them, and soon became the favourite of the monastery. Who else sang like her? Before long she had won the confidence of the abbot.

One day, he sent Mina, together with two other monks, to make some purchases for the monastery. En route, the three rested in an inn. It so happened that the innkeeper's daughter, in an affair with a soldier, had become pregnant. To protect him from her father's wrath, she accused Mina, 'the handsome young monk,' of rape.

The innkeeper complained to the abbot, who confronted

Mina. Thinking that perhaps one of the other monks might have been guilty, Mina made no defence. If she asserted her innocence, the suspicion would fall on another, who would be expelled from the monastery. If he could not control his impulses while a monk, how would he resist the temptation of the world? 'It is better if I am expelled,' said Mina to herself.

For years she stood at the gate of the monastery and begged forgiveness from the abbot as often as she saw him. In the end, she was received back into the order, but

the lowliest jobs were given to her, and she was despised by all.

Mina lived like this to the end of her life. When she died, the monks who washed her corpse saw that she was a girl saint who had borne innocent reproach without ever saying one word in her own defence.

Mina would have objected to a decrucifixion. She preferred to be despised and stand begging at the gate in order to protect the guilty.

Should I decrucify such persons by using force? Luther defied danger. When he went to the Diet of Worms, a prince kidnapped him to save him from his foes and kept him locked in his castle. Should we do such things? To please whom? To serve whom?

Stephen, the first martyr for your name, did not defend himself at all when threatened with stoning. Perhaps he could have saved his life by denying the accusations brought against him. But he delivered a speech in which the personal element is completely absent. He had nothing to say about the slander that victimised him. Rather, he lost himself in the vision of the Father and you.

Since you were born a Jew, you will have no difficulty in understanding what I meant when I said Solomon's words: 'My beloved is mine, and I am his,' also translated, 'My beloved is mine, and I am not.'

It is true that "lo" in one sense is written with the letter ~ayin~, whereas in the other case it is written with ~aleph~. But was not the spoken language, in which these

distinctions could not be made, much earlier than the written language?

Then the ideal is that you should be mine and I should no longer be, just as Stephen ceased to be. His instinct for self-preservation had disappeared. He had fulfilled your first command: 'Whoever wishes to come after me should deny himself.'

If I should do this, all my worries, even the worry of

decrucifying you and yours, would disappear. I would pass away beneath your ardent kiss. Tradition tells us that Moses died by a kiss of God.

If only I knew! But why do I keep the 'I' that wants to know? Well, though Moses died on Mount Pisgah, centuries later he appeared to you on Mount Tabor at the transfiguration, and spoke with you about your departure from life.

What did he say to you? I imagine he reminded you that when he arrived at the borders of Canaan, he had asked to be allowed to enter the Promised Land, if only briefly. God replied with an unequivocal 'No.' Moses believed that even such a categorical denial of his request could be overruled. Prayer is a mighty weapon. But Moses died with only a view of the Promised Land.

Fifteen centuries passed. Now he was with you on Mount Tabor, which was in the land of Canaan. He had entered the land in spite of God's absolute 'No.'

You were human at that time. No doubt he said to you, 'Do not fear crucifixion. If you die with the words, "Father, into thy hands I surrender my spirit," you will be resurrected gloriously.'

This is probably true also of your crucifixions in heaven and the crucifixions of all who are yours. The end will surely be good. Therefore, plans to decrucify you may seem strange.

If through some means I might have arranged that Moses be be spared the pain of dying without having entered the Promised Land, his triumph centuries later might have been less beautiful.

Triumph in spite of unconquerable difficulties is surely more admirable than triumph in the midst of favourable circumstances.

I conclude, then, that you do not want decrucifixion, for either yourself or those who love you.

What if they die? The greater part of a man is invisible; at death the remaining part becomes invisible,

too, joining what has always been invisible. That is all.

Moses defended an innocent man who was being beaten, and for this lost for forty years the possibility of helping a whole nation of slaves. As a prince he could have done much. Morality in small things is sometimes the enemy of morality in great things.

When Joseph was sold by his brothers as a slave, a man with my turn of mind could have fought and saved him. Then Joseph would have been spared years of prison in Egypt, but he would have been denied the opportunity to become Egypt's prime minister and to save a whole nation, plus his own family, from famine. In this he prefigured you in type.

If Peter had been able to save you from crucifixion on Golgotha, he would have deprived mankind of the possibility of being saved. Can it be that your new crucifixions in heaven might also serve some great purpose? As for the sufferings of your church on earth, Tertullian once observed, 'The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.'

Maybe this whole idea of decrucifying you, which sounds so beautiful, might be wrong.

And if this is wrong, then much of my thinking in other religious matters might also be wrong. Is this possible? Can a child of God go astray easily even in matters of faith? Do we not have the promise that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth? Have I not been instructed by your holy church to whom you have entrusted the whole truth in your word?

How do I know that the road I travel in the future is the correct one?

I await your reply.

p072

My Eight Letter to Jesus

Dear Jesus, my love,

You remain silent, as ever. And I have no criterion for truth.

Should I say the Scripture is this criterion? Is it the original manuscript, which no contemporary has ever seen? Among those we have, which version is correct? There are hundreds of manuscripts that differ from each other.

The simple fact that there are so many interpretations of the Bible shows that it is not easy to put the mind at rest by saying, 'I follow the Bible.' Two individuals equally sincere and assiduous in their studies come to entirely different conclusions.

Is the church the proper guide? Then which church?

You would have done well to forbid Christians to study church history, except for the biographies of saints and martyrs.

The first to call the Pope of Rome ~Pontifex maximus~ (the chief of priests) was Tertullian in the beginning of the third century, but he did so with bitter irony, comparing him to his pagan counterpart of the same name.

Pope Callistus I (217-222) set up a bank and induced church members to deposit their money with him. He failed and then fled.

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When Stephen I (254-257) claimed for the first time in recorded history to be Peter's successor, St Firmilian of Caesarea compared him to Judas Iscariot and censured his

insolence. St Cyprian called him a 'deceitful worker, false apostle, false Christ.'

Pope Marcellinus (269-304) was charged by the church with being a traitor, since, it was said, he delivered Bibles to the heathen government to be burned, and he himself burned incense to the gods.

And so on and on. Are these your vicars from whom I should learn?

You must have abhorred the Catholic Inquisition as much as I do, as well as the subsequent killing of Catholics by Protestants.

Should I seek the truth from the Reformers? In some ways they were Deformers, committing acts that Protestants should repent of in sackcloth and ashes.

When the peasants revolted during the Reformation, thousands were killed, many of them under torture. Luther wrote, 'I, Martin Luther, slew all the peasants in the rebellion, for I said that they should be slain; all their blood is upon my head.'

With his accustomed hyperbole, he also wrote these blasphemous words: 'We must put the whole Decalogue entirely out of sight and out of our hearts. If Moses harasses you with his stupid Ten Commandments, say to him at once: "Take yourself off to your Jews. To the gallows with Moses!"' In addition, Luther was a determined anti-Semite.

To cap his highhandedness, he wrote: 'Whoever teaches otherwise than I teach, condemns God and must remain a child of hell. I can bear and endure nothing which is against "my" teaching.'

So I can learn neither from the Popes nor from their opponents in the Reformation.

I will tell you a Christian's vision. He saw himself ascending the steps toward heaven. He saw many men,

one more shining than another. Then he saw angels and bowed before one. The angel forbade him and pointing upward said,

'The one to be worshipped is higher.' The man then saw a much more beautiful angel, who also would not accept worship, but smiled and also pointed higher. Finally the man saw God himself, before whom all knelt. When he was about to join them, God pointed downward and said, 'Worship there.'

Looking down, the Christian saw the most wretched man hanging on a cross. He wanted to bow before him but was told, 'There exists something ever more precious. I am the eternal, sinless Son of God. Since I am love incarnate, it is no wonder that I love and sacrifice myself. Descend lower.'

Then, descending to the depths, the man saw in subterranean prisons simple people, sinners, and even former criminals, all of whom had become Christians and who now endured torture for the truth and long years in jail, and he worshipped the Godhead residing in them.

Long ago I decided to learn from the chain on martyrs and saints.

For many years I was with them in jail. And to my sorrow I discovered that they were divided. Everyone is convinced he has the whole truth and does not accept peace at the expense of it.

One of these fellow-sufferers said: 'The word "toleration" must be cut out of the church's vocabulary. It cannot be found in the Bible. It is not a nice word. Under its cloak have been hatched conspiracy, treason and heresy.'

Though hundreds of Christians were together in the same prison cell, they would not take Communion or even say an 'Our Father' together. 'How can we?' they asked. Some believed in transubstantiation, others in symbolism. Is it a matter of indifference (went the argument) if a loving soul

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offers truth or an error that can destroy the soul for eternity?

From whom should I learn? In despair I said I would learn from the dying saints. In their last moments they would give up their vanities.

Paul had had many debates. His swan song was 'I have

fought the good fight ...' Mozart wrote to his father, 'Death is the end of our lives. I have become acquainted over a period of years with this true, this best friend of men, so that its image is no longer a matter of dread for me, but of touching comfort. I thank God that he has given me the happiness to discover in death the key to our true blessedness.'

Some day I too will die. You who have been silent so long, grant me in my last moments serenity. No river has ever despaired of emptying into the sea. I have my sure course, which leads to a sea of light. 'More light!' said Goethe, when dying. Though I am confident of reaching the true light, my sin is my impatience. It is my desire to have the truth "now," perhaps before I am ready to receive it.

True is not given all at once because we might squander it.

I think I understand why you cannot write to us. You would have to put thoughts into words, as you did when you wrote to the angels of the Asian churches. Words not only convey thoughts but also limit and distort them. If we cannot say tunes or landscapes in words, how can Deity express itself adequately in such flimsy vehicles of thought?

In English you yourself are called the Word, but this is not so in your own language. In Hebrew you are ~Davar~. The Hebrews have no word for 'word,' though the Word of God was entrusted to them. ~Davar~ means 'the real thing.' Therefore, you the Word - 'the real thing' - were in the beginning.

Goethe's ~Faust~ was really not criticising the Bible but

rather its German translation when he said, 'I cannot value the simple word so much' as to say with John that 'in the beginning was the Word.' Then he inclines toward 'In the beginning was the sense' - exactly what the Greek name ~Logos~ means - arriving in the end to 'In the beginning was the power,' and lastly, 'In the beginning was the deed.' He felt that you are not only 'the Word,' but the real thing.

Your seven short letters in the Book of Revelation have drowned in a multitude of religious words. Real things cannot be reduced simply to words alone. Therefore you caused the Hebrew

Bible to contain musical notes as well. You prescribed a certain architecture for a place of worship and ornaments for the temple walls. You gave directions for the making of a brazen serpent and the embellishment of beautiful multi-color garments for the priesthood. The eyes as well as the mind should read your will.

You have not left me without reply. It was much more ample than an answer in a letter. The whole of reality is your reply. Scripture says of you, 'Jesus answered and said' when no one addressed you in words. You were replying to the reality of men and events confronting you.

You replied, ~Hallelujah~. You showed me where to find truth: it is in facts. There is no reason to believe that the whole truth is contained only in an old book, even if inspired by you. It lies in the totality of facts. I know now where to seek solutions to what torments me.

Hegel said, 'Everything that exists is reasonable,' which is obvious because there is nothing reasonable except facts, and the totality of facts.

Now I understand your saying, 'All must come to pass' (MTT 24:6). Anything that does not happen does not belong to the all. I think of it as a reel of film entitled 'The all' or 'The everything, material and spiritual, of all times.' If only part of the film appeared on the

screen, it would be mutilated. This film is the only truth.

Until the time of Luther a clear-cut distinction was made between religious and secular life. To be in church or to be a monk meant to serve God. All other things were worldly.

Luther tore down this barrier.

A story is told of a pastor who, in explaining some difficult parts of Scripture to a cobbler, used without thinking some rare theological terms. To his surprise, the cobbler was familiar with them. The pastor said, 'With such a mind and such knowledge you should be in God's work.'

The cobbler replied, 'I am in God's work. I repair the

shoes of poor people who have no means of transport. They walk miles to their place of work. I fear their feet might become wet and they might fall sick. Who will then care for their families? I pray therefore for God's grace before taking a pair of shoes in my hands, just as you pray before you start preparing your sermon.

'My desire is the same as yours: that, on the day of his judgement, God might look at the shoes I have repaired and say what he will say about your sermons, "Well done, good and faithful servant." My profession is not secular.'

Jesus, now you have thrown the ball into my court.

Everything is your reply: what preachers say, the work that plumbers do, their spiritual or material tools, the smile of indifference with which their wives receive them when they come home, the sunshine they enjoy, the tempests they encounter, the cosmic rays that alter their moods, the play of children in school and the interplay of elementary particles, things in this life and the next, what happens in the stars and in the space between them, angels, animals, micro-organisms. Everything is your revelation, your reply to our questions.

Twenty-four centuries ago, the Greek philosopher

Metrodotus of Chios suggested that intelligent life existed on worlds far from earth. He wrote, 'It goes against nature to find in a large field only one shaft of wheat and in an infinite universe only one living world.' Everything that happens in field or universe is part of your reply.

Even the questions we ask belong to your answer. There exists nothing apart from your replies, freely given. You once said, 'Before they call, I will answer' (ISA 65:24).

Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk observed, 'Man is the language of God.' Not only man, but the whole of reality is his language. Everything is your reply.

Now that you have provided me with this insight, I feel I must formulate your reply in words. I might try. I'll write to you again.

p079

My Ninth Letter to Jesus

Dear Jesus,

For years I have had no response and now all at once I read your reply as if it were posted on every wall and every tree. No other voice is heard, no other writing is to be read. The whole world, its whole history, all its events and all its thoughts, great and small, are your answer to questions I have already asked and those I have not even thought to ask.

You speak to me in the language of quality, so little known.

I showed many people a picture of a cow and asked them what they saw. Almost all replied, 'I see a cow,' which was a wrong reply. Rarely did one state the simple fact, 'I see a picture of a cow,' not a cow.

At the initiation into Zen religion, disciples spend months meditating on the question put to them by the master: 'What is the sound of clapping with only one hand?' Rare are those who find the only correct answer, though it is obvious. The obvious is the Cinderella abandoned in the scullery of our thoughts. The sound of clapping with only one hand is the sound of clapping with only one hand.

Prophets as well as ordinary men have said about God that he is love, he is revenge, and so on. He himself when

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asked gives the only complete reply: 'I am what I am.' St Paul introduces himself with exactly the same words.

The reply to any question can only be the reply to any question. The reply to a specific question is the reply to a specific question. You insist, 'Which is the reply?' It is, 'Which is the reply?' Life is an echo. He who puts questions will always remain with questions as his reply.

So the person who wants replies must not ask questions but give replies. It is written about you, 'He answered and said,' though no one had questioned you. It is because only by answering does one obtain answers. Raising problems raises problems. Only finding solutions finds solutions. In all matters, you know what to do when you start doing.

Every leaf of a tree, every flower and sunbeam, the pretty face of an American baby and the swollen belly of a starving baby in Africa, all reality tells me you are the life.

There is sense in life because if we investigate its origins, we see that at its beginning was a Mind.

How foolish I have been to wait for a written reply from you! I had no writing material in jail; I composed letters in my mind. Who knows if you can get paper and ink in heaven?

But whence come pebbles and jewels, thistles and roses, sun and moon, every man and every animal? Is it not from you who are the Word? Children of the Word are words. You were the Word who had become flesh in a special manner, but everything is a witness to you. Your speaking to men was implied in the plan of creation.

We have unanswered questions only because we are deaf, and even our deafness is a reply. Things and events carry your word; even more, it is carried by the connection between them.

It is written about you that you came full of grace and truth. Which of the two is more important? It is the 'and' that connects them. In the original Hebrew, the books of Judges, Samuel, Ezekiel and Jonah begin with the word 'And,' written in Hebrew simply with the letter 'v' - vav. Therefore the Kabbalah says the universe was created by

the letter "vav," by the 'and.' One event or one thing might not be clear. But when we listen to what connects them we will know.

Now I understand the words of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus: 'The Logos is day and night, winter and fire,

war and peace, abundance and hunger. Like the fire, he is in continual transformation.' The ancient Indians had said, 'The Himalaya is the god Vishnu in a very solid form.' The Bible says, 'In God we have our life, being and movement.'

The beautiful flower comes from a seed without beauty. This is possible because the unattractive seed comes from a beautiful flower. We individuals with our unreasonable thoughts come from you, the Word, the supreme reason. Therefore I found you, the supreme reason.

How great you are! All things were made by you. How many they are. Someone estimated that it would take a person 80,000 years to count every living creature in a cubic kilometre of water. And God knows each of them.

Goethe wrote, 'Believe in life; it is the best of books.' It is as much your book as the Bible.

The Archangel Gabriel told the prophet Daniel what is written in 'the scripture of truth' (Dan 10:21). He could not have meant the Bible as we know it, since it did not exist at that time. Neither were the things the angel revealed written in any book, as with ink on parchment. But there exists the great book of life. Indians called it 'Chronicle Akashah,' which is simply the all of all times and everywhere, all events and beings connected by the holy word 'and.'

I am beginning to read everything that happens as pages of this holy book, inspired by you as really as the Scriptures are inspired.

An Indian once said to a missionary, 'I always knew him [God]; you told me his name.' Likewise, I can say I have always had all your answers. But I had not known that quality is your answer. The Hindus had the sacred formula: ~Ta tyam asi~ - 'This also is you.'

The Jewish Hassidim have a Sabbath evening song:

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You, you, only you,
You, you, you, nothing else than you.
You, you, you, again you,

You, you, you.

They sing this for hours. Everything is your reply. I had not known it.

A beautiful legend is written in ~Sefer Ierahmeel~: When a child is to be conceived, God gives a sign to the angel over the spirits and tells him, 'Bring me a certain soul hidden in the garden of Eden, whose name is so-and-so and who looks thus-and-so.' When the world was created, all souls were prepared for men, as it is written, 'There is nothing new under the sun.'

The angel brings that spirit, which prostrates itself before God. God then says, 'Enter this seed.' The spirit replies, 'Lord of the universe, I am satisfied with the world in which I have lived since you created me. Please do not make me enter this impure being, because I am holy and clean.' God replies, 'The world which I make you enter is better than the world in which you have lived since I formed you. I created you only for this purpose.'

Two angels are put to guard the embryo during pregnancy. Every morning the child is taken into Eden and is shown the righteous who sit in glory with crowns on their heads. The angel asks the soul, 'Do you know who these are?'

'No.'

'These are men formed like you in a mother's womb. They went into the world and kept God's commandments. Therefore they have part in this blessing. You also, at the end of your days, will leave the world. If you fulfill all the commandments, you too will sit in these places.'

Every evening the child is taken to Gehenna. He sees sinners whom evil angels beat with red-hot sticks. They cry but no pity is shown them. The angel asks, 'Do you know who these are who burn?'

'No.'

'They had the same origin as you. They did not obey

God's statutes. Therefore they came to this place of punishment. You too, my child, will one day have to forsake the world. Remember!'

The angel also shows him all the places through which he will walk and finally his tomb. When the child is born, he forgets what he has seen. So ends the legend.

Another Jewish tradition tells us that the indentation between the nose and the lips is from the angel putting his finger on our mouth as a sign we have to keep silent about what we have seen.

There is nothing new under the sun. In every event of life I seem to see again the places through which I walked with angels and I seem to hear again words previously spoken for which I had had a luminous explanation by angels. Heaven is a goal and yet a place where I seem to have been before.

Things are clear. There are no questions to ask. How foolish I was to yearn for your replies. You speak through everything, or we could as well say you are mute, having nothing more to say.

God had long since given fragments of truth through the prophets. Questions remained open. But then you came. You are the whole truth. Henceforth it is an offence to seek visions and revelations. Any new revelation would be false. Every novelty would be wrong. You are God's only Word in which everything has been said once for ever.

Thank you, thank you.

I would like to tell you more, but I remember the poor tailor, St Gerard, probably the only canonised tailor. He did not make many suits because he loved prayer too much. He was overheard crying out, 'Lord, let me go, I pray you. I must make some trousers too.' Others take some time from their work for conversation with you. He took some time from prayer for work. I too am sorry I cannot spend my whole time with you, questioning or shouting Hallelujah about having found the answer.

Goodbye, for the time being.

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My Tenth Letter to Jesus

Dear Jesus,

'~Ti emoi kai soi?~' You have taught me not to question any more; though when you were a man, reduced to our level of weakness, you asked questions.

'~Ti emoi kai soi?~' – 'What is between me and you?' you had asked your mother. You wondered what fluid circulated between you and her. The narrator does not even give her name, as would have been natural, but only calls her your mother. The only thing which counted was this mysterious fluid, this full coincidence between your intentions and hers.

You were united by a spiritual umbilical tie with your earthly mother, as she was tied to you, her Master and Lord. She had given you a human body; you had made her full of diving grace.

There is also something ~emoi kai soi~, between me, Richard and you, Jesus. There was first the wilful sinning against you, then my intemperate questioning. But I must say you were no better. You questioned me, too, even about sensitive things that gentlemen never bring into discussion. Now there is the calm.

The wedding in Cana was on the third day.

In ancient initiations into mystery religions, the first day one relived his past and the past of mankind; the

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second day one saw his actual duties and the present of mankind; the third day was that of the mystical marriage.

The bride is quiet in the bridegroom's embrace. She receives his holy kiss. How wonderful it is to have a God untroubled by wrath or weariness, but rather a God who rejoices at weddings.

Bernard said rightly, 'A quiet God quiets all things; to see him rested means to be rested. A joyful God gladdens one.'

Such a God are you to me now, and I guess such a disciple am I to you.

I know that what I experience now is a sentiment and sentiments fluctuate. I have known many moments of deep joy with you, as well as repeated doubts, times when we were not even on speaking terms, and moments of utter despair about our relationship. Now I know calm. I could not call it perfect calm, because I know that, like everything human, it is transitory.

I enjoy reading the lives of the greatest saints. None of them was constant and stable in sainthood.

Perhaps tomorrow all the questions will torment me again. But why should I heed tomorrow? Tomorrow will take care of itself.

Lincoln said, 'Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.' On earth, no one can set far-reaching goals of happiness. But instead of brooding about the unhappiness that might overcome me tomorrow, I wish to obtain the fullness of joy with you which this day can give. I made up my mind to be happy today.

I possess the most precious but much despised jewel: today. People squander it on regrets about the past and utopian dreams about the future. God says, 'Today have I begotten thee.' God does not miss the todays, or he might have missed begetting you.

A Chinese story tells of Pineiho, who found a piece of uncut jade and presented it to Emperor Wu. He in turn asked a jeweller to assess it. 'Just an ordinary stone,' said the jeweller. In a rage, the emperor cut off Pineiho's foot.

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When the emperor died, Pineiho presented the jade to his successor, Wen, who also took it to a jeweller. His opinion too was that it was just a stone. Pineiho lost his other foot. Weeping bitterly, he said, 'I am not grieving about the loss of my feet, but because a jewel has been called an ordinary stone.'

Under a third emperor the jade was polished and found to be very precious.

Dreamers, including religious dreamers, fancying a kingdom of God far away, cut off the feet of those who offer them the jewel 'today,' with the best it can bring and the best opportunities it offers.

When you took on humanity with all its human features, you might also have taken this disregard for today. The bride had invited you with words not many brides use: 'Our bed is green. The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir' (SOS 1:10,11).

You renounced the delights of love today in order to die on a cross to save in all the tomorrows many who will never care about you. You left those who loved you in order to prepare mansions in heaven. What kind of mansions are these that take two thousand years to prepare? Our modern architects build great cities in no time.

The delay might not be because of technical difficulties, or because it takes so much time to build these habitations, but rather because you might wring your hands after laying each brick and ask yourself in tears, 'When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? Will he find inhabitants for these heavenly palaces?'

Peter had said to you, 'Don't think about tomorrow. You have here today those who love you. Do not die. Stay with those who are yours.' You wounded his heart for ever by calling him Satan. Perhaps without this one bitter experience, he would not have wavered in Gethsemane. I have seen many faltering or even falling away in prison. It was not simply cowardice. Could it be that you neglected them on some today while you were in search of that glorious tomorrow for all?

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Away, away, questions! Now you have come again. No, Bridegroom, I have turned them away. Make me forget everything with a kiss of your mouth.

Please do a miracle for me. In Bible times, you caused prophets to see into the distant future. You restored to Hezekiah ten hours of his past. For me, make past and future

melt in the one today of your embrace.

You can do so. When life first appeared in a purely mechanical universe, something new arose with new laws. Plants that grow and animals that move are wonders to inanimate nature. Likewise, man is a miracle to animals and you to man.

Come, put your left hand under my head and with your right hand embrace me (SOS 2:6). You showed in your everyday life here on earth that you can be both delicate and forceful. So I wish you to be as I relax in your arms.

I cannot overcome fully the thought of tomorrow. Perhaps you will leave me when I fall asleep exhausted.

As a bottle of perfume retains its fragrance even months after it has been emptied, so your mother kept the fragrance of your presence within her long after you were born. Saints who have known you ~in extasis~ keep the afterglow of your brightness long after they descend from the heights. Ellen White says that the devil is not ugly, as he is usually depicted in paintings, but retains some of the grandeur he once knew in heaven.

In the warmth of your embrace, I believe there will be no tomorrow. But if there is, it will be suffused with the loveliness of today. I will have known experimentally what Plotin said: that object and subject are no more two principles, and that the beatified soul can no longer distinguish them. I am no more I. I have become the one whom I contemplate.

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St Gertrude said, 'I am you; you are I. I am not you, you are not I. You and I are a new person: ~You-I~.' Perhaps it is you who take the initiative and apply to me the words of the bridge in Solomon's Song, 'My beloved is mine and I am not' - ~Dodi li veani lo~.

I desire the fulness of pleasure in your love. You inspired the erotic imagery of the Song of Songs and of the mystical writings of other religions. Your first miracle was performed at a wedding in Cana. Is a Puritan asceticism the best way to thank you for your generosity?

If a hostess works hard to prepare a dinner for her guests, will she rejoice if they proclaim a fast and refuse to

eat? Puritans walk through the beautiful garden of life gathering thorns and throwing away roses. They imagine they thus please God, the gardener who planted the flowers for them.

The bride in Solomon's Song was not a Puritan in her relationship with you; neither am I. Let us both forget about ourselves in an eternal embrace.

Come!

It is such an ardent embrace, a full one, like those in bridal chambers, but, strangely, you were never seen other than fully clothed.

If anyone had a reason to walk nude, it was you when you were resurrected from the dead. You had left the linen in which you have been wrapped in the tomb. Perhaps, in anticipation of resurrection, you prepared beforehand garments for your needs. We do not know. But it is certain that you were always clothed.

Your embrace is always circumspect, but still you are able to communicate to your bride the intensity of your unfathomable love.

It is for this that I long.

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My Eleventh Letter to Jesus

My beloved Jesus,

There exists a strange subjunctive world into which the devil tried to introduce you. '~If~ you are the Son of God,' he said, addressing you. The very word 'if' shows that all the rest of the sentence is nonsense. Reality knows no 'ifs.' Pilate used the interrogative mood when he asked, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' Wherever there is a sign of interrogation, there is no truth.

I acknowledge only the declarative mood. 'My Beloved is mine, and I am his.' I am the bride of the King of kings.

An author used the following sentence: 'Proper writing [and you have heard this a million times] avoids exaggeration.' He did not realize that he was exaggerating.

Those who teach 'truth' often are unaware that they lie. When I was a child I was told this classic story.

As a father and a boy walked together, the boy said, 'I saw a dog as big as an elephant.'

The father replied, 'We are now approaching what is called the liar's bridge. When a liar passes over it, it collapses and everyone dies.'

Now the boy was afraid. After a few steps, he said, 'Well, the dog was as big as an ox.'

They drew nearer. The bridge was already in sight.

Finally, the boy conceded, 'The dog was really as big as a dog.' With this the story ended.

The truth is that the father would also have fallen into the water, because he told a lie about an ordinary bridge. Rather, the author of the story would have had to die, because everything he recounted was a fabrication.

So in the world one is condemned for lying in the name of a moral system which itself is a lie. Immorality is a lie, too. The world's assertions and denials of truth are all wrong. '~Every~ imagination of the thoughts of a man's heart is only evil continually' (GEN 6:5). ~Every~ imagination, including what we label as good.

I do not need this world and its systems of thought.

If I alone had been a sinner and the whole world were righteous, you, in whose embrace I am, would have come to be crucified only for me.

There I go pronouncing the word again. I started this whole series of letters with the concern of decrucifying you or, if Paul's assertion that you are also nailed to crosses in heaven is only a metaphor, of decrucifying your oppressed little

brethren who suffer here.

Then I had a sudden illumination and spent, not time, but something outside of time with you in the inebriation of love. Your hands caressed me, as I lay at your feet. Neither the bride in Solomon's Song nor I observed any wounds.

How could that be? You are said to be 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' (REV 13:8), then slain again on earth, then slain in heaven. Slain, slain, and again slain. This seems to be your whole existence.

But you never had to be slain. In Gethsemane you said you could have called twelve legions of angels to your defence, though it was written that you have to die. So you yourself acknowledge that there was an alternative to what was written.

But before the foundation of the world there were no Scriptures. In Gethsemane you had a problem: 'How

shall the Scriptures be fulfilled if I call upon angels?' (MTT 26:54). This problem did not exist before the foundation of the world. Why were you slain then? And what Scripture do you now fulfill in allowing yourself to be crucified again and again?

I dare even to reproach you for not being as respectful of Scriptures as you were in Gethsemane. Scripture says your role in heave is to be seated on the throne near your Father, to rule the world and to intercede for us. Why are you not mindful of this? Why do you depart from Scripture and endure the cross again and again?

The hours spent in loving embrace vanished as if they had never been. We had been one. Now we discuss. Dialecticians say discussions are the midwives of truth because they shed light from many quarters. But I am not interested in truth obtained by this method.

One question alone remains for me: why has my Beloved been torn from my side? Why did you - why do you - suffer with so much stubbornness, in spite of your bride's longing after you, yes, in spite of Scripture which required only one crucifixion?

I guess I will not persuade you to renounce your

sufferings willingly. You are the King of the Jews, who were called in the Bible a stiff-necked people. You are the most stiff-necked of all. To try to keep you from crucifixion is like trying to convince the sea not to ebb and flow or the pine trees on mountaintops not to bend in the tempest.

You have a heart of stone. It could not be otherwise, since you are the express image of God. And John compares the Father to a precious stone (REV 4:3). Precious, precious, but still a stone. It is not what lovers wish it to be. Never has a precious stone yielded to a poor girl's legitimate desire to ornament her neck. You also do only your own will. If on occasion it seems that you do ours, it is because - with the unfathomable means at your command - you inspired us to will what you had

already decided. We are caught in a net from which there is no escape.

What about me? I intend to publish these letters. But I am a pastor who is supposed to spread faith, not doubt. It is the devil who sows doubt.

Another question arises: Why did you choose Judas, a devil, for an apostle? He must have realized at times that he was a devil. I have known pastors and even bishops who were clearly conscious of being devils. Why did you choose such men? Is it because you did not want to conquer, but to suffer? Could you have been crucified without the Judases, Caiaphases and Pilates?

Well, I have an inspiration. I have found at least one method to decrucify you, to keep you from being put on crosses any more: a general strike.

My life should be dedicated to convincing men not to betray, or sell their fellowmen, or sentence innocents, or whip, or mock, or crucify. If I succeed in organising such a strike, your divine decision to be crucified again and again will be foiled by me, a small creature indeed.

But there are all kinds of Hitlers living today, national leaders as well as minor functionaries. I was once a tormentor of others and was saved. So this is the way to achieve my goal;

win tormentors to the way of love.

If Abels would not sacrifice lambs to God who does not need them but would offer them to Cains as a sign of friendship; if Jacobs would not deceive Esaus in order to obtain blessings but would be happy about Esaus receiving them; if all would yield like Jonathan their legitimate right to the throne in favour of Davids who

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are surely worse than they - then love might disarm crucifiers.

In the past, love has not proved that it has this power.

Once, when a house was on fire, a man threw a cup of water on it, only to see it burn to the ground. 'Water does not extinguish fire,' he concluded. The fool! A cup of water does not quench it, but fire engines with water hoses do. The little love we have shown until now has not succeeded. Flames of love might very well.

The fact is, I was once a crucifier, till an encounter with your all-forgiving love changed me. If I could be transformed, others can too.

I will dedicate my life to this.

p094

My Twelfth Letter to Jesus

Dear Jesus,

The story is told about King Kansa in India, who sent soldiers to arrest Krishna. The latter, seeing the soldiers, smiled and said, 'I know who you are and why you come. I am ready to follow you to your king, but let me speak to you first about the king of heaven who is my king too.' And he told them about Mahadeva, his glory and revelations.

When he finished, the soldiers gave him their weapons and said, 'We will not take you as a prisoner to our king, but rather we will follow you to yours.'

When the soldiers failed to return, Nysumba, Kansa's wife, said to him, 'Send the noblemen.' These promised the king they would not listen to Krishna. But when they saw the shining of his eyes, his warm presence, and the respect shown by the multitude, they changed their minds.

He spoke to them about the inner slavery of those who do evil and of the heavenly freedom of those who do good. The noblemen then said, 'We promised the king to bring you bound in chains, but we cannot do so, because you have broken ours.'

The Jewish prophets were not alone in their expectations regarding you. The Krishna legend also knew about your coming.

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At one time, officers were sent to arrest you. Unable to fulfill their mission, they defended themselves with the words, 'Never did any man speak like this man' (JHN 45:46).

You spoke. At that time it was as true as it is today that the whole of reality is your speech, but we are so deaf to truth that you considered the shouting of reality not enough but added to it your own voice in human language.

Are men today less hardhearted than they were then? If not, why are you silent now? Why do you allow your church in half the world - under Communism and Islam - to be silenced? Many of the preachers in the West find themselves unable to speak out about important issues. They are silenced by the attraction of the world.

I had escaped this nagging question for a short time. Now it has come back, but I will shrug it off. I love you and surely do not wish to quarrel.

I can understand how foreign it must have been for you to become a historic person. Like Melchisedek you are without father or mother, temple, people and human habits (GEN 14:18-20; HEB 7:1-4). Because of the brevity of life on earth, we have historicised you too much. I understand you to be entirely other.

I will make no claim on you. My only desire is to organize the strike. As a matter of fact, I should not have disclosed to you this secret, since there is a fundamental misunderstanding between us. For too long we have beaten around the bush.

Please realize that for humans who think, it is incomprehensible that we have to pray endlessly to the Almighty to have his name hallowed, his kingdom triumph and his will fulfilled.

I love you without understanding. You might want so suffer. I want to ensure that there will be no one to satisfy your desire. You will have to be happy.

You remember how, when I was in solitary confinement, I drew your face with chalk on the door. You

looked sad. Then I erased the drawing and made another with your lips curled upward. I made you smile. Some can make God rejoice with singing (ZEP 3:17). We can make the Man of Sorrows smile. This is my ambition.

You can use any excuse with me. You said to men, 'How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?' (MTT 17:17). We are your suffering. One translation says, 'How is it I even talk with you?' You express impatience about having to suffer us, but nevertheless you desire to suffer.

I want to cut this tangled knot. You should no longer have to suffer, nor your disciples, nor anyone in the world. Hell should remain empty.

We cannot accept the situation in the world today. The Talmud Berahot records these words of Rabbi Papa: 'It is better for a man to throw himself into a burning oven than to make someone blush in public.' To insult a person is like killing him, because you cause his blood to shed itself upon his face. Human blood should not be shed anywhere, in any way, with malice.

Unfortunately, on this sin-cursed earth a knowledge of good co-exists with the results of the Fall. And so the lofty principle of respect for human life co-exists with preparations

for nuclear war. While some sing sons praising you, millions of human beings are born each year, most of them in areas of widespread poverty and malnutrition, where the possibility of hearing the gospel intelligently set forth is virtually nil.

There are those who try to account for human suffering with high-flown explanations. Rabbi Elimelekh of Lizensk supposed that it comes from God as a veil, because man is too weak to accept divine charity which is absolute. But such rationalisations are of no avail to ignorant, starving children whose bellies are swollen with hunger, nor to their mothers who have no milk in their breasts.

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It took scientists decades to reconstruct the pithecanthropus, the monkey-man whose past experience can in no way be proved. But many women might testify that their husbands belong to this species, and sub-human pithecanthropuses like Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Amin and Bokassa have ruled half of the world in this century.

In any case, in all those who suffer, whether physically or spiritually, it is you who suffer.

I do not know if I will succeed, but I will try together with others to change all this, to make your sufferings cease or at least to diminish them greatly for a time.

It is futile and unrealistic to attempt to change the world. Therefore I will try gentle changes. They will be accepted more easily.

Among many primitive peoples, a woman accused of adultery had to prove her innocence by putting her hand in boiling water or taking poison. Needless to say, all were found guilty.

God knew the ancient Jews were a superstitious people. He also knew that in such cases it would have been too much to demand understanding and forgiveness. So he undertook a devious solution. He ordered that the suspected woman drink plain water in which a writing had been put and upon which some formula had been pronounced (NUM 5:11ff). If her belly swelled, she was to be pronounced guilty; if not, she was innocent. Obviously, a glass of water does not cause one's belly to swell. With such a system, no woman was ever proved adulterous. The husbands were

satisfied and the women went free.

I do not know yet how I will fare in this undertaking. Perhaps I will tell those who inflict suffering to be satisfied with less than crucifixion.

You must have much fellowship with Francis of Assisi. You remember how he accomplished his ends. When robbers who lived in the forest surrounding his monastery assaulted worshippers, the friars wanted to call the police.

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Francis said, 'No, but rather take them some food and beverage; tell them I give them by blessing and that I ask for only one thing: they should rob but not kill.' The thieves consented. Then he obtained from them the promise not to rob on Sundays and great feasts. Gradually he changed them into good men.

This might be a workable method. Well, I will not discuss these questions with you but with my fellow-believers.

For the time being, I will curtail my correspondence with you in order to speak to my peers.

My besetting sin is pride. I know. Some of it is inherited. I am presumed to be a descendant of Rabbi Dov Ber of Meseritch, a great personality of the Hassidic movement.

It is said that at the age of five he saw his mother crying because, when their house burned down, they lost their family tree proving they were descendants of King David. The future Maggid told her, 'Do not cry. I will give you another lineage. It will become an honour to be my descendant.'

Forgive me for writing to you in such a presumptuous manner. I boasted about what I would do. Surely you will forgive. Let us just remain in love. And until I write again, 'Be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether' (SOS 2:17).

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My First Letter to Christians

Dear brethren and sisters,

I submit to you a series of twelve letters I wrote to Jesus. I think they are self-explanatory.

They started with the grandiose plan of decrucifying him. But I think I will have to come down to earth. Some of the major problems of our planet, such as famine, housing, unemployment, drug addiction, prostitution, pollution, overpopulation, alcoholism, revolution, racism, the danger of war, terrorism, are all too much for our small minds without adding the task I proposed.

We can solve problems only one by one and step by step.

History has shown that revolution is not a magic word that makes problems disappear. If this were the intended outcome, all revolutions have failed. By the same token, there is no possibility of an instantaneous Christian revolution that would satisfy the heart of our Master. He could never be satisfied with less than the whole creation being wholly his.

I am sure he has a good plan to achieve this end. He taught us never to start a war unless we have calculated in advance the size of our forces compared with the enemy's. and never to build a tower without being sure that we have the wherewithal to finish it (LUK 14:28-31).

He must certainly follow his own advice. God surely did not create the earth nor did Jesus start to build his church without first calculating all the consequences.

In our human realm we do not launch a satellite without the full assurance that it will reach its target and, if so desired, return to earth safely. The One who gave us the mind to accomplish such feats is surely far more intelligent than his creatures. He knows every sparrow and the hair on every head.

An office manager would be fired for incompetence if he spend money on useless statistics. God knows not only how but

also why such minutiae are accounted for in such detail.

Hebrew, the language of his revelation, does not contain the word 'to think.' For this the Jews use the word ~likshav~, which really means 'to count.' There may be deep significance to the fact that God gave 'Numbers' as the title of one of his books in the Bible.

More than this, God saw to it that in the three languages of the Bible, Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, every letter also represents a figure. The apocalyptic beast has no name but a number: 666 (REV 13:18). Jesus has a number, too. The numbers of letters of his Greek name are 888. In the language of symbolism, six is the figure for pettiness. The beast is 'almost nothing to the cube.' As for 777, it represents the superlative of human holiness, 888 the superlative of divine holiness on earth.

Well, in the Bible everything is calculation. Christ calculated his final victory and reunion with the Father in glory in a state without any crucifixions or other sorrow.

The Zohar asserts, 'No blessing from above can rest on anything that is counted.... Blessing does not rest on what is numbered.' The intention of the writer is good. He wants to teach that with God quality counts, not quantity. But God's world is permeated with mathematical concepts. Among other things, God commanded Moses to number the Jewish people (EXO 30:11).

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Everything is counted, including the troubles through which we have to pass, but these transitory troubles should not disturb us.

The Hebrew word for 'parable' - ~mashal~ - has two other meanings: to reign, and song of mockery. In all Jesus' parables, good triumphs in the end. The prodigal son returns and the lost sheep is found. The fruitful seed brings forth so much that it makes up for what is lost. Jesus will also triumph in the end, and evil will be mocked.

Faith looks beyond the painful present to his last triumph and is patient. But none of us is all faith. We are humans with faith, which means we are often impatient. Not

knowing his calculations, we long to accomplish things now.

In my letters to Jesus, I made the mistake of overstating my intentions. I now feel that we should rather do concrete things; we should be pragmatic, down to earth, realistic.

When I write to you, I do not have the same feelings I had when I wrote to him. Then I felt terrible pain sharing the sufferings he must endure while being crucified again and again.

Now I am having second thoughts. During this earthly life, he had reduced himself to our level and must have felt the sting of the whip and the crunch of the nails just as we would under such circumstances. But there exist among humans those who exercise mental pain control.

Yogis have this ability; there are rare persons who practise a sort of religious anesthesia. I have known badly tortured prisoners who really experienced the concept that the rest of us hold only intellectually. 'They are not beating my back or soles. They beat a back. This back belongs to a body. I happen to inhabit it for a time, but I have left it many times in the rapture of love, in the ecstasy of prayer, in identifying with the beauties of nature, in dreams. Therefore I can leave it again.'

Such individuals endured torture of their own bodies as if they were spectators in a theatre observing a performance

of ~King Lear~, in which characters had their eyes gouged out.

Under scientific control yogis have been known to spend many hours in boxes with so little oxygen that anyone else would be asphyxiated. I have seen 150 prisoners stacked in one cell, in wretched heat, with neither window nor ventilation but only the stench from barrels of human excrement. Specialists say this ability to survive depends upon the brain's capacity to produce the alpha waves that accompany full relaxation and inner quiet. We are forced to acknowledge that there are things that defy human logic.

What some human beings are able to endure, Jesus can surely surpass. What if these crucifixions in heaven about which St Paul speaks are not painful at all?

Divine feelings are so different from ours. It is written that the heavenly Father found pleasure in bruising his Son (ISA 53:10). What breaks our hearts with grief has an entirely different effects upon him. Perhaps this is also true of crucifixions. Perhaps Jesus re-enacts them painlessly, bloodlessly, as is done in every Communion service, just for the instruction of the saints.

If this is so, then instead of decrucifying him and others, I would have to take myself down from the cross of ignorance, which measures heavenly events with a human rod. We could abandon the tremendous assignment to decrucify the Son of God and concentrate instead on producing changes in ourselves.

We possess amazing letters from Christians in Communist prisons, suggesting that some of them have transcended the threshold of sorrow and grief and feel positive joy in enduring tribulation. Their suffering is something like the re-enacting of Jesus' passion in Oberammergau.

Let us too become more and more Godlike, fulfilling Jesus' words. 'You are gods' (JHN 10:34). Does the possibility of becoming one exist? Then I will have no 'He' about whom to care, no 'He' with whom to share.

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Eckhardt teaches that the real believer does not even have a God to worship because he is one with God.

Can there be unity with God? We are so different. He likes angelic music and wisdom. We prefer jazz and fun. He is serene and earnest. We enjoy laughter. He feels at ease sitting on a throne age after age. We have never enough of jogging and sports. He is 'the entirely other.'

But God is not limited to the role a Calvinist theologian assigns him. Who invented music and sex? Who gave us the organs with which to laugh? Sometimes he himself laughs (PSA 2:4). And it is not true that he spends endless ages sitting on a throne. Sometimes he takes a ride, at other times he flies. He flew long before men, though on cherubim, not in a jet (PSA 18:10).

We can be united with God, with Jesus. Then he will be

no problem to us any more, unless he is a problem to himself, a matter for later discussion.

The Bhagavad-Gita contains the prayer: 'You alone know what you are by the light of your innermost nature. Therefore teach me now and hold back no word in the telling.'

We have sought for less than unity with him because we were not mature. It became a habit to indulge our petty preoccupations. Habit is like a cable of which we weave a thread each day. But if it is possible to fall into habitual neglect, become alienated from God or worshipping him from afar, it is also possible to reverse the process and make it a habit of spending time with him and becoming one with him in thought and feeling.

Then this crucifixion in heaven, if it is real, will be my crucifixion. And since the crucified cannot decrucify himself, there will be no one to decrucify him. We will have to live with this. And the worst pain will have passed, because it is surely much more difficult to see one's beloved suffering than to suffer oneself.

Can this be the solution to what torments me? We will have to speak about this again.

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My Second Letter to Christians

Dear brethren and sisters,

Jesus' contemporaries were concerned that he might be a suicidal type. They once asked, 'Will he kill himself?' (JHN 8:22). We also know that, though he was only thirty, he must have looked almost fifty (JHN 8:57).

These are the only physiognomic clues about Jesus that we find in the Gospels. We can infer from them that on Jesus' face one could read tragedy when he thought and spoke about men dying in sin and missing the mark of becoming one with God. A mother does not joke when speaking about a child who is deathly ill.

(A face gives many clues to character. Those who encountered St Catherine began to weep, as they sensed the about Charles Finney, last century's renowned American evangelist.)

We have to become one with him. The divine Bridegroom has but one consuming passion, the desire to become one with his bride, the church, of which we are members.

This passion for oneness is also the supreme desire of the bride. (And in this context the converted male is also a bride, not a bridegroom, and partakes of female characteristics. In Hebrew the word for 'you' addressed

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to males is ~atah~, to females ~at~. In the Hebrew of DEU 5:27, Moses, with the soul of a bride, is addressed with the feminine "at.")

In no domain is change possible without differentiation. Inequality is the motive force of the universe. Energy manifests itself only where there is a difference of level, otherwise the universe would be static. The difference between God and us may necessarily exist, but through his gracious condescension it can be bridged as his energy flows to us with transforming power.

A religion of 'I and thou' creates by its very nature a relationship of master to servant. The Christian religion unites the 'i' with the 'thou.' There is no more difference of level.

Already during the Old Testament times, the Jews had the feeling that as long as God remained a 'he,' we would always have to forsake him, in order to fulfill the needs of the 'I.' Therefore, God had to become an 'I' within the believer.

This is the mystery contained in the Hebrew expression ~Ani-Hu~, which we find in ISA 48:12: '~Ani-hu ani arishon, af ani aharon.~' The literal translation is, 'A me-he is the first and an only me is the last.'

Even now, at the Feast of the Tabernacles, there is a procession every day in the synagogues, during which these words are sung: '~Ani ve-Hu hoshana~' - 'I and you save me.' ~Ani Hu~ is the ineffable name of God which Jesus made known to his disciples (Jn 17.21-23).

The resurrected Lord appears to the persecutor Saul of Tarsus and asks him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute ~me~?' (Acts 9.4). Now, the truth is that Saul had never touched Jesus with so much as a finger. He had fought against his disciples. But Jesus - even though he might be omniscient - does not know that there is a difference, a distance between himself and his disciples. When he talks about them, he says, 'Me.'

God does not create apart from himself. All his works

become by the fact of creation a part of his being. We form God's inner world. God chooses to be one with his creatures.

The Hebrew name 'Jehovah Sabaoth' cannot be translated simply as 'Lord of Hosts.' In many parts of the Bible 'Sabaoth' is not a genitive but an appositive to Jehovah. 'Sabaoth' (Hosts) is an independent name of God. The literal translation would be 'Jehovah-Hosts.' God has the name 'Hosts.'

We have only a pallid image of what this means. Curiously, when Jesus asked a fallen angel what his name was, he replied, 'My name is legion' (Lk 8.30), indicating that some angels apparently have no consciousness of their individuality. They have a feeling of unity that we lack and do not regard themselves as isolated individuals, separate from their comrades.

God has a sense of unity to the superlative. He sees himself as being all the hosts, all the antithetical forces that collide in the world he created and rules. Therefore his name is 'Hosts.' He perceives himself as the only reality.

The believer also comprehends him in terms of this unity, while acknowledging that he speaks to us as to separate individuals. But do we not often talk to ourselves internally as to another person?

'I live, yet not I, but he lives in me,' says St Paul. He is me.

Let us not allow ourselves to be turned away from this. A thief was once arrested and badly beaten by the police. When he was thrown into my cell, his first words were: 'It is useless for them to beat me. I love stealing. As soon as I'm released,

I'll try again.'

I love and desire nothing more than this unity with God. I have not attained it, but I will continue to strive for it. I want to become oblivious of the outside world, which is an inside world ignorant about its true nature.

When bereaved of very dear ones, I could remain quiet

and serene. I am not sure if it was callousness on my part, but I felt that my beloved ones were in Godhead. They continue to be there, though in another dimension. Death is not final. The Dakes and the Irish used to dance at funerals.

I realize my letter becomes incoherent. I speak about the infinite, and the written word cannot contain it. In order to see a tuberculosis microbe, one must destroy, stain, and bombard it with photons, which makes it impossible to see the organism as it is 'in vivo.'

A God bombarded by our meditations, contemplations, and speculations becomes very interesting but ceases to be the 'I am what I am.' Perhaps, independently of my thoughts, everything that torments me about him and the whole plan of decrucifixion might be senseless.

This business of setting down everything in words is not good. Even God does not like to put in words all that he has to reveal to us. It is true he gave us the Bible. But why? When asked about one of the Old Testament commands, Jesus said it was given because of our hardness of heart. Those with upright hearts need no commands. Ultimately they need no words either.

The real language of God finds expression in holy men. God provided first an Enoch, then a Noah, an Abraham, Isaac, Rachel, Moses and others like them. When it became difficult to find men of this calibre, he gave many words.

We must transcend the sphere of words. Then we will realize that realities are frightening only when they are put in words, when they are labelled. Otherwise they just are. Even to say 'they are' is too much said. We say too much even if we say only that God is, because he exists in a special sense like no other, which means that the word 'is' is a misnomer when applied

to him. He is the force beyond all force.

Hegel wrote, 'God is, in the highest and most unique sense of the word, force, ie, the primal force of all forces, the soul of all souls.'

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We perceive him as a 'he.' He perceives man as an 'I.' Therefore he can love us without measure. If we would consider him also an 'I,' and the I and he would both burn with fire and yet remain unconsumed, just like the bush Moses saw in the desert.

The 'I' is a part of my psyche, but my lungs pump air, the vocal cords modulate themselves, and the tongue and the lips articulate the sound. All these which are not the 'I' work together to pronounce the word. They usurp the name 'I' which does not really belong to them. But my whole being robs the 'I,' which is the name only of God. There is only one 'I' and no one besides him to trouble the waters, either to crucify or to decrucify him.

He is me, and I am he. When I understood this, every deed that served and kept my own life became hallowed, since it served the well-being of the Divine. Our deeds are sanctified by the real doer.

Rabbi Baruch of Medzebosh said, 'To attain truth, man must pass forty-nine gates, each opening onto a new question, only to arrive finally before the last gate, beyond which he could not live without faith.'

The unbeliever is all questions; the believer needs no answers. When the veil before the Most Holy Place in the temple was rent at Jesus' death, it was seen to be empty. It had been completely empty since the ark of the covenant disappeared in the Babylonian captivity. In Mithraism, after long exercises, the initiate is brought before the most holy place. When the veil is drawn aside, it is seen to contain nothing.

There is no reply because the questioner, the questioned and the question are one.

Apart from unity with God, all religion, even beautiful plans for decrucifying Jesus, is just imagination and fantasy.

What are we worried about? The soul is a slave if it smiles only when bathed in light; it must continue to smile when it passes through darkness as well.

In Cambodia, the Communists brought a group of

men before the statue of Buddha with his ineffable smile and said, 'Pray that he will save you.' Buddha remained silent and smiled. They were all slaughtered. The smile on his lips never ceased. Did the victims understand that one can smile even under such circumstances?

A free soul sings also when his material body is destroyed. The Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer are the same Deity.

It is wrong to weep about not having achieved unity with God. Jesus, reduced to human nature, felt our sinfulness so much that he looked like one who could commit suicide. In his glory God remains serene even if we sin.

The Lamaists ~Book of Golden Teachings~ says, 'If your blossoming soul bows its ear to the noise of the world, if it finds pleasure in the fun of the great deceit; if, frightened of seeing the burning tears of pain and deafened by cries, it hides itself fearfully in the shell of consciousness of the I, know, O disciple, that your soul is unworthy of the silent God.'

I started the letters to Jesus and to you as a sick soul. I was not living in unity with him.

Now I realize that the great importance of Jesus consists in the fact that he had the highest comprehension of the absolute unity of human and divine existence. It is rather the metaphysical, than the historical, in Jesus which saves.

In the metaphysical, it was not wicked men who slew Jesus. He was slain before the foundation of the world, when there were no unjust judges, greedy kings, Judases, or raging mobs. Who slew him then? What does the slaughtering of a lamb mean there?

Abel slaughtered a lamb as a sacrifice to God. Would not

God have preferred to see this lamb playing in a meadow?

Only if I understand these things will I be able to think fruitfully about decrucifying him.

I will have to consider all these things again.

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My Third Letter to Christians

Dear brethren and sisters,

I wish to free Jesus and those who bear his name, but only a free man can free others.

If I want to help sick men, I cannot start by doctoring them; I have to study for a few years and become a physician first.

The story is told that an English king gave an architect a great deal of money to built St Paul's cathedral. Years passed while the architect did nothing. When the king asked why, he replied, 'I have to work on myself first to eliminate from my heart all greed for money.' After a few more years, he excused himself again: 'I had to fight against the desire for fame.' Only after cleansing himself did he do the work.

He who wants to decrucify Jesus should not attempt the task till he has learned in depth what is required. Or rather, he should start by unlearning the many wrong things taught for centuries in the churches.

If one approaches the task of unlearning first, learning will be easier. It is obviously easier to recognize error, which is on the surface, than to reach truth, which is in the depths beneath.

When we unlearn the things we have known before learning the new, when we have swept away all the

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fancies that populate the mind and that have been accepted on the basis of hearsay, we realize that we all are what John the Baptist was said to be: a voice. We are the voices of other superior beings.

Demons have spoken through men. Satan used even the voice of an apostle to suggest to Jesus a false thought.

But Deity also speaks through us. On one occasion Peter expressed what he thought was his opinion about Jesus. The Saviour told him his observation was inspired by God, not his own mind.

No doubt many of the biblical authors did not know that God was speaking through them. Was the author of the Book of Esther aware of it? He never even mentions the name of God in his book. But notwithstanding he was a voice for God.

Let us empty ourselves of human thoughts and seek an awareness of God's presence such as Jesus possessed. Then we will be able to say, 'It is not I that speak, but the Father.' No physical laboratory has ever possessed a more exact physical apparatus for conveying another's voice than a man controlled by Jesus.

We must become pure like Jesus to decrucify him. But if we become like him, will we not be crucified ourselves? So many saints have ended like this. The saints are crucified together with Jesus, yes, buried with him (ROM 6:4). Where do they get these foolish ideas about decrucifixions and great liberations? Do they think in their graves? Do the dead think, if they died with Jesus?

It is as if I were going mad, as if this were my swan song before I lost my mind.

I am surrounded by so many mysteries.

Jacob had thirteen children that we know about: twelve sons and Dinah. We are told the story of the twelve tribes. Where are Dinah's descendants? Why are we not told their fate?

When Jesus died, many saints arose from the dead and entered Jerusalem on resurrection day (MTT 27:52; cf

ISA 26:19). Their appearance must have produced quite a stir. What did they have to say? What happened to them afterward? Did they die again? Did they ascend with Jesus?

Why do all these questions come into my mind?

If we do not decrucify Jesus and his followers, soon nothing will be left of this old world but rubble and corpses. It is urgent that we ensure the triumph of good.

Instead of doing so, I have to start the long process of accomplishing what I had neglected all my life: becoming like Jesus. I am not even sure I will help him by doing so or will just become one more crucified victim. True, with the prospect of a glorious resurrection, but where? In heaven where there are still more crucifixions?

Meanwhile, mankind runs to its doom, and I cannot help.

I look up for succor. I find only the sweet smile of Jesus, who assures me of his perfect unity with the Father. The Bible speaks of this unity in many places.

In REV 6:17 we read about the day of ~his~ wrath, though in the preceding verse two beings are the subject: the one who sits on the throne and the Lamb. The two beings are one. REV 11:15 says the same thing: 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ' - two persons. 'And he [not they] shall reign for ever and ever.'

God and Jesus do not form a plural, even from a grammatical viewpoint. Neither do God and I.

My consciousness of my 'I,' though it is only a little part of my being, extends itself to the whole person and considers everything as his 'I.' Even more does God consider everything as his 'I.' The godlier we become, the more we think like him.

I was convinced I could do something to end Jesus' pain. His one great pain - what hurts him again and again like a crucifixion - is that the world is alienated from the Father.

I will do away with this alienation. But the world is too

enormous a task for me, and even for the church universal. The church is out of contact with at least one half of mankind. Well, I could start with the country in which I live. But the United States of America is too big for me. My city, Los Angeles, is also inhabited by millions who speak a multitude of languages, English, Spanish, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, Samoan, Romanian and so on. Every my street is too big.

So I have to start with myself. I will be one with God as a house with its foundation, as a branch with the vine, as a bride with the bridegroom, as an arm to the body.

The limbs without the body are just pieces of meat. The body without the limbs is just a stump. The Kabbalah says, 'God with Israel is God; God without Israel is not God.'

But wait! The hand never thinks about what to do for the head, not even how to serve it. It was wrong for wicked men to crucify him. My endeavours to decrucify him are wrong too. Jesus said, 'I will come in such an hour as ye think not' (MTT 24:44). Thinking is his exclusive prerogative. It is a sign of sickness if the foot contracts without the head's will, or when the hand cannot carry out the orders of the head.

It is not for me to do even nice things like decrucifying him without his first ordering me to do so. My brain, too, is only a member of his and should think only his thoughts. Jesus rebuked Peter for a thought which did not savour as being of God, though it was a loving thought (MTT 16:23).

Once when Jesus gave sight to someone born blind, the Pharisees, instead of admiring this great work of God, were offended at a trifle: that the miracle had been performed on the Sabbath day. Please, do not do the same thing. Do not find fault with some vagary in my writing.

I believe I am close to an important truth that I can share with you. Consider the time when Jesus, wanting to give sight to a blind man, first made clay and anointed

the man's eyes with it (JHN 9:5), making him even more blind. When Saul of Tarsus the persecutor, blinded by hate, first met Jesus, he also became physically blind. This also happened to Milton when he started to write ~Paradise Lost~.

I had an encounter in depth with Jesus and became blind. 'Who is blind but my servant?' (ISA 42:18), the prophet asks. Jesus caused me to abandon a multitude of notions I had had before. I am open now to new ones. Only when I have received them in clarity, will I be able to wash myself in the pool of Siloam. I am now at the important stage of unlearning what I knew before.

I have to unlearn to 'think Jewish,' feeling obliged to do so because I happened to be born into this nation; but I must be careful at the same time to continue to love my nation. If Jesus had a preferential love for this nation, who am I to strip myself of nationalism? I must keep it, without allowing my mind to be biased by it.

I have to unlearn to be Protestant because this happened to be the first form in which I knew Christianity.

I will have to unlearn to be anti-Communist, for the fact that the Communists made me suffer is not sufficient reason to be their foe.

I will have to be a member at Jesus' disposal, without any intention of my own, not even to decrucify him. Let him decide. He might decide that I should pass through agonising sufferings, too.

We are stones in a building of which he is the foundation - an image of rest. We are branches where he is the vine - an image of life. We are united to him as spouse to husband - an image of love. But there are still two lives.

I love most the metaphor about the body and its members. It is the clearest, bespeaking only one life. A husband can travel far away from his wife, but the members are inseparable from the body. A man whose head is at a distance of even an inch from his body is dead. Neither we, nor our head, can live even one second without being one. Christ and we are both in danger of

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death if we separate from each other for even one moment. He cannot rejoice in glory without us. Perhaps this is what is meant by his crucifixion in heaven.

John the Baptist's head was on a charger while his body lay in a prison cell. Jesus must not pass through such a tragedy. This is what decrucifying him would mean. Nothing less than our perfect union with God can help.

Luther says in his ~Commentary on Galatians~: 'The Christian is Christ.'

This is his position. It must become a fact of experience.

Leslie B. Flynn, in ~Dare to Care Like Jesus~, wrote: 'A Christian baroness, living in the highlands of Nairobi, Kenya, told of a young national who was employed as her houseboy. After three months he asked the baroness to give him a letter of reference to a friendly sheik some miles away. The baroness, not wishing the houseboy to leave just when he had learned the routine of the household, offered to increase his pay. The lad replied that he was not leaving for higher pay. Rather, he had decided he would become either a Christian or a Mohammedan. This was why he had come to work for the baroness for three months. He had wished to see how Christians acted. Now he wanted to work for three months for the sheik to observe the ways of the Mohammedans. Then he would decide which way of life he would follow. The baroness was stunned as she recalled her many blemishes in her dealings with the houseboy. She could only exclaim, 'Why didn't you tell me at the beginning!'

Well, the young Kenyan did not warn her, but the best Christian teachers had said that she is Christ and has to behave accordingly.

Let us stop here for a time.

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My Fourth Letter to Christians

Dear brethren and sisters,

I imagine many Christians will say my thoughts are not in Scripture. But what does the conductor of an orchestra do? Does he not extract from the score what is not written?

When the renowned Toscanini was conducting a piece by Verdi, he inserted his own ~rallentando~ in the score. Later he asked Verdi if he liked his execution and approved the fact that he had added the "rallentando." Verdi thought a moment, certain that he had indicated the rubric. Toscanini had read into the music the composer's intention.

The Talmud relates that Rabbi Akiba, while teaching, once remarked, 'This is what Moses intended when he said these words.' Moses, standing near God, protested: 'Shut his mouth! Those were not my thoughts.' God replied, 'Keep quiet! He knows better than you the meaning of your words.'

Every orchestra conductor must be allowed to add something to the music, just as every executive must allow his secretaries and typists, and every author his translators, to give rein to their own ideas and emendations.

A preacher and a Christian writer also have the right to let the thoughts come. I had no outline in mind for this

book, nor any prefatory notes, when I sat down to write. I had not the slightest idea of what would follow after writing the first page. Thoughts came, and I allowed them to flow.

Once while walking on a street in Bucharest I felt a strong impulse to stop. Leaning near a shop window, I wrote down almost as if under dictation the main contents of a book. It has been considered one of my best. I have also dreamt whole articles and sermons, which were much appreciated.

Spurgeon's wife says he once arose from bed in sleep, went to his desk, wrote out a sermon, then went back to sleep. Next morning he knew nothing about what had happened.

There must be some purpose in this book of mine. As yet I know not what.

A false teacher or a false messiah uses extraordinary

caution in the way he acts, speaks, and writes. The true Messiah, on the other hand, did not behave as the Jews expected of a messiah. He permitted himself words and attitudes that offended and, being genuine, did not need to act his role.

The man who cries after knowledge, who seeks her as silver and searches for her as for hidden treasure (PRO 2:3,4), may use an unorthodox manner of speech. But whatever leads to truth is truth.

This should be enough by way of introduction.

I must arrive at such a unity with God as to be able to have the assurance that God is where I am. If you had asked Jesus for his address, he could have given you the street and number where the Virgin Mary lived or the street and number of the house in Bethany.

If my desires are fulfilled, I will be united with Christ in my future destiny as well. How could I die if he is alive? A man whose head is above water does not drown. This is true of us, however deep we might have fallen into misery and sin, since Jesus, the head, is always above

the water. If a prisoner who tries to escape can squeeze his head through the bars, he will be able to get his whole body through also. How could Christ remain only as an isolated head in heaven without taking with him the body as well?

In the ancient Egyptian ~Book of the Dead~, long ago this was written: 'As truly as Osiris lives, this man will live. As truly as Osiris did not die, it is true neither will he die. As truly as Osiris did not perish, neither will he perish.'

The sign that one has achieved this unity is that he no longer has doubts about being with him in heaven. A son whose father promises him something does no say, 'I hope you will keep your word,' because this would be an insult.

If salvation is by faith, perishing is by doubt.

Thus far I am clear. But is it a beautiful perspective to be with him in heaven when he is crucified there again and again?

This must be settled too. Paul was very lax in his manner of writing. He described believers in whose houses he stayed as being crucified, dead, and buried with Christ, and at the same time they were joyous Christians. He included himself among those crucified and yet could say to Christians, 'Always rejoice.'

So the phrase about Jesus being crucified in heaven afresh is also a metaphor and has an entirely different meaning. When I meet Paul in heaven, I will chide him about the many hours of sadness he has produced in me. I could have been spared if he had been more explicit.

I can well imagine how he will reply. He might use a parable of Spurgeon, whom he must have befriended:

> A man cultivated in his orchard world-renowned apples of exquisite flavour. Once he invited his friend to visit him, saying, 'You will eat apples such as you have never eaten before.' The friend excused himself. After the second and third time, the man wondered and asked him why. The friend confessed, 'I had heard about your apples. Once when

> passing by your orchard, I picked up some apples that had fallen on the ground. Never had I bitten such a sour one. I made sad reflections about the difference between advertising and reality.'
>
> The man laughed: 'My apples are so good I had to protect them from naughty children and thieves. Therefore, I planted around the fence two rows of bad apples. My guests enter through the gate. The good apples are for them alone.'

God has prepared a paradise of beauties and joys such as the human mind cannot even imagine. Perhaps he had to shield it from unworthy intruders and therefore enjoined Paul to use language that would frighten them away. Heaven is all glory.

A stone was taken from my heart when I understood this. Perhaps this is the whole answer to my quest about decrucifixion. Heaven surely shares with concern and love our sorrows and above

all our falling short of unity with God. But this does not dim its happiness.

Well, it seems that I do not have to decrucify Jesus - but what about his disciples who suffer and die on crosses in many parts of the world? Do we not have to decrucify them?

We strive for unity with God. How does he feel about the pain of his children? He is so unlike those who have not become one of them.

When Lazarus died, his sisters suffered and wept. Jesus said, 'I am glad for your sake, that you may believe' (JHN 11:15). Faith, which ultimately leads to union with God, is so valuable that transitory sorrows, which serve to increase faith, are not worthy even to be mentioned. What does the weariness of a journey matter when it leads to a wedding with the much Beloved?

A Christian who was told that his son had died in a Communist jail broke the news to his wife in this way: 'I have heard news about our child. He sings and praises the Lord.'

After eight years of prison, during which time I had no

knowledge about my wife, I met a believer recently imprisoned whom I had known in liberty. I asked him about her. He said, 'I have been in your home. She smiles and sings as usual.'

Death, even death on a cross in unspeakable torture, does not destroy life but only sins and the dangers to which they expose us.

Let us not confound death with non-existence and life with existence. There are men who exist without being alive. Some have only a name that they live and are dead (REV 3:1).

Prolonged life in jail is good preparation for the state after death. There the hours are not counted. Life is not measured in days and years; one loses the notion of time in prison. Death means to be freed from shadows; it means entrance into the kingdom of truth. Henceforth the soul is out of peril. A believer becomes irrevocably an heir of the kingdom.

I myself have suffered much. I possess 350 poems that I

composed in jail. They are not of artistic value, but as I re-read them I wonder about the deep quiet, serenity, and joy that is in most of them. They could as well have been composed in moments of delight amid the beauties of nature. When I conceived them, I was thirty feet under the earth, hungry, in chains, with never a view of sun, moon, stars, rain or snow.

It seems that for a time I had forgotten my deprivation, and I suffered about the sufferings of others as I had not suffered about my own.

The Soviet Christian Jakob Loewen wrote, when freed from jail, 'I must confess I never dared to pray for being freed from prison. God led me to be there. I considered my state as being willed by him. We desire to be his witnesses everywhere through word and attitudes. In prison we are, by our simple presence there, a call toward the living God. God knows how long I must serve him in this capacity. Therefore I asked of him only to be kept in the faith.'

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In my plans for decrucifying Jesus and his church, I have gone too far. This is dangerous.

The Talmud says four men forced an entrance into the highest heaven. One died, one went mad, one became an apostate; only one was illuminated.

Rabbi Yaakov-Yitzchak of Lublin and his two friends Mendl of Riminov and the Maggid of Kozhenitz devised a strategy to constrain the Messiah to come and put an end to exile. They all died in the same year under mysterious circumstances.

We are small; let us not adventure too far.

I finish this letter with high aims. When I write again it will be about more immediate things.

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My Fifth Letter to Christians

Dear brethren and sisters,

Does the end justify the means? Well, if not the end, what else could justify means?

When the Jewish high priest said, 'It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people,' he did not speak of himself, but prophesied (JHN 11:50,51).

It is not respectable to find pleasure in the violent death of your own son, but if this serves the salvation of mankind, the feeling is justified (ISA 53:10). God was pleased but only because he saw what lay beyond.

The end of becoming one with God has as its means the imposing of great hardship upon family and loved ones.

How did poor Zebedee feel when his sons James and John, his hope for old age, left him in a ship with his hired servants? (MRK 1:19,20). They went because a stranger had called them.

Spurgeon's last sermon before his death was about unity with God. He finished it with the words, 'This evening I spoke to you in some kind of Dutch, and you did not understand me at all.' During the last period of his life, he spoke repeatedly from EPH 5:30, where it is said that 'we are bone of his bones.'

This teaching about unity with God is very little

known in Christianity, though the New Testament often alludes to it. Jesus says, 'In that day you shall ask me nothing' (JHN 16:23). We will ask him nothing because he will not be someone apart from us. 'He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit' (1CO 6:17).

I myself have known these verses for almost half a century. Notwithstanding I started this book with many futile questions. Who addressed them, and to whom? The questioner, the questioned and the question are one.

When I left prison, someone said, 'Wurmbrand does not look to God any more.' I wish it had been true then. To a believer this is a compliment. How could someone look to a Being

with whom he has become one? What can one ask him? He has become identified with the believer. 'Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? Who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?' (ISA 42:19).

Meister Eckhardt, the renowned German medieval mystic, insists repeatedly on the teaching that God's intention is for men to lose their God, because as long as one has a God, knows him and speaks with him, he is separated from him. The purpose of God is to abolish himself in the soul. The name of God is not fit for him. He received it from creatures. His preferred name is 'I.' This is the name that Jesus manifested to the men whom the Father gave him out of the world (JHN 17:6).

The idea of the unity between the believer and God is an essential part of Christian thought.

The apocryphal Gospel of Eve says, 'I stood on a high mountain, and I saw a tall man and another who was short. I heard something like a thunder, and I approached to hear. Then he spoke to me and said, "I am you and you are I, and wherever you are, I am too, and I am alike in all things. You can pluck me from wherever you wish. And if you pluck me, you pluck yourself."'

Augustine had some hesitations, but he too wrote,

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'How should I call you, seeing I am in you? From where could you come to me?'

John Chrysostom wrote, 'This is true love, not to see in the lover and the beloved two separate beings, but only one.'

Th,rŠse of Avila writes in ~The Inner Castle~: 'Unity with God is like water which when it falls from the sky into a river or fountain confounds itself so much with it that they cannot be separated any more. Neither could one distinguish which is the water from the river and which from the sky. For it is like a river entering the sea, which cannot be separated anymore.'

If you choose to walk this way of oneness with God, men will blow trumpets at your misstep. Do not wonder! In this world, the wind is always in Christ's face. The world agrees

with true religion only in the measure to which God agrees with the devil. You will have to suffer.

John Bunyan, who advanced with great steps toward the heavenly city where the wedding between Christ and his church is celebrated, sat in jail for over twelve years, knowing that his four children, one of whom was blind, were starving. Since then thousands have had to suffer and still do.

This is what prompted me to be so preoccupied with decrucifying them. Somehow the sufferers themselves do not think about this. I also did not worry about such things while I was in prison. I don't know why I am so tormented now.

Bunyan passed his time in prison not thinking about how to escape and make others escape, but writing books, some nine in all. Among them was the classic that has been a spiritual guide to millions, ~Pilgrim's Progress~.

While non-conformists were driven from home, ruined by fines, and locked up, he wrote, 'Persecution of the godly was of God never intended for their destruction, but for their glory, and to make them shine the

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more when they are beyond the valley of the shadow of death.' And again: 'I have often thought that the best Christians are found in the worst of times; and I have thought again that one reason why we are no better is because God purges us no more. I know these things are against the grain of the flesh, but they are not against the graces of the spirit.'

~Pilgrim's Progress~ was not a book that Bunyan had premeditated. It was begun as a kind of relaxation. Neither did I plan the present letters. At a certain point my mind collided with with his. I wanted to decrucify him. He does not wish to be decrucified.

Bunyan had to suffer not only from the king and bishops. Baptists denounced him as a devil. They heaped upon him scurrilous abuse and ridicule. In addition to writing books, he also made hundreds of long lace tags, which were sold to provide for the bare necessities of his home and himself.

When he had to decide whether to submit to the

authorities or go to jail, he said, 'I was as a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children, yet, thought I, I must do it, I must do it.... I have determined, the Almighty God being my help and my shield, yet to suffer, if frail life might continue so long, even till the moss shall grow on my eyebrows, rather than to violate my faith and principles.'

What is behind this willingness to suffer, even this joy in tribulations?

Human language is poor and cannot make the right distinctions. On the one hand there are the facts: to be tortured, jailed, deprived, crucified. On the other hand is one's personal perception of these states. The objective situation in which a man finds himself, and the feelings or thoughts of a man about his situation are not always the same.

A man might not feel bad while suffering from a deadly disease such as leukemia. Mind has some sway

over matter. I know of a man in my own experience who overcame a fatal illness in prison, though all physicians had said that he must die. Men with certain religious beliefs also walk on fire without experiencing pain. Those who have faith and confidence that God is a very present help, who see some sense in bearing heavy crosses, who do not yield to anxiety and depression, overcome great physical suffering.

One who has a deep desire to enjoy his life with God can enjoy it under the most adverse circumstances. He needs no decrucifying.

He is happy because he is one with God, as Angelus Silesius says: 'I am not I, neither you you. You are the I in me. ... He who wishes to be like God must become unlike all things else.' Thus it is possible to fulfill 1JN 2:6: 'He that says he abides in him, must live as Jesus himself lived.'

The idea of identification with God belongs to the essence of the Christian faith, but not to it alone.

Some primitive peoples identify strongly with their totems. In South America tribesmen claim they are big parrots. Jung reported that they say about parrots: 'Parrots are we; we are parrots, only we have no feathers.' They cannot be convinced to the contrary.

They have a pre-logical mentality. All adherents of a purely materialistic philosophy are on approximately the same level. They identify themselves with their idol: matter.

In Congo Brazzaville, thousands of natives considered themselves leopards, walked on four legs, threw themselves upon men, and tore them apart with artificial nails. They opened the jugular vein, exactly as leopards do. They identified themselves with the bestial within.

We identify ourselves with God. This also is not logical, but beyond logic, super-logical.

God is love. We identify ourselves with love. But love and suffering are the same thing. The value of love is the

price we pay to enjoy it. If we obtain it for less than suffering, we receive a cheap substitute.

If God is love, there must be crucifixions in heaven. The Lamb must be slain from the very beginning. If Christians love, there must be Golgothas even now. To decrucify means to extinguish love.

I have been wrong from the very beginning.

I will have to rethink this whole matter.

My Thirteenth Letter to Jesus

Dear Jesus,

I have left you for a long time without a letter from me. Instead I wrote to my fellow-Christians. All seemed to go well for a while. In my letters to them, some thoughts were shared, some knots untied.

But now I find myself in a cul-de-sac. My last letter was no longer correspondence, but rather some kind of theological treatise about the unity of the believer with you.

To many Christians nowadays it sounds like a new teaching. To you it is old. You have with you John of the Cross. Writing about spiritual marriage, he said that it means to be transformed completely in the Most High. Alphonse di Liguori taught likewise.

John of the Cross was a monk. It is true, a monk who suffered terrible abuse from his brethren in the monastery, but still a monk, which means he lived in a place propitious for contemplation and meditation.

I live in the real world. I meet people, read newspapers, watch TV. I have been in Communist prisons, probably the worst place in the world for spiritual life.

I start the day by reading with John of the Cross that the soul becomes, through spiritual marriage, one with God, that it becomes, in a manner of speaking, God

through fellowship. I read that we are God's shadow, that a substantial transformation has taken place.

Protestants are taught to believe that the elements at Communion do not change their substance. They remain bread and wine. But all believers have changed their own substance. They have become one with God. The work of God and that of the soul are one. We give God to God.

After being nourished with such sublime thoughts, I open the newspaper and read:

> In an amphitheater in Chicago, where 3,000 attended a rhythm-and-blues concert, twenty men in the audience attacked an eighteen-year-old girl. They stripped here of all her clothing and violated her, in full view of the crowd. She was sodomized and raped, even with a bottle after the whole gang had had her. The injuries were severe enough to require surgery. In all that crowd listening to music, a number certainly witnessed this savagery. No one intervened (~Los Angeles Times~, 7th January 1982).

This is just a little thing compared with what has happened in Romanian Communist prisons for years. And that was a

little thing in comparison with the slaughtering of half the population in Cambodia or the holocaust of Jews in Nazi Germany or of the Armenians and Greeks in Turkey.

John of the Cross says that the soul united with God can give God to everyone, as one can share a possession, and that, by doing this, the soul is filled with delight and great joy.

Then why in the world did he not give God to everyone, even to those who mistreated him? Or was there a hindrance? What hindrances can God encounter?

I would like to unite with you but my heart is torn. Uniting with you means entering into serenity. But this girl sodomised by a gang cries, and with her thousands of other innocent victims. And so I feel the pull to unite with her and be on her side, even if in her despair

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she rebels against you, as I have seen so many sufferers do.

In the eighteenth century the Jews of Eastern Europe were divided into two big parties: the Hassidim and the Mitnagdim. The former had a religion that was all joy and exultation in the Lord, while the latter strictly obeyed their laws and regulations.

A Mitnagged gave his daughter to a Hassid on condition he break away from this movement and not visit his rabbi any more. The young man consented and kept his word for a while. But then he began to visit his rabbi once more, at first in secret and then in the open, siding with him again.

The outraged father-in-law went to his own rabbi, who consulted what the books say about the breaking of contractual promises, and pronounced the divorce. The young man was driven out of the house and died soon after of a broken heart.

When the Messiah comes - Rabbi Dov Beer of Mezeritsh said - the resurrected young man will complain about his father-in-law. But the latter will be able to prove he was right. He had obeyed his rabbi's decision. The rabbi will claim too that he was right. He stuck to his law.

But the Messiah will say, 'The law was right, and the

rabbi and the father-in-law. But what have I to do with what is right? I care about the young Hassid with a broken heart.'

You, God, are right in all you do. And theologians are right in justifying you and providing satisfactory explanations for suffering. The girl might also have been rightly punished for who knows what past sins and for being at such a wicked concert. But I am little interested in who is right. The only thing that concerns me is who suffers.

I have just found out that you do not suffer and that your being crucified even now is just a figure of speech. But that girl suffers, and with her millions of others.

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I identify with all the sufferers of the world, even if they are in conflict with you.

Perhaps I am totally wrong again. As death is the name given to a profound sleep by those who do not know how to resurrect, suffering might be the name given to a thrilling experience by those who do not know how to change tears into pearls which comfort and crown the martyrs of life.

In the beginning, you saw all the things you had made - including the possibility of suffering - and behold, all was very good (GEN 1:31). Well, I believe, but please help my unbelief.

I will repeat to you the words you said to the heavenly Father: 'All mine are thine,' all these my torments and tribulations, 'and thin are mine,' all your serenity and glory (JHN 17:10).

I will say with Catherine of Genoa: 'God is my I, and I know no other I than this my God.' Or to come back to Meister Eckhardt: 'The eye of God and my eye are one single eye.' 'The humble has as much power over God as God has over himself.' 'Some simple men imagine that they must see God as if He stood there and I here. It is not so. God and I are one.' 'The fire transforms into fire whatever you put into it. So does God.'

Yes, he says even more: 'I stand in the depth of eternal Divinity; here God does all his works through me and I am all that is to be understood. God made all things through me, while I was in the bottomless depth of God.'

It seems senseless to recite before you words of faith which you yourself must have inspired. These words express the highest level a heart can reach.

Ah, I am torn in two - but wait, I could use Paul's expression: 'I am crucified.' I love you and long for perfect union with you. I love also those who suffer on earth, in hell, and in heaven. I feel their pain as mine. I feel every pain, that of innocents and of their henchmen.

The latter suffer too. A Communist officer was in the

basement of the Secret Police headquarters with a mass of corpses, the men he had just shot. He began to cry aloud, as he went from corpse to corpse: 'Please say something! Move! I did not mean to do you ill. I did not even know you. I shot you, but did not desire that you be so completely dead for ever. Please speak! Please move!' His comrades first put him in an asylum, then, to silence their own conscience, finished him off.

The pain of this criminal is also mine. To be very honest with you, I must say there is in me a voice that says 'I hate God' because of this tragedy. I do not silence the voice, fearing that if it is repressed it will become louder.

I ask you the question you asked your mother: 'What is it between me and you?'

I might tell you what no one before me dared to tell, not because they were hypocrites, but because the circumstances of their life did not allow them to probe the depths I reached in years of intense sufferings in a Communist prison cell.

God might answer here and there a prayer. He has done so for me, too. But he never fulfilled the great requests of his church, though endlessly presented to him for thousands of years.

He did not cause his name to be hallowed in all the world, he did not bring his kingdom, he did not see to it that his will was fulfilled.

Millions are without a crust of bread. We have the consciousness of many sins unforgiven (this is why Catholics

believe in purgatory). We meet temptations every day, and we are not delivered from evil.

Why? What is wrong? It is hard on me to continue this letter today. Farewell till another time.

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My Fourteenth Letter to Jesus

Dear Jesus,

I broke off my last letter on a very sore point.

I had even gone so far as to say, 'I hate God.'

Well, there are no pure metals in the earth. Pure metal is an intellectual concept. Instead, we find iron, gold, silver, etc, always in alloys. Similarly, no one has pure love. It is always mixed with other elements. David, Job and many other saints have chided God with harsh words.

God has chosen as the vehicle of his revelation languages in which words have contradictory meanings. In Hebrew, ~Baruch~ is used for 'bless' and 'curse.' ~Kadosh~ means 'holy' and 'sexually perverted'; ~kedeshah~, 'saintly woman' and 'prostitute.'

In Greek, ~afes~ means 'to forgive' and 'to leave.' In the original of the 'Our Father,' we pray 'forgive us our sins' and 'leave us our sins.' Who among those who ask forgiveness does not cherish also the desire to keep them? In Greek we express both desires in one word.

The Kabbalah asks, 'How can one love God with all his heart, seeing he has in his heart both good and bad impulses?' It replies, 'Serve God with both.'

The lover of God is also a critic of God. In the Book of Lamentations are reproaches against God of a kind that Communists can use in their atheistic books.

Such criticism is wrong, and we have to say so even if the guilty are biblical authors. Criticism should never place blame, insult, hurt or retaliate. It should be constructive. But even God should at least listen to criticism, even if he does not take it.

We have a good God and a bad world. Loving God without reservation might mean resigning oneself to a bad world, with all the suffering this involves. Siding with the world in its pain brings one into conflict with God, who has predestined all things, including this pain.

We reproach God; he very justifiably reproaches us. What he demands of us also remains unfulfilled.

You are the middleman. A mediator is not partisan. You did your best to make peace between God and us. You tried to tear down the wall of partition between us. And you suffered for it, as it is written, 'Whoso breaks a hedge a serpent shall bite him.' You were crucified by men, and the heavenly Father found pleasure in your being bruised. He was the last to determine your crucifixion.

Now you continue with your work of peace-making, though much of your loving energy has been squandered.

Generally, good teachings are beautiful, but most are wasted. They were wasted on Lucifer and his angels, on the Jews, and now on Christendom.

But you are love, and love continues to strive.

One of your principal objectives is to teach us the value of suffering, knowing that if rebellion against it ceased, the path of our union with God would be cleared.

What would Beethoven have been without his deafness? His sonatas for piano, his late string quartets, and the ninth symphony became possible only because of his deafness. The absolute concentration, this ascending into other worlds, the complaints never heard before, and the song of joy could be expressed only by a deaf composer. Beethoven created many works before being stricken, but he reached the peak of creativity as a deaf man.

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You want us to accept suffering - ours, that of our fellowmen, and yours. Then we will be one with God. Who will then complain about his not fulfilling the demands in the 'Our Father'? Who will even say the 'Our Father,' and to whom? Who knows what might happen then? We might be united with God even in his finding pleasure in the bruising of his Son.

All problems would disappear.

You must be the One who inspired this deep longing for unity with God even in the pagan religions.

Just as you appropriated the sayings of the Jewish prophets while in Galilee and simply repeated the words of your predecessor John the Baptist, 'Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near,' so you have humbled yourself to repeat the words of the mythical Krishna.

I read with interest in the Hindu ~Kurma Purana~: 'Yoga is divided into two parts. One is called ~Abhava~ [a word akin to the Hebrew ~Ahavah~ - love], the other ~mahayoga~. ~Abhavah~ is the state in which you meditate about your own I as a zero, lacking qualities. ~Mahayoga~ is the state in which the own I is seen as full of delights, totally righteous and one with God.... Other kinds of yoga of which we hear and read are not worthy to be put on the same level with the wonderful mahayoga, in which the ~yoghin~ knows himself and the whole universe as God.'

I know both states, but my trouble is that I am fixed in neither of them.

~Mai-Trajana-Brahmana-Upanishad~ says: 'Water in water, fire in fire, air in air - no one can distinguish them. Likewise, one cannot distinguish from the great I the man who has entered into him. This man has reached liberty.' 'The One who is in fire, and the One who is in the heart, and the One who is in the sun are one and the same. The man who knows it becomes one with the Unique.'

If this unity were a fact of existence for me, I could say like Jesus, 'I am the way.' Paul felt himself to be like this.

A missionary to Africa relates how he followed a black

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guide through the jungle during the night and asked again and again, 'Which is the way?' The guide, who did not know Scripture, replied, 'I am the way. You just follow me.'

But I have not become one with you. Water in water may be indistinguishable, but I can be distinguished from God.

I had the privilege of spending years in solitary confinement. I could practise what is called 'the yoga of six kinds,' the restraint of respiration, meditation, fixed attention, research, and absorption. It did not achieve for me my aim.

Perhaps now I understand. A legend says that once while walking with Peter you saw a small coin on the road and told him, 'Pick it up.' He replied, 'It's not worth it. What can you buy with such a coin?' So you picked it up yourself. A merchant gave you eighteen cherries for it. While continuing the walk, you dropped one after the other. Peter, thirsty, bowed to pick them up. He bowed eighteen times because he had not bowed once at the right time, at your command.

Men spend decades practising yoga because they have not followed your calling. Neither did I. I did not take the one big step of faith that makes me one hated by the world, as you were hated, but that unites a man instantly with God: the erasing of the consciousness of a separate I (except perhaps for conversational purposes). 'I do not live, but you live in me.' I have no other I than you. Then you are I and I am you.

I am reminded of an amusing incident recounted by a Slovak nun. A teacher in primary school, she gave the children candy on St Nicholas' Day. But one child, Stanko, was ill, so she gave another boy, John, a slipper full of candy to take to him.

When Stanko recovered, she asked him if he had enjoyed the present; he said he never received it. She confronted Stanko and John together.

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'I gave them to you,' said John, pointing to himself.

'I received nothing,' Stanko protested.

But John repeated, pointing to himself, 'I gave them to "you." Don't you call me "you"? Well, I gave them to the one you call "you." I fulfilled my assignment.

We smile at this little story. But in our relationship this is reality. You always call me 'you.' I have become a child again, as you taught. You did not even tell me to become a good child, but simply a child. I became a naughty child that takes candies belonging to you. You call me you. I am you. And I have the candy. In a relationship with Godhead this is acceptable.

You told us to become like children; you also taught us that we are gods. In the manger, you were a child-god. But a child-god is also God in all his supremeness.

You are the heart of my desires. I do not simply throw away my self. I thrust it like an arrow toward the goal. There goal and arrow become one.

For a while you were one body with the blessed Virgin. She bore within herself the wonderful Friend. You went with her wherever she walked. So you live within every one of us.

How magnified was your mother! You say that whoever will do the will of your Father who is in heaven is your mother (MTT 12:50). So we too are magnified.

Protestants object that Mary is almost deified by Catholics, instead of comprehending that every Christian is deified. The Hebrew biblical ~ani-hu~ (I am he) shows that the "ani"-I and the "hu"-he have ceased to exist as separate beings.

The two have merged. The new being has no problems, no torments. He is serene, he smiles, he lives above the turmoil of this world.

I understand now. Help me to consummate my chief desire.

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My Fifteenth Letter to Jesus

Dear Jesus,

You once wept over Jerusalem in great wracking sobs. At the tomb of Lazarus it was only quiet weeping, or just a welling of tears. I surely would not like to add to your grief.

I also hope that in the end everything will be clear, that saints will not be disappointed. The last words of Moody at death were, 'The earth gets further away. Heaven opens before my eyes. If this is death, it is sweet. God calls me and I have to go. This is my triumph, the day of my coronation.'

He had assured his converts: 'Once you will read in the newspapers that Dwight Moody of East Northfield has died. Don't believe it. Then I will be more alive than now. What is born of the flesh can die, but what is born of the Spirit will live eternally.'

He must have been right. Some organ in his body failed to function well. The whole universe would be unreasonable if a splendid spirit would have to disappear because of some disorder of the flesh.

In music every note is played separately. A melody exists only because we can retain in our consciousness a piece of time. Man is superior to time. We think and we make projects. We are superior to this world. We will survive it.

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All this I believe, and I am thankful that you gave us this eternal life through your sacrifice on the cross.

But - if only these hellish "buts" did not plague me.... The Jew Tevye in ~Fiddler on the Roof~ said to you, 'God, I did not complain that you gave me five daughters in my poverty. But why did you let my only horse go lame just on Sabbath eve?' I have no reply to this.

When innocent men are taken to prison, parting with their wives and poor children is like pulling the flesh from their bones.

But the miracle happens. There are saints among the innocents. Bunyan told his jailers, 'If I were out of prison today, I would preach the gospel again tomorrow by the help of God' - the almighty God in whose world he spent twelve years in jail for preaching his gospel.

Tevye puts daring questions to God but sticks to the Jewish tradition, even if he knows almost nothing about it.

Men in pain, trying to forget their suffering, invented the old, old story: A young man who loved a girl to madness knocked one night at her door, begging admittance. She asked, 'Who is it?' He said, 'It is I.' She replied, 'I cannot receive you, because my room is small and my bed narrow. Only one person has a place in it.'

Knowing the girl loved him dearly, he could not understand her refusal. For many years he wandered in the world, yearning for the girl. And then the inspiration came.

One night, he knocked at her door again. She asked from within, 'Who is it?' This time he replied, 'It is you.' The door opened immediately, and the beloved embraced him.

In heaven, too, there is place for only one. This I understand. Everyone who comes there as an 'I' will be rejected. The one who asks for entrance at the gates of heaven must be able to say to God, 'I am you.' Then he will be received.

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I am you, which means I have to abandon all questions and problems belonging to the 'I.' Does God worry about decrucifying Jesus? If not, why should I?

St Claire, when she lay dying amid great sufferings, was asked how she could bear such pain. She answered joyously, 'Ever since I learned of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ through his servant Francis of Assisi, no suffering has troubled me, no penance has been hard, no sickness too arduous.'

You ask me what all my letters are about? I suppose they are from the unbelieving part of me. For the other part, it would have been enough to give heed to what I myself preach and to the many illustrations I use in order to renounce everything that troubles me.

Consider one of my favourite parables: A dwarf who was also a hunchback decided to commit suicide. Who could ever love him? He would ascend a mountain and throw himself off a cliff. While climbing he met a girl of exquisite beauty. She had made the same decision because her loved one had opted for a rich bride. They decided to commit suicide together.

Continuing the ascent, they met a police officer who told them he was after a notorious robber and murderer. The king had promised a great reward to whoever caught him, and the police officer was sure he would find him. There was an unmistakable identification: the murderer had six fingers on his right hand.

Near the peak was a monastery whose abbot, though only recently tonsured, had already achieved the fame of a great saint and had brought many to conversion. At the very entrance to the monastery the trio saw the abbot. The girl bowed to kiss the right hand. She observed it had six fingers.

The former murderer was now the renowned saint.

With this my story ends.

The audiences always objected. 'The story is not

finished yet. What happened to the girl, and the dwarf, and the police officer? Was the abbot apprehended?

Well, the story was a test. The elect fall in adoration before the One who changes murderers into saints. Beside this miracle everything else pales into insignificance.

I believe this response is the only right attitude. Our minds are too preoccupied with many childish questions.

A children's class was shown a painting of the Nativity and they were told, 'The holy family was very poor.' A child asked, 'Where did they get the money to pay the photographer?'

Another child was taught how Adam became a living soul when God breathed his spirit into him sighed, 'So God is dead.' He could not be convinced otherwise. 'Everyone who gives up his spirit is dead.'

We smile about such childish sayings and questions. I suppose you smile about my incoherent thoughts.

I am uncomfortable with attempts to put coherence into our thoughts on religious matters. To what purpose? You see everything. You knew my thoughts in their incoherent state. You know their being systematised is only superficial or cosmetic. It does not belong to the essence.

But - and I come back to my first thoughts about decrucifying you - is there any sense in these thoughts?

In Mahayana Buddhism, there is a belief in Boddhisatvas, men who have achieved perfection and thus at death can enter into nirvana. But as they look at their fellowmen, who are like victims going to the slaughter, immense compassion grips them and they refuse nirvana until they have brought in all these unfortunate souls.

They take upon themselves the burden of sorrow, the pain of all men living. If they were to renounce suffering, they would defraud the world of the root of good.

Like the writings of the Jewish prophets, these hopes of India were forebodings of your coming - you, the

Messiah of the Jews, whom Indians might yet call the greatest, yes, the unique, Boddhisatva.

Decrucifying a Boddhisatva is like taking away from a surgeon the tools with which he can save lives. When Communism in Chine chopped off the fingers of pianists, how could they then make music? Suffering is the melody with which Boddhisatvas heal mankind.

Instead of decrucifying them, should we not rather unite with the Boddhisatvas? Don't we all have this priestly calling to bear another's sins and griefs?

Thinking about this role we have to play, John Chrysostom said, 'Speak not of royal purple or diadems, of golden vestments; all these are but shadows more frail than flowers of spring compared with the glories and powers of the priesthood.'

Instead of decrucifying you and others, I should rather hasten to be crucified with you. Then I will be able to write like Paul: 'Those things which you have both learned and received and heard and seen ~in me~, do' (PHP 4:9). At first glance, these are the words of an egotist. Paul gives himself as a model of truth and pattern of life. Paul, a former persecutor, a man who confesses even after conversion, 'Nothing good is in me,' and 'I am the chief of sinners.'

It would have seemed natural for him to write, 'Those things which you have learned and seen ~in Christ~, do.' But he does not say, 'Follow the example ~of Christ~.' His words are, 'Follow ~my example~.'

If I were able to ask Paul about this, he would not understand the question. 'To follow Christ' or 'to follow me, Paul' - what is the difference? Do these not express the same thought? What is the difference between himself and Christ for a man who says, 'I do not live any more, but Christ lives in me'?

Working for a very backward tribe, a missionary doctor cared for a sick woman and told her about Christ. She could not understand his words but saw his goodness.

p143 ..... My 15th Letter to Jesus

Once she asked, 'Tell me, what is this Christ like about whom you speak?' He, in a moment of supreme spiritual courage, replied, 'He is like me.' Then she said, 'If he is so, I love him and trust in him.'

I resolve, therefore, to become like you, and then I will no longer grieve about your being crucified. Like all the great saints of all the centuries, I will have the desire to be crucified with you. I will find my delight in suffering for others.

p144

My Sixteenth Letter to Jesus

Dear Jesus,

I realize the fallacy of all-or-nothing thinking. In jail I composed a poem that began with the words, 'Give yourself fully to me or leave me completely.' I realize now that my statement was wrong.

Innumerable factors shape the relationship between two beings. There are some things in you that make me love you passionately. About some of your activities I have reservations. If I said otherwise, you would know I am lying. Regarding some matters, I would like you to a make a U-turn, to which your reply is, '"You" turn.'

But in faith I apply a mental filter. All men have such a filter. If a man received ten nice letters and one bad, he would fret over the bad letter and ignore the rest. I use the filter in the opposite sense. I erase from my mind everything about which we might disagree, or - to put it mildly - which I do not understand, and I keep only the positive.

I bracket some of the thoughts that occur to me. It is probably too early for me to come to a conclusion about your character. We know only an infinitesimal part of it. For love one does not need more.

Romeo and Juliet fell in love after once glance at a masked ball in which they had scarcely seen each other's

face. The next thing they knew was that they belonged to families committed to a blood feud. But the love produced by even such a tenuous knowledge of each other was sufficient to overcome all barriers. It is a love that flouts reason.

The heavenly Bridegroom tells us, 'You have ravished my heart with one single glance of your eyes.' I could say this about you. Many years ago, before I had even read your Gospel or heard a sermon, an inner voice said to me, 'Jesus is a friend. If you would talk over all things with him, you would obtain the peace for which you long.' At that time I had not the slightest idea that you had died for me.

How much did Magdalene know when she kissed your feet and washed them with her tears?

I love you for the little I know of you. Juliet's parents could have brought many telling arguments against an affair with Romeo. And they would have been perfectly right, as the outcome shows. They would have told her that emotional reasoning is not to be trusted, that it is wrong to magnify one pleasant feature in a man, to label someone an ideal lover because he is attractive at first glance. But all such counsel would have been to no avail.

The essence of my life is to praise you. Good men become better when praised; bad men become worse. You cannot become better because the very word 'God' means a being whose better cannot be imagined. I praise you not because of your need, nor because I wish to obtain something from you. I praise you because a voice in me, overcoming all objections, tells me you only are praiseworthy.

I told you the story of the murderer with six fingers on his right hand who had become a saintly abbot. When you were a child, the Virgin Mary told you stories. Why should I not do the same? This story belongs to the Christian tradition, though the Jews have a similar one.

Two impoverished children walked around begging.

A blind man who gave them alms said, 'Become like me.' Then they received something from a deaf man, who repeated the same words. And so it went with a stutterer, a man without legs, and other handicapped individuals.

It took the children many years to understand, but eventually they had an illumination: only the blind see. Men with sight have their attention absorbed by so many things that will prove to be mere will-o'-the-wisps that they are blind to the one reality: you. Only the deaf hear. Those with hearing are distracted by useless noises and things hardly worth hearing. (I know. I was like a deaf man in a jail in which perfect silence reigned. Then I heard your voice and the song of celestial spheres.) Only the stutterer expresses well the contradictory, conflicting, chaotic things he sees and sentiments he experiences. The man who speaks smoothly falsifies incoherent reality in order to be systematic and to speak well.

With this the story ends. What happened further with these children and the men they had met, is no more important. Whoever does not learn from the little that is said will not learn even if he hears the whole story.

At any rate, I do not have to know your whole story. Who could know it?

The Bible says that God created the sun and moon to give light upon the earth. We think of the sun as useful to us, but only a minuscule fraction of its light reaches the earth. It has many more functions.

So we know you as the Saviour of mankind. You are much more than Saviour of one species on what in the universe is only a speck of dust. We know your career only in its relationship to us. Even this we do not know fully, because you continue to live in a glorified human body. Your task is not yet finished.

We even hear about new crucifixions you endure. We do not know their details, nor the resurrections by which they are followed.

To us you are a mystery, but a mystery we love heartily.

p147 ..... My 16th Letter to Jesus

It is such a joy to see you. In a certain sense you are unseen, but you are also seen. It is written that the children of Israel at Sinai saw the voice. Blindfolded dolphins find coins thrown into the water. They can even distinguish between different metals, thanks to the echo of the sound produced by their falling into water. The sound becomes a picture in their mind. Bats, too, 'see' with their ears. They can find insects without seeing them with their eyes. They also hear high-pitched sounds that we cannot perceive.

Nowadays we transform sound waves into images in our clinics through the use of ultrasound technology.

You also speak to us on a pitch that can be caught only by your own sheep. Atheists are right when they say they hear nothing.

Those who guard the borders in Communist countries communicate with their dogs with whistles at a pitch unperceived

by human ears. The one who tries to cross the frontier secretly hears nothing.

We have no quarrel with atheists. We understand them. They lack our privilege. They do not hear what we hear. Your words become images within our minds and hearts. We see you; we can always evoke you.

In this sense you are as near to us as you were to the disciples of the first century.

A renowned pastor wrote that at the age of three his grandson wanted to be a monkey, sit on a tree, and eat bananas. By the age of six, he had decided to become an astronaut. So also does mankind change in a few short years.

But you have remained the same. I can evoke you as did John on Patmos.

You are here. All I need is the eye of faith. God gives the milk but not the pail. Faith is a gift of God, but our will also plays a part. I can see you. A power emanates from you toward me, as it did to the woman who had a loss of blood. I can take more power than she did.

p148 ..... My Correspondence With Jesus

Some believers are satisfied to receive from you only enough power to obey the words of God. But I listen to what you have said through the men who wrote the word of God and can go beyond the mere reading. You can make "me" a channel of wisdom and guidance for others.

Furthermore, I can sing an entirely new song. The Talmud says, 'Angels never repeat their litanies.' Even when the angels sing 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Sabaoth,' they do not repeat themselves. In Hebrew the words of the Bible have musical notes. Every 'holy' in this verse is sung on another note. So you wish to have the Song of the Lamb sung on the Wurmbrand notes.

Mozart wrote his compositions almost without corrections. Beethoven wrote and rewrote his, innumerable times. He never ceased changing. My thoughts evolve, too. A while ago there was a deep conflict between us. I had wild plans for decrucifying you, even against your will. Then I had the idea of organising a strike of all crucifiers. Then I began to wonder if you really

are still crucified.

Now all these thoughts have disappeared. Only love remains.

It is so easy to love you, because you are very much like us. Karl Barth calls God 'the entirely Other.' So he is. But who is not entirely other? A man once said to Rabbi Yakov-Itzhak of Pshiske, 'I would like to know what the birds are singing.' To which the rabbi replied, 'What you yourself are saying. Do you understand?' I am myself entirely other than what I believe or would like myself to be. By being entirely other, you are like me.

A youth was told, 'Don't watch TV so much. You should read the Bible.

He asked, 'Why should I not watch TV?'

'Because there is so much sex and violence in it.'

The youth said truthfully, 'There is more sex and violence in the Bible. On TV you cannot see the slaughter

of whole nations, including women and children, and even animals, or sodomy and incest.'

For everything having to do with man, there is a counterpart in heaven. There is a war going on in heaven. Angels had swords before men invented weapons. You wished so much to be like us that you became sin for us, even the most abject sin. No wonder so much in your revelation is like our thoughts and instincts.

In jail, I had a vision of a female angel who had come to lead me to heaven. With surprise, I found myself descending stairs. I was told, 'You thought heaven was above. Well, because many cannot reach the heights, not being able to bear the icy cold of the peaks, heaven has descended below men. No matter how far you descend, heaven is still below you.'

I am in your embrace. All other thoughts have disappeared. Your words have proved true: 'The Son of man will come in an hour when you think not.' We become one.

The Hindus and Sufites, being human, were wrong to say, 'I am he.' I as God would be a godhead to no purpose. But in the Bible God is the one who says, '~Ani-hu~ - I am he.' This is condescension. But whichever way it happened, we are one. My I is denied, my sinful I, as well as my own righteousness, and the compassion my I has for you.

It is wrong for a caterpillar to remain a caterpillar, and for a seed to remain a seed. An embryo is not meant to remain an embryo, nor should children remain children. Adolescents must develop further, as must adults and even the aged. We are all called to godlikeness, to such a likeness with him that we may almost be mistaken for each other, like twins. It was not in vain that apostle Thomas was called in the Bible 'Didymus,' which in Greek means 'the twin.'

Blessed be thou, Jesus, my beloved ~Ani-Hu~. I advance toward you.

p150 ..... My Correspondence With Jesus

The ancient Greeks believed in Neptune as god of the seas. It is said that a sea captain caught by a storm in the Aegean shouted, 'Father Neptune, if you will, sink me; if you will, save me; but whatever your decision, I will keep my rudder true.'

Some you accept, some you reject; some you help, while others encounter great hindrances on their way. I do not know how it will be with me. But I remain true to my resolve: to be united in love with you.

p151

The First Letter from Jesus

My beloved disciple,

I inspired the apostle John to write about 'a beloved disciple.' Many commentators have tried to guess who this might have been and have attached a name to this title. I did not

intend that this be done.

I am the only Teacher and I always have only one beloved disciple – you, no one else but you. Everyone can run for the position of ~the one~ beloved disciple by seeking me as teacher.

~You~ are my beloved disciple, but make sure you are convinced of this without any hesitation.

In the sixteenth century I had a unique beloved disciple in Germany, prior John of Landsberg, who wrote the classic ~A Letter from Jesus Christ~. It really was my letter. I lived in him and inspired the letter, but he apologises in the beginning for daring to use my name. He says it is only a literary device, though he should have been convinced of his union with me.

He wrote these words, attributed to me:

> When I stand knocking at your door, I shall be very weak and shivering with cold and shall need you very much. When I stand at your door, I shall be as I was when they freed me from the pillar they bound me to, to whip me and wound me

> for your sake. When I show myself to you, I show myself in the form of a man weak, degraded and insulted. I want to impress my image on your mind as one suffering and wounded, so that you take pity on me and lift me up and embrace me, and hold me with the arms of your love.

How could he have doubted that these words were really mine? What reasonable man would doubt the authenticity of Moses' record of the words spoken by an ass to Balaam? The first words of an ass allowed to speak would certainly be these: 'What have I done unto you that you have smitten me?' (NUM 22:28). Certain words have the ring of truth. One can rely on their authenticity.

My way of speaking to men is to insinuate myself into their psyche. When this happens to a beloved disciple, he knows that when he speaks, I speak. Peter was certain of this when he made this recommendation: 'If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God' (1PE 4:11).

Now "I" speak. Listen to me.

You are getting old and useless. You feel frustrated because of this. Therefore you write so many letters.

Not many feel the need of me either. It is still an open question if, when I return, I will find any real faith on earth. But there is a beauty in uselessness.

I like Chuang-Tzu's story: A wandering carpenter examined an old oak tree standing near an earthen altar on a field. He said to his apprentice, 'This tree is no good. Make a ship out of it and it will rot. Make tools and they will break. That is why it has become old.'

That same evening, the oak tree appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Why do you compare me with fruit trees that are useful? Even before the fruit ripens, people attack them. They break the branches and tear the twigs. Because such trees are so productive and bear tasty fruit, they do not live out their natural span. Therefore I decided to become useless. Nothing useful reaches my size. What do you, mortal man, know about useless trees?'

p153 ..... My 1st Letter from Jesus

Next day the carpenter told the apprentice, 'Altars would not last if they were not erected before long-lived, useless trees.'

False gods are widely trusted and continually bothered. I am not as men would like me to be. I leave no prayer unanswered, but often my answer is 'No.' God still says 'No' to multiplied prayers of the church for over 2,000 years that his name be sanctified, his kingdom come, and his will be done on earth.

On earth, I always said 'I am': 'I am the bread of life'; 'I am the light of the world'; 'I am the door of the sheepfold.' Paul, too, said 'I am what I am.'

Peter said, 'I am not.' He said it when he denied me. You say boldly that "I" live in you, that "I" write in your writings, that a letter written by you is "my" letter.

The heathen have had more courage to identify with their

gods than Christians have to identify themselves with me, though I have taught them to do so.

You mentioned yourself that in the Egyptian ~Book of the Dead~, the man who has died, after passing through judgement, becomes one with Osiris and is addressed as God. Toth, secretary of the gods, says this about the dead man Hunifer: 'The heart of Osiris has been weighed, and his soul was a witness for him. He was found truthful.' What a witness! This, fourteen centuries before my birth.

The Bhagavad Gita teaches something similar: 'A man bears within himself a wonderful friend, whom he does not know, because God lives within every man, but few find him. The man who sacrifices his desires and works for the being from whom all things come and who created the world, reaches through this sacrifice perfection - because the man who finds

in himself joy and happiness and light is one with God.'

The most beautiful words in a heathen religion are from the Lamaist "Book of Golden Teachings": 'Where is now your individuality, O Lanoo [disciple], where is Lanoo himself? A spark united with the fire, a drop sunk in the ocean, the always-existing ray become the full and everlasting light. Now, O Lanoo, you are the one who acts and the witness, you are the one who emits and you are the emitted beam, the light in the sound and the sound in the light.' 'If you succeed in arriving at the seventh degree, you most happy, you will not see before you the Holy Trinity any more, because you yourself will be this trinity.' Before the mystic force can make a god out of you, you must obtain first the capacity to destroy, at your pleasure, your lunar form.' (The moon is the symbol of fantasy.)

The Book of Revelation says, 'The earth and heaven fled away' (REV 20:11). The theoretical world, which is a fiction, has to disappear so that the one reality might remain.

Identify yourself with me and write my letter to the beloved disciple.

I in you will be different from I in others. But everywhere it is "I," just as every pine is still a pine. But the growth of some pines is obstructed by a stone; some have

better soil, some are on a slope, others on a cliff; some get more sun, others more water. Every pine is different from its comrades, just as every man is unique.

Remember this from the poem you conceived in prison:

When God made me in the secret place,
He made me to be a 'me';
To be in my own way the herald of his glory,
To be unique as God is.

May your uniqueness and your being challenged by those who would judge you not make you doubt that I am you,

p155 ..... My 1st Letter from Jesus

that I speak in you. The Galatian Christians received Paul 'even as Christ Jesus.' They were no fools, neither was Paul a fraud for accepting honours due to him. They equated – and they were right – receiving Paul with receiving me.

You may have two sure signs that it is I who speak: first, that every word is inspired by love; second, that my talk is not systematic, that I will jump from one subject to another. (By the way, I like the way you do so yourself.)

System is a product of reason, a minuscule part of man. Emotion, the irrational, has its part when I speak. Love itself does not belong to reason, but even contradicts it.

I taught that when a king sees that he has only 10,000 soldiers, whereas the enemy has 20,000, he would do well to make peace. This is what reason dictates. But I, abandoned by all disciples except you, the one beloved, took up the fight, did not yield, did not make peace with darkness, and was crucified. No one should expect my letter to be always reasonable, systematic.

In Thomas Aquinas, everything is reasonable. I was nice to him and said, 'You have written well about me.' But he realized his shortcomings and said at the end, 'All I have written is only straw.'

You remember what a Russian Baptist pastor of the underground church said when you tried to teach him systematic theology: 'Did those who founded this science bear a heavy cross? Jesus did not think systematically when crucified. Everyone of

his seven last words on Golgotha is on a different subject. It is dangerous to think systematically. Those who do so have not fulfilled the first commandment: to be crucified with Jesus.'

Just leave my thoughts to me; allow them to pass quietly from one sphere to another. My thinking is not subjected to any law.

The value of laws has diminished even in natural science. In microphysics, laws provide only a statistical average, indicating how particles in great numbers

behave. Every single particle is unique. How it will behave is unpredictable, indeterminate.

So you are unique; even more am I. I do not fit into any system. I the founder of the Christian religion do not fit even into the category of its founder. I am beyond any such pigeon-hole.

Systematic thinking is clear-cut: either/or.

There was once a king who was hungry. His servants brought him bread and two jars, one with peanut butter, the other with jelly, so as to fix him a sandwich. But he could not decide which he preferred and in an agony of indecision grew hungrier and hungrier. His wise men urged him to eat, some advising peanut butter, others jelly. The hunger increased until finally a girl taught him the magic word 'and.' Make the sandwich with peanut butter ~and~ jelly.

I come with truth and grace, though normally the two do not go well together. I am the truth and the life. I satisfy both demands. Therefore the Kabbalah says, 'God made the world through the latter ~Vav~,' which in Hebrew stands for 'and.'

With me there is room for the whole of life, including all its contradictions. Therefore I can give peace.

Learn from your grandson Alexander. Once he was told he would be taken to the doctor for a cough. He came back happy: 'The doctor does not have a cough.'

Men come to me with sins and sorrows. They look to me

and are happy when they leave, because I am sinless and serene. Be like me.

Well, this whole correspondence began because you did not believe me to be serene, but agonising again on crosses. We will speak about this next time.

p157

The Second Letter from Jesus

My beloved,

Be sure of what you write in my name. Luther was never sure whether his break with the Papacy was inspired by me or arose from his own pride and obstinacy. He knew about union with me. He had written in his ~Commentary on Galatians~ The Christian is Christ,' but he did not live up to his own teaching.

He had the excuse of not having read Pushkin's words: 'I write what I live and live what I write.'

How could Luther have united with me, the King of the Jews, while remaining a Jew-hater? How could he have united with the God of love when he loathed the Pope, priests, monks, Baptists and peasants?

But if you are rooted and grounded in love, you can write and speak with confidence in my name.

If you will purify yourself, what you write in my name will not only be beautiful, it will be me. This letter is mine. I have condescended to inspire it in the hope that you will be clean.

You wish to decrucify me. I came to earth to decrucify you. I said so in my first sermon in Nazareth: '[God] has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance of the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised' (LUK 4:18).

p158 ..... My Correspondence With Jesus

Because you were crucified in sin and sorrow, I too was crucified. The Father could have given me twelve legions of angels to fight for me, but he did not. I never asked him why. Not all his experiences with angels were good. A third of them rebelled with Lucifer. Even now he finds many a mistake with them. Perhaps there was a chance angels would not have obeyed. Apparently they did not volunteer.

You endure your lot, and I endure mine. When you say 'I wish to decrucify you,' this 'I' does not represent your whole person, but only a part of your conscious ego. You have in yourself the shadow that says 'No' to all to which the ego says 'Yes.' Half a man cannot decrucify me. No one is yet more than half a man.

Paul was a beloved disciple, yet even he had to confess that he was divided between two laws (ROM 7:21-23).

Your plans for me did not succeed. My plans for mankind worked out only for a few. We both have to endure crucifixions quietly, confident that the words 'all thing work together for good' apply to us, too.

The Koran borrowed a story from the Jews and beautified it. According to this tale, Moses met Khidr, the first angel of God, in the desert. Khidr agreed to show Moses his works on condition that Moses would express no opinion about them. If he did, Khidr would leave.

The first thing Khidr did was to scuttle near the shore a fishing boat belonging to poor men. Then he killed a handsome young man. Then he restored the wall of a wicked city. Moses, unable to contain himself any longer, protested. Before leaving, Khidr explained: 'Pirates wanted to steal the boat. They would have slaughtered the men too. I saved them. They can salvage the boat later. The young man was on his way to commit a crime. I saved him from infamy. While digging in order to strengthen the wall, two pious youngster found a treasure.'

There is sense behind even the most foolish things.

p159 ..... My 2nd Letter from Jesus

There is a sense behind the folly of Golgotha, behind your pain, and behind my being crucified afresh in heaven by saints who sin.

At a certain moment, you told me, 'I love you' but also 'I hate you.' This is nothing new for me. I know that human love might well be called 'love-hate,' because every man has the ego, the self, the Id, the conscious and the unconscious. Every man has a shadow that resents what the ego embraces.

How I love Rabbi Levi-Itzchak of Berditchev! And he loved me. But he made the same mistake you do. You are preoccupied too much with mankind's sorrows and my sufferings. This leads to melancholy and madness.

I would have preferred that the evangelists describing Golgotha chronicle not only my pain, but also the details of the garden nearby, with its roses and carnations, the children enjoying butterflies, the birds that flitted about, as well as the many who feasted the Passover in quiet and genuine faith. They should not have pictured only the darkness, but also the bright sunshine before the darkness. And they might have acknowledged the genuine, if sorrily misled, faith that made some vote for my death sentence. Evangelists should be more serene.

You commit the same error. The Communist countries are not all prisons full of torture. They also produce love and song and enjoyment of life.

Rabbi Levi-Itzchak of Berditchev, too, had been trapped in the web of suffering. He proclaimed on the Day of Atonement, 'Today all your creatures stand before you so that you may pass sentence. But I say it is you who shall be judged today.'

He refused to blow the ram's horn on New Year's day, as prescribed by Moses' law, shouting, 'Let Ivan do it, since you side with him.'

I shout to him and he shouts to me, not realizing what he is really doing. He shows he has my character; he is

one with me. Together we share the cosmic pain and the reactions it produces.

Buddha said life is all evil. He was wrong. Man is not only sin, as some preachers declare in my name. God is not all wrong in denying many human petitions.

You and I, Godhead and man, both live. To live means to evolve toward something higher, to be in a state of tension, to be in conflict with what opposes you. You do not realize that when you are in opposition to me, you are one with me, as I am one with you when I chide and punish you. You are one with my tension.

Our unity is ontological, not psychological. Tao-te-King said it rightly: 'The man with Tao [the supreme God] is identical with Tao as the man with De [matter] is identical with De.'

If you identify with me, think like me. On Golgotha, there were more flowers and saints than crosses. Even if I am crucified in heaven, it is in a splendid heaven that I suffer. So do not be obsessed only by the sufferings that happen here, but admire also the unspeakable beauties in which there is some suffering.

Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav, another darling of mine, once asked a Jew, 'Did you see the sky today?'

He replied, 'I have been too busy. I have a family to feed.'

'Did you see people today?'

'I saw lots of them. Men and women, and children and cabs and shops.'

'Well, after hundreds of years there will be other men and other shops on other kinds of streets. Only you and I will not be any more. So what is the good of looking at so many things and not having time to enjoy the sky?'

I am the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. I suffered in Abel and in all the saints since. I hung on a cross in Jerusalem and have been crucified since. Everything passes. These things will pass, too. In the end I will

triumph. The eternal beauties and truth and love are unmoved. Look to them and you will have joy.

You cannot decrucify me because you have taken upon

yourself too big a task.

You are like St Christopher. Proud of his strength, he was desirous of helping only the strongest. He served a king, but the devil subdued the king, so he served the devil. Then he found out the devil trembles before Christ. So, following a priest's advice, he waited for Christ at a river crossing. It would be something splendid to carry across the stream no less than the Son of God.

But then a little child came. As a pastime, bored by so much waiting, Christopher volunteered to carry the child on his shoulders. But with every step in the water, the child became heavier and heavier, until Christopher realized he was carrying the weight of the whole universe.

There are so many children on Golgothas. In the USA alone, 100,000 living children have been abused sexually. Others are battered, abandoned. Do not concern yourself with decrucifying me. Take upon yourself the suffering of one child, make him happy, and it will be enough. Whoever receives one child receives me. Then you will no longer have the heavy problems that torment you.

Instead of decrucifying me - how can a drop in a bucket solve the problems of an ocean? - decrucify a fellowman.

To raise Lazarus from the dead I gave the command, 'Loose him and let him go' (JHN 11:44). You also loose some man. Make him forget the sins I have forgiven him; do not condemn a sinner whom I have acquitted; do not chide a man whom I love. It will be enough for you.

I was happy that the first Christians liked the story of the resurrection of Lazarus, which they considered a

guarantee that they themselves would be resurrected. They were sure I would loose them, too, as they painted and carved the episode on their tombs. Some even had statues of Lazarus in metal or ivory.

You cannot resurrect a dead man, but you can loose one I have resurrected. Do this and I will be fully satisfied.

Saints are not men who do tremendous things. Dreams about unachievably great works are pernicious. Saints are those who do small things well.

Not every David can kill a Goliath - and, in the end, even killing a Goliath is not a big thing. The Philistines continued to be a major source of trouble to Israel for many years. But every David can do one small thing exquisitely, like Th,rŠse of Lisieux. I need no more from you.

And even if the one little thing you do is not quite exquisite and even if my Father is not able to tell you on the last day, 'Well done,' he will at least say to you, 'Well tried, good and faithful servant.'

David's great desire was to build a temple for God. He was not allowed to do so, but God did say, 'Thou didst well that it was in thine heart' (1KI 8:18).

Do, or at least try to do, one little thing well and I will be satisfied.

A young girl applied to a missionary society. When she was called, she was sure she would be sent to some interesting field, perhaps Central Africa or Thailand. The director gave her an envelope and told her, 'You will find in it your assignment. Open the letter at home.' It contained the words, 'Bring your father to Christ.'

Always think about me as a modest God.

When Lord Byron began to write, he knew Walter Scott was the leading protagonist of English literature in his time. One day, an article appeared in the press stating that after the appearance of Byron's brilliant poems, Scott could no longer be considered pre-eminent.

p163 ..... My 2nd Letter from Jesus

Walter Scott was the man who had written that article.

Such nice gestures of modesty and love please me more than expansive plans for cosmic decrucifixions.

Think along these lines.

p164

My beloved,

I see that you cannot dedicate yourself to the one child or the one sufferer who needs you, because you are worried about my being crucified afresh in heaven.

In reading the words of Paul, you have wrongly put the emphasis on the word 'crucified' instead of the phrase 'in heaven.'

Crucifixions in heaven and of the heavenly on earth are entirely different from pains as you know them.

My companion Buddha (do not wonder that I call him so; this is how the bride in Solomon's Song [SOS 1:7] refers to the founders of other religions. They are not my competitors; I have none) – my companion Buddha once was abused. He listened quietly and at the end asked his enemy, 'Friend, to whom does a present that is offered to me belong if I refuse it?'

'To the one who offered it.'

'Well,' said Buddha, 'you offered me insults, which I refuse. They belong to you.'

This is how far Buddha could go. I can go further. There is a spot in my heart which cannot be reached by crucifixion. I do not accept murder at the hands of anybody. Death cannot hold me. I mock it. The blood falls back on those who shed it.

p165 ..... My 3rd Letter from Jesus

So do not pity me. I am serene.

You know about the seven words I spoke on the cross. I hung there for three long hours. What did I do the rest of the time? Why has no one inquired into this?

I admired the flowers. I listened to the voice of the

birds. I rejoiced that the Jewish people kept the Passover. I foresaw the beautiful day when they would know about an even greater liberation, which I prepare for them through my sacrifice.

I had sunlight on my face till darkness came.

Then, all other preoccupations being gone, I felt with gladness the wind and I listened to the noise of the leaves.

Some soldiers had fallen asleep while I hung on the cross. I strove not to disturb them.

I saw before my eyes all people of every nation and tribe who would be saved. Do not wonder that I mentioned the flowers before mankind. You always think about me as I am in relationship with men. But man was the last of earthly creations.

It has been asked what God did before there were men. He walked in gardens amid the flowers, enjoy tulips and nightingales.

Isaiah was right: 'It pleased God to bruise me' (ISA 53:10). It pleased Buddha to be insulted; God knew the devil would lose by crucifying me.

And the Father knew that in my human form I, too, had an outer and a hidden man, or what today's psychologists would call the 'ego' and the 'shadow.' What I consider my real 'I' went singing to Gethsemane. To this the apostles were witnesses. But when I was alone in the prison cell, I sang again. And there was an unspeakable joy in my heart as I suffered on Golgotha, too.

A man can be at the same time in heaven and in hell. You experienced this yourself in jail, while singing to the accompanying cling-clang of chains between tortures.

Therefore I could tell the penitent thief, 'Today you

will be with me in paradise.' My body was that day in a grave, nowhere else. A part of me was in hell preaching to those who were long since dead (1PE 3:19). But my real 'I' never ceased to rejoice. It could not die.'

I was and am all right. There was real passion on Golgotha. 'Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord has afflicted me in that day?' (LAM 1:12). This sorrow repeats itself when saints fall away. It is like being crucified again.

But there is only one sorrow. The suffering is palliated by joy. The pain on the cross was eased greatly by the thought of the result.

I cried on the cross, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' I put the verb in the past tense, thought the being forsaken was actual. Normally, the words should have been, 'Why do you forsake me (now)?'

The explanation is that by an act of will one can place his present sufferings in the past. Then they do not hurt so much. The bad things occurring in your life today hurt deeply. But though worse things have occurred in your past, they are easily bearable.

For the Jewish king Hezekiah God turned back time on his sundial (2KI 20:10). It was again ten hours earlier, when he had not yet become deathly sick nor committed certain sins.

You can place present pains in the past just as you can place future joys in the present.

'The joy that was set before me' I really had before it was given (HEB 12:2). I have it even now when my heart breaks about the trespasses of the elect.

There is no need to decrucify me! By doing so, you would deprive me of the great satisfaction of saving mankind by bearing its sin.

I have warned you all: 'Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves' (LUK 23:28). It is blasphemous to treat me as a pitiable God.

p167 ..... My 3rd Letter from Jesus

I did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister. I do not need your ministrations.

Give up your ideas about decrucify me. Instead, make an unhappy child rejoice. Give aid and comfort to a suffering man. This will do.

In one respect, heaven is a little like prison, where you passed whole nights listening to everyone's story. This is what saints and angels do, too.

Former robbers are unanimous in claiming that they were more alive when in the act of burglary than at any other time in their lives. That they risked being shot and killed did not count; the thrill outweighed every danger.

Those who work in the persecuted underground church do so because they love me, but also because of the exquisite pleasure of conspirational activity.

This is what a Saviour feels when he redeems men even while enduring crucifixion.

In the measure to which I endure passion, your compassion is justified, which means sharing with me the cross with its ultimate joyous outcome. If it were not a joy, I would not have called you to be my companion in suffering.

For those who understand it, my cross exudes strength, confidence and an all-encompassing serenity.

Live on it and convey its meaning to others.

p168

The Fourth Letter from Jesus

My beloved,

I told the penitent thief, 'Today you will be with me in paradise.'

Paradise is no paradise for me if I cannot share it with someone. I came to earth to obtain companions for the heavenly joys.

This same relationship exists between me and the other persons of the Trinity. God is a being of the highest imaginable perfection. But a person who would keep this perfection for himself without sharing it in its fulness with another would not be the highest being imaginable. He had to share it with his eternal Son who is of the same essence as himself.

But there is an even higher dimension to divine perfection: the sharing of mutual love with another Being equally immaculate, so that each shares with a third person the love he receives from another. Therefore God must be at least a Trinity.

I needed the thief for my own supreme joy. I need you. Learn from me and find your delight in one other man. Bring him to a state of paradise. Do it today. Decrucify him, not me.

An atheist once ranted, 'We will destroy everything that is a reminder of God: churches, holy books, priests.'

p169 ..... My 4th Letter from Jesus

A believer replied, 'I wonder how you will pull heaven down.' The atheist has no need to do so. I brought heaven down to the level of criminals and thus gave them its joys. You, too, should open your heaven to your fellow-men.

It need not be for a criminal. It can be for a very honourable person.

Many years ago the British Court News related that Queen Victoria asked a pastor if there was any assurance of salvation and received this reply: 'I know nothing which would warrant it.' A Pastor Townsend sent a letter to the queen asking her to read JHN 3:16: 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life'; and ROM 10:9: 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.'

Queen Victoria replied, 'I have carefully and prayerfully read the portions of Scripture referred to. I believe in the finished work of Christ for me and trust by God's grace to meet you in that home of which He said, "I go to prepare a place for you."' ~Signed~ Victoria Guelph.

I like an event in Japan. The Oriental Missionary churches decided to set aside a day on which everyone would do his best to win one soul for Christ. That evening, the superintendent's wife, Nakada, went to bed sad. She had not succeeded.

Suddenly, her sleep was interrupted. A bandit who had broken into the house bent over her and threatened her with a dagger in his hand. 'Now, be quick and give me all you have or I will kill you!'

She was happy and said to him with a smile, 'You might be the one for whom I prayed and waited. I had to win one soul for Christ today. You must hear the story about the Friend of robbers, the Holiest of all who did not hesitate to compare himself with a thief (1TH 5:2),

who chose a man just like you, a bandit to be the last person to take with him to heaven when he died.'

The bandit was converted. The story became known, and thousands of conversions followed in many lands.

This woman did something practical. Dreaming about great plans for decrucifying me does not help.

Take practical steps to improve your own behaviour. A young Christian employed in a pawn shop once wrote this resolution:

> I do promise God that I will rise early every morning to have a few minutes, not less than five, in private prayer. I will endeavour to conduct myself as a humble, meek and zealous follower of Jesus and be a serious witness and warning. I will try to lead others to think of the needs of their immortal souls. I hereby vow to read no less than four chapters in God's Word every day. I will cultivate a spirit of self-denial and will yield myself a prisoner of love to the Redeemer of the world.

The young man was William Booth. I liked his resolution and his sticking to it. It helped him become the founder of the Salvation Army.

In Communist countries some Christians have turned traitor for some thirty pieces of silver like Judas. I can give more than silver. I can make men shine like stars in the eternal kingdom of heaven, for bringing souls to me.

Luther dared to say that preaching or simply telling the gospel is more important than what I have done for the salvation of men, because my sacrifice would be of no avail without this human activity.

I became angry at some other sayings of his in which there was hatred, but not at this. His intention was good: to challenge men to win souls.

When Luther explained the Apostles' Creed, he stressed, 'God created ~me~. ... Jesus was crucified for ~my~ salvation. This gives ~me~ a tremendous obligation to represent him in the world, making him known.'

p171 ..... My 4th Letter from Jesus

Luther's saying is acceptable as long as it is understood that salvation does not come through preaching, through accepting the truth, or through faith, but only by what my Father accomplished through my sacrifice on Golgotha.

Bring at least one man from the world of deceit, not from deceit in the world. It is not true that some things in the world are wrong. The world as a whole is wrong. 'The whole world lies in wickedness' (1JN 5:19).

There is deceit even in the belief that there is a world. Science has searched for the ultimate stuff out of which the universe is made and has come to the conclusion that there is no such thing. The sub-atomic particles are energy, which means they are not a something that acts. There exists no energy apart from its action. Actor and action are the same. And in its research, human reason can find some answers only if it admits that there are realms beyond what reason can accommodate; otherwise it too is deceived.

If two particles are caused to collide, they are destroyed and two new ones are created. These decay spontaneously into two additional particles, making them four, out of which two are those with which the experiment began. This

defies reason, or at least the accepted laws of physics.

In Gethsemane I asked the Father to spare me from the bitter cup. He found pleasure in bruising me. On the cross I asked to be given at least an explanation why I was forsaken. I was ignored. The Holy Spirit whom I had called the Comforter did not comfort me. He waited for my departure from the earth in order to descend. Not one angel come to my defence.

To you it looks as if Golgotha was an internal drama in the Trinity and in heavenly spheres. You might say, a collision. But our new Trinity is the same Holy Trinity, united in love as ever, magnified by the new birth of millions of children of God.

p172 ..... My Correspondence With Jesus

The laws of the microcosmos are entirely different from the usual laws of physics. In the heavenly spheres, things are also very different from what you experience on earth.

Atheists ask themselves if God is real. But is reality real?

I will quote Heisenberg, one of the most renowned physicists. (Do not wonder that I, Jesus, should quote him. Remember that I quoted Isaiah, too, to support my claims.) Heisenberg stated, 'In the light of the quantum theory elementary particles are no longer real in the same sense as the objects of daily life.' Gravity, matter, energy are ultimately only curvatures of the space-time continuum or, better said, they all all constructs of the human mind.

You need them for practical purposes, but if you reach toward the heights, you should realize that the whole notion of 'world' is an illusion.

Starting with the assertion that 1 + 2 = 4, you can construct a coherent mathematical system, but it will ultimately be all wrong because the premise is wrong. Everything in this world deceives.

Therefore, I have shown preferential love for thieves, prostitutes, criminals, prodigals, those who, though wrong themselves, have the one advantage over other men in that they are brave and daring and enterprising, and reject the standards of the world outright.

In this respect, learn from them. Take up the burden of children of God. Do so without being concerned about the minimal abilities you might have. The brains of Anatole France and Walt Whitman were half the weight of Turghenev's brain, but they could write as well as he. David was only a child but could defeat a Goliath.

But do reject the world, acknowledging as false "all" its whispers. Once you have done this you will confound the wise and the mighty, even if you are foolish, weak, base and despised (1CO 1:27,28).

p173 ..... My 4th Letter from Jesus

Yes, I have chosen even criminals, who can be compared to the fanatical henchmen of Nazism and Communism. Saul of Tarsus was one of them.

Lombroso claimed to have had a flash of inspiration while examining the skull of a famous brigand. He saw in the criminal 'an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals.' So he explained anatomically their enormous jaws, high cheekbones, prominent superciliary arches, solitary lines in the palms, extreme size of the orbits, handle-shaped ears and insensibility to another's pain.

He was wrong. Saul of Tarsus had been insensible to the pain of the first Christians whom he had questioned with a whip and put to death, 'He had breathed slaughter' (ACT 9:1). That same man wrote afterward the love song of 1 Corinthians 13. Lombroso was wrong because he had imputed ferocious instincts to primitive humanity. He had not known Adam and Eve.

Diseased brains can be healed by me and made to serve a good cause.

I repeat again, reject the world. Its thinking is abominable even when it seems benign.

Darwin launched the theory of evolution, a scientific hypothesis that seemed not to have moral or religious implications. But Marx and Stalin embraced it, with chilling consequences.

Ferri stated it simply: 'The universal law of evolution shows us that vital progress of every kind is due to continual selection, by the death of the least fit in the struggle for life. ... I would therefore be in agreement with natural laws that human society should make an artificial selection by the elimination of antisocial elements and incongruous individuals.'

Darwin concocted just a scientific hypothesis about what in the past led to the appearance of men on earth. He launched this seemingly innocent hypothesis in a

fundamentally, intrinsically wicked world. Ferri, a man of law, drew from it the conclusion that criminals shuld be sentenced to death. Marx, Lenin, Stalin drew from it the conclusion that millions should be killed, because everyone who impedes the rule of Communism is a criminal. Nietzsche and Hitler saw that whatever thwarts the triumph of the superman - ie, the Aryan race - must be slaughtered.

The possibility that man evolved from primitive organisms is not so important as the evolution from Darwin to Lenin to Hitler and Stalin, the ultimacy of which will be the wiping out of mankind in a nuclear war.

In this world all acorns are bitter. Therefore there are only bitter oak trees.

Arouse your conscience, that inner voice that tells you someone is watching. Consider as sin any minute of life spent on something other than saving souls for eternity from this world doomed to destruction.

Use every opportunity, knowing opportunity is a bird that never perches.

Do not appeal to reason, which is like a courtroom in which I and Judas Iscariot are equals, with the odds in favour of Judas. Appeal, rather, to the heart.

Do not repel youth by posing as the voice of experience and the fount of wisdom. A father told his child, 'Son, when Lincoln was your age, he was earning his own living.' The son replied, 'Yes, father, and when he was your age, he was president of the United States.'

Come with earnestness as one who has a foreboding of the destruction of the whole web of this deceitful world. Point to me as the only Saviour.

Allow for the widest diversity.

Communists say I was the first Communist. Terrorists claim me as their predecessor. German Lutheran pastors have described me as an Aryan Jew-hater. Tyrannical monarchs have used me to legitimate their power. Black

theologians say I belong to their race. Catholics characterize me as the only lover in the world whose bride needs a vicar. And so I could go on and on.

In a sick world, faith too can only be sick. Colour is the illness of light, because it tears apart its whiteness, its wholeness.

There are 35,000 kinds of orchids, plus 30,000 man-made hybrids. Some resemble swans, others moths, butterflies, mums, pansies, scorpions, tigers, doves, dancers, slippers. Some have flowers less than one-tenth of an inch in diameter. Others are as broad as ten inches across. But they are all orchids.

In the diversity of flowers lies their beauty. My believers should be one. Since they cannot seem to agree as yet, become many things to many man.

For some time I can be only the Lamb of God, for others rather the Lion of Judah; some are happy that I used the whip, others that I forgave. Some like the sweat of the carpenter or the blood of the innocent victim; others prefer to bow before me as king. Be a Jew to the Jews and a Greek to the Greeks and by all means save souls.

Remember Daniel Webster's words:

If we work upon marble, it will perish;
If we work upon brass, time will efface it;
If we rear temples, they will crumble to dust,
But if we work on immortal minds,
If we imbue them with principles, with the just

Fear of God and love of our fellowmen,
We engrave on those tablets something which
Will brighten to all eternity.

You asked me one series of questions. You told me your thoughts. I cannot be obliged to enter into conversation with you on the topics you choose.

The foregoing is my message to you.

p176

The Fifth Letter from Jesus

My beloved,

You probably wonder if the last letter was really mine or just an ordinary product of your own mind attributed to me. It was so down-to-earth. A lecturer could have said some of those things in a Bible school. If he were a gardener, he would not have permitted so many varieties of orchids in his garden.

What comes from me, you are certain, must have deep spiritual significance, must be of lofty mystical import, must startle through novelty.

This is not so. My spoken words as recorded in the New Testament cover only forty days of my life. If they are all read slowly with a loud voice, it will not take more than half an hour. I surely spoke much more than that, but the rest was not thought important enough to be recorded.

When I changed water into wine at Cana, it took but a moment. Do you think I sat there mute during the rest of the celebration?

Usually, I spoke about practical things: buying wood and carpenter's tools, shopping, selling, the news of the village and of the world we knew, a loving word to my mother and to acquaintances, the weather, a joke, small talk, or elementary things from the Bible. Learn to see me in the ordinary thoughts.

p177 ..... My 5th Letter from Jesus

There is nothing elaborate in my speech. Much of it is made up of incomplete, interrupted and unfinished sentences.

The 1943 report of the President of Colombia University contained one word-group, punctuated as a single sentence, that filled 11 pages and consisted of 4,284 words. I was never a university president, nor even a university student.

I never recorded my thoughts on paper. I merely spoke. In spoken language there are no capital letters to show where a sentence begins, nor full stops to show where they end. Spoken language flows like life, without punctuation marks. In my language - Aramaic - capital letters and punctuation marks do not even exist.

Accept as inspired by me a very ordinary letter with very common thoughts. Accept everything I tell you, without asking questions.

Once a grasshopper stopped a centipede and asked him if he really needed so many legs. 'I have only six legs but I don't know what to do with them. That is why I hop about. How do you manage with so many legs?'

'It is so simple,' replied the centipede. 'Watch how I do it.'

The grasshopper waited and waited, but all in vain. Finally, he had to drag the centipede along, because his question had totally unnerved the creature, to the point of paralysis.

You believers have so many things to do only because you ask me so many questions. I would like to minister to you constantly, but you interrupt me with all the problems you raise in your minds. Instead of being useful to you, I have to explain myself in many words, which in turn require further explanation because of the inadequacy of language.

There are two hundred definitions for the word 'sentence' alone. How then can human language provide clarity?

p178 ..... My Correspondence With Jesus

Some languages are privileged. Tamil has a multitude of words for 'laughter.' Whole-hearted, malicious, ironic, sympathetic, innocent laughter - all are called by the same word in the English tongue. Malayalam has different words for every kind of 'yes.' Gaelic has eighty-two words for 'love.' It is surely wrong to call human sentiments for apple pie, a dog, a child and God by the same name. In Malayalam there are also many words for 'banana': every variety is called a different name. Similarly, the Eskimos have many words for snow (new snow, crusty snow, frozen snow are not the same), as Arabs have for 'camel.'

In English there is one word 'God' for a multi-faceted Being, whereas the Jews have Elohim, Jahweh, Adonai, El Shaddai, Sabaoth, El and many others.

Your language does not have words enough to formulate questions properly, let alone give replies.

Do not ask me so many things, but strive to make me loved, using the little you know and can say. Whoever has me as his theme, who speaks about me with the awe and devotion with which my holy mother spoke about me, and sings for me with the same joy with which angels sing, cannot err even if he is far from being wise. I give sense to your words, even if they are a lullaby sung to a child.

I have promised that the righteous will shine like the sun. The sun draws moisture from all over the earth and returns it as rain from the clouds.

Like my servant David, you see me as the Rock. But a rock in a stream can be an impediment to the flow of water, which must then go around on either side. Like the rock surrounded by water, I find myself in your embrace, a prisoner of your love.

I named a prophetess of mine Deborah, which means 'bee,' because the bee gently collects nectar from many flowers and produce honey that men take away for food. Look at these insects and believe in God.

p179 ..... My 5th Letter from Jesus

I have inscribed in the genes the dazzling ability to construct honeycombs of geometric perfection. They can sense the earth's magnetic field and instinctively know how to make a structure that takes it into account. They agree as to which way

the comb should face, without a 'foreman' to tell them. I have given to every bee its own plumb-line.

In addition, bees construct their cells as hexagonal prisms, this being the best shape to hold a given volume using the small amount of material. The cells are tilted back at a grade of thirteen degrees to keep the honey from running out.

Believe that I have inscribed in your genes, too, what makes you most useful. But you philosophise too much. It looks as if there might have occurred a catastrophic mutation in your genes. Be still. You will accomplish what I have destined you to do. If bees began to brood over what they do, their honeycombs would be far from perfect.

May my love be uppermost in your mind, rather than condemnation of sin. Fighting sin in yourself and others can become a very dangerous occupation. Some dogs trained for heroin detection have become addicted from sniffing the stuff and eventually died.

To combat sin constantly is also a means in wallowing in it. Instead, look upon it with contempt. Do not attach importance to it.

There is a great deal at stake in the ascension toward the ultimate heights.

In times past, the time it takes the earth to go around the sun was divided by men into 31,536,000 units called seconds. It is barbarous to cut time into pieces. Furthermore, the revolution of the earth is not uniform. Consequently, the operation did not provide exact time. The moon's gravity pulls on the oceans and causes friction. In some years the effect is greater than in others. In addition, paleontologists who have measured fossils of

ancient coral, which had annual growth rings like trees, have concluded that 600 million years ago a day on the earth was only 21 hours long.

Now, your notion of a second has changed. Caesium atoms perform an electromagnetic flip. Their electrons, which spin like tops, suddenly point the axis of their spin in a different

direction. A second is the time that passes until an atom of caesium flips, the time of 9,192,631,770 photon pulses. A second is thus no longer a limb of the corpse time. It is a period rich in events. Billions of pulsations take place in it. And they happen not only in the caesium atom.

A second is a highly valuable jewel. It is so rich you cannot even think about it. And if you cannot comprehend a second, you certainly have to give up any attempt to grasp the exceeding riches of eternity, which I have promised to the faithful.

My counsel is that you reach toward eternal values. Ascend at a steady pace. Use every second well. A Talmudic writing says, 'Every second presents itself to man first, gets the mark of men, and then goes to tell God what man has done with it.'

Many highly valued frescoes are in grave danger of deterioration. The damage is caused by the fact that the churches are heated on week-ends but left cold during the week. Condensation takes place, and the resulting dampness in the walls is very harmful. In the temple of Jerusalem the same light had to burn uninterruptedly.

Burn for me with equal flames of love until we become one, just as your two eyes unite to produce normal vision. Be mine in your work and mine in your play, mine in your activity and mine in your leisure - not considering the latter as less important.

You have written me much. You yourself asked if I read your writing. You suspected that I cannot read because of being crucified afresh in heaven. I have written to you but am not sure I have satisfied you.

p181 ..... My 5th Letter from Jesus

Correspondence never satisfies lovers. Even the Bible cannot satisfy believers. All the talk between Romeo and Juliet was only preliminary. They both desired the embrace of love.

No other image than that of sexual union is adequate to describe what we both are longing for. It is not true that such a relationship is profane. King Solomon's Song of Songs hymns it, and the Talmud says rightly, 'All Scriptures are holy, but

the Song of Songs is most holy.'

Because sexual union is a religious act, Isaiah says, 'I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bore a son' (ISA 8:2,3).

Sometimes evangelists who claim to represent me have given birth to spiritual children without first having had such an intimate union with me. Therefore they sometimes bring forth monsters.

Nothing less will satisfy us both than replacing practical or lofty talk with a union as sacred as that between man and wife, where each becomes both. I will not be a riddle for you any more, because you will be you ~and~ I; you will be as much as I as I am myself.

While on earth, I was an 'I' limited to being a Jewish carpenter of the first century. I could not become abstract man. I had to become man of a certain social class in a certain epoch.

You can become my 'I' of another period with another outlook and another assignment.

It is foolish to assume that imitating me means to imitate my dress and customs in another age.

A boy of eleven once played the role of Joseph, my adoptive father, in a Sunday school Christmas programme. When he discussed with his parents what kind of shoes he should wear, they suggested sandals. He wanted cowboy boots. When the father said it was unlikely that Joseph have worn western boots, the

son replied, 'Yes, but then he did not have braces on his teeth either.'

Everything in the world has changed over the past 2,000 years. But while I am the same yesterday, today and for ever, this permanent 'I' has not permanent form. Isaiah knew this and prophesied, 'He has no form' (ISA 53:2). Mark says about me, 'He showed himself in another form' (MRK 16:12). I live in you. Luther said rightly, 'The Christian is Christ.' Be yet another form of mine.

When I took upon myself the limitations of humanity, my power was necessarily limited. But to you I have promised all power, which is mediated to you by the Holy Spirit. I said that my disciples will do greater works than I have done, which is obvious, because they will have at their disposal all my power plus the knowledge and experience accumulated during the centuries.

As you use this power, remember above all to be ardent in love.

I mean really ardent.

It is a fact scientifically established that Tibetan Buddhist monks can raise their body temperature through ~tum-mo~ yoga, a meditational practice. They can raise the temperature of fingers and toes by 15 degrees Fahrenheit in a matter of minutes. During cold Himalayan nights, they can dry icy-wet sheets draped over the bodies.

Why not use Christian meditation to increase the heat of your love? It is known that erotic imagination increases the heartbeat and produces physiological changes. Use your imagination and take a seat in the heavenly mansion that I am preparing for you.

See me suffering, and see me joyous and peaceful and triumphant because I have the privilege of suffering afresh as often as saints fall. My incarnation was needed in order to acquaint men with God so that they might love and adore in a realistic, personal manner. Since my

ascension to heaven in a glorified body, I feel I may seem remote and less personal again.

By being in you and in other believers, by being present in the world in the form of the poor and persecuted, by the image of my new pains in heaven, I am with you again, softening your heart with my compassion and filling it with the assurance of victory.

Soon we will see each other face to face. Then you will be satisfied.

It is wrong for you to be troubled about anything, even about my being crucified afresh. This indicates that you have not yet entered fully into the relationship you so desire.

When I was on earth, people asked themselves if I were God. They had doubts. Instead of giving them a direct reply about myself, I told them, 'Ye are gods' (JHN 10:34). Discover Godhead in yourself and you will not question my role. Discover who you are in this sphere by setting aside the usual tools of logic. Simply recognize that you dwell in heavenly spheres.

I am God in the supreme sense of the word and know that I am God. You are also god, though in another sense, which you do not realize as yet. You know me in images which are diverse. The contemplation of different images gives you different moods. You see me sitting at the right hand of the heavenly Father and you are happy. Then you think about me as suffering crucifixion afresh and you are despondent. You see me as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world and you are quieted. Then you see me as the Lion of Judah who will devour sinners and you are frightened.

Rest from these images and see me once and for all as the Divine Lover reclining in the innermost chamber of the heart. Then you will have obtained your heart's desire.

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The Sixth Letter from Jesus

My beloved,

This will be my last letter to you, since it is time we concluded our correspondence.

Let me summarise my teaching in one proposition: In English, 'I' is written with a capital letter, but you should write it with a small letter and write 'Love' with a capital.

If you do so, you will not be alarmed by the sight of a lover crucified. You will not have the impulse to decrucify him but will try to strengthen him to endure to the end. And you

will take up a cross, too.

Every painter who does not love is only a picture-maker; every musician who does not love is only an instrument-player.

On earth there is so much anti-culture, anti-art, anti-politics, anti-marriage, anti-religion. People are against, not for. They do not love.

The martyrs were highly honoured in churches in times past; now we have the heroism of bent backs on which the enemy can ride. It is all because of the lack of love.

A Christian girl who was to be martyred sang heartily the night before. Someone asked, 'Aren't you afraid?' She replied, 'Why this silly question? I am human and experience all emotions, including fear. But if you cannot

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laugh and rejoice and sing while you live and have courage, how can you understand a person who sings when she expects to be executed?'

If an individual cannot rejoice while looking for a heaven filled with gladness, how will he understand the deep joy of one who is crucified in heaven again and again, knowing what this suffering will bring to the world?

Do not reproach atheists, but rather ask yourself why they are what they are.

Darwin has destroyed the faith of many. In his ~Voyage of the Beagle~ he provides a clue as to what shaped his thinking. He writes:

> Near Rio de Janeiro I lived opposite an old lady, who kept screws to crush the fingers of her female servants. I have stayed in a house where a young household mulatto daily and hourly was reviled, beaten and persecuted enough to break the spirit of the lowest animal. I have seen a little boy, six or seven years old, struck thrice with a horse-whip (before I could interfere) on his naked head, for having handed me a glass of water not quite clean. ... And these deeds are done and palliated by men who profess to love their

> neighbours as themselves, who believe in God and pray that his will be done on earth. It makes one's blood boil, yet heart tremble, to think that we Englishmen and our American descendants with their boastful cry of liberty have been and are so guilty.

Love needs to be spelled not l-o-v-e but s-a-c-r-i-f-i-c-e.

You cannot live more or less ardently just by willing to do so. Our love depends upon many circumstances. Do not be dismayed that you cannot love as the great saints have done.

Physical deficiencies can affect the quality of love. Those who have a pituitary deficiency or who have undergone brain surgery are unable to experience passionate love. An exploration of the brain in the future might explain why some individuals are demonstrative lovers while others are lukewarm. Those who lead

dangerous lives can love better than those whose lives are commonplace. The presence of amphetamines also makes a difference.

Natural phenomena can also affect human behaviour. Arson increases 100% during a full moon. Murders increase too by a significant percentage. Because 50% of the human body is composed of water, it is influenced by the gravitational pull of the moon, like the sea with its tides.

But learn from the Jews: they feast the new moon with solemnity. The bad days of the full moon have passed, when ardent love was almost impossible.

No one, not even a genius, can think well twenty-four hours a day; no athlete is fit for competition at any hour. Geniuses and athletes are men who use well their best moments.

Instead of worrying about the times when your love cannot be at the desired fervour, maximise the great moments. Be quiet; you have time to grow in love.

I once said, 'Let tares and wheat (the children of the wicked one and the children of the kingdom) grow together until the harvest, which is the end of the world' (MTT 13:29,30,38,39).

The children of the kingdom will grow until the end of the world, which at that time was 2,000 years away. It was thought that men have only the short span of earthly life for growth. This causes them to be in a hurry and not to grow properly.

It is only because believers have much time for growth in love that they can afford to engage in conflict instead of acts of love.

I am not for peace at any price. The Bible teaches that God ordered some terrible destructions rather than suffering evil to continue. God sanctifies armies to destroy incarnate devils. I repeat what I have said before: 'I came not to bring peace but a sword.'

Using a sword is terribly risky for men who have only this short lifespan for growth in love. Only those who know there is an eternity for embracing and kissing can

afford to spend their time in battles. In my short ministry I took time to expel the money-changers from the temple.

Love as much as you can, and fight the right battles. Do not decrucify me, but be ready to be crucified near me.

If you had lived in Jerusalem and had been in the mob confronting Pilate, what would you have replied to his question, 'Whom should I release, Jesus or Barabbas?' The only right answer, as events have proved, was 'Free Barabbas.' His death would have profited no one. But my suffering and death profited the whole human race. Without my sacrifice you would have no hope of spending eternity with me.

When you started writing your letters, first of all you really did not expect a reply. Letters to me were a literary fiction. When you started getting replies, you never thought that I would contradict your plans. Well, I give showers of blessings but usually not those my devotees expect from me.

Your letters are of much loftier spirituality than mine. You feel it a duty to venture to higher realms to speak with me, but the texture of the eternally valuable is woven on the loom of temporal things. You are on earth and have to remain there for the time being.

On earth practise love toward me. The Narada Bakhti Sutras contain some beautiful truths. They state that love for God can manifest itself in eleven ways: love of God's qualities, love of his enchanting beauty, love of worship, love of his remembrance, love of service, love of him as a child, love of him as the Bridegroom, love of total surrender, love of total oneness and love in the form of anguish and separation from him.

There are many more forms of love, but no one has shown me higher love than did my holy mother. I like Luther's words: 'Mary is after Christ the most precious jewel in the whole of Christendom; she is never praised

too much. No one can say about her more than that she is the mother of God. We have to consider also in our hearts what it means to be God's mother.

Protestants nowadays shun even the mention of her. They would not call her 'mother of God.' They might call a woman 'the US president's mother,' though she did not give birth to a president but merely brought forth a child who eventually became president. A queen mother also did not give birth to a king. The glory later acquired by these children is somehow shared by the mothers.

No one, therefore, should avoid calling my mother 'mother of God,' because I was God from the first moment of conception in her womb. I have been this from eternity. She was mother only of my human body, except that my humanity cannot be separated from my divinity.

Love me as she loved me. I said, 'Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, ~and mother~' (MTT 12:50).

Many have grasped the fact that they can be my little brethren and sisters. Few grasp that they can be mothers to me. They challenge the designation 'mother of God' because they themselves do not strive to fill this role.

Motherly love is the highest form of human love. Every other kind of love is mingled with self-interest. Individuals love their parents because they provide them with the necessities

of life. Mother also gives sweets, and father pocket money. Husbands provide security and protection, wives maintain the home and provide loving care.

Mothers just love, whatever their children do. I remember the heartrending attitude of a mother whose grown son had hit her on the head with an axe, then dragged her by the feet to the cellar. The door slammed on his finger. Hearing her criminal son utter profanity, the expiring mother, who had not died instantly, gasped, 'Is it very painful, my son?'

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My mother had no easy lot and spent many a night in tears because of me. It is not easy to be a Saviour's mother. Nor is it easy to be God's bride.

Once in history the sons of God united with the daughters of men (GEN 6:1). Giants were born of this union, giants in wickedness. The world eventually had to be destroyed because of them. After such negative experiences, it was quite an undertaking for the Holy Spirit to unite with the human virgin.

By virtue of my divinity, I must have been a child difficult to rear, difficult to master, though I always tried to be her joy and to show obedience. She loved and loves me with a love than which there is none higher.

You too can be to me a mother. I can be as real to you as I was to my mother when she carried me in her womb or held me in her arms, as real as I am to her now when she stands near my throne.

She is near me not only when I sit on my throne. She is near me also when I am crucified afresh.

The words so often sung, '~Stabat mater dolorosa/Juxta crucem lacrimosa~' (The sorrowful mother stood in tears near the cross) are actual even now. But she only weeps. She does nothing to decrucify me or to ease my suffering, because she understands and consents.

It was only through my death on Golgotha that the sins of men have been erased; it is only through my crucifixion afresh that the repeated sins of saints who have lost their salvation and whom no man can help any more are dealt with. Do not imagine

that I accept these fresh crucifixions just because I could not do otherwise. Do not think that they are senseless. Roses will blossom on these new crosses, too.

My mother desires that none should perish and encourages me in what I do. She suffers with me and rejoices in hope with me. In this you do your part: take upon yourself the cross of poverty and renunciation.

A king said to a monk, 'Ask a boon of me.'

The monk replied, 'I will not ask a boon from one of my slaves.'

'How can that be?' queried the king.

The monk explained, 'I have two slaves who are thy masters: covetousness and expectation.'

Renounce covetousness and greed. Take up your cross. The upright post of a cross stands for the 'I,' the crossbeam represents the cancelling of the ego.

My memory is entirely submissive to my will. I can forget completely what I wish to forget. You would do well to make use of my ability by asking me to forget your past sins. I will do so gladly. Then you are as one who never sinned. 'Justified' means 'just as if I'd never sinned.'

The wine I made in Cana was said to be the best wine. Now only old wine is considered the best. When I changed water into something else, it was not a liquid that from then one was wine, but that had been wine. I made it as if it had not been water. So it is with the sins you confess.

As in the case of Hezekiah, I set back the sundial (ISA 38:8) so many degrees and he was again the man he had been before he had committed that day's sins.

I have forgotten all your offences and sins. You do wrong to remind me of them on occasion. It is not good for you, and it diminishes my ability to forget fully.

On the other hand, you should not abuse the privilege in

appealing to my forgetfulness, or I might forget to take good care of you. Instead, spend your energy seeking union with me. Give up your you-ness.

When human medicine cannot invent a cure, it invents a jargon. Doctors say nowadays that pain is a figment of the imagination. It is an imbalance in the mind-body complex.

Call it what you like and attribute it to whatever you wish, the fact remains that I am a Man of Sorrows. I knew terrible physical pain when whipped and crucified.

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I still have very real pain now. But I can rejoice in spite of it, in fact, because of it. It is a great joy to endure pain willingly in order to benefit others.

So my counsel to you is to forget about decrucifying me. Instead, share my pain in all its intensity, together with its unspeakable joy.

This is what I have to tell you for the time being.

Truth is not proved by terms and demonstrations,
Nor seen when hidden by concrete relations.
The 'Canon' is no 'cure' for 'ignorance'
Nor can 'Deliv'rance come from 'Indications.'

If at each 'Stage' thy course diverted be
To different 'Goals,' true goal thou'lt never see.
And till the veil is lifted from thine eyes
The Sun of truth will never 'Rise' for thee.

Strive to cast off the veil, not to augment
Book-lore. No books will further thy intent.
The germ of love to God grows not in books.
Shut up thy books, turn to God and repent.

(Nuruddin Abdur Rahman Jami,
translated by Whinfieldd and Kazvini)

End

If you would like to write to Pastor Wurmbrand,
please sent your letters to:

P.O. Box 443
Bartlesville, OK 74005
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The End of "My Correspondence with Jesus"

Reaching Toward The Heights

Richard Wurmbrand
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"To my children Mihai and Judith
and their little Amalia and Alex"

Jan 1
|
"Teach us to number our days." (PSA 90:12)

An American urged a friend of his who had just arrived in this country from Thailand, "Quick, let's run to catch this bus!" Once inside, the happy American said, "We have gained three minutes." The Thai asked, "What do you intend to do with them?"

Men in advanced Western countries have no answer to this question. Our generation has forgotten how to walk. It knows only how to run and to drive.

Jesus never ran; He only walked. There were chariots, horses, and camels in His day but we don't read that He used them. It is recorded only once that He rode, and then on an animal which advances at an even slower pace than a human walk.

We do well to save minutes. Every minute is a jewel, but we often realize its value too late. The story is told about a man who walked in the dark along the shore of a river. He stumbled on a small bag containing stones, which he picked up. As a pastime, he amused himself by throwing a stone in the river every once in awhile. He liked to hear the ~plitch-plitch~ in the water. When he arrived home, only two stones were left in the bag. He saw they were diamonds.

We run to save minutes and squander what we have saved in unworthy activities, conversation, and amusements. A cashier is answerable for every cent that has passed through his hands. A man who

has lived seventy years will answer before God for thirty-seven million minutes.

Jan 2
|
"God is love." (1JN 4:8)

A Soviet Christian released from prison wrote in a letter:

> My outward appearance is not attractive. In the slave labor camp, I worked beneath the earth. I had an accident which made me a hunchback. Once a boy stared at me and then asked, "Uncle, what do you have on your back?" I was sure that some mockery would follow, but still I answered, "A hunchback."
> "No," said the child. "God is love and gives no one deformities You do not have a hunchback but a box below your shoulders. In this box, angel wings are hidden. One day the box will open and you will fly to heaven with these wings." I began to cry for joy. Even now, I write and cry.

Every man has some kind of "hunchback," some physical, mental, or spiritual handicap, something which makes him different from everyone else.
Things appear this way only if we look at them from the perspective of our
limited earthly life. Here we "know in part" (1CO 13:12). And because of this, our lives and sufferings often seem meaningless.

God has allowed one person to have a hunchback, another sickness, or poverty, or a prison term, or bereavement, or some other sorrow. But we will not accept human standards which categorize such things as catastrophes. We will apply to them the standard of this Spirit-filled Soviet child and see in our sorrows boxes which hide angel wings, with which we are meant to fly to heaven.

Jan 3
|
"The LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him." (HAB 2:20)

Two thousand years ago an Athenian statesman named Phocion waited wearily while his barber gave to the customer he was shaving a summary of the current Athenian political situation. At last the barber turned to Phocion and said, "How would you like to have your beard trimmed?" Phocion replied, "In silence." This simple answer often is quoted in the great literature of the world.

We are victims of a plot against silence, without which no spiritual

life is possible. We are subjected daily to the noise of cars, trains, planes, radio, TV, vacuum cleaners, dishwashers, fans - not to mention the chatter and clatter of children and much useless speech of adults.

I have known Christians who have spent years in solitary confinement in complete silence. When they once again heard humans speak, they wondered that so much of their speech lacked content.

If you wish to reach God, create some silence around you. Switch off the many intruders on silence. Enter your closet, or teach your loved ones to be quiet at certain hours.

But silence is not altogether silent. All the scream of men in pain, all the weeping of sufferers, all the cries of real joy, the most earnest
discussions, a multitude of sermons, and scientific truth are embedded in the silence which surrounds you. Above these you will hear the voice of God. You will become illuminated if you will listen, as did Jesus when He spent whole nights in prayer on silent mountains.

Jan 4
|
"The angel came in unto (Mary), and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." (LUK 1:28)

In a Communist country, a young prisoner was taken from his cell to court. When he returned, his face shone. The other prisoners asked how it went in court. He answered, "As on the day of Mary's annunciation. What a beautiful day! A pure virgin alone in meditation. At once a radiant angel before her. He tells her that she, a creature, will have the
Creator as a babe in her arms; that she, a creature, will wash her Creator. She will wash the One who later will cleanse millions of men of their sins. She, a creature, will teach her Creator to walk. She will teach the eternal Word of God to speak. He will be the sun and joy of her house.

"There will be a few difficult moments. She will have to stand weeping at the foot of a cross where God's Son and her Son will die for our salvation, but this will pass. He will be resurrected and will go to heaven, and surely He will take His mother to be with Him. And it will be joy again, without end."

The prisoners thanked him for the nice little sermon, but they insisted, "We asked you something else. How was it in court?"

He repeated, "I told you already. It was like the day of Mary's annunciation. The judges told me that I am sentenced to death. Is it not beautiful? Gates of pearl, streets of gold, angels playing harps, the communion of saints, and above all, rest on Jesus' bosom."

Every year of our life is a new step toward death. Let us make this

step joyfully and hopefully. Jesus was resurrected. Those who believe in Him will be resurrected too.

Jan 5
|
"The LORD opened the mouth of the ass." (NUM 22:28)

Believe the Bible. Some of its stories can be accepted by our reason only with difficulty, but there is no alternative. If we don't accept the difficult parts of the Bible, the only choice that remains is to accept
the absurd.

Atheists scorn: the Bible says that an ass could speak. But the Bible does not say this. Rather, it states, "The LORD opened the mouth of the ass." Where there is an almighty God, He can cause an ass to speak at any time.

Set aside belief in God for a moment. What remains? Unbelief says man evolved from the ape. This means that at a certain moment an animal, the ape, started to speak without the aid of a higher, more intelligent being than himself. No child learned to speak without being taught by an adult. How did the ape achieve what a child cannot?

You have to accept the fact that an animal spoke, either an animal unaided by anyone, as Darwinism teaches, or an animal whose mouth a wise and almighty God opened. It obviously is easier for reason to accept the latter alternative.

Think also about the inner truth of the first words an animal ever spoke: "What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me?" One day all those whom we have wronged will put this question to us. What will we answer? Even if those we have smitten were guilty, was it absolutely necessary to smite them three times as the false prophet Balaam smote the ass? Would less than that not have been sufficient? Don't listen to those who cavil about the Bible, but rather ponder its words carefully.

Jan 6
|
"If we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." (HEB 10:26)

An old Christian legend says that when God announced to His angels His purpose in creating man in His image, Lucifer, who had not yet fallen from heaven, cried, "Surely He will give them no power to disobey Him." The Son answered him, "Power to fall is power to rise." The devil then willfully decided to fall, taking others with him. His expectation that he would rise again was never fulfilled because he had fallen purposely.

In the story where Mary Magdalene washed Jesus' feet with her tears, Lucifer began to understand how power to fall is connected with power to rise. He understood the profoundness of the words of the Lord, "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little," and "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much" (LUK 7:47).

So the devil thought if he could check the power to fall, he might check the power to rise. Therefore he tried to impose the Mosaic law upon the first Christians. Through this teaching he fooled the Galatians (GAL 3:1) and many others. He also tries to subject today's Christians to ordinances such as "Touch not, taste not, handle not" (COL 2:21,22) and plays upon our fears.

But we have the word, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (GAL 5:1). We will not continue in sin
that grace may abound (ROM 6:1). Sin will never more be the content of our lives. But neither will we despair if we do sin. Peter could strengthen his brethren because he was converted after having fallen into grievous sin (LUK 22:32).

Jan 7
|
"The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair." (GEN 6:2)

A Jewish book of old, ~Sepher Ierahmeel~, tells the following story about the Old Testament Joseph. A multitude of high-ranking Egyptian women went to the house of Potiphar, to see the handsomeness of his Hebrew servant. Lady Potiphar offered every guest an apple and a knife with which to peel it. When Joseph entered to serve them, they were all so captivated by his appearance that they accidentally cut themselves. Then Lady Potiphar told them, "You have seen him for a minute and you are charmed. Now you understand why I, who see him continually, burn with passion."

Lady Potiphar might have been beautiful, too, but Joseph was holy and refused to sin. And we should follow his example. But if anyone sins in this regard, let us not condemn him or her too harshly. Instead, let us be charitable toward those who yield to human weakness, understanding that sex is the most powerful drive in our nature.
And let us not despair ourselves when we are much tempted even if we have fallen into sin. To give us hope, the first book of the Bible records that even the sons of God, whoever they might be (the interpretations vary), could not resist this temptation.

It is written, "Sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1JN 2:1). Because this temptation is powerful, victory over it and refusal to sin in sexual matters is glorious.

Jan 8
|
"Some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up." (MTT 13:4)

How is it that some men hear the Word of God gladly, while others allow the fowls – that is, wicked spirits – to devour this good seed?

The Old Testament Joseph was told a dream by Pharaoh's baker with whom he was in prison: "Behold, I had three white baskets on my head: and in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head" (GEN 40:16,17). Joseph interpreted the dream to mean that the baker would be hanged on a tree.

The renowned rabbi of Dubna was asked how Joseph could have known this. He answered, "A painter once painted a man with a basket of bread on his head. Birds came to eat from the picture, believing that it was real bread. A man said, 'What a good painter! How natural he made the bread look!' He was not a good painter. He did not make the man look natural enough to frighten the birds, or they would not have come. Likewise, Joseph understood that if the birds dared come to the baker, then he must be a dead man."

The wicked spirits cannot take away the seeds of the Word of God from a living Christian, but only from one who looks rather like a scarecrow. Scarecrows don't scare spirits. Be sure your faith is a lively
faith.

Jan 9
|
"Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein." (JER 6:16)

A hunter shouted to his dog, "Nero, seek!" Nero lifted his eyes toward his master and answered, "I lost nothing."

What have Christians lost that they must seek so much? Some seek new cults and delve into the occult. But the old way waits for them The religion which saved righteous Abel, King David, Mary Magdalene, and Peter will hold good for us, too. It is not true that Christianity has been practiced and found insufficient. We did not practice it. We will never find a better means of salvation than the blood
of Christ, which was shed for us, nor will we find a better teaching than
His teaching of love.

A bored tourist walking through the art galleries of the Louvre told a guard, "I find nothing exceptional in these pictures." The guard answered, "These paintings are not judged by us. We are judged by them."

Christianity has long since been proven true and stands independent of human opinions. The cross, reaching from earth to heaven, is its standard and is the criterion by which all religions, all isms, all philosophies and philosophers, all purveyors of truth are measured. Whether we see the beauty of Christianity and follow its precepts and its Founder, or stray after the foolish inventions of base fellows – as the founders of strange cults are referred to in the Bible (JOB 30:8; DEU 13:13, RSV) we cannot escape being measured and judged.

Let us choose wisely – for eternity.

Jan 10

"Mary ... seeth two angels." (JHN 20:11,12)

There are two ways of looking at a tomb. Peter and another disciple of Jesus came on Easter morning to the tomb of their Master, found it empty, and saw in it the linen in which Jesus had been wrapped. Mary Magdalene also looked into the empty tomb, but she saw angels where the body of Jesus had lain. Some today see only the crumbling of Christian civilization, while others look beyond the dreadful headlines and see angels at work preparing the blessed kingdom of God.

How does a man get to see angels, to sense their presence? The apostles had been very active in the service of the Lord. Mary had sat quietly at the feet of Jesus and heard His word (LUK 10:39), which no doubt began with Moses and all the prophets. She probably heard from His lips the stories of many saints and martyrs for the faith and had become familiar with them.

A church that excludes from its teaching the example of saints and martyrs misses a vital dimension. Read "Moses and the prophets," remembering that "all these things ... are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1CO 10:11). And then keep in touch with the living sufferers for Christ. Your eyes will be opened.

Jan 11

"Judge not, that ye be not judged." (MTT 7:1)

Two friends took a stroll along the shore of a river. One slipped

and fell into the water. He began to cry, "Help! help! I can't swim." His
friend answered, "You don't have to shout like that. I don't know how to swim either, but I don't make as much noise about it as you do."

We sometimes judge men harshly for their ill temper, their incivility. We behave otherwise, but can it be that we do not pass through their deep waters?

The Lord called certain men fools (LUK 11:40). A Pharisee had invited Him to dine with him. It is not recorded that the Pharisee had uttered one provocative word; he had only marveled silently that Jesus did not wash His hands before the meal. We would have wondered, too. Without any apparent provocation, Jesus insults the host and all his friends, calling them "fools." A lawyer who also was a guest at this dinner tried to quiet Jesus. The Lord then turned on him and all his companions saying, "Woe unto you also, ye lawyers" (LUK 11:37-52). Few hosts would tolerate such behavior today.

We judge harshly our unmannered acquaintances. We might have criticized Jesus, too. Have we passed through His deep sorrow to see the essential message of salvation rejected by His own people because of blind leaders who led them astray? Until you have walked a mile in another's shoes, don't judge him.

Jan 12
|
"Christ Jesus ... made himself no reputation." (PHP 2:7)

King Ibrahim sought God and could not find Him. One night he heard someone walking with heavy boots on the roof of the palace. Going up to see who it was, he found his most intimate friend, who shared his spiritual concern. The king asked him,

"What are you doing on the roof?"

"I seek camels."

"What foolishness to seek camels on the roof of a palace," exclaimed the king, to which the friend answered,

"What foolishness to seek God while sitting on a throne."

God gives to everyone a task, whether one be a king, or wealthy business manager, or middle-class housewife, or low-paid worker. We should fulfill this task humbly, with joy and love, but without becoming attached to any outward situation. Positions of fame, of honor, and of riches often bind us, making every search for God fruitless. A Christian can be a king only on the condition he consider himself a servant of his people.

Social prestige and material possessions are easily lost. The Lord long ago warned, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (MTT 6:19-21).

Jesus, who had the highest position, "took upon him the form of a servant ... he humbled himself" (PHP 2:7,8). Let us follow in His footsteps. Otherwise all our endeavor to come nearer to God will be in vain.

Jan 13
|
"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (GEN 1:1)

An atheist shoemaker told his son that nature exists by itself, to which his son replied, "Then it is easier to have the whole of nature than a pair of shoes. For these you have to work hard." If the whole of nature is the random result of the evolution of matter, why don't atheists
leave to nature the production of godless books? Why do they work with great diligence to create them? Even an atheistic book is proof that behind every organized thing there exists an intelligent design.

Acknowledge the Creator, adore Him, and don't waste time in useless speculations. Luther, when asked what God did before He created the world, answered, "He sat in the forest and cut rods with which to beat those who asked foolish questions."

There exists a better answer than this witty one. The Lord tells what the Father did before creation. Before the foundation of the world, He loved Christ (see JHN 17:24). To love Jesus is a full-time job. This job can fill God's eternity. The Father also did something else. Before the foundation of the world, He prepared the kingdom for those who feed the hungry, who satisfy the thirsty, who take in strangers, who clothe the naked, and who visit the sick as well as the prisoners (see MTT 25:34-36). Acknowledge God as creator, and do these things, just as Jesus "went about doing good" (ACT 10:38).

Jan 14
|
"The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." (JOB 1:21)

The story is told of an angel who appeared to a mother watching at the cradle of her babe and then asked for her child. She cried, "Death, I won't give him!" The angel smiled and said, "My name is not death, but life. I offer you someone else in exchange." He showed her a fair boy. She refused. He showed her a powerful young man. She refused again. He showed a grown-up industrious man. She repeated, "No, no!" to all the proposals. "I exchange him for no one. I wish to

keep my little child."

The angel departed. Time passed, and she had to lose the child. He was exchanged for a boy. She lost the boy. He was exchanged for a young man, and so on.

Why be afraid of death? We don't lose at death what we don't lose every day. Day by day our beloved ones change from one stage of life to another. What we call death is one of these many changes. The bud is no more. It has become a flower. The caterpillar is no more. It has become a butterfly. The sun may have set for you, but it gives its light somewhere else.

Whenever the angel has taken your beloved, acquiesce with humility to God's doings.

Jan 15
|
"Thine enemies ... shall ...flee before thee." (DEU 28:7)

A Christian teacher took a walk with one of his disciples through the forest. The disciple walked a few steps ahead of the master on a narrow trail. A hare fled from him. The master asked, "Why did the hare flee?"

"Because he feared me," the disciple said.

"No," replied the master, "but because you have murderous instincts in you."

Every warrior is happy when his enemies flee before him, but much more blessed is the man to whom his fiercest enemies can come with confidence, knowing beforehand that they will be received with love.

At the end of World War II, the Soviet army occupied Romania. Much of the German army was taken prisoner. Every German soldier could be shot at sight by anyone. One evening while a group of prisoners was being transported from one place to another, two of them profited from darkness and escaped. With their uniforms on, their lives were in danger. Seeing a building with an inscription "Evangelical Lutheran Chapel," they recalled that Lutherans of Romania were mostly of German background, so they entered the precinct. The pastor who encountered them extended a welcome, saying,

"I am Jewish and Christian. My family has been killed by Germans. I have learned from Christ love and forgiveness,. I don't hold you
accountable for what the German troops have done to the Jews. You men are in deadly danger. You have taken refuge in our church. You are our honored guests."

One of the Germans said, "If you are a believer, we know we are safe." They had found a haven of refuge.

"When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (ROM 5:10). Let us now be men from whom enemies should

have no reason to flee.

Jan 16
|
"We love him, because he first loved us." (1JN 4:19)

I was told the following happening:
When the Soviet army invaded Eastern Europe, a Russian officer was lodged in the house of a painter who liked his expressive face and used him as his model for a painting. While sitting for the artist, the model looked at a picture of the crucified Jesus and asked what it was. The painter answered briefly, but the Russian officer insisted:
"If He was good and wished the salvation of all for eternity, men would surely have taken Him down from the cross in time and cured His wounds."
"Please, don't disturb me in my painting," came the reply. "No, He was not freed. He died on the cross. This is what He was meant to do. He paid the price for our sins. But let us continue our business."
The Russian officer would not be quieted. "How aglow you must be in your love for someone who made such a sacrifice for you." The painter put down his brush. He had many times painted Jesus crucified, but he realized now that it had been done without love aglow. The unbeliever who was his model taught him how he must love Christ.

Jan 17
|
"Upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it." (EZE 1:26)

The verse which follows the above is, "I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire."
Rashi, the most authoritative rabbinic commentator of the Bible, observes, "One is not allowed to reflect on this verse." Why not? We can easily guess. It is because the description indicates clearly that the
God whom Ezekiel saw in his vision had the body of a glorified man. It confirms the Christian doctrine of the incarnation of God's Son in the man Jesus.
Commenting on Zechariah's words, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced" (ZEC 12:10), the same Rashi writes, "Though the verse applies to the king Messiah, we should rather apply it to king Ezechiah, so as not to allow the Christians to gain."
We can understand the Jewish revulsion against nominal Christianity guilty of the blood of millions of innocents, but still

the Christian teaching about the Messiah is true and fulfills the ancient Jewish prophecies. Let us present these prophecies to the Jews and call them lovingly to Christ.

Jan 18
|
"When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid." (MTT 14:30)

A miracle had taken place. At the Lord's command, Peter was able to walk on the water, which is contrary to the laws of nature. But while Peter walked on the water, why was he afraid of the wind because it was boisterous? Could Christ perform such a miracle only when the weather was calm?

On another occasion the disciples were fearful in a great storm when the waves beat into their ship, so "that it was now full" (MRK 4:37). Heeding their cries of distress, Jesus made the winds cease and calmed the sea. Now the disciples were happy. But if a ship is full of water, it sinks whether the sea is calm or is agitated by tempest.

The miracle was not that the Lord rebuked the sea. The wonder is that the ship of Jesus has navigated for two thousand years, in good times and bad, though it is full of heresies, schisms, and sins. It still
navigates though full of water, when it should have sunk long since according to the laws of hydrodynamics.

You may have passed through many crushing difficulties in life. Don't be afraid when one more is added. It is through a miracle that you have made it until now.

The stone that covered the tomb of Jesus was rolled away by an angel, "for it was very great" (MRK 16:4). Even though your burden has become greater than ever before, God might send an angel to help you.

The admonition "Do not fear" occurs in the Bible 366 times, once for every day of the year - and an extra for leap year.

Jan 19
|
"One of the malefactors which were hanged ... said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." (LUK 23:39,42,43).

Before his death, Lenin told a priest, "I have erred. No doubt many oppressed had to be freed, but our method has provoked other oppressions and horrible massacres. My mortal grief is to be immersed in an ocean of blood from innumerable victims. It is too late to turn back, but to save Russia we would have needed ten St. Francis' of

Assisi."

Lenin had come under Christian influence. He had met the Orthodox priest Gapon, later hanged by the Communists. ~Nauka I Religia~, the atheist magazine of the Soviet Union, published the following in December 1973:

> "Lenin showed great interest in the writings of Christian sectarians which a fellow-Communist had gathered, especially in the old manuscripts. He studied them thoroughly.... He was especially interested in their philosophical writings. Once after thoroughly reading their manuscripts he said, 'How interesting! This was created by simple people. Whole books!'"

The Communist magazine says this much. Who knows how much more is behind the story? Perhaps a deathbed conversion. Heaven is a place of surprises. We might be surprised to find there the converted mass-slaughterer of Christians - Vladimir Lenin.

You may be a wicked person. You may be reading this at the end of your life. You can yet go to paradise.

Jan 20

|

"A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast." (PRO 12:10)

We often see horses jumping in races and in circuses, in pictures if not in reality. Now, the foot bones of the horse are weak. This domesticated animal is not made for jumping. He is taught to perform only by being beaten severely. More recently, horses are being subjected to electric shock treatments: circus trainers have mini-electrical batteries in their whips. Horses also are struck on the legs with iron bars to teach them to jump over fences. The pain makes them raise their legs high.

Don't support or cheer such exploitation; rather, pity the animal.

I do not personally admire the pyramids. Moses did not find them worth even a brief mention. He thought about the misery of the slaves who erected them.

In Communist jails, prisoners are very hungry. One slice of bread a week is a longed-for luxury. Yet Christians often save some to feed the pigeons and swallows that come confidently to the sills of windows with iron bars. They know how to distinguish the windows of cells containing Christians. Here they are not disappointed.

The Bible has much to say regarding the care of animals and forbids cruelty and indifference to helpless beasts (DEU 22:4). Jesus spoke about His love for the birds and His concern about

animals (LUK 14:5). He did not find it degrading to be compared to a lamb, or a lion, or a hen with chicks.

Let us emulate Him in all things. As we show loving concern for our fellow men, let us not forget to be kind to animals, too.

Jan 21
|
"Bless, and curse not." (ROM 12:14)

Mrs. Gerda Forster, while baby-sitting for a neighbor, suffered the misfortune of having the baby fall out of her hands. The infant was injured on the edge of a large vase, with resultant brain damage. It was paralyzed for life.

The mother cursed Mrs. Forster that her fingers might rot. Mr. Forster offered to pay large compensatory damages. The mother refused and repeated the curse: may her fingers rot.

Mrs. Forster suddenly started to have great pain in her fingers. The fingertips became first white, then blue. It was a case of necrosis, the malady known as "morbus Raynaud." Psychic trauma can produce it, usually in women already possessing a precarious nervous constitution. The fingers had to be amputated.

When I was in solitary confinement, a neighbor tapped out this story in Morse code through the wall: "When I was six, I beat a schoolmate only because he was Jewish. He cursed me that my mother should not be able to see me when she was on her deathbed. Fifty years have passed since. I had just received the news that my mother was dying and intended to go to her deathbed when I was arrested." A curse had been accomplished. I know of other such cases.

I believe some curses are fulfilled. But so are blessings. So bless, don't curse.

Jan 22
|
"It is appointed unto men once to die." (HEB 9:27)

The surest business is that of the mortuary, while other trades may come and go. You might never enter a jeweler's shop or a theater, but you will have to die. How will you meet death?

Julius Caesar died a disillusioned man. His foster son was among his murderers. The great Caesar's last words were, "Brutus, you too?" Goethe said, "More light, more light!" He had not sought it before. Oscar Wilde's last request was, "Please, champagne," and he added, "I die as I lived, above my means." Napoleon died in delirium with the cry, "Mon Dieu, the French nation, at the head of the army!" The renowned arithmetician Lagny passed thirty-six hours in silence on his deathbed. He did not react when his beloved spoke to him. But when an

acquaintance asked, "Do you still know how much sixty-seven to the second power is?" the mathematician answered smiling, "Four thousand four hundred eighty-nine" and died. Carlyle said, "So this is death? It is good." The German poet Heine's last words were, " Flowers, flowers. How beautiful is nature!" He had no thought about the Creator. The French writer Rabelais said before dying, "Let the curtain fall. The comedy is finished."

Jesus' last words were, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (LUK 23:46). When in prison, I decided that if I were conscious in the moment of my death my last words would be "Jesus and Binzea" (the name by which I call my wife). Christians know the reason for death and have the assurance that love waits for them on the other side.

Jan 23
|
"Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." (JMS 1:22)

A taxidermist once caught a splendid bird. When he lifted his knife to kill her, she begged, "Spare my life. I have little ones. In exchange I will give you three pieces of advice, very simple, but very useful." The taxidermist wondered at a bird that could speak human language and promised her freedom if the advice was good.

The bird gave the following counsel: "First, never believe anything stupid, no matter who it is who speaks to you. Second, never regret a good thing you have done. Third, never reach for something unattainable."

The taxidermist saw the wisdom of this advice and let the bird go. The bird flew to the first branch and from there mocked him, "You idiot, why did you let me go? I have in my belly a diamond. Had you ripped me open, you would have been rich the rest of your life."

The taxidermist, hearing this, regretted having released her and began to climb the tree to retrieve her. But when he reached the first branch, she was already on the second, and when he was on the second, she was on the third. In the end, he lost his footing, fell from the tree,
and broke both his legs.

While he lay groaning under the tree, the bird flew nearer and told him, "You had accepted my three pieces of advice and praised them for being wise. Why did you not regard them for at least five minutes? I told
you not to believe anything stupid, no matter who said it. How come you believed that a bird had a diamond in her belly? I told you never to regret a good deed. Why did you regret having freed me? I told you not to reach for the unattainable. Did you not know that you cannot catch a bird with your bare hands? You men have invented the radio and can hear in one country speeches from another, but you have not yet discovered an apparatus to enable you to hear with your ears what your

own mouths speak, or to believe in your heart what your mind acknowledges as just."

You accept the Bible as the Word of God. Don't be only a hearer or a reader, but also a doer and a fulfiller.

Jan 24

|

"The LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden." (GEN 2:15)

It is more pleasant to know that our forefathers lived in a paradise than in a zoo, as Darwin asserts.

"The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground" (GEN 2:7). Science confirms the fact that our bodies are made of the same elements of which the earth is constituted.

~Sepher Ierahmeel~, an ancient Jewish book, embellishes the biblical account: "God sent the archangel Gabriel to bring Him clay out of which He would make man, but the earth refused to give it up, knowing that it would be cursed because of man's disobedience." There was good reason for the refusal. Think only of the ravaging of the earth from bombing, or from defoliation, or from pollution. But in the end, Gabriel succeeded in convincing the earth. Man was made.

"God created man in his own image" (GEN 1:27). Modern technology recreates man in the image of machines, artificial, standardized, materialistic, programed, always in haste. Modern mass media recreate him after their image, reducing him to a low level, filling him with thoughts of violence and lust. Modern universities induce man to repeat the sin of the first couple and to prefer the tree of knowledge to the tree of life. Abstract theories and ideologies take the place of life.

George Fox, founder of the Quakers, wished to return to the image of God, to "experience God, ... pass beyond the flaming sword, re-enter paradise and seek the state of Adam before his fall."

Christ calls us all to this adventure. He, being God, took the nature of man that we might come back to the image of God.

Jan 25

|

"Let nothing be done through strife." (PHP 2:3)

Soshi walked along the shores of a river with a friend. Soshi said, "How well fish feel in water." The friend replied, "You are not a fish. How do you know that fish feel well?" Soshi said, "You are not me. How do you know that I do not know that fish feel well in water?" We fall

out
with one another through questioning or contesting someone else's experiences which are outside our control.

Two friends, both peasants, sat on a log one evening and chatted. The one said, "I would like to have a meadow as big as the sky above our heads." The other said, "I would like to have as many sheep as the stars which we see." The first one asked, "Where would you pasture such a multitude of sheep?"

"No problem," replied the other. "They will graze on your huge pasture." The first one protested, "I will not allow your sheep on my field."

The one had no pasture, the other no sheep, but they quarreled about what they did not have. Don't we quarrel often about things we don't know?

Having the same love, let us be of one accord and of one mind. The other's opinion or attitude might be more worthy of esteem than yours. His experience of today which you consider strange might be yours tomorrow.

The Lord wished us to be one, as He and the Father are one.

Jan 26
|
"Thy servant Joab, he bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid." (2SM 14:19)

I dreamed one night that I attended a party at which Solzhenitsyn, the renowned Russian writer and Nobel prize winner, read aloud from his book, ~Gulag Archipelago~. I wept bitterly about all the suffering
he described. Solzhenitsyn asked me, "Do you know any remedy against these atrocities?" I answered, "I have known many criminals. Everyone had a weak point. Some passionately loved a wife, a child; others had great tenderness for a dog."

Svetlana, Stalin's daughter, tells how she obtained from her father the release of a prisoner. She could have obtained more than that. Kings of old took a rival's son as hostage, knowing the rival would not attack as long as the beloved was held captive. There are offenders who could not commit a felony if you threatened to kill their dog. Hardened murderers in prison gave up their only slice of bread to feed the swallows.

The woman who has stolen your husband might dearly love her mother, through whom you might influence her to give up your husband.

Joab, David's general, knew that the king wished clemency to rule in the country. He appealed to this through a woman whom he used to tell David an invented story about a son of hers, a murderer who should be pardoned. When David granted the petition as expected, she appealed to his desire for consistency and asked clemency for Absalom

his son, who had offended greatly.

Make the man who wrongs you or society an object of your loving study. Seek an avenue of access to his heart. The natural love of children for parents can be used to influence them toward believing. Proceed in the same manner with other men. The emperor Constantine was influenced by his Christian mother, St. Helen, to favor the persecuted church of the Roman Empire and eventually to give the Christians liberty.

Jan 27
|
"If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." (MTT 6:14)

I received the following letter from Latin America:

"I write from a guerrilla camp in Peru. I lie awake. Sleep has fled from me. Recently I looked for some radio program to cheer me up, being sad and afraid. The programs of my comrades had become empty to me. They were repetitious and filled with hate. Then I came across your program called 'The Gospel in Marxist Language.' In it we were told that Jesus, the great teacher, spoke of pardoning one's enemies. That passage drove itself into the deepest part of my being. Suddenly, I experienced peace and I wept as a child. I don't understand what has happened. I had hated the rich. My parents had been victims of an exploiting landowner, but for some reason, I don't hate any more. I can't explain it. Is it possible for me not to hate?

"That was the only time I heard your program. How happy I have become, Don Ricardo. Now I shall not miss a single one of your programs. I want to read the Book of books."

This man left the guerillas and joined a church. Two years later he returned to the former comrades, hoping to tell them about Christ. We have not heard from him since. It is probable he was martyred by the Communists.

Jesus healed this soul at once of the most poisonous sentiment hatred. Has someone wronged you? Forgive. Receive forgiveness from God. Only then will you have inner freedom.

Jan 28
|
"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." (MTT 6:34)

A Scotsman, traveling on a slow train from Glasgow to London, bought a ticket only to the first station; there he bought a ticket to the

second, and so forth. He was asked why. His answer was, "I might have a heart attack while traveling and never reach London. In that case, I would have saved on my fare."

What about saving on worry and apprehension? Why worry about things far away? Perhaps those fears will prove unfounded. Perhaps you will die before arriving at that critical moment. Buy a ticket for one
station at a time.

Jesus is the head of His church. Being the head, He has the monopoly on headaches. For you to have a headache because of worry is a sin. You thereby usurp the role of the head, which belongs to Jesus alone.

Luther had a habit of going to the window in the evening and saying, "God, is it my world or Yours? Is it my church or Yours? If they are Your world and Your church, please take care of them. I am tired. I am going to bed. Good night, my God."

Take this attitude. The Talmud says, "When the sun has set, the day is clean." When the evening comes, leave all the past days problems and failures with Jesus. Take no thought of the morrow. Sleep well. Tomorrow's worries might never reach you. They may even vanish overnight. Have a good day and a good night without worrying.

Jan 29
|
"As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." (SOS 2:2)

In ~Gulistan~ (the Garden of Roses), by the renowned mystic Persian writer Muslih al-Din Saadi, there exists the story about Madshnun and his beloved girl friend Leila. It was an unhappy love, because the father of Leila had given the daughter to another man. Madshnun, mad with love (his very name means "madman"), fled to the wilderness to live with the beasts, without purpose, without hope.

The king of the country had him brought to his palace and reproached him his folly, to which Madshnun answered, "Should you know how beautiful Leila is, you would understand me." The king gave the order that Leila be brought before him.

She was a Bedouin woman like anyone else, even uglier, burned by the sun, frail because of poverty. The meanest slave in his harem was surely more beautiful than she. He could not understand why she should be so much beloved. Madshnun guessed the king's thought and said to him, "You cannot see Leila's beauty, nor can anyone else. This beauty is revealed only to those who look through the window of Madshnun's eyes. Love and beauty are two riddles in one. Only the one who has divined the first, can understand the second."

God so loved the sinning soul that He gave His Son. "Because he first loved us," we love Him (1JN 4:19). His love makes Him see

beauty and value in men whom no one else would esteem. Let us believe in the good taste of love. He knows why He has chosen us. We rejoice in His love.

Jan 30
|
"The Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country." (GEN 12:1)

In Hebrew the word given by God to Abram is ~Leh leha~, which means, literally translated, "Go for your own benefit" or "for thyself."

Rabbi Nachum Chernobler Zatzal explained the verse as follows: Abram, our forefather in faith, was a wellspring of loving-kindness and hospitality. We read in GEN 18:1 that, though he had just undergone a painful operation, "he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day" that, God forbid, no traveler should pass by without being his guest.

But his hospitality had not been flawless in the beginning because he had never been a wanderer himself. Abram had to have firsthand experience of a traveler's hardship to become perfect in hospitality.

Peter had to pass through the experience of denying Christ. The Lord had told him, "When thou art converted (after such a falling into sin), strengthen thy brethren" (LUK 22:32). You will be able to do so because you will have passed through the bitterness of cowardice yourself.

Godhead had known the whole of human life as seen from the perspective of deity. But the Father told the Son ~Leh leha~ - "Go for your own benefit as future judge of mankind and participate in their sorrows and joys. Lead a human life Yourself. Godhead will thus be enriched by human experience. You will know human life as it looks to humans." So He became a high priest "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Now He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (HEB 4:15).

Accept your experiences of life, the sweet and the bitter. They all prepare you to become more helpful to your fellow men.

Jan 31
|
"Thou shalt love thy neighbour." (MTT 22:39)

Those who bring sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves.

Jesus "went about doing good" (ACT 10:38). Therefore He could sing on the night He was betrayed (see MTT 26:30).

Don't require a smile of people. If you see someone without a smile give him yours. Multitudes followed Jesus. It was because He did not expect from them sympathy for His great sorrows. He comforted them in theirs.

Don't get angry at the man who acts in a manner that displeases you. He might have heard a different drummer. Everyone walks to the music he hears. Let him hear from you a more beautiful melody. It might change his pace.

At a party in my home Christians were discussing their friends. Some they considered good believers, others weak, still others unbelievers. An old missionary from India intervened: "Don't classify people. Our judgments might be wrong. As often as we speak, let us better propagate the love of Christ. This will gladden the strong believer, strengthen the weak one, and convert the unbeliever. So we will have done something positive. By categorizing men we are not helping them."

Spread sunshine among others instead of judging how much sunshine another has in his or her life.

Feb 1
|
"Charity ... beareth all things." (1CO 13:7)

The Jewish people have a legend about Abraham, the father of the faithful.

One evening while in deep meditation, the patriarch was disturbed by a knock at the door. It was a drunkard who asked for hospitality. Abraham's first impulse was to drive him away and to continue his sweet communion with God. But then the thought occurred to him: "What would be the purpose of so much more meditation? I know already that God bears with sinners and that He makes the sun to shine over this drunkard and provides him with daily bread. Why should I refuse a man whom God accepts? I can bear with him. God bears with my sins, too."

So the patriarch washed, served the drunkard some food, and prepared a bed for him.

Abraham had less spiritual light than we. Can we not follow his example?

Christians learned that a brother was in the act of committing adultery. They called Bishop Ammona to come with them and to convict the sinner on the spot, so that the church would not be contaminated anymore by his membership. However, when they arrived at the house, the adulterer succeeded in hiding the woman quickly in a big empty case which he had in the room. The bishop was the only one who observed it. He sat on the upturned case and said to the brethren, "Seek." They did and found no one. Ammona told them, "May God forgive you your suspicions and unseemly behavior." When they had left, he told the brother ensnared in sin, "Beware of the devil! "
Then he left. Bishop Ammona could sympathize with his brother in his

sin, remembering that he, too, belonged to the same category. He had tried to win him through kindness and understanding.

When Jesus was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, "he opened not his mouth" (ISA 53:7) to say that the sins for which He suffered were not His own. He bore our sins. Let us not only be saved from hell through this, but saved also from judging others. Let us bear everything, and above all human failures and weaknesses.

Feb 2

|

"The fruit of the Spirit is love ... against such there is no law." (GAL 5:22,23)

St. Mechtild of Magdeburg once said, "Love has no virtues." Love has no fixed rules, no immutable principles of action. Augustine's renowned injunction was, "Love God and do as you please." Normally, the lover will fulfill the commandments of Scripture, but he is free in exceptional circumstances.

In the Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz pregnant women were killed. A Christian woman doctor, herself a prisoner, performed primitive abortions on hundreds of other prisoners. Thus she saved their lives. It is true she killed the embryos, but without her intervention both the children and their mothers would have died.

A German lady had been taken prisoner by the Soviet army and sent to a slave labor camp in Siberia. Women were allowed to come back from there only if they were gravely sick or pregnant. She had left behind three children who had no one to care for them. Her husband was in British captivity. She asked a guard to impregnate her. Thus she was able to return to care for her children. When her husband returned, she explained to him what she had done. He agreed that it was the only recourse under the circumstances.

Missions to Communist and Moslem countries smuggle in Christian literature, using all kinds of strange tricks. Against love there is law, though in normal circumstances love walks according to law.

Feb 3

|

"[Jesus said] Teach all nations." (MTT 28:19)

Mahomet's son-in-law Ali, who should have been his successor was killed, as was Ali's son Husain. The Shiite Moslems, who are the closest to Christianity in their theology, have the following text in their sacred writings: "To weep for Husain is the sense of our life and of our soul. Otherwise we would be the most ungrateful beings. Even in

Paradise we will mourn for Husain. It is impossible for a Shiite not to weep.... The death of Husain prepared a way to paradise."

The Kerbela book considered holy by them says, "The death of Husain is our entrance into life. The love toward Ali consumes all sins, as fire consumes the dry wood." They also venerate Ali's wife, Fatima. They believe that she is "the incarnation of everything divine in female nature, the most noble ideal attained by human reason, the queen of paradise." They believe that the "unseen Imam," their religious leader in every generation, is an incarnation of Godhead.

The twelfth descendant of Ali, Mohamed ibn al-Hasan, who disappeared at the age of four, is considered to have been raptured to heaven, from which he will return at the end of time as Mahdi, universal Savior.

We find in Islam, as in many other erroneous religions, tenets which are vaguely akin to our Christian faith. Souls grope after the truth
of which they have only a foreboding. But they don't have the light of Christ. Almost all Moslem states forbid Christian missionary work. Let us pray for the conversion of the Islamic world.

Feb 4
|
"As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." (PRO 23:7)

The American cancer specialist Eugene Pendergrass was the first to observe that in most cases cancer appears six to eighteen months
after some tragedy in life, be it a bereavement, the unloyalty of a marriage partner, loss in business, etc. But if sorrow of soul can produce this sickness, then peace and hope of soul must be able to contribute greatly to the recovery of health. The cancerous cells can multiply, but the white blood cells can attack and destroy them. This depends much on our faith and determination.

Often we are sick because subconsciously we wish to be sick in order to gain attention and the loving-kindness we miss. But it is wrong to wish only to be the object of love. Be its subject; love others. Those
who harbor hatred, those who cannot forgive, are much more prone to cancer and other illnesses than those who forgive easily.

I was sick at one time with generalized tuberculosis of both lungs, backbone and bone tuberculosis, intestinal tuberculosis, jaundice, diabetes, and heart disease. I was in prison where the "medicine" consisted of hunger, lack of air lack of sun, and beatings; But I was determined to live because I felt that I had a calling to fulfill. I prayed
and many others prayed for me. A general confession of all my past sins unburdened my soul. Thus God gave me the energy to overcome the

sickness.

Some day you must die. It may be that your present sickness is God's means to take you home. Miraculous healings are the exception; otherwise they would not be miraculous. Still, believe in the miraculous. It is in the realm of the possible. And concur with it by having peaceful faith.

Feb 5
|
"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." (ROM 13:1

Of twenty-nine members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party which created the revolution in Russia, three were killed by their enemies, two committed suicide, and fifteen were executed by their own comrades. Stalin was disowned after his death. If these revolutionists who wanted to overthrow tyranny had known that the result of their rebellion would be death at the hand of their own comrades and the establishment of a tyranny directed not only against the enemies of the revolution but also against those who made it succeed, would they have started on their career as rebels against existing powers?

Would Trotsky have become a revolutionist had he known beforehand that this revolution would finally bring Stalin to power? Stalin killed two of Trotsky's children plus many relatives, all his adherents, and in the end sent a henchman to finish Trotsky himself with an axe.

The Czarist regime, which had many injustices, would never have committed such crimes against revolutionists or the people.

Most revolutions have not been worth the fight. Revolutions are the worst of solutions. The Jewish state would not have been destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 71 if the people had listened to Jesus' advice: "Resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (MTT 5:39).

Let us make revolutionists and terrorists a matter of prayerful concern, asking that they may use their energies in the service of peaceful reforms.

Feb 6
|
The serpent said to Eve:
"God doth know that in the day ye eat (of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden), then your eyes shall be opened." (GEN 3:5)

It seems as if the purposes of God and those of Satan are the same. The Lord Jesus said to Saul of Tarsus, "I send thee [now to the Gentiles] to open their eyes" (ACT 26:17,18). The devil promises the same thing. Still, the difference is great.

If the serpent opens your eyes, they will always be wide open. Those whose eyes God opens can close them as often as they like. They can close them to the sins of their brother, just as Shem and Japheth covered the nakedness of their father. This is what Christians do for every man.

On the other hand, those whose eyes the serpent has opened are wide open to all future dangers and troubles. They are open to the distractions of biblical intricacies and to all the problems that faith leaves unsolved.

Those who allow God to control what they see can close their eyes in faith in the midst of perils. Why should I worry? "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (PSA 121:4).

The day is coming when we shall see "face to face" (1CO 13:12).

Refuse the devil as your eye doctor. Allow only God to take care of your vision.

Feb 7
|
"[A sparrow] shall not fall on the ground without your Father." (MTT 10:29)

The Chinese pastor Wang-Min-tao had risked his life under the Japanese occupation to maintain the purity of the gospel. Among other things, he refused to allow a picture of the Japanese emperor to hang in his church. He also refused this honor to a picture of Mao Tse-tung. His excuse was that he did not have a picture of Jesus Christ either.

In 1955 he was arrested for his refusal to compromise with the Communists. For two years he was subjected to extreme brainwashing techniques. Maddened by torture, he signed a confession enumerating his "imperialist" sins. He was released.

In freedom he had no peace. He went around muttering continually, "I am Peter; I am Judas," until one day he went to the Communists and told them that he recanted his former confession. For this, he and his wife were put in prison. From jail he wrote the biblical words: "Do not be anxious about me; I am of more value than many sparrows." He died in prison.

Once a prominent leader in Christianity, he had denied his faith. He had fallen. Sparrows don't fall from the tree without the Father's leave. Neither do Christians fall without His will.

Why should God allow us to fall in sin? Daniel says, "Some of them of understanding shall fall, ... to purge, and to make them white" (DAN 11:35). Falls from which we return to the Lord are sources of humility, of light, of strength, and of comfort to others.

"All things work together for good to them that love God" (ROM 8:28). Augustine adds, "even their sins."

Feb 8
|
"It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (LUK 18:25)

Red China's former minister of foreign affairs, Chou En-Lai, once declared that he was much impressed by this verse, but the Communists criticize Jesus for allowing the rich ruler to depart in peace. He should have arrested him and confiscated all his property.

The Communists believe that the expropriation of capitalist property creates an immediate paradise. Even some leftist clergymen in the West as well as the East have embraced this conviction.

Why should Jesus have taken riches from the young ruler? A man of means and a mean man sometimes are the same person. Whoever takes a rich man's means might also take his meanness, without he might not have remained so rich in a starving world.

Taking the ruler's riches, Jesus also would have taken away the restlessness of his soul which made him to go from rabbi to rabbi asking for the way to life eternal.

Rich men must part with their riches at death if not before.

"My kingdom is not of this world," said Jesus (JHN 18:36). We are to gather our treasures in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (MTT 6:20).

Feb 9
|
"The LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" (GEN 3:9)

A professor of homiletics (preaching) at a seminary asked his students to read this verse of Scripture. Most read the question as would a policeman who had just caught a robber about to break into a house. But a good preacher reads these words as if they were uttered by a broken-hearted father. The world would be less mysterious to us if we could realize that Adam was created by a sad God, sad because of the fall of Lucifer.

And now the new disappointment. Adam fell too. God lost a fellowship in which He had placed great hope.

Later God put an even more tragic question to Cain: "Where is Abel thy brother?" (GEN 4:9).

Where is the good preacher who can read these words as

expressing all God's sadness?

These questions must be read so that the listener can overcome the fear that made Adam hide himself, naked and sinful, among the bushes. The questions come from a God who already decided to send the Savior, the seed of the woman, to be bruised for the sins of mankind; they come from a God who put even a criminal like Cain under His special protection. The blood of Christ can cleanse him, too. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (ROM 5:20).

Have confidence in God for the whole of your life and trust His loving-kindness.

Feb 9

|

"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." (EPH 5:18)

You might commit excesses in drinking. You might suffer because a loved one commits this sin. Don't chide alcoholics. Don't chide yourself if you are one. But remind yourself how much money you have lost because of alcohol, how many smiles of your wife or mother, how much laughter of your children, and how much happiness have disappeared from your home because of the criminal plotters of the alcohol Industry, whose victim you are.

Visit a prison and a mental asylum. You will be amazed to find out how many are there because of alcohol. No one goes to jail because he is temperate or a teetotaler.

Do you like it when you vomit? Do you like it when your children despise you? Would you like to be forsaken by your sweetheart? What kind of business sense makes you enrich the saloon keepers and impoverish yourself? Does alcohol help you to avoid car accidents? Do you think better when drunk than when sober?

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (PRO 20:1).

If you have succumbed and feel helpless or despairing, consider the fact that God's eyes "run down with tears night and day" because of your sin (JER 14:17). He cares. He has the remedy.

You don't need wine. The fullness of the Holy Spirit is available. Unlike alcohol, it gives a euphoria, a sense of exhilaration which is not transitory. The apostles gave the impression of being drunk at Pentecost when they received the Spirit (ACT 2:13), but this was a jubilation which enabled them to accomplish great things for God.

Feb 11

|
"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (MTT 5:3)

In a theater in Moscow at the premier of a new play, ~Christ in a Fur~, the hall was overcrowded.

The actor Alexander Rostovtsev had to play the main role. He belonged to the high circles of Soviet life and was a convinced Marxist.

On the stage was a mockery of an altar. The cross on it was made of bottles of wine and beer. Full glasses surrounded it. Fat "clergymen" said a drunken "liturgy" consisting of blasphemous formulas. In this sham church, "nuns" played cards, drank, and made ugly jokes while the "religious service" went on.

Then Rostovtsev appeared as Christ, dressed in a robe. He had the New Testament in his hands. He was supposed to read two verses from the Sermon on the Mount, then throw away the book in disgust and shout, "Give me my fur and my hat! I prefer a simple proletarian life." But something unexpected happened. The actor read not only two verses, but continued, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (MTT 5:5), and so on to the end of the sermon. It was in vain that
the prompter made desperate signs for him to stop.

When Rostovtsev came to the last words of Jesus, he made the sign of the cross in the Orthodox manner, said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (LUK 23:42), and left the stage. He was never seen again. The Communists disposed of him.

Let us, like this actor, forget the ugly roles imposed upon us by the
world and allow ourselves to be enraptured by the beauties of the Savior's words.

Feb 12
|
"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (REV 2:10)

Great forces persecute the church, such as communism and Islamism. Old tribal religions have revived in Africa. Christians often suffer persecution in their homes and at their work in other countries.

How can the dragon of persecution be killed? Martyrdom is one weapon.

Thomas … Becket, archbishop of Canterbury in the twelfth century, showed the tyrannical King Henry II of England that the church has powers superior to those of this world, and that the divine and permanent cannot be subject to the human and transient. He fought for the noninterference of the state in church matters. For this he was killed. His last words were, "I die willingly, for the name of Jesus and

for the defense of the church." The news of his murder so horrified Europe that the movement against the church's liberty was stopped. All recognized him as a martyr.

His blood still showed red on the cathedral stones when, in 1174, King Henry II walked barefoot to Canterbury to suffer a flogging, accepted willingly as penance for his crime, and to keep vigil by the tomb of the man he killed. The blood of the martyr converted the murderer. Could it not happen again?

The first Christians were persecuted by the Roman emperors, but in the end, Roman emperors became Christians.

Cross near cross, grave near grave - this is how the church conquers. Patient suffering will make you, too, a victor.

Feb 13
|
"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house." (2JN 10)

All the great teachers of the Christian church were what one would call today narrow-minded. They knew only one way to heaven. Astronauts, returning to earth from the moon are also very narrow-minded. The spaceship must follow a certain limited path which permits little deviation. If they were to miss their entry "slot" by one degree, they could end up lost in space or burned up completely.

We must stay on the path and stick to what we have learned from Christ. Luther differed from Zwingli, the Swiss reformer, in the meaning of Holy Communion. Therefore Luther taught: "He who knows that his pastor teaches in the Zwinglian manner should shun him and remain without the sacrament his whole life rather than receive it from him. He should prefer to die and suffer everything.... It is horrible for
me to hear that in one and the same church, and at the same altar, men receive the same sacrament, some of whom believe that they receive only bread and wine while others that they receive the body and blood of Christ."

If we start by calling heretics "separated brethren," we might eventually call devils "separated angels."

Be careful with whom you align yourself. Be wary of schemes to unite the churches. When you tie two birds together, though they might have
a total of four wings, they don't fly better. They will not fly at all.

Remain faithful to what you have learned from God's holy Word.

Feb 14
|
"Our Father which art in heaven." (MTT 6:9)

A document making the rounds secretly in the Soviet Union tells the story of a large group of nuns in a labor camp who had refused to work for their captors. They had been manacled and reduced to hunger. All was to no avail. Common prisoners were converted under their influence, and they now had a real convent in the camp. When Irene, the daughter of the prison camp's director, fell gravely ill, he had no choice. He asked for the nuns' prayers. The girl was healed.

The wife of the Communist officer Tcherednitchenko was having a difficult time giving birth. Her life and the life of the child were in danger. Someone suggested to him, "Promise that if everything goes well, you will have the child baptized."

"I can lose everything by this act."

"Well, choose between what you call 'everything' on the one hand and your wife and child on the other." The birth went well. He had the child baptized.

The Communists wished to compel the nuns to abandon their religious habit and to wear the uniform of prisoners. They answered, "We will not wear the badge of the antichrist." Because of this they were compelled to walk naked through the snow in freezing temperatures. They walked singing "Our Father." Not one of them fell ill. When a Communist inquired of the camp's doctor, Mrs. Bravermann, herself an atheist, how this was possible from a medical point of view, she replied, "Did you not hear them singing about a Father in heaven? Well, this is the scientific explanation."

He is your Father, too.

Feb 15
|
"Behold the fowls of the air ... Consider the lilies of the field." (MTT 6:26, 28)

An anthropologist asked an aborigine in Australia: "Tuplin, is the earth round like a ball (holding up a ball of crochet cotton) or square
like the box I am sitting on?"

"Round like a ball," the girl promptly replied.

"How do you know?" she asked.

"Oh, Missus, just look all round you; see sky touching the earth all round. Wherever you stand and look, it is all round; put baby down to walk he soon run round, not always straight like a fence; see sheep get lost they run round and round. See younger (kangaroo) run straight very little, then run round and round.... All trees are round, all bushes grown round.. .. Oh, Missus, why do you ask us?" Here in the mind of a primitive native the problem of the roundness of the earth was solved in the simplest manner.

Without genial minds, education, telescopes, and complicated

calculations, aborigines have discovered the shape of the earth.

We rely too much on the sayings of scientific, religious, and philosophic authorities. We look into books to discover reality and truth, though the "eternal power and Godhead" can be seen in His creation even by simple people. "For the invisible things ... are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (ROM 1:20).

Exercise your own powers of observation, Jesus says, so that you will be better able to judge men, things, and events.

Feb 16

"The publican ... smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." (LUK 18:13)

In Russia, a Christian asked his pastor, "How must I say the words, 'Lord, have mercy'?" The pastor answered, "You do well to ask. It is a short but important prayer and is not easily said. When you say the words, evoke the image of the crucified Lord. Look at Him with nails driven into His body and remember His words, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' If you say the simple prayer like this, you will glorify God, serve men, and grow in grace yourself."

Say your prayers without worrying about the fact that either others don't pray or they pray in a pharisaical manner.

A religion takes in believers and unbelievers, saints and hypocrites, those who love God and those who only fear Him. It includes persons who yield absolute surrender and others who obey only up to a point. It embraces elaborate rituals and humble prayers of penitent sinners. A religion without all of these is hardly imaginable.

Let others play the role allotted to them. You say again and again the simple prayer given for you, "God, have mercy." He will be merciful to you.

Feb 17

"Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord." (ROM 14:8)

When Paulinus, the Christian missionary, came to the Anglo-Saxons asking them to embrace his faith, an old warrior told the king in the national assembly: "On a dark night, when the tempest was abroad and snow was falling without, when you were seated by the fire in the lighted hall, a sparrow entered through a window open for a moment,

fluttered through the room, and then left by that same window. We have never seen it again. So we come from somewhere, we enjoy light and heat for a moment, and afterwards we go. If this stranger can tell us whence we come and where we go, we should accept his religion."

Christians have the answers to these questions. All the stars, the planets, the earth, and everything upon it are not as valuable as one single soul – your soul – because your soul knows both itself and them, whereas they know nothing. Our souls came from God but have gone astray, attracted by the things of this world. Therefore Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth, pleasing the Father by His life of perfect
obedience and His sacrificial death on the cross. He did not need to earn these "credits," since the heavenly Father loves Him for His divine nature, but the credits acquired on earth are imparted to His believers, who thus may inherit a beautiful paradise forever.

"He that hath the Son hath life (the only life really worth the name); and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1JN 5:12).

It is amazing how many intellectuals call themselves "agnostics," not realizing that this is the Greek word for "ignorant." To be ignorant is a shame when one has the possibility of acquiring knowledge.

The Christian religion gives a satisfactory answer to the ultimate problems of life.

Feb 18
|
"Lord, is it I?" (MTT 26:22)

A letter smuggled out of Russia by the Baptist church in Barnaui tells how the Secret Police infiltrated their ranks six years ago in the person of a lady named Z. Polushina. She pretended to be a teacher. She wept and prayed and declared herself converted. She soon became a hero. She refused to renounce her faith, lost her job, and was fired by
one factory after another because of her Christian testimony. Her husband, a Communist, mistreated her and deprived her of her son. He destroyed her radio because she listened to sermons from abroad.

All the members of the church saw her courage in suffering. So she became highly regarded and appreciated. It was she who unmasked a new member of the church as being an agent of the Secret Police. Held in high esteem, she knew all the secrets of the church, especially since her prayers were always accompanied by tears. After six years, it was discovered that she had been an informer for the Communists, that she had had no husband, no child, and no teacher's job to lose. Everything had been staged.

Don't be bitter nor even surprised if you have been betrayed in friendship or love, or if your trust in a person has proved unfounded. The fault may be yours for not heeding Jesus' commandment, "Beware

of men" (MTT 10:17). The number of French, Dutch, and Norwegians who betrayed their fatherland under German occupation was large, as was the number of American soldiers who cooperated with the enemy as prisoners of war in Korea and Vietnam.

Instead of asking fidelity from others, whenever you hear about a treason ask yourself, as did the apostles, "Lord, is it I?" We are all potential Judases, and it is only the grace of God that can keep us loyal
to God and to our fellow men.

Feb 19
|
"He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread."
(PRO 12:11)

Mankind has three times the weapons necessary to kill every living being and only half the food it needs. Every second man is undernourished or starving. Strikes, riots, and revolutions do not increase the output of food. Furthermore, they do harm to our fellow men.

Try the means shown by God for such circumstances:

1) Pray regularly, in the words taught by our Lord, "Give us this day our daily bread."

2) Be obedient to God. It is written, "If ye walk in my statutes, and
keep my commandments, and do them ... ye shall eat your bread to the full" (LEV 26:3-5).

3) Be careful how you eat. "God hath created [meats] to be received with thanksgiving" (1TM 4:3). "Eat thy bread with joy" (ECC 9:7). The first Christians "did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (ACT 2:46).

4) "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse ... and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not ... pour you out a blessing" (MAL 3:10).

S) Change your attitude, if necessary, to suit the promise, "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; ... bread shall be given him" (ISA 33:15,16).

We, on the contrary, spend "money for that which is not bread" (ISA 55:2). We all squander. We give little thought to the needs of others.

Knowing that hunger stalks the earth, let us change our ways today for the sake of our own spiritual health and for the sake of those who starve.

Feb 20
|
"Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping." (JHN 20:11)

A woman in tears entered the police station.
"Find my husband. I can't live without him. He has disappeared."
"Please, lady, let us get the facts in order. When did your husband disappear?"
"A week ago."
"Why did you wait till today to let us know?"
"Today he gets his paycheck."
Many of us seek the Lord when we need His help, when we pass through some crisis, not simply because we love Him.
Would you have loved a Savior who hung on a cross and declared Himself to be forsaken by God? Would you have spent your love and sweet spices on a Savior who was a corpse and could be of no help to anyone? Mary Magdalene did.
She sat loving and weeping near His tomb. This is why He was resurrected so early. Though buried on Friday evening, He was alive again on Sunday morning. His Spirit saw Mary weeping at the tomb and He could not bear her tears.
Show God and your fellow men a disinterested love that is not altered by circumstances.

Feb 21
|
"Which is called in the Hebrew tongue." (JHN 5.2)
"Canst thou speak Greek?" (ACT 21:37)

The Bible in its original languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) is the Word of God. What we have today is a translation of the Word. The advantage of knowing the biblical languages is obvious. Every man with a high school education can learn Hebrew or Greek by devoting to this study one fourth of an hour a day. I would encourage you to learn the original languages.
In the Authorized Version some words are in italics, which were employed to complete a biblical sentence that seemed incomplete to the translator. Thus, for example, the Hebrew text of 2SM 5:8 is "David said ... Whosoever ... smiteth the Jebusites ... hated of David's soul." That is all. The translators added, "he shall be chief and
captain." There is no such promise in the original. David's soldiers should
have fulfilled his desire out of love for their country, not in order to be advanced in rank.
In GEN 13:9, Abram says to Lot, "Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if to the right hand,

then I will go the left." The translators added in italics, "if ~thou wilt
take~ the left hand, if ~thou depart~ to the right hand." The original is
not clear grammatically, but teaches that the two are one body and that separation between believers is like cutting off one's hand.

GEN 30:27 says simply in Hebrew, "Laban said unto [Jacob], ... If I have found favor in thine eyes." The word "tarry" is added by the translators. It was for Jacob to take what course of action he considered best. Love does not impose attitudes upon others. Laban wished only to find favor in Jacob's eyes.

Search the Scriptures in their original setting. Ask your pastors to go to the original for flavor and interpretation.

Feb 22
|
"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." (PSA 14:1)

In the psalmist's day, people led a natural life and only isolated fools could deny the existence of God, however they conceived Him. This is no longer true. Modern atheism is an urban phenomenon conceived by men who live in crowded cities, walk and ride on concrete, and are out of touch with nature. Inhabitants of cities have polluted the air and the water. Now they ask where God is. Those who live where the skies are blue, the air clean, and the water sparkling know. There are very few, if any, atheist farmers.

The early crocus, the first robin of spring, the rhythm of the seasons, the dark woods and the fields of ripening grain, the work of insects, the migration of birds, the intricate design of the snowflake all speak of their Creator. "Day unto day uttereth speech, and unto night sheweth knowledge" (PSA 19:2).

Chief Seattle of the Squamish Indians in Washington said in 1854, "The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters, the deer, the
horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rock crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man all belong to the same family."

But this Indian's reproaches against white men were unjust, as far as the Christians are concerned. We look upon the earth as God's footstool. Jesus walked on it and was buried in it. His body was formed of its elements. He took this body with Him to heaven. He loved the earthly elements, which sing God's glory.

There is no atheism among those brought up in nature. May this assurance confirm your faith in God.

Feb 23
|

"The water was spent in the bottle.... And God opened [Hagar's] eyes and she saw a well of water." (GEN 21:15,19)

Hagar was sent away by Abraham into the wilderness. After traveling a long way with her son Ishmael, she found that the contents of her only bottle of water were depleted.

She was in a desert place. There was no hope. She cast the child under a shrub and sat over against him "a good way off ... and wept." It seemed that the child was lost. A thirsty child, an empty bottle, a scorching sun. She expected him to die.

But there was one factor she had forgotten to take into account. We also tend to forget this when we pass through difficulties. There is a God. He revealed a well of water to the woman who went about with an empty bottle. God may have deprived you of small possibilities in order to give you great ones.

We carry bottles; God has wells.

Let us draw water from the wells of salvation.

Feb 24
|
"It is appointed unto men once to die." (HEB 9:27)

Fourteen of the Japanese war criminals sentenced to death were converted. The last letter of one of them, Nishizawa, says, "I am living thankful days, believing that I may receive salvation ... Saved by the grace of God, to live in Christ and to die is gain." An atheist said on his deathbed, "There is one thing that mars all the pleasure of my life. I'm afraid the Bible is true. If I could only know for a certainty that death is an eternal sleep, I should be happy. But here is what pierces my soul: if the Bible is true, I am lost forever."

The dying advice of Louis IX, king of France, to his daughter was: "I conjure you to love our Lord with all your might, for this is the foundation of all goodness. I wish you could comprehend what the Son of God has done for our redemption. Never be guilty of any deliberate sin, though it were to save your life." Philip Melanchthon, Luther's closest co-worker in the Reformation, said, "I want nothing but heaven; therefore trouble me no more."

Francis Spira, after having been an evangelical preacher for years, recanted in the presence of a multitude for fear of persecution.

His last words were: "I have denied Christ voluntarily and against my convictions. I feel that He hardens me and will allow no hope. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

A dying minister said: "I call heaven and earth to witness, that if I were to recover, I would labor for holiness. As for riches and pleasure and the applause of men, I count them as dross. But now the best resolutions are insignificant, because it is too late."

Remember that you too will die. Repent while you have time.

Feb 25
|
"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (ROM 3:24)

A poor fakir prayed to God that he might be fed. A divine voice came to him in his sleep and directed him to go to a certain location, place an arrow in his bow while facing east, and wherever the arrow fell dig for treasure. The fakir shot many arrows and dug in every direction, but all in vain. Then a voice from heaven came to him saying, "You were directed to fix an arrow in your bow, but not to draw the bow with all your might, as you have been doing. Shoot as gently as possible that the arrow may fall close to you, for the hidden treasure is near."

Don't make arduous efforts in religion. When my son was small, he asked me how he should examine himself to see if he were in the faith, as enjoined in 1CO 11:28. I told him that at train stations he must have observed a mechanic proving the wheels with a hammer to see if they had the right vibrations. Then, beating my breast powerfully, I said, "So you must beat your breast, too, asking again and again, 'Heart, do you love Jesus?'"

"Father," he replied, "you are wrong. I once asked the mechanic in the station to allow me to handle the hammer. I discovered that it is very light. We have to beat our breasts very softly. If I hear from inside only a low whisper 'I love Jesus,' this should be enough."

There are some who would rather impose upon themselves great hardships in religion instead of simply believing that the blood of Jesus Christ saves to the uttermost. The Beloved is right here. Just embrace Him.

Feb 26
|
"[Beware of perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds." (1TM 6:5)

Two men disputed over the meaning of the word "glass." The one said, "It is a cylinder, and cursed be he who says otherwise." The second says, "A glass is a vessel of any shape for drinking and accursed is the one who says otherwise."

A glass can also be defined in other ways. It has many relationships and utilitarian possibilities. For instance, it can be a projectile thrown at someone else's head in anger. Ultimately, however, a glass is a glass. Its reality has nothing to do with its name "glass," which it bears only in English. In French it is called ~verre~ and in Russian ~stakan~. Definitions are subjective, incomplete, and are given from a certain point of view.

Let us never forget that every point of view is a point of blindness because it eliminates other points of views which may be equally valid. If I look up, I cease to see the floor of the room. If I look down, I don't
see the ceiling. I arrive at truth only through an intuition of the whole
of reality with all its intricacies. But reality is not only material, it
is also spiritual. It knows itself. Christ is the expression of this self-knowledge of the whole reality. Therefore He says, "I am the truth" (JHN 14:6).

Observe that He never said "He is" the truth. He said "~I am~ the truth." We are not allowed to change the pronoun. If Jesus is for you a "He," you cannot have the truth; He must become your"I." He wishes to live in your heart as truly as He lived in the Virgin Mary's womb. Then, as you identify with Him, your doubts will disappear. You, too, will become a personification of truth. Imperfect? Yes. But with "Christ in you" you have "the hope of glory" (COL 1:27).

Feb 27
|
"Let both grow together." (MTT 13:30)

A gardener in the United States once wrote to the Department of Agriculture: "I've tried everything I've ever heard about or read, including all your bulletins, on how to get rid of dandelions - and I've still got them." By return mail, he received the last word on the subject:
"Dear Sir: If you have tried everything and you still have dandelions, there is only one thing left for you to do. Learn to love them."

Whatever means you employ, you will never get rid of false friends, enemies, rivals, opponents, or annoyances with your marriage partner or other relatives. But you can rid yourself once and for all of the burden they present to you, by declaring them the objects of your love. There exists no alternative to loving your enemies unless you wish to kill yourself slowly by nurturing hatred.

Don't judge your enemies by the attitudes they take toward you, but by the circumstances of their own lives. They may never have been beloved. You might be the scapegoat for their resentment against other persons they do not dare attack. A man who has a nasty employer in the office may sometimes say bitter words to his wife. He has to be silent when the boss rebukes him. His wife becomes the target.

You can't always change the stream of life. Love it with whatever it brings. Jesus said, "I am the life" - the life in all its aspects. Consider
it sacred - and handle it with care.

Feb 28
|
"Be ye separate." (2CO 6:17)

A peasant, hearing a proclamation issued by the prince of Tirmid to the effect that a large reward would be given to him who would take a message to Samarkand in the space of four days, hurried to Tirmid as fast as he could. The city became alarmed, thinking that his extreme haste announced the approach of some calamity. When admitted to the presence of the prince, all he had to say was that he had
hurried to inform the prince that he could not go to Samarkand that fast.

I often think about this story of Rumi's "Masnavi" when I hear many prayers in churches in which men, who had driven to the service at great speed, excuse themselves before God for the fact that, being sinners, they will not be able to fulfill His commandments. What was the good of coming to tell God this?

You are a weak believer. God does not ask much from you, but only that you should not yoke yourself together with an unbeliever, or else you too might receive the same damnation.

A mouse developed a great affection for a frog. That he might be able to communicate with his friend at all times, he fastened a string to
the frog's leg, and the other end of it to its own. Shortly afterward a raven swooped down on the mouse and carried him off, and the frog, being fastened to the mouse, was dragged off and destroyed with it. If it
would not have been attached to the mouse, it would have been safe. The raven could not have entered into water.

Instead of telling God again and again that you can't fulfill His commandment, however weak you might be, separate yourself from the world and at once you will be in new surroundings favorable to the keeping of God's will.

Feb 29

|
"It pleased God ... to reveal his Son in me." (GAL 1:15,16)

When Michelangelo used a stonemason as his model for a statue of Christ, he was criticized by his teacher, Ghirlandaio. Michelangelo defended himself: "But Christ was also a workingman, a carpenter." The master replied, "Florence won't accept a working-class Christ. they are used to thinking of Him as a nobleman."

Some are accustomed only to a historical Savior. They will not accept an inner Christ, though to be real Christ must dwell within the heart.

In a renowned French novel, we are told about a British lord who loved to play the fool over a prima donna in the opera. He would go night after night to listen to her. He would send her flowers and jewels. She became interested in him and made an arrangement that they should meet at a party, but she was not introduced under her real name. He did not pay any attention to her then, or at later encounters. He loved her only in her roles on the stage. He did not even recognize the real person.

Many of us bow before Jesus as portrayed in the pages of the Bible; we bow before Him as represented in Holy Communion or in a statue. But when He passes near us in the person of a hungry man, when He suffers in a jail or in a hospital, we do not give Him reverence or take His side. Let us invite Jesus to dwell in our hearts and recognize Him in
the shape of the needy who surround us! Let us also recognize His presence in our life and in the lives of others.

Mar 1
|
"The flesh is weak." (MTT 26:41)

It was in the times of Lenin and Stalin. Eight thousand Orthodox priests had been killed.

Father Mikhail was among the few who had not yet been arrested, but he had lost his faith. The loss came suddenly. He had just said during the liturgy, "Blessed be God," when he heard a voice whispering, "There is no God." He looked questioningly at the images of saints hanging on the wall. What did their friendship with God mean? Does such a mighty Friend allow His believers to be thrown to the wild beasts, burned at the stake, tortured? He tried to repress the thought. He repeated to himself the words of the psalm, "The fool hath said in said his heart, There is no God." It did not help.

After that moment, he continued to act as a priest out of duty, but duty he no longer believed. The sorrow around him had been too great. He had to restrain himself to keep from crying out to the peasants who filled

the church, "Go home, poor people. There is no God. God would not have permitted this bloody chaos."

Drunk Communists arrested him on an Easter eve. Among them was the cantor of his church whom he had expelled because of immortal behavior. Now he too was a Bolshevik. The head of the gang told the priest, "We have decided to kill you. What have you to say?"

Life was worthless for Father Mikhail. He answered, "As you like." But he was given a chance. "If you renounce Christ and trample on a cross, you will be freed." The thought passed through his mind, "I don't believe. What does a cross mean to me? Let me save my life." But when he opened his mouth, he said, to his own astonishment, "I believe in one God."

It was Good Friday. In remembrance of the crown of thorns, they put his fur cap on his head, with the linen on the outside; they put a sack upon his shoulders as a royal garment, and the cantor knelt saying, "Hail, king of the Jews," and they all beat him. He prayed to the One in whom he did not believe any more, "If You exist, save me." With a loud voice, he repeated, "I believe in one God."

This made such an impression upon the drunk murderers that they freed him. He went home, prostrated himself to the earth in his prayer comer, and said with tears, "I believe."

When assailed by doubts, don't seek an intellectual solution. Take some burden upon yourself for Jesus' sake. Where reason fails, faith will conquer.

Mar 2
|
"He was wounded for our transgressions." (ISA 53:5)

Jesus took our sins upon Himself and suffered for them. Should I not do the same for my guilty fellow man?

An unmarried girl became pregnant. To save her lover from her father's wrath, she told him, "It is my pastor who did it." The father nursed his grudge against the pastor. When the child was born, he brought the baby on Sunday morning into the church, and in front of the congregation he threw it into the pastor's arms shouting"Take it, the fruit of your whoredom with my daughter!" Swearing and shouting insults, the father left the church. The astonished congregation expected a word of explanation from the pastor, but he only caressed the baby and said, "So you are mine? You will surely be my darling." It goes without saying that he lost all his following. Despised by men, he brought up the child in utter poverty.

After a few years, the girl was overcome by remorse and confessed the truth to her father. Stunned by the news, he rushed to the pastor and
begged his forgiveness; then he told the truth to the entire church. The congregation waited again, expecting now that their former pastor

would explain his strange behavior. But the pastor said only these words: "Do you wish to tell me he is not mine? He surely is my darling." Now he had a congregation bigger than ever before. He had not justified himself when accused unjustly; nor did he boast of his innocence when it was proven.

The Lord has said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself" (LUK 9:23). If one denies himself, everyone's self becomes his own; and he realizes that every man is co-responsible for everyone's sins. He never rejects any accusation as not applying to him, but is happy to take it upon himself to ease his brother's burden. This means to have the mind of Christ.

Mar 3
|
"[They] waxed valiant in fight." (HEB 34)

Listen to the story of a hero of the faith.

His name was Florea. He died in the prison of Gherla (Romania) He had been beaten until both arms and both legs were paralyzed because he refused to do slave labor on the Lord's Day. He could only move his neck. It is bad enough to be in such a situation in a nursing home or with one's family, but he was in a prison cell where fellow inmates had no water, no sheets-nothing with which to help him.

We had to spoon-feed him, but where did we get a spoon? Yet he was the most serene and joyful among us. His face shone. When we prisoners sometimes sat around his bed brooding about our sorrows, moaning that our outlook was bad, he would reply, "If the outlook is ad, try the uplook. St. Stephen, surrounded by men who threw stones at him, abandoned by the other members of the church who did not stay with him in his moment of trial, nevertheless looked up and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father. This comforted his heart; it will
comfort yours also. Look up!"

After my release from prison, I spoke to his son, aged nine, and told him the story of his father's faithfulness. I added, "I hope that you
will become a good man like him." He replied, "Brother, I would like to become a sufferer for Christ as my father has been."

There is no law that obliges Christians to be dull, lukewarm, half-hearted. Christianity can be heroic. The right spelling of the word "love" is "s-a-c-r-i-f-i-c-e."

Mar 4
|
"[Jesus said,] This is my body which is given for you." (LUK 22:19)

When the pastor repeats the word of consecration at Holy

Communion, "This is my body," which body does he mean?

Jesus has two natures in one body, a divine nature and a human nature. He also has two bodies: the glorified human body with which He ascended to heaven, and the church, which is His body too. At Communion we commemorate the body which suffered on Golgotha, but we remember also His mystical body, the church universal, which n every century has given martyrs whose blood was shed for the glory of God.

To the glorified body of Christ we can bring adoration. We adore His pierced heart which bled for us. For His mystical body, the church universal, we can do much. We can share the cross of the martyrs of today and alleviate their suffering.

At every communion remember both bodies.

Mar 5
|
"All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme." (MRK 3:28)

Once a traveler was sitting in a railroad coach next to a young man who appeared to be depressed. Finally the latter revealed that he was a convict who had just gotten out of prison. He also admitted that his imprisonment had brought shame on his family and that they had neither visited him nor written much. He tried to convince himself that their negligence was only because they were too poor to travel, too uneducated to write. Despite his misgivings, he hoped they had forgiven him.

l o make it as easy as posslble tor them he had written suggesting that if his family had forgiven him they should put up a white ribbon in the big apple tree near the tracks as a signal. If they didn't want him back they were to do nothing; he would understand, stay on the train, and head West.

As the train neared his hometown, the suspense became so great he couldn't bear to look out the window. The older man changed places with him and said he would watch for the apple tree. In a few minutes he put his hand on the young convict's arm. "There it is," he whispered, his voice suddenly unsteady. "It's all right. The whole tree is white with
ribbons."

The Hebrews don't even have a singular word for God's compassion. It is rahamim-compassions. Ever,v Hebrew word with the "m" ending is plural. Whatever you have done, there is enough forgiveness in Jesus' blood.

Mar 6
|
"The multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat.

... They did eat, and were filled." (MRK 8:1,8)

About fifty million people die a year, more than a third of them as the result of malnutrition or starvation.

Remember every morning when you awake that you awake in a hungry world. To use food recklessly and wastefully is a grave sin. When grain is fed to livestock to turn it into meat, three quarters of the food value is lost. Americans consume nearly a ton of grain annually per person, whereas an Asian consumes only a fifth as much. If you give up your meat consumption three times a week, you allow agricultural products that now feed livestock to be diverted to the poor and hungry.

The food situation will grow worse. Many Indian children are given the name Dashkal, which means hunger. It is easier to multiply men than the means of existence. Morocco, Kenya, Iraq, and India, for example, will double their population in twenty-five years. This trend virtually guarantees utter catastrophe.

The fact that I cannot solve the global problem does not free me from the responsibility of doing the little I can, through some bona fide institution, to help at least one hungry child survive.

Jesus had been poor as a child. When He saw hungry multitudes He did not dismiss them or turn His back on them. He gave them bread and fish. Do the same. Share what you have with those in need.

Mar 7
|
"They found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. him they compelled to bear his cross." (MTT 27:32)

You could put into Africa the entire territory of the United States, all of Europe, China, India, and Japan and still have much space left over. This is how large Africa is. So large also must be every Christian's concern for Africa.

In order that this continent might belong to Christ, St. Perpetua and her husband were willing to be hacked to pieces in the year A.D. 201, on this day, March 7. They had refused to burn some incense before the statue of Caesar. That Africa might belong to Christ, the great missionary Livingstone died on his knees at his bedside in Chitambo, in what is today Tanzania. The French missionary Francois Coillard died in Bulawayo (Rhodesia). In one of his last letters he wrote, "The old tent is wearing out, but my heart is still young. My heart belongs to Africa. There is work waiting for me, and there my grave shall be. My great desire is not to live a day longer than I can work."

Africa was a piece of hell on earth when Robert Laws went there along with five other missionaries. The natives were killing each other

indiscriminately in tribal wars. Livingstone had cried, "Blood, blood, blood everywhere!" Dr. Laws and his companions worked six years before winning the first convert, but not before four of the missionaries
had died from fever.

Dan Crawford, a Scotsman, was the first missionary who decided that "we must think and speak black" in order to win the blacks. He became one of them, and as such he was subject to the cruel King Mushidi of Katanga. He had five hundred wives, was growing rich and fat on the sale of slaves, rubber, and ivory, and each day was putting to
death as many human victims as he liked.

Almost all African countries are dictatorships even now. Islam and heathenism, as well as modern secularism, prevail. Communism has taken over many countries.

Jesus, while carrying the cross, was helped by an African. Help Africa come to Christ.

Mar 8
|
"[David] feigned himself mad." (1SM 21:13)

Cardinal Trochta of Czechoslovakia, when he was a priest, was a prisoner of the Nazis. During a mass execution, he was only wounded. He pretended to be dead, was carried away with the corpses, and managed in this way to escape. Thus Trochta deceived the Nazis. A simulated death is the enacting of a lie.

According to strong moralists, he should have been obedient to the authorities who had decided to kill innocents. He should have cried out, "I am not dead yet. Please, another bullet."

Every righteous rule pushed to an extreme becomes ridiculous. We surely have the duty to tell the truth. We as surely have the duty to defend ourselves against murderers; we have to defend our families, our church, and our nation.

The supreme Christian rule is neither love, nor sternness, nor truth, nor wisdom, nor seeking of pleasure, nor asceticism, nor generosity, nor economy, nor self-sacrifice, nor self-defense. It is, in the words of St. Anthony the Great, "to have in all things the right measure."

Our conscience illuminated by the Holy Spirit as we search the Scriptures will show us in every circumstance the right way.

Mar 9
|
"Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." (LUK 1: 48)

The renowned Jewish novelist Sholem Asch, who had become a Christian, wrote, "The tread of your feet, Mary, is dear to me as the beat of my heart, and the air I breathe in your presence purifies my being, for you, Mary, are holy and lend sanctity to all that come near."

As often as we look to Jesus crucified, we see His mother watching :he body of her son convulsing with pain. She had tended that same body when He was a babe. She had bathed and fed Him. How often it had been her clelight to kiss Him. Now she gazed at the red welts where the soldiers' whips had struck. She heard the singing leather of the whip snap loud against His skin, which she, stricken by awe, had 3carcely dared to touch.

What should we admire most in her who was so highly favored of God?

I will extol her virginity. She, the virgin who had known no man 3he it was who gave birth to the highest being-the God-man.

Mar 10
|
"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (MTT 6:12)

During World War II, Simon Wiesenthal, the renowned Jewish hunter of war criminals, wrote that, while doing slave labor in a concentration camp in Lvov (Ukraine), he was called by a nurse to the deathbed of a Nazi officer. This officer told him that his mother was a Christian who had been much grieved when he joined Hitler's youth and afterward his army. He was in a unit which occupied the Soviet town of Dnepropetrovsk. There, two hundred Jews, among them women, children, and babes, were locked in a small house, into which Karl's unit tossed grenades. The house burned. Some Jews, with children in their arms, tried to jump through the window, but Karl shot them. A few days later, in a battle, Karl's unit was ordered to attack. In this battle he was completely blinded and badly injured. The last thing he remembered to have seen was a Jew in flames with a burning child in his arms coming toward him. Now he waited for death, tortured constantly by the vision of the martyred Jewish women and children. Karl wished to be absolved by a Jew. However, Wiesenthal did not pronounce the longed-for word of forgiveness.

We can sympathize with this man who lost almost his entire family because of the cruelty of the Nazis. Criminals have to be defeated and punished. But the man Wiesenthal had before him no longer represented danger. He was suffering the pangs of death. Here a word of forgiveness should have been spoken. But one has to realize first his

own sinfulness in the light of Christ's forgiveness. Only then will he be
able to absolve others.

Mar 11
|
"Judge not." (MTT 7:1)

The Lord Jesus said to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (MTT 16:19). Every child of God can open the kingdom to anyone, even to the worst of men, by proclaiming to him Christ's forgiveness. But the same Jesus says, "I ... have the keys of hell" (REV 1:18). These He gave to no one. He reserved them for Himself. Otherwise some of us would have thrown ourselves into hell through our foolishness, and we would have doomed to hell those who don't believe like us. A mother gives her child a toy, not a knife with which to cut himself. Therefore, Peter got the keys of heaven, but not of
hell.

Luther said about Erasmus, his philosophical adversary, "He died without light, without a cross, and without God," which means he doomed him to hell. Erasmus' last words were, "Beloved God."

Only one key has been entrusted to you. Open the gates of heaven to others. Don't condemn anyone. Don't damn yourself either.

Mar 12
|
"Jesus saith, I am ... the life." (JHN 14:6)

Why did God give us His Word? Why not a picture instead? The atom is not picturable. Neitheris realiq; even less so is God. A range of
fragrances ortastes could also not have instlucted us as does His Word.

But is the word a perfect means of communication? Some words have many meanings. In Hebrew barach means both "blessing" and "curse"; kedeshah, "prostitute" and "saint"; hesed, "grace" and "abomination." In Greek afes means "to forgive" and "to leave." Bible verses can be interpreted variously. We need assurance. Our eternal life depends upon knowing clearly the will of God.

A pastor told a Jewish boy of twelve, "If Jesus is really the Messiah
sent by God and you don't believe in Him, you will be lost eternally." The boy answered, "If Jesus is really the blasphemer our court declared Him to be, you as a preacher who clings to Him, will pass your eternity in hell." There can be no joking in religion. If Christ has not risen and we have given up so many earthly pleasures hoping for the

resurrection, "we are of all men most miserable" (1CO 15:19). If there is a resurrection and we have spent our life in vain pleasures, we are fools.

Don't confine yourself only to the words of the Bible but accept the total revelation of God. He reveals Himself through all His actions. The Hebrews through whom the Word of God was given have no word for "word." They use for it the expression davar, which means "thing, something real." The whole of outward and inward reality is God's sure revelation-the entire happening at Golgotha, your whole life with its sins and repentance, its falls and recoveries, its sorrows and joys. Believe in life, His life. Accept Him in your life. Then you will have the assurance of ~eternal~ life.

Mar 13
|
"The scripture cannot be broken." (JHN 10:35)

A Zionist named Shifrin was jailed in Russia. While in prison he met the Baptist Solodiankin, aged seventy-two. "The goodness and transparent purity of that man made a deep impression. Even the soldiers who guarded us became better when he was there." He was almost blind. His glasses had been broken by the interrogator. " Everything
he earned as a slave laborer he used like this: half for his sick daughter and 25% for his church. From the rest (7.8 rubles) he bought for
himself a little sugar and bread; the rest he gave to the sick prisoners in the camp."

Shifrin told him that he had a Bible and was ready to read it to him In the evening, Solodiankin came. He had changed his shirt and combed himself with great care. L'To read the eternal book is a feast." The Jew read to the Christian from Isaiah. At a certain moment, he was interrupted: "You made a mistake in reading."

It was true. "But do you know the text by heart?"

"Of course."

"Then why should I read it to you?"

"Because it is a joy for me to hear the Scriptures. One gets new ideas."

We recognize the value of a thing only when we don't have it. Let us learn from those who are deprived the real value of the Scriptures, and let us search them diligently.

Mar 14
|
"... vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers." (1PE 1: 18)

We don't belong to a church because of the plausibility of its tenets. We measure their plausibility by the conviction already formed of its veracity.

The majority of mankind adhere to the religion of their parents. If a Catholic man is married to a Catholic woman, the child born of this union will hear from the beginning things that will incline him toward Catholicism. As an adult he will tend to aceept all its arguments, just as
someone born of Jewish or Baptist parents will have a bias toward these beliefs.

It is not otherwise with conversions. When an individual passes through a crisis or has his early beliefs shattered, a devotee of some other religion may show him what he conceives to be the way to God. Accepting the comfort, the new sense of life needed at that moment, the individual finds it easy to swallow uncritically a multitude of other dogmas, beliefs, or rituals held by the person who brought him to faith.

It is difficult to find the truth. Start by examining and questioning
ancestral religion, the process by which hundreds of millions of men are made to call themselves Christians, Hindus, Moslems, or Jews.

Real religion begins with a readiness to acknowledge that all your beliefs, including the most cherished, may be wrong, that your own religion may be a variety of prejudice just as you conceive others to be. None but the finest spirits ever rose above a hazy group consciousness.

Pass with a broom through your heart, sweeping away everything that does not come from a personal experience with God. That is what I did. In the emptied heart–the heart of the man who denies not only his belief, but himself, his own person–God, the source and aim of all religion, shines.

Acknowledge that you have acquired plejudices of both birth and education. Then "prove all things" by the Word of God and "hold fast that which is good" (1TH 5:21).

Mar 15
|
"[God said to Abraham] Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac ... and offer him [on mount Moriah] for a burnt offering." (GEN 22:2)

A girl named Mary tells the story of the court trial in the Soviet Union in which her mother was deprived of parental rights. They shouted at her, "You are a mother. Deny God! What did He give you? Whom do you love more, your own children or your idol? How can you?" And her mother sat with her scarf covering her eyes, repeating, "God sees everything. He will reward accordingly." When the children, including Mary, cried to her, "Mother, do not leave us," she did

not even turn to them.

It is a scene exactly like those we read about in the history of the early martyrs who went into the circus arena to be devoured by wild beasts. They refused to listen to the pleading of their loved ones when asked to recant and save their lives for their children's sake.

With God, it was the mystery of preferring the death of His Son to permitting the eternal death of sinners; with saints, the mystery of preferring to lose their children rather than deny God. Such is our God; so are we. We can do nothing but sing His praise whatever the consequences.

Where choices are to be made, don't hesitate. Sacrifice even what or whom you love most for God. He sacrificed all for you.

Mar 16

|

"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, re shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove." (MTT 17:20)

I tried to move mountains and did not succeed. Nor do I know any child of God able to perform such a deed.

I asked the Lord how it was that His words did not correspond to reality. A disciple of Christ should not deliver monologues in prayer, but should expect to receive answers to his questions. I received an answer to mine:

"You, my beloved, cannot move mountains because your faith is not the size of a grain. You have bushels full of faith. Nobody uses a one-thousand-ton hammer, such as those employed by heavy industry, to crack open a nut. Such a hammer can only perform great works. By the same token, you are called to do greater things than amuse yourself by moving mountains. You can move God. Remember how God decided to destroy the Jewish people after they had worshiped a golden calf, and Moses through his prayer made God change His mind? To produce changes in heavenly decrees is much more important than moving mountains."

Since then, I have stopped trying to move mountains. We are seated with Christ in heavenly places. We participate in things happening there. And when in our ealthly life mountains hinder us, we don't need to command them to move. We can follow the example of Christ, about whom His bride says, "My beloved ... cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills" (SOS 2:8).

Don't try to remove mountains of difficulty in your own life. Jump over them. Do your Christian duty in spite of them.

Mar 17

|
"Do good to them that hate you." (MTT 5:44)

The following episode took place in a prison cell in 8 Communist country:

One day the guards pushed a new prisoner into a cell where only Christians were detained. He was shorn, dirty, and thin. First no one recognized him. But after a few minutes one exclaimed, "This is Captain X." He was one of the worst torturers of Christians. He had arrested and beaten many of those with whom he now shared the prison cell. They surrounded him and asked how he came to be in prison. With tears rolling down his cheek, he told his story.

A couple of months before, while he was sitting in his office, a boy of twelve entered, holding in his hand a flower for the captain's wife, The boy told him, "Captain, you are the one who put my father and mother in prison. Today is my mother's birthday. I always buy her a nower on this day. Because of you I have no mother to gladden today, b ut she is a Christian and taught me to love my enemies and reward evil with good. So I thought I would bring a flower to the mother of your children. Please, take it to your wife and tell her about my love and about the love of Christ."

It was too much even for a Communist captain. He also is a creature of God, enlightened with "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (JHN 1:9). He embraced the child. He could not torture any more, nor could he retain his position. He now considered it a privilege to sit in prison with those he had himself imprisoned.

Forgiving love is the key to a victorious Christian life.

Mar 18

|
"God hath chosen the weak things of the world." (1CO 1:27)

Nelson achieved all his triumphs by overcoming great handicaps.

Frail and weak, he fell victim to yellow fever in India. He contracted some other unidentified sickness in the West Indies. He, a navy commander, suffered all his life from seasickness. He lost an eye in Corsica. Later his right hand was amputated. In another fight he was heavily wounded in the chest.

But he had learned to overcome pain. And it was he who defeated the naval forces of France and Spain at Trafalgar.

The hero Nelson also had a weak point. He became the subject of a huge scandal in London and Naples through his involvement with Lady Hamilton, another man's wife. It is not the handicaps that are apt to wreck a man's life, but rather his weaknesses of character. "He that ruleth his spirit [is better] than he that taketh a city" (PRO 16:32).

As a human being, Jesus entered life with many handicaps. His birth was rumored to have been irregular. He belonged to a poor family in an oppressed nation. He never had a rabbinical education. But he showed that by faith one can conquer obstacles and be the right kind of person. Jesus is the Son of God. Those who believe in Him are children of God. He said, "Everything is possible to the one who believes."

Don't worry about your physical handicaps or any other kind of handicap. They can be the best stimulants to great achievement.

Find out your specific weakness, and through Christ strengthen the wall of the fortress that is most exposed to the enemy.

Mar 19
|
"Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life." (JHN 17:2)

Giacomo Puccini was a great success in life. His operas Manon Lescaut and Madame Butterfly made him world-renowned. He had money and fame. Women were after him. It seemed that he had everything needed to make him a happy man. He was anything but happy.

He wrote when he was at the peak of glory, "Success? What is it worth, if in any case old age comes and death. I would like to create new
operas, write more musical pieces, but alas, I have no more power."

At the age of eighty-two Mao Tse-tung received the president of Western Germany and told him about his grandiose plans for Red China. The president answered that with persistence he might achieve them, quoting the proverb, "Persistent rivulets of waters pierce the stone," to which Mao replied, "Yes, but I don't have enough water any more."

Kiro-, one of the top leaders of Russian Bolshevism, was killed by Stalin. He had finished his last speech with the words, "I would like to live, to live and to live."

If everything ends with death, even the grandest life is like a banquet given to someone sentenced to death. You enjoy a meal and then you are hanged.

Do you wish lasting achievements and endless energy to create valuable things? Then your first priority must be to assure yourself of life eternal. Jesus said, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (JHN 11:26).

Mar 20
|
"What they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves." (JUD 10)

It is out of the question that man should have descended from a monkey. Monkeys are faithful to their wives; they don't perform a abortions. Monkeys have no bombs with which to exterminate their own species. Crime, alcoholism, drug addiction, prostitution are unknown among them. They neither make nor view immoral movies.

The monkey, creature of God which has remained as God made it, never claims mankind for progeny. The Darwinist theory is an insult to the ape. No ape ever conceived a book as unsubstantiated as The Origin of Species.

Man has a much higher provenance. He was created by God in His image. The higher the first position, the more catastrophic the fall. Man shows in his intelligence traces of his first state, but too often he bears greater resemblance to the wolf, the fox, the snake, the pig. When man becomes beast, he becomes the beastliest beast. And his descent is all due to the sin of the first human parents, perpetuated and aggravated by their progeny.

It is true that "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but lsrael doth not know" (ISA 1:3). What man needs is not to be told he is a relative of the beast. The animal kingdom is distinctly separate from humanity. It has suffered degradation because of the Fall but is closer to its original state than mankind. The urgent need of man is to return to his primary privilege, to regain the innocence Adam lost.

Jesus, through His shed blood, washes us from all sins in this world and will restore us to our forfeited state in the world to come, when "this corruptible shall have put on incorruption" (1CO 15:54)

Mar 21
|
"All things work together for good to them that love God." (ROM 8:28)

The story is told of a lone survivor of a shipwreck who was thrown upon an uninhabited island. After awhile he managed to build for himself a crude hut in which he placed the "little all" that he had saved from the sinking ship. He prayed to God for deliverance and anxiously scanned the horizon each day to hail any ship that might be passing that way.

One day, upon returning from a hunt for food, he was horrified to find his hut in flames! All that he had salvaged was now going up in smoke! The worst had happened, so it appeared. But what at first seemed so great a tragedy was, in reality, for the best, though to the man's limited vision it seemed a devastating loss.

In God's infinite wisdom, his loss was actually an answer to his most eamest prayer. The same day a ship arrived. "We saw your smoke signal," the captain said.

Can we not take our seeming calamities and look for God's best in

them?

Even the calamity death worked for the glory of God in the case of Lazarus. And John the beloved was given his great visions of the future of the world and of heaven itself while in exile on the Isle of Patmos.

Mar 22
|
"When [David] had need, and was an hungred ... and they that were with him ... he went into the house of God ... and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests." (MRK 2:25,26)

Powerful needs and strong urges sometimes put a human being in a position that obliges him to break the normal rules set up by God, or is culture. Never rationalize as to what you should do in those circumstances. Be aware of the law; be aware of your special condition. and your psychological complexes, which are as real as metal. Regret the state of fallen man who sometimes cannot even satisfy a legitimate hunger without trespassing against a rule. Say like the apostle, "It is no more I that do [the unlawful thing], but sin that dwelleth in me" (ROM 7:17). Separate your"I" decidedly from the forbidden bread that hunger obliges you to eat.

The much-persecuted Russian Orthodox priest Dudko tells about a Soviet girl who had come to confess. She said, "I believe, but they force me to wear the red neckscarf which is the badge of the pioneers, the atheistic Communist children's organization. I am powerless." If she refused, she would be beaten and expelled from school, and her parents might go to prison. So she sprinkled the red neckscarf with holy water, over which special prayers are said by the priest and which is used in Orthodox rituals. "I put the neckscarf on," she confessed, "only after having sprinkled it."

In the free world, we also are compelled at times to do things which normally should not be done. But then face the facts as they are; don't try to find excuses, but do them in Christ's name. You are only human. And everything is sanctified by prayer (1TM 4:5). "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth" (ROM 14:22).

Mar 23
|
"My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves." (LUK 19:46)

Many Christians are dissatisfied with their churches. This is to be expected in view of the work of self-demolition that faithless bishops

and pastors have done in the church. Would Jesus call the modern churches "dens of thieves"? This pronouncement on the part of Jesus was a broad generalization in His time as well.

How many "thieves" were in the house of prayer? Some of the top leaders of the temple were dishonest, and they brought the temple into ill-repute. But the rank-and-file priest and worshiper could have been very devout. Zacharias, a priest, and his wife Elisabeth, parents of John the Baptist, "were both righteous before God" (LUK 1:5,6). They were righteous in a den of thieves. "[Simeon] came by the Spirit into the temple" (into the den of thieves). "The same man was just and devout ... and the Holy Ghost was upon him" (LUK 2:27,25). So the Holy Spirit works in temples even when they have become dens of thieves.

A publican stood in the temple, in the den of thieves, and found there no encouragement to continue in his sinful life. On the contrary, he "smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner ... This man went down to his house justified" (LUK 18:13,14). So a man can find salvation even in a temple which has deteriorated to the point of becoming a den of thieves.

The Jewish temple was not a dead or apostate church. It was a den of thieves which the Messiah had not forsaken, in which He worshiped, in which the rituals prescribed by God were fulfilled, in which the law was chanted, and in which there were many saints.

Look for the saints in your church, too. Don't forsake a church lightly or casually. Better still, be a saint.

Mar 24

"The King [shall] say unto them on the right hand, Come then ... shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me." (MTT 25:34,41)

The existence of an objectively real right and left, with some men separated for eternal life on the right while their fellow men are set apart on the left for everlasting destruction, once was considered only a metaphor of speech. But that is not so. It is a fact.

Certain molecules exist in two forms, one being the mirror image of the other, which means they are related like a left hand and a right hand. If I hold my left hand to a mirror, what I appear to see in the mirror is a right hand. So it is with these molecules called isomers. Proteins are exclusively composed of L- (left-handed) amino acids. This is regarded as a unique characteristic of life-that is, life as we know it, in a fallen creation. The whole purpose of life is to pass from the left, the sinful state to which we belong by nature, to the right, the place of grace. D- amino acids (those of the right hand) are never found

in proteins, but in antibiotics which save endangered life.
There exists a right and a left not only in living matter. In 1957, the particle physicists discovered a basic asymmetry in the matter out of which our part of the universe is composed. Electrons emitted during the beta decay of radioactive nuclei such as cobalt 60 are predominantly left-handed. Their particle spin is coupled to their momentum
like a left-handed screw. The positron is right-handed.
Nature makes an absolute distinction between right and left, just as there is an absolute distinction between the sons of light and those of
darkness. Through repentance the latter can change to the former during their short life span on earth. Those remaining on the left will go
to the lake of fire. Time is running out. Hurry!

Mar 25
|
"There was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at the [rich man's] gate." (LUK 16:20)

Lazarus begged without ever protesting against social injustice. Today this is not the case. The poor have become vocal. No sermon telling them to hold their peace would be effective. In her great, inspired "Magnificat," the Virgin MaIy foretold a time when the hungry would be filled with good things and the rich would be sent away empty (LUK 1:53). We live in this time of total world revolution.
Marie Antoinette, on hearing that the Parisian mob was rioting because it had no bread, suggested, "Let them eat cake." The French monarchy, so completely out of touch with popular feeling, was thus doomed. By the same token, Czar Nicholas II never read Lenin.
The world's richest one billion people have an average income of $3,200 a year. The world's poorest one billion have an income of $120 a year. Many starve in shanty towns. Their days are lived in poverty and illiteracy. Sixty percent of mankind cannot read.
Nevertheless in the eyes of God people are most precious. The Lord tells us to "Sell that ye have, and give alms" (LUK 12:33). Don't give simply castoffs, but give what is needed. Hungry people are more important than houses, cars, chocolates, or operas.
In thirty years the world population will have doubled, along with its demands and hopes. Be understanding and generous about anticipating their material and spiritual needs. Otherwise you may find yourself among the rich who will be sent away empty.

Mar 26
|
"[The Pharisees said about Jesus,] This man is a sinner."

(JHN 9:24)

These Pharisees had never met Jesus personally. They had drawn rash conclusions about who He was from hearsay regarding a single event. Jesus warned against attitudes rashly taken. "[Those] who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness ... have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time" (MRK 4:16,17). Don't accept Jesus hurriedly under the impulse of an urgent evangelistic appeal. Don't reject Him hastily without having listened attentively to the arguments for His case.

Geologists, men of science, were asked to look at this picture for seven seconds:

[small illustration printed here in the book]

It contains a fault with concave cleavage lines at the synform and convex cleavage lines at the antiform. No more than 20 per cent of those tested, including experienced geologists, reproduced it. This drawing, with both sets of cleavages convex, was a common response.

[small illustration printed here in the book]

No quick look at a man oran event can give you the truth. Mary sat an entire evening at Jesus' feet, listened to His words attentively, and pondered them. So she became a faithful disciple. Thomas asked for proofs of Jesus' resurrection, received them, and later became a successful missionary to India.

I don't ask you to come to Jesus immediately if you lack sufficient motivation. Jesus said that you should rather"search the Scriptures" (JHN 5:39), an operation which takes quite a while. But do not reject Jesus without checking His claims carefully. Christians do not ask anyone to believe blindly. Only thorough inquiry and carefu decision produce good Christians.

Mar 27
|
"The Son of man came ... to give his life a ransom...."
(MTT 20:28)

Let us pray for China. Every fourth man in the world today is a Chinese. On the mainland of China Christianity is completely forbidden, but God's Spirit has strange ways of penetrating dark places.

In a hut in a commune, a family gathered around the grandfather who entertained them with stories from the rich Chinese folklore. This time it was the story of Tso-Po-Tao, the man who had been a symbol of goodness. He had traveled once with his friend, Yang-Chiao-Ai. They had to reach Tsu Yuan Wang, but after a few days' journey, they found the snow to be too deep and their food and clothing insufficient. Both could not survive. Tso-Po-Tao urged, "I am a servant. Take the garments of us both and all the food and reach your goal. Why should

we both die?" Yang was reluctant to accept this offer, but Tso had already removed his clothes and laid down on the snow with hands outstretched as though wishing to embrace all mankind with his love. In a few minutes he was frozen to death. Then Yang dressed himself in his garments and had food enough to reach the destination. He always remembered with gratitude what Tso had done for him.

A child asked, "Is this a real story or a story-story? Do such good men like Tso exist? I never met that kind of man. Most around us are brutal."

The grandfather replied, "I guess you will not meet many Tsos. I heard once a white man saying that something just like this had happened long ago in a country far away. A man gave His life meekly like a lamb to save many others. The white man said this is why our Chinese character for 'righteousness' is the 'I' covered by "a lamb." We have been saved by this good being, but I am illiterate and did not understand much of his talk. In any case, child, you would do well to take Tso as an example for life."

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers" (HEB 1:1).

Mar 28
|
"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (REV 2:10)

C. T. Studd saw a strangely worded notice in Liverpool in 1908 It caught his attention and his sense of humor: "Cannibals want missionaries." He entered the meeting hall where Karl Kumm told the story of his walking through Africa and of all the tribes who had never heard the story of Jesus Christ. Explorers had been to those regions, even though they knew they were inhabited by cannibals. Big-game hunters, Moslem missionaries, traders of weapons and liquor, European officials, and scientists had risked their lives, but no Christian
had ever gone there to tell of Jesus.

Studd asked himself why Christians did not go. God replied, "Why don't you go?" Studd already had long terms of missionary work in China and India behind him. He was sick. He went, notwithstanding, and won cannibals for Christ.

There are still individuals, tribes, and countries that take pleasure
in torturing and murdering Christians. Today you can give your life among stone-age peoples in Latin America, in the Philippines, in New Guinea-Papua. Moslem fanatics are always ready to kill Christians. They have killed great numbers in this century in Turkey and Lebanon. Communists are ready to jail anyone who dares to bring Bibles into Communist countries. There are still backward and unreached tribes in

Africa. Go there even if you are old and sick. If you cannot go, help with
your prayers, your home work, and your contributions to those who do go.

Let us all pray for the Christians who do missionary work in places of great danger, at the risk of their own lives.

Mar 29
|
"They were stoned, they were sawn asunder." (HEB 11:37

It was in 1964. Kingese, the mad ruler of Stanleyville, and other Sambi leaders had vowed to end religious teaching in their country and wipe the name of God from the Congo.

In one hamlet every man who wore trousers instead of a loincloth was killed. In Kindu, the rebels burned so many bodies before the monument of Lumumba that the sidewalk cracked under the constant heat. At Paulis, observers placed the toll at four thousand. Some died by dismemberment, some by being forced to drink gasoline and then having fire touched to their bodies.

Twenty members of the Unevangelized Field Mission and nine from other societies died as martyrs. Seventy among the Catholic missions lost their lives in this world. They all died for Christ. They also died because of the foolishness of granting independence to peoples who were still at an infantile stage.

The missionaries had the consolation of knowing that many Congolese stood firm in their commitment to Christ in spite of the terror.

The corns of wheat had fallen into the ground and died. Their example brought forth a harvest of new souls for Christ. Not everyone of us is called upon to be a martyr, but everyone has to be a co-martyr. We should love Christ whole-heartedly as they did and vicariously share their sorrows, trials, and triumphs in prayer. Let us intercede regularly
for Africa.

Mar 30
|
"Preach the gospel to every creature." (MRK 16:15)

Nate Saint, one of the five missionaries martyred in the jungles Ecuador in 1956, before leaving Quito had delivered a premonitory sermon on the subject of expendability. He said: "During the last war we were taught that, in order to obtain our objective, we had to be willing to be expendable, and many lives were spent paying the price of our redemption from the bonds of political slavery.... We know that

there is only one answer wben our country demands that we share in the price of freedom - yet when the Lord Jesus asks us to pay the price for world evangelization, we often answer without a word. We cannot go We say it costs too much.... Missionaries constantly face expendability."

Then he was sent to the Auca Indians. The missionaries knew them to be savages, so they used "Jacob's tactics." They dropped gifts while flying over their territories. They received gifts in return. On the last flight, the natives put a beautiful parrot in the bag let down from the plane with a rope.

Then five missionaries landed among the Aucas. Saint was one of them. First they had a happy encounter. The next day they were killed Betty Elliot, one of the wives of the martyred, wrote that same evening, "Nothing was more burning in Jim's heart than that Christ should be named among the Aucas."

Choose one nation, one tribe, one social category to the service of which, for Christ, you would dedicate your heart. You might not be called to go as a missionary to them, but you can be a co-missionary through your prayers, spreading the news about the mission, and helping financially from your earnings.

Mar 31
|
"They loved not their lives unto the death." (REV 12:11)

Did you ever think about the immortal souls of Somalia, a the northwest tip of Africa? In Somalia's sands there is a simple gravestone with the inscription "Merlin R. Grove, Feb. 9, 1929 - July 16, 1962. Jesus said, ... 'No man cometh unto the Father but by me' (JHN 14:6)."

Grove was a Mennonite missionary. A Moslem priest, aroused to anger against him, stabbed him twelve times. Grove's wife Dorothy heard something happening, and when she rushed outdoors, her husband was already dying. The murdererturned on herand stabbed her in the abdomen.

Dorothy had questioned before if she were in the right place as a missionary, not feeling sure that she could love Somalians, whom she considered lazy, fierce, prone to kill. Now that she lay bleeding on the floor, the love of Calvary for Somalians filled her heart. She recovered, She no longer doubted her calling.

The quickest way to have the assurance of salvation is to take upon yourself some suffering for the fact that you are saved. The quickest way to be sure about a certain calling is to take upon yourself a specific cross connected with this calling. You have chosen the right wife or husband or boy friend if you can bear some heavy burden for him or her.

Today Somalia is Communist. Two brands of fanaticism,

Moslemism and Marxism, have combined. Is there anyone willing to do his best that Somalians might be saved?

Apr 1
|
"The love of money is the root of all evil." (1TM 6:10)

The Reformation and the irreparable split in Christianity might never have happened if it were not for some of the clergy's love of money and the many personal sins of those involved on all sides. I still wonder if the reformation of the church was necessary.

The church is a continuation of the incarnation of Christ. Christ, its head, sees to it that it should function well, so the church cannot die, Even the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

However, there exist human institutions called churches, full of men and women who have not been born again. And they do not need to be reformed, but transformed. New birth can change every man into a child of God.

On the human level, scandalous things have happened through the years. Indulgences, and with them the eternal destinies of souls, were offered for sale. The bastard children of King James of Scotland were appointed to some of the wealthiest abbacies in the kingdom while they were still infants. Acts like these produce public revulsion. Certainly they made it easy for a Henry VIII, angry with the Pope because he could not get a divorce from his wife, to take his nation away from Rome. Both sides later made it a crime punishable by death not to agree with the Vatican, guilty of greed, or with the king, guilty of lust.
Similar things happened in other countries.

We must take a look at our clergy and denominational leaders today. Are their priorities in life obvious? Use your dedicated Christian influence to keep them holy in thought and action. Transform your church after the pattern given by Christ, but above all be sure to belong not only to a human institution.

Through new birth become a member of the "glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (EPH 5:27).

Apr 2
|
"God hath ... given him a name which is above every name." (PHP 2:9)

Some men are given names that foreshadow their destiny. Vladimir, in Russian, means "the ruler of the world." Russian history has known two influential men who bore this name. In A.D. 998 Prince Vladimir of Kiev became a Christian. Having to choose between Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, he sent envoys to Europe to find out which of the two religions would be more suitable. These emissaries were impressed with the beautiful music of the Orthodox service and inclined the prince to embrace this form of Christianity. As a result, he ordered all his subjects to be baptized.

About nine hundred years later another Vladimir was born in Russia. At the age of sixteen he became an atheist, all because of a stupid incident. A sin of a Christian can make a God-hater out of a man who was previously a worshiper. Like many young men, Vladimir Lenin had neglected going to church for some time. The lad overheard his father asking a priest what he should do about it. The priest answered, "Beat him and beat him." Indignant, Lenin tore the cross from his neck, resolving never to have anything more to do with religion. He hated it now. As a result of the revolution he fomented, millions of Christians have been killed. Perhaps this never would have happened if the priest had given a wiser and more loving answer.

It is sobering to realize that one word of ours can elevate a soul. One wrong word can destroy it.

Vladimir the prince could not make all his people disciples of Christ. Lenin could not make all the people atheists. In any case, neither of them was a Vladimir – a ruler over the world. Only one is such a ruler – Jesus Christ. He will reign, and before Him every knee will bow.

Apr 3
|
"Present your bodies a living sacrifice." (ROM 12:1)

During the Vietnam war, Buddhist priests who saw their religion endangered by the politics of the Catholic Thieu set fire to themselves. Two monks would pour gasoline on a priest, and then he would commit ritual suicide while thousands watched, kneeling. The Czech Christian Jan Pollach and the East German evangelical pastor Bruescwitz self-immolated themselves as a protest against Communist injustice.

Christians might learn something from this. Suicide in the usual sense of the word is normally forbidden by our religion, but we all have to give ourselves as a living sacrifice to the only cause that really counts.

Jesus' death could be called a sophisticated suicide. He said, "I lay down my life ... No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (JHN 10:17,18). He seemed to do His utmost to provoke His enemies to utter anger. He took issue with all the impulses by which

men live. Don't even look at a woman with lust! Let your speech be yes, yes, or no, no, which makes all advertising and all promotion impossible! Don't lie even when lying could save your life! Christ did some of His miracles on the Sabbath, even though He knew that this would irritate His enemies. He wished to be crucified, because He knew His death was the only means of salvation for mankind.

Christians also go against the standards of this world, because they too wish to be sacrificed through bearing their cross daily.

"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (GAL 2:20).

Apr 4
|
"[Jesus said:] He that is faithful in that which is least faithful also in much." (LUK 16:10)

We deceive ourselves if we believe that payment of the tithe discharges our financial obligation to God. Imprisoned Christians under persecution, who received one slice of bread a week plus soup containing dirty potato peels, would tithe. Every tenth week they would give their piece of bread to someone who was sick or weaker than they. But this was not all. They knew that man's responsibility encompasses 100 percent of what he has. Many Christians gave their bread every third or every fifth week. Some never ate bread, but gave it always, being content themselves with the dirty soup.

Not simply 10 percent, but all our money belongs to the Lord. It is not true that after giving 10 percent we can do with the rest as we like. Rather, we have been given an expense account by the Lord and we will have to answer for every cent we spend. A traveling salesman cannot buy a fur coat for his wife from his expense account. Neither are we allowed any luxury.

Is your conscience clear? Can you justify before God all that you spend for yourself on food and clothing in a hungry and naked world? Can you justify the luxurious church buildings, choir robes, upholstered pews, when missions lack a dollar to give a Bible in a heathen country? Can you justify your expenses on cosmetics, on entertainment? Will you be able to look in the face of Jesus in the day of judgment and tell Him, "I did well to spend my money like this"? Will He say to you, "Well done, thou good and faithful steward"?

Apr 5
|
"Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent." (EXO 4:10)

Richard Hext was born with crippled hands and feet. His hands hung normally following an operation, but he had not the slightest power in them.

This did not keep him from attaining his ambition to become a painter. He attended the school of arts for seven years. Then he earned his living as a painter-wielding a brush with his teeth. Some of his paintings are so beautiful that they hang in Buckingham Palace.

Moses became a great preacher, though he was a stutterer. Rahab became a saint and an ancestor of the Lord, though she was first a prostitute in a heathen nation. Peter became a martyr, though he was a coward by nature. We first see him trembling before a servant maid who could do him no harm. After the Resurrection the same man stood in a marketplace in Jerusalem defying the rulers of the nation and the mob. History tells us he eventually died for his Lord by his own request crucified head down.

A Christian convicted of both adultery and murder probably would give up hope of ever again being useful to the Lord. But David repented and wrote beautiful psalms which are our spiritual nourishment. Solomon fell into idolatry and promiscuity but became the author of three books of the Bible.

No physical, intellectual, or moral handicap is unconquerable. If you have no hands, paint by using your teeth, but make pictures for the Lord.

Apr 6
|
"Be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." (PHP 2:2)

Human sin has marred the history of Christendom, which could have been beautiful if those bearing the name of Christ had followed their Master's precepts. Everyone knows of the Catholic Inquisition, but Protestants could be cruel as well.

Her Majesty the Gracious Sovereign of Britain, Elizabeth I, condemned Bishop Plunkett for his Catholic beliefs, ordered him to be partly hanged, then lowered, then ripped off, then his bowels burned (he being still alive), then quartered. Catholics in Piedmont apprehended the Protestant Giovanni Michialin with four of his children. As three of the children were hacked to pieces before Michialin's eyes, the soldiers asked at the death of each child if he would recant; he constantly refused. When the same answer was given the fourth time, a soldier grabbed the child by the legs and dashed out its brains.

Catholics killed thousands of Orthodox in Croatia during the war. Orthodox priests wickedly persecuted Evangelicals in Romania and saw to it that they were jailed. Priests led mass slaughters of Jews. Today Protestants and Catholics kill each other in Northern Ireland in the name of the One who enjoined love even for an enemy.

Let us decide once and for all that we will uproot any thought of resentment or hostility toward another for holding a religion different from ours. Let us guard against using inflammatory language against someone else's religion. It might incite an irresponsible person to rash acts and lead even to murder. Religious differences have to be discussed in love. Whenever there are seemingly irreconcilable differences, each should retain his convictions based on the Word of God. But the supreme commandment is love.

Apr 7
|
"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made ... for kings, and for all that are in authority." (1TM 2:1,2)

The text does not say that we should pray only for our country's rulers and government. This is what British, German, Russian, and American clergy did in World War II. Having done this, one can comfortably kill those who belong to the army of another sovereign. It is
wrong to pray only for our own king or president.

Rulers and kings are a specific class of society for which we have to pray, just as we pray for the hungry or the sick. A Christian, then, prays at once for his own ruler, as well as for the ruler of the neighboring country and the chief of an aboriginal tribe.

By praying for our rulers and loving them, even though they may be wicked, we will be enabled to lead "a quiet and peaceable life," because the thought of rioting and rebelling will never occur to us. Furthermore, with such an outlook we can be a leaven for good in society. "Therefore ... pray."

Apr 8
|
"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." (EPH 5:18)

I will take the figures of the European country least reputed vice.

Since the end of World War II the consumption of alcohol has doubled in Switzerland. The number of alcoholics has increased from 100,000 to 130,000. Twenty percent of the court cases and 23 percent of the divorces are due to alcohol. Alcohol is responsible for one third of
the suicides. Each year 1300 persons enter psychiatric asylums as a result of alcohol abuse. The figures for other countries are much worse.

The Bible speaks about being drunk with love, about being so

filled with the Holy Spirit as to give the impression of being a drunkard.
Does anyone know of any evil effects from such holy drunkenness?

Drink therefore from the miraculous wine which Jesus gave to the apostles at Cana. You will have many symptoms of drunkenness: drunkards praise their wine, you will praise yours; drunkards sing, you will have an irresistible impulse to sing to the glory of your Savior; drunkards are ready to fight, you also will be willing to fight, even if you are very weak, against much stronger foes.

I am not against drunkenness. But I consider alcohol the wrong beverage. Let us drink of the wine which Jesus freely offers to those who
thirst.

Apr 9
|
"Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (JUD 3)

Beware of tolerance in matters of faith. Imagine two schools, one run by a wise man, the other by a fool. In the first, children are taught
that 2 and 2 are 4; in the second, that 2 and 2 are 3. Then along comes a
teacher who says that after all love is the most important thing. Why should there be differences between teachers of mathematics? Let them each agree to make a small concession so that both can teach the same way. Then children can be taught that 2 and 2 are 3-1/2. Whoever refuses to accept such a loving, agreeable solution is a fanatic, a bigot, and is no longer worthy to be teacher of mathematics. What would you say to this?

Christians love unity but not at the expense of truth.

The Christian church possesses definitive truth much sure than mathematics because it has been revealed by God Himself. From my wallet I can give a man as much as I like, because it is my money. From God's truth I can give nothing. There might be variations among Christians in nonessentials, just as there exist varieties of orchids. I will accept any rose of another color, but I cannot accept a thistle as a rose. Love is not sufficient reason to abandon one word, one letter of the Bible. I can love the heretic, but not the heresy.

Christ is God. He became man, was born of the Virgin Mary, died for our sins, was resurrected bodily, and ascended into heaven. Anyone is free to believe otherwise, but then I wish no unity and no dialogue with him. Professors of mathematics don't conduct dialogues with their pupils. They proclaim the truth and it must be accepted. Christians also proclaim the truth. Whoever refuses to accept it, will perish.

Apr 10
|
"O sing unto the LORD a new song. (PSA 96:1)

It is much more important to save the youth than to save the old manner of worship or the old songs to which we are accustomed. We live in a world in which minds and hearts have been revolutionized. New songs and new manners of worship have arisen. The older generation of Christians feel offended, as if God were inseparably linked only to the liturgy which they have known from childhood. They forget that what is now old was itself once new.

The ~St. Matthew Passion~ of Bach was not accepted in his day. After a few performances it lay forgotten for a hundred years. The ~Great Organ Mass~ of Haydn was declared sacrilegious by the founder of the German Cecilian order, who wrote: "It compares to pure church music like a prostitute to a queen or like a waltz to the death of Christ." This priest, Witt, wrote to the Pope ... he considered this music more suitable for salons: "The military and bacchantic rhythms don't correspond to the earnestness of the church services and the sacrifice on the cross."

Missionaries to Africa tell how much more the hearts of converts are moved when the organ is replaced by their drums.

Open your heart to music and church practices which you personally may not like. They may be helpful to someone with another frame of mind. They may even help someone else praise the Lord better.

Apr 11
|
"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (MTT 22:39)

Don't be content simply to admire the beauty of this commandment or even to tell it to others. Rather sit down and write on a sheet of paper the names of the neighbors who are in need of your love.

Who is frustrated? Who is lonely? Who has been forsaken by his marriage partner or by his children? Who is a dropout?

Squeaky Fromm, of the infamous Manson cult, was driven out by her parents who never exhibited any love for her. When she sat helpless and forsaken in a gutter, Manson, the future killer, passed by and asked her, "Do you need love? I love. Follow me." She followed him and became a member of a satanic sect that knew how to disguise itself behind loving words. She became a drug addict and made an attempt on the life of former President Ford. Now she is serving a life sentence in

prison. Think how different her life might have been if a Christian had stopped to befriend a girl weeping by the roadside and had shown her the love of Christ.

Your neighbor who needs your love might be a refugee from a foreign land, he might be one of the many who starve in Africa or India, he might be one of those who lack a knowledge of Christ on a Pacific island, in a Communist or Moslem land, or in your own reputedly Christian country. Don't stop to admire the dictum "Love your neighbour" as you would a picture in an art gallery, but begin to love in
a practical way.

Apr 12
|
"What ... God hath joined together,
let not man put asunder." (MTT 19:6)

God hates divorce (MAL 2:16). There is really only one basic reason why people divorce. It is that they had no real motive for marriage. They either did not marry with the intent of sacrificing their whole life to the earthly and eternal well-being of the spouse. or else they have abandoned this intent.

It would be unrealistic not to admit that sometimes it is best for a couple to part. Jesus cites the case of adultery, by which He does not mean one instance of falling into sin, but a permanent life style of the marriage partner. We cannot limit permission to divorce to this either. Otherwise we would be like some who might quote the Scripture, "Pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin" (MTT 23:23), to justify not tithing other sources of income. The products mentioned in this Bible verse are only examples of different kinds of earnings.

Likewise, Jesus' mention of adultery as motive for divorce is that there must be a motive as important as this. What can one do when the spouse is a compulsive gambler or an incurable drug addict or alcoholic, when he (or she) endangers the upbringing of children, when he deserts the family, when overt cruelty and homosexuality persist? If the erring spouse refuses to take corrective measures, one cannot insist that the partner remain involved in his illness. I would not remain married to someone who obliged me to be an accomplice in crime.

The best prevention of divorce is earnest prayer and the willingness to open one's eyes and engage in mature reflection as well as
consultation with experienced people regarding marriage and children. Girls who marry under the age of twenty have, statistically, three times as great a chance of winding up in divorce court as those who marry later. A survey reveals that 31 percent of girls who married between fourteen and eighteen were pregnant at the time.

Parents, be loving to and considerate of each other, not only for

your own happiness and to prevent divorce, but also to serve as an example to your children of what marriage should be, so that theirs will not end in divorce.

Apr 13
|
"Search the scriptures." (JHN 5:39)

In Madagascar, during all the persecution between 1836 and 1861, Christians not only kept their faith alive by secret Bible reading, but the church increased tenfold under this experience. The Formosan hill tribes, almost untouched by Christianity before the Second World War, resisted Japanese pressure and emerged with firmly planted Christian communities based on nothing but the study of the Bible. In Kenya, under the threat of the Mau Mau, it was the Christians whose lives were most deeply rooted in the Bible who stood firm against all attempts to get them to take the heathen Kikuyu oath. The toughness of indigenous churches depends on the degree of devotion to the Bible. The organization of the church, even its ministers and priests, may be destroyed without ultimate disaster so long as the people have - and read - the Bible.

Not everywhere is there persecution, but everywhere the world is adverse to true Christianity. We have to be versed in the Scriptures if we wish our faith to survive.

In Red China, Mao's book of "thought," the most pestilential volume ever vomited forth from the jaws of hell, is chanted in every house and on every street under compulsion. Erasmus, one of the great translators of the Bible, said, "I could wish that the husbandman might sing parts of Scripture at his plough." Speak to each other in psalms and Scriptures. In this lies the salvation of the church.

Be thankful to God that you belong to the privileged elite (only 40 percent of mankind) who know how to read. Be thankful that you belong to the much narrower circle of those who can have a Bible. (In one half of the world it is not available.) You are privileged in that you are able
to afford to buy a Bible. (Many desirous Christians in Latin America, Africa, and India have no money for a Bible.) Make the searching of the Scriptures your daily occupation.

Apr 14
|
"I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (GAL 2:20)

Among all the biblical authors, I particularly love those whose names are unknown. Moses quotes "The book of the wars of the LORD" (NUM 21:14). Who is its author? JOS 10:13 mentions "the book of

Yasher," which means "the righteous." Who might have written it? Paul quotes a Greek poet who said, "We are also [God's] offspring" (ACT 17:28). His saying was of such a superlative nature that it transcended the importance of its author.

When people sing your verses they have become verses indeed, but when a poet is quoted as authority by an apostle of Christ to support his argument, there is no longer need to remember his human name.

Such is the glory of those who write the real songs of God. It is as if they were not written by mere man. A Buddhist legend says a man painted such a masterful picture of Buddha that when he finished only the painting remained. The painter was no longer there. The same is true of the real Christian author, poet, preacher, and of the layman who witnesses as a rank-and-file Christian to another person. He must cease to be himself and must unite with the soul of his listener who starts to believe. He must become one with Jesus about whom he writes or speaks.

When you write, speak, or act for Jesus, let Him infuse your heart with His sacred spirit. You might lose your name by this, but you will gain eternity. You will be quoted by God without mention of a name, because the mystical marriage will have taken place. You will have become united with Him.

Apr 15
|
"The greatest ... is charity." (1CO 13:13)

An old legend says that in the beginning there was God and two swallows. One swallow whispered into the ears of God, "Make something. We should have trees in which to make nests, and air through which to fly, and many countries so that we might migrate to and fro. Life is boresome in a nothing." The other swallow chirped,"Don't create, my God. Once You create matter, energy, and movement, who knows which molecule will unite with which. Some rapacious birds might appear which would eat us up, there might be tempests in which we will perish, and who knows what else. Let it be as it is." God answered, "I wish to create. I wish to have beings on whom to pour My love and who would love Me."

The swallow warned again, "Once You create beings with changing sentiments, thoughts, and moods, they may at a certain moment not love You, but come to hate You. Even a God cannot calculate all possibilities involved in a huge creation. Let us be just as we are, You and the two swallows." The other bird insisted, "Make a world. I promise that I will chirp even if the world turns bad. I will chirp even when I know rapacious birds are stalking me and naughty children have

set traps to catch me."
So God decided to make the world. He took upon Himself the risks love, the risks everyone has to take when he begins a friendship or a marriage, the risks everyone has to take when he launched a new idea. He decided to love and, because He loves, we learn to trust and to hope and to aid.

The only alternative to love is nonexistence. If love should totally disappear in the world. the world would no linger be. Think about it.

Apr 16
|
"Do all things without ... disputings." (PHP 2:14)

Six blind men tried to ascertain what an elephant was. One felt its side and thought it a wall. One felt its ear and thought it a fan. One felt its leg and thought it a pillar. One felt its tail and believed he had touched a snake, and so on. We know in part (1CO 13:12).

The story is told how several blind men, cured by the Lord discussed at a party how Jesus heals blindness. The one said, 'I can tell it from my own experience. He simply says, 'Your faith has healed you.' " The other objected, "This is Protestant disregard of good deeds. Faith alone does not suffice. Jesus touches the eyes of the blind man." To which a third added, "It must be done twice. If he touches you only once you see men walking like trees." The former insisted that he had been touched only once and notwithstanding saw perfectly. A fourth one said, "You all have talked nonsense. Jesus makes mud by spitting on the earth. He puts the mud on your eyes. Then you have to go to wash yourself in a certain pool in Palestine. No other pool will do. What you have spoken until now are fancies."

So the four former blind men fall into a great quarrel. Each formed his own denomination. Once Jesus gathered the heads of the four denominations and asked them, "I have healed you all, each one in a different way. Would it not have been better for you to unite in thanking Me for what I have done? Am I not free to heal everyone as I see best?

What you condemn as the error of your brother might very well be a valid personal experience of his with the Lord Jesus.

Apr 17
|
"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit,
saith the LORD of hosts." (ZEC 4:6).

An admirer of modern art wrote in an English newspaper that "this art is democratic. Anybody can do it." You can make two strokes with the brush in yellow and three others in blue. Make a circle around them in red. The circle does not even need to be round. Paste on it a nose and one eye of a girl cut out of a newspaper. Call it "Mankind's Glorious Future" and critics may well label your painting exciting. It is really exciting. Exciting of what?

Ungifted, untalented, and untaught men produce so-called works of art. Ungifted preachers preach. The result is that many churches are being emptied. Luther made preaching the center of the worship service, rather than Holy Communion, as had been the case before. He forgot to consider that the world does not have many good preachers.

Look at the Pieta. Two life-sized statues are combined into one group. Michelangelo cut into the stone and placed the body of a full-grown man in the lap of a maid. She looks much younger than her son. She has kept the beauty of virginity. He has been the Man of Sorrows. Her face is calm. She knows about resurrection. Such artists are not found on every street. Neither can you make preachers like John Chrysostom by passing boring speakers through theological exams.

Jesus must live within the heart before He becomes the subject of a sermon or a personal witness. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (MTT 12:34).

Preachers who are not gifted should become something else or be born again with the gift of preaching. Even an uncultured and untalented man can speak interestingly about the person he loves most. Mothers know how to tell about the good in their children. Only those who love Jesus greatly should speak about Him. Otherwise our witnessing for Him will look like modern art. Anyone can do it, but it is not beautiful. Or significant.

To be eloquent in personal witnessing or preaching depends not upon scholarship, but upon being fervent in the Spirit.

Apr 18
|
"The day of the Lord ... is ... a day of darkness and of gloominess." (JOE 2:1,2)

The Lord taught us to say, "Thy kingdom come." He did not

mean us to say it light-heartedly. If His kingdom were to come today it would mean the entering of many into everlasting fire. "He that believeth
not shall be damned" (MRK 16:16). The believers in Christ are an infinitesimal minority. Where will the others pass their eternity? What will the advent of the kingdom mean for those you love?

A sifting will take place. Some will go to the right, others to the left. Your darling might be found to the left. Can you say with your whole heart, "Thy kingdom come"? Are you willing that many of your family and your nation spend eternity in hell?

The prayer "Thy kingdom come" was taught to give us a sense of urgency. Having both the knowledge of and the desire for its coming, we should spread the gospel around us to the utmost of our abilities.

Be cautious with books about biblical prophecies. I have found that every such book older than twenty years has proven untrue. Luther believed that the advance of the Turks meant the end. Mussolini was said to be the man who would reestablish the kingdom of Rome as allegedly foretold by Daniel. Hitler was considered the apocalyptic beast bearing the number 666 (REV 13:18).

We often have in us an unhealthy curiosity. When the Lord said about the buildings of Jerusalem that there would not be left one stone upon another that would not be thrown down (MRK 13:2), the disciples wanted details about when these things would happen, instead of interceding like Abraham and Moses that the predicted catastrophe might not occur.

There is now much rejoicing about the pouring out of the Spirit in many places. Those who receive His gifts should not forget that the prophecy about this outpouring in JOE 2:28,29 is followed immediately by the announcement of terrible judgments upon mankind. We should not seek merely to interpret these prophecies, but having the Spirit and knowing the dangers, we should become intercessors to prevent the catastrophes. The decrees of God are not unalterable.

Apr 19
|
"All scripture is given by inspiration of God." (2TM 3:16)

During the Reformation, Thomas Muntzer mocked Luther as a scribe addicted to the dead letter of the Bible. He nicknamed Luther a "Bible-gobbler" and said, "It is of no use to have swallowed the Bible one hundred thousand times." Muntzer's religion centered on having the living Spirit. Luther retorted that he would not listen to Muntzer though he had received the Holy Ghost completely, unless he adduced Scripture.

Luther was right in this. St. Jerome had written long before, "To be ignorant of Scriptures is not to know Christ.... A

man who is well-grounded in the Scriptures is the bulwark of the church." The contest between being Spirit-guided and Scripture-guided is artificial, because those who have been inwardly taught by the Spirit feel an entire acquiescence to the Scripture and perceive that self-authenticated, carrying with it its own evidence" (Calvin).

A man would have to demonstrate that his attitudes or words were really inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Bible need not and ought not be made subject to demonstrations and arguments from reason. We have received it from God's mouth by the ministry of men. It is superior to any human judgment. When you read the Scripture with faith, they give you the perception of God Himself. It is wrong to believe the Bible because arguments prove it to be true. We do not judge Word the God; it judges us. It is the invincible truth. Christians submit to it completely. Don't allow any spirit to separate you from any part of it.

Apr 20
|
"To the Jew first." (ROM 1:16)

"The sun has never shone on such a bloodthirsty and vindictive people as the Jews, who cherish the idea of murdering and strangling the heathen. No other men under the sun are more greedy than they have been and always will be, as one can see from their accursed usury."

These are the words of Martin Luther. There are other sayings like this in the writings of other great Christian divines, of popes and church fathers.

The sentiments have gone beyond mere words. The Jewish people described as being so despicable have been slaughtered over the centuries by those calling themselves Christians. Hitler received his first education in a Catholic school. He must have heard many times the story about the Jews being God-killers. No wonder that the unjustly hated Jews do not believe in Christ.

The Scriptures, on the other hand, say that the Jews gave to the world the human Son of God (ROM 9:5).

A wanderer walking in a storm drew his overcoat around him tighter and tighter. Then the sun came out with its warmth and light and the wanderer took off his outer garment. Only warm Christian love will lead the chosen people of God, who have gone

astray, to give up their prejudices against Jesus and embrace Him as their Savior. Let us as Christians allow ourselves to reflect on them the light and warmth of the Sun of righteousness.

Apr 21
|
"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." (EXO 20:8,

Many businessmen spend their lives in a frantic endeavor to make money, much of which they don't even need (the best proof being that they keep it stored in banks). This accumulation of wealth enables them to buy things they can go without, in order to impress people they don't like.

What is the good of all this frenetic activity to amass wealth?

One of the most important laws of God is the law enjoining rest: Remember to keep the Sabbath. Stop running after money. Cease your constant striving for achievement. Let up on your engagements and committees. Ease the stress of living. Come apart and rest.

The Sabbath is the oldest of God's institutions. Even the heathen understand the importance - could they have had it from Adam? Relax when possible from work, even from important work. Socrates recuperated from stressful experiences by playing with children. In the Jesuit order it was formerly a rule that after two hours of study there was
a relaxation period of fifteen minutes when something else had to be done. Cardinal Richelieu relaxed by doing strenuous exercises, such as competing against his manservant in the high jump.

Don't allow yourself to be consumed with the desire to earn more money. An increase in your income may not be a necessity, especially if it increases your worries. Take time to enter into a Sabbath rest. Relax. "Come unto me," Jesus said, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden.... and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (MTT 11:28,29). And while you rest, the One who keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps (PSA 121:4).

Apr 22
|
"O grave, where is thy victory?" (1CO 15:55)

Those who accept the materialistic philosophy of life believe that the individual ceases to exist at death. This contradicts the principle of conservation of energy which is a cornerstone of science. The energy condensed in the atoms constituting my body doesn't disappear at death. As the body decays, these atoms form other combinations. The caloric energy I have does not disappear. It remains a part of the constant total

energy of the universe. When the stove gets cold its former warmth has been communicated to the room. So it is when my body becomes a cold corpse.

I also have spiritual energy; the power to will; sentiments; conscience. We know of no kind of energy which should disappear in this universe. There is not the slightest proof to convince us that spiritual energy would be an exception. Death can only transfer it into a new dimension, but cannot destroy it.

The renowned physicist, Maxwell, wrote that "scientific progress ... obliges one to make a profound distinction between the visible side of the human being, which obviously perishes and that which constitutes our 'I' and to adopt the position that human personality, by its nature and calling, lies beyond the borders of the sphere of science." The fact that we cannot comprehend how consciousness could exist when death has severed its ties with the brain - because in us while we are living, mind and brain are connected - does not prove that after death consciousness has disappeared.

The German writer, Goethe, said: "My conviction that we will live eternally stems from the notion of activity. If I will be energetically active until my end, nature, when it sees that my body cannot bear anymore the burden of my spirit, will be obliged to provide me with some other form of existence."

Continue your good work diligently, not worrying about death. God, who has given you a body for the present work, will have to give you another one at death if your work is pleasing to Him.

Apr 23
|
"One soul of five hundred." (NUM 31:28)

In Numbers 31, we are told how God gave the Jews a great victory over the Midianite people. The Jews took a great spoil. God told them to
give to the temple a five-hundredth part of it. God is modest. There are
times when He asks little.

When the Son of God became incarnate, He chose as His place of birth a stable; as His way of life, sorrow; as His manner of death, crucifixion.

He chose as disciples twelve despised men (1CO 1:28). He

allows the world at times to be ruled by monsters and keeps for Himself a little flock. The wicked triumph and the Christians pass through sufferings.

If you ask "Why this modesty of God?" the answer would be, "It is a very immodest thing to question the Creator. Don't ask why, but take your modest place near your modest God."

Christ's church and real Christians never boast of great achievements. His kingdom is not of this world. Here the great achievements belong to tyrants and crooks. God's successes in this world are always modest, for His triumph is in the realm of the spirit.

Be happy about your modest achievements.

Apr 24
|
"I the LORD thy God am a jealous God." (EXO 20:5)

The great painter, Van Gogh, when very sick, wrote to his brother: "I promised myself to consider my illness as nonexistent. Art is jealous. She does not want us to choose illness in preference to her so I do what she wishes. Enough time has been lost, my hands have become too white. People such as I are not allowed to be ill, so to speak. So I have set to drawing regularly from morning until night."

We have a God who is jealous, as art is. He does not want us to escape from problems, disappointments, failures, mischiefs, into nervous breakdowns or mental illness. Christians are not allowed to absent themselves from their work under the pretense of being ill. There should be no spiritual sickness.

A man watched Michelangelo shape a statue. He asked him "What do you do if your chisel has taken away a bit too much of the nose?"

Michelangelo answered, "It does not happen."

The man insisted, "Suppose it has happened. Can you repair the fault?"

The sculptor answered again, "It does not happen."

The man could not understand. "What if it happens?"

Michelangelo shouted angrily at him, "Shut up, and leave me alone! It does not happen!"

"Whosoever abideth in [Jesus] sinneth not" (1JN 3:6),

in the sense that he never allows himself the luxury of abandoning his art, his calling, for sin's sake or for trouble's sake. He continues his walk on the way of the Lord. The Lord is jealous. He does not willingly accept or allow us to wallow in sins, sorrows, or laziness.

Apr 25
|
"We also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." (HEB 12:1)

A Christian prisoner in Cuba was asked to sign a statement containing accusations against brethren, which would have led to their arrest. He said, "The chain keeps me from signing this."

The Red officer replied, "But you are not in chains."

"I am," said the Christian; "I am bound by the chains of witnesses who throughout the centuries gave their lives for Christ. I am a link in this chain. I will not break it."

Thomas Aquinas, after having called martyrdom the greatest proof of perfect love, adds: "Words pronounced by the martyrs before authorities are not human words, the simple expression of a human conviction, but words pronounced by the Holy Spirit through the confessors of Jesus."

Learn from the martyrs. You too are a link in this chain. Remain faithful!

Nijole Sadunaite, a young Christian lady, said before the court in Lithuania when she was sentenced for her faith: "This is the happiest day of my life. I am tried for the cause of truth and love toward men ... I have enviable fate, a glorious destiny. My condemnation will be my triumph. I regret only to have done so little for men.... Let us love each other and we will be happy. Only the one who loves not is unhappy.... We must condemn evil, but we must love the man, even the one in error. This you can learn only at the school of Jesus Christ"

This is the teaching which the Holy Spirit gives you through a sufferer for Christ. Apply it in your own life.

Apr 26
|

"The fruit of the Spirit is love ... against such there is no law." (GAL 5:22,23)

More than one third of the world is under Communist dominion. One aim of the Communists is eradication of religion. Bibles have to be smuggled into most countries of the Red bloc. Is it right for Christians sometimes to do illegal things and things which contravene generally accepted moral standards?

The Jewish high priests had a promise from God that He would speak to them from between the two cherubim on the ark of the covenant in the temple. They felt safe. Never would the Messiah dare to come without telling them in advance. No ruler from abroad would visit a country without giving notice. Thus the Roman governor was also sure. The king of the Jews could not appear in the world without his knowledge.

One night, the Light of the world "smuggled" Himself into Palestine as a babe, after having been in the womb of a holy virgin, contrary to accepted moral standards and the laws of biology.

Then He was crucified and buried. A seal was put on His grave by the authorities. Now everyone knows that one is not supposed to break a government seal. But angels are not bound by earthly laws. An angel just rolled away the stone, not caring about the seal.

Would we have advised Jesus to abide by the law and remain in the grave once the authorities had sealed the tomb? Jesus "smuggled" Himself out of the grave into life again.

Some think that we should not break the laws of Communist tyrants. Jesus "broke" the law of gravity and ascended into heaven.

Augustine taught a principle valid for all spheres of life: "Love and do as you like."

Apr 27
|
"Be ye angry and sin not." (EPH 4:26)

Anatolii Krasnov-Levitin, a Soviet writer, said: "Love and anger are sisters. Where there is no anger, there is no love. The words of the ancient prophets were full of a strong wrath because their hearts were full of a powerful love towards their

own people, and love brought forth wrath not only against the oppressors of the people, but also against the people themselves because they did not follow the ways of truth. There was also a strong wrath in the words of our Saviour when he looked on the Scribes and Pharisees...." Who does not feel horror and anger against sins has no Christian or human feelings.

To be kind toward offenders is not always the wisest course. Absalom had committed a crime. He had directed his servants to kill his brother Amnon (2SM 13:28). After this murder, Absalom fled from before the face of King David. Banishment is a well-deserved punishment for someone who takes the law into his own hands and kills someone who has never been sentenced to death by the only appointed judge, which was the king. Absalom should have been left in this self-imposed exile.

Instead, David listened to bad advice and forgave the murderer, though he had not shown any sign of repentance and change of life. Nor had he even humbled himself to ask for pardon. So Absalom became big again in Jerusalem and was free to organize a bloody rebellion against his father, King David. Much innocent blood flowed and there was much sorrow. It could easily have been avoided if David had shown in this case holy wrath instead of unholy meekness.

Everyone must pay for his sin, unless he has become a new person through new birth by believing that Jesus paid the penalty for his sin; as it is written, "the chastisement of our peace was upon him" (ISA 53:5). Only then do we have a guarantee that goodness will not be misused.

Apr 28
|
"Jesus said: Take ye away the stone ...." (JHN 11:39)

In a small town, the hearse driver was an unbeliever. The pastor of the church had tried repeatedly to bring him to God without success. One day the car of the pastor was being repaired, and on that day he had to conduct a burial service. So he sat in the hearse next to the driver. He made a new attempt to bring the driver to conversion.

"Sir, would you please do me a favor?" the pastor asked. The Bible contains a difficult verse which speaks about your profession. Help me to understand it. Our Lord Jesus said, 'Let the dead bury their dead.' Now, a dead hearse driver cannot drive a corpse to the cemetery. A dead grave digger cannot dig a grave.

A dead pastor cannot deliver the funeral sermon. What is then the meaning of these words?"

The driver laughed. "Have I not always told you, pastor, that the Bible is sheer nonsense? Take these words of Jesus only and you have the proof of it."

The pastor replied, "Before discarding it, let us consider it a little bit. When the coffin with the dead man whom we have behind us was taken out of the house, you heard his wife crying, 'George, don't leave me alone! Return!' The children also begged their father to stay with them. It was in vain. The dead did not answer because he was dead.

"The same happens with you. For years Christ, the angels Christians have called you to repentance and you have not answered, because you also are dead-spiritually. So a man who is dead spiritually buries a man who is bodily dead. The words of ur Lord do make sense."

Every man who does not have Christ is dead spiritually. Bodily he may live in a nice home. Spiritually his abode is in a grave. Jesus would like to resurrect him from there, as He resurrected Lazarus bodily long ago. Bodily resurrections have been rare, but the Lord wishes the spiritual resurrection of all who are dead in sins and error. He asks us the believers, to be His co-workers in this. He is the only One who can raise the dead, but we are called to take away the stones from the graves.

Apr 29
|

"The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." (GAL 3:8)

Which Scripture preached the gospel to Abraham? The first book of the Holy Scriptures which we possess now was written centuries after Abraham's. death. How then did a Scripture give him the news about his becoming a blessing to all nations?

The Scripture explained to Abraham that this promise would be fulfilled in a descendant of his, Jesus Christ. It spoke to Abraham with such power that he rejoiced thousands of years beforehand to see the day of Christ (JHN 8:56).

Now, which Scripture spoke to Abraham? He did not have

our Scriptures. But our Bible tells us that it is based upon more ancient scriptures, that it is an outcry in simple human words of eternal values, for whose expression we lack the adequate language. In DAN 10:21, a being from heaven told Daniel: "I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth," and he showed him things which were not contained in any holy Scripture written for men until then. In NUM 21:14, "the book of the wars of the LORD," is mentioned and JOS 10:13 mentions "the book of Jasher" (which means in Hebrew "the righteous").

Under special circumstances men specially endowed by God are privileged to read these books. This is what Abraham did. Our Bible puts in human words, accessible to us, thoughts inspired by God. Those other books contain the same thoughts, as they are before being pressed into the narrow frame of human language.

Climb to spiritual heights. Then you will not remain only at the Bible, but will arrive at mysteries of God which can only with great difficulty be put into human words. We apprehend them in moments of ecstasy.

Apr 30
|
"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." (JHN 3:16)

A minister had tried unsuccessfully to bring faith to a great railroad trade union leader. Then a strike broke out. It was prolonged. The strikers tightened their belts and held to their demands in the face of hunger and mounting debt.

The minister went to visit the trade union leader and told him, "I have a suggestion which will enable you to win the strike. You can get the full weight of public opinion behind you."

For the first time, the leader became interested in the words of the preacher and asked to learn the proposal. The minister explained, "To demonstrate the truly desperate condition of the workers, and to arouse compassion for them, tie your son to a railroad track and run over him with a locomotive. You will have the victory."

Indignant, the trade leader refused. "I would rather see the whole world starve before I would sacrifice my only son."

God could have sent an ancient saint or an angel to die

for us, but instead He gave the best in heaven, Jesus Christ. Realizing the extent of the sacrifice, our hearts are moved to repentance. Jesus died for our sins on Good Friday. But death could not hold Him. Death is a low quality phenomenon. It could not contain the best. He was resurrected. This is what we celebrate on Easter Sunday - Christ's conquering death.

God gave the best He had. We also are meant to give our best. The strict rules of the Jewish temple specified that offerings brought to the Lord had to be of the finest flour.

May 1
|
"He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none." (LUK 3:11)

"Be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats" (MRK 6:9).

During the persecution of Christians under the Roman emperor Diocletian, a Christian, Eustrat, was shod in iron boots with big, sharp nails fixed inside. In these boots, beaten the entire time to run faster, he was led to martyrdom. The church honors his memory.

We are not all called to such sufferings. Martyrdom is the exception. Not all have to wear shoes with nails which would pierce the flesh.

However, God does look into our wardrobe. He taught His first disciples simplicity in clothing. Some contemporary Christians are careful to have the right doctrine, others the right ritual. What about the right number of shoes and suits and dresses?

Christians should give everything they have to the Lord, considering themselves not as owners, but as stewards of material riches. They strip themselves even of their own selves to follow the naked and barefoot Christ on His way to Golgotha.

Christians should be careful about how much clothing and food they have. Billions of souls need the gospel. The children of God will be arrayed in glory in the future.

May 2
|
"... hath God chosen ... things which are not." (1CO 1:28)

"He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them.... So they did eat, and were filled" (MRK 8:6,8).

Suppose the disciples would not have had seven loaves, but only three or one; what would have happened? The multitudes would have been satisfied just the same. As a matter of fact, on another occasion Jesus had only five loaves of bread instead of seven. Notwithstanding, He fed an even bigger multitude and a greater number of baskets of fragments remained behind (MRK 6:41-43). You can serve God with the little you have. His blessings do not depend upon the size or quantity of what you have, but upon the fact that you bring them to Him.

Suppose I have nothing to bring, what then? This is impossible, for a man who has nothing to bring to Jesus does not exist. Neither the word, nor the symbol "zero" occur in the Bible.

He can bring his own person, that person which says, "I possess nothing; I am nothing." He has something valuable: himself and his utter poverty. He can bring his sins to Jesus. From the sin of being a fanatic persecutor, Saul of Tarsus was made by God into a zealous apostle. From a sinful, loose woman Mary Magdalene was made a saint possessing steadfast love. Bring your weakness to Christ. This you surely have. His strength will show its perfectness in your weakness.

Start with little, but instead of using this little, bring it to Jesus. And He will multiply it and greatly bless it.

May 3
|
"... Cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." (EPH 4:14)

Christians should study Mao Tse-tung's works. Before he quarreled with his Russian comrades, he stated the tactics of all Communists in his book, On Protracted War: "Deliberately creating misconceptions for the enemy and then springing surprise attacks upon him in one means ... of achieving superiority and seizing the initiative. What are misconceptions? ... Making a feint to the east but attacking in the west is a way of creating misconceptions among the enemies.... There can never be too much deception in war."

Add to this the fact that for Maoists class struggles and revolutionary wars are the desirable, permanent state of things for centuries to come, and you will learn that according to them, deceitfulness must be a main feature of man's character.

Jesus teaches, "Let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay" (MTT 5:37). We have to choose between a life of lies or a life rooted in truth.

May 4
|
"As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread." (JHN 21:9)

The disciples were hungry and the Lord Jesus had provided them with a meal.

In this instance He prepared it Himself. At other times He charged an angel to care for a saint. When the prophet Elijah slept under a tree, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baked on the coals and a cruse of water at his head" (1KI 19:6).

It is easy to believe in these miracles after having eaten well, but in some parts of the world Christians are in jail where the food is soup made of unwashed intestines. The dung is swimming in the soup. For such food, you have to do hard slave labor.

Our imprisoned brethren do not suffer only physically. Their faith is stressed, too. Doubts arise. "The Lord is almighty. He could provide food for the first apostles or for Elijah. Why does He not provide some fried fish or cake for me? Why have I to eat unwashed intestines?"

God has provided the necessary food for the Christian prisoners. Only this time, He has not entrusted angels with it, but their fellow Christians. As He had charged an angel to feed Elijah, now He has charged the Christians of the free world to provide their imprisoned brethren with food. It is tragic that many of those who have the task of feeding martyrs steal what God has given them for this purpose and deprive the martyrs of their due.

Are you one of these thieves?

God has also provided for the freedom of Christians under

different anti-Christian rulers. However, the Moseses and Joshuas of today those to whom God has entrusted the freedom of the world and of His people, are on strike. Pharaoh has bribed them and they are now on his side.

Would you do something for the freedom of the world?

May 5
|
"The angel of the Lord appeared unto [Joseph] in a dream." (MTT 1:20)

A Chinese poet said, "I dreamed last night that I was a butterfly and now I don't know whether I am a man who dreamed he was a butterfly or perhaps a butterfly who dreams now that he is a man."

The Bible attributes great significance to dreams. It tells thirty-six dreams and also their interpretations. Was Old Testament Joseph basically a shepherd who dreamed of being a ruler or had he the character and talents of a ruler and only dreamed while awake that he was a shepherd? Had Nebuchadnezzar been a king who dreamed at night that he was a beast or was he essentially a wild beast who fancied during daytime he was worthy of kingly honor?

Who wishes to know himself and others should be attentive to his dreams. If New Testament Joseph would have despised dreams as a source of knowledge, he would not have covered the unusual pregnancy the Virgin Mary. She would have been stoned under the suspicion of being an unfaithful bride.

Have paper and pen beside you when you go to bed. Date and record the dreams you have. You will find that things which you considered as incredible in the Bible are daily occurrences in your dreams. Practice will make you understand your dreams. The Talmud says, "Dreams which are not interpreted are like letters which have not been opened."

May 6
|
"Does the hawk fly by thy wisdom?" (JOB 39:26)

In wild Alaska, where beavers have not seen men before and don't fear them, you can watch for hours as they fell trees with their sharp teeth and then transport the branches on artificial canals created by them to the sea where their humid

castles emerge from the waters. What they accomplish is a miracle. No atheist could explain how it is that beavers, supposedly the result of an evolution at random, can regulate the level of water in artificial lakes made by them at the exact height necessary for them.

They have dams which open and close according to the changing affluence of waters exactly like it happens in man-made dams. So the level of the water remains equal the entire year. How do the beavers calculate their actions? To create canals and dams like those of the beavers. we would need a staff of first-class engineers. What is a recent discovery in human technique to give to dams a slight curl toward the front in order to distribute equally the pressure of the water on the waft - is a secret which the beavers have known for thousands of years. Where waters run quickly they give to the dams a concave curl which dislocates the pressure of the water from the center to the shore.

It takes an intelligent Being to create intelligence. If the world of men does not make you believe in God, believe in the One who made the beavers and the ants.

May 7
|
"Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ."
(2CO 3:3)

One of the proofs of God's existence is the existence of good men. An atheist thinker said that the universe is a gigantic accident consequent upon an infinite succession of happy flukes.

Suppose that chance could have brought forth a material universe. No reasonable being will accept the fact that goodness, noble character, self-sacrifice, forgiveness, generosity are the result of an accidental coming together of elementary particles. Throw symbols of notes into the air: they will not fall as Beethoven's ~Ninth Symphony~.

Why would anyone enter the most difficult of fights - how to become a good human being if he was an accidental aggregate of molecules which will be decomposed tomorrow and of whom no remembrance will remain? Some are good because we are designed as good and these have realized their calling.

Become good yourself, after the model of the divine

Master, and your own life will become a proof of God's existence.

May 8
|
"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (JHN 3:16)

This verse is the heart of the Bible. It contains its main message. Every word in it is grand:

"God" - He is the grandest source of everything good;
"so loved" - it is love at its highest peak;
"the world" - it is the widest object which love can have;
"he gave" - giving is the best expression of love;
"his only begotten son" – the grandest gift which could be made;
"whosoever" - it is the greatest number which can be comprehended;
"believes" - the simplest condition possible;
"in him" – the One most trustworthy, faith in whom presents no problem;
"should not perish" - it is delivery from the worst fate;
"but" - the greatest alternative to perishing;
"have" – the greatest assurance – it is a possession not a hope;
"everlasting life" – life of which there can be no longer and no better.

When my son was six years old I asked him if he did not find this verse to be wonderful. He said, "Not at all. I find it normal. For a rich man it is normal to give much and for a God it is not wonderful, but the normal to give no less than His Son and no other life than the everlasting one."

May 9
|
"The King eternal, immortal, invisible." (1TM 1:17)

Why is God unseen? For the same reason that a snowflake that has fallen on a white blanket would be unseen. God is very good. "... everything that he has made ... was very good" (GEN 1:31). How can you distinguish very good from very good? There is not the slightest bit of goodness in Him which He would not have communicated to His creatures.

He does not stand before a mirror, like the wicked queen

in Snow White, the fairy tale, to ask, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is fairest of us all?" He cannot be the fairest; no superlative can be attributed to Him, because there exists no fairness of His which He would not have shared with the singing birds, the brooks, the majestic mountain peaks, with children.

How much effort does it take for a girl to fall in love with a fair prince? None. So every striving to love God wholeheartedly is false. You cannot help loving Him. The angels told a prophet, "The whole earth is full of his glory" (ISA 6:3), of no less glory than He has on His throne.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (MTT 5:8). God is seen in all things and in all events. What makes Him seem unseen is our impurity. Be washed in the blood of Christ, receive the Holy Spirit, and you will behold with open face, though as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, yea, you will be changed into the same image (2CO 3:18).

May 10
|
"We ... rejoice in hope." (ROM 5:2)

The most unfounded hope is much more founded than the most founded despair. I know it from my own experience.

I was sentenced to twenty-five years of hard labor. I had been deathly sick in prison, and doctors had abandoned any hope that I would recover. Under those circumstances I had a completely unfounded hope of ever leading a world-wide mission, having as its purpose the helping of persecuted Christians in Communist countries. Despair and suicide would have been logically justified. There seemed no hope that I would see my son again. Now I have my grandchild on my lap.

Never give up hope. The Talmud says that if a man is sentenced to death, has his head on the block, the executioner has already lifted his axe, and he thinks, "Now I am lost," he is unfaithful. The axe can fall from the executioner's hand. It happened like this with the Romanian King Michael the Brave.

Euthanasia is false. Men doomed by all the doctors of the world can live. Hope for your business, for your children. Hope for your character even though, in spite of thousands of endeavors, it has not improved yet. We have as our hope a God who hung "the earth upon nothing" (JOB 26:7). A hope which He gives holds good even without any foundation.

May 11
|
"I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (EXO 20:2)

Some Christians think that we should not care about politics.

Did Livingstone know the gospel? When he came to Africa, slave trade was going on. Should Livingstone have allowed the slaves to remain slaves? He had read in the Bible how God freed slaves. He could not remain unmoved when he saw the gangs of innocents, chained by the wrists to a long chain, being beaten with whips, exactly as it happens at the transport of prisoners in many countries today.

These terrible things made Dr. Livingstone burn with anger. Many Christians today have lost the virtue of becoming angry against slavery. Some never do get angry, except against those who fight slavery.

Livingstone never forgot to beg the British people to put down the terrible trade in human flesh and blood. He succeeded. Slavery was abolished in the British empire. Today Livingstone's body lies in Westminster Abbey.

The Jewish ark of the covenant was not only a ritual object, but also an ensign of battle. When the Jews, former slaves, passed the Jordan to fight for a land of their own in which they should be free, the ark was borne by the Levites as a flag would be borne now. It was a symbol of the fight for liberty.

Christians are fighters not only for personal righteousness, but also for righteousness in social relations.

May 12
|
"We which have believed do enter into rest." (HEB 4:3)

Men have not been created to be torturers and murderers. To be criminal is unnatural. Therefore the criminals are terribly tormented themselves. Only a tormented man torments others.

In the "White Book About the Trial Siniavski-Daniel," we find the description of how Lenin used to leave his room and go

into the yard at two o'clock in the morning. Standing in the snow, he would howl at the moon. He did it every night. He howled a little bit, listened if everything was quiet, then he would howl again, until he began to freeze. Then he would re-enter his room to make plans for the future destiny of Russia.

The story has been told by Lenin's own bodyguard.

Not every man is a tormentor on such a large scale as Lenin or Hitler were, but many have the "stuff" of a Bolshevik. We torment our marriage partners, our parents, our friends, our employees. We are brutal, sadistic.

We find our joy in tormenting others, but in reality we are tormented ourselves. Only a troubled man is a troublemaker.

You could free others from your wickedness and you could be free yourself if you would only listen to Jesus' gracious invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (MTT 11:28).

May 13
|
"Thou shalt not kill." (EXO 20:13)

In prisons you may hear thieves condemning murderers harshly. They say, "We can repent and make restitution for what we have stolen. Even if we don't, our victim can earn other money. But you cannot give back the life you have taken from a man. You are criminals."

They have a point. Every sin destroys the relationship between man and man. It also renders man more and more insensitive to the appeal of God. But killing is an irresponsible sin. If you impoverish a man or destroy his good fame, not everything is lost. The victim still has the chance to attain a good position again. However, murder is definitive. It brings a man before his judge and, if he is unprepared for this, to eternal hell. It is a sin apart, this "sin unto death."

Therefore clergymen who condone violence and propagate revolutions are wrong. Governments which lead their countries into war, when it could be avoided, are also wrong; as are also all bloody rioters. Why should revolutions be needed?

V. Tarsis, the Soviet writer, tells in his book, ~Message From an Asylum~, the story of a man who was considered to be crazy by the Communists. This man said: "I began to read the

Bible daily. I must confess it is the most dangerous and seducing book. I don't wonder that the comrades observed it and forbade its distribution. Because, if you have read the wise words of the Bible, you can only roar with laughter about revolutions."

When you can have perfect peace of heart and joy even while being oppressed and poor; when you are sure of an eternal, beautiful life in paradise, it will not pass through your mind to spill blood in order to change the social order in this transitory world.

Christians do not participate in these things. They remember God's words, "Thou shalt not kill."

May 14
|
"The ruler of the feast ... saith unto [the bridegroom], Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now." (JHN 2:9,10)

The devil sometimes gives good things first: beautiful promises selfish pleasures. After much of life has been drunk, a worse wine follows these: a wrecked life, remorse, spiritual blindness, and, in the end, the worst - eternal damnation.

Love knows that the best things are yet to come. It already has the joy of obeying God's commands, fellowship with Christ, with His holy angels and the great communion of saints. This joy, for the present, is mingled with the bitterness of the cross. Now it is a glory in tribulation, distress, persecution, and nakedness, in that amidst tears and shedding of blood, the bride of Christ never ceases to hope. She knows her bridegroom has stored up in His banqueting house the best of wines for the age to come. She is not in a hurry as those who believe they have only this short life. Love does not hasten to obtain results. She can bear with transitory failures, sufferings, and defeats. The last victory is hers.

Not daunted by conflicts, but positively inspired by them, Christians go ahead. Our adversaries don't know the unspeakable joys reserved by Christ for those who are on His side when He is in pain. We love and believe that love will win.

The church of Christ is not endangered by the sinful world. Even the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. It is the sinful world which is rather endangered by the existence of the

church, because the last victory is ours.

May 15
|
"Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (EPH 4:24)

Ordinarily, men confuse holiness with goodness, though these are different virtues. "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (GEN 1:31). After this "very good" followed something entirely different.

"God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (GEN 2:3). Sanctification belongs to another sphere than goodness.

A man can be very good, without being holy or put aside for God. There are extreme cases when men are holy without being good. Where is the goodness of Gideon, Jael, Joshua? They were fighters for the triumph of the chosen people. By this they were holy. Those who have read the lives of Athanasius, Luther, and Calvin, see little trace of goodness in them. These men fought ruthlessly for a truth entrusted to them, hitting their adversaries relentlessly. The truth must be victorious.

We become holy by feeding upon the right spiritual food.

In an experiment it was found that worms which usually live in the darkness can be conditioned to leave this habitat and to prefer the light. As often as they would withdraw into darkness, they would get electric shocks, whereas if they came out in the light, they found abundant food. With time, these beings "put on a new worm," to use the biblical expression. Contrary to the habits of their species, from that time on they preferred the light to darkness. Then these worms were cut into small pieces and added in the food given to other worms and, lo, these worms also changed their habits. They had increased, with the addition of the flesh of the new breed of worms, their ribonuclear acid, the depository of memory. They would shun darkness and prefer light just as the beings upon which they had fed. Similar experiments have also been made with other animals.

If you wish to put on the new man, a man of righteousness and holiness, feed upon Christ. He has become flesh in order that He might become your daily food.

May 16
|
"And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head ... So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd." (JON 4:6)

In the Bible the shadow is an image of the transitory. "Our days upon earth are a shadow," says Bildad (JOB 8:9). "[Man] fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not," says Job himself (JOB 14:2). "Man [spends] all the days of his vain life ... as a shadow," says Solomon (ECC 6:12). He had inherited this thought from his father David. "Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding" (1CH 29:15).

Even prophets like Jonah are sometimes "exceedingly glad" in what is transitory.

Jonah first made himself a booth so he could sit under its shadow, forgetting that whatever a man constructs is transitory. A vehement wind overthrew the booth the next day. There is nothing we construct for ourselves which will not be destroyed. Nothing lasts forever. Not even civilizations. Neither will we last here.

Then, Jonah was glad because of the shadow given by a tree but the next day a worm smote the tree. Every tree will die someday. The worm which has eaten it dies. So too the prophet who sat under the tree's shadow. Nineveh to whom he preached would also pass away, although it repented in Jonah's day. Believers die as do unbelievers. There is no sense being glad because of a shadow. Tomorrow you may wish to die because you lost this joy. However, the despair will not last either. It is transitory like every sentiment. Then the earth on which the trees grew, on which men were sometimes glad and sometimes angry will also burn.

Only God is everlasting who says "Should not I spare?" (JON 4:11). He will not spare Nineveh forever. He spares no one forever on this earth. Lazarus, like the others whom Jesus resurrected, had to die again later. Only God remains forever. His word "Shall I not spare?" remains. Shall I not spare in eternity the soul which has trusted in Me?

May 17
|
"Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day ..." (2TH 3:8)

Paul's main subject in his epistles was the One whose countenance is like a thousand suns, releasing their splendor, whose eyes are pure and whose whole being is snowy as white jade.

Christ is his main subject, but not the only subject. Sometimes He writes about himself and His co-workers, as in the verse quoted above.

For us, too, the main preoccupation is the One whose virtues resemble the boundless great ocean and in whom infinitely wonderful jewels are amassed. When you know Him, thought expires in enjoyment.

Notwithstanding, we cannot avoid speaking about pastors. Remind your pastor that for those who live of the gospel it is demanded that:

1) They don't eat the bread of their fellow believers for nothing. A medical doctor can report at the end of the year how many patients he has treated, how many he has cured. A shoemaker can report how many pairs of shoes he has made. A pastor must be able to report about his work of spreading the gospel and about the efficiency of his work.

2) They labor day and night. The day alone is not enough. "Blessed is the man who ... [in the Lord's law] meditates day and night" (PSA 1:2). The fruits come when you continue to work during the night.

Christians must be pastors to their pastors.

May 18
|
"He was bruised for our iniquities." (ISA 53:5)

In a country where persecution reigns, a police officer came to arrest a pastor. He asked the latter, "Do you consider me a monster, like everyone else does?"

The pastor answered, "Monster? No, but an unhappy man who believes that no one loves him. God loves you, yea, even in a special manner. It is for evil men that He became man. He did not come on earth because we were nice like altar boys, but because we were dirty. The dirtier we are, the more right we have to His pity."

The officer defended himself, "I am not as bad as that. I am not a thief."

"You are," answered the pastor. "You have stolen from God."

"What?"

"You have robbed Him of your sins. Our sins belong to Him. They are His property. He came to be born as Son of man to take them. All the dirt of our evil deeds are His, not yours. You are a thief, a robber, if you refuse to give them to Him, to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, who has the right to take them away because they are His property and no one else's. You keep what belongs to someone else."

On that night the pastor remained unimprisoned. The police officer confessed to him his sins. Are you a thief? Do you declare as yours the sins you have committed, though by right they belong to Jesus?

May 19
|
"At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." (MTT 25:6)

The earth turns around on its axis. Midnight is the moment when a part of the earth is the farthest from the sun. Spiritual midnight is the period of the greatest departure of men from God. We are approaching this midnight and its terrific events.

But midnight is not received with the same feelings by the children of God as by the world. At midnight, the firstborn of the Egyptians died, but the chosen people got their freedom.

The Lord has said, "The night cometh, when no man can work" (JHN 9:4). But when a thing is declared impossible in the Bible, this does not refer to the faithful. About them, Jesus declared, "all things are possible to him that believeth" (MRK 9:23).

The holy people can work even at midnight. It was at midnight that Samson took the gates of the city of Gaza (JDG 16:3). At midnight, Ruth received from Boaz the promise, "I will do to thee all that thou requirest" (RUT 3:11). At midnight, Paul and Silas won the jailer of Philippi for the Lord (ACT 16:25).

At midnight, the people of God do their greatest

exploits. Therefore, the psalmist says, "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee" (PSA 119:62).

We are not afraid of the darkness in the world. We work. The bridegroom comes soon. We should not meet Him empty-handed.

May 20
|
"Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish...." (ACT 13:41)

Paul quotes here HAB 1:5, adding to the latter's prophecy, by his authority as an apostle, the word "perish," a word of curse addressed to the adversaries of the gospel. The Lord had already pronounced a doom over Jerusalem. He had cursed the fig tree and it withered. Here Paul warns the Jewish state that it will perish - and so it did soon after. It was only recently that God showed again His pity, gathering in a new Jewish state the scattered sheep of Israel.

It sounds unusual for us that an apostle could say to adversaries, "perish." We know that God is love. This He is, but nowhere does the Bible say that He is only love. You cannot exhaust the description of God by one word, "love." You could describe no man by one word. I am a Christian, but I am also male, tall, a pastor, a sinner, a father, and so on. So, love is only one of the attributes of God. There exists also a righteousness, a wrath, a terror of the Lord. These are as clearly expressed in the Bible as His love.

Paul, after having written the hymn of love in 1 Corinthians 13, writes in the same epistle (1CO 16:22), "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be [cursed]."

Christians have the power to loose and to bind, to bless and to curse. They love their adversaries as individuals and do their best to bring them to salvation, but to the institutions which persecute them, they say prophetically, "perish," and perish they will.

Remember Genghis Khan and his powerful Tartars. In the thirteenth century, without jet planes or atomic weapons, they swept from China to the middle of Europe. It took him half the time it took the Soviets to conquer this territory. But Genghis Khan passed away. We don't fear the stockpiles of bombs which enemies of the gospel have manufactured. Remember Suleiman the Magnificent and his tremendous Turks. Christians prayed and pronounced the word of doom - "perish." The enemy perished.

Spiritual weapons are powerful. They are deadly. One word of Peter dealt death to Ananias and Sapphira, the unfaithful Christians.

May 21
|
"Do justice." (ISA 56:1)

A. Krasnov-Levitin, a Hebrew Christian writer who has been in Soviet prisons for ten years, described a discussion he had with a Christian pacifist. Levitin asked him, "If a bandit attacks your family, why not wrest the axe out of his hand and hit him on the head?"

The pacifist answered, "This is forbidden by the Holy Scriptures. Jesus taught to turn the other cheek if anyone smites you." Levitin replied, "But Jesus never taught to allow your children to be killed by bandits."

He explained further. "What is sensible when only you are attacked becomes foolish when other persons are involved. A man who looks on quietly while another man without defense is beaten, and does not intervene in his favor, is a coward and selfish. This cannot be justified by the doctrine of nonresistance. A man who is silent when falsehood triumphs, is also a coward and selfish.... Mildness, forgetting about insults addressed to your person, are needed to concentrate the will of man toward fighting against injustice, lies, and evil in which the world lives."

The words, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness," Levitin explains as a blessedness not only for those who try to make righteousness triumph in the world. Jude writes about the "common salvation." Every saved man fights to make salvation common, to make Christ's principles rule the world.

All real Christians are fighters against injustice and cruelty. Therefore they are persecuted. Don't be satisfied with personal salvation. Save others also.

May 22
|
"Charity ... doth not behave itself unseemly." (1CO 13:5)

These words usually are understood in the sense that a Christian does not behave impolitely. But Paul himself was sometimes terribly impolite. So was the Lord. So were the reformers and their opponents. Where the fate of the church and of the world are at stake, politeness can do much harm.

The Greek word translated by "unseemly" is ~aschemon~. A literal translation would be "charity does not behave without a scheme."

Christ categorizes men as does a zoologist; He frames them in a system, in a scheme. Some men are "sheep," others "wolves," others "dogs," others "foxes." Some He calls fools, hypocrites, and vipers. Others are beloved disciples. He knows about a beast, a Red dragon, and a chosen dove. Love does not behave unseemly, that is without having this scheme in view.

All men must be loved, but I cannot behave toward the "sheep-type" as toward the "wolf-type." I cannot behave with hypocrites as with beloved disciples, with tyrants as with victims. Woe to the shepherd who would not make a difference and would behave the same toward his sheep, his dogs, and toward wolves. Charity does not behave the same toward a good and a bad husband, an obedient and a disobedient child. The attitude of charity depends upon the situation.

Suppose some gangsters attacked an innocent man; I might love them all, but I would try to protect the innocent man, shooting if necessary at the gangsters. Otherwise I would behave unseemly or ~aschemon~, not taking in account the fact that in the scheme of the world they occupy different positions. The same holds true in our attitude toward those who benefit the church and those who harm it, those who defend their country and those who attack it.

Love does not behave unseemly. It has a diversified love according to the place which every man occupies in the scheme.

May 23
|
"Let be, let us see...." (MTT 27:49)

There exists an invincible indifference, insensitivity, and apathy toward suffering.

There was a multitude on Golgotha who attended the crucifixion of men, who actually heard their cries when nails were hammered into their hands and feet. They must have known that at least one of the three crucified on that Good Friday was the best of men. Otherwise He would not have prayed for His torturers. Otherwise He would not have cared to bring a robber to God, while passing Himself through unspeakable physical suffering. Now this Jesus cried, as in despair, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

And what was the reaction of the multitude? They said to each other, "Let be, let us see...." It did not enter their minds to alleviate His suffering by at least giving Him a little bit of

water or a word of compassion. "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him."

Elias is not only the proper name of a prophet of old. It is in Hebrew a short sentence which means "Jehovah is my God." In this sense everyone can be an Elias. In this sense the Lord said that John the Baptist was Elias. Each of us must have Jehovah as his or her God. If the compassionate God Jehovah is master of our lives, we will never remain passive when we see innocent suffering.

Those who are in reality without God have the attitude, "Let be, let us see." Men of this type were attending the crucifixion on Golgotha and were not moved by it. Such men will not be moved by the message of today's sufferings. They are damned. They do not care if the little brethren of Jesus are hungry or in jail. We leave these men to the judgment of God.

There is much inertia and apathy to be overcome even in God's elect. Don't remain passive wherever there is a need; if you can, help.

May 24
|
"He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." (LUK 6:35)

One of the greatest beauties of the Bible is the fact that two verses do not exist in it. First of all, there exists in the Bible no verse in which Jesus asks anyone: "What sins did you commit? How many? Under what circumstances? With whom? Tell me if your sins were venial, small offenses, or huge crimes." Rather, the Bible tells us Jesus went from person to person saying, "Be of good cheer, son; be of good cheer, daughter; your sins are forgiven" - without inquiring what these sins had been. Neither does He ask you about your past.

Second, there is not one instance in the Bible in which someone apologized to Jesus or asked forgiveness. After the Last Supper, all apostles except John had fled; Peter had denied Him. When they met the resurrected Lord, it would have been nice if they had said, "We are sorry." They did not. This was because whoever looks into the face of Jesus sees on it so much understanding and love he can be sure beforehand that "he forgives everything." Christ wishes to save me much more than I wish to be saved. He wishes me to be in heaven much more than I wish to go there. A man must run fast to run away from God, who is after him with His blessings.

Rely on these two verses which are not in the Bible. Believe that He does not hold your sins against you and that His utmost desire is to forgive you.

May 25
|
"Ye are ... a peculiar people." (1PE 2:9)

King Lear said, "When we are born, we cry that we are come to this great stage of fools." He was right. He has been a fool himself entrusting prematurely all he had to children. He should have known that they were shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin (PSA 51:5).

This is a world of fools. It spoke evil of the Best. It called Him a devil. Hamlet was right: "Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny." Othello called pure Desdemona a whore. "A beggar in his drink could not have laid such terms upon his callet."

Juliet was foolish. She had all the right to be enamored at the age of fourteen. Only she did not love wisely. She told Romeo, "Thy gracious self is the god of my idolatry." It is foolish to make an idol of the object of your love. Would she have lived one year more, she might have changed her idol.

Hamlet said to Ophelia, "Marry a fool, for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them." How many men are wise and beware?

Iago said about Cassius, "If I can fasten but one cup upon him, he'll be as full of quarrel and offense as my young mistress' dog." Liquor producers succeed in fastening upon us many cups. The world is drunk.

How well that Jesus told us not to belong to this world. We are in it only as strangers and pilgrims. We don't partake in its foolishness.

May 26
|
"If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (PHP 4:8)

While Cleopas and a friend journeyed toward a village called Emmaus, Jesus joined them. But He had changed. They could not recognize Him. Cleopas asked Jesus: "Art thou only a stranger

in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things?" (LUK 24:18,19).

Jesus showed interest. So many things had happened in Jerusalem in the last days. Two robbers had been crucified. Would one of His disciples have gone to comfort their grief-stricken mothers? Would one have cared to ask Pilate for the corpses of these thieves so they would not be left on the crosses to be devoured by ravens? One of these thieves had become a brother in the faith. His disciples would at least have assured him a decent burial. And what about His executioners? They had shown wickedness. They needed salvation. Would one of Jesus' disciples have loved them and shown them the way to receive forgiveness?

Three days had passed. How many things had happened in Jerusalem in that time? Homes might have broken up, men might have been injured; there had been bereavements. Some would have committed crimes. Some might have composed new hymns to the praise of Jehovah. Mothers would have cared for children. Others would have seen that their fellow men had bread. Many things happen in three days. "What things?" asks Jesus. He is interested in human life in all its aspects, virtues and sins, joys and sorrows. He wishes to share everything with us.

The disciples, while speaking about "things" which come to pass in Jerusalem, really were obsessed with only one thing: with what had happened to Jesus, the Person they loved.

Many Christians are obsessed only with their own personal relationship with the ascended Lord, who can give them peace here and in paradise hereafter. But Christ is the life, the life around them. It is He whom you can see in His brethren, in hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and enslaved humanity. You meet Him as often as you meet a child of God.

May 27
|

"Some doubted." (MTT 28:17)

Doubt has a positive value. Where would science have been if Copernicus had not doubted the generally accepted theory that the earth was the center of the universe; or if Einstein had not doubted the absolute value of Euclid's geometry and of Newton's celestial mechanic? Where would religion be if Abraham had not doubted the polytheistic religion he inherited from his ancestors

- or if the apostles had not doubted the judgment pronounced by the chief priests of their nation that Jesus was a blasphemer?

Doubt is legitimate and necessary. There is more wisdom in honest doubt than in some apparent certainties. Many religious people who seem so cocksure of their place in heaven will be lost. Some preachers will even say to the Lord when He returns, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" And Jesus will reply, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (MTT 7:22,23).

Instead of insisting that you know God, when you only have Him in your imagination, you should be a seeker. Seekers of God are safe. Augustine, the great teacher of Christianity, wrote: "I would not seek you, if I had not found you already in the depth of my heart." Honest doubt is nothing else than a search for truth. But then it is an agony of the spirit. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (PSA 42:1). The hart does not pant after sermons and books about water. It is, not interested in conversations about thirst-quenching. The highest notions, the most poetic phrases about the coolness and beauty of water do not satisfy a thirsty man; neither do exact analyses of water's chemical composition. He wishes the water itself.

So is the seeker of God. People weep rivers of tears because they have lost riches or a child. How many have ever met a teardrop because they could not find God? How many can really say from their hearts the words of the psalmist: "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God ... My tears have been my meat day and night ..." (PSA 42:2,3)?

May 28
|
"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." (EPH 6:10)

In the USA at least ten percent of the children in elementary schools suffer from dyslexia, a perceptual disorder which blocks their ability to read, spell, or write legibly. The percentage must be approximately the same in other civilized countries. Eighty percent of the prison population of the USA is affected with dyslexia, a state of mind, sometimes inherited, which makes you scramble letters and numbers. A ceiling can be confused with a floor, the word "hostile" with "hospitable." "A" may change to "D"; a number series such as 1-2-3 may come out as 2-1-3. The rage and frustration that results from continued

academic failure often is expressed in delinquent and antisocial behavior.

But it must not always be so. Nelson Rockefeller, former vice-president of the United States, said that he also has had this trouble all his life. "I've got reverse reading. I see numbers backwards. I even think of them backwards - that's the worst." He has never mastered spelling, but he overcame his handicap by simply learning to cope with it. Edison was dyslexic, which did not hinder him from becoming a great inventor. General Patton could not read print by the age of twelve. President Wilson also suffered from dyslexia. The same with Albert Einstein, the physicist whose name the universe admires.

Children should be nurtured with two important medicines: the vitamins M and R, lacking often in the nutrition of children today. They stand for morality and religion. Children should be taught that they have a moral duty not to be failures; to achieve something useful in life. They should be taught secondly that there is One who helps to overcome this handicap and others.

You, too, can overcome your handicaps.

May 29
|
"Thou has made [man] a little lower than the angels." (PSA 8:5)

Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, used to boast that he had "completed the uncrowning of man."

Man had been considered to be the crown of God's creation. Then Copernicus showed that man's habitation, the earth, was not the center of the universe as believed until then. Our sun is but one of billions of stars, most of them much larger than ours. Copernicus was a believing Christian and remained so after his discovery; but others drew the conclusion that by reducing the importance of the earth in the universe, man had lost the right to consider himself as a being of special value. Darwin is said to have shown that even on earth man is not something unique and cannot be considered the result of God's design to have a friend, a being with whom to communicate. Man, according to Darwin's hypothesis, is only one of the results of chance evolution, just as gorillas and chimpanzees are. This was a second blow to the superiority of man.

If we really are the product of chance, only matter and not spirit, mere animals, gluttons, and sexists - whence then

arises the resistance to these theories? Do apes and bulls resent being considered such? Do little ants resent that they are not considered elephants? Whence man's self-assertion, his idea that he is God's beloved creature superior to and different from all animals? Whence the voice of conscience and the reaching after spiritual peaks?

"God created man in his own image" (GEN 1:27). Nothing similar is said about any creature in the universe. "[God has] crowned him with glory and honour" (PSA 8:5). Man is the crown of creation. When God wished to become incarnate, He became man on our earth. Unto men a child was born; unto men a son was given, and among his names were: Eternal God and The Everlasting Father (ISA 9:6).

Believe in your unique and great calling and fulfill it. Let God's image be seen in you. Let your light so shine that men will glorify the Father.

May 30
|
"Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt." (GEN 41:29)

Why this exceptional blessing over Egypt? Why should it have great plenty and be warned of famine in meager years to follow? There are three reasons for this which are also the secrets of any successful Christian work:

1. The Pharaoh of that time was every inch a king. He acted as a king not only when awake. His subconscious was also filled with concern for the welfare of his people and he would dream about it at night.

Every Christian is a king. Luther said, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none." But a Christian is a loving king. Therefore, Luther adds, "A Christian is a dutiful servant of all, subject to all."

A Christian does not ~strive~ to be a soul-winner; it is no imposition to him to place the well-being of the church first. His Christian belief has pervaded his subconscious. He simply ~is~ a soul-winner, a man who puts God's kingdom first.

2. Pharaoh, the dreamer of good, meets another dreamer of dreams, Joseph, and is united with him. Do the same.

3. Pharaoh was completely unprejudiced. He was advised to call to his court a foreigner with another color of skin, a man with what must have seemed to Pharaoh a strange religion, a man who worshiped only one unseen God, a prisoner with a bad reputation. The charge for which he had been jailed was assault on a woman with the intent to commit rape.

But to Pharaoh, every man was first of all a man. Every man could be used for the welfare of the country. Men who committed bad deeds yesterday could become good men this morning. And besides, who knew if the charges against Joseph were true? Slaveholders like Potiphar often jailed their slaves without a fair trial.

The fulfilling of these conditions gave Egypt great plenty and provision for themselves and their neighbors in times of famine. These qualities will make you a winner also.

May 31
|

"All is vanity." (ECC 1:2)

When Corinth was besieged by Philip of Macedonia, everyone was involved in the defense of the city. Some repaired the walls; others threw spears and shot arrows. Diogenes, the philosopher, became active too. He rolled his barrel to and fro on a street. Asked why, he replied, "Well, I don't want to be the only lazy one among so many who work."

"But the others do something useful for the city, which is not your case" he was told.

Solemnly, Diogenes continued to roll the barrel. He considered the work of others as useless as his own. Corinth and the Macedonian empire would pass away, regardless of who won this particular battle. The soldiers of both sides would soon die, the victors as well as the vanquished. After a few centuries, who would care about the details of the battle? Is there anyone today who remembers the names of those combatants? The citizens of the city were busy with things which, in the perspective of eternity, will prove to have been as much vanity as the rolling of the barrel.

In this world, where everything passes away, there is one thing that stands: it is what Christ the eternal One did for us on Golgotha. Other works ultimately will be of no avail. The cross of Christ saves sinners, imparting to them the eternity

which the Son of God possesses.

Concerning the cross of Christ, John Chrysostom said: "It is the will of the Father, the honor of the Son, the joy of the Spirit, the jewel of angels, the assurance of the faithful, the glory of Paul."

Don't scorn those who spend their time in amusements, when the earnest labor you take pride in will bring no better results for eternity. Serve Christ, the crucified and resurrected. This is the only work that is not vanity.

June 1
|
"The wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not show the interpretation of the things." (DAN 5:15)

While King Belshazzar of Babylon feasted merrily with his lords and women, a message in Aramaic appeared on the wall. Frightened and sobered, he summoned his counselors to declare the meaning of this unusual occurrence. However, none of them could interpret what had been written. Then he called Daniel and complained to him that his counselors did not know Aramaic.

The language was spoken by the Jews. These captives from Israel had become an important national minority in Babylon, contributing to the empire a prime minister and many other political leaders. But none of the wise men of Babylon had bothered to learn the language, religion, or mentality of the Jews. The enemies of Babylon, the Medes and Persians, were secretly entering the city while the king and his lords entertained themselves. That very night King Belshazzar was slain, and his great empire fell into other hands. His "wise" men lacked wisdom. Not knowing the imminence of the danger, they could not warn the king.

We see the tragic ignorance of these ancient counselors duplicated today. Modern wise men - many who are leaders in the universal church - are clever enough to secure for themselves high positions and the benefits and fame which go with eminence. But they lack an understanding of the people whom they are meant to lead to Christ: nor do they recognize the destructive forces which threaten the church. Today's "wise" men, the spiritual leaders, seem unaware of the grave danger that aggressive Islam, communism, and widespread secularism present to Christianity. The

warning to King Belshazzar had been written by a hand on the wall. The warning to the free world is written in blood, and still our wise men cannot read it.

June 2
|
"And all the brethren which are with me." (GAL 1:2)

Paul had decided to write an instructive letter to the church in Galatia. What he wrote down was the eternal Word of God which would serve as edification of Christians to the end of the world. In such a case you don't write your own opinion. You unite with all your brethren. There exists a faith for all which was once delivered to the saints: the faith held by all brethren always and everywhere. Only in communion with all the saints does one become able to deliver everlasting truth. Therefore, Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians in fellowship with "all the brethren" who were with him.

The One on whom Paul relied most was his brother, Jesus. In Him we trust.

Christ, our brother and Lord, has many holy angels. They, too, are our brethren.

Moreover, the glorified saints also are with us.

When Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, He asked His disciples not to tell anyone. No one, after meeting a man would say to someone, "You know, he had a nose." To have a nose is not unnatural. We are inclined to make much of the supernatural, but Jesus wished us to consider ourselves continually in communion with the saints who have passed on.

We are against spiritualism, the evoking of the dead; we do not wish to feel their nearness. But we believe that the saints who have gone on to be with the Lord are not far away.

The Bible says, "Seeing we also are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses" (HEB 12:1). It is told in the biography of John Chrysostom, the greatest preacher Christianity has ever known, that when he wrote his sermons a Christian saw Paul and John standing near him whispering ideas in his ear. Those who have become as children can believe this story. These experiences are not spoken of often because much talk would show that we do not believe the miraculous to be the normal in the

Christian life, that we do not believe the communion of saints is an everyday experience.

Let us write our letters "together with the brethren who are with us."

June 3
|
"There was a certain rich man, which had...." (LUK 16:1)

"A certain man had...." (LUK 15:11)

The Bible is God's revelation. Revelation is a word of Latin origin with two meanings. It discovers hidden things unknown before, but it also puts some things behind a veil.

From the beginning, the words of our Lord were conveyed to us in Greek, another language than that spoken by Jesus. We have His words in the veil of a translation, which can never convey the full sense of the original. Even the Hebrew of the Old Testament veils the thoughts of God, wrapping them in the poor language of men. The purpose of the Bible is to awaken in us a longing after the blessed state when there was no Creator apart from creation, when there was only God and we were one in Him - when there was no communication among men in words unfit to express the highest thoughts - as it will be again at the consummation of the ages.

Jesus spoke Aramaic, a dialect of the Hebrew language. Neither in Aramaic nor in Hebrew does the word "to have" exist. Jesus never pronounced this word. Jesus never said of anything that He "had" it. Therefore He could keep perfect joy when they undressed Him to be scourged. They took away from Him clothes, about which He had never said, "I have them." He had never said, "I have a body." The body which they tortured was not His. He owned nothing. Jesus had yielded His body to His Father as a living sacrifice before they killed Him.

He taught His first disciples to think in the same manner. "Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own" (ACT 4:32). Everything belongs to God and we are the stewards of His possessions. He is free to take away at any time the material riches, health, a beloved child, a good name, a friend, fame. These things are only entrusted to us. If they are taken away we lose nothing. They are not ours. This constitutes one of the joys of the Christian life. All Christians are "have-nots" and do not desire to be "haves." Those who have, worry about possible losses. This is not possible for us. Our life is one of full serenity.

Jun 4
|
"Thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son,
then an heir of God." (GAL 4:7)

Since genes and DNA have been discovered, we know new things about heredity. We know what irresistible forces, working good or evil, are conveyed to us by heredity from our ancestors.

There is also a heredity of the spirit. God is truly our Father; heavenly Jerusalem is our mother. We inherit from God not only His kingdom, but also His character. The seed of God is in us (1JN 3:9).

The children of English-speaking people speak English; the children of Romanians speak Romanian. The children of God speak the words of God. Peter says in his first epistle (1PE 4:11), "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." If a man is an heir of God, his words or writings should normally also be oracles of God. If not, then he shouldn't speak or write.

We should all be able to say with Paul, "Ye received me a angel of God, even as Christ Jesus" (GAL 4:14). This is the no] manner to receive someone who speaks as the oracles of God.

A Swedish sister writes that when she completed the translation of a Christian book an angel appeared to her and thanked her. It may make some Christians smile. But I would not waste my time in Christianity if I did not believe at least the first page of the New Testament, where we are told that angels appear. You get the approval of Christians and angels when you speak as the oracles of God.

Jun 5
|
[Jesus said] "Teach all nations." (MTT 28:19)

If a man stood by a roadside and watched the whole population of China walk past him at the rate of one individual per second, more than twenty years would elapse before the last member of the procession would go by. The most strict Leninism rules these people. Lenin has written, "Everything is moral that is necessary for the annihilation of the old exploiting order." According to Lenin, religion belongs in this category and must be annihilated.

But there are Christians in China who do not fear death. It is the way to enter into the embrace of the heavenly Bridegroom and to receive the holy kiss. A remarkable report comes from the province of Hunan. A preacher was hanged by the Communists, but they left too quickly. The brethren were able to cut him down, and he is still alive. He says that when the rope was around his neck and he was being

hauled up over the branch of a tree, all he could think of was our Lord being raised upon the cross.

Pray for the great people of China and for its believers. God loves the Chinese very much. He has made so many of them - 800 million.

Jun 6
|
"Do good to them which hate you." (LUK 6:27)

St. Patrick begins his "Confession" with the words, "I, Patrick, a sinner, the most uncouth and the least of all the faithful." In the fourth century, he, a Britisher, was taken as slave in a raid by the Irish. He had to herd sheep for them in hunger and nakedness. Their cruelty kindled in the young Christian lad a foolish love toward his slaveholders.

Eventually he succeeded in escaping. In England, and free, he had a dream. A man approached him with a letter and Patrick read, "The voice of the Irish." Then he heard many Irish voices crying, "We beseech you, holy youth, to come over and walk once more among us." For a runaway slave to be caught by his former slaveholder could mean death. But Patrick loved, so the danger did not count. He confessed to a cleric some gross sin he had committed. This made his sin publicly known, and the church would not send Patrick to Ireland. So he returned on his own and brought his former slaveholders to Christ.

Let us bring persecutors to the Savior. Think about the man who has wronged you the most and make it a point of honor to bring him to conversion.

Jun 7
|
"Enter into the closet." (MTT 6:6)

Teachers of philosophy have given to men unnatural advice Marcus Aurelius wrote: "People seek retreats in villages, on beaches, in the mountains.... This is vulgar, because, whenever you wish, you can withdraw into yourself. Nowhere does man find a more silent and calm retreat than in his soul." You surely can find inner quietness among the noise, but it takes a huge effort.

Why not follow the better example and teaching of the Master, who went into desert places or into the mountains to pray? And when this is not possible, why not assure yourself of quietness in a closet?

The noise of this technological age is part of a plot against spirituality. Radio and TV, among other things, make sure that you

never have a bit of quiet. Lovers, friends, have forgotten the art of sitting or walking together in silence. A good 80 percent of the words spoken or written are useless.

The Hebrews, to whom God gave His first revelation, have no word for "word." Through them the Word of God was given, but you cannot say that in Hebrew. Instead of "word," they use ~davar~, which means "the real thing." Let us speak and listen to words only if they are
not useless chatter, but realities.

In Hebrew the prologue to the Gospel of John says, "In the beginning was the real thing (davar), and the real thing was with God, and the real thing was God."

Instead of wasting our time in idle talk about things that don't really matter, let us pass much time in our closets in quiet communion with God.

Jun 8
|
"Verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he says shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith." (MRK 11:23)

Jesus said these words on the road between Jerusalem and Bethany. The terrain is flat. There is no mountain. When he said "this mountain," He could point toward nothing as being a hindrance on the way.

The mountains of difficulties and obstacles are all in our imagination. We have promises. "Nothing shall by any means hurt you" (LUK 10:19), and "All things work together for good to them that love God" (ROM 8:28). Things and events never touch our souls but remain outside their door. What troubles us are our opinions and our attitudes toward persons and events. Over these we have authority. These we can throw into the sea.

The circumstances in which the Lord said these words show that they don't apply to material mountains. How would the world look if each one of the millions of Jesus' disciples would move mountains to the right or to the left according to his or her pleasure? Every discipline
would have a different opinion about where the mountain should be. Jesus speaks about spiritual realities when He teaches us how to remove mountains.

Let events come. Let persons act toward you as they will. Don't regard anything as a mountain in your way. Two and two make four. Fruits contain juice. Men sometimes behave badly. Events can be unpleasant. Yet all things will work together for my good. Difficulties

on my way to heaven belong to the world of imagination. I can throw them off.

Jun 9
|
"Simon ... said ... Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net." (LUK 5:5)

William Chalmers Burns went out as a missionary to China in 1847. After seven years he wrote, "I do not know of a single soul brought to Christ through me." The Lord had made him pass through the school of perseverance.

In the Middle East one can still see fishermen throwing a net in a primitive manner, as it was done 2000 years ago. It was hard work. Would we have thrown our nets into the water again after a whole night of vain labor? Reason and the desire to rest pleaded against it; but there exists the magnificent word, "nevertheless." Simon Peter threw in the nets again and did not pause to rest even after miraculous but also tiring fishing. He and his comrades brought their ships to land and did not go to bed. "They ... followed him" (LUK 5:11).

The important thing we must remember is that we should remain at our place of labor in spite of unhappy experiences and unsatisfactory results.

Archbishop Fenelon wrote, "If one were not upheld by the spirit of faith to work on without seeing the fruit of one's labor, one would be disheartened, so little does one accomplish whether in winning others or in amending oneself."

I am president of a world-wide mission. I was brought to Christ by a carpenter, Woelfkes, who had prayed for years - without result that he might not die before bringing one Jew to Christ. God granted him two, my wife and myself. We brought to the Savior a few other Jews; and these, in turn won more. The result can be seen now in thriving Hebrew-Christian congregations in many towns of Israel. Many of the believers come from Woelfkes' homeland, Romania. Once when I told the story of my conversion in a Romanian village I noticed that a very old man in the audience was weeping. He told the end: "God used me to bring that carpenter to Christ. I thought that I had toiled all my life uselessly. I heard from you now that I am the grandfather in faith of many Jews." You also continue on your post, "nevertheless."

Jun 10
|
"Not I, but Christ liveth in me." (GAL 2:20)

The relationship between Jesus and a believing soul is unique and

cannot be well explained in words, there being no real equivalent. In a transfusion, the blood of one man becomes another man's blood. If the latter man is injured and there is a shedding of blood immediately after the transfusion, not the blood of the donor is shed, but that of the recipient. It has become his. In a heart transplant, the heart is no longer that of a corpse, but that of a living man. So it is between Jesus and the believing soul. A transfusion, a transplantation, a change of personalities takes place.

Luther puts it like this: "The Father says to Christ, 'You become Peter who denies, Saul who persecutes, Judas who betrays, Magdalene who sins. Then the law sees Jesus full of all these offenses and tells him that he must die.' Jesus is the greatest murderer, thief, liar, adulterer mankind has ever known. Not in the sense that he committed these crimes, but that he appropriated them to himself." He has become my sinning personality. In exchange, He gives me His personality. In his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, Luther daringly says: "The Christian is Christ."

Luther stands here on biblical ground. The greatest teachers of Christianity have taught the same thing. Ignatius wrote, "Christ is our inseparable life." Thomas Aquinas said that Christ and the Christians are "quasi one mystical person." The Scottish Catechism (Craig's) teaches: "Christ is not another person from his people properly."

Jesus was delivered to be crucified. It is Jesus who continues to be delivered to be crucified today in the person of His disciples. All your sufferings are His.

Jun 11
|
"Lord, teach us to pray." (LUK 11:1)

St. Francis of Assisi prayed like this:
LORD!
Make me an instrument of thy peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so
much seek to be consoled, as to console;

to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

How is it that most of us don't act like this? It is because we have the "I." In English, all substantives and pronouns are written with small letters; only the "I" is written with a capital letter. Having an "I," much discomfort can happen to me, because of which I become unhappy and unloving. If you have no "I," what evil can come you?

Therefore the Lord says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself," e.g. let him deny the "I." I will be saved only there will be no more "I" to be saved.

Jun 12
|
"One thing is needful." (LUK 10:42)

The greatest complaint one hears is that people have no time. It is surely so because, like Martha, they are busy with too many things. You would never have heard Mary saying that she had no time. She needed only one thing: to listen to her Beloved and from time to time to do the one thing commanded by Him. He never commands us to do two things in the same moment. There is just one task for each moment of our lives. While fulfilling this one task, I have no other duty. Believers, therefore, always have time.

A new evangelist came into a village and astonished all by his powerful preaching. The news quickly spread, and the next Sunday the entire village gathered in church. He delivered exactly the same sermon. On the third Sunday, when people had come from neighboring villages, again he preached the same sermon. Also the fourth Sunday. The church elders said to each other, "This must be a crook who has learned just one sermon by heart."

"Don't you know how to deliver another sermon?" they asked.

"I have not yet seen you fulfilling what I taught you in the first sermon," he replied. "So why should I burden you with another one?"

Why must we read so many newspapers and listen to so much news, instead of responding to one tragedy near us by offering our help? Why must we read so many new books when we have not put into practice any of the good things already read? Why do I answer another telephone call, when I did not take time to be attentive, compassionate, and kind toward the man who called me first?

How little our Lord said and did! You could compile the essentials in the sixteen chapters of Mark. But every single act and word was

pure, beaten gold. Examine your words and actions. You will find that most of them are not needed. Control them and you will have time and serenity. Examine your conscience every evening. Review the day, asking yourself step by step whether the things you did were necessary. Eliminate all useless thoughts and deeds.

Jun 13
|
"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." (JHN 1:12)

Once when Napoleon was riding in a parade his horse went berserk. Seeing that the emperor was about to be thrown, a foot soldier, at the risk of his own life, grabbed the loose reins and through sheer strength stopped the wild horse and held it still.

Napoleon said, "Thank you, captain."

The newly made captain understood and went directly to the officers' dining room. Sitting down he began to address the officers as his comrades.

"How dare you?" they asked.

"Why not?" he answered. "I am a captain."

They mocked, ú'A captain? You? But you don't have a captain's bars, neither the schooling, nor a company to command."

"I have none of this yet," he replied confidently, "but I ~am~ a captain, because Napoleon called me one."

No child of God should be dismayed that he does not have the behavior of a saint; that he does not have the necessary knowledge; that he may not be acknowledged as a fellow believer by those around him. He has been called "a child of God" by the King of Kings. This is enough.

He who has given you this name will lead you through life, through its ascents and descents, even through death to the fulfilling of your high calling. Only believe that you are a child of God. The rest will come.

Jun 14
|
"Baptism doth also now save us." (1PE 3:21)

John Chrysostom said: "If we were non-corporeal, God would give us the spiritual things in their simplicity without material form. But because our souls live in bodies, He gives us spiritual gifts in the shape of visible things." He spoke about the ordinances. No Christian life is possible without them.

Augustine wrote: "You cannot gather men in the name of a right or a wrong religion, if you don't unite them through the common use of

visible signs or sacraments."

Baptism, Holy Communion, the laying on of hands - all are visible signs of an invisible grace which is given to you.

A cheap ring given by a bridegroom gets a new value. The same is true of any metal made into a coin that bears the stamp of the state. So it is with the water of baptism: it becomes a symbol of the cleansing of sin.

By the same token, in Holy Communion the bread and the wine get the value of the body and blood of the Lord.

It is wrong to look around during Holy Communion to see whether someone is taking it unworthily. Examine yourself. Everyone takes it on his own responsibility. Don't hesitate to take communion from a pastor whose life you know to be bad. The value of the ordinance does lot depend upon the character of the one who gives it, any more than the value of a letter from a loved one depends upon the character of the mailman.

Do not imagine that the ordinances in themselves will help you. They strengthen us on the path toward heaven only if they are taken with faith.

If you have these things in proper perspective, they can become true food for your soul.

Jun 15

|

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him." (MTT 3:13)

St. Ignace said that Jesus was baptized "to cleanse the waters." Most theologians would say that He did it to show His compassion toward sinners. Did Jesus feel Himself to be a sinner? Did He wish to be cleansed?

From the genes of Mary's ovule, by which Jesus was conceived, He inherited physical characteristics from many ancestors, all sinners. Seventy percent of man's character is inherited. If Jesus is God who has become man in the fullest sense of the word, He was subject to the law of heredity. As man He could be influenced. "He had been brought up" (LUK 4:16). His teachers and all those around Him were sinners. He was tempted like all of us. He had our instincts and impulses. As man His knowledge was limited. To save the humble, He had to hit merchants and Pharisees.

He never committed any sin, but He felt as His own all sins committed against Him since He was a child, beginning with the heredity imposed upon Him and the slaughter of the babes in Bethlehem. He felt as His the sorrow of all who had committed crimes. No one ever had felt guilty like Him. Taking all our sins upon Himself, He became the greatest criminal of history. The sense of guilt is the

acutest in the most innocent. Paul calls himself the chief of sinners. We
would have said that the greatest sinners were Caiaphas, Pilate, and Judas. The completely innocent One felt the paroxysms of guilt.

Therefore He felt the need to be baptized.

Don't wallow in the innocence granted to you by Jesus. Just because you have become whiter than the snow, appropriate to yourself everyone's sin.

Jun 16
|
"Every man shall bear his own burden." (GAL 6:5)

A bishop committed whoredom. No one knew it. Yet he confessed it before everyone in church. Putting his pallium on the altar, he said, "I cannot be your bishop anymore."

Everybody wept and replied, "May the sin be ours, but keep your bishopric."

He then lay on the floor of the church just inside the door and said, "Whosoever will go out without treading on me shall have no part with God." So they did. When the last had trodden on him, a voice came from heaven: "Because of his great humility, I have forgiven his sin."

This happened in the fourth century. At that time the Christians were a gathering of saints. But today I would recommend that no man with a position in the church, or any church worker do what that bishop did.

I know the case of a Soviet heroine of the faith. She was in prison for having taught children about Christ. She had behaved courageously at interrogations and before the court. In her cell a fellow Christian she
had always looked up to as a great leader confessed to her a hidden sin. This made her lose her faith. She did not expect a fellow Christian to have sinned so grievously. She forsook the church and married a Communist. There are times when confessing your sin can hurt someone else. Confess your sins to the Lord. Take your burden to Him.

Only be careful to be considered a sinner by your brethren and sisters. Do not pose as a saint and God will forgive you your sins for your humility.

Jun 17
|
"If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way ... his blood will I require at thine hand." (EZE 33:8)

One stormy, winter day on Lake Michigan a ship sank not far from the shore. A good swimmer succeeded in saving ten persons, one

after another. His colleagues had prepared a fire on the beach. Exhausted, the "savior" warmed himself. Seeing others still wrestling with the waves, he prepared to enter the water again.

His friends advised him not to do it. "You are too tired," they said. "You will drown, too."

"I cannot see men perishing!" he answered.

Gathering all his strength, he saved another five. He had done his utmost. He himself was pulled from the water with difficulty.

Lying exhau8ted near the fire, he saw two men trying hard to keep themselves afloat on a plank. "I must save these, too," he cried.

"It is folly," the others exclaimed. "You will commit suicide!"

He did not listen to them, and saved also these two.

Now the last of his strength was gone, but he could not excuse himself. He was in agony. In the delirium of fever he asked again and again, "How will I present myself before the Lord having saved only 8eventeen? Could I not have saved at least one more?"

We are responsible for the blood of everyone whose physical or spiritual life we could have saved, but have neglected to do so. Are we not all murderers?

Seeing a criminal being led to the gallows, Philip Neri said, "Were it not for the grace of God, I would have deserved to be in his place."

Jun 18
|
"God ... giveth to all men liberally." (JMS 1:5)

In his important book, ~The Power and the Glory~, Graham Greene has one of his characters say the following to the poor priest whose story
is the subject of the work: "I can't think how a man like you can believe
those things. The Indians, yes; why, the first time they see an electric light they think it's a miracle."

The priest responds: "And l dare say the first time you saw a man raised from the dead you might think so too. Oh, it's funny, isn't it. It
isn't a case of miracle8 not happening-it's just a case of people calling them something else. Can't you see the doctors round the dead man? He isn't breathing any more, his pulse has stopped, his heart's not beating: he's dead. Then somebody gives him back his life, and they all-what's the expression?-reserve their opinion. They won't say it's a miracle, because that's a word they don't like. Then it happens
again and again perhaps-because God's about on earth - and they say: there aren't miracles, it is simply that we have enlarged our conception of what life is. Now we know you can be alive without pulse,

breath, heart beats. And they invent a new word to describe that state of
life, and they say science has again disproved a miracle. You can't get around them."

See the miracles of God in the daily work of doctors, engineers, technicians, psychiatrists, inventors, farmers, factory-workers who improve and ease our life on earth. They are the tool8. The donor, the performer of miracles is God.

Jun 19
|
"Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (MTT 6:24)

A Christian had received great gifts from God. He had been famous for his holy life. His renown came to the attention of the emperor, who called for him to hear his teachings. The emperor was very satisfied and gave him gold, which he accepted.

When he returned home, the Christian bought some land and houses.

As had often happened in the past, someone possessed by a demon was brought to him. The Christian commanded the demon: "Leave the man!"

The demon scorned, "I will not obey you."

Having never heard such refusals before, the surprised believer asked, "Why don't you obey me?"

The demon replied: "Abandoning your sole preoccupation with God, you have become like us. Therefore I don't obey you."

A rich church is powerles6 in the fight against the devil. So is a rich Christian. A Christian can administrate great riche6, but only on the condition that they are not his, but God's, who has given him the gift
of multiplying and using them for His glory.

The moment you consider the riches to be yours, you fall under the curse pronounced by the Lord: "It is easier for a camel to go through the
eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" MTT 19:24).

Think thoroughly about these things before you go about managing what you believe to be your money.

Jun 20
|
"Suffer it to be so now." (MTT 3:15)

We know what Jesus said at the age of twelve. About the following eighteen years of his life, the Gospels keep perfect silence.

They break it when He reached the age of thirty. His first word is, "Suffer."

John the Baptist could not conceive that the Savior should be baptized by him, as so many sinners had been. Jesus said "Suffer it."

"Suffer little children" to come to the worship service, though they might disturb it (MTT 19:14). "Suffer (in Greek it is the same word, ~afiemi~) the tares to grow together with the wheat" (MTT 13:30).

"They be blind leaders of the blind." We would have added, "Don't allow them to continue." Jesus says, "Let them alone" (MTT 15:14).

A certain man wished to cut down a fig tree because it gave no fruit. The dresser of the vineyard, who represents Jesus in the parable, answers, "Let it alone this year also" (LUK 13:8).

Suffer men and things. Let them alone.

Instead of worrying about the evil which others do, learn from the bees. They care about no one, but feed mankind with honey. Do the same.

Jun 21
|
"The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." (GEN 1:2)

Augustine wrote, "If we had been commanded to build for the Spirit a temple of wood and stones, we would have had a clear proof of the Divinity of the Spirit, because worship is due only to God. But we have an even clearer proof in the fact that we are not to erect, but to ~be~ a temple for him."

The Spirit must be God if blasphemy against Him is the only unforgivable sin.

The presence of the Spirit in the life of the believer must be essential. Jews who went to Samaria risked their lives because they were hated by the Samaritans. Notwithstanding, Peter and John risked their lives and went there with the sole purpose of imparting the Spirit to believers.

Without the Spirit, all religious acts are as useless as light to blind men or melodies to the deaf. Christ was baptized because He knew that afterward the Spirit would descend upon Him. This must be our purpose, too, in every religious practice.

"If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (ROM 8:9). On the other hand, there is no condemnation to them who are in
Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (ROM 8:1)ú

Jun 22
|
"Amen." (REV 22:21)

After Jesus was baptized, He desired to have the Holy Spirit descend upon Him. And the Spirit did so.

When you ask some gift from God in prayer, don't abandon prayer until you get an inner experience, until you see the demand descending upon you in a quasi-material shape and hear from God's mouth the approval of your request.

This is the sense of the word "Amen." You have spoken to God, but God lives within you and uses your mouth to answer your prayer. "Amen" is His approval to what you have required.

A girl overheard the doctor telling her father, "There is no more hope for your wife." The girl went into the adjoining room, knelt down and prayed for the recovery of her mother.

Then she changed her voice and said, "Yes, Mary, I will surely heal her."

Changing her voice again, she said, "God, I thank You."

Entering the other room, she told her father, "God has just promised me He will heal mother."

The mother was healed. This is the sense of our "Amen." It is God's seal of approval uttered through your mouth that your intercession has been accepted.

Every prayer should be followed by an "Amen."

Jun 23

"Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." (MTT 3:15)

No commandment in the Old Testament obliged a Jew to be baptized. Jesus says that it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness by doing things which are not commanded.

There exist no commandments of God forbidding us to smoke, to wear jewelry (what did God make the emeralds and rubies for?), to go to beauty shops, to pass hours watching television. There are no commandments of God which forbid petting or trying drugs. Righteousness is fulfilled not by obeying commandments, but by asking ourselves the simple question, "Would Jesus like it or do it?"

If you threw some dust at a man, you would not hurt him. Neither would he suffer if you poured water upon him. Nor if you threw straw at him. But earth, straw, and water together make a brick. Throw that and you can crush his head.

So there are many little things, which by themselves are harmless. When they gather in our life, however, they become a heavy weight which might destroy our souls. "The little foxes ... spoil the vines" SOS 2:15).

There is no commandment in the law of God to fight little foxes, but it is good for the possessor of a vineyard to do so. It is good for you to

fight certain habits. Even though each one by itself is a mere trifle, together they become a weight that hampers your spiritual life.

Jun 24
|
"He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove." (MTT 3:16)

The dove is gentle, friendly with men, like the Holy Spirit, and therefore a fit symbol for Christ. They also have something else in common.

In order to observe doves, one must be very attentive and quiet. These little creatures of nature don't show their ways to noisy men. He who wishes to know them must develop the qualities for observing without being observed, for listening without being heard.

It is the same with the Spirit. One must be quiet, remaining silent before Him (HAB 2:20). The Holy Spirit does not behave the same way when He feels observed as when He is at His ease.

In the first case He is suspicious, worried about how His actions will be interpreted. The Lord says of the Jews, "I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy ... lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the LORD hath not done all this" (DEU 32:26,27).

The Spirit knows Himself to be observed by His enemies, and He depicts Himself as fearing to be misunderstood and acting otherwise than He normally would. The Lord said, "Because of the people which stand by I said it" (JHN 11:42). To know the words Jesus intended to say, if uninfluenced by those standing by, we have to keep reservedly aloof.

When observed by enemies, complainers, or the curious, the Spirit, like the dove, does not have normal reactions.

Keep silent, don't interfere, and let the Spirit do as He pleases.

Jun 25
|
"Others save with fear." (JUD 23)

If you see someone drowning, throw him a rope and try to pull him out of the water. If he is much too heavy for you, abandon your endeavor. Otherwise he might pull you into the water, and two will perish instead of one.

The path of endeavoring to bring men to eternal salvation is also fraught with danger. The effort of many a young man trying to bring some girl to salvation has ended with both falling into sin.

Missionaries have gone to Asian countries to tell people about Christ. Instead, some have been converted to Buddhism or have ended

up with a mixture of a foreign religion and Christianity. Mission boards have been formed to proclaim the gospel to other nations; and then Christians have become so busy with financial matters of the institution that Christ disappeared from their lives.

Some Christians have entered the slums, places of poverty, to bring Christ's love-but instead they have become infected with the rebellious spirit prevailing there and are now members of rebellious organizations. When speaking with a profane man about things spiritual, there is a danger that he may pull you down into his profane manner of conversation.

How will you save the souls of others if you are not careful about keeping your own soul pure? Leave the castle of your own loving fellowship with the Lord only rarely, after much preparation in prayer.

Be wary of every maneuver of the enemy. Avoid battles which are too dangerous for you. Foolhardiness is not courage. Save with fear.

Jun 26
|
"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (JHN 1:29)

If you sent a child to the grocery store to buy something with a dollar and the grocer demanded two dollars, you could not punish the child for not fulfilling your command. A teacher cannot expect a child in the primary grades to solve complicated problems of algebra.

Neither does God ask us to save our souls. We don't have the capacity for this. We are not guilty of not saving ourselves. Our guilt consists only in not coming to Jesus, who has the immeasurable power to save the whole world. If the whole world, why not me?

Augustine wrote, "If there had been in the world only one sinner, Jesus would have gladly brought for him the same sacrifice which he brought for the entire world."

Jesus never demanded that you should do for yourself what you cannot do. Just leave your soul to Him. He will do the work.

Leonardo da Vinci, painting the scene where John the Baptist exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world," gave John the eyes of a drunkard. He went so far in this that some believed he had painted Bacchus, the god of wine.

John the Baptist must have been drunk with joy when he discovered that such a Savior had appeared.

Appeal to Jesus for the salvation from all your sins.

Jun 27
|
"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (JHN 1:46)

Nazareth was a town with an immoral reputation. But Nathanael, who spoke the words of our text, was guilty of one of the most destructive
sins: despite toward an entire group of men. Every group of people contains a variety of persons with different personalities and characteristics.

A Lutheran pastor told me, "I have an emotional complex against the Baptists and Pentecostals." He did not realize that he had confessed to a much graver sin than if he had said, "I have lived many years in adultery." His duty was to give up his prejudice immediately for we must forsake every sin.

Every prejudice excludes the man holding it from any possibility of right thinking.

Many will not accept Jesus because He was Jewish; others because He was white.

The Pharisees could not admit that a prophet could come from Galilee (JHN 7:52).

Others took offense at His belonging to the lower class. They asked in mocking tone, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" (MTT 13:55),

Some ask themselves if the church about which so many bad things are said can give anything of value.

God is the Father of all men. There is good in all groups.

The Moabites, on the whole, had behaved badly toward the Jewish people. But from them came Ruth, one of the Bible's saintly women.

The Samaritans had gone astray from the true religion, but Jesus tells us about a good Samaritan.

Flee any racial, national, or denominational prejudice. Judge every person on his or her own merits.

Jun 28
|
"Let each esteem other better than themselves." (PHP 2:3)

While praying in his cell, St. Anthony heard a voice: "Anthony," it said, "you have not yet arrived at the stage of that tanner." Anthony immediately went to see the tanner to learn from him the ways of sanctification.

The tanner bowed, bewildered that he could have been found worthy of such a visit.

Anthony asked him, "What is your Christian exercise?"

He answered, "In the morning, when I awake, I say to myself, all in my city are much better than I. They are pleasing to God. I am the biggest sinner and deserve punishment."

The sins of others are not our business. Who am I to judge? Only pride judges and condemns fellow men.

A man came to his pastor and asked, "What should I do? I am much tempted by pride."

The pastor answered, "Just accept it. You have plenty to be proud of, seeing that you created heaven and earth."

The young man did not understand.

The pastor dismissed him with the words, "If the One through whom the world has been made came in humility, why should you, who are on!y dust and ashes, be proud? What are your works, you unhappy

Jun 29

"Thou we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." (2CO 5:16)

Augustine writes: "The face which Jesus had when he was in the flesh is shaped by men in various forms. It is completely unknown how the face of Jesus looked."

We know exactly from sculptures and ancient coins the faces of Julius Caesar or the emperors of Jesus' time, Octavian Augustus and Tiberius; but not that of the King of Kings. God's providence has arranged it to be so. This is because the Caesars were only historic personalities. Jesus is God, the Eternal stepping only briefly into time. We should not associate Him with a certain face expressing the specific features of an age, a sex, a race, a climate.

Jesus lives within many men: some of them beggars, others emperors; some white, others black or red or yellow; some children, some old men; some saints, some beginners in sanctity, some who have fallen in gross sins which they regret. We must learn to see Jesus in all of these.

Therefore there has been great opposition in the church to the introduction of ikons. Becoming familiar with a certain image of Jesus, you no longer recognize Him in the needy near you.

Jun 30

"This is the law, when a man dieth...." (NUM 19:14)

Five missionaries to the Auca Indians in Ecuador were killed in one day. Their wives received the news with composure. The norm of Christian living is to die for one's faith. No one really acknowledges a law to be the law of God if he is not ready to die for it.

Not everyone has the privilege of a martyr's death, but every Christian has to die before he dies. He must be dead to the world, its laws and its sins, before he dies.

Macarius was asked, "What does it mean to be dead to the world?"

He answered, "Go to a cemetery, praise some of the dead and curse others. Then come and tell me what happened."

The inquirer did as commanded. He returned telling Macarius "None answered a word."

Macarius replied, "Do the same."

The five martyrs had guns upon them when they died. They could have defended their lives, but they chose to die rather than to shoot the Indians. They had died before dying. How could a corpse shoot anyone? They were alive only for God.

These martyrs gave their lives to bring the gospel to a tribe which at that time numbered only fifty-six people. Men of all tribes have to be among the saved, those of small tribes, too.

The blood of the martyrs brought seed. The Auca Indians already have their first martyr, one of them who went to evangelize a neighboring tribe.

Let us pray regularly for the many men who are still in the stone age not touched by civilization.

Jul 1
|
"We ... are compassed about with ... a cloud of witness." (HEB 12:1)

Let us learn from the great saints.

John de la Salle is the father of modern pedagogy. He founded the first free high school and teachers' seminary in France. Because he loved much, he did much. He said, "I cannot think about the many children who perish from ignorance without shedding tears." We are upset by trifles in our personal lives, but how many of us would shed tears for the ignorant?

Unable to bear this burden idly, he distributed his great wealth among the poor and became a poor teacher of the poor. I compare his spirit with that of teachers who are dissatisfied with large salaries and strike to get more. They are examples of selfishness to their students. The catastrophe which they produce in the minds of children by their greed will never be erased by the beauties they teach.

De la Salle had to suffer much from fellow Christians and unemployed teachers.

Pacificus of San Severino was obsessed by the words of the Lord that the harvest is big and the laborers few. He said, "The world needs apostles not doctors of theology." He had decided to become one, going as a missionary to the heathen. But God had appointed him to another apostolate, that of suffering. His feet swelled until he could no longer counsel the souls he loved so much. Then he was afflicted by blindness. His soul was ravaged by inner tempests. Friends insulted him, calling him accursed of God, convinced by his suffering that it was so.

He bore all this suffering valiantly knowing that God's will, not

his
own, must be done in all things. Pacificus still brings souls to Christ three centuries after his death. Through the story of his sufferings lovingly borne, many more have been won to his Lord than if he had gone to preach among the heathen.

Let us learn to be unselfish and submissive to God's will.

Jul 2
|
"Seek, and ye shall find." (MTT 7:7)

In daily life you find Jesus through prayer. Teresa of Avila wrote, "The devil knows that he has lost the soul that perseveringly practices mental prayer." She also gives a definition of this exercise: "Mental prayer is nothing else than an intimate friendship, a frequent heart-to-heart conversation with Him by whom we know ourselves to be loved."

This is something entirely different than saying your prayers in the morning and evening and at meals. He prays very little and very poorly who prays only when he is on his knees. We have to remain in contact with Jesus the whole day, through short prayers and meditations about everything which occurs. Be aware that in all circumstances God is present and discuss with Him, your best Friend, what would be the best thing to do. Thank Him also in all things.

We read in The Imitation of Christ: "A man does himself more harm, if he seeks not Jesus, than the whole world and all his enemies could do." We are upset about having been offended, or about the catastrophes of war and revolutions. provoked by wicked men, without realizing that the greatest enemy we each have is self.

There was a man who never succeeded in anything he did. An invisible enemy thwarted all his purposes. One evening, lying on his couch and brooding about all his failures, he saw a hand stretching out from behind the curtain to strangle him. He said to himself, "Now I can see my enemy face to face. I am powerful. I will overcome him." With a swift movement, he drew aside the curtain and saw the enemy. It was himself-his neglect to seek Jesus.

Jul 3
|
"With God all things are possible." (MTT 19:26)

When I was a little child I did not think about God. I had been taught that He is an all-powerful being. This was all I knew. At the age of perhaps eight, another child mocked God in my presence. "If He is all-powerful," the child scoffed, "can He make a weight He cannot lift? If He can, He is not all-powerful. If He cannot, again He is not what He

claims."

I liked the joke and the idea of an all-powerful God never occurred to me again.

At the age of twenty-seven, I read the New Testament and found out that God had made a weight He could not lift. He had made of Himself a babe, weighing just a few pounds. He could not lift Himself. The Virgin Mary had to lift God, to take Him from the manger to her breast to feed Him. God had His ears washed. He was too small a child to do it Himself. His jacket which He had torn climbing some tree was patched by His holy mother. He did not know how to sew.

God had made a weight He could not lift. He had become incarnate as the Son of man. And this Son of man was given into the hands of men. They mocked Him; they crucified Him. The only real subject had become a simple object. People around jeered Him for His lack of power. He could not descend from His cros8. Then He became even more of an object-a corpse. If Joseph of Arimathea had not buried Him, His flesh would have been eaten by eagles.

Having made a weight He could not lift, God showed His almightiness by lifting the unliftable. Jesus was resurrected in power and
ascended into heaven. Once lifted from the earth, He attracts all men toward Him.

I had been wrong as a child. God is almighty. He can make a weight He Himself cannot lift and is almighty notwithstanding.

Jul 4
|
"He hungered." (MTT 21:18)

One billion people hunger. We give a figure, but every number represents a person. Ten thousand die daily of malnutrition and starvation,
9,900 of them without having heard of Christ. People of developed countries consume five times as much food as the minimum necessary to save the hungry. In some part of Africa 25 percent of the children die
before their first birthday. Their chance of dying is forty times higher than in the USA or Australia. Among those who hunger are the children of thousands of Christian martyrs in the Communist camps.

The Christian philosopher Aristides wrote in the year A.D. 125 to the emperor Hadrian: "With Christians, he who has gives to him who has not, ungrudgingly and without boasting.... If they find poverty in their midst and they do not have spare food, they fast two or three days in order that the needy might be supplied with necessities."

Fast. Renounce. On the day of judgment, the Lord will tell you, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat" (MTT 25:35).

Jul 5
|
"Of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again." (LUK 6:30)

A Christian surprised burglars stealing his belongings. He told them, "Hurry and finish before the police come. Here, I will help you load the goods into your car. It is my fault for possessing them. I am a Christian and we were meant not to gather treasures on earth. Our Lord has warned us that thieves might steal them. It was my fault not to rely on the Father to take care of my needs. Please forgive me for having given you such a bad example!"

The robbers became interested, asking him one question after another. They did not steal from him, but were converted. The Christian had learned a lesson, too.

"The love of money is the root of all evil" (1TM 6:10). Money must be totally despised by Christians. I

An old legend says that Christ once taught His disciples, "Beware of money." They asked, "Why?" He replied, "Because often it is dishonestly acquired."

They asked again, "Suppose it is honestly earned?" Jesus said, "Beware of money even then, because it usually is sinfully spent."

The disciples asked for the third time, "What if it is honestly gained and well spent?"

The Lord replied, "Even then, beware of money. It always pollutes."

July 6
|
"Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God." (JHN 1:49)

Islam and Reformed Judaism accept Jesus as a great prophet. They object to His being worshiped as Son of God. We owe them light in this matter.

In Hebrew, the adjective is little used. The Hebrew would not say a talkative person," but ~Ish dvarim~ - "a man of words." For "divine," he could only say, "Son of God." In Aramaic, the language the Lord spoke, the adjectives were used even less. Therefore we find in our Bibles the strange expressions, "children of light," instead of "luminous"; and "son of perdition," instead of "lost."

We have to explain to the Jews and Moslems that we don't believe in Jesus being the Son of God in the usual sense of the word. God has no wife and does not conceive children. The Hebrew of the first century simply did not have another expression to show the degree of Christ's affinity as man and substantial unity with the Father as God than calling

Him "Son of God." I

Modem science supplies us with a new image of what "Son of God" means. We speak about the family of radioactive elements and about a radioactive filiation. Emanation of electrons changes uranium I into uranium II, then into ionium, etc.

We can use different images to exemplify what is meant by the expression "Son of God." What is certain, however, is that Christ is God. The ancients said, "Aut Deus, aut homo non bonus." He was either God or not a good man.

Great authors of the twentieth century try to convince us that Jesus was only man. What kind of being must Jesus have been, if after 2000 years such great effort is still needed to convince men that He was only man. Such a being is God incarnate, in whom we can have full confidence.

Jul 7

|

"He that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward." (MTT 10:41)

Macarius of Corinth is considered a saint in the East, not because he died a martyr's death himself, but because he trained men for martyrdom. He encouraged those who were entering the martyr's arena, and thus lit in their hearts the flame of love for Christ and the aspiration of suffering for His sake.

Just as the crown of righteousness is laid up for the martyrs because they finished their course like Paul and kept the faith - so it is laid up for all of the co-workers of the martyrs, their fellow contenders and helpers.

In our day also there are many martyrs: in the Communist world, under the reign of Islam, and in heathen countries. Many Christians, including well-known leaders, compromise with the persecuting powers and sympathize with those who prefer sacrificing incense before Caesar's statue to dying, as many Christians did in the first centuries. At that time those who sacrificed were called ~lapsi~ - "apostates." Now they are called "wise. " And today those who, filled with the Holy Spirit, choose prison and death, are called "full of wine" as the apostles were at Pentecost.

Let us be on the side of those who sit in jails and are sentenced to death for their faith. Let us pray for them and help them. So we will get a crown like theirs.

Jul 8

|
"Thou art the King of Israel." (JHN 1:49)

It would seem that this name, "King of Israel," which Nathanael gives to Jesus, would cancel any interest non-Jews might otherwise have in Him. What does a European or an American care for a king of the Zulus of 2000 years ago?

A King of the Jews was born and wise men came from abroad, while He was still a babe, to worship Him. And today after twenty centuries men of all races still bow before Him.

There must be something special about the Jews that makes their King so important. Paul wrote: "To whom (the Israelites) pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever" (ROM 9:4,5).

The Nazis were consistent when they rejected Christianity as being Jewish. They understood the connection between the church and the Jews better than many Christians do.

Outside the church Israel can do nothing that will last. And without Israel the church cannot triumph. It is only "their receiving" Christ that will be "life from the dead" (ROM 11:15).

A look at the world reveals Israel's chosen role. The great fight is going on between the world which believes in the Jew, Jesus, and the other world which believes in the Jew, Marx. In science, the universe bears the name of another Jew, Einstein.

It is every Christian's duty to pray and work for the conversion of Jews and for the peace of Israel. We must all contribute our energy toward this.

Jul 9
|
"Go your way." (LUK 7:22)

Saints are men and women completely apart, each in his or her own way. They cannot be judged by applying common measurements.

John of the Cross was not capable of any manual work because he was so preoccupied with God that he could not pay attention to a hammer or scissors in his hands. Joseph of Copertino was so lost in God that he had to pinch himself when called to come back to the awareness of the world. For whatever thing was asked him, he brought something else, because his mind was not tuned to the words of men.

Only some saints are like this. Elisabeth of Hungary was a saint who was attentive to every need of the most humble men, though she was a queen. A human saint, she was the human being Elisabeth at her best, sacrificing everything in order that the ideal Elisabeth might live

on earth.

Like Jesus Himself, many saints are considered to have been psychopaths. They were theopaths in the etymological sense of the word - suffering for God. They had died to the world before dying.

Some saints have been warriors, like Joan of Arc. Others have gone to extremes of asceticism. But Therese of Lisieux said, "If the food
tastes good, I thank God for it. If it is bad, I accept the mortification.
The surest way to holiness is to accept as mortification whatever occurs."

Find out your calling from God, the ideal "you," the purpose for which you have been elected from before the foundation of the world. Then follow Jesus in your own calling, though it may seem strange to others.

Jul 10
|
"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." (HEB 13:3)

A Christian in Russia was sentenced to ten years in prison for his faith. He left behind a wife with nine hungry children. The mission, "Jesus to the Communist world" helped them with a small sum of money and received the following amazing response from the wife.

"Glory be to the Lord that He has given us, too, to bear a little chip
of His cross." (We complain about many trifles as being unbearable crosses. For her, a husband in prison and nine children to feed, without any source of income, was just a little chip of His cross.) "We must eat our bread with tears, but the Lord be praised for everything. I thank you
with tears that the Lord has opened your hearts at such a big distance. Love has a long arm and stretched it out toward us. (When Paul enumerated all the attributes of love in 1CO 13, he forgot to mention that she has a long arm.)

"When we remained alone, the wicked ones said that we would not have wherewith to live, but praised be the Lord that He takes care, as He took care of Elijah, Daniel and of all who served Him.

"God has given me nine children who wait now for their father to come home, but their father put his life at stake for Christ and left his
children to suffer for the faith once for all delivered by God to the saints."

Acts of the Apostles in the original is the only biblical book which ends abruptly in the midst of a sentence. It is an unfinished book. The heroism of the first Christians continues to this day.

Let us always remember in prayer our brethren suffering in prison

or their faith. And let us not forget their families.

Jul 11
|
"We ... are changed into the same image from glory to glory." (2CO 3:18)

From scholastic philosophy we received two axioms, which on the face seem contradictory, but in fact complement each other. The first is ~Omne quod recipitur, per modus recipientis recipitur~ - "Whatever we receive, we receive in the manner of the recipient." Hence the variety of religions and opinions about everything.

We all perceive the same reality, but according to our differing backgrounds, heredity, education, character, strength, and the specifics of our intelligence. We never see God as He is, but as He appears to each of us in our own eyes.

This axiom applies even to God. He knows everything about us as we appear from the viewpoint of a divine being. This was not enough however, for a righteous judgment. Therefore the Son of God became the man Jesus. Now He knew in His flesh poverty, oppression, sorrow, opposition, torture, temptation. When He ascended to heaven, Christ enriched the Godhead with a new dimension: human experience.

Therefore it is written in SOS 3:11, "Behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals."

From eternity past Christ possessed the crown of divine glory. Mary gave Him one more crown: to be God incarnate. She gave him the possibility of uniting with human nature and human experience.

The second axiom is: ~Anima quodammodo fit omnia~ - "The soul has the capability somehow of becoming everything." It can identify with what it understands and with what it loves and ardently desires.

Christians know their limitations. They know that their spirit lives in the cage of the personality, but they yearn to see God at last as He is. Our soul has the capacity for this. We will reach our aim.

Jul 12
|
"God hath chosen ... base things of the world." (1CO 1:27,28)

From among the many persons to whom the Lord could have appeared, he chose the chief of sinners, Saul of Tarsus - a wicked man who had made havoc of the churches, killing some of the believers and forcing others to deny their faith.

The capacity to do evil is a potential capacity to do good.

At one time Niagara Falls was the source of many disasters for the United States and Canada, flooding great territories of both countries and making agriculture impossible. Then one man decided: "If these

falls have such potential for destruction, they must have the same potential for good," So dams were built, turbines were installed. Now Niagara Falls supplies electricity to both countries.

When William Booth wished to evangelize Britain, he looked around for suitable men. He considered most pastors to be either professionals who had not been born again, or real children of God who were much too meek and gentle to be capable of revolutionizing their surroundings. So he appealed to prison inmates. Once converted, they became the soldiers and officers of the Salvation Army. They did the great work.

In Hebrew, ~Kedeshah~ means both prostitute and saint. Magdalene was always a ~kedeshah~, first with a minus, later with a plus. The love which she had squandered in sin was now shed in abundance upon the Savior and upon men.

Seek the worst of men, pray for them, and do your best to bring them to conversion. They might become the greatest blessing.

This may apply also to yourself if you are base.

Jul 13

|

"They were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (HEB 11:13)

An American evangelist, John Morrison, returned home after preaching in many countries where he had brought tens of thousands to Christ. He happened to travel on the same ship as President Theodore Roosevelt, who was returning from a hunting expedition in Africa where he had shot 8 number of wild hogs.

On the dock at New York thousands cheered. Whom would you say they cheered? Of course they cheered the killer of hogs, who was also the president of the United States. No one was interested in the man who had saved souls. They traveled on the same train. On the station platform again thousands cheered Roosevelt, not Morrison.

An evangelist is human. Morrison felt envy and discontent growing within him. "Is this all the welcome I get when I return home after such an exhaustive journey?" he fretted. A divine voice corrected him: "You are not yet home."

Miserable are the Christians who hope for recognition in this world. Here we have to shun success. What would the value of General Eisenhower or Winston Churchill have been if they had been cheered in Nazi Germany?

Jesus said, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you" (LUK 6:26). It would be a sure sign that you belong to this world which is hostile toward God.

Let us wait for our full reward in heaven.

Jul 14

|
"Be not conformed to this world." (ROM 12:2)

We are told in LUK 7 that John the Baptist, while in prison, had doubts concerning whether Jesus was really the Messiah. The uncertainty came though he had proclaimed Him to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Prison often casts shadows on men's spiritual life.

John doubted and communicated his doubts to two of his disciples, who had no doubts until then. They had been sure that Jesus was the Savior. But because someone else had planted a doubt in their heart, they traveled far to tell Jesus about another's doubts and to question Him. They might have spoken to Him in the presence of others, thus further disseminating the doubts.

Jesus answered, "Go your way" (LUK 7:22).

Don't allow yourselves to be infested by someone else's wrong attitudes, even if he is a great-prophet.

Christian sisters worked in a concentration camp in a Siberian forest, where they had to fell trees. Far away there were other barracks with prisoners who did the same work. One evening, while the Christian ladies were gathered in prayer around a little stove, someone knocked at the door.

"Open! Nothing bad will happen to you," a rough voice shouted. The sisters did not dare obey. "Open, or we will smash the door," several voices yelled.

When they opened the door, twenty men with overcoats covered with snow entered. One of them said, "We heard you were Christians. Speak to us about God. We have seen no pastor for thirty years. Tell us something."

Since that evening the barracks became an underground church where the prisoners gathered regularly. The sisters instructed them in the faith, taught them the gospel and prayers long forgotten, and baptized some of them. In exchange, these men sentenced for crimes did the hard work of the sisters, thus giving them more time for prayer.

These were souls who in a Bolshevik surrounding went their way. You go yours, whatever the difficulties of your surroundings.

Jul 15
|
"Where is the promise of his (Jesus') coming ... all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2PE 3:4)

Scoffers challenged the Christians in earlier times with these words. They cannot say so anymore. Today entirely new things happen in this old world. Man has interfered artificially with the nucleus of the

atom, piling up fifteen tons of explosives for every living inhabitant. The destruction of mankind could happen in a few minutes. Men walk on the moon. Dictators and money-grabbers can change the minds of men at will through drugs and mass media. Population explosion, famines as never before, the unbreathable air in the towns of the privileged nations are all here. The power is no longer in the hands of the white race, which engineered Christian civilization. Representatives of the Third World have the majority in the United Nations, and generally vote as Red China or the Russian Communists dictate.

The state of Israel is an unshakable fact. God brought His people back to the Holy Land. The whole of Jerusalem is theirs, a further sign of the end time.

Anti-Christian forces have invaded the church. ~Capital Voice~, August 1, 1974, published the results of a recent poll: "51% of the Methodist ministers in the USA do not believe in Jesus' resurrection; 60% don't believe in the virgin birth; 62% contest the existence of Satan; 89% of Episcopalian priests don't believe the Bible to be the Word of God. They believe there is no truth." Again a sign of the end time. The abomination of desolation is in the holy place (DAN 9:27).

These are all signs of the Lord's coming. Things do not continue as they were from the beginning. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (MTT 24:13).

Jul 16
|
"What manner of man was he which came up to meet you,
and told you these words?" (2KI 1:7)

When Elijah sent a message to Ahaziah, king of Israel, the king did not ask his servants the details of the communication, but the question above. The value of a message depends upon the quality of the messenger. A sermon on the words, "Woe unto you that are rich" (LUK 6:24), delivered by a man who strives to become rich would make a ridiculous impression.

The Christians of the first centuries were the right manner of men.

Stripped naked and hanged on walls by four rings to which the ankles and wrists were tied with ropes, they were attacked with truncheons, pincers, and torches. They bore the torture and did not deny Christ nor betray where and when the brethren met together for prayer and worship services.

No machine devised by human mind could have withstood what our brethren and sisters withstood during centuries of persecution. Their underfed bodies resisted better than those of overfed wrestlers. It
is because they were the right manner of men.

In sufferings, they did not pity themselves but their torturers. They saw even in those who beat or slandered them angels of grace,

who, through humiliations, sanctified them for the future kingdom.
We do not need a new theology, but this old breed of Christians,
What about ourselves becoming such men, whose manner of being would give credibility to our Christian message? With Elijah, even his outward appearance, his simple manner of dressing showed the earnestness with which he spoke.

Jul 17
|
"Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." (PSA 90:12)

Augustine wrote in his ~Confessions~: "If nobody asks me about time, I know what it is; but if I am asked, I don't know what to answer." The Russian astronomer Koziereff calls time, "the most important and the strangest quality of nature."
I will not enter into the philosophy of time. It is what makes men belong to different generations, it is the gap between men and their children. They have been born later in time. This makes them look upon parents as symbols of everything old, no more relevant, unfashionable, hypocritically tied to a now worthless moral code. Therefore
Freud said, "One of the most difficult professions in the world is to be a
parent. "
Some parents are surely not worthy of the honor due them according to the Bible. The American killer, Manson, was the son of a sixteen-year-old prostitute, who gave birth to the child only because she had no money for an abortion. Soon after his birth she entered prison. He was given to relatives who fed him little but beat him much. From the age of fourteen, Manson grew up only in correction houses and prisons.
Some respectable and religious parents have been rewarded by their children with titles like "capitalist swine" or similar expressions.
These are extreme cases. Also extreme are the suicides among teenagers. Their number has increased in the last twenty years by 250 percent. In between is the multitude of youngsters dissatisfied with their parents.
Let us all remember that the problem of children is a problem for the parents who forget that time passes quickly and another generation rises. We must give our children the best of godly examples. Giving them an affluent life is not sufficient. They need the example of a holy life united with a wise education.

Jul 18

|
"Shewing thyself a pattern." (TIT 2:7)

A candidate for ordination presented himself before the examining commission and the bishop. He had good credentials, including the best marks on all theological subjects. He answered the usual question
well. The pastor of his church also confirmed that he was involved in all
of its activities.

The godly bishop then asked him some questions which were put to ordinands in the first centuries: "Is despite as welcome to you as profit? Do you love foreign people as much as your relatives? Do you accept with the same joy sickness or health, liberty or prison, beatings or caresses, opposition or applause?"

The candidate answered, "No."

"Then go and study some more," said the bishop.

Many pastors believe they are called upon to interpret and preach the Bible. This is a secondary function. Jesus said He had come "to fulfill the law, or the prophets" (MTT 5:17). He fulfilled what others merely used as subjects for sermons.

Seek for a pastor who is a fulfiller, not a debater, of God's will.

Jul 19
|
"The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." (1TH 5:2).

Leonid Brezhnev, Russia's present dictator, shows his old mother his luxurious offices, his villa in the suburbs of Moscow, his Cadillac, his vacation home at the Black Sea, and asks her, "Are you satisfied?"

She replies, "I am happy that you have it so well; but what if the Communists come to power? They are bad guys. They hate the rich and insist upon equality for all."

It is easy for us to laugh about the inconsistencies between the life
style of the Communist leaders and their teachings.

The joke could be changed. What if we should show the surroundings in which we live to a godly mother, and she should ssk us, "All is fine, but how will it be when Jesus returns?"

A story says that Jesus came to Rome. He saw the army parading. everyone with his gun. He asked them if they were Christians. When they all nodded, Jesus said, "I have taught that my disciples should not even say a bad word to anyone. I never thought that Christians would use weapons!"

He saw the advertisements in shop windows proclaiming, "Here re the best shoes, or the best cars." Jesus entered the shop8 and said,

I have taught that everyone should put another's honor above his oown. Why don't you rather recommend the products of your competitors?"

He saw the prostitutes. They were all baptized and confirmed. He saw Christians split into different political parties. He saw a Catholic church, a Baptist church, and a Lutheran church. He wondered which was His church. The other names he had never heard of before.

He wished to speak with the pope, but he could not receive an appointment. He had to slip stealthily past the Swiss Guard. Jesus did not look respectable, but rather like a Jesus freak. Before being received by the pope, He was told that He must call him "Holy Father." Jesus replied, "I thought this was a name reserved for God!"

What is your standard of life? What is its moral and spiritual level? Everything seems fine now-but what if Je8us returns?

Jul 20
|
"The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." (2CO 3:6)

The Bible is verbally inspired. Every word in it is from God. Then let us learn from it not to be satisfied only with the words, but use
the words to achieve their main purpose: to bring souls to eternal salvation.

We read in AMO 9:11, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof ... that they (the Jews) may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name." This verse predicts a spiritual domination of the Jews throughout the heathen world.

To tell the heathen such a thing at the beginning when they were prejudiced against the Jews, would not have been helpful. So Peter, quoting Amos, simply changed the text: "I ... will build again the tabernacle of David ... that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called" (ACT 15:16,17). Compare the two passages. The whole sense is changed. The prophecy means now that the Gentiles will spontaneously seek the Lord. This was acceptable to them.

In EXO 34:35 we read that Moses, after having received from God the tables with the commandments, put a veil over his face because it shone. This would have put Paul, who also had a revelation from God, in an inferior situation toward Moses. So Paul takes the liberty to explain things otherwise: "Moses ... put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished" (2CO 3:13).

The purpose is what counts: souls should be saved. If a sophisticated ritual helps some, and a simple worship others; if rather one preacher or one denomination than another; if one Bible translation can help better than another one, the important thing is not fidelity

to methods or words, but to the end, that by all means some should be saved (1CO 9:22).

Jul 21
|
"Ye shall be hated of all nations." (MTT 24:9)

There is something wrong with Christians who are not hated.

Henrik Ibsen, the renowned Norwegian playwright, was the most rejected artist of the nineteenth century. This was because he did what we should do. He shook sensibilities by bringing up in public subjects that were utterly taboo; and he championed attitudes unpopular in the society of his time. His main message was that in questions of conscience men have to stand firm and not compromise.

Because of this, he and his family had to suffer much. He puts in the mouth of one of the personalities of his plays, The Enemy of the People, words of reproach which he must have heard often from well-meaning friends: "You are a madman; you are insane with egotism. And don't excuse it with humanitarian slogans, because a man who'll drag his family through a lifetime of disgrace is a demon in his heart, a demon who cares more for a public cause than for the lives of his wife and children."

Men who suffer in prisons for Christ's sake in our century have often heard similar reproaches.

Ibsen's reaction was simple. He wrote, "In a storm there's just one thing to remember: it will pass.... Before many can know something, one must know it.... The majority is always wrong.. .. I am in revolt against the age-old lie that the majority is always right."

When an irritated mob threw stones through his hero's windows, Dr. Stockmann said, "I'm going to keep these like sacred relics."

"The strong man must learn to be lonely."

Let us learn to confront public opinion. Jesus never yielded to the blindness of the masses. He is the light. He influences without being influenced. He was hated, but His acceptance of this gained Him friends who loved Him unto death.

Jul 22
|
"Contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (JUD 3)

When Nelson, as a teenager, came home from a birdnesting expedition, his aunt chided him for being out so late at night. She said, "I'm surprised that fear did not make you come home."

"Fear?" replied Nelson. "I don't know him."

We don't know the fear of conflicts,. When Spurgeon, the renowned Baptist preacher of Britain, alarmed at the increasing spread

of
heresy within the denomination, forsook the Baptist Union and took up the fight for biblical belief, he did not expect success. He said, "I am quite willing to be eaten by dogs for the next fifty years, but the more distant future will vindicate me."

Abusive and shameful titles were given to him. He replied to his opponents, that since there was no language sufficiently strong to express the abhorrence he had for them, he would let them pass in silence.

He craved no tolerance. He demanded submission, being sure that his message was from God.

A black preacher in a village said that he abstained from preaching against stealing chickens because such preaching dampened brotherly love. I was rebuked once by a pastor, to whose church I had been invited, for having preached about Herod's sin of taking his brother's wife. This was the sin of the richest supporter of his church, whose contributions he did not wish to lose.

We have to fight this spirit of compromise and everything which is wrong in the church and in mission work, though it may be at the risk of provoking great conflicts. Traitors to Christ's principles should never be our friends.

Jul 23
|
"My beloved is mine." (SOS 2:16)

A king once told a favorite, "Ask whatever you like and it will be given to you."

The favorite thought it over "If I ask to be a general, I'll become one, and then I will regret not being the prime minister. If I ask for half of the kingdom, I will get it, and then I will be sad for not having
the other half." Therefore he said to the king, "Give me your daughter to
wife."

In Hebrew and in Greek the word for "soul" is feminine. Being feminine, the believing soul asks from God Christ to be her bridegroom. So we become heirs of all things and all angels will serve us.

How glorious and yet how modest our bridegroom is. Nathanael called him "Son of God" (JHN 1:49). Jesus answered, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (JHN 1:51). In the measure in which men discovered the divine in Him, His modest and good heart made Him emphasize His humanity, in order that His brides, who are human and sometimes much too human, can come to Him with confidence. He belongs to them. Our prayer that He should be ours has been fulfilled.

He is not only a divine, but also a human bridegroom, interested in human things, concerned even that there should be wine enough at a marriage feast. How unlike some saints, who, because of their sanctity, become apathetic toward the needs of their fellow men.

Christ does not only deliver sermons; and He does not rebuke continually. He quietly takes supper with us, as a bridegroom would do with a bride.

Bernard of Clairveaux said, "A quiet God quiets everything. To see Him as quiet, means to be quiet." The most quieting thought is, "the Beloved is mille."

Jul 24
|
"Jesus said unto hun [a malefactor], Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (LUK 23:43)

A world which very much needs our love and our prayers is the world of criminals. Society can give them only the punishment they deserve. We can give them the divine message of forgiveness through the blood of Jesus.

Criminals are continually haunted by their victims-some consciously, others unconsciously. Behind all other words, they hear the last words of their victims. You might speak kindly to them but they know what you think about them: they are murderers.

Even if they have not confessed to the police or to a priest, the words break out of them in their dreams, in their involuntary speech. The victims are near their beds at night.

Emile Zola describes in Therese Raquin a painter who had killed. No one knew what he had done. He continued to paint, but now all faces resembled each other. They were like his victim. Children's faces, women's faces, all reminded him of them.

Criminals have not killed only the men now dead. They have killed also the pity toward themselves in fellow men. They are despised by everyone, except by Jesus, the friend of sinners. He chose to share the fate of criminals, being crucified like them. He preordained that when Pilate offered the release of a prisoner, the mob should choose freedom for a murderer, Barabas. Jesus was glad to die in his place.

He does not despise thieves. He compares Himself with them. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2PE 3:10).

Criminals receive salvation from Jesus. They find also understanding and compassion among His true followers.

Jul 25
|
"Wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." (JUD 13)

The Epistle of Jude accredits one of the many pseudepigraphic books, the book of Enoch.

Enoch wrote, "I saw seven stars like seven great burning mountains. When I asked, the angel told me, 'This is the place where heaven and earth end. This is a prison for the stars and the host of heaven. The stars which turn over the fire are those who at the start of their rising trespassed against the commandment of God, not rising in time. So he became angry with them and bound them.... ' "

Remember that this day there are angels who have been in chains for thousands of years. They are surrounded by darkness and await the judgment of the great day.

All prison life is terrible. Hell, for men, is even worse. But who can imagine the torment of a prison for angels, winged beings, used to flying from star to star to fulfill God's will?

Some angels have arrived there because they did not keep "their first estate, but left their own habitation" (JUD 6). Did you keep your high estate of being a Christian? Do you keep your own habitation, the church, or do you mingle with the sinful world? God did not spare angels; will He spare you?

"They that turn many to righteousness [shall shine] as the stars for ever and ever" (DAN 12:3). Are you a shining star? Do you turn many to righteousness?

Fear and trembling is a vital contributing part of the Christian life.

Jul 26
|
"He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." (LUK 1:52)

Strindberg's play, ~Miss Julie~, is the story of a love affair between a very rich girl and her servant. At a certain moment they tell each other their dreams.

The rich girl: "I'm sitting on top of a pillar that I've climbed up, somehow, and I don't know how to get back down.... l have to get down, but I don't have the courage to jump.... I want to fall, but I don't fall. I know I won't have any peace until I get down, down on the ground. And if I ever get down on the ground, I'd want to go further down, right down into the earth."

The servant: "I used to dream that I'm lying under a tall tree in a dark wood. I want to get up, up to the very top, to look out over the

bright landscape with the sun shining on it, to rob the bird's nest up there with the golden eggs in it. I climb and I climb, but the trunk is so thick and so smooth, and it's such a long way to that first branch. But I know that if I could just reach that first branch, I'd go right to the top as if on a ladder."

Many rich people have a complex of guilt because of their privileged situation, though they might not be conscious of it. This makes many of them become revolutionists or supporters of revolutionist causes. They feel that their duty is to descend. The poor, however, envy the rich and would like to ascend.

These normal feelings, if brought into light, could become positive factors in social life. The rich could learn from Jesus to go about doing good and sharing, in many ways, with the underprivileged what they have. The poor could emulate the rich, learning from them how better to use their talents for the good of their families.

He who follows Jesus shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life (JHN 8:12). The unbelievers love darkness rather than light (JHN 3:19). Their feelings are repressed and surface not only in dreams, but also in foolish acts of terrorism, riots, and revolutions. The re3ult is that privileged people lose their positions which they did not enjoy fully, and are replaced by those of low degree, who soon will become disenchanted too.

Jul 27
|
"[Jesus] went round about the villages, teaching." (MRK 6:6)

Many of us feel frustrated. We are not successes. Neither was Jesus. He was a small-time country preacher. Caiaphas had mass rallies with more than a million in attendance at the great festivals. when Jews from all over the world came to worship in Jerusalem. However, he was not a success. Pilate could depose him whenever he liked. Neither was Pilate a success. Caesar dismissed and exiled him. Neither was it a success to be a Caesar. Julius Caesar was killed by his own son. Nero was killed, too, after his successes in uprooting Christians.

Don't envy great men who can achieve much. It only seems so Great men may make history, but only such history as it is possible for them to make. They stand under the dictate of their surroundings.

Even more than that we are conditioned inwardly by our own past. Robespierre, the bloody dictator of the French revolution, had been abandoned by his father soon after his mother's death. He had to struggle hard for an education. He had been offended in his youth by

the young King Louis XVI and the queen. He had been chosen to deliver an address of welcome when they came to his town. They did not say one word of approval, neither did they make a gesture showing appreciation, but drove on. This turned him into a hater of men. He revelled in killing thousands of innocents. He enjoyed seeing the blood of men at the guillotine.

God did not destine us to be killers. To be a killer is always contrary to nature. Therefore, murderers make big mistakes. Robespierre, too, behaved senselessly and died on the guillotine himself. He had achieved nothing. The republic had paved the way for an emperor, Napoleon.

Don't seek successes as the world considers success. They only increase vanity. Bear with resignation your own burden and that of your heredity. Learn from Jesus who was "meek and lowly in heart," content to be a carpenter, an unloved rabbi who went around villages teaching and then was crucified. A resurrection followed.

Jul 28
|
"I will make with them a covenant of peace." (EZE 34:25)

The Jewess, Simone Weil, escaped from Nazi Germany to Britain. There she died from malnutrition and tuberculosis because she had decided to eat only the ration which the population received in the Nazi-occupied regions. She left behind many books of deep Christian thought, though she was never baptized. She did not join a church so that she would not put a distance between her and the unhappy multitude of unbelievers. She was a soul with a special calling.

She could not endure what is wrongly called the traditional in the church. She thought that tradition did not consist in faithfully keeping old ashes, but in keeping the old fire burning by continually adding new fuel.

She could not imagine what would happen if Jesus would suddenly appear on the front between the lines dividing armies and tell the Christians on both sides, "Love one another as I loved you." He would fall dead riddled with bullets from both sides. On Sunday, the Christ-killers of both armies would worship the One whom they had killed and each would pray for the victory of their fatherland, which would mean
the defeat of the adversary.

Many Christian thinkers suffered because of our inconsistency in love. War, class struggles, revolutions, as well as dissensions among Christians are great blasphemies because they are at the opposite pole from the words, "God is love."

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (MTT 5:9). Let us seek peace with all men, insofar as it

depends upon us.

Jul 29
|
"God blessed the seventh day." (GEN 2:3)

In the Bible the figure 7 is the symbol of holiness.

"Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied" (JUD 14). Every seventh year the land had to remain untilled. When seven times seven years passed, the Jews had the year of Jubilee, in which all the land sold in the meantime returned to its first possessor. The days of the creation were seven; seven of each clean animal were saved from the flood. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says in seven ways who He is. On the cross He pronounces seven words. The Book of Revelation contains letters to seven churches, etc.

Why is just the figure 7 the sacred figure? The Chaldeans did not have our decimal system, but a heximal one, e.g. six figures and a zero. The decimal system is arbitrary. In the computers men use the binary system, having only a 1 and a 0. In the heximal system, our 7 was written 10, because there were no more than six figures. Seven became the holy figure because in looking to its written form "10" it symbolized the fact that if you put before the 0, sign of human nothingness, the 1, sign of the one God, the insignificant man becomes important, more important than all the simple figures.

The Jews were descendants of the Chaldeans. So the 7 became their holy figure. In opposition to 7, 6, being the last simple figure, became the symbol of everything petty. The number of the apocalyptic beast is six, six, and again six (REV 13:18), which means a trifle, a trifle, and again a trifle. A lamb can destroy it.

If you are an impersonation of the 7, a man who has denied himself and has become a 0; and if God, "the one," has put Himself as a shield before you, then don't fear huge beasts. They are paper tigers. You will be the victor.

Jul 30
|
"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." (MTT 5:5)

Compare Washington to Napoleon.

Washington was modest. He desired freedom for a country and obtained it. With this he was satisfied. When the crown was offered to him, he refused. He left behind a new, free state.

Napoleon was eager for his own renown. Being general of the republic was not enough. Consul was not enough; it must be prime

consul. In the end he became emperor. He had to depose other kings and replace them with his family. He fought in Egypt and in Moscow, where he had no business to be. He died in exile, a prisoner. His empire is no more.

How many are your preoccupations? No one can do everything without bringing everything into a mess. No one can seek his own renown without getting the reputation of being self-seeking and arrogant.

Jul 31
|
"Be fruitful, and multiply." (GEN 1:28)

Jesus did not marry, though it was considered shameful for a rabbi in His time to be a bachelor. He might have been loved by many girls. He who was "in favour with God and man" (LUK 2:52), must surely have been in favor also with girls. He was human. He might also have had some preferential love, but renounced it for the calling He had from the Father.

He did not impose the same attitude upon others. To the contrary, He honored the marriage feast in Cana with His presence. God's Word also teaches "Marriage is honourable in all" (HEB 13:4); not only in conversations between marriage partners and common meals, but also in the sex play and sexual intercourse.

Rank and file Christians may choose to be or not to be married. Bishops are obliged by the Bible to have a wife (1TM 3:2). Chrysostom said, "The first degree of chastity is pure virginity, the second is faithfulness in marriage. The chaste love in marriage is a second kind of virginity."

Enjoy fully sexual life in marriage. Overcome medieval prejudices which cause people to consider sexuality as something dirty. The One who made sexual organs, who commanded, "Be fruitful and multiply" and inspired the Bible which teaches that "they shall be one flesh," surely likes it when you exercise your sexual functions in marriage, as He likes every other good thing you do.

There is nothing wrong or shameful about sex in marriage. Let us thank God for this beautiful gift He gave to mankind.

Let spinsters and bachelors also be thankful for their estate. It is a
calling apart with its own blessings, and often contains opportunities which married people don't have. It is a simple fact that under persecution, bachelors and spinsters resisted better than those who had to
be concerned about a family.

Aug 1

|
"Marriage is honourable in all." (HEB 13:4)

Every marriage is an adventure. Only great love can make possible the happy cohabitation of two very different persons. Where love is missing, marriage can become fornication with legal documents.

Let us free sexuality from any connection with commercialism. No one can sanctify a marriage whose motives were the wealth of the girl, or the high position of the man. Let us free marriage from problems which are foreign to it: denomination, nationality, race, and party. It is surely ideal if the two partners belong to the same religion, but no one can dictate with whom someone should fall in love. Romeo and Juliet had to die because they belonged to families which had quarreled. Must love die because Catholics have quarreled with Protestants, Jews with Arabs, and blacks with whites? Cannot two persons love and live in harmony even if they do not agree in all matters?

Women are used unnaturally when they are treated as mere objects for pleasure; when they are used as dolls or dressed and ornamented as advertisements for your high social position; when they become idols for which you give up moral duties; when they are made into slaves.

You cannot impose upon today's woman-who can be a doctor, an engineer, or an officer-unjunctions 2000 years old, that say she must be submissive to her husband. It was not Christ's desire, but the backward situation of women at that time, which led to giving such a commandment. Now a cultured woman must be her husband's equal, treated with awe and love, as Christ loved His church.

Aug 2
|
"The just shall live by his faith." (HAB 2:4)

In the Talmud (Makkoth) it is written: Rabbi Simla said, "613 commandments have been given to Moses ... David came and reduced them to 11. They are: 1) to walk uprightly, 2) to work righteousness, 3) to speak the truth in your heart, 4) not to backbite with the tongue, 5) not to do evil to the neighbour, 6) not to take up a reproach against the neighbour, 7) to have contempt for a vile person, 8) to honor them that fear the Lord, 9) not to swear, 10) not to put out money for usury, 11) not to take reward against the innocent. (PSA 15)

"Isaiah reduced them to six: 1) to walk righteously, 2) to speak uprightly, 3) to despise the gain of oppression, 4) not to take bribes, 5) to stop your ears from hearing of blood, 6) to shut your eye from seeing

evil. (ISA 33:15,16)

"Micah came and reduced them to three: 1) to do justly, 2) to love mercy, and 3) to walk humbly with God. (MIC 6:8) "

Rabbi Nachman, son of Isaac, added: Habakkuk reduced them to one: "The just shall live by his faith."

Faith is the great principle of which all the commandments are the elaboration, and which gives them value. Commandments fulfilled without faith do not please God.

Paul mentions this verse of Habakkuk repeatedly. Luther rediscovered its value at the time of the Reformation. If the many commandments are cumbersome for you and you are disoriented, stick to one: have faith in the Lord Jesus and you will live.

Aug 3
|
"Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor." (MTT 19:21)

It is said about Father Serapion that he found in Alexandria a poor man bitten by the cold. He said to himself, "How can I, who am considered to be an ascetic, wear a garment while this poor man, or rather Christ, suffers from the cold? Surely, if I allow him to die from the cold, I will be condemned for homicide on the day of judgment." He undressed himself and gave to the poor his garment.

Then he sat down with his gospel to read. A police constable passed, and seeing him naked, asked, "Father Serapion, who has deprived you of your garments?" He answered "It is the one about whom this book speaks."

Later, he saw a man led to prison because he could not pay his debts. So Serapion sold the gospel and paid the debt.

When he re-entered naked into his cell, his disciple asked him, "Abba, where is your garment?" He answered: "I sent it where we will need it." The disciple asked again, "Where is your gospel?" He replied, "He who told me every day, 'Sell all you have and give to the poor' asked me for it. So I sold it in order to have more confidence on the
day of judgment."

Why should we be satisfied with little faith or wavering faith, when we have before our eyes so many splendid examples of consistent faith? Gamblers put all their possessions on a card. We know in whom we have believed. It is the eternal God, Creator of heaven and earth. Let us
rely on Him fully and do to our utmost what He commands.

Aug 4
|
"Ye are a chosen generation." (1PE 2:9)

How do we recognize one of God's elect? By his humility.

The Lord made Abraham a great man, yet the "friend of God" said, "Behold, I ... am but dust and ashes" (GEN 18:27). Though Moses and Aaron dealt with powerful rulers in the name of God, they acted like servants when they spoke even to rebels: "Hear, I pray you," and "What is Aaron?" (NUM 16:8,11). God made David the greatest king on earth, yet he said, "I am a worm, and no man" (PSA 22:6). Lord called Paul to become the greatest of apostles, yet he wrote, "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle" 1CO 15:9). The elect of God do not feel superior to their fellow men. They fulfill, in its strictest sense, the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (LEV 19:18). The sentence in Hebrew could be translated literally, "Love thy neighbor: he is as thyself" - of the same caliber, of the same value, with sins and virtues like your own. That should be reason enough to love him. Election is by grace, without any merit of ours. It does not justify a feeling of superiority. It reduces
us rather to the state of servants of our fellow men.

Aug 5
|
"Present your bodies a living sacrifice." (ROM 12:1)

When the Earl of Morton, regent of Scotland, told a committee of the General Assembly that they were holding a convocation of the king's subjects and that it was treasonable for them to meet without the king's permission, Andrew Melville answered: "If this be so, then Christ and His apostles must have been guilty of treason, for they called
together great multitudes without asking permission of the magistrates."

The regent growled in anger, "There will never be quietness in this country till half a dozen of you will be hanged or banished."

Melville replied, "Threaten your courtiers after this manner. It is the same to me whether I rot in the air or in the ground. The earth is the
Lord's. I have been ready to give my life where it would not be half so well expended. Let God be glorified."

The Huguenot Admiral Coligny had been wounded for his evangelical faith. The surgeon had amputated his finger and cut the bullet from his arm. "Nothing happens," Coligny said, "but by the will of God. Why do you weep? I am happy in being thus wounded in God's cause. Pray that He may strengthen me. I forgive with all my heart him who fired upon me and those who incited him."

A thrust of a sword to the hilt into the admiral's heart finished him.

Then his corpse was thrown from the balcony.

With this infamous deed the night of Bartholomew started, when thousands of men who also thought like Coligny were killed. Monks encouraged the murderers with the words, "The church revives by the death of heretics."

The Evangelical church has had great men like Knox, who prayed, "O God, give me Scotland or I die." May we learn from them to be men and women of faithful prayer, ready to suffer and die for the holy
cause.

Aug 6
|
"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1CO 10:31)

It is not true that men are converted only through sermons or books or personal witness, which means through words. If you eat and drink and do all things to the glory of God, men should be able to arrive
at the truth through watching your behavior at meals, in business, or entertainment.

Someone came to a believer and asked him about the way of truth. The answer was: "Do you hear the murmuring of the brook? There is the entrance." He could have pointed also toward every other phenomenon of God-created nature or any manifestation of a saint.

The mystic is - in the words of John of Ruysbroek - a man who has climbed the tree of faith, which grows from above downward, because its roots are in God. Not only words, but also the grotesqueness of every moment of such climbing speaks about the source. There was a time when God had not created me, though in His plan I had been an elect person before the foundation of the world. I was in Him; we were one. Then He created me. So I became a creature and He became my God.

When I will arrive at the top in my climbing, that is, to the root from where I came, I will cease to be a creature. God then ceases to be my God. I will have become a partaker of the divine being. We have become one. This oneness, this uniqueness manifests itself in everything I do, even if it is far away from religion. It manifests itself though this treasure is contained in earthly vessels.

If someone does not see my participation in the divine nature, it is because a man who has not been born again cannot see the kingdom of heaven (JHN 3:3). He would not have recognized Jesus to be the Son of God.

Continue to be what you are. Angelus Silesius says that our bodies are
shells, in which the Spirit of eternity wishes to brood his little ones,

For those illuminated by God, ow[?] manner of eating, drinking, and other things of daily life reveal the mystery of our divine nature.

Aug 7
|
"The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (JOB 1:21)

There was once a man who, when his son died, did not exhibit the terrible grief customary at such occasions. His friends said, "You loved your son dearly. How is it that you are so composed now that he is dead?"

The man replied, "There was a time when I had no son. I did not grieve on that account. Now that he died, I am in the same condition as before. Why should I not keep my peace?"

Believers can remain strong in difficult circumstances.

Confucius once met a man clothed in a deerskin, girdled with a rope and playing on a lute. He asked him, "What makes you so happy?"

The man replied, "I have many things to make me happy. Man is the crown of creation. Lo, God made me a man, not an animal. Some die in childhood. I have become an adult. Many are in prison or bound to a sick bed. I am free and healthy. I ate this morning. I have food enough for tonight. How else could I be than content?"

Only when someone is thus free of earthly cares, can he make real advances in spiritual life.

Many a man has unreasonable fears. If your speech is sweet, how can the echo be otherwise than sweet? If you walk with the body straight, how can your shadow be otherwise than straight? A Christian is not afraid of anyone or any thing.

Jesus was anointed with an oil of gladness above His comrades. He anoints His disciples with the same oil. We never lose anything. He is the Lord, our lover, who takes from us some things in order to multiply and then restitute them.

Aug 8
|
"Some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white." (DAN 11:35)

Jesus foretold His disciples that on the evening of His betrayal they would forsake Him. He foretold Peter that he would deny Him. The strange thing is that none of His disciples begged Him to save them from such a fate, though it seems that this would have been the time to say, "Lead us not into temptation."

The pronouns in the Lord's Prayer are plural. We say, "Lead us

not into temptation" for the whole church of Christ that she may not fall away. As for me, I let God decide if He wishes to pass me through the experience of a fall.

If He decides it, we even fall gladly, knowing that God's bottom waits for us. If He pushes me, the fall will not hurt me. It is part of God's providence and it fulfills a good purpose.

Jesus told Peter that not only would he fall, but also that after recovery he would strengthen the brethren. Just after the fall and because of this experience, he was of an unequalled boldness, challenging the people on the day of Pentecost with harsh words which could have cost him his life.

Church history tells us that when sentenced to death, together with his wife, his last desire was to be crucified head down. He did not feel worthy to be crucified head up like his Master. On the cross he said, "In this topsy-turvy world I am now in the right position. I look up toward heaven as men should always do."

The child Jesus "is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel" (LUK 2:34). Accept both destinies.

Aug 9

|

"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." (1JN 1:6)

The apostle deals here with the heresy widespread today called antinomianism (anti-law). The adherents of this doctrine believe that a man can live in sin or compromise with it and at the same time have fellowship with God. Antinomians never state their doctrine bluntly like this, but as a matter of fact this is their attitude in life.

The apostle deals gently with antinomians in his day. He writes, "If we say" this wrong thing, not, "if ~you~ say." He includes himself in the possibility of thinking falsely.

The verb for "to walk in darkness," which is a synonym of "to sin," is in the present subjunctive in this verse, indicating habitual action. The simple fact is that Christians sin, some of them often and gravely. This is so much the reality that the apostle writes, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (1JN 1:8). "And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father" (1JN 2:1). But for the Christian, sin is not the usual attitude. It is a deviation from his habitual course. Children of God sin, but they don't allow sin to dominate them so much that righteousness would be excluded from their life. They walk in the light, not in the darkness. Just because they

walk in the light, they are aware of their sinfulness and regret it.

As for those for whom sin is the program of life, no religiosity is of any avail. They cannot have communion with God.

We live in the last days. Morality, laws, and standards break down. The heresy of antinomianism, of lawlessness united with religiosity, is very dangerous today. Let us beware of it.

Aug 10

|

"Christ Jesus made himself of no reputation." (PHP 2:7)

Niccolo Paganini was one of the best violinists the world has ever seen. Even highly intelligent people like the German poet Henrich Heine, believed that Paganini had made a pact with the devil, giving him his soul for eternity, in exchange for genius, riches, and fame.

Paganini's rise to fame and fortune was difficult. Pursued by creditors he could not pay, he fled from Venice to Vienna, where he had to earn his living playing at marriages or going from saloon to saloon in the slums. He would not be accepted in better restaurants because of his poor clothing. Once while he played the violin in a third-class restaurant, a student gave him a few coins on the condition that he " stop this unbearable noise."

The insult fired Paganini with a mad ambition. He won a competition in the palace of the crown prince. Henceforth a splendid career opened for him. He had world fame and unspeakable riches. Women offered themselves to him. Paganini had succeeded in life, but only through damning his soul. He was an unhappy man, seeking adulation, a money-grabber of unspeakable stinginess and, above all, full of envy of all other artists of the past, present, and future. Only his own art counted in his eyes.

He wrote his music in such difficult combinations of notes that no one except himself, who had a very large hand, will ever be able to play it. Although a millionaire, Paganini would pick up nails, bits of paper or rope which he found on the street, to save buying such articles. He ate the cheapest food. He refused women who loved him, because they might have cost him money.

Success at the price of happiness, costing the ability to enjoy it and to put it in the service of the One from whom it comes-this is the sad story of Paganini. Multiply your talents; seek success: but don't allow the tares of sin to grow in your heart. Relax when you seek success, enjoy it and help others to enjoy it.

Aug 11

|
"Sit down in the lowest room." (LUK 14:10)

Every one of us wishes growth, growth in wealth, a bigger house, a bigger business, a bigger church or mission, a bigger position. Why? Growth for growth's sake is the philosophy of the cancer cell.

There are many recipes for success. Jesus studied none of them. Instead He sought to be pleasant to His father and to faithfully fulfill His duty, whether it involved a cross or a crown.

Don't give up biblical principles. Don't marry for money, nor earn money dishonestly. Don't rise in politics through demagoguery. Don't call people to become church members without instructing them in the fact that this implies a Christian life. Don't lead a missionary work so that you might have a big income or a large number of converts, but so that the truth might remain in all its purity.

Never give up any slice of truth for ecumenicity's sake. Love everyone but acknowledge as a brother i n faith only the man who stands for the truth as contained in the Bible.

Don't be apologetic about being poor, unnoticed, belonging to some small church. Being ashamed of these, you will become big in the wrong way. Jesus was not ashamed of being a babe in a manger or a man crucified between thieves.

Don't try to be great through producing splits in someone else's family, business, church, or mission. Let the other one enjoy the leadership. Be ready to play the second violin. In this way you will enjoy your modest position much more than the unhappy "successful" people.

Aug 12
|
"Let all the earth keep silence before him." (HAB 2:20)

The prerequisite for apprehending God is silence. The radio and TV have to be switched off, as well as the noise of air-conditioners, dishwashers, and much talk.

Many souls never find the silent God because of the much noise in their homes.

There is much vain talk. I know no vain silence. Silence is a fullness of which words are only crumbs.

When you appreciate the Word or someone's words as being profound, remember that they come from deep silence. So why should you not come to the source of the river? Why do you stop at the words, "He will bring us to the source of living water"?

I have traveled around the world many times, but the most interesting journeys have been those I made in silence in the depths of my own heart, the only place where God wishes to meet me.

Forsake the outward noises, also the inward ones, the inner

debates, the obsessions, the worries. Enter through the golden gate in the realm of silence where the Bridegroom waits for you.

Aug 13
|
"Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord." (LUK 1:38)

The Virgin Mary has many virtues for which she is worthy of admiration. One of them is her spirit of independence.

She must have been a young peasant girl when the angel appeared to her. When the angel told her that she was chosen to be the Lord's mother, she knew what she risked. Everyone, including her bridegroom, would consider that she had sinned. The punishment for unfaithfulness in betrothal was stoning. Twenty centuries have passed. She still is the subject of mockery in Communist countries, and not only there. She knew also the prophecies. Her song proves it. So she realized that becoming the mother of the Lord, she would become also a mother of sorrows. She knew that a sword would pierce her heart, too, when nails pierced the hands and feet of her son.

One would expect that she would have asked from the angel time for reflection and would have consulted with her bridegroom, her parents if they still were alive, her older relatives, or some priest.

The whole plan of salvation would have remained unfulfilled if she had taken counsel from men. Like Paul later, who when he had seen Jesus, "conferred not with flesh and blood" (GAL 1:16), the young girl, Mary, also asked no one, but said spontaneously to the angel, "Be it unto me according to thy word."

The chastest of women, the example of purity took upon herself the shame of a premarital pregnancy. She knew that what she did was right.

The biblical ideal is that of a submissive womanhood, of a silent woman. However, the submissiveness of a Christian woman is not one of weakness. She is obedient to her husband because she is great and can give him an example of humility. She can be silent because she has much to say and can show everyone that deep silence speaks. She can be dependent because she had inwardly acquired a great independence, which is her love-gift to her husband.

Aug 14
|
"His decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." (LUK 9:31)

Enemies of Christ spread the lie about the collusion of the church with Nazism. They hide the fact that Hitler killed four thousand Catholic priests and kept in prison many thousands of others. The number of Protestant pastors who have met the same fate is not known.

Not only priests, but tens of thousands of laymen also gave their lives for Christ in this period. As is always the case, the church had at that time its Judases also; but those who represent the church are its saints.

August 14 is the day of the execution of the priest Jacob Gapp. Before being led to death, he wrote: "I consider this day as the most beautiful of my life.... I naturally passed through many difficult hours, but I could prepare myself well for death.... Everything passes except heaven. I pray for all; I pray also for my fatherland."

The priest John Steinmeyer wrote in his last letter, "My demand for pardon has been refused. Today at l P.M. the flight to heaven ... I die gladly."

The priest Bernhard Liechtenberg told a fellow prisoner, when both had been beaten with sticks and had their heads put in barrels filled with excrement: "I wish nothing else than what my Savior wills. Quiet. He was spat upon on the way to the cross." He died praying.

Jesus has accomplished many things. The most important was that He accomplished the right decease in Jerusalem. His death had a purpose: He died for our sins. It had the right manner: He died praying, caring for His beloved, opening the kingdom for a thief who was a fellow sufferer.

Not everyone is called to martyrdom. But every Christian can give a good testimony by dying in a dignified, hopeful, and loving manner. Your death should be an accomplishment.

Aug 15

|

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (HEB 13:2)

Those who entertain the greatest number of angels, being unaware of it, are the Communist prison directors. Here is one such incident.

An Orthodox priest in the Soviet Union worked in a garden. He observed a boy sneaking in to steal apples. He caught him with a strong grip on his hand. The boy was deadly afraid, expecting a beating, but the priest filled his pockets with apples. He put a few more in his hands
and told him, "You are welcome any time. Only enter through the gate and bring other boys with you. I have plenty of apples for all of you." Soon some thirty boys gathered regularly in his garden. He instructed them in the gospel, though it is strictly forbidden by the Soviet authorities to teach religion to youth. He also taught them religious songs. After a time the converted boys brought their parents to these meetings. An underground church had begun.

A teacher discovered the "crime" and denounced the priest. He disappeared forever in a Soviet prison. Like an angel, he appeared from nowhere, then went out of sight, but he left behind him a fragrance of

heaven and souls inebriated with the love of God.

This was a priest of the True Orthodox Church, followers of Patriarch Tikhon who had refused to cooperate with the Communists. Metropolitan Venianmin and innumerable other priests have been shot, but this church lives and conquers through love. We pity the Communists who do not know that they, unaware, keep angels in their prisons.

The Baptist pastor Odintsov did not allow the atheist government to dictate to him as to how he should lead Christ's church. He was arrested and literally thrown before dogs to be tom to pieces. The director again had had an angel in his jail.

A chill passes through a Christian's spine when he receives a brother. What if he is an angel? The Galatians received St. Paul as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus (GAL 4:14).

Aug 16
|
"Jesus said unto her: Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (JHN 2:4)

The German mystic Meister Eckhart wrote, "Woman is the noblest name for soul." Staupitz, Luther's confessor, wrote, "The man who wishes to bring fruits for eternal life must become a woman." With Jesus, woman was 8 name of honor. He addressed His mother in this way, because she was the woman predicted in GEN 3:15, whose seed would bruise the head of the serpent.

The words surely are not words of rebuke. The only evangelist to report them is John, who must have heard the story from the Lord's mother herself. He had taken her to his house after the Crucifixion (JHN 19:27).

The words sound harsh in translation. The Greek original is, ~Ti emoi kai soi, an expression frequently used in the mystery religions of ancient times and having approximately the following sense: "What strange fluid is circulating between us two? How is it you guessed my intention?"

He also explains to her, "My hour has not come yet." His time to do a miracle will have arrived only when the last drop of wine has been exhausted, so He should not be under suspicion that He mixed water with wine. Man's extremity is God's opportunity.

However, his mother has interceded. So He does not wait longer. He who yielded to the prayer of a Canaanite woman (MTT 15:28), how will He not yield to the request of His holy mother?

She knew what He would do; so she said to the servants, " Whatsoever he says unto you, do it." She was sure that He could only order
something good, even when what he ordered was strange, like filling pots with water as though the guests were desirous to take a bath, when they needed wine.

Let this be our principle of life also: to do whatever He says.

Aug 17
|
"Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil ... durst not bring against him a railing accusation." (JUD 9)

Historians of old, Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus describe Pilate as guilty of corruption, insults, rapine, intrigues on the people, arrogance, murders of innocent victims, and constant savagery. The Talmud has strong words about the high priests of Jesus' time.

The Gospels use absolutely no epithets. It is because the evangelists did not hate. They said only what was needed to stimulate faith and action, not what would make the adversary despicable in the eyes of men.

Love is the only possible attitude for a Christian. The tree does not withdraw its protecting shadow from the woodcutter, nor the moon its light from the hovel of the outcast.

In LAM 2:21, Jeremiah tells God, "Thou hast slain [virgins and young men] in the day of thine anger." He prefers to accuse God, who is not reached by our mean words, in order to avoid the great crime of speaking mean words against the actual killers.

Criminals deserve our pity, our love, yea, our respect, for the great suffering they bring upon themselves. To call them names is not a Christian trait. The most terrible waste is the waste of mind. It is such a waste to invent something that would put an adversary to shame.

Christ's death was not the work of some murderers. It was the fulfillment of a plan of God. God the Creator of all beings is also the One who dissolves them in order to resurrect them again. He might sometimes use wicked men to bring to Himself His elected ones. They see all as coming from God, and therefore use no bad words against their murderers.

How much less should we use mean words against those who wrong us.

Aug 18
|
"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." (EXO 20:4)

When we read in the Bible about the idols to which men bow, we think that these belonged to the past. We don't realize how

backward a great part of humanity still is. Animism and fetishism are among
the most widespread religions even today.

One example is the Konkombas in Ghana (Africa). Their highest worship is given to a fetish, which they have to forsake when they become Christians. This is not easy. They still believe that the fetish wields great power. It makes the owner rich, gives him many wives, health, etc. They bring chicken, goats, and sheep as sacrifices to the fetish.

The Grumade fetish asks from time to time for blood of men. Missionaries testify that a witchdoctor, in service to this fetish, poisoned a man. His body was completely swollen in agony. Then the chief of the tribe ordered the witchdoctor to bring him back to life or he
would be in trouble. Soon the swelling passed.

The natives value this fetish above their families.

Some Konkombas would like to combine the Christian faith with keeping the fetish, which is not accepted by missionaries.

Let us keep in prayer those primitives who bow to fetishes, as well as the many superstitious among modern men who have a belief in luck-bringing amulets and other idols.

Aug 19
|
"Abraham begat Isaac." (MTT 1:2)

The Authorized Version says, "Abraham begat." We would like to translate in the present tense, "begets." The Greek form of the verb used here is called, "aorist," which means etymologically, "without horizon." It is much used in the New Testament and has the connotation of an eternal present, of events outside of time.

In Greek, the aorist is used in the genealogy of the Lord because what we have in this chapter is not only a historical record of what happened once. A comparison with the genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3 shows that they don't match. They do not have to match because they are not only history.

The artificial reduction of the number of ancestors to forty-two and the willful omission of some ancestors from the genealogy shows that this list has another purpose. It was a ladder of initiation. Mature souls
in early Christianity, when taught to change from simple believers into men who, like the Virgin Mary, would have Jesus living in them, meditated successively on the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the others until they came to Mary and identified spiritually with her. The genealogy in Luke is another procedure of initiation looking retrospectively from the height of Jesus-likeness to the whole past history.

Even if not in a sophisticated and methodical manner as in times before, every Christian passes through such processes. The Abraham state begets the Isaac state. Therefore the Greek does not use the past tense, but the aorist, the tense without horizon. We are meant not to be slaves of our time, but to live outside of time.

Aug 20
|
"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." (LUK 9:23)

A mocker asked a believer, "If you say that Godhead is everywhere, is it also in this dog?" The answer was, "Bow-wow." A wise answer, the answer the dog would give to such a question put to him.

To every question you ask someone else, you will obtain an answer according to that person's constitution. In this respect, men are not different than dogs. You ask high questions about Godhead. No man has any other answer than the "bow-wow" of a very small creature.

We all see things from our limited point of view. Every point of view is a point of blindness because it incapacitates us totally for every
other perspective. Lifting up your eyes, you see the ceiling, but not the
floor. Looking to the door, I exclude the window from my sight.

Jesus gives manifold salvation, a salvation from points of view, too. The Christian denies himself, which means that he denies himself. He does not look on things anymore from a certain position, because he has no position. The foxes have their holes and the birds their nests, but
the Son of man does not have where to place His head.

Not having a certain place for your head frees you. You don't see things anymore from one side or the other. Your answer about the Godhead will not be one of the common "bow-wow." You will have the intuition of the whole, and you will be its witness.

Aug 21
|
"This man receiveth sinners." (LUK 15:2)

Devil's Island" is the common name of a cluster of little islands ten miles from the South American coast. They are surrounded by an unruly sea infested with sharks. For years it was populated only by hard-core criminals. They did not work much because the climate makes work almost impossible.

For most of them, drink had been the first cause of their downfall. (Men of the liquor industry should be compelled to spend a year with the

victims of their vice in a place like this.) A poll established also that
80 percent are children of alcoholics or syphilitics. The vice of their fathers sentenced them to hard labor.

In 1933, officers of the French Salvation Army offered to live and work for Christ among the most rotten and decayed, exposed to insects and pests. One officer said, "Without the love of God it would be impossible to love such men. I shiver to let my thoughts go into this infected place."

Notwithstanding, they went. Here is the description of a meetings "Criminals with shaven heads, bare breasts and sleeves rolled up showing the tatooing. One bears the picture of his wife and child, remarkably done, in two medallions. Others have inscriptions such as, 'Child of sorrows,' or 'Oh, my mother, if thou but saw thy son.' They listen silently with impassive faces."

They did not remain impassive forever. The Salvation Army had a recruit among the criminals. He had committed murder. The police knew nothing about him. Converted at a meeting of the Army, he confessed his crime and was sent to Devil's Island. There he helped the Salvationists. He said, "Would that I had known the one Son of man who saved me, before knowing the sons of men who destroyed me!"

Thanks to the missionary, Charles Pean, and his colleagues many were saved and their situation was improved. Now Devil's Island has ceased to be a penal institution. The Salvation Army has learned from Jesus love toward criminals.

Aug 22
|
"What he saith unto you, do it." (JHN 2:5)

Therese of Lisieux was the last of several girls in a poor family. One Christmas, a case with toys left over from her older sisters was presented to her and she was asked which one she would like to choose. She answered, "I choose all of them." At the age of fifteen, she entered a Carmelite convent and had to fix her intention upon one specific Christian virtue which she would have to practice above all others. She said again, "I will choose all of them."

Even so the mother of the Lord teaches us to do whatsoever Her son says, without any discrimination. If you choose among the commandments of the Lord, you really say, "I will not do what He commands,
but what I like. " We have to obey like soldiers, to go into battle when commanded even if it means sure death and to obey also when He commands what we consider to be shameful retreat.

Moses told the people, "Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (DEU 5:32). Do commandments have a right and a

left side?

The commandment says, "Do not steal." You can steal in order to enjoy more pleasures. You can steal in order to help the poor. You shall not lie. You can lie in order to deceive for selfish reasons. You can lie in order to save lives. There exist sins of the right side and of the left side, but we are meant not to reason at all when He commands. We are simply to obey and to avoid sin.

We have general rules of conduct which are absolutes, unless we have a special command to do otherwise in exceptional circumstances. Love is the supreme standard. Do everything He commands you, however strange or unsuitable His commandment might seem to you.

Aug 23

|

"I am ... the truth." (JHN 14:6)

Two men, Truth and Falsehood, went swimming. Falsehood stole Truth's clothes, and Truth, rather than lower himself to wear Falsehood's clothes, chose to go without. Hence the expression "the naked truth." Falsehood, in the guise of Truth, goes about deceiving mankind to this day.

Truth can never compromise with Falsehood. They can never walk the same way. It is something else with ~the man~ taken in falsehood. Toward him, Truth is full of love and tries to convince him to leave behind the stolen clothes and stan walking naked, too.

Henry IV of England was a brave man. Therefore he is known as Henry the Great. He was truthful himself and great in kindness toward those with false attitudes.

He once was told about a certain captain who had spread slander against him and had rebelled. Though he had been pardoned and had obtained many benefits, yet for all this he continued not to love the king. Henry IV said, "I will do him so many kindnesses that I will force him to love me whether he will or not." It is thus that naked truth wins false men who disguise themselves as sincere.

Henry IV used to say to those who admired his proceedings, "A man catches more flies with one spoonful of honey than with twenty tons of vinegar."

Love the man in error; love also the man who lives in deliberate falsehood. Just remember: truth is truth and falsehood is falsehood. Never confuse or mix them.

Aug 24

|
"There are diversities of gifts." (1CO 12:4)

Around A.D. 165, Bishop Carpus was burned alive because he had refused to offer incense to the heathen gods. While the henchmen arranged the stake, he said, "We all have the same Eve as mother, and what things men do to men." When he was mounted on the stake, his face shone. He was asked about it. He answered, "I have been raptured from this world and have seen the glory of the Lord."

St. Mechthild of Magdeburg knew how to write exquisitely about divine mysteries: "The sweet dew of Trinity sprinkles the flower of the elect maid with water from the well of the eternal Godhead. The fruit of the flower is an immortal God and a mortal man and an eternal warrant of life eternal. Our Saviour became our bridegroom."

She knew how to write otherwise, too. She wrote to her bishop, "Your honor has rotted in the mire of vices. You are poor like a beggar, because you want the kingly treasure of love. Jesus will come against you with judgment." For letters like this she was much hated.

Frederic the Wise, duke of Saxonia, when told to conquer the town of Erfurt which had rebelled against him, and when assured that it would cost at the utmost the life of only five men, answered, "One would be too much for me." He preferred peace. He protected Luther, though this was dangerous for his throne. When warned about it, he answered, "I would prefer to take a stick and to leave as a beggar than to
act knowingly against God."

Different saints, different callings, but everyone an example of obedience for us.

Aug 25
|
"What do ye do more than others?" (MTT 5:47)

A Russian revolutionist, Zasulitch, in Czarist times shot General Trepov for flogging a student in the Paviak prison. In 1907, another revolutionist woman, Ragozinikova, fashionably dressed, called at the Central prison in Petersburg and asked to speak with the commandant. She had come to protest the government's policy of flogging her imprisoned comrades. Inside her dress were sewed thirteen pounds of dynamite and a detonator. When the commandant appeared, she killed him with her revolver. The dynamite was for another purpose. She knew that she would be arrested and taken to the headquarters of the Secret Police. Not knowing any other way to penetrate it, she intended to blow it up with herself. But she was searched and the dynamite discovered.

She was sentenced to be hanged. Awaiting execution, she wrote to her family, "Death itself is nothing.... Frightful only is the thought of

dying without having achieved what I could have done." When she was hanged, Ragozinikova was twenty years old.

Christian brethren and sisters are flogged today in many Communists Moslem, and heathen countries. Worse, they are tortured. Surely, we will not imitate the methods of the revolutionists. Notwithstanding, we need souls as resolute as Zasulitch and Ragozinikova to defend their fellow believers, to protest, to help, to fight for them. Today Jesus says that our courage and zeal should exceed that of the revolutionists and terrorists, as we seek to help our Christian brethren and sisters in bondage.

Aug 26
|
"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (MTT 27:46)

During the great terror when Tito first came to power, one of his purge victims, a lay assistant in an Orthodox church, hanged himself before he could be shot. He left this note for his wife: "I have gone to remind God of a world He has forgotten."

"Where is God?" Many believing men have asked this question when passing through great sufferings. Job and David questioned God. Even Jesus did it when hanging on a cross.

You may have some heavy sorrow, and doubt about God may nag you.

When Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor, was converted, the first thing the Lord showed him was, "how great things he must suffer." (ACT 9:16). Parents and professors and clergy should teach children and adults sufferology, without the knowledge of which it is impossible to lead the right life. "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (JOB 5:7). We are taught many useless things. We are not taught to suffer with understanding. Therefore the despair in sorrows.

Life and reality are hidden behind veils. The Jewish high priest had to pass through two thick veils before entering in the most holy place of the temple in Jerusalem. We don't know whether a veiled Moslem lady smiles at us or frowns; and we don't see the intentions of God because of the veils which cover Him.

The curtain was rent at the death of Jesus. Soon after this, He was seen resurrected. The veil was rent for you, too. You will see that all things work together for your good. God is very near you. He does not forget you.

Aug 27
|
"He ... became obedient." (PHP 2:8)

When Bibles were written by hand, a king of France asked a

monk to write for him a Scripture without the verses in which whoredom is condemned.

If it were left up to most of us, we would leave out of the Bible everything which enjoins obedience. Once this is missing, everything else is bearable for us.

Obedience to Christ must be total. Once He orders something, we should not ask ourselves what the results will be. A soldier who advances in obedience against a well-armed enemy in the face of cannon fire knows that he has a great chance of dying if he obeys the orders. This is what obedience means.

Can obedience to a commandment of Christ make us lose many possibilities of doing good? We don't have better minds than Jesus. He surely has weighed also the pros and cons. If He says something, we obey without reflecting. We don't delay, saying that wise men think things over before doing them. The psalmist writes, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments" (PSA 119:60).

In our day Christians do not help the poor because welfare agencies do it. Hospitals take care of the sick, orphanages take care of the fatherless, but institutions don't have the touch of personal love.

In former Portuguese Africa, blacks were observed walking miles with their sick past the government hospital to a much more primitive Christian clinic. When asked why, seeing that the medicines were the same, they replied, "This might be so, but it is not the same hands."

Obey and love and add your personal touch to the good done in the world.

Aug 28
|
"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana." (JHN 2:11)

Missionaries who have lived among savages all report that they seemed to the natives to be miracle workers. Missionaries knew how to make water to burn, even stinking water (gasoline); they made fire in a minute through lighting a match, whereas the natives had to rub two pieces of wood together for a long time. Missionaries could hunt with guns; they could sew; they could talk to each other without opening their mouths, by inscribing some strange signs on paper.

Pearl Buck tells in her novels that the Chinese in remote regions disbelieved her when she said that in England houses were built over houses (she meant apartments) and that carts needed no horses to make them go. The Chinese considered these to be fairy tales.

When Marco Polo, the first European to return from China, said that he had seen yellow men with slanted eyes and pigtails, he got the nickname, "Marco Polo the liar."

What then is the miraculous? It is what a being who is superior physically, intellectually, and spiritually knows and can do, which the inferior being cannot know and do.

Jesus was a superior being-God living as man among us. He could do what men normally cannot do.

Now He is in heaven and has all power. Don't limit His possibilities to normal human experience. He can do above all we can imagine. Come to Him with all your problems and those of mankind. Have confidence in His miraculous power. He can change water into wine. He can change tears into cause for joy.

Aug 29
|
"Wine that maketh glad the heart of man." (PSA 104:15)

The Talmud, one of the holy books of the Jews, says that men will be accountable before God for every pure joy they could have had an have missed.

This thought is right. Everything God created is good - the bacilli which produce the fermentation of grape juice, too. Sin has changed many things into occasions of sadness, but there has remained still, "a time to laugh ... and a time to dance" (ECC 3:4).

When Jesus changed water into wine in Cana, He showed us that well-understood religion does not exclude human pleasures and joys, providing that they are not inherently evil or that they are not the prominent preoccupation of life. Within these limits, a Christian should share the joys of the world.

Never believe that Jesus, who changed an enormous quantity of water into wine at Cana, reproaches you for a joy. Remember also that His wine, just because it was made out of water, might not have had the intoxicating effects of the everyday wine.

The Christian must thoroughly renounce sin, but not the things which make life to be really life. Beauty, art, joy unite man with God. Religion contains an ever-fresh love which is grateful for the happiness in life.

Aug 30
|
"This is love, that we walk after his commandments." (2JN 6)

Men are trying hard to be clever and smart and modern, when what is needed is adherence to the old verities.

When Queen Victoria's ministers were urging on her certain mattes of state as being wise procedure, she said impatiently, "Don't talk to me of what is expedient. Tell me what is right."

Some Christians joined the Communist Secret Police in order to use their positions to help the church. They had not foreseen all the consequences. They were commanded to murder. If they obeyed, they would retain their rank and a slight possibility of mitigating other

horrors. If they refused in the name of truth, they would die without anyone ever learning of their stand. The murder they were ordered to commit would be carried out anyway. They would die without being useful to anyone through their death.

So life is sometimes rooted in horror. Every grain is dunged with filth before becoming an ear of wheat.

What has one to choose when he has before him only tragic alternatives? Don't choose the expedient. Choose God's commandment: "Do not kill."

In a concentration camp in Nikolaev, a Jew was ordered to hang six other Jews who had committed no other crime than being Jewish. If he did it, six innocents would die. If he refused, seven Jews would die and seven old mothers would weep. He thought about his helpless mother and hanged his fellow Jews. He could never forgive himself. Had he refused, there would have been no regrets. Choose always God's commandment.

Aug 31
|
"Thy word is truth." (JHN 17:17)

What guarantee do we have that our New Testament is the same as that which was revealed in the first century to the apostles?

Well, the New Testament can claim one advantage over all the writings of old Greece–the age of its manuscripts.

The oldest complete manuscript of Homer we possess is from the tenth century A.D., which means it dates from 2000 years after the death of its author. There is an interval of 1600 years between the date when the poetry of Pindar was written (450 B.C.) and the oldest manuscript (A.D. 1150).

In contrast, the New Testament was finished by the year 100. The oldest complete manuscript dates from about the year A.D. 300, only two hundred years separating the two dates. Even for these two hundred years there exists a chain of rich quotations in the early writings of Christians which guarantee the authenticity of the first manuscripts. We possess 4000 old manuscripts of the New Testament, which can be compared with each other and give us the modern correct text.

We can rely on the teachings of the New Testament. Let us take heed to its principal teaching: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (JHN 3:5).

When we are born physically, we come in a sack of water. We all are born from water, but being born into this world does not make us heirs of heaven. The teaching of universal salvation can be dangerous. Jesus tells those who have been born from a sack of water that they need to be born from the Spirit, too.

Wesley preached endlessly about the same subject: "You must be born again." When asked why, he answered, "Because you must be

born again."
Jesus said it. We can be sure that we have in our New Testament His authentic words.

Sep 1
|
"Straightway coming up out of the water." (MRK 1:10)

Soldiers begin to march the second they hear the command, "March."
The Gospel According to Mark is characterized by the astonishing repetition of the word, ~evthus~ which in Greek means, "straightway." Some feel that Mark was the rich ruler to whom the Lord had said, "Sell what you have and give to the poor." He had too many possessions. He left the Lord with sadness in his heart. He could not renounce so much. Later he regretted his disobedience and did what the Lord commanded him, although he had remorse for not having done it "straightway." This made him repeat this one word again and again, when needed and when not needed in his Gospel.
It is said about the cavaliers of earlier times that they slept with the spear and shield near them. So the Christian must be ready to obey a commandment the moment it is pronounced, even if it is at night. The bride says in Solomon's Song, "I sleep, but my heart awaketh" (SOS 5:2).
Mary at the marriage in Cana said, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (JHN 2:5). Be attentive. The words are not, "Do whatsoever He has said before."
It is written, "the word of God increased" (ACT 6:7). "The word of God grew and multiplied" (ACT 12:24). Christ did not speak only 2000 years ago. He has, not become dumb since. He gives teachings in every generation. He is a wonderful counselor (ISA 9:6) in your personal life today. Listen daily to Him and obey immediately what He tells you.

Sep 2
|
"The ox knoweth his owner." (ISA 1:3)

Our text makes a comparison between men on the one hand and oxen or asses on the other. The comparison is in favor of the animals.
The comparison would not be favorable for us even if we were measured with mice. Mice know how to establish causal relations between the eating of a food and death. If poisoned food has been given to them, the death of one of them is a warning for others. They would not
touch the food.
Experiments were made with mice to whom poisons with delayed effect were given, e.g. kumaphen. The mice still found out the cause

and transmitted genetically an attitude of refusal toward this poison to their offspring. Moreover, if mice who knew about a poison and had an adversity toward it had other mice put in their cage who knew nothing about the matter, the wise mice hindered those without knowledge from touching the poisoned food, using even violence, as we would try to overpower someone who wanted to commit suicide.

Mice know enough to beware themselves and to warn their comrades of what is deadly for them, even when death is a delayed effect. Yet we men, the crown of creation, do not beware of sin though it brings with it eternal death. We do not have at least as much zeal as mice have to warn others about sin. On the contrary, we sometimes attract others to sin and encourage them in it.

Jesus teaches us to learn from birds (MTT 6:26). Isaiah teaches us to learn from asses and oxen. Let us be ashamed to have to learn even from mice. Sin is poison. Abstain from it and restrain others.

Sep 3
|
"Forgetting those things which are behind." (PHP 3:13)

~Shema Israel, Adonai Eloheinu Adonai ehad.~

"Listen Israel, the Lord your God is one God." It was this prayer (the words above are their Hebrew original) that was on the lips of many Jews who went to Eichmann's gas chambers while he looked on smiling.

Some twenty years later he was captured by the Israeli Secret Police in Buenos Aires. In his provisional prison, he amazed the guards by reciting this same prayer; this was even more amazing since he claimed not to be a believer at all.

I have known well the world of murderers and big criminals. A mysterious identification with their victims happens in their souls. Mass murderers of Jews became much more obsessed with Jewishness than any Jew would be. Professional abortionists will be haunted by a world of children who point at them, putting the question, "Why did you kill me?" The man who dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, when asked by reporters, "How do you feel about it?" answered, "How did they feel about it?"

We have many victims in life. Jesus became the ideal victim, the innocent lamb betrayed, insulted, wronged, killed for our misdoings. And He died with the words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Then He addresses Himself to us and says, "I, the victim, have forgiven you. All your victims are now in a world where forgiveness reigns. You are the only one who does not forgive yourself. You are haunted by what you have done. Accept forgiveness. Forgive yourself. The unhealthy identification with the men whom you have wronged will cease. You will have a new personality."

Sep 4
|
"Love of money is the root of all evil." (1TM 6:10)

It surely is. The possession of much money can be a great evil, too. Usually men cannot handle it without being polluted.

Another great evil is the lack of money. A hungry man is an angry man. Revolutions accompanied by mass killings are made by men without money.

Jesus teaches us to give alms, which means that He wishes the poor to get some money from us. Through this we bring them from one endangered sphere into another.

Money is dangerous. Its simple mention produces harm. Having it as well as not having it can produce trouble.

The solution is to live as if money did not exist, not allowing it to
play a role in your making of decisions. Do not seek the job which produces much money, but the one in which you can be most useful to society. Marry not the girl or boy who has more money, but the one whom you can make the happiest. Do not buy the most expensive things, which would give you the occasion to boast, neither the cheapest thing which would prove your detachment from the world. Buy what is needed.

May your sanctified mind decide about having or not having of this nonentity-money. Never allow the having or not having of money determine the state of your mind.

Sep 5
|
"That they all may be one." (JHN 17:21)

The British publication ~New Society~ has conducted a psychological survey of player3 in symphony orchestras. This shows that brass and string players usually have bad opinions of each other. Woodwind players, especially oboists, are considered as neurotics by their colleagues in the orchestra. Violin and viola players have uneasy, mutually deprecatory attitudes.

The wonder is that people who tend to be mutually hostile to each other can produce an effect of order and harmony.

The moment the conductor lifts his baton, all these emotions are set apart. Only one thing counts now: the success of the concert.

The children of this world sometimes are wiser than the children of light. It is unavoidable that Christians, men and women of such different background, temperaments, experiences of life, cultural levels, nations, races, and social classes should disagree in many

things and feel even, however slightly, some hostility toward each other. We are not only partakers of the divine nature; we are human, too. But the human side should be put aside for the common worship and the common action in the service of the Lord.

Ask yourself what is greater the cause which we serve in common or the matter in which we differ? Then you will have the right attitude of love.

Sep 6
|
"I sleep, but my heart waketh." (SOS 5:2)

The time of sleep must not be lost time.

The renowned Russian chemist Mendeleev did not succeed for a long time in finding the definitive form of the periodicity and quality of simple elements. Once after having worked at it a whole night, he fell
asleep in his laboratory. And, lo, he dreamed it was the table. When he awoke, he Jotted it down immediately. Much of the music of the opera ~Snegurotchka~ of Rimski-Korsakov came to him in his sleep. The psychiatrist Bechterev always concentrated on the most important problem in the evening in order to have the answers ready when he awakened from sleep. The chessmaster Karpov dreamed a move which made him win a tournament.

Sometimes more neurons are active during a dream than when one is awake. Therefore the morning is always wiser than the evening.

One evening, New Testament Joseph considered leaving the Virgin Mary, believing she had sinned. He did not sleep well. His heart remained awake. An angel spoke to him. In the morning he did the right thing. He took Mary as his wife. In a dream he learned how to save the child from Herod and also when to return to Palestine. Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar both received important warnings in dreams. So did the Old Testament Joseph as well as many others.

Use the time of your sleep well. Let your last thought be from God's Word. Finish the day with prayer. God will speak to you sometimes as you sleep.

Sep 7
|
"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." (GAL 6:1)

A. Krasnov-Levitin is a Hebrew-Christian writer from Russia who thrice has been in prison for his heroic attitude. He told his interrogators simply, "You cannot buy and you cannot frighten me."

When freed, he was sad because Krasin, another Christian writer and godson of his, while in prison, cracked under stress and betrayed some names.

Krasnov-Levitin was called as a witness for Krasin's trial. He had hard feelings in his heart toward the Christian who had betrayed others. In court he met an acquaintance, Mrs. Hodorovitch. He asked her what she was doing there. She answered, "Though I don't call myself a Christian, I sympathize with those who suffer, even if they have broken down under the burden of a cross which was too heavy." Krasnov-Levitin became ashamed of his evil thoughts and he himself published the story of his sin.

Not only under torture, but under all temptations and pressures, some Christians are strong and others weak. Some yield. Men who are strong in some circumstances are very weak in others. It is not for us to judge and condemn those who have fallen, but rather to stretch out toward them a helping hand to restore them with words of meekness.

Sep 8
|
"Mine enemies reproach me." (PSA 42:10)

Christians have to be warned against anti-Semitism, against white and black racism. One of the great dangers is the widespread anti-American feeling. It is just like the anti-Jewish hatred in the past generation, unreasonable and unpleasant to God.

The United States provides 80 percent of the finances and 60 percent of the staff for the world mission of the church. The collapse of America would be a collapse of the entire missionary effort. Therefore criticism of America is propagated by the devil.

As the Jews were described as usurers and deceivers, now the lie is spread that rich America is ruining the poor nations. When the West established its first contacts with the Third World it was already far ahead of them. The white settlers of South Africa also were far ahead of the black population from the beginning. They do not owe their privileged economic situation to the exploitation of the backward nations.

It is true that Americans and other whites consume too much. It is to be noted, however, that per capita production in America exceeds production in India by more than the difference in consumption, allowing it not only to pay for the consumption, but also to give foreign aid.

The whites did not cause the Third World to become poor. They are the only help for these people to overcome poverty.

Beware of anti-Americanism as the devil's tool to destroy the greatest support of mission work and of freedom of religion in the whole world.

Sep 9
|
"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (JHN 3:5)

Jesus does not say that a man who has not passed through new birth will not be in the heavenly kingdom. He says that this man ~cannot~ enter. A mineral cannot enter into the sphere of living beings except it ix absorbed by them. A plant cannot become an animal. If the animal eats it, it becomes a part of the animal's body. An animal cannot become a man. Man belongs to a superior realm. Only if a man eats an animal will it become part of a human body.

So a man cannot become a child of God through any deed of his. The distance between a child of God and a man is much greater than that between a man and a monkey, because man and monkey are both creatures, whereas the child of God is a partaker of the divine nature. Men cannot become heirs of the kingdom through their endeavors. They are absorbed into it by the all-embracing love of the church.

Then the man has to die, to die to the world, to its laws and to sin. He has to cease to exist as an "1." Jesus says that we have to deny ourselves. A Christian dies before he dies. Then he is absorbed by the divine nature. He becomes a child of God. The new birth has happened.

Die in order to be alive. Someone who has died is not conscious of the human voices around him and is not interested in what is happening.

We remain partly human even after the new birth and continue in the world, but the child of God has an inner sanctuary in which he is dead to the passions, the fun, and the labor of this world. If a child of
God would remain with his old preoccupations, he would be like a corpse kept in the house, which spreads only stench.

Don't give undue importance to all other religious things. To be born again is the most important of all.

Sep 10
|
"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and l will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." (ROM 9:15)

A man was brought to a psychiatrist. His madness consisted in believing that he was a corpse. The psychiatrist was sure that it would

be easy to cure him by showing him that corpses do not bleed, whereas from his body blood would flow even when stuck only with a needle.

The psychiatrist took the patient to morgues and made him attend autopsies. He thus convinced him that dead men do not bleed. Then, to convince him that he was alive, he pricked his finger with a penknife. Blood flowed. The man cried, "So I have been mistaken. Corpses ~do~ bleed."

We sometimes are dismayed about the many to whom we have witnessed about Christ, some of them beloved members, of our families, who do not accept the message of the gospel. We cannot attribute it always to our fault.

There exists a vincible and an invincible ignorance. Reactions of men usually are irrational. The most powerful arguments rarely succeed in changing a viewpoint which a man has because of circumstances of birth and education or because of belonging to a certain
religion or nation. Prejudices always are more powerful than facts.

It is our responsibility to witness for Christ and to pray. The elect
will receive the testimony, fulfilling what has been ordained for them before the creation of the world. Cases of vincible ignorance can be helped by dialogues and good examples. Where the ignorance is invincible, we have to leave the case in the hands of a loving and righteous God. Don't destroy your own peace of heart with unjustified continual reproaches about your inability to convince others.

Sep 11
|
"Thou shalt not kill." (EXO 20:13)

Abraham Lincoln was the first man to buy a machine gun to protect himself. It did not help him. He was shot.

The machine gun was invented by the American R. J. Gatling. He hoped that by enabling one soldier to do the duty of one hundred, there would be no more need for large armies. But the armies became bigger than even before.

Hiram Maxim patented a much better machine gun, after he was advised in Europe, "Hang your chemistry and electricity. If you want to make a pile of money, invent something that will enable these Europeans to cut each others' throats with greater facility." He really made big money. Not only Europeans killed each other, but Africans, Asians, and Australians, too. Americans gave their part of sacrifice of blood.

The Middle Ages was a time of chivalry in war. It was said already during the American Civil War that shovelry had replaced chivalry. After the atomic bomb on Japanese cities, there remained not even corpses for whom to shovel a grave.

Einstein said that he did not know with what weapons World War III would be fought, but that World War IV would surely be fought with sticks and stones by primitives.

The solution is so simple. It is God's word: "Thou shalt not kill." God does not forbid you to get killed, but to kill. The knowledge of eternal life chases fear. Children of God can afford to be good. While in the world an arms race is going on, we have to run in another race set before us, the race toward Jesus (HEB 12:1,2).

As the world has multiplied its weapons of destruction, let us multiply our actions of love and kindness.

Sep 12

"Any covenant was with him of life and peace." (MAL 2:5)

Christians keep their peace. Why should they squander energy fighting their enemies? Peacefulness is one of the secrets of longevity. To outlive your enemies is better than to try to beat them. Look to the Jews. During almost two thousand years they had no army and outlived their foes. Since they have an army, they are in trouble.

Christians keep their peace. They count the many reasons to be happy and, while doing so, forget to have a look at the many mischiefs which beset them.

When rains and floods come, they get into the ark. If you are not smart enough to get out of the rain, an umbrella will not help you much. You might still get wet and catch pneumonia, too.

Christians live their lives quietly without anxieties. If Jesus is the head of the church, He should also have the monopoly on headaches.

A reporter asked an old lady on her birthday, "What is the secret of living to 105?" She said, "The secret is to keep breathing." Jesus breathed on the apostles and said unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (JHN 20:22).

There is a kind of breathing which communicates the Holy Ghost. There are other breathings. "Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter" (ACT 9:1). There is the quiet breathing of faith, which prolongs a life of peace.

Sep 13

"With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you." (1CO 4:3)

When Napoleon Bonaparte proclaimed himself Emperor of France, and the English government, ignoring the fact, continued

address him simply as general, he said to a friend, "They may call me what they please. They cannot prevent me from being what I am."

With many people politics befuddle policy. They anxiously seek public applause and fear the disapproval of the mob; they always are trying to overhear what people say about them, and they miss the only chance they have to be themselves once in this single life.

You cannot avoid being misunderstood. Moses, the great man of God, was slandered even by Miriam a prophetess, who was also his sister. It is also true that every child of God is exposed to the gossip of men who often speak without thinking.

Don't be concerned about others' opinions. Be yourself, whatever this may mean. Jesus was a first-class child to His mother and a first-class carpenter before becoming a first-class Savior. Lincoln and Garfield had few friends, but were the right men and became presidents of the United States.

Even stains on your character and sins, if confessed to God, cannot hinder you from being what you basically are, a person called by God to do good.

Francis Bacon twice was arrested for debts. As attorney general he was guilty of torturing at the rack an old clergyman, Peacham, to make him confess to treason in a sermon he had never preached. Later Bacon himself pleaded guilty to taking bribes. But then he came to his senses and became one of the greatest intellects mankind has ever known. He retired and wrote Novum Organum and other books which keep him famous century after century, and which have taught many men right statesmanship.

Be what you are, a creature of God sent into this world for a great purpose. Don't allow sayings of others and memories of your past sins to sidetrack you.

Sep 14
|
"His own sheep ... will flee from [a stranger]." (JHN 10:4,5)

In the middle of the seventeenth century, the Jews all over the world went wild with joy. From Spain to Russia news came that the Messiah had appeared. His name was Sabbatai Zvi.

Rich men gave away their possessions to the poor. Some Jews rolled in the snow or lay with heavy stones on their chests or flagellated
themselves to become clean of sin and to be worthy to meet with this Messiah who would lead them back to their Holy Land.

Sabbatai Zvi had given the command that all mourning for the loss of Zion was to cease. He would reconquer it. A Jewish Christian girl brought up in a convent in Poland who had always dreamed of being the Messiah's bride, became Sabbatai's wife. She, too, believed him to be the Anointed.

The Turkish Sultan had Sabbatai brought before him. "If you are

God's messenger you can prove it and then we will all honor you. Let my archers shoot at you with their arrows and if you don't die, then you will
be acknowledged as the Messiah. Or, you have the alternative to accept our religion. Otherwise you will die."

Sabbatai did not waver. He put on a white Turkish turban and accepted Mohammed's religion. He said to the Sultan, "I am not the Messiah. I am your majesty's humble subject."

The Jews had not believed in Jesus. They had believed in Sabbatai Zvi. All men are prone to believe impostors rather than the embodied Truth. In every century, certain men capture the imagination of millions who consider them as saviors. In the end they all prove to have been deceivers.

Jesus, when defied by those in power, allowed the arrows of death to pierce Him. Lo, He is alive and is the giver of life.

Beware of every new name which appears on the firmament of religion. There is only one name by which men can be saved.

Sep 15
|
"These things wrote I unto you, that ye sin not." (1JN 2:1)

A Christian is not to sin. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not" (1JN 3:6). There might be exceptional circumstances in which a Christian falls into sin but then he should not despair. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father" (1JN 2:1). Taught by what has happened, you try to do better next time.

Persecution has not crushed the church, time has not abated its forces, but continual abuses by its members have shaken its stability and credibility. Sin cannot be a program of life for Christians.

We are not perfect, but we should strive to be able to say about the deeds of our life what Sir Walter Scott said about his writings: "I have been perhaps the most voluminous author of the day and it is a comfort to me to think that I have tried to unsettle no man's faith, to corrupt no
man's principle, and that I have written nothing which on my deathbed I should wish blotted."

There is forgiveness of sins, but blessings lie not in forgiven sins. They lie in virtuous deeds which surely will be succeeded by reward, even if sometimes late. One immediate reward of a thing well done is to know that you have done it.

Prefer this small reward to the regrets of forgiven sins. The admonition of the Bible is: "Sin not."

Sep 16
|
"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of (God, that giveth to

all men liberally." (JMS 1:5)

If Martians existed and you would ask their scientists about life on earth, they probably would say there was none. So we don't know what is happening on the billions of stars throughout the universe.

We don't even know our neighbors, the animals. In December, 1975, ~Sovietskaia Rossia~, published a few amazing facts. A cat passed a driveway out of which a car came at great speed. The cat did not see the car and would surely have been killed, if a shepherd dog had not stopped the cat with its teeth and brought it at the last second to a halt
on the sidewalk.

Near the town of Livingstone in South Africa a man had a dog. A crow had also become friendly and came regularly to be fed from the man's hand. One day, the dog disappeared and could not be found. The crow became gluttonous as never before. When she received a piece of meat she would fly away with it and come back crowing loudly asking for more. After a week the man decided to find out where the crow flew. Thus he found his dog which had fallen into a trap. It had been provided for by the crow.

The Cairo engineer, Mahmud Vally, was on the sea in an inflated mattress when the currents took him far away from the shore. He would have been lost if dolphins had not pushed the mattress for a whole day the many miles to shore.

The chimpanzee, when he wishes to drink, wraps up a few leaves to make something similar to a cup.

Will not God (who has given much more than instinct to animals) have taken care that there should be plenty of wisdom in store for the crown of His earthly creation?

God says, "My son, attend unto my wisdom, and bow thine ear to my understanding" (PRO 5:1). Then you will have the light of life.

Sep 17
|
"Whatsoever ye sha11 ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." (MTT 21.22)

This verse seems blatantly to contradict our experience. No man received from God everything he asked for in prayer.

I believe that most of us misunderstand these words of the Lord. We usually express in prayer not what we desire, but what we have desired before kneeling in prayer. We have no promise that these requests will be fulfilled. Jesus speaks about the desires which arise while you pray.

If prayer is really standing before the awful majesty of God, bowing to Him and speaking with Him; if it is forgetting yourself in His inebriating embrace, all desires which you had before that moment will

play no role in it. only love remains-love to God and love for the eternal salvation of others. This prayer is one of adoration. God never refuses a deeper spirit of adoration to anyone who asks for it.

St. Catherine said toward the end of her life, "God, you know that for thirty-five years I have asked You for nothing." Whatever you desire in this attitude of heart, is granted. Whatsoever, without restriction.

The bride in the Song of Solomon says, "I am sick of love" (SOS 5:8).
She asks for no medicine or miraculous healing. Martha and Mary sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was sick. They didn't ask Him to come and put His hand upon him. At the highest levels of faith, all desires cease except the desire of nearer union with Him. Such a desire will be fulfilled.

It would be terrible for us if God would give us everything we desired before prayer and expressed in prayer.

Shakespeare has written:

> We, ignorant of ourselves, beg often our own harms,
> Which the wise powers deny for our good,
> So we find profit by losing our prayers.

Sep 18
|
"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall return thither." (JOB 1:21)

The following anecdote comes from the Soviet Union:

In the Ukraine, where meat is scarce, people stood in line the whole night in front of a butcher shop. In the morning, the director of the State store came out and said, "There will be only pork and even of this not much. So Jews should go home. Nothing for them." The Jews left.

After an hour, he came out again and said, "We were told that the quantity allotted to us will be reduced. So only those who work will get meat. Retired persons have to leave." These also left.

Two hours later came another announcement: "There will be very little meat. Only for the Party members. All the others go home."

A hundred Communists remained, wet because of a rain which had started to fall. An hour later the director told them, "We just received another telephone call. There will be no meat today."

One Communist exclaimed, "It is again the dirty Jews who are the profiteers." "What do you mean by this?" someone asked. "Well, they were the first to go home."

The story has a deep spiritual application. In the end we will all remain empty-handed. We stand in line in this world. When we leave it, we will not be able to take with us even a needle. All our possessions
will remain behind. The profiteers, the privileged, are those who

renounce them first.

Christians know that everything which is under the sun is vanity, that we have come into the world naked and that we will leave it the same way. They die before they die. They renounce what deceived everyone in the end. They go home first and spend their time in their home, in the realm of the Spirit.

Sep 19
|
"It is appointed unto men once to die." (HEB 9:27)

In many Japanese homes you can find the hieroglyphs "Shinzo arau" (wash your heart or cleanse your soul) exhibited in the nicest place, though not many are still able to read these Chinese signs.

One of the many stains from which we have to cleanse ourselves is the illusion that we have here an abiding place.

A legend says that a woman with the name of Kishagotami told the Savior: "My only babe has died. I can't give him back to the earth. I asked everybody in vain for help. Now I have been sent to you and hope was given me that you can resurrect the dead. I cannot live without my child."

Jesus answered, "All right, I will bring your child back to life, but I need for this some salt. Bring it." She immediately ran toward the first house to ask for salt, but Jesus shouted after her, "Kishagotami, the salt must be from a house where no one has died." This condition, she thought, was not hard to accept.

She asked for salt in the first home. They were happy to serve her, but when asked, they said that their father had died recently. She ran to another home. There the wife had died. In the third home a child had died. Then her eyes opened and she understood what the Lord wanted to teach her.

She returned to Him and said, "I thank You for having taught me that there is no house in which no one has died. Give to my child and me life eternal."

The clinging to this earthly life, the fear of death, keep us prisoners of the evil one. Accept the idea of your death and of the death of your beloved one as being as natural as that of life, and accept the resurrection which the Lord Jesus gives.

Sep 20
|

"For envy they had delivered him." (MTT 27:18)

Champollion was a poor pupil in school, except at languages. At the age of eleven he had already learned Hebrew, Arabic, Syrian, Chaldean, Persian, and Coptic. All the other subjects in school were uninteresting to him. At the age of seventeen, he was already a member of the Academy, having become famous through his book, ~Egypt Under the Pharaohs~. At the age of twenty, he was a university professor.

His great ambition was to decipher the Egyptian hieroglyphs. When he succeeded, he rushed into the house of a friend with the words, "I discovered," but fell in a swoon when this friend told him, "You are the second. Alexander Lenoir has already published a brochure with the translation of the old Egyptian signs." He discovered afterward there was nothing to worry about. Lenoir's book was a hoax. However, Champollion's character had been disclosed. He himself might have believed that he worked purely in the interest of science. Not so. He was concerned with his own fame. He was not happy that someone else should bring his contribution to the same science. He was jealous. All of the discoveries must go under his name.

Champollion himself became the victim of envies later. He was even put in prison and denounced by colleagues who could not suffer someone else to have a big name.

The motives for the condemnation of Jesus were complex. One of the main motives was envy. Christ knew how to preach as no one else could. He did miracles. He was beloved, where others were only respected. He dared be the Messiah, without having doctorates in divinity.

There is in ever,v one of us a tendency to be envious. The envious will not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Sep 21
|
"I press toward the mark." (PHP 3:14)

I once listened to the testimony of a Norwegian lady, now over seventy, as she told how she had received Christ at the age of fourteen.

She had heard a sermon in which the pastor described the Last Judgment. God would sit on His white throne. Behind Him would be a curtain. Before Him in a line would be all those to be judged. God would make a sign with His hand and from behind the curtain would appear beings of unspeakable beauty, radiating with splendor, and one of these beings would stand before every accused. The men and women who had never seen such splendor before would ask God, "Who are these wonderful beings?"

God would answer, "These are each of you as you would have been if you had obeyed My voice."

Then men will realize what they have lost; and, ashamed, they will

flee to hell, to escape the sight of the opportunity they rejected.

This illustration brought her to Christ. I heard it forty years ago. I used it often in my sermons and it brought others to the Savior. The sermon of the pastor still works a century after he died.

There is the real "I" and the ideal "I," the person I am and the person God conceived and planned and intended me to be. I can live my everyday life on the level of what is immediate, or I can run toward the goal, the ideal "I," the being which I have been predestinated to become.

Let us be careful not to be ashamed on that day.

Sep 22

"As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men." (ROM 5:18)

Showing a patient in a sanatorium a huge sycamore tree dead to its roots, a doctor told its story. It had been killed by one small worm.

"Two years ago the tree was as healthy as every other tree in the garden. One day I observed a worm three inches long which tried to penetrate its bark. A naturalist asked me not to kill or bother the worm. He wished to know how much time it would take the worm to destroy the tree. I complied and allowed the black-headed worm to do its works. It made a hole in the bark very quickly. Soon after this, the tree lost its leaves-much earlier than usual. One year later it was dead. The worm had penetrated to the heart of the tree."

Adam and Eve, having committed only one sin, lost Paradise because of this-paradise for themselves and their successors. Moses was excluded from the Promised Land for one sin. Many sit in prisons all their lives because of one wicked deed.

It is the same with righteousness as it is with sin. As one sin of a man can destroy him forever and have a deadly influence upon his children for many generations, so the one deed of Christ, suffering for us on the cross of Golgotha, glorified Him and also gave salvation to all those who believe in Him.

Don't discount as unimportant the one sin which still besets you. Put your faith in the one deed of Jesus Christ.

Sep 23

"The Word ... dwelt among us ... full of grace." (JHN 1:14)

An American Indian who had just arrived from a reservation

attended a party in a nice Christian home in San Francisco. A heated debate went on about grace and law. The Indian listened, trying to understand. In the end he was enlightened and asked to be allowed to state his opinion.

"When I was at the train station," he said, "an ugly, old station, I saw a sign on which was written, 'Do not spit.' So me spit. Then I came to this beautiful house. Carpets, curtains, furniture, as I have never seen before. I looked around to see the sign forbidding me to spit. There
was none. So I did not spit. The first case showed me the law, the second was grace."

No law, not even the law of God, can give life (GAL 3:21). But what the law cannot do, was done by God sending His Son in the flesh (ROM 8:3).

How can an inscription, "Don't do this or that," even if it is written
by the finger of God keep a man from sinning when he is a sinner through and through? It only antagonizes his innate self-will.

The railway station is ugly and there is nothing attractive about it. So I amuse myself by spitting just because it is forbidden. But Christ brings me to another realm. He makes me to sit with Him in heavenly places. I am in the communion of saints and see around me only examples of love and beauty. No one forbids me anymore to spit. But why should I?

Pass from the sphere of law to that of grace.

Sep 24
|
"Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and
hast been assured of" (2TM 3:14)

Many base their unbelief on the writings of Darwin. The only one who did not draw atheistic conclusions from his writing was Darwin himself.

Lady Hope, a British aristocrat, had been at his bedside often before he died. He was bedridden for a long time and assiduously studied the Bible. She asked him one day what he was reading.

"Hebrews!" he answered, "still Hebrews. The Royal Book, it." Then placing his finger on certain passages, he commented on them.

She made some allusions to the strong opinions expressed by many persons on this history of the Creation, its grandeur, and then their treatment of the earliest chapters of the Book of Genesis.

He seemed greatly distressed. His fingers twitched nervously, and a look of agony came over his face as he said, "I was a young man with unformed ideas. I threw out queries, suggestions, wondering all the time over everything; and to my astonishment the ideas took like

wildfire. People made a religion of them."

Then he paused, and after a few more sentences on "the holiness of God" and "the grandeur of this Book," looking at the Bible which he was holding tenderly all the time, he suddenly said, "I have a summerhouse in the garden which holds about thirty people. It is over there," pointing through the open window. "I want you very much to speak there. I know you read the Bible in villages. Tomorrow afternoon I should like the servants on the place, and a few of the neighbors to gather there. Will you speak to them?"

"What shall I speak about?" she asked.

"Jesus Christ," he replied, "and His salvation. Is not that the best theme? And then I want you to sing some hymns with them. If you take the meeting at three o'clock this window will be open, and you will know that I am joining in with the singing."

Does the whole guilt really lie on one who was at that time a young man with unformed ideas, or on the many scientists who have destroyed the faith of millions by holding up unsubstantiated theories?

Only what we will think on our deathbed counts. Don't be rash in your youth to elaborate theories and to act according to them. Seek the old path of righteousness.

Sep 25
|
"At the name of Jesus every knee should bow." (PHP 2:10)

A young Brahmin came one day to the renowned missionary, E. Stanley Jones, and told him, "Your speeches have found much response. It would be good if you would preach Christ as one of the many ways. There are others, too. We love Krishna. Others love Kali. If you would accept this, all India would listen to you."

This temptation existed already at the beginning of Christianity. The Roman Empire was very tolerant toward religions. They gladly would have accepted Christ as one of the many gods in their Pantheon - on the same footing as Diana, Mars, Apollo, Mithra, and the emperors. What led to the persecution of the first Christians was the insistence that Christ is the only way and that all the others are false.

Personally, I would like it very much if there could be many ways. However, in no regard is the universe constructed according to my wishes. Someone wiser than I, who knows better, has created it. I have to accept it. I have no other choice. I would like to have been born and raised in other circumstances. Again, my life has been predestinated without my being consulted. I cannot decide how men should be saved. The master of the universe has appointed only one way of salvation.

There is no arguing with Him. Receive Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Refuse Him, neglect Him, and you will be damned. It is as simple as this. God did not ask us about our tastes. We would like it if there would only be a heaven. There exists a hell, too. It is so easy

for
you to avoid it.

Sep 26
|
"Endure unto the end." (MTT 24:13)

One day a three-year-old child had given her mother a particularly hard day. After one more exasperating episode, mother said, "Rebecca, I'm getting sick and tired of this!"

The child answered innocently, "Well, you'd better go to bed then."

Her answer was right. A Chinese proverb says, "The day you cannot smile, don't open your shop." I would add, "When you cannot smile anymore, close your shop." We are meant to be always nice and gentle. We cannot be so twenty-four hours a day. We sometimes come to the end of our rope. That is the right time to go to bed or to cease, at least, the opening of our mouths and the writing of letters.

We all have mutually exclusive desires. The same man might like to be handsome, well dressed, an ascetic, a millionaire, God's "poverello," like St. Francis of Assisi, a warrior, a peaceful man, have all the pleasures of life, and be a saint. "The flesh lusteth against the
Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh" (GAL 5:17). Within the flesh and
within the spirit, different tendencies tempt us. We cannot commit two contradictory sins, to be at the same time stingy and a squanderer. We cannot be two kinds of saints in one: a Joan of Arc and a hermit. "These are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye
would."

William James said that you must review the options carefully and pick out the best.

If you have chosen to be a mother, be motherly to the end, never giving up, never getting tired and sick of what your child or your brother
in faith does.

Sep 27
|
"A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance." (PRO 15:13)

Two little boys who had never been to church peeked through the window while a prayer meeting was going on. It apparently was a dry service.

One boy asked the other, "What are they doing in there?"

The other boy replied, "I don't know, but whatever it is, they surely don't enjoy it."

On the contrary, a Hindu once asked a Christian, "What cream do you put on your face to make it shine?"

The man said, "Nothing."

The Hindu retorted, "Yes, you Christians do. Your faces shine."

The Christian religion has many shades. Choose the joyous one. Christians are saved by a deed, by what Christ did for us on Golgotha. May our religion be one of deeds, as that of Dorcas: "a woman full of good works and almsdeeds which she did" (ACT 9:36). There is no better cream for making your face shine than a pure conscience, the knowledge that your response to Christ's deed has filled your own life to the brim with good deeds.

The religion a man has is less important than the man who has the religion. A ritual is less important for a soul than the soul he puts into
the ritual. No religion or ritual will ever make you happy, if your whole
personality is not in it. "Put on ... bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another" (COL 3:12,13). Your heart will become free and your countenance cheerful.

Sep 28
|
"When he was yet a great way off, his father ... ran ...
and kissed him." (LUK 15:20)

In a village a poor woman had an only daughter. She decided to make her a servant maid in town, hoping to buy a field from her earnings. The girl served in a rich home. She was beautiful and intelligent. She soon discovered that she could earn more by not working than by working. Soon the girl had a car, furs, jewels. However, she had lost her soul and had forgotten about mother.
Ten years passed like this, in parties and fun.

One night the remorse came. "How could I neglect mother?" she asked herself. Driving immediately to her village, she arrived there after midnight. The gate to her house was wide open. She was sure her mother must be ill and the doctor had come. Crossing the yard, she saw the light burning in her mother's bedroom.

When she put her foot on the threshold, the voice of her mother asked, "June, is it you?"

"Yes," she replied. "How is it, mother, that the gate is wide open so late at night?"

"Since you left, ten years ago, I have never closed it."

The daughter asked again, "How is it, mother, that the lamp burns in your room so late at night?"

The mother replied, "It is because since you left, I have never turned it off. The heart of a loving mother waited for you."

The same will be your experience if, after having walked astray in sin for years, you return to the heavenly home. You will find the gate wide open and the light burning. God waits for your return with motherly love.

Sep 29
|
"There is no fear in love." (1JN 4:18)

A missionary to Indonesia tells the story how the natives, being saved from sins, are saved also from fears that literally controlled their
lives; such as the fear of going on down the trail after hearing a certain
bird call out from the jungle because it had special power from ~iblis~ (the devil). They would turn around and go home because they were afraid of the consequences.

There was also the fear of continuing to prepare a rice field prior to
planting because they saw a snake. Thus, they would have to sacrifice a pig, rice, money, some chickens, or whatever the ~dukun~ (witch doctor) requested. If they could not afford to sacrifice to ~iblis~ they had to abandon the field, even if it were very fertile, or else pay the consequences.

Fear of crop failure haunted them if when they burned their field off, an animal got caught in the fire and died. They had to sacrifice to ~iblis~ or pay the consequences.

If they had fear of losing their sick child, they would make a ~jimat~.
This might be a little wooden block, a dove carved on top, a hole dug in from the front in which is placed a stone, and a wooden plug snugly closing the opening. The purpose is to hide the child's soul in the box (represented by the stone) from evil spirits with the dove guarding it.

We modern men don't have these fears, but we have many others of our own: the fear of losses in business, of remaining unemployed, the fear of sorrows, of wars, etc.

The words "don't fear" occur in the Bible 366 times, once for every day of the year. Even the extra day of leap year is covered. If we love God, we are as safe amidst the tempests of life as in heaven, because all things work together for our good (ROM 8:28). Every day of the calendar is covered. Don't fear.

Sep 30
|

"He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." (JHN 11:25)

The great German industrialist, Krupp, produced weapons of war. He supplied many countries with the means of killing millions of men. He himself was haunted by the fear of death. His biographer says that he had forbidden the mention of dying in his home. When a relative died in his home, he fled from the house. He divorced his wife when she chided him for it.

When he became ill the last time, he offered to give the doctor a million marks if he could prolong his life for ten years. It was in vain.

How different from this is the attitude of the believer.

I know about the child of the caretaker of a cemetery. Asked if she was afraid to walk through it at night, she answered, "No, because my home is at its end." So we know that our home is at the end of the road on which we pass through death.

We sympathize with all those who strive for a better society, in which men will be richer, freer, happier. Suppose this ideal were fulfilled, who would be willing to die and forsake such a beautiful life? Happy men die with much more difficulty than the poor. The happy inhabitants of the future Utopia also will have to die.

Every party that doesn't give perpetual youth without old age and endless life without death, deceives. A rich life ending in death is like
the banquet given to men sentenced to death before being executed.

Jesus has overcome death. He was resurrected from the grave. He gives life eternal. He is our hope.

Oct 1
|
"Seek those things which are above." (COL 3:1)

A Christian put the inscription, Linquenda, on the front of his house, which means in Latin, "I will have to leave it."

It is good to remember that one day we will have to leave our business, our library, our beloved ones, our body.

A beggar knocked at the gate of a rich man and asked for one night's lodging.

The rich man shouted, "I cannot let you in. This is not a hotel."

The beggar answered, "Please, forgive me. I will seek shelter somewhere else. Your house really impresses me by its beauty. I will not bother you, but please satisfy my curiosity. Who built this house?"

The rich man, friendlier now that he knew he would not have to put up with the stranger, replied, "My father built it."

"Very nice. Is he still alive?

"No, he died and I inherited it."

"Do you have children? Who will inherit it when you will die?"

"My eldest son. He just married. He will live in it after my decease."

The beggar then said, "Well, the house is just what I thought it to be-a hotel. It is the first time I saw a hotel owner getting angry when someone asked for a room."

All of our houses are hotels. I don't have the slightest idea who stayed in the house, where I write these lines, before I entered it. I don't know who will succeed me. ~Linguenda~ - we will have to leave all.

Jesus came to invite us to an eternal abode, to His paradise. Detach your mind and your lusts from the transitory. You will have to leave it anyway.

Oct 2
|
"Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me." (MTT 19:14)

Before finishing the complete sentence "Forbid children not to come unto me," the Lord had to say, "Forbid children not to come...." They had to be born before being able to come to Jesus.

The question is discussed with great debate today whether the embryo has the right to live. Does a human being have the right to be conceived, or should this right be voided through birth control pills? Abortionists and birth planners base their arguments on overpopulation, poverty, and much suffering.

I believe that the problem is not whether the embryo has the right to exist. I would ask rather whether nuclear weapons, hunger, and poverty have a right to exist. A revolution must come in this regard. I am only against revolutionists who are resolute to kill others and to die
themselves if necessary, but who have no idea how to change society.

The United States is the third richest country in the world. It is first in the world in the percentage of church-goers, yet the proportion of the total American gross national product which goes for economic aid ranks below that of thirteen other free-world nations, according to the World Bank. That proportion has decreased since 1960.

We know the secret of successful revolution: perfect love. The determination with which terrorists pursue their wicked deeds is the one thing lacking among those whose weapon is love. Only then will the danger of nuclear war be gone, and the worst aspects of poverty and hunger, too. Why should children then not come into the world in order to come to Him?

Oct 3
|
"[Jesus] made a scourge." (JHN 2:15)

Paul said to a sorcerer named Elymas, "O full of all subtilty and all mischief,- thou child of the devil," and he cursed him to blindness (ACT 13:9-11). Paul would have sinned if he had been meek toward an enemy of righteousness.

Luther wrote to a duke who opposed the Word: "Ass of all asses, bloody dog, lying mouth, thick sausage, son of the devil." In a later letter he expresses his wonder that he could have written so gently and explains: "A Christian is a man who has hatred and enmity against nobody, but nurtures only love and goodness; but a preacher must have guts, must bite salt, and say the whole truth, because this is what the Word of God does. It hurts the whole world; it puts its hand into the throats of rulers and princes; it thunders and lightens and assaults big mountains.... As far as I am concerned, I would do no harm and say nothing against any man, but as regards the enemies of Word of God, you should know no friendships and no love."

Christians must be fighters against evil in the church and in the world. They must fight for justice in society, for peace and progress. "The kingdom of God suffereth violence" (MTT 11:12).

The Christian does not indulge in small conflicts. He would not quarrel with his wife or neighbor, but when he has to fight the evil which
has penetrated the church, he must always have before him the image of Jesus with the whip in His hand. He must hit and not have remorse. Jesus never apologized to the merchants He had driven out. Hatred toward sin cannot be expressed in dignified words, as love cannot be cold and formal. There can be no politeness toward sin. Love the sinner and awaken him through striking ruthlessly at his sinfulness.

Oct 4
|
"[Of the Israelites] as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." (ROM 9:5)

In a Soviet jail, a Christian prisoner, A. Petrov, wrote a poem called, "If I Were a Jew." Here are some excerpts from it in prose.

If I were a Jew, I would never call myself something else.
We're all brethren. We have our Parises and Romes and
Washingtons,
But Israel, it is unique.
Israel is Cain and at the same time Abel, it is servant and master.
From Israel comes freedom and truth and the greatest of sins and
the deepest repentance.
Israel is the beginning and end a miracle-from there comes
the salvation for all.
If I were a Jew! By the way, this is what everyone should be,

judging and slandering nobody,
Bringing honor to our homeland and nation.
The Jews are the salt, the sense, the essence of things.
Remember, you are the descendants of men like David.
The Lord came from you.
Don't spare your forces. In fights, temptations and tempests,
In days of triumph and of great sorrows,
Be worthy of your great predecessors, remember that you are a Jew.
Oh, if I were a Jew.

Is it really something so special to be a Jew, a member of the chosen people, to have a capital city whose name our heavenly abode also bears, the Jerusalem above? We should be thankful to God that "he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly ... he is a Jew which is one inwardly ... whose praise is not of men, but of God" (ROM 2:28,29).

Let us bear with joy the beautiful name of Israelites, let us love Israel, the Jewish nation, the Hebrew Christians. Let us remember also that we, having been grafted into the olive tree of Israel, now have a duty to add fame to the beautiful name "Jew" which has been given to us all.

Oct 5
|
"Remember them that are in bonds, bound with them." (HEB 13:3)

In Boston, a statue honors Mary Dyer, a Quaker who was twice imprisoned, twice exiled, and finally hanged for her faith.

It happened in the seventeenth century. Massachusetts was ruled by Puritans. They were so pure that they could not tolerate Christians who believed in inward light, in direct communication with God. without the intermediary of a clergy or rituals. So a law was passed that
every Quaker coming into the colony would be "soundly whipped. jailed, and kept at hard labor during imprisonment." A man who, although not himself a Quaker, had defended a Quaker assaulted by a zealous Puritan, was whipped and exiled. Any Quaker who converted someone had to be exiled, and if he returned, hanged.

Mary Dyer came from Rhode Island to Boston to visit some imprisoned Quakers. She was flogged and exiled with the threat of death should she return. Three months later she was back, to care for her imprisoned brethren. She and two fellow believers were sentenced to be hanged. Mary watched their execution. Then her hands were bound, her face hooded. She ascended the ladder and put her head in the hangman's noose. At the last moment she was pardoned, but banished.

She returned. She knew she had brethren in jail. She risked public flogging and having her tongue pierced through with a hot iron.

Brought before the court, she said, "If you do not repeal your unrighteous laws, after my death the Lord will send others to witness for
the truth. My life means nothing in comparison to the liberty of the truth."

There are thousands of brethren and sisters in prisons today in various countries for their faith. We should also be ready to give our lives for them.

Oct 6
|
"He must needs go through Samaria." (JHN 4:4)

When the bulk of the Jewish people was led into the Babylonian captivity, the remainder left in Samaria intermarried with the new settlers placed in their land by the oppressors and practiced a mixture of Jewish and heathen religion. When the Jews returned from captivity, they despised these people called Samaritans.

The animosity was so great that Jews and Samaritans would not give each other a glass of water. The Talmud taught that to eat bread from a Samaritan was as sinful as to eat pork; that Samaritans had no part in eternal life. Samaritans were considered as devils.

The capital of Samaria was called Shechem. The Jews gave it the nickname, "Sichar," which meant, "drunkard," as if they themselves had no drunkards.

Jews avoided passing through Samaria. Jesus, though Jewish, went to Samaria. He stood on the side of those hated and despised by His religion. In Jericho, He chose as host Zacchaeus, a tax gatherer despised by the population.

We hurt ourselves when we hate or despise someone. By doing, so we place Jesus on his side.

Don't listen to the arguments brought by your mind to justify despite toward a fellow man. Jesus is the friend of sinners. Be their friend, too.

Oct 7
|
"Lord, trouble not thyself." (LUK 7:6)

The state of the world would be less of a riddle to us if we would understand that it was created by a sad God. It was created just after the
fall of a beloved archangel, Lucifer, who had drawn with him in rebellion one-third of the host of angels.

We could understand the relationship between divinity and the world better if we would meditate on the fact that we have a troubled

and weary God. God says through Isaiah, "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me" (ISA 1:14) Isaiah also wrote, "Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye
weary my God also?" (ISA 7:13).

We always ask God for comfort and deliverance from our troubles, which is all right, but what about reciprocating sometimes and being a comfort to Him?

St. Therese of Lisieux surprised a young nun complaining to another about some sorrow she had. St. Therese advised her not to do so anymore, not to burden someone else's heart. This nun answered, "You are right. Henceforth I will tell my troubles to Jesus alone."

"Oh no, not to Him," the saint replied. "Has He not had trouble enough? Keep your sadness for yourself. Give Him rest."

She herself had the habit of laying her crucifix on the pillow in the
mornings and saying to Jesus, "You rest now. I will work for you."

God has saved us. Let us save Him, too, from more sadness and weariness than what He already has.

Oct 8
|
"Let all ... evil speaking, be put away from you." (EPH 4:31)

~De mortuis nihil nise bene~ - "Speak nothing about dead men except good." This is a wrong precept. Historic accuracy and justice and the need to learn from other men's mischiefs oblige us sometimes to tell their sins. This proverb dates from the times when people feared the
revenge of the spirits.

I would say we should rather determine not to speak evil of the living. The Bible prescribes fixed rules for cases when something blamable is found in 8 man. The first thing is that you should love a man
in spite of his sins. Only lovers are allowed to blame and to criticize. Second, you must tell him first what you find wrong in him. If he refuses
your advice, bring others to help you persuade him. Then speak with his church. In cases of public sins, you might be obliged sometimes to press the issue publicly, but never become a slanderer or a detractor.

Slander is an old vice. It preceded the appearance of man. The devil is the accuser of the brethren (REV 12:10). He accused us before we committed sins, asking that we should not be created. Slander often precedes the entrance of a person into your life. Before you made his acquaintance, you may have received the suggestion that there was a question concerning a coat, implying that he stole it.

Jesus was killed by slander. They spread lies about Him that He

was Samaritan, that He had a devil, that He broke the laws and was a blasphemer. Knowing that slander crucified Christ, Christians abstain from it and never listen to it.

Oct 9
|
"(God hath chosen the foolish things of the world." (1CO 1:27)

Many people have passed through depressions, neuroses, and psychoses. Some have passed a time in asylums. When they return to normal, they feel branded for life. They know that they have been mental cases and that those around them might not pay attention to their ideas because of this.

As one who has lived among many who have passed through states of madness as a result of tortures and doping in Communist prisons, I can speak from direct knowledge. There is no motive to feel badly about a past and not even about an actual "mental case." Bear your state with easy heart if this is your predicament or comfort others who are in it.

Adolf Woelfli's drawings have been exhibited in all of Europe. innumerable books and studies have been written about his art, because Woelfli was not only a painter who achieved fame, but he was also
writer and a musical composer.

His life history? Adolf's father died because of alcoholism when the child was seven. His mother died soon after her husband. At the age f ten, Adolf had to earn his own living. At the age of thirty he was put in
hospital for lunatics after having tried to rape a girl of three. Woelfli
stayed in this asylum thirty-five years and died there in 1930. He never had a schooling. No one taught him to draw or paint. He had no occasion for self-education except the few books of the asylum's library and a few musical notes in its possession.

If men, using well the natural gifts of God, can overcome schizophrenia and become not only useful, but even remarkable members of society, the more so those who are by faith in Christ children of God and
have His Spirit should be able to do so.

If you have been or even still are out of your mind, it is God who has dealt bitterly with you and has afflicted you (RUT 1:20,21). Job has shown that God who takes away can restitute sevenfold what you have lost. Madness is not only a liability, it is an asset, too.

The person you know might not be artistically inclined, but he can become a useful member of your family and of his church.

Oct 10

|
"They had sung a hymn." (MTT 26:30)

Be careful about the music you hear. Rock music can be deadly.

The Revelation of God consists not only of letters. The Hebrew Bible contains also musical signs. It is not meant to be read, but chanted according to a specific melody. The same word might have different meanings according to the pitch on which this word is sung. Only with its melody does the Bible contain the complete revelation of God.

There is also evil, obscene, and morally corrupting music. Giants like Cervantes, Goethe, and Tolstoy were shocked at the immorality of some music. There is music that wrecks homes today. Understanding between two generations becomes impossible if they listen to types of musics which are so contrary to each other. Neither is all of the classical music good. Tolstoy believed that no one listening to Beethoven's ~Kreutzer Sonata~ could possibly withstand the erotic suggestiveness of the music. Their morals would be in jeopardy and the inevitable would happen, if occasion arose.

It is terrible to hear the beautiful music in Verdi's Othello~ when the Moor chokes Desdemona. You hear Strauss's electrifying music when Salome stripteases and demands the severed head of John the Baptist. Most opera plots could have been written by members of the Mafia. Crime is propagated on the stage, crime accompanied by heavenly music.

People hear Beethoven's Passion According to St. Matthew, and whisper to each other, while the artist sings about the whipping of Jesus, "How beautiful a melody."

Many sins are strengthened in our souls this way. Therefore, Christians are careful about the deceit of music.

Jesus went to Gethsemane singing. Sing His tunes. Listen only to music pleasant to God.

Oct 11
|
"Take, eat; this is my body." (MTT 26:26)

During World War I, almost two million Armenians were martyred for their faith and nationality by the Turks.

At Der es Zor a group of Armenians stood before the firing squad. One of them, Mavy, told the soldiers, "It is written in your Koran that you should not kill anybody without allowing him first to worship his god." Mavy was granted his request.

He gave a short message from REV 2:10: "Fear none of those things which thou shall suffer ... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. " They sang together and took Holy Communion. They had no bread, but distributed some of the glowing

sand from the ground saying, "Take and eat. This is my body." Everyone swallowed some sand. Then they were shot. Those who did not die instantly dipped their fingers in their blood. While dying Mavy told them, "Take and drink this. This is my blood given for you."

Christ is a being with two natures: a human and a divine one. He also has two bodies. He has the body of a Jewish carpenter which, after death, was glorified and ascended to heaven, as well as the church, which is also His body. When at Communion the words are said, "Eat; this is my body," both bodies are meant. Jesus suffered and bled 2000 years ago in Palestine in His limited body. It is He Himself who suffers and bleeds also in all those who bleed for Him. They took Communion with their own blood, which was also His blood.

You are a member of His body. Behave as such.

Oct 12
|
"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." (LUK 12:20)

How many years of life do we still have?

A king gave to his clown a marshal's baton and told him, "I nominate you as marshal of the fools. If you ever find one who is more foolish than you, hand it to him."

Years passed. The king was on his deathbed. The clown asked him, "Do you know where you go?"

"No," answered the king. "I know only that I must die."

"So there is a 'must' for kings, too. Did you store for yourself some
riches in the world beyond to which you go?"

"I never thought about it."

"You knew that you would have to die and, notwithstanding, you made no definite choice? You did not prepare for heaven? You did not avoid hell?"

"I never took time even to ponder deeply about these things."

The clown took the baton from the sleeve in which he had hidden it, and returned it to the king. "Now I nominate you as marshal of the fools."

Remember that you will die, and that you do not know when this will happen.

Oct 13
|
"Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ." (1TH 2:6)

A Christian is supposed to be humble and submissive. When hit on one cheek he turns the other. The canvas never quarrels with the painter. He is free to paint on it what he likes, be it a beggar or a king.
The Christian accepts any condition in life as coming from God. If he is successful, he does not boast of it. Can a brush boast that a beautiful picture has been drawn with it? Only the master painter deserves glory. Such is our relationship with Christ. A Christian seeks glory from no one.

Christ was humble, as was Paul, though their humility had a special feature: it was difficult to make others understand it. Jesus had
to say: "I seek not mine own glory" (JHN 8:50), and, "I am meek and lowly in heart" (MTT 11:29). Paul also had to assure men that he sought no glory. Normally, a humble man does not go around boasting about his humility. It is only when he makes an impression of great pride, or even arrogance, that he has to explain what is in him.

A Christian is humble in his own affairs, yet he is sure that he has a message from God. This he asserts with full authority, ready to contend with anyone, even to the point of being considered burdensome or annoying, or giving the impression of being an "I-know-better" man. "Apostles of Christ might be burdensome" (1TH 2:6). Paul was such when he wrote that he sought no glory from men.

Know how to exercise authority in God's service.

Oct 14
|
"Do good to them that hate you." (MTT 5:44)

Here are some true stones from Romania that show how persecuted Christians are following this teaching of Jesus today.

B. had been a Communist state prosecutor. He fell out of the good graces of the party and was imprisoned by his own comrades. Once he was transferred from a prison where hunger reigned, to a mine where the prisoners were given more food since they had to do hard slave labor. At the prison gate he was met by a stranger who immediately gave him something to eat. The stranger sat near him while he ate. He asked the stranger for how long he was sentenced. The answer was twenty years.
"What for?"

"For having given some food to a fugitive pastor sought by the police."

"Who gave you such punishment for a good deed?"

"You were the state prosecutor at my trial. You did not recognize me, but I recognized you. I am a Christian. Christ taught us to reward evil with good. I wished to teach you that it is right to give food to a hungry man."

Dr. Munteanu's father, an Orthodox dean in Romania, had been killed for being a priest. The doctor eventually ended up in prison with the murderers of his father. When the murderers fell sick, he gave them not only medical care, but also his own bread and food.

The Christian, Tsotsea, had been sentenced unjustly to twenty years in prison. After a while, the judge who sentenced him was also imprisoned and fell deathly sick. His disease was repulsive. His waste and urine had to be washed away continually under prison conditions, without running water, cotton, or sheets. Tsotsea, the victim, loved his enemy and cared for him as for a brother until his judge died, reconciled to God and forgiven.

Oct 15
|
"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." (ACT 4:19)

Psychological experiments at Yale University demonstrated the dismaying extent to which ordinary men will obey authority, even to the point of inflicting excruciating pain upon another person, such as against someone for whom they have no personal feelings.

A shock machine and three persons were the setting for this experiment. The experimenter was the authority figure. An actor was in collusion with the experimenter. He had to pose as a pupil. The third party-the subject of the experiment-was made to believe that he was teaching the pupil.

The electric shock machine looked authentic. It had switches labeled from fifteen to four hundred fifteen volts with the designations, "Slight shock," "Strong shock," "Danger: severe shock." The last switch bore the label, "XXX." The machine was a fake. It gave no shocks to the actor who played the part of the pupil.

The one doing the teaching had to instruct "the learner" in several simple things and then to examine him. If "the learner" gave the wrong answer, the subject of experiment, "the teacher," had to shock him, first slightly and then stronger and stronger. The actor screamed, shouted, complained of his heart and feigned to fall in swoon. "The teacher" could think only that it was all real.

The experimenter would order strong shocks and suggest to the teacher that he must continue in spite of the pain he inflicted upon " the
learner. "

Two-thirds of the subjects at Yale obeyed the experimenter. They were not impressed by the pain shown by "the learner." They had an order and fulfilled it. In Germany, 85 percent of the subjects obeyed authority.

Christians obey authority only if it does not order something contrary to the law of love given by God. For this independence of

mind, Christians are hated by beastly rulers. We should never give up our independence. Otherwise, we could become accomplices of criminals.

Oct 16
|
"Sarai said unto Abram ... I pray thee, go in unto my maid, it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai." (GEN 16:2)

Commenting on this verse the Talmud says that Abram yielded to the authoritative voice with which Sarai requested him to take a servant maid as concubine.

The words "hearkened to the voice" can be expressed in Hebrew in three ways: ~shamoa bekol~, ~shamoa el kol~, and ~shamoa lekol~. ~Lekol~ is used generally only when one has to consent to what is dictated to him. The Midrash, another Jewish commentary, referring to GEN 3:17, where God says to Adam "thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife," explains that Eve, too, has taken a domineering attitude toward him and had imposed her will. So Adam ate the forbidden fruit. This commentary is based on the fact that the term used for harkening to the voice is, in both cases, ~shamoa lekol~.

You can easily discover that someone wishes to tempt you to sin by the fact that he exercises authority in his manner of speech.

The Lord Jesus said, "The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them ... but whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (MTT 20:25-27). A servant entreats you humbly to do something; he never commands. You hearken to the voice out of love or you consider the wisdom of the advice, not because you fear that the other side might give you a hard time. The lover leaves you the freedom of choice.

Christians should not yield to the big tyrants, neither to the little tyrannies exercised over them in daily life.

Oct 17
|
"All have sinned." (ROM 3:23)

An infidel mocked Christianity. One of his arguments was the bad behavior of some believers. One of these answered, "Did you ever meet anyone who wondered about the bad behavior of atheists?

The infidel answered, "No."

"Well, this is the whole difference," said the believer.

Christianity teaches the highest moral and spiritual standard of

living. Christ was Himself the example of how a life should be lived. It is normal that men born in sin, no matter how hard they try, should fail in their endeavors and that there should often be a discrepancy between the high principles proclaimed and our few achievements.

Atheism has no principles of conduct. Marx wrote in the ~Communist Manifesto~ that he wished the abrogation not only of all religion, but also of all morals. Where there are no morals, there can be no inconsistency.

For us it is an honor to be mocked on this account. We are sorry for our sinfulness. The fact that, though climbing, we are still far from our goal, shows that we are among that part of mankind which has set for itself the highest aim.

Join us. If we become a larger party climbing together, we may succeed better.

Oct 18
|
"Avoid ... oppositions of science falsely so called." (1TM 6:20)

Never allow science to disturb your faith. Science which does not admit the miraculous is not scientific.

In physics, there exists the law of Charles. According to this law, the volume of an ideal gas under constant pressure is directly proportional to the absolute temperature. Since for each degree centigrade of temperature which the ideal gas drops at constant pressure, it loses 1/273 of its volume, at -273ø C., the ideal gas would have zero volume. But this does not happen. First of all because absolute zero has not been achieved, but also because a phase change occurs before it is reached. Balloons made the observation that the pressure-temperature curve drops smoothly as the altitude rises to 40,000 feet, where the thermometer stands at-67ø F.

The scientist has to accept either that beyond 40,000 feet a miracle happens, the natural law is transgressed, the law of Charles is broken; or he has to plead that another law, yet unknown, intervenes when the law of Charles leaves off.

In the first case, he concedes that miracles happen. The miracle of the resurrection of Jesus is possible then, too. If the scientist chooses the other alternative, that laws still unknown account for some experiences, then some laws still unknown may account for the miracles of the Bible, too.

Believe the Bible. No science can contradict it.

Oct 19
|
"Life ... is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time,
and then vanisheth away." (JMS 4:14)

When you feel important, when you are on an ego trip, when you are inclined to believe that you are the navel of the earth and cannot be replaced, dip your hand into a bucket of water. When you have pulled it out and looked for the hole it left, you will know exactly the measure of your indispensability. The water does not keep even a trace of the fact that your hand was in it.

I have known important Christians who played a big role in church work. They were put in prison under totalitarian regimes. When they were freed, they found out that the church had fared without them as well as with them. In some cases their absence gave younger and more capable men the possibility to develop better.

Jesus, the Son of God, lay in a grave. The planets continued their courses. Flowers bloomed and children played. Jesus left the world for a little while without Himself, to encourage us to do the same, to feel a little bit less important. Then He resurrected and He had entirely new powers.

The saints were saints because they did not consider their staying in this world as absolutely necessary. Knowing that he could go, without the church suffering because of this, Basil the Great could answer the persecutor, Modest, "I don't fear deportation because the whole earth is the Lord's. You have no treasure to take away from me. I possess nothing. To die is gain for me, because this will unite me with Christ for whom I live and work."

By not considering themselves important, the saints became important.

Oct 20
|
"Be ye followers of me." (1CO 4:16)

One evening a father went to a saloon. Soon his little boy joined him. "How did you find out where I was?" asked the father.

The boy answered, "I just followed your steps in the snow."

The apple does not fall far from the branch. Our dependents follow in our steps. Where do our steps lead?

I stood once at the gate of a prison in which a criminal sentenced to life was detained with chains on his hands and feet because he was considered very dangerous. A police van bringing new convicts

stopped before the gate. Among them was the son of the criminal, himself also a murderer sentenced to life, kept also with chains on hands and feet. Father and son met there.

The son lifted his chained hands toward the father and asked him, "Was it for this that you brought me into the world?"

The hardened criminal blushed and let his head drop. He did not answer a word.

Where do our steps lead?

We think about the traces which Abraham's walk left. After thousands of years Judaism, Christianity, and Islam still walk in these steps. Winds and floods could not wipe them away. Paul walked in the bloodstained steps of Christ in self-sacrifice. For two thousand years Christians could follow his example.

Be careful of your steps. You will not be the only one to walk in them.

Oct 21
|
"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust." (1TM 6:20)

One of the great losses of the church after the Reformation was the forgetting of the beautiful teachings and examples of the saints of old.

They were humble. When, at the Second Ecumenical Council, quarrels arose about his being bishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom said, "I am not better than Jonah, the prophet. Throw me into the sea, only let the strife finish." He withdrew forever from the bishopric, quoting to his parishioners as his last words 1TM 6:20.

He was ready to renounce everything, but he would not yield an inch from the truth. He left us the teaching: "There are splendid divergences as well as harmonious concord.... When we are required to act with obvious dishonesty, or with violence and the sword, we must disregard the requirements of the times and rulers (I dare say, not only of secular, but also of church rulers); we must not have communion with evil. We should not touch the contagious. The most horrible thing for a servant of truth is to fear anything more than God, and because of this fear to become a traitor to the faith and the truth."

John Chrysostom was a preacher, though not in the modern sense of the word-e.g., one who delivers a speech for twenty minutes once a week-but he daily called men to repentance. He did not spare his audience. He spoke out against shameful dress, against luxury, among other things, but most of all against the clergy's love of power and against divisions in the church. He said, "Nothing provokes God to wrath more than strife. Even if we do the most perfect works, but destroy the unity, we will be punished as if we had torn apart the body of
the Lord."

In exile, he finished his life with the words, "God be praised for everything."

Oct 22
|
"Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." (EPH 5:2)

In 1969 the Christians in Kenya had a difficult time. They had refused to take the heathen oath of the Kikuyu tribe. Many were stabbed because of this. Others were beaten to death. This had happened to a brother, whose wife, also beaten, was lying in the hospital.
She was brought from the hospital to his burial attended by a thousand people, among them some who had hated the deceased.

The wounded wife stood near the grave of her husband. The believers sang Christian hymns. Then the widow spoke. Her speech was published the next day in the newspaper. "Before we finish this burial service, I wish to tell you what my husband told me before dying. He asked me to tell all his murderers that he goes to heaven loving whole-heartedly everybody, his assassins, too. He has forgiven all for what they have done, because Jesus loves them. I, as his widow, also tell all of you, in the presence of my dead husband, that I hate none of those who killed him. I love the killers. I forgive them, knowing that Christ has died for them, too."

This is Christian forgiveness. Make a precise, written list of all men who have ever wronged you. Write over it in large letters, "Jesus loves them." Then burn the list and forgive once and forever all those who have harmed you. Remember how n any you have hurt. To bear a grudge is not the Christian way.

Oct 23
|
"Every man's work shall be made manifest." (1CO 3:13)

Einstein, who discovered the last laws in physics, and whose name our universe respects, declared at the end of his life: "If I had known, I should have been 8 plumber." It was because he had not known how to conceal some of his science from wicked men. His formula served as the basis for the construction of the first atomic bomb.

How unlike this is the conclusion which Paul draws at the end of his life: "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2TM 4:8).

Like Einstein, Paul had discovered a mystery, that the Gentiles are called into the kingdom and given the same standing as the chosen people, the Jews. He also had other divine mysteries entrusted to him from God. They were all beneficial. He did not have to regret that he

had made them known to the world.

As a result of the activity of scientists who did not seek guidance from God concerning how much to reveal to sinful mankind, today the radioactivity in the world is thirty-five times higher than it was in the beginning of the century. Scientists may have contradicted religion. The problem arises now whether mankind will be able to survive the victory of a godless science. The air, our rivers, and the seas are all polluted.

As a result of the activity of every Christian who witnesses for his Lord, multitudes of men pass from transitory life to life eternal.

Will you regret at the end of your life what you have done, or do you serve Christ and are you sure that your end will be a change to glory?

Oct 24

|

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." (MTT 23:13)

The Lord Jesus scolded the hypocrites, and He told us to beware of hypocrisy. He never told us, however, not to be in their company.

Many Christians have forsaken the church, complaining that there is too much hypocrisy in it. Business is full of hypocrites, too, but no one stops making money because of that. The relationship between sexes, generations, and nations is full of hypocrisy. Notwithstanding, people fall in love, cohabit with children and parents. Nations coexist. How many remain bachelors and spinsters because married life is full of hypocrites?

One place is surely full of hypocrites. It is hell. Instead of not going to church because you cannot suffer those who only pretend to be religious, you had better beware that you don't go to hell which is full of men with false hearts. In church you are with the hypocrites for only an hour; in hell for eternity.

If you loathe hypocrisy, then take decided steps to get to heaven, the only place where full sincerity reigns.

There is no salvation outside the church, in spite of its many human failures. He who has God as his father, has the church as his mother. A loving child does not forsake his mother when she falls sick. Neither does a Christian forsake the church because he finds in her some faults. She is the keeper of the Word of God and of the ordinances. In her, the communion of the saints is fulfilled.

Regarding hypocrisy, it is best not to look at the straw in your brother's eyes, but rather to take out the beam from your own.

Oct 25
|
"The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting." (PSA 103:17)

The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is aleph. It is in the form of a man who is pointing to heaven and earth in order to show that the world below is the mirror of the world above.

George Cantor, a mathematical genius who died mad, introduced the aleph in mathematics as the symbol of the transfinite.

What is this transfinite? Draw on a piece of paper a line of ten inches. Everyone knows that the number of points on this line is infinite. Cantor says, "Obviously no." Cut the line into ten pieces. Every line of one inch has an infinite number of points, so the number of points on the first line must have been bigger than infinity, a multitude of infinites which he calls the transfinite. Only so can we understand the expression of the Bible, "from everlasting to everlasting." There exists a multiple of eternities.

The number aleph is the only one that is equal to each of its parts. The number of points on the first line is as big as the number of points on every segment of it, because these can be divided, too. Any part is equal to the whole. A Jewish carpenter said to an apostle, "Who sees me, sees the Father." The one Christ can be "the all in all." He is in His entirety in every believing soul.

The first Christians had the proverb, "When you see a brother, you see God." Luther wrote, "The Christian is Christ." The Lord has taught that as often as you are good to a hungry and suffering man, you do your good deeds to Him. He Himself was the hungry or imprisoned person.

This seems absurd to reason. It is a truth of faith and, since recently, a mathematical commonplace.

Oct 26
|
"O death, where is thy sting?" (1CO 15:55)

There is an old Christian story, kept in secrecy for the elect only. They hear it from a man or from an angel only in moments of supreme suffering.

A believer had devoted his whole life to seeking revelation in nature, in the faces of men, and within his own heart. He sought the sense of the ineffable name Jehovah. Approaching old age, he was condemned for his faith and was to be devoured by a leopard.

While waiting in the arena of the circus, he observed through the

iron bars the wild beast to which he had been assigned for food. He gazed at the spots of its skin, and behold, a wonder. The rhythm of their
design and their pattern explained to him the sense of the name of God for which he had been seeking for decades. At once he understood why he had to be sentenced to this cruel death. It was because this was the only means to fulfill his great wish. God had granted him this meeting with the leopard bearing the secret.

The martyr knew then that such a death was no death.

We all will be swallowed up by death in some manner. The question is, "What have you been looking for in life?" If you have looked for the right thing, death will reveal to you the mystery, and it will be just a veil through which you will enter into the presence of the
Lord. This applies not only to death, but also to every great suffering. Seek in its forms the name of God.

Oct 27
|
"Jesus began to shew unto his disciples, how ...
he must ... killed." (MTT 16:12)

Every army has had an elite force: the Persian Immortals, the American Green Berets, the German SS., the Soviet Gvardia. The Kamikaze pilots of Japan are probably the best known. They would have a funeral service while alive. After they had entered the cockpit of
the aircraft, it would be sealed from the outside. Then they would fly toward some enemy ship and crash with their load of bombs into the ship. It was certain they would die, but they also would destroy many of the foe.

It is as though Jesus had put Himself inside the cockpit of a Kamikaze aircraft. He went knowingly and decidedly to die on the cross for sinners.

We also bring our lives as a living sacrifice for God (ROM 12:1); our baptism is our burial service. We are buried with Christ. Only those who pass through this experience belong to the elite of the church, because having shared Christ's passion they also will know the power of His resurrection.

In 1955, a Professor Singleton showed during an atomic conference in Geneva some carnations which he had grown in the radioactive
field of the great nuclear reactor at Brookhaven. They had been white. Now they were a purple-red, a hitherto unknown species. All their cells had been modified and they would continue in their new state.

So is the new man resurrected with Jesus, an avante guard fighter for the cause of the kingdom of God.

Oct 28
|
"Not I [live], but Christ liveth in me." (GAL 2:20)

God has given us a great gift: to be personalities on our own, Personality is not a part of the universe. The universe is a part of everything which the personality comprehends. This is because the universe, the energy, and whatever material entities may exist are objects of thoughts. Personality is not an object. It always remains the subject.

Jesus has said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." An "I," a divine subject, has pronounced these words. On the basis of these words, we have asserted for 2000 years that ~He~ is the way, the truth, and the life, which simply is not true. When we reduce Him to a "He," Christ has become an object of our reflections. An object cannot be the truth. Jesus never wanted to become a "He." Jesus is always an "I." Jesus lives in His fullness as an "I" in every believer. The believer is an
"I" also-the same "I" as Jesus. The eyes with which Jesus sees me and my eyes are the same eyes.

A lover could not bear it any more. He knocked at the door of his sweetheart late at night and asked for entrance. "Who is there?" she called.

He answered, "It is I."

The girl from inside responded, "My room is strait and my bed is narrow. I have no room for you. Leave."

He left, not understanding why she had refused him. He knew her to love him dearly. After wandering through the world for several years, he had an illumination. Late one night he knocked again at the door.

She asked, "Who is there?"

He answered, "It is you."

Then the door opened. He heard the words, "For years I have been waiting for you."

When we arrive at the gate of heaven, we must be free people free from being one of the many objects of this world. We must have
become a personality on our own, an "I," but this "I" must have become His "I," a reappearance of Jesus in miniature. You must be able to say at the gate to Jesus, "It is You." Then the door will be wide open for us.

Oct 29
|
"Ye cannot do the things that ye would." (GAL 5:17)

A soldier made great plans how he would fight the foe and conquer him, but when he tried to stretch out his rifle, he found out he could not. When making his plans, he had forgotten to find out first who he was. He was a soldier-but a paper soldier with whom children played.

Many of us make beautiful plans for a life of service to the Lord and mankind. They are futile. We have forgotten that we are born in sin and shaped in iniquity, that even our good deeds are like dirty rags; that
we have within us powers incapacitating us so we cannot fulfill beautiful
designs. We are no more than toys in the hands of evil forces and of base lusts. We are paper soldiers. Before doing real things, we must become soldiers of flesh and blood.

This miracle is accomplished by Jesus. He gives us new birth. He tells us to eat His flesh and to drink His blood.

He makes us partakers of His spiritual divine nature. He gives us new life, the strength of His grace.

He makes a paper soldier into a real one and only then can the fight begin.

Oct 30
|
"Clean every whit." (JHN 13:10)

A smith had a son who broke his heart. Every time the son did something wrong, the father would hammer a nail in the door. In time, the whole door was full of nails. The son heard of this in the distant land
where he had gone. He was plagued with regrets and it caused him to ask forgiveness from his father. The first nail was taken out of the door.
Then the son returned to God and news began to flow about the good deeds done by the same son. At every such news, the father pulled from the door another nail.

One day the son returned as an honest man, yea, as a saint. He became the joy of his father. The last nail disappeared. The father showed the son the door and explained to him what had happened.

The son said, "Yes, the nails are gone, but the holes have remained."

The father was happy to tell the son that there is One who also can close the holes. The Hebrew word ~asham~ means not only "sacrifice for sin," but also "restitution." In ISA 53:10 it is written that Jesus gave His life as an ~asham~, thus not only atoning for our sins, but also washing them away. To be justified is to be "just as if I'd" never sinned.
We become whiter than snow.

Oct 31
|
"I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth." (DAN 10:21)

The angel tells Daniel about a book of the truth and quotes from it things which were not in the prophet's Bible. Our Scripture is a translation into human language of the inexpressible realities of God, contained in this book of truth. Every true preacher of the Word lifts his
Bible which is a translation from Hebrew and Greek and says, "This is the book of God." What if the Hebrew and Greek were themselves translations, putting into the primitive languages of men the unspeakable riches of God?

Value the Bible, but don't stop at the words. Jesus said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (JHN 16:12). Why should we not become men who can bear everything and learn from His mouth these hidden things? Forced to explain again to the Hebrews elementary things, Paul complains that he has no time left to speak about the spiritual explanation of the stories of Gideon, Jepthah, etc. (see HEB 11:32). If we would not always return like children to the elementary things of the beginning, we could perhaps learn these explanations which were withheld from the Hebrews 2000 years ago. Jude said that when he wished to write about an important subject, our common salvation, he had to change his mind and warn against some false teachers in the church (JUD 3). If we would drive these out, we could learn what Jude intended to teach.

Go on from the Bible to the realities toward which the Bible points. There is a book of truth in heaven.

Nov 1
|
"There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?" (LUK 17:18)

God once invited all virtues to a banquet. They greeted and embraced each other. They were good friends, except two who stood aloof from each other. God asked them, "Are you not acquainted?" They answered, "We never met before." Their names were " generosity" and "gratitude."

There is a legend about a Roman slave, Androcles, who had fled from his harsh master. He hid in one of the caves of the Lybian desert. Once he observed a lion in pain, because a thorn had entered its flesh. Androcles took the thorn out and healed the wound. Afterward, the two were inseparable friends.

In the end, the master found his slave and brought him bound to Rome, where-according to the custom-he had to be thrown before a wild beast in the circus. It so happened that the lion launched against
him was the same lion whose pain he had eased. The lion recognized his friend and instead of devouring him, sat down quietly at his feet. Androcles explained this attitude and was pardoned.

It is easier to find gratitude among beasts than among men. A Turkish proverb says, "If you have done good to somebody, avoid him like a raving dog. He will bite you." The experience of centuries is in this proverb. We all complain about the lack of gratitude of others toward us. Let us make a list of all those who have been good toward us and to whom we have not shown thankfulness.

Let us first be thankful to God for His creation. Let us be thankful to Christ for salvation, let us be thankful to the Holy Spirit for His guidance, and let us be thankful to parents, teachers, doctors, bakers, tailors, and farmers. In other words, let us be thankful to all who work for us and also to all those who have stooped down to help us in difficult
moments of our lives.

Nov 2
|
"And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white." (DAN 11:35)

Most people spell the word "disappointment" wrong. The correct way to write it is, "His appointment." Paul of the Cross wrote, "Indeed, when an undertaking seems to have failed completely, it is then that we see it succeed wonderfully." On Good Friday, Jesus, the hope of the world, died, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Everything seemed to be lost. This was the preparation of the triumphal Resurrection.

Lincoln was a bankrupt businessman-so he could start his career as the biggest American statesman. Many engagements and marriages have been happily healed when they seemed hopeless. Many people who almost died, afterward spent many years in good health. I have been near death many times. Some Christians who have fallen into deep sin have later become great saints of God. Seemingly Peter's career as an apostle had ended in disgrace with the ugly denial of his Lord on the night Jesus was betrayed. There was no hope that he could ever again be a leader with authority in the church, after having failed so shamefully when he was tested. Forgiven by Jesus, he returned, continued to lead a fruitful life, and died as a martyr.

In 1759, Paul of the Cross wrote: "In the most profound recollection of mental prayer, I shall prepare myself for death." He had to

change his mind because there were still some towns to evangelize. So the dying saint continued his activity another sixteen years.

He wrote, "The misfortunes which happen in this world, when accepted from the living hand of God with submission to His most holy will, enable us to run in the path of the divine commandments. Besides, resignation to these events serves as a very efficacious means of obtaining favors, even temporal favors."

Cherish your disappointments. They will prove to have been His appointments.

Nov 3
|
"Wine ... maketh glad the heart of man." (PSA 104:15)

"God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (GEN 1:31). Wine is good, too, as are all the other human joys. Sin has brought sadness and grief; but a time to laugh and a time to dance has remained (ECC 3:4).

It is true that Christ teaches us this life is only a vestibule through which we pass to life eternal. But in a well-ordered house the vestibule must be beautiful, too.

Jesus, in changing water into wine in Cana, showed us that well-understood religion excludes no earthly joy so long as it contains no inherent evil and does not receive a prominence causing it to absorb more time and energy than permitted.

Within these limits, it is not wrong for a Christian to lead a life full of joy. The Christian must abandon sin, not things which make life enjoyable.

Many men know only the alternatives of life without God or God without life. Jesus breaks this vicious circle. He gives joyful life with God. The joyful instinct of the healthy child is the ideal example we see in Jesus-not the self-inflicted tortures of the ascetic. The latter may be a special individual calling, but not the rule for the average Christian life.

If you had been at Cana, would you have agreed with what Jesus did, or would you have preferred for Him to deliver a speech scolding those who wished to enjoy themselves at a wedding feast?

Nov 4
|
"It came to pass." (MTT 11:1)

It is said that King David once called a jeweler and said, "Make me a ring whose appearance will gladden my heart when I am sad, and make me sad when I am joyful. You have two days for this. If you bring the ring, you will be richly rewarded. If not, your head will be where your legs are now."

The jeweler left in despair. He knew his life would be forfeited. Who could make such a ring?

When he crossed the palace yard, little Solomon, who was playing, observed his grief and asked him what it was about. The jeweler told him of the foolish demand the king had made.

The child laughed and said, "Make him a simple ring of tin and write on it the words, 'Gam ze iavoh' 'This will pass, too.' Nothing more is needed. In moments of darkness, the king will read that this will pass and find comfort. In revellings, the ring will remind him that joys in this world are transitory."

The jeweler made the ring and received a rich reward.

One of the beauties of the King James Version of the Bible is that the expression "It came to pass," occurs so often. What burdens you have today will pass. Don't be so occupied with your present griefs. What were you sad about five years ago, on November 4? You don't even remember anymore. So today's sorrows soon will be forgotten. And when you are joyful, don't forget that you have not attained heaven yet. All joys in this world are temporary.

Christians seek the eternal abode in which all tears will be wiped away.

Nov 5
|
"Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." (MTT 22:37)

Moslem tradition recites the following legend from the life of our Lord Jesus:

One day He saw a group of people standing around with a sad expression on their faces. He asked them what their trouble was. They answered that they had heard about a horrible hell and were afraid to end up there.

Then he met another group of people, also showing grief. When asked about it they said that they had another burden: they had heard about heaven and trembled to miss it.

Afterward he met a third group overflowing with happiness. They told him that they had found the truth and rejoiced in it.

Jesus, blessed be His name, said, "These men have escaped hell and are sure of heaven."

God promises rewards to the righteous and everlasting punishment to the wicked, but the motivation for the actions of Christians is love toward the Lord and enthusiasm for the truth. If the followers of the

luminous path of Jesus would be sure that their road leads toward eternal destruction and if the devil would have a splendid paradise to offer, we would still follow Christ's way of the cross. We do not serve Him for His heaven, but out of love for Him.

Madame de Guyon prayed, "Lord, everything which You wish to give me in the next world, give to my friends. Everything You wish to give me in this world, give to my enemies. To me, give Yourself."

Nov 6
|
"He ... entered into a ship." (MTT 8:23)

An Oriental emperor in times of old sat on the balcony of his palace and watched with pleasure the many boats which passed near the shore. Each was a sign of the prosperity which flourished under his rule.

He asked a priest who stood near him, "How many boats do you think leave and enter our harbor during one year?" The priest answered "Only four." The wrath of the king was kindled. This priest dared to mock him to his face?

"How do you dare to give me such a reply!" exclaimed the king. "I see at least a hundred boats before my eyes right now, and you tell me there are only four the whole year?"

The priest repeated, "It is as I said, only four: the ship, 'Desire of adventure,' another, 'Desire of fun,' the third, 'Search for fame,' and the fourth, 'Running after money.' These are the real names of all boats, whatever the inscription on their bow. These are the only forces which drive men."

On the small lake Gennesaret one very small boat sailed. Jesus had entered into it. This ship had another name, "Self-sacrifice for the glory of God."

It is a unique ship. In MRK 4:37-39, we are told that Jesus once rebuked a storm and the wind ceased at His command. But that evening a bigger miracle than the stilling of the storm happened. The waves had beaten into the ship, "so that it was now full" (MRK 4:37). When a ship is full of water, it sinks. Whether there is a big gale or the sea is calm does not make a bit of difference. A ship full of water sinks-but not if it is Jesus' ship. It goes forward when no wind blows in its sails; it glides on when the oarsmen have become lazy and do not row anymore. The church advances even when it is filled to the brim with heresies, schisms, and sins that make her the mockery of men. It advances contrary to the laws of hydrodynamics. It is the only ship which stays afloat and sails on though full of water, because its motivation is the

right one.
    Choose the right ship in which to make your journey.

Nov 7
|
"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." (2CO 5:17)

    This is the day of the Communist revolution in Russia, the most important fact in the political history of the twentieth century. What did it give to souls?
    In an atheistic meeting in Moscow, the lecturer showed a glass of water to the audience compelled to attend. He put a powder into it. The water became a purplish wine. He explained: "Jesus, at Cana, had such a powder hidden in his, sleeve. People at that time were backward and believed that He had performed a miracle, when as a matter of fact it was only a magician's trick, like mine. I can do even better than Jesus. I can change the wine into water again." Another powder and this change happened. "And now I turn it into wine again." Another powder and his word was, fulfilled.
    A Christian stood up and said, "Comrade lecturer, you have amazed us by your miraculous power. We would ask you only for one thing more. Could you, please, drink a little bit of the wine you just made?"
    "I am sorry," was the reply, "the powder I put into the water is poisonous."
    The Christian then said, "This is the whole difference between you, the Communists, and Jesus. He gives a wine that has gladdened hearts and enlightened minds for 2000 years. You also change water into wine, but it is a wine that poisons our hearts with fear and hatred. "
    No revolution that leaves the hearts of men unchanged can bring lasting good to mankind. The revolution needed is the new birth. It makes men into new creatures as Christ Jesus.

Nov 8
|
"When ye pray, say." (LUK 11:2)

Let us adopt the following prayer of the early church. It was composed by Eusebius.

O, God, grant that 1 may be no man's enemy,
But friend of all that is eternal and abides.
That I may never invent evil against somebody,
And if evil happens to me, may I be spared
Without hurting the one who wished to do me evil.

May I love, seek, and obtain only the good,
May I desire the good of all men and envy nobody.
May I never wait for someone else to scold me,
When I have done or said something amiss;
But may I reproach myself, until I become better.
May I never obtain a victory
Which would hurt me or my adversary.
May I reconcile friends who are angry with each other.
May I help with all my might those who need my help.
May I never abandon a friend in danger.
May I respect myself.
And for this may I tame all my impulses that might otherwise make me rave.
May I never speak about who is evil and who had done evil,
But seek good men and follow in their footsteps.

Nov 9
|
"Blessed are the peacemakers." (MTT 5:9)

It is said that in the first generation of monks in the Thebaid desert, Avva Pahone built for himself a hut in the valley, because he had gotten old. His former cell on the hill he gave to Avva George. He soon regretted this, because he saw that hundreds came to Avva George to hear the Word from this saint.

Overwhelmed by envy, Pahone sent a disciple to Avva George, ordering him to leave the cell immediately. The disciple told Avva George, "Father Pahone sends me to you with words of peace and begs for your prayers, because he values your piety very much."

When the disciple returned, Pahone asked him, "Did you tell him what I ordered?"

He replied, "I surely told him what he deserved."

Avva George did not change his place and people continued to flock to him. Pahone sent the disciple a second time. "Tell that hypocrite to leave my cell without delay, otherwise I will drive him out with a stick."

The disciple went to Avva George and told him, "Father Pahone loves you so much. He asked me to assure you of his affection and to convey his blessings. He never ceases day or night to pray for you."

Returned, the disciple reported to his master, "I told him everything needed." So also the third time.

Since Avva George remained in his place, Pahone went with a stick to drive him out. The disciple, who was swifter, ran before him on another path and told Avva George, "I could not detain my master. Though old, he ascends the hill to get a blessing from you."

George went to meet Pahone, knelt before him and said, "I thank you for the many messages of love which you sent through your disciple. I am not worthy of them and of your coming up this steep hill

especially to bless me."
Avva Pahone understood how the disciple had fulfilled his task. He embraced Avva George and, returning to his hut, said to the novice, "Until now I was your master. You were my disciple. Henceforth you will teach me, because you know better the ways of love."

Nov 10
|
"The tree of life also in the midst of the garden." (GEN 2:9)

Every tree is a tree of life. First of all because it is a nature preserve for birds. What the Lord said is true of every tree: "The birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof" (MTT 13:32).
Trees are not only for birds. Badgers burrow at their roots. Hundreds of plants, insects, and animals find food and shelter beneath its branches and lovers find a place to enjoy each other.
More than 200 different kinds of insects live in an oak. Innumerable wasps and bugs feed on oak flowers, beetles eat the bark, caterpillars of many kinds eat the leaves. There are the squirrels and the
wood mice. Owls in their turn feed on the mice and nest in the hollow trunks of old oaks.
Then there are the ivy, mistletoe, mosses, algae, lichens, and ferns. Near to death, the oak tree is invaded by fungi.
The oak is hospitable to each and every one. Lovers are gladly received to exchange kisses in its shadow. Trees are even places where men can meet with angels. Abraham met angels while resting in the shadow of an oak. Believers are likened to palm trees (SOS 7:7). They are like trees planted by the rivers of water (PSA 1:2). Not only that
they have life in themselves, but they give opportunity of life to hundreds of others. They are trees of life for a multitude of creatures.
When dying, a tree gave its wood for a cross on which the salvation of mankind was fulfilled. The tree served even when dead. Let us be trees in God's garden.

Nov 11
|
"[They] shall betray one another." (MTT 24:10)

One of the darkest features of the Chinese church under communism has been the denunciation movement, when friends and members of the same family were turned against each other in betrayal and
hate, everyone seeking only to save his or her own skin. A "Christian" conference in 1951, attended by 152 Protestant leaders, asked the

death penalty for the Methodist Bishop Chen and the Evangelist Ku-Jen-en. The Communist Party was more gracious than the brethren. They gave the bishop only five years of prison. No one heard any more from Ku. He probably died in some jail.

The Christian pastor Lu Chih-Wei was attacked in a public meeting by his own daughter: "I now accuse my father, for the way in which he has blinded me, causing me to lose my standing with the people." The father wept. She continued, "Do you think that your false tears are able to bribe my conscience?"

Good Christians, thousands of them, could be induced vehemently to denounce their beloved ones. Brother Sun, editor of the ~Christian Farmer~, was subjected to such mental pressure that he committed suicide. Only a few resisted, among them Watchman Nee and Wang-Min-Tao.

Your not becoming a traitor and your resistance in times of intensive trial depends upon your earlier Christian life. When, after the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, the Lord appeared to Ananias, the pastor of the church, He told him how to teach a new convert: "I will shew him how great things he must suffer" (ACT 9:16).

Every Christian church which does not teach its members the main religious science, sufferology, does not fulfill its duties. Impose upon yourself mortification. Learn to suffer and not to yield. The time may come when you will need this knowledge.

Nov 12

"The LORD ... said unto [Abraham] ... walk before me, and be thou perfect." (GEN 17:1)

A story says that the devil and a friend of his were walking along a street, when they saw on the other side a man bowing down, picking up something and putting it in his bag. The devil told his friend, "This man just found a piece of truth."

"This is a catastrophe for you," said the friend.

"Oh, no," the devil replied. "I will give him the idea of creating an institution for its propagation. It will see to it that the truth is neutralized."

We cannot renounce institutions. If Jesus had only given His teachings and died and resurrected without leaving a church behind, there would be no disciples of Christ today. We have the Scriptures from the church. The church guarantees their authenticity, interprets the difficult parts, preserves the rich experience of generations of Christians, and imparts baptism and Holy Communion.

We would like every man to be a giant of faith like Abraham, who set out on his own and walked before God, when, except for his family,

no one believed in him. We could as well desire every baboon to be a man, every aborigine to be a cultured genius. Men are as they are and they need the institutional church for a life of faith.

We must be aware at the same time that institutions not only convey truth, but sometimes also distort it. They are led by men with shortcomings. Nothing can replace firsthand experience and the discovery of the kingdom within ourselves.

So be faithful to the institution and have your personal walk with God.

Nov 13
|
"Them that have the rule over you ... watch for your souls." (HEB 13:17)

Don't be a troubler in Zion, one who always finds faults with ministers, who is ready to break away from a church or to produce a split.

Every minister, even one who leads a church like the church in Laodicea, where Christ instead of being in the center was kept like a beggar at the door knocking, is a star in Jesus' right hand (REV 2:1). It
is for Him and for the rare ones who have a special assignment from Him to reprove and to remove ministers who have gone astray. We can easily be mistaken and uproot wheat together with the tares. We can deceive ourselves into believing that we are doing God's service when we drive a holy man from the pulpit or make his life bitter by continual criticism.

A pastor could achieve nothing good in his congregation because of much gossip directed against him. He left. After this, men were converted through remembering his previous sermons. His value was not appreciated by the congregation while the minister had been with them. The deacon who had hated him most, repented, and went to see him. The pastor's wife received him with the words, "He is dying. Don't go in to see him. The sight of your face might add to his anguish."

How terrible for a Christian to be a source of anguish for a dying saint!

The deacon entered anyway. The dying pastor could only open his languid eyes once and said, "Touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm. I have been a sinner. Whatever you have done to me has been right. Don't worry, but you will meet others. Remember these words. The one in whom you find faults might be God's anointed. Touch not my anointed and do my prophets no harm." With this, he passed away.

No minister is perfect-either in his teaching, or in his life. Still they must be held in esteem. An unloved pastor cannot do good to his congregation.

Nov 14
|
"Thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (ACT 16:31)

There are privileged saints whose faith is tested to its uttermost and who have the chance to show their loyalty to the uttermost.

In the sixteenth century, in Spain, Antonio Herrezuelo was sentenced by the Inquisition to die at the stake for his evangelical belief. Julian Hernandez had smuggled Spanish Scriptures and reformed literature into the country, hidden in wine casks. Smuggling is an old habit in the church of Christ. When caught, Hernandez was brutally tortured for three years, but did not betray those to whom he had given the Bibles. Herrezuelo had received such a Bible and had been converted.

When brought to the stake, Herrezuelo was tormented by the knowledge that his wife, also a believer, had recanted for fear of death and that because of this, the generous inquisitors had changed her death sentence to life imprisonment. One word from the mouth of Antonio and he could escape the stake, too. He could go to jail and hope that one day a pardon would be given and he would be reunited with his wife.

He knew of a better hope: the promise of God given to all believers that they and their houses would be saved. Until the gag was put into his
mouth, he admonished his wife to repent. He believed that the Word of God, effective in saving sinners, would also be effective in making a backslidden saint return to the fold of Christ.

He died. His wife went to jail, but had no peace there. The inner fight lasted eight years. After this time, she withdrew her recantation and threw the affirmation of her faith in the teeth of the inquisitors. She
was burned, too, and went to join her husband in heaven.

Believe in the promise of God for all who constitute your house.

Nov 15
|
"I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (ACT 20:27)

A Bible salesman was refused harshly when he tried to sell a Bible. He then offered a New Testament at no charge to the lady.

Her husband mocked. "We are married," he said. "So half of everything she has belongs to me." He took an axe and cut the New Testament in half.

A few weeks later he asked his wife, "Where do you have the other half of the book? I need it. My half finished with the story of a

prodigal
son returning to his father and saying something. I am curious to know what he said. His words are in your half."

This was not the only man to divide the Bible in half. Jesus came full of truth and grace. Some preachers speak only about truth, leaving for others only grace. Others do the opposite.

The Bible always unites forgiveness of sins with repentance.

Don't halve the Bible.

Don't stop at the fact that Jesus died for our sins. It is also written
that we have to present our bodies as a living sacrifice (ROM 12:1).

Nov 16
|
"They that have known the truth." (2JN 1)

How can a man find the truth? Do we have the necessary spiritual and intellectual qualifications for finding it? Would we recognize it if we met it?

We are small. Can one catch the sun in a butterfly net or the ocean in a thimble? Send a child of three to a big library and ask it to find and
bring to you Dante's Divine Comedy. How will the child identify it?

In order to find the truth, I must have an exact definition of what truth is. In order to know which of the many definitions of truth is true,
and which of the assertions declaring themselves to be the ultimate truth in religion, politics, morals, etc. are really true, I must know the
true signs by which truth is recognized. Who does not know the the truth beforehand, can never find the truth.

We are in a vicious circle. The truth cannot be found. The history of human thought is a graveyard of scientific and other assertions of which mankind once had been cocksure were true, only to later discover they were false.

Possession of truth distinguishable from my person, of truth which I can take or leave, is ruled out. Truth can be only an "I." Therefore Jesus said, "I am the truth" (JHN 14:6).

The rule of truth in a man can never be the rule of someone or something else.

Truth is the manner of being of a Jesus-like person. The more Jesus-likeness, the more truth is indwelling me, a truth which I don't have to seek. It is my character. There is no other answer to the search for truth.

God does not lead us as being someone else, but as identifying Himself with me.

Nov 17
|
"Let it not be that outward adorning." (1PE 3:3)

Perpetua was in a dungeon for her faith. She could have escaped if she had denied the Savior. Her old father entreated her to do so.

She told him, "Father, do you see this little pitcher here?"

He replied, "Yes."

She said to him again, "Could it be called by any other name than pitcher?"

He replied, "No."

Then Perpetua said, "Neither can I call myself anything else than what I am, a Christian. "

She remained steadfast when her father asked her to have pity on his gray hairs, not to deliver him up to the scorn of men for having an imprisoned criminal as a daughter, and also to remember her infant child. She could not be shaken, because she could not be something other than a Christian, as a pitcher cannot be something other than it is.

Her unbelieving father was beaten with rods in her presence and her child was taken from her. She remained the only thing she could be.

When she was tossed to the wild beasts, her tunic was torn from her side. She immediately covered her legs, being more mindful of her nakedness than of the suffering which waited her. This was her last gesture before dying a martyr's death.

Christians, simply be what you are. You could not be anything else.

Nov 18
|
"Be not conformed to this world." (ROM 12:2)

A Christian cannot be careful enough in choosing which public events he will attend, what he will watch on TV, or what books he will read. Tertullian, a great Christian teacher of the third century, told of a
Christian lady who went to an indecent show and came back possessed. In the exorcism, when the unclean spirit was upbraided for having dared to attack a believer, he firmly replied, "I did it most righteously,
for I found her in my domain."

I concede that in many shows there are things that are both pleasant and innocent in themselves, even some things that are excellent. The explanation is simple. No one dilutes poison with gall. The
accursed thing is put into delicacies well seasoned and of sweet taste.

Be careful before going to a show even if it seems innocent.

The Christian's joys, his nuptial banquet, are yet to come. We are not in a hurry to get all the possible pleasures out of life. We can fellowship with the world in her entertainment as little as she can fellowship with us in our worship.

The Lord has said, "The world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful" (JHN 16:20). Let us mourn over the prevailing unrighteousness, while the world is merry, that in the day of the world's doom we may rejoice.

No one can have the pleasures of both lives. Don't scan the newspapers daily to find what fun you can have, but take daily your cross and follow Him.

Nov 19
|
"The bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage." (MTT 25:10)

We who live four hundred years after the Reformation can understand only with difficulty the thinking of Christians in the Middle Ages.

In the thirteenth century, no one would have contested the words written by a monk of that time: "All are entitled to enter the family of Christ, when they make a proper use of the blood of their Redeemer and of the milk of the sacred Virgin, their mother; yes, of that adorable blood which encourages the martyrs and soothes their torments and of that virginal milk which sweetens the bitterness of our cup by appeasing the wrath of God."

The Scriptures were almost totally unknown. They tell us about the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. The saving power of Mary's milk is just a beautiful human fancy.

Men at that time loved also to venerate lesser female saints. They might have gone too far in this respect, although many of them were beautiful personalities.

Wartburg, remembered now only as the place where Luther preached, had been the place where St. Elizabeth of Hungary was reared and where she had prayed. She had erected a hospital, which still can be seen at the palace gates so that she might never forget human misery in the splendor of her queenly rank.

Her last words were, "The moment has arrived when God summons His friend to the wedding feast. The Bridegroom seeks His spouse. Silence, silence."

It was on November 19.

Nov 20
|

"[Let] husbands ... be won by the conversation of the wives." (1PE 3:1)

On a Sabbath day, Rabbi Meir had gone to the synagogue. While he was there his two little boys had climbed up a tree, had fallen, and were found dead beneath the tree. His wife, Beruria, took the corpses to an upper room, covered them with a sheet, and went downstairs to prepare the table for her husband.

When he returned home, he said the prescribed prayers, sat down at table and asked about the children. She answered, "Well, they are children. What can you expect from them?"

When he had finished eating, she said, "I have to ask you a question. A neighbor gave me a pair of costly earrings to keep for her, because her husband was a drunkard and might have sold them. Now her husband is dead and she asked me to give them back. I loved them. When you were not at home, I used to ornament myself with them. before the mirror. They were one of my joys. Should I give them back?"

The rabbi answered, "I wonder about that question, but I think you should return them, and thank her for the privilege of having had them for so long a time."

Then she said, "Come with me. I wish to show you how beautiful they are."

She took him to the upper room, drew away the sheet, and said, "These are the gems. We have enjoyed the time with them. Let us now hand them back to their owner with thankfulness."

He answered, "Blessed is a husband with a wise wife. God has given; God has taken. Let the name of God be praised."

Let us take our losses like this.

Nov 21
|
"God loveth a cheerful giver." (2CO 9:7)

A Christian told his brother in the faith, "I put aside every Sunday what I have to give to the church. If I am hindered from going, I give the money to my wife to take along or save it for the next time, and
add the tithe to the next week's offering. How do you act in this regard?
"

The brother answered, "Before going to church, I kneel with my family at home and thank God for the privilege of living in a free hand where I can go to God's house. I thank Him for the pastor, for the missionary effort of our congregation, and for all the other things. Then
I decide how much to give and bring it to the altar."

After a time the two Christians met again. The second said, "I tried your method. It is marvelous. After praying and thanking God before deciding about how much to give in church, I found always that

the sun put aside was much too small, when I had in view the favors received. I increased my giving. My blessings increased accordingly. I find exquisite joy in giving. I am happier than ever before."

Do you give at random or under God's guidance?

Nov 22
|
"I am come ... to fulfil [the law]." (MTT 5:17)

Shun Shauk, former president of the Japanese Bible Society, tells the following story.

At the end of World War II American soldiers received a hearty welcome in Shinmanbuke, a village on the island of Okinawa. The houses and the streets in this village were clean, unlike anything seen elsewhere, and the inhabitants looked happier than the other Japanese.

The difference came from the fact that thirty years earlier an American missionary had passed through that village. He could not stay long. He just told them a few words and left them a Bible.

Two brothers, Shosei and Mogon, began to live according to this book, though they had no communication with Christians from anywhere else. They had found the Savior through the book and fulfilled His precepts. They witnessed to others. So the one brother became mayor of the village, the other its teacher. The Bible was read daily in school. The village was administrated according to the Bible.

The American chaplain could see that the thirty-year-old Bible had been well used and had changed the life of a village.

Does your Bible lie often on the shelf? Has it changed your life? Have you decided to learn daily from it and to put to practice immediately what you learn? Do you bring its teachings into your school, factory, and community?

If you have not used the Bible wisely until now, learn from these Japanese brethren.

Nov 23
|
"To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." (PSA 95:7,8)

A young man told his mother, "I cannot accept the Bible. It contains so many things which I cannot swallow. They simply make no sense."

The mother answered, "When you were at war, you wrote me once: 'Your letters describe a situation which is unintelligible for me. It is true that I have been away from home for three years. I would understand perhaps if I were with you.'"

The measure of how much the Bible is unintelligible for us shows

for how long and how far away we are from our heavenly home, whose thoughts are expressed in the Bible. Return to the parental house and you will understand.

Do it at once.

The Greek tyrant Archacus was on his way to a banquet, when someone handed him a letter, saying, "It is very important."

He answered, "Important things we will leave for tomorrow." Shortly after that, while he was drunk, a dagger of an assassin pierced his heart. His blood fell upon the letter containing a warning about the plot.

Evil forces strive to keep us far away and for a long time from the house of the heavenly Father, in order to keep our minds muddled there with eternal death waiting for us at the end.

Heed the warning. Return.

Nov 24
|
"Lord, teach us to pray." (LUK 11:1)

When I was a young Christian, I was taught that if you go to a prayer meeting for rain in a time of drought, you have to take an umbrella with you. This would be a token of faith.

Later I read in the Talmud that the Jewish high priest, when he entered once a year into the most holy place, always finished his supplication with the words, "Lord, don't listen to the prayers of wayfarers.

Every wayfarer wishes nice weather for the day on which he travels. How would the world look if God would have to give or stop rain according to our having taken an umbrella or not?

I prefer the vicar who, when asked to pray for rain, answered, "Not while the wind is in this direction."

Our Lord said, "The wind blows wherever it listeth." There are objective laws which reign in nature. To pray against the weather forecast because it does not fit your purpose is as wrong as praying that
two times two should not be four.

The great prayer of Christians is, "Thy will be done." Elijah could bring rain. Jesus could rebuke the winds. Do you wish to imitate them? You can't do it on your level. You have to become a powerful, spiritual personality, knowing God's will about the weather. You must know things meteorologists don't know.

Nov 25
|
"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me." (JHN 17: 6)

When the monk, Paulinus, was at the court of Edwin, king of Northumbria, in A.D. 627, endeavoring to persuade him to accept Christianity, the king was in two minds about it, until one of his warriors spoke.

"The present life of man upon earth, O king, seems to me, in comparison to the time which is unknown to us, like the swift flight of a sparrow through that house wherein you sit at supper in winter with your nobility, while the fire blazes in the midst, and the hall is armed, but the wintry storms of rain or snow are raging without. The sparrow, flying in at one door and immediately out at another, whilst he is within is safe from the wintry tempests, but after a short space of fair weather he immediately vanishes out of your sight, passing from winter into winter again. So this life of man appears for a little while, but of what is to follow or what went before we know nothing at all. If therefore this new doctrine tells us something more certain, it seems justly to deserve to be followed."

The new doctrine, the doctrine of Christ, answers this quest. Jesus manifested to us the name of the Father (JHN 17:6). The knowledge of this name opens all doors for a soul here and in eternity. Through all ancient literature of different peoples persists the belief that if the real name of a thing is known to a man, the powers inherent in that thing are under his control. The thought was right. When we know the chemical formula, the last name of a thing, we can act on it.

Through Jesus we know that God is love. God's love is the key for solving the riddle.

Nov 26
|
"There was silence." (JOB 4:16)

A student went to a great sage and said, "Master, teach me about God."

The sage remained silent.

The student again said to him, "Master, teach me about God."

He still remained silent.

When asked by the student a third time, the sage said, "I taught thee about God. I am silent."

To put God in words is like trying to catch waves with a fishing net. Words have arisen from the necessity of men to understand each other in hunting, production, personal relations. We cannot do without them, but we must be aware that when we apply human words to God,

calling Him, "Master, Father, Love," they can bring wrong connotations. A master can be an exploiter. Luther had great difficulty in saying the Lord's Prayer, because he did not like to call God "Father." His father had been very harsh. Love? I love apple pie and my dog. Is it the same sentiment which stands for God?

When Livingstone wished to explain to savages that God is love, he could not do it, because they did not have the word "love" in their language. He found out that the thing which they appreciated most was the meat from the arm of a man when smoked. They called it "unboy." He delivered his famous sermon that, "God is the best unboy." He was criticized for it. But he did what the apostle John had done before him, calling God "love."

Love is a human sentiment. Does anyone believe that God is a sentiment? Because it was the highest which man knew, John applied it to God, as Livingstone applied to Him "unboy."

As for what God ultimately is, you will know it when you keep silent.

Nov 27
|
"It pleased God.... to reveal his Son in me." (GAL 1:15,16)

What can a man do to discover the Son of God in himself? How can he recover God's image in which he was created and which has been marred by sin? There is no way.

An actor plays Othello. Perhaps he never had an occasion to be jealous and has not known this sentiment. He tries to play the role of a personality foreign to his nature: the prototype of the jealous male. The impersonated person, the role Othello, could never change the character of the actor. The actor can always decide not to play Othello any more.

Every one of us is first of all what he is. Secondly, he takes different attitudes in life, that of a person which plays with sin, that of a hardened sinner, that of a repentant sinner. None of these roles can decide what I should be. It is the fundamental "I" which decides what role to play.

The whole change starts when the Othello played by me does not take himself seriously any more. He knows that he does not really care for the fake Desdemona and never killed her–that the whole scene has been a play. Then your real personality, the Son of God in you, will appear in its entire beauty. The old man, the acting, will have passed away.

It is written in the parable of the prodigal son that when the

prodigal son decided to return to his father, he came to himself (LUK 15:17). Every return to God is a return to your real self.

Nov 28
|
"Weep with them that weep." (ROM 12:15)

A Christian was severely stabbed. The criminal was caught and taken by the police to confront his victim in the hospital. The police assured the Christian, "This man will get his due punishment. He will sit in prison."

The Christian replied, "What an honor for me to meet him now. Jesus said that everyone who sits in prison is His little brother." The Christian bowed before the criminal and died.

Bow before everyone who suffers, even if he suffers for having wronged you. Jesus, the Man of SOlTOW8, sympathizes with the sufferers.

It is written in the Talmud: "When an unrighteous man persecutes a righteous one, God is on the side of the persecuted righteous man. If an unrighteous man persecutes another unrighteous man, God is on the side of the persecuted unrighteous man. If a righteous man persecutes an unrighteous one, even then God is on the side of the persecuted."

Be always on the side of the hungry, even if they are hungry because they are lazy. Be on the side of the thirsty, even if it was their
neglect not to have dug a well. Be on the side of the naked even if they have gambled away their clothes. Be on the side of the sick, even if they
have destroyed their health through vice. Be on the side of prisoners even if they are criminals, only being careful not to favor them above their victims who were also men innocently persecuted.

Nov 29
|
"Sell that ye have, and give alms." (LUK 12:33)

The rich man in the parable was clothed in fine linen, which according to Revelation 19 symbolizes the righteousness of the saints. This man had the outward appearance of righteousness, but he could not be acknowledged as such because he was callous toward the poor.

All Christians of industrial countries are in danger of committing the same sin. Developing countries receive only fifteen percent of the final selling price of their product. Producer nations get only eleven cents for every dollar worth of bananas sold to rich countries. The colonial pattern by which poor countries provided cheap raw materials and tropical foods for the rich industrialized nations still exists.

Between 1963 and 1971 Sri Lanka los,t 45 million dollars on exports of tea
to Britain alone as a result of falling prices, twice as much as Britain gave in aid.

Within the underdeveloped countries, there is also much social injustice. The richest ten percent of the population in these countries account for about forty percent of the total income, while the poorest forty percent account just for twelve percent of the income.

The individual Christian must use restraint in consumption. The normal thing for a Christian, with whatever income, is not to spend on himself and his family more than the average income of a citizen of his country. Everything above this is luxury.

Ambrose wrote, "If your brother starves while you have the possibility of helping him, you are a thief; and if he dies of hunger, you
are a murderer."

Nov 30
|
"Of such [the little children] is the kingdom of heaven." (MTT 19:14)

One of the saddest moments in the life of a parent is when he observes that his child is retarded. For them I recount the following true
story, quoted from the book by Fritz Rienecker, ~The Best Is Still to Come~ (Sonne und Schild, Wuppertal).

"In a home for retarded children, Catherine was nurtured twenty years. The child had been a complete idiot from the beginning and had never spoken a word, but only vegetated. She either gazed quietly at the walls or made disordered movements. To eat, to drink, to sleep, were her whole life. She seemed not to participate at all in what happened around her. A leg had to be amputated. The staff wished Cathy well and hoped that the Lord would soon take her to Himself.

"One day the doctor called the director to come quickly. Catherine was dying. When both entered the room, they could not believe their senses. Catherine was singing Christian hymns she had heard and had picked up, just those suitable for deathbeds. She repeated again and again the German song, 'Where does the soul find its fatherland, its rest?' She sang for half an hour with transfigured face, then she passed away quietly."

So it had only seemed that she was not receptive to what happened around her. From the medical point of view this case is a riddle. God has lifted the veil once to encourage parents of handicapped children. God makes no mistakes. He who cares for sparrows has arranged that the mentally retarded should have a place in heaven, too.

Dec 1
|
"The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground." (GEN 2:7)

Man is not formed simply from earth (~eretz~ in Hebrew, from which the English word "earth" comes.) He is formed from the ground. The Hebrew word is ~adamah~, which meant originally exceptionally good soil. The soil of paradise is called ~adamah~ in GEN 2:9. There is also desert or stony ground. God used the best of grounds on which the trees of paradise, even the tree of life grew, to form man of it. The potential of man is huge.

Then God breathed into his nostrils "the breath of life." The Hebrew does not have the singular, "life." The Jews used for it, ~haiim~, which is a plurals "lives." If you would like to write an infidel book in Hebrew saying that man has only one life, you could not do it because the language has no singular for "life." God endowed man with lives: with bodily and spiritual life, with life in this world and life in the next.

Man must be exceptional in that it should be said about him that he is only a little lower than an angel (PSA 8:5). In Hebrew the verse says, "Thou hast made him a little lower than God (~Elohim~)."

In bodily size, man is only a speck of dust in the universe, but who can express his greatness? Blaise Pascal wrote, "A breath, a drop of water, can kill man. But even if the universe would destroy him, man is greater than the universe; because man knows that he dies, while the universe does not know that it kills him."

Remember your greatness and thank the Creator who has given it to you.

Dec 2
|
"My joy might remain in you." (JHN 15:11)

It is said that a man suffering from melancholic depression visited a psychiatrist, who recommended frequent travels.

The patient answered, "I am traveling continuously and it does not help."

"A glass of wine drunk at a happy party is useful," said the doctor.

The reply was, "I drink whole barrels of alcohol and remain sad."

The doctor had an idea. "There is a clown in town who is unequaled. People cannot control their laughter listening to his jokes and seeing his tricks. Spend your evenings there."

The patient said, "I am that clown. I gladden everyone except myself. And the joy of those who watch me does not last."

The joys which this world gives are illusory, because in the depths

of our hearts we realize they are mere escapes from the fact that we are men sentenced to death, men burdened with guilt. When we laugh, there is in us the remembrance that we made others weep.

Only God gives the real joy. He has shown in the resurrection of Christ that He has forgiven all our sins. Jesus our Lord "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (ROM 4:25). The resurrection of Jesus is a pledge that we will resurrect, too, because we belong to Him. We have an inner joy which continues even without external stimulants.

Dec 3

"The works of the flesh are ... adultery, fornication, uncleanness." (GAL 5:19)

A preacher was asked at a student meetings "What is wrong with premarital sex? Everyone tries four or five suits before buying one. Why should I not try sex with four or five girls before marrying one?"

The preacher answered, "There is a flaw in your judgment. By the same token, each girl has to try four or five young men before taking a husband. So in the end you buy a used suit instead of a new one."

Premarital sex is not a preparation for marriage. Should theft be the preparation for an honest life? How can the sexual possession of a person, unaccompanied by love, prepare for a life based on the highest sentiment of affection between two beings of the opposite sex?

Sexual sins are frequent today. They can easily be forgiven, like all other sins. Isaiah said, "He [the Messiah] was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities" (ISA 53:5), iniquities of whatever kind, including sexual ones. But after being forgiven, let us not continue in them. The price for extramarital affairs is much too high.

Think only about the fate of children born without a stable home, abandoned. Think about the grief of your parents and of the other person's parents.

To avoid sexual sin, practice spiritual hygiene. Be choosy in reading books and magazines, in watching TV or movies. Fill you days to the brim with serving the Lord and your fellow men.

Dec 4

"We are members of one body." (EPH 5:30)

Because we are members of His body, we must be active in continuing His mission today.

Some years ago, a young boy actively involved in sports suffered a diving accident which rendered him permanently paralyzed from his neck down. His mind sent out signals to his members to respond to the desire within his youthful heart to involve himself in further activity, but his arms and legs remained limp and lifeless in the wheelchair.

Even more tragic and heartbreaking is the thought of seeing Christ at the wayside of humanity, His noble mind sending forth signals to His members to show love and mercy, only to find those members paralyzed and silent in fear and neglect.

In earlier times He healed the paralytic. Today He is rendered helpless by the same malady of His body which is the church.

Let us fulfill without delay all the orders issued from His mind, remembering that we are His members.

Dec 5
|
"For [Christ] I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung." (PHP 3:8)

You discover easily how much of a Christian a man is if he loses money, fame, health, etc. He was meant to consider all things as dung. Who gets angry when he gets rid of dung, which makes everything around him smell offensively?

Sadly, these biblical words which were reality for Paul are only a phrase for most of us. Even churches try to accumulate dung. There have been attempts at reformation in this regard, but they all failed. Francis of Assisi and Joachim of Fiore, founders of religious, orders having poverty as their supreme rule, resigned from the leadership when they saw that they had not succeeded.

Money, love of fame, attachment to creatures are great competitors of God. With most men, God loses in this competition.

A prince boasted once to a company about the great wealth he possessed. A pastor who was present asked him,, "Your highness, would you kindly accept this pin and return it to me when we meet in eternity?"

The prince replied, "How can you ask for this? 1 can take nothing with me."

"That is right," said the pastor. "We boast of what does not belong to us and might be lost today, instead of accumulating what is of eternal
value."

An inscription was found in India, "Jesus, blessing be upon His name, has said, 'This world is a bridge. Pass over it, but don't construct
a house on it.' "

Die to the things of this world before you die. Count all things really as dung, that you may win Christ.

Dec 6
|
"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." (ROM 5:5)

While Jesus walked once on the streets of Nazareth - so a Moslem story goes-the mob heaped abuse upon Him. He continued on His way quietly, praying with loud voice for everyone who insulted Him.

He was asked how He could do this, to which He replied, "I give them the only thing I have in My purse."

Smash a bottle filled with milk. No vinegar will spill from it, because the bottle did not contain vinegar. How can words of hatred and vindictiveness flow from a Christian heart? The Christian does not have to choose between several options. He does not fulfill a commandment of love because Christ so ordered. If he would like to hate, he would not know how to do it, because God has renewed his heart.

The first disciples asked the Lord, "Rabbi, where dwellest thou?" He said unto them, "Come and see." They abode with Him that day (JHN 1:38,39).

He could not have taken them to an abode on earth. He had none. He dwells wherever love reigns, be it in a humble cottage, or in a palace. Jesus took the inquirers to a couple of such homes. They understood and became His apostles.

Dec 7
|
"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (ACT 11:26)

It is said that whales once swam near the shore of America and philosophically asked themselves what they really were. Then they heard some children exclaiming, "Look! whales!" Then the whales were happy. They knew their names and they fancied they knew by this also what they were.

Some believers, in the same way, have been given by men on shore the title "Christians," and mistakenly think that this name discloses their inner reality. It ;s not so. The Lord said, "By this shall
all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (JHN 13:35), not that you "bear a certain name."

In the Italian Alps, peasants have the habit of leaving the door open on Christmas Eve, heating the oven, and having a dinner prepared on the table, in case the holy family pursued by Herod should want to take refuge there.

The Ostjaks, a Mongol tribe in the outer parts of Siberia, the place of deportation under the Czars and under Bolshevism, always put some

food outside their door when they go to sleep, in case a fugitive prisoner
needs it.

We are what we are, not what we are called. Jesus and the holy ones are always fugitives in this world. Do we show concern for the needy? What we do shows what we are.

Dec 8
|
"The LORD is good." (PSA 100:5)

One of the oldest problems in religion involves the question of why there is so much suffering among mankind if the world is led by a good God.

The answer is simpler than we would imagine. God is good not only toward the good, but also toward the unthankful and wicked (LUK 6:35). Only an all-embracing goodness is good. Goodness shown to the wicked usually does not have the effect of changing them, but often encourages them to continue in their evil. God's goodness is patient and long-suffering, which is used by those who are evil to commit new crimes. God was patient even with Hitler and Stalin and bore with them for decades. During this time they practiced mass slaughter.

In order for the world to be good, God would have to cease to be good Himself toward the wicked. Who of us would dare to tell God, "Stop being good to sinners," when we know the evil in our own hearts?

On the earthly level, with our human mind, there is no solution for the problem of evil. God has made provision. He is not only good, but He knows how to take revenge as well. He has a day of wrath in reserve. Leave philosophizing to God-He has a better head than we do - and flee urgently from the wrath of God.

Dec 9
|
"Enoch walked with God." (GEN 5:22)

Don t be afraid to follow a man because he is rejected by the church. Many a saint has been martyred by the church and canonized afterward. Men who would have opposed the church in the saint's lifetime and have taken his defense against the prelates would have served the cause of Christ better than those who obeyed and trusted the church.

Joan of Arc was burned by the church. Celestine V died in prison. There is strong suspicion that he was murdered there by the order of his successor, Pope Boniface VIII. St. John of the Cross was treated like a madman. Huss died at the stake, condemned as a heretic. Thousands of others suffered the same fate.

Our attitude toward the church has to be ambivalent. Whoever has God as his father, has the church as his mother and owes her obedience and love. A mother can go mad, too. The church is not only a divine institution; she is also constituted of men who can commit grave sins in her name. Top church leaders are not exempt from this possibility. So obedience toward the church has a limit which natural reason and the guidance of the Holy Spirit will show you.

The supreme ideal for every Christian is to be, like Abraham, a man who walks with God. Personal contact with God is the best guarantee against a life of error.

Dec 10
|
"Moses said unto the LORD ... I am not eloquent." (EXO 4:10)

Why did God choose as His messenger a man slow of speech and of a slow tongue? Rabbi Mohliver of Byalystok explained that if he had chosen instead an eloquent orator, such a man would have entered into a long argument with Pharaoh and his advisers about the sociological and psychological evils produced by slavery, about the value of emancipation, about the beauty of a monotheistic religion, and the value of
the traditions which the Jews had from their ancestors, etc. He would have become enamored of his own speeches. More and more dialogues would have been initiated, like the endless and useless dialogues which different religions have with each other. The result for the Jews would have been nil.

Because Moses stuttered and could pronounce few words without difficulty, he went directly to the point and said to Pharaoh, "Let my people go." It is such men that God needs even today.

It is as though the whole Bible had been written by men who had difficulty in speaking. They chose monosyllables.

In JHN 3:16, the central verse of the Bible, there are twenty monosyllables in one sentence and only six words with more than a syllable. In JHN 3:17, there are twenty-one monosyllables and only one word with more syllables. I know no other book like this.

It is not a book of eloquence which is important, but one which brings us into the heart of truth.

Dec 11
|
"God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake." (HEB 1:1)

The Buddhists in Japan have a legend that four eternities ago a king by the name of Amida arrived at the perfection of a Buddha, but refused to enter into the well-deserved Nirvana until all living beings

had also entered it. They believe that men who cannot arrive at Buddhahood because of their many sins and cares will arrive at it through the merits of this sacrifice, if they repeat the sacred formula, ~Namu Amida Buddha Butsu~ (I trust fully in Amida Buddha).

God who inspired in many nations aspirations expressed in such legends, has made the hope of sinners a reality in Jesus. The very name Jesus (in Hebrew ~Jeshua~) means "salvation." The Bible assures us repeatedly that whoever calls on His name will be saved. God knows that we are born in sin and conceived in iniquity, that we cannot save ourselves by our endeavors. The sacrifice which Christ accomplished on Golgotha saves sinners, if only they call upon Him, because the calling of their heart is inspired by His love. Don't expect an answer when you call Him. Your call is already His answer.

A concert doesn't really involve two different objects-a pianist and a piano-but rather one unique event, the pianist at the piano. So in the act of faith there are not two parties, the sinner who appeals and
the Lord who pities. His pity made you appeal. It is the sign of your acceptance. Believe this and you will live.

Pray also for the Buddhists that they may know the only name in which there is salvation.

Dec 12
|
"Do not judge." (MTT 7:1)

The Japanese Christian, Endo Shisaku, tells about a missionary, Rodrigo, during the great persecution in the eighteenth century. When arrested, he endured tortures stoically and did not deny his faith. Inwardly, though, he was disturbed by the fact that God kept silent, that He did not answer his prayers. He begged Jesus at least to diminish his pain, but received no answer.

One day he faced the great test. He had the alternative either of seeing dozens of Christians killed before his eyes, or of winning their freedom. They would not even have to recant but he had to give up his faith publicly by treading on an image of Jesus. Out of love toward his brethren, he chose the latter. The moment he did it, he heard for the first time Jesus speaking to him, encouraging him to save the lives of his
brethren. It is the character of Jesus willingly to be wounded in all ages
so that others may escape. When Pilate offered either to release Jesus or Barabbas, Jesus wished rather Barabbas' release. Would He not wish to have His image trodden under the feet of a pastor so that innocent believers should not die?

Secretly, Rodrigo remained a Christian and brought to salvation even the one who had betrayed him.

The biblical solution is simple. It is to endure everything and never to deny the Lord. On the other hand, life has its complications, in
which it is not easy to make the right choice.

Let us remember lovingly in prayer the leaders of the official churches in the Communist countries, commonly referred to as traitors because of their cooperation with the atheist governments. Many of them did it with the thought of saving the churches and their flocks. God understands and is rich in mercy. Let us be the same.

Dec 13
|
"Be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." (PHP 2:2)

The Greek word for peace, ~eirene~, means etymologically, "to speak again with each other." Men don't come to an understanding because they never talk. They only make noises when they are together, believing that this is discussion. They change the expressions on their faces and think they understand each other. We are strangers even within our families and among friends. We live together for decades without the normal receiving and giving of aims and ideas. We make use of each other each for his own purpose. We don't love and are not beloved. We are alone. Men don't know the way of peace.

It consists in passing from making noises with words to " realizing." I have translated thus the real sense of the Hebrew word ~ledaber~ as to speak. It has as its root ~davar~, which means not only word, but also thing, reality, cause. A Hebrew is meant not only to speak
in words, but also to communicate reality in words. For"knowing," the Hebrews used the same word as for sexual intercourse. In Greek, too, ~gnosis~ has both senses. You know only through intimate union, through a loving embrace in which the two become one. You communicate them not only in words, but also in the warmth of the fellowship of burning hearts. There is no possibility of quarreling in that moment.

The bride in the Song of Solomon prays, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" (SOS 1:2). No one can quarrel while his mouth is covered with kisses.

Seek real encounters with your brother, sister, and fellow man. Let it not be only an exchange of words, but a real melting together. Then we will have fulfilled the commandment, "Love one another, as I loved you." Jesus did not only tell us words. He, the Son of God, became man.

Dec 14
|

"He might fill all things." (EPH 4:10)

Blessed Armelle Nicolas was an illiterate peasant woman who lived in the seventeenth century in France. She said, "God has sent me into the world with the sole purpose of loving Him. By His grace, I loved Him so much, that I cannot love Him anymore in the manner of mortals. It is time that I go to Him, that I may love Him in the manner of
the saints in heaven."

She came to this high level of love through practicing the continuous presence of our Lord.

She took every piece of food which others despised, rejoicing that she could leave the good things to others. When she prepared food for her mistress, she thought about Jesus as food for her soul. If she saw a dog following its master faithfully, she decided to do the same. When she saw the quiet lambs in the pasture, who meekly allowed themselves to be shorn and slaughtered, she remembered that Jesus was the Lamb of God who had had the same attitude. When she saw the hen gathering her chickens under her wings, she remembered that she was compared with one of them and that Jesus wished her to be under His shelter. When she was enchanted by beautiful flowers, she remembered the words by which the Lord described Himself: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys" (SOS 2:1). The fish swimming in the sea taught her to swim in the ocean of His love.

All things were for her allegories of the heavenly realities. So she became an advanced saint.

Dec 15
|
"Be not righteous over much." (ECC 7:16)

Peter wept a few tears about his denial of Jesus. When he met the resurrected Lord he did not even apologize. Judas' remorse was of an entirely different kind. He confessed to the priests that he had sold innocent blood. Peter had not gone back to the servant girl, before whom he had denied Jesus, to put things straight. Judas gave back the money he had received for betrayal. How few are those who make such restitution.

Contrary to all human logic, Peter received grace and became a prince among the apostles. Judas, after having done things much greater than to weep a little bit, remained without grace and committed suicide.

This is always the fate of those who are righteous over much, who overdo in repentance, who accumulate works of penitence instead of simply relying on the sacrifice of Christ, not only for forgiveness of sins, but also for repairing its effects.

In the Book of Leviticus the Hebrew word used for sins among

fellow men is called ~asham~, but the restitution which a thief had to make to the owner is also called ~asham~. Jesus is called ~asham~ in the great prophecy of ISA 53. He is not only the sacrifice for our sins, but also the One who makes restitution. He can give pearls for every tear we have caused someone to weep; He can give new life to those whom we have murdered; He can give heavenly riches to those from whom we stole earthly treasures. Do not dig into your past too much-not even in order to repair it if you cannot do it with an easy and confident heart. Do not make the way of holiness too difficult for yourself.

Judas proceeded like this and failed. Peter did not muse too long over his own sins and won. He shed tears of repentance, met the resurrected Lord, and saw that he had remained Jesus' friend, so the sin of the past was done with. It did not burden him anymore.

Dec 16
|
"It had been good for that man if he had not been born."
(MTT 26:24)

Would it have been better for me not to have been born? Suppose that the soul is preexistent, to have been in some other sphere before being born on earth. Suppose that I could have known beforehand all the sins which I would commit in life, and all the chain of sufferings and sorrows they would provoke. Suppose that I had known all of the sorrows which have been my lot in life and the possibility of an eternity in hell. If I had had the choice, I would have
chosen not to be born. Jesus said about Judas, "it had been better for that man if he had not been born." Did Judas have a choice?

We belong to a Master whose power is absolute. He does not take advice from anyone. We were born without having been consulted. We will live a span of life whose length is not decided by us. It is not decided by us even when we will have a mood which will lead one of us to suicide. We will be judged whether we like it or not. Instead of a useless quarrel with this Master, let us prepare ourselves to meet our God.

There is no other preparation for eternity than to obtain eternal life
now through belief in the blood of Christ. In the presence of Judas Jesus
said, "This is my blood shed for you!" Judas could have had part, too, in the unbreakable covenant in this blood. Jesus is not ashamed to call sinners His brethren. He would not have been ashamed to call Judas a brother either. He had called him friend.

Only when you think about this life as a prelude to life eternal in paradise, does being born become the right choice. I have a choice after all. I can be born again. I say, "Yes," to this. I enter this time into

life concurring willingly with God's decision that I should be His elect.

Dec 17
|
"It pleased the LORD to bruise him." (ISA 53:10)

Therese of Lisieux had her place at evening prayers just in the front of a sister who had a nervous affliction. She always made a little curious noise, rather like one would make by rubbing two shells together. This tiny noise got Therese down, but she never chided the offender, not even with a look. Something inside her told her that the right thing to do was to put up with it for the love of God and spare the
sister any embarrassment. Only she could not ignore the disturbing noise. Perspiration poured down her in the attempt to pray notwithstanding, but it was useless.

Then Therese hit on the idea of liking this exasperating noise. Instead of trying vainly not to hear it, she devoted herself to listening
hard, as if the sound were that of delightful music and her prayer consisted of offering the music to the Lord.

It is wrong to escape anxieties and troubles through vain hopes or through quarreling with those who disturb you. Do not only bear sorrows, but positively love them.

In giving to Abraham the order to sacrifice his son, God gave him the additional happiness of specifying an altar three days' journey away, so that he might enjoy for a long time the idea of giving his most beloved for his Master. He could have placed the wood for the fire on an ass, but Isaac preferred to carry the wood up the hill himself. Great sacrifices should be borne, not with patience, but with delight.

The heavenly Father Himself, because it was necessary that His Son should die on the cross for the sins of the world, did not sacrifice Him grudgingly: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." Adopt this attitude toward whatever disturbs you in life and you will be happy.

Dec 18
|
"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." (MTT 10:32)

In Cambodia a prayer meeting took place in a church. Communist soldiers surrounded it. Some entered, took an image of Jesus from the wall, put it on the threshold and ordered, "Everyone who walks out spits on the image and denies Jesus. If not, he is shot."

What would you have done? Some made their excuses. One had a beloved fiancee, whom he had to marry soon. Another one had an old

father to care for. A third one had small children at home. They knew Jesus to be forgiving and full of understanding. He knows that they have acted under duress. So they spat, and saved their lives.

The turn of a sixteen-year-old girl came. She made no excuse. Having guns pointed toward her, and having the alternative of spitting on the image or dying, she knelt, kissed the image, and wiped the spittle from its face. She had loved Jesus. She fell dead over the image of her bridegroom.

Souls like this girl's are the smile of mankind. Jesus calls Himself, "The lily of the valley, the rose of Sharon" (SOS 2:1) He expects His souls to have a heart as pure as the lily. He values such purity.

Flocks of healthy and beautiful sheep come from breeding the right type of lambs. Jesus told a pastor, "Feed my lambs." Let us teach our youth such beautiful examples of love even unto death.

Dec 19
|
"Not without blood." (HEB 9:7)

The religious Jews face a dilemma. The law of Moses states that sins can be remitted only through the atoning blood of innocent victims. On the other hand, the temple being destroyed, there are no sacrifices any more in the Jewish religion. The rabbis teach that the daily reading of a portion from Leviticus about the animal sacrifices is accepted by God as if the sacrifices themselves had been brought.

A Christian entered a Jewish shop and told the owner that he should accept Jesus, because the Jews have no more sacrifices. The Jew replied, "You are misinformed. Our reading of the Bible is accepted by God, counting as much as the blood of rams and lambs in times of old."

The Christian said, "All right. Instead of arguing religion with you, I had better buy a few things." He chose a dozen shirts, some shoes, and ties, among other things. Then he asked for an invoice. This was given. He began to read, "So many shirts cost so much, the ties and the shoes so much, the total some $200." He said farewell and left the

The Jew ran after him crying, "Sir, you have forgotten to pay!"
The Christian answered, "Did I not read the invoice?"
"Yes, but you did not pay the money."

To which the Christian said, "Well, I followed the advice of your rabbis that reading the bill is as good as paying."

It is not only Jews who are mistaken in this regard. There are also Christians who believe that saying the Lord's Prayer can take the place of really having God as Father; and calling Jesus a Savior means as much as really being saved by Him.

Look for the reality. Don't be content with formulas.

Dec 20
|
"Jesus said, Love your enemies." (MTT 5:44)

Five centuries before Jesus, Sophocles said in ~Antigone~, "I am here not for hating, but for loving." The Old Testament, too, taught love toward one's neighbor. Jesus brought love to its greatest height by demonstrating that it should also embrace the enemy.

A Jewess, Ilse Blumenthal-Weiss, whose husband was gassed and whose son was killed, was also in a concentration camp, in which she composed a poem that says, "I cannot hate. They beat me. They trample me under their feet. I cannot hate. They throw stones at me. I cannot hate. I can only weep bitterly."

A high human achievement-to restrain from sentiments of hatred. God gives more: the power to love the enemy.

Love toward the enemy does not mean avoiding the confrontation with evil. Jesus fought against the merchants in the temple and against the Pharisees. Jesus does not mean for us to flatter the enemy, to embrace him. He did not fall around Caiaphas's neck, neither did He offer Himself as His partner in evil deeds.

Love toward the enemy means to understand him better than he understands himself. His hatred blinds him. You can look with unbiased mind upon his position, too. To love the enemy means that, in defending yourself, you will not be obliged to use his methods. To love him means, like Jesus, to take upon yourself his guilt; to consider his sin as being yours and to atone for it by acts of goodness toward him and his victims.

Having the example of Christ before our eyes, we can do this through the power of His Spirit.

Dec 21
|
"We glory in tribulations." (ROM 5:3)

Therese of Lisieux was helping with the washing in the convent. A sister opposite her splashed dirty water in her face every time she lifted up a piece of wet clothing from the ledge.

Therese's first instinct was to step back and wipe her face, as a suggestion to her sister that she did wrong. All at once the thought occurred to her, "You're a fool not to take what comes frees" So she decided rather to hide her annoyance. She cultivated instead a liking for dirty water. In the end she became so fond of it that she came back at

other times for this happy "dip."

Isaiah had predicted the most cruel sufferings for Jesus. It would have seemed normal for Jesus to shun the reading and pondering of this book. On the contrary, it was His favorite. Isaiah is the only author whom Jesus praises-"Well did Esaias prophesy of you" (MTT 15:7). Welcome the evils of which you are apprehensive; look difficulties straight in the face. They will not haunt you any more.

A Soviet Christian was asked, "How could you bear tortures?" He answered, "Since I was converted, I daydreamed of being tortured, knowing that this would be my fate, as another man would have erotic imaginations. When I passed through them, they could not break me anymore."

Whoever embraces the feet of Jesus crucified, embraces also the beam of the cross. Whosoever wishes to follow Him, has to daily take His cross. Make the cross your joyful expectation. It will become a source of blessing.

Abraham, just when He showed Himself ready to make the highest sacrifice, received the blessing from God that in his seed all the nations would be blessed and that his offspring would be like the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea (GEN 22:17).

Dec 22

|

"Death passed upon all men." (ROM 5:12)

In St. Lawrence's church in Nuremberg there is a statue called "The woman of the world." She is shown as having a beautiful face and ornamented with jewelry. This is how she looks from one side. From the other side, you see something entirely different: a skeleton on which serpents creep.

St. Francis de Sales advised a Christian, who was a lady at the royal court of France and was obliged to attend parties dressed in beautiful dresses, to escape vanity through spending a few moments before the mirror and imagining how she would look as a skeleton with only a skull instead of a head.

These might not be pleasant thoughts, but nothing is surer than our death. The mortuary is the surest business. It is foolish to try to flee the thought of death.

Jesus knew that He would die, but He could defy death. He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (JHN 2:19). Paul could also defy death, "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God" (2CO 5:1).

To receive life eternal is easy. Jesus said in JHN 5:24, "Verily, verily I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life."

Believe on the Lord Jesus now and you will know for sure that death is not your end. It will be the entrance into a glorious life.

Dec 23
|
"[He] took upon him the form of a servant." (PHP 2:7)

Etymologically compassion means to suffer with our fellow man. Rich men and men in high position, as well as middle-class men, must learn to see how the world looks from below. They feast at Christmas but have not caught its meaning.

Jesus came to earth to experience what it is like when heaven disappoints: when one is hungry and it does not rain manna; when one's only shelter is a stable though he is not an ox; when one is crucified and
people under the cross are gambling; when one cries to God and gets no response.

Could men of the middle and upper classes not try the same experience? Why should they not go hungry for a few weeks, as their brethren do without any guilt in Mali or Bangladesh?

Jesus says that a thief can enter heaven, but a black person or a badly dressed man cannot enter a rich man's garden. The thief can play with the angels, but the poor child cannot play with the child of the rich.

The dog lies on the sofa with his mistress, but the servant who has worked the whole day to tidy the garden and the maid with the swollen feet who stood the whole day in the kitchen are not invited to sit down.

I know there are many arguments against such an excessively mild behavior with the poor. It might do them harm. The question is not what arguments the rich and the middle classes have, but how these things look from below, for the sixty percent of mankind who are starving or at least badly fed.

Jesus teaches us not to give to poor men kept at the right distance, but to call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, the most disgusting persons into our homes when we have a feast (LUK 14:13). He called you, a wretched sinner, to come to heaven.

Dec 24
|
"I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." (GAL 4:19)

Jesus surely was not born on December 25. The cold is very piercing during the nights in December near Jerusalem. It was not the custom of the Jewish shepherds to watch their flocks in the fields so late.

The Bible does not tell us the date when Jesus became man. The

25th of December was a holiday and an occasion of a carnival in the Roman Empire in honor of the sun. The Christians took advantage of this occasion, when the persecuting authorities had greater difficulty detecting them, to celebrate the birth of Jesus-but not only His physical birth that had happened at a certain date in history. They celebrated the daily miracle of Jesus' birth in the souls of those who had
accepted Him as Savior.

Jesus was born in a stable and put in a manger. It was wrong that the shepherds, who each had at least a hut, and the wise men, who might have had comfortable houses, allowed the newborn King to remain in a manger on the hay. They should have taken him into their homes. Jesus' place is not in a manger. The less so is it on a cross. He is
not happy to stay in heaven either. The place He longs for is in our hearts. That is where He wants to live.

The moment He is born there and I become for Him a Mary - that is the real Christmas. He said that He wished to have a mother for Himself. "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is ... my mother" (MTT 12:50).

Celebrate Christmas in this sense.

Dec 25
|
"Unto us a child is born." (ISA 9:6)

In the Hebrew original this prophecy about the coming of the Savior continues as follows: "Unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his, name s,hall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, heroic God (~El Ghibor~)...."

It was surely a heroic decision to leave heaven and the world of angels, having decided for Himself to be born in a stable, to be in danger of death from early childhood, to live an entire life of sorrow which end would be crucifixion, for the salvation of mankind who would show no gratitude for this sacrifice. Our Lord knew that ultimately good would triumph because of this sacrifice, so He made it.

Christmas is the memorial of the birth of a heroic God.

The main feature of His followers is heroism. Shallowness and lukewarmness do not belong to Christianity.

A renowned preacher, whose father had been a drunkard and his mother a pious, woman, was taught by the latter from early childhood a particular spiritual exercise. He would put on the floor a wine glass, playing cards, dice, pornographic magazines, some money, his own picture, and would trample on it all, shouting, "No! No!" And again, "No! No!" Then he would say to himself, "I belong to a heroic God, and I will always say 'No!' to any temptation to sin."

Let us commemorate the Nativity of a divine hero, forsaking the

comfortable ways and making the decision which all heroes in history have made: "To win or to perish, but never to yield."

Dec 26
|
"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself."

A boy of twelve was asked what he wished to become. He answered, "A missionary in Africa."
"Why?"
"Because then I will be able to hunt lions."
Many of us have the same mentality. We wish to become good Christians. Why? In order to have a better piece of heaven.
The right motive for being a good Christian is to be able to bear a heavier beam of the cross of Christ. The man who is born again wishes to be a better Christian so that in the future, when he passes through sorrows, his first question should not be, "How can I escape?" but, "How can I be useful to the kingdom of God in this new situation?"
We have no sufferings accidentally. They are all foreordained by a loving God. The ship with the apostles passed through a tempest (MTT 8:23-27). The Lord wished to teach them how to cope with a storm. They would have to face many.
He will awake in time if you are in danger of perishing. Until then, suffer silently and work and fight valiantly. It is for this that you were
called to be a Christian, not only to enjoy heaven.
Missionaries are not sent to Africa for the thrill of lion hunting.

Dec 27
|
"Teach all nations." (MTT 28:19)

Pope Gregory, the Great, received this honored title, even though he was a small man, because of one persistent merit. It was he who, in 596, began the mission among the Anglo-Saxons.
The Christianized Anglo-Saxons became a blessing to the whole world. Boniface, an Englishman, Christianized the Germans. Willibrord, also English, converted the Flemish people; Patrick won the Irish to Christ. The creation of the British empire gave the Anglo-Saxons the possibility of spreading Christianity to Asia, Africa, and Australia.
Anglo-Saxons brought the evangelical faith to the United States. Even now, 60 percent of all missionaries and so percent of all mission finances come from the United States.
To keep Christianity alive in the Anglo-Saxon world is of utter strategic importance. Missionaries must go to the farthest shores, but let us not forget that Christianity is decaying in the Anglo-Saxon world.

Only 3 percent of the population of the British Isles goes to church. In America seven out of ten teen-agers never cross the threshold of a church. Seventy percent of the population is unchurched.

Let us pray for the churches in the Anglo-Saxon world.

Dec 28
|
"[If] I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing. And [Elisha] said unto him: Go in peace." (2KI 5:18,19)

A Jewish legend says that Moses overheard a shepherd boy praying, "God, if You would appear to me, I would give you wool, milk, and meat for free. If You have some sheep, I would lead them to pasture, without asking for any pay. I would comb Your hair, wash Your robe, and kiss Your hand." Moses was shocked and shouted to the boy to stop it because the prayer was blasphemous.

Then God appeared to Moses and admonished him for what he had done. God told Moses that he had found pleasure in this naive prayer of the boy, more than in the sophisticated prayers of the know-it-alls.

Be wise in handling the false and primitive religious views of others. For someone who only goes to church, never witnessing for Christ to others, the church-going might be the Christianity of a shy person. A wrong belief in one of the many cults must not be interpreted as wickedness. It can be a transit from worldliness to the knowledge of God. The person gropes in darkness, but he might grope for the right thing. Give him some advice delicately, but do not destroy the little light he has.

As a principle, be stingy in giving advice in religious mattes. Ask yourself earnestly how much advice you are ready to take. This should be the dosage of advice imparted by you to others.

Dec 29
|
"I besought the Lord thrice, that [the messenger of Satan] might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee." (2CO 12:8,9)

Two days remain until the end of the year. We remember the many blessings we received this year, but also the fact that so many desires of the heart and prayers have remained unanswered.

A saint was renowned for having his prayers on behalf of others answered. He was asked, "If this is the case, why then don't you pray that your infirmity should be removed?" He was blind.

He answered, "Submission to the will of God is preferable to the satisfaction of my personal pleasure at being able to see."

Be thankful for answered prayer and accept the will of God for the cases in which you have been refused. He knows best what you need.

Unanswered prayers may have been prayers uttered in ignorance, not knowing the harm which their fulfillment would occasion. A time might come when you will thank God that they have not been fulfilled.

Monica was sad that her prayer for her son, Augustine, was not answered. She had prayed that he would remain with her. He led a wicked life, inclined toward all kinds of occult teachings, and forsook his mother, though she had prayed to the contrary.

Augustine went to Milan, where he met Bishop Ambrose. This led to his conversion. He later became one of the greatest teachers the Christian church has ever had.

Dec 30
|
"He became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." (2CO 8:9)

Recapitulating what we have done this year, we remember our many sins. They have many causes. One of them might be that we do not have the right spiritual teacher.

Beware of religious teachers who have a great following. It is possible they as frauds. If they would tell the full truth, their audience
would diminish.

Jesus had thousands around Him when He multiplied bread or healed. His teachings, however, were not accepted by the crowd.

Would the crowd flock to your teacher? Would you follow him if he practiced and taught poverty according to the word of the Master, "Blessed be ye poor" (LUK 6:20)?

A saint was offered some money. He refused with the words, "I have the money necessary for today's good."

"The money you have will not last long," he was told. "Take and you will have for the following days."

He replied, "Guarantee me that I will live longer than my few coins will suffice me, and I will accept your money."

Seek the teacher who will tell you not to worry about the many things you lack, but to be content with the few things you have. Jesus though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor (2CO 8:9).

The verb "to have" does not exist in Hebrew. Only God is the possessor of all things. You can possess the possessor of all things. Seek the teacher who will teach you not only how to be content, but how to be jubilant about having God.

Dec 31
|
"Teach us to number our days." (PSA 90:12)

The year has passed. Let all the troubles, sins, and quarrels of the past year pass with it. For our sins there is forgiveness in the blood of Christ. Next year will bring its own troubles. No need to bring into the trouble of the year which is no more. The quarrels have lost their importance.

A couple, prompted by love, had married. They sat at the table and hugged each other. Suddenly she became afraid. "Did you see?" she exclaimed. "A mouse ran by and entered into the hole there to the right."

He calmed her. "It can do nothing to you. I saw it. A little thing. It entered into the hole to the left."

She insisted that it was the right hole. He used his authority as a husband to impress upon her that he was correct; it must have been in the other hole. They divorced because of this question.

After seven years of separation, friends succeeded in making peace between them. They remarried and sat in the same room at the table. She said, "How stupid we have been to quarrel about a mouse that entered into that hole to the right."

He shouted, "You're starting again?" They divorced the second time. It was forever. Are all our quarrels really less ridiculous than this?

Now another year has gone by. With a year we have come nearer to our appointment with God. What will all our worries and our conflicts which we considered so important count for on the day of His judgment?

Let us examine earnestly what has been amiss during the past year, and start the new year with confidence. We will have in the new year: God, the Savior, the Spirit, the protecting angel. We can be confident.

The End of "Reaching Toward the Heights"

The Oracles of God

Richard Wurmbrand
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About the Author

In 1992, ~70 Great Christians Changing the World~ by Geoffrey Hanks appeared in Great Britain (Christian Focus Publication). Peter and Paul, Apostles; Ignatius, Polycarp, martyrs of old; St. Jerome, Augustine, Columbus, world renowned teachers; Patrick, apostle of the Irish; Francis of Assisi, Wyclif, Luther, Tyndale, Bible translators; John Knoxx, Scottish reformer; Luther and Ignatius Loyola, Carey (the father of modern missions); Hudson Taylor, Livingstone, founders of missions in Asia and Africa; Barnardo, founder of orphanages, William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army; Spurgeon and Moody, two of the greatest evangelic preachers ever; and other people like these are listed in this book. Included in this book is a chapter on Richard Wurmbrand. He is counted among the 70 greatest Christians our world has known.

This listing in Hank's book tops all other reports of Wurmbrand, both good and bad, that have been

recorded in the world press. The following is a selection of some of these.

"Wurmbrand irritates, but he opens our eyes...Wurmbrand has gotten the world to hearken, even if he has sacrificed himself. He has reached quite a bit...Wurmbrand has shouted the cry of the martyrs."
The Rev. Ingemar Martinson
General Secretary of the Slavic Mission
Sweden

"Wurmbrand is an Iron Curtain Paul. He is the most authoritative voice of the Underground Church, he is more than a living martyr."
Underground Evangelism

"Since the Sermon on the Mount was delivered, no one has preached with love like Richard Wurmbrand."
~Haratta~
Finland

"Wurmbrand has brought to the universal Church a new dimension, reminding it about the martyrs."
~Church Times~
London

"Wurmbrand burst like a fireball across the cool complacency of some."

USA Congressional Record

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"We were hit by a hurricane call Wurmbrand."
~Tablet~
New Zealand

"We have checked and can say with almost certainty that there has never been a Pastor Wurmbrand in Romania."
Finnish Communist newspaper

"In the present Communist regimes strong powers for the humanization of society lie hidden...Wurmbrand becomes really dangerous."
Van deHeuwell
(while Director of Public Relations
The World Council of Churches)

"Wurmbrand is the devil's mouthpiece."
~Arbeiterzeitung~
Switzerland

"Wurmbrand is a new St. John the Baptist ... a voice crying in the wilderness."
~Christianity Today~
USA

"Wurmbrand is a passionate anti-Communist and anti-Soviet. His books are full of unveiled hatred."
several Soviet newspapers

"Except for the Bible, nothing has shaken me like Wurmbrand's ~Tortured for Christ~. It is the message of the century. Even more: since the persecution of

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Christians by Nero, it is the most powerful Act of Martyrs."
Dr. Kurt Koch
renowned German evangelical
pastor and author

"Wurmbrand is broadly charitable in his understanding of God's love and the nature of man. Not even an ounce of contentiousness appears in his books. Perhaps the agony of long imprisonment purges that out of a man."
~Alliance Witness~

USA

"Wurmbrand is a dirty Jew."
~Christian Vanguard~
USA

"What I have to say about myself is much simpler: I am an ordinary Christian who lived in very unusual circumstances."
Richard Wurmbrand

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Prologue

The Rev. Richard Wurmbrand is an evangelical minister of Jewish descent. Most of his family members died in the Holocaust. He endured more than fourteen years of Fascist and Communist imprisonment and torture in his homeland of Romania. He is one of Romania's most widely known Christian leaders, authors, and educators.

In 1945, when Soviet troops invaded Romania and the new Communist regime attempted to control the churches for its own purposes, Richard Wurmbrand immediately began an effective, vigorous "underground" ministry to his enslaved people and to the Russian soldiers. He was finally arrested in 1948, along with his wife Sabina. Sabina served three years as a slave-laborer. Richard Wurmbrand spent three years in solitary confinement - seeing no one but his Communist torturers. Following this period, he was transferred to a mass cell five years, There the torture continued.

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Due to his international stature as a Christian leader, diplomats of foreign embassies made inquiries about his safety to the Communist government. They were told he had fled Romania. Secret police, posing as released fellow-prisoners, told his wife stories of attending his burial in the prison cemetery. His family in Romania and his friends abroad were all told to forget him since he was now dead. After spending eight years in prison, Rev. Wurmbrand was released. He promptly resumed his work with the underground Church. Two years later, in 1959, he was re-arrested and sentenced to 25 years in prison.

Rev. Wurmbrand was released in a general amnesty in 1964, and

again he continued his underground ministry. Realizing the great danger of a third imprisonment, Christians in Norway negotiated with the Communist authorities for his release from Romania; the Communist government had begun "selling" its political prisoners. The "going price" for a prisoner was set at $1,900, but the price for Wurmbrand was $10,000.

In May 1966, Richard Wurmbrand testified in Washington, D.C. before the Senate's Internal Security Subcommittee. He stripped to the waist to show eighteen deep torture wounds covering hi body. His story was carried across the world in newspapers throughout the U.S., Europe, and Asia. In September 1966, Wurmbrand was warned that the Romanian Communist regime had made a decision to assassinate him, yet even in the face of these

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threats, he refused to be silent. He has been called the "voice of the Underground Church." Christian leaders have referred to him as a "living martyr" and the "Iron Curtain Paul."

In October 1967, Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand founded a non-profit missionary organization to bring assistance to persecuted Christians around the world. Today, ~The Voice of the Martyrs, Inc.~, directed by Pastor Wurmbrand, continues to carry out this work.

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page xv The Oracles of God

Preface

~If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God...~ (1PE 4:11).

Did you ever meet a person who speaks ~as the oracles of God~? Do you speak like this? If not, why not? If this Scripture is from God, every bit of speech that is not spoken as His oracle is grave sin. Oracles was a name given to certain priestesses or priests in heathen religions of the past through which sure revelations were given.

How does one arrive at speaking like an oracle? This is the subject of the present book. Would it seem presumptuous to you if I would say that I speak as an oracle of God? But why would a Christian dare to write a book if he would not be convinced of

this?

I am not bound to think and write only about dictatorships and jails, nor only about missionary practices. This time I wrote a book with the thoughts about God and human life.

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I had most of these thoughts when I was alone in a solitary cell, 30 feet beneath the earth, never, but never, seeing sun, moon, stars, trees, flowers, birds, butterflies. I never saw any other color than gray - the gray of the walls and of our prison uniform. I never heard a voice except the insults of those who watched us.

Don't wonder if some of these thoughts will seem strange.

The same One who said, "Don't murder, don't steal," said, "Speak as my oracles." Ponder about this.

Pastor Richard Wurmbrand

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Introduction

A soldier in need approached Alexander the Great and asked for some money. The emperor, who knew the bravery of this soldier in battle, refused, but instead made him ruler over one of his cities. Overcome by such royal largesse, the soldier demurred, exclaiming, "This gift is too big for me!"

"That may be," responded the emperor. "But it is not too great a gift on the part of a king."

As you begin to read this book, you anticipate another collection of human thoughts to be found within its covers. It is proper for you to not ask for much. But I write in the name of Christ, for whom it is customary to give more than a man usually expects. He is the King of Kings. ~When one writes in His name or speaks on His behalf, he is expected to speak the oracles of God~ (see 1PE 4:11).

Shakespeare might have meant just such a man when he wrote:

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"His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles. His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate, His tears pure messages, sent from his heart, His heart as far from fraud, as heaven from earth."

In mystery religions of old (as in the Lamaists' religion of today), some priests or priestesses were put into a trance-like state through drugs, dances, or incense, and what they spoke in this condition was thought to come from their god and was therefore deemed an "oracle."

The one who writes or preaches in the name of Christ is meant to be God-intoxicated, a person who has first received the kiss of God.

For not savoring the mind of God, the Lord once reproached Peter: "...You are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (MTT 16:23).

Any man who deals with religious matters, not only the apostles, should not open his mouth unless what he says is a revelation from God. It might be but a little drop from the sea, but it must still be from the sea itself. His words must savor of the things of God.

The Hebrew language has strange expressions for our terms "to speak" or "to tell"; we consider every word expressed, however foolish, as falling into the category of "speaking," not so the Jews. It is in their genius to believe that the word is divine. For "to

speak" they use ~ledaber~, akin to ~davar~, which is used for "word." But ~davar~ is also the word for "thing." Hebrew words are real things, not simply talk. ~Ledaber~ means "to communicate a reality."

Another word for "to speak" is ~le-omer~, from the root ~amir~, which means the highest branch of a tree. A man's words are worthy only if he speaks at the highest level he can reach.

For "to tell," the word is ~le-saper~, from ~saper~ meaning "sapphire." "To tell" is to give another a jewel. If you have a jewel to give, talk. If not, keep silent.

It is a risky thing for an author to write a book such as this, but I do so because I love you, my reader.

This book, then, contains the oracles of God.

***

Some readers may already be laughing skeptically: "What an absurd claim, to speak of oracles of God!" Countless men throughout the ages have claimed to speak such oracles and some still do. All the false prophets and messiahs among the Jewish people, founders of new religions like Mohammed and of new sects like Joseph Smith and Mary Baker Eddy not only claimed, but also sincerely believed, that they spoke the oracles of God. All the promoters of heresies have done so, as did the inquisitors. Hitler and Khomeini spoke as if they were voices of Providence.

So why do I make such a claim?

Well, if you have already begun to laugh, I will tell you a joke to make you laugh even more.

A man named George wanted to sell his horse and therefore boasted among his acquaintances, "My horse is indeed unique. In the morning I send him to the baker and to the dairy, and he brings me bread and milk, as well as the newspaper. The horse knows the way from my home to the office and back. I give him free rein in the evening, and he takes me to my club."

Tom was deeply impressed and paid $2,000 to obtain this remarkable horse.

After much time had passed, George and Tom met at a party. Tom immediately launched into a dismal recital of the horse's inadequacies: "It only likes to enjoy itself, and it is lazy and stubborn when you want to saddle it up for a ride. It doesn't understand any of the things I want it to do."

George warned Tom, "Stop talking like that or you won't be able to sell the horse. I got a good price because I praised it!"

Obviously, only highly touted political and religious convictions are accepted by the populace. Anyone who wants to propagate an idea must boast of its merits. Every salesman for a product has to claim that it is the best.

But one idea, one product, is really the best. The idea of a "best product" cannot be discarded simply because lesser products are also touted as "top of the line."

Of the many pretended oracles of God, some are genuine, some false. It is up to you to determine whether or not what I write is indeed a genuine sapphire.

Every book on metaphysical or religious matters will be useless or even harmful if the reader does not have the gift of a discerning spirit. He must be able to find out if what is presented to him is actually a message from God.

If a book only amuses, then enjoy it and have a little fun. If it claims to be from God but does not contain a message from Him, don't waste time on it. If it does, then you are obliged to accept its ideas in a spirit of obedience. The Master speaks through the author, and you will have to fulfill what He says.

When a reader seeking treasure encounters a writer with jewels to share, amazing things can happen. But the character and frame of mind of the reader must be part of the equation. Then if the writer speaks truth, the reader can expect sure and salutary results.

But be very sure about the writer. Ask yourself whether God speaks through him to your soul, whether the devil speaks, or if this is some human

being merely expressing his own thoughts. Most readers, or listeners, are remarkably inattentive.

An experiment was carried out in Israel. The well-known radio announcer Kishon read a novel on the radio, beginning with the last chapter and ending with the first. Then he read only the odd pages of another novel. Later he announced a novel and read the State budget. Only one man was moved to complain.

People swallow bad books, bad sermons, and bad lectures with the same ease with which they swallow good ones - I would even say with greater ease.

Only if you are wary can the reading of this book be of value to you.

* * *

I present this book with the claim that it contains an important message.

What God has for you in this book is not an ordinary gift. Earthly gifts may provide great pleasure, but ultimately they are vain.

In Iran, near the town of Shiraz, there is a small, simple tomb with this inscription: "Man, whosoever you are, and whenever you will come, because I know that you will come, I tell you that I am Emperor Cyrus and that I conquered for the Persians the dominion of the world. Leave me at least with this little piece of land that covers my body." This

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minimal request has not been fulfilled; his tomb has been depredated.

The earthly gifts God provides are temporary. In time, wicked men or the forces of nature will take them from us. He gives us earthly gifts while making it clear from the beginning they are but tokens that should open our hearts to receive the one great eternal gift reserved for us. This gift is what this book is all about.

I wonder how many of you have ever played cards. If you have, you know that it is neither advantageous nor fun to play with open cards. The challenge and enjoyment lie in not knowing another's cards, in guessing and surmising which cards your opponent may hold. God keeps man in suspense; man doesn't know what trump cards God is holding. An author representing God through his books must do likewise.

I do not want to tell you what God's gift is until I have prepared your heart to receive it. I want to awaken within you a state of intense desire for the unknown and the invisible. I put all my soul into what I write

page 1 Chapter 1: Possess the Truth

A perceptive child can often spot insincerity or indifference. In Sunday school, when the teacher recounted the story of Jesus' sufferings and death, a child remarked, "The story is not true."

Taken aback, the teacher asked, "What makes you say that?"

"If it were true," the boy replied quietly, "you could not tell it without weeping."

Sorrily, some Christian writers, authors of religious hymns, and preachers are boring; others are very good but burn out quickly; and some become soul-less - perhaps it is because they spend too much of their souls on their work without taking due precautions to refill them daily.

William Cowper wrote the renowned hymn:

"There is a fountain, filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,

And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.
The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day,
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away."

One feels there is life in this song. Cowper poured into it the blood of his own heart. In his old age, he suffered several bouts of insanity; he who had written that "the precious blood shall never lose its power" doubted during his depressions that his own sins were washed away by Christ's sacrifice.

It is necessary that we allow ourselves to be cleansed and purified.

To be in error is a dreadful thing, but it is even worse to embrace truth for the wrong reasons: because it is convenient, because it is pleasant, because it is profitable, because it is socially acceptable. God wants us to love the truth. It is the water of life He offers us. Don't adulterate it with pollutants.

Love truth for its own sake, and it will come to you.

***

The one who claims to speak the oracles of God must expect to be asked many questions.

He can be asked, first of all, "Who are you to make this

claim?"

page 3 Chapter 1: Possess the Truth

Every "I" contains a multifaceted "we." We have within us a long history of I's, many sides of our personality. Which of my I's speaks oracles?

If the different faces of the self alternate and I think one thing at one time and something else at another, or if at times I live my unconscious life without thinking, then what happens in my mind at one moment can contradict what happened a few moments before, and I can be certain of nothing. Can something uncertain be the oracle of God?

To claim certainty is mostly a pose. It is not reasonable to always be certain, to know things absolutely, when every event has so many faces, most of which are beyond our ken anyway.

Furthermore, there is no such thing as a state of perpetual illumination. Just as it is impossible to be in a constant state of ecstasy or to stand on tiptoe without relaxation, so it is also impossible to administer truth 24 hours a day, although we may have access to it.

The apostle Peter said one day, under divine inspiration, that Jesus was the Son of God. After a few minutes, another "I" of Peter said such terrible things that Jesus called him "satan." Peter boasted that even if everyone else forsook Jesus, he would not. This was, again, another ~I~; then he denied ever having known Jesus - another ~I~. Later he repented with tears and received the commission to feed Jesus'

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sheep, which he also did. (See MTT 16:17-23; MTT 26:7; JHN 21:16-17.)

Legend says that when persecution erupted in Rome, Peter fled. Again, that was another I. While fleeing, he realized that what he was doing was wrong. He returned and died a martyr's death for Christ, asking to be crucified head-down because he did not deserve to die like Jesus. Peter had many I's. That is why he had three names in the Bible: Simon, Cephas, and Peter. It is this same Peter who teaches us in his epistle to speak the oracles of God. Which of the I's of Peter spoke oracles?

We all have many I's. I have had many opinions and convictions

in life that I later abandoned. What then authorizes me to believe that today as I write these lines, I am speaking the oracles of God? What about all the things I said yesterday? And what of that I will speak tomorrow?

How can one find out for himself which of his many opinions are the truth of God? Peter, the man who said so many wrong things and vacillated so much, who was publicly accused by St. Paul of prevarication (GAL 2:11 ff), might have wondered himself which of his sayings, if any, were oracles.

How can one choose among the many who claim to speak the oracles of God? Does an objective, sure truth exist? If so, how can one find it?

The oracle of God must tell me, first of all, what an oracle of God is and must then accredit itself as

such. The question is an important one, a critical one, but don't try to get quick answers.

Foreign lecturers speaking in Japan have wondered why students don't reply to questions put to them. But in their culture an immediate reply shows contempt for the speaker. It means that his questions are of so little importance that anyone can answer them without difficulty. Therefore the proper reaction to a question is not a quick reply, but meditation upon it, indicating that the question and the questioner deserve respect.

The number of conflicts in families, churches, and society at large would be greatly reduced if spouses, children, parents, parties, leaders, and states would forego the felt need to respond immediately to every question and instead make each question an object of loving, or at least civil, mediation.

Therefore, my advice to you is not to swallow this book in a hurry. Read a portion, then meditate. To make this easier, I have divided the book into small, bite-size portions.

***

But is there no hurry to find the truth?

St. Augustine says, "You would never have sought the truth if you had not already found it." "The truth induces men to seek the truth," said St. Makarios the Great. And Blaise Pascal wrote, "We

could not seek God unless in some real sense we already possessed Him." The fact that you seek truth, that you

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ask for it, shows you have a love for it. Love for truth is an essential part of truth itself. If you seek it earnestly, you can afford to sit down quietly, like Mary Magdalene.

Which is more real to you, your problem or yourself? You existed before you posed the question to yourself about finding truth. How many hours a day do you seek it even now? You are much bigger and more important than your search for truth.

Don't throw away the whole of your life for this particular, though valuable, preoccupation - this search for truth. Live your life. When you work, work. When you eat, eat. When you sleep, sleep. When you amuse yourself, amuse yourself. Truth and life are good companions. They are friends, not enemies. You don't have to exclude the one in order to have the other. Jesus said, "I am the Way." What does this "Way" consist of? He explained Himself immediately: "the Truth ~and~ the Life." (See JHN 14:6.)

Take it easy, take one step at a time, and you will reach the truth. Meanwhile, be yourself.

Truth is the supreme goal, except that truth alone can be found nowhere, just as one cannot find either iron or gold alone in the earth; they exist only in combination with other elements.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth ~and~ the life" (JHN 14:6). If one wishes to know truth, he must know life too. If he wishes to fulfill the demands of truth, he must be attentive to the demands of life as well.

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St. Paul taught us to beware of vain philosophy (COL 2:8).

Long ago there lived a king who had a very valuable stallion. He appointed a watchman to do nothing else but guard the magnificent animal during the night. To satisfy his concerns, the king arose at night and went to the guard.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Well, your majesty, I was just reflecting on why a circle is round and a square rectangular."

The king exclaimed, "I am happy to have in my service a real philosopher. Just continue."

Later in the night, the king went again and asked the watchman, "What were you doing now?"

"I was trying to find out what happens to the hole in a bagel after it is eaten. I did not eat the hole, but notwithstanding it has disappeared."

The king was very pleased to have a soldier with such interesting thoughts. He came a third time and asked the watchman, "What now? What are you thinking?"

"Now I have a really serious problem. There was a stallion in the stable. It is no longer there. Where could it be?"

For the sake of philosophy, he had lost the stallion of truth.

Seek the truth, but be careful not to destroy your life and the lives of other men for the sake of

philosophizing about truth. Without men, where will the truth settle and of what good will it be?

The story is told that Pol Pot, the Communist dictator of Cambodia, declared, "I have a truth that will make my people happy."

He was asked, "What if your people do not accept your formula of truth?"

He replied, "I will kill all those who oppose truth. Truth is for me above all things." Out of a population of five million, he killed two million of his own people.

This is the attitude of the inquisitors of all convictions. This is the philosophy of those who tyrannize their families, forcing them to accept what they consider as truth.

God says, "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, ~he shall live by them...~" (LEV 18:5).

Truth is given that you and others might live by it, not die

by it.

Be careful. Be forewarned.

***

A sage had a disciple called Moses. When he called, the disciple would reply, "Yes," and come immediately. The master would then tell him a few things, but with a disappointed expression on his face. Moses did not understand why. Again and again, the master would call, "Moses!" Each time

Moses would reply, "Yes," and elicit the same reaction. Eventually he came to the conclusion that his answer "Yes" was not what his master desired.

He changed, and for a time, as often as the master called, "Moses!" he replied, "Here I am." But neither did this answer satisfy the sage, though he continued to impart love to his disciple and to teach him the ways of God.

One day Moses had an illumination, and when the master called, "Moses!" he came, smiled, and said, "I understood." With this, he left his master forever.

The master gave a sign of relief. Moses had become himself. He now knew he was Moses and no longer had to be the copy of his master.

Likewise, I urge you to develop a personality that is able to discern the truth among the many lies that are told.

***

You may be sure that truth exists. There is no doubt about this. Socrates already showed the fallacy of the contrary assertion.

The Sophist philosopher Gorgias had asserted "Truth does not exist." Socrates challenged these words in a conversation with Kriton, a disciple of Gorgias. He asked the younger man, "Does Gorgias believe what he says?"

"Yes."

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"Then Gorgias contradicts himself."

"How?"

"According to the teaching of your master, no truth exists, yet he considers this, his assertion, to be true. Then he does acknowledge something to be true."

No one can escape the belief that men can know sure truth. If we say, "Everything we know is relative," then this knowledge of ours, that everything known only relatively, is an absolute truth? Everything we postulate is based on just such an assumption. So there exists a kernel of the absolute even in the midst of relativity.

There exist sure oracles.

The Bible calls the Creator "The God of Truth" (PSA 31:5). There is a legend that the blood that flowed from Jesus on Golgotha formed the Hebrew words ~Ani ha-emet~, "I am the truth." We can know a truth.

Socrates said, "I know that I know nothing." This assertion may exhibit modesty, but it can be accepted only with certain qualifications. It is simply not true that Socrates knew nothing. He knew the Greek language. He knew the whole alphabet. He knew grammar-substantives, verbs, conjugations. He knew how to think, how to speak. There always exists a core of sure truth at the heart of what is doubtful and relative in our thinking.

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The problem is, we confuse knowing the truth with understanding it. "I have not understood a bar of music in my life, but I have felt it." said Igor Stravinsky. "I shut my eyes in order to see," said the painter Paul Gaugin.

Anna Pavlova, the renowned dancer, when asked once to explain her pirouettes, replied to the interviewer, "If I could say it, I would not have danced it." If painters could say, in words, what they know, they would not resort to the brush and the palette. Einstein and other creative scientists have expressed their need to think in images. Words alone cannot yield the truth.

I have learned much about God not only from the words of Christian hymns, but also from the Gregorian chanting in Orthodox

churches and from the music of Bach and others.

Only a small part of truth can be understood: The rest must be caught as an intense longing for a beautiful, loving, harmonious world. Truth is something much better than a set of ideas.

All music critics evaluate the notes played on instruments. But what about the music of the pauses between the notes?

Before being confined in Communist prisons for fourteen years, I believed that the whole Bible as written was the truth. In jail I discovered that in reality I had considered as truth only the black letters

of the Bible, without paying attention to the white spaces between the letters, words, and chapters.

In the Bible, Jesus is called "the Word," not the sentence. He is the Word surrounded by white space, the white margins and blank pages within the Bible. Many of the most interesting truths are written with invisible ink on these white spaces.

What did Jesus say to the priests when He conversed with them in the temple at the age of twelve? What did He do between twelve and thirty? What is meant by the assertion that after His crucifixion He descended into hell? What happened after the resurrection between the times He appeared to His disciples?

Learn also from the greater Christ of the white pages, and you will know.

***

All this may sound irrational, but what if some truth is irrational? It could not be otherwise because there is much that is beyond reason in the universe. Any effort to understand it only by rational means will be futile and superficial.

The chief features of the world are, at one pole conflict and struggle, the clash of antithetical forces, and at the opposite pole, ardent love. Human life is not all rational. It is a madman like Hitler beguiling the German people, then considered rational, with the senseless slogan "Blood and soil," and a

loving

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priest like Maximilian Kolbe throwing away his life in Auschwitz for a man he never knew. To tell an SS officer he wanted to die in place of another prisoner was foolish. Logic would have taught him that the officer would laugh and kill them both.

Bergson said in ~Creative Evolution~: "The intellect is characterized by a natural inability to comprehend life. Instinct, on the contrary, is molded on the very form of life."

In the search for truth, do not rely on intellect alone. Golgotha means in Aramaic "place of the skull." When Jesus was taken there, He was crucified. If you wish Him to live, bring Him to the place of the heart!

Use instinct, intuition, feeling, faith, a high ideal, a noble dream that should become the truth. Do not be the lackey of truth, saying only what it orders, but be its master and make of reality what your heart dictates in its best moments.

A certain painter, when reproached that his portraits did not look like the subject, replied that it was not his business to exactly replicate how a person looked, but to challenge the person to become like the picture he painted.

This is exactly how God paints the faithful soul. She is called in Scripture "the fairest among women," "A lily among thorns," "without spot or wrinkle" (SOS 6:9; 2:2; EPH 5:27). Rationalists

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would say this is simply not true. The description does not show the Church as it is. It was never God's intention merely to describe how it is, but to tell us how it should be. This is the image God has of us, and He expects us to conform to it.

It is interesting to note that only in the English language does the word translated "to realize" have the double meaning "to understand, to be aware of," and also "to cause something to be." This is how truth is molded.

* * *

Truth, when communicated in words, is no longer pure truth. It

passes through a censorship.

The Wycliffe Bible translators on the Solomon Islands were fined a pig and ten dollars in cash for having used the name "Momoli" in a story in a reading primer. It was simply a contrived name, but it happened to coincide with name of an ancestor who was worshiped.

The translators soon found out they must be cautious. The common word for "sea" - ~asi~ - also had to be avoided because in the past it was the name of an important man. Now it was forbidden.

Another taboo is pronouncing the names of in-laws. Once in a church there was a Scripture reading from the Book of First Peter. The person who read the text accordingly said, "The reading this morning is from the first of my father-in-law, chapter one."

On Misima Island, off Papua, New Guinea, a person who had an in-law with a name that sounded like the word for "big" had to stop singing hymns whenever he came to that word. It was taboo.

We smile about these backward people. But can we express freely in "civilized" nations all we know to be true? Don't we often have to use euphemisms?

It is taboo to speak to children about one of the most dramatic aspects of life, which they will understand only when they are already involved in it. But then it is too late to learn.

In Germany after the defeat of Hitler, the word "fatherland" could no longer be used. It was considered a dirty word.

In psychoanalysis, both the patient and the doctor try to construct out of isolated threads a story that makes sense. When the psychoanalyst and his patient converse, they intentionally invest happenings with a coherence that may not have existed in reality. The facts of life are shaped to give them meaning and purpose. Both use literary skill.

We all try to give sense to everything, instead of acknowledging that nonsense is also part of reality.

A religious person usually romanticizes the story of his

conversion. In Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, the youth, reduced to utter misery, returns to his father (who symbolizes God) for the simple reason that at home he would have better food. If the prodigal son had told the story himself, he might

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have said that a longing of his heart after Heaven made him return to his father's house.

It takes only one black sheep to prove that all sheep are not white. If there were only one deformation of truth, it would be enough to assure us that not all stories and thoughts parading as truth are true. But falsehoods are multiplied without number.

Humanity by itself has no truth and cannot obtain it. Truth can only descend to us from a higher sphere.

***

There exists an unconscious wisdom called faith. The smallest notion of the unconscious soul is more important and true than the noblest production of our conscious thoughts. God loves to dwell in the darkness of the unconscious. There resides the truth for which the conscious has to fish.

The Sufite Mohammedan sect has a legend about Jesus, told in a beautiful book by Indris Shah.

According to this legend, Jesus once saw a group of sad people who, when asked about their grief, replied, "We fear we may go to hell." Then He saw another group who also looked very depressed and wept.

"What troubles you?" He asked.

"We heard there is a splendid paradise, and we tremble that we might miss it."

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Then He met a third group, all worn out but with faces full of joy. "What makes you so radiant?" He queried.

"Here and there we have obtained some little bits of truth, and we have within us a spirit that promises us even more. We now see things more and more as they really are. With what little truth we have, we realize that nothing else matters to us."

Jesus said, "These are the people who attain.
They will see the face of God."

***

Seekers after truth generally begin with the presumption that truth is a response to the question "What?" This is wrong.

Pilate put the question, to which he got no reply: "What is truth?" (JHN 18:38). Before him stood the incarnate Truth, but he did not recognize Him.

Pilate's question is like asking, "What is the melody of a peach?" He makes the false assumption that truth is the fruit of discussion, that it is a collection of statements.

The right question is, "~Who~ is the truth?" Truth is a Person. Jesus said, "I am the truth" (JHN 14:6). Jews search the Scriptures; Buddhists search their canons; Muslims search the Koran. Jesus says, "The Scriptures testify of Me. Come to Me" (JHN 5:39; MTT 11:28). Since He promises to live within us, in the

measure to which we become like Him, we too can become the truth.

There are no right answers to wrong questions.

In many places in the New Testament, "Jesus" is not just the name of one Person. He is called ~ho Iesous~ - "the Jesus." He bears a generic name. There exists a category of men to whom the name Jesus can be applied at least partially. These are truth-bearers. They represent Jesus. In Kabbalistic poetry they are called "the minuscule faces of God."

St. Laurence Justinian wrote, "He thirsted for us and desired to give Himself to us." Well, He has done so, which means the truth is in us.

We might not realize it most of the time because of not differentiating between what theologians call ~fides directa~ and ~fides reflecta~ - direct and reflected faith. If I say "I believe," I say what I believe to believe I can believe I am a believer and be mistaken. Some, on the other hand, have a direct faith and are not aware of it or are aware only rarely.

But if Jesus lives within us, we are the people to whom John writes: "But you have an anointing of the Holy One, and you ~know~ all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth but because you know it" (1JN 2:20,21).

Buddha's last words were, "Seek the truth." Jesus said, "I am the truth." Therefore His disciples are no more searchers for truth but its possessors.

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Scripture says that God "...raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (EPH 2:6). Observe, "we are raised up" and "sit in heavenly places."

Scientists have launched a space telescope that is clear-sighted because of its position above the atmosphere, which bends, distorts and absorbs light before it reaches the earth. The night sky cannot properly be seen from the earth, any more than objects can be viewed through a fish tank filled with water. Light passing through the atmosphere, or water, is refracted and therefore dislocates the objects being viewed. Furthermore, air and water turbulence blur the images. A space telescope remedies all these defects.

If we look at truth from the earth, we are unable to see it as and where it is, but with Jesus we are seated high above the world in heavenly places where God's peace reigns undisturbed and undistorted. There we become possessors of the truth as it really is.

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page 21 Chapter 2: Love the Truth

In the search for truth, we are doomed to meet innumerable speculators, eccentrics, crackpots, and out-and-out fakers, not to mention their gullible victims. Even St. Paul recognized that some of those who taught were largely unreliable. He warned against the "many vain talkers and deceivers" in the early church (TIT 1:10).

Psychologist Bertram Forer bought a newsstand astrology book, from which he extracted the following character reading: "...You are extroverted, affable, sociable, while at other times you are introverted, wary and reserved. Disciplined and controlled on the outside, you tend to be worrisome and insecure on the inside. Your sexual adjustment has presented some problems for you..."

This very same character reading was given to fifty students, who were each made to believe it was

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uniquely formulated for him as a result of a personality test. Forty-one percent of the students considered it a perfect fit to their personality.

Most of us tend to be gullible and are easily waylaid by countless individuals and organizations eager to lead us astray. A psychologist, Hyman, convinced that he could read palms, decided one day to tell people the exact opposite of what he read in their palms. He found that they swallowed what he said as readily as before.

In a Seattle bus station a woman went to the restroom, leaving her bags by her seat. Profiting from her absence, a man rummaged through her baggage and disappeared with something bundled under his coat. When the woman returned, she cried, "My tape deck was stolen!" Several men who witnessed the incident agreed to give their names and addresses for use in the insurance claim. When they were questioned later, they recalled the color, shape, and size of the tape deck.

The fact is that there never had been a tape deck. The whole incident was staged as an experiment by the University of Washington to show the unreliability of witnesses and of human memory.

***

If we wish to have the truth, we must realize we have nothing to rely on. Truth can come only as a free gift from above. It is received as revelation or not at all.

page 23 Chapter 2: Love the Truth

The Romans had a saying: ~Quidquid recipitur, secundum modum recipientis recipitur~ - "Whatever is received, is received according to the manner of the one receiving it." Aristotle said, "Wickedness corrupts a man's nature and gives him false principles and evil measures of things." Bad men are condemned to have false ideas. And we are all bad.

Jesus, the Pure, cleanses us from all sins. He, the embodiment of truth, identifies with us and becomes our new personality. He

gives us His thoughts.

Those with ears only for what is earthly believe that music consists of the sounds produced by crickets rubbing their legs together. But those who look up will hear the heavenly harmony of truth.

Just as pigeons or snails have a magnetic sense that helps orient them at great distances, so those who hear the sound of ultimate truth are irresistibly attracted to it. They know to whom they are to entrust themselves and where they are going. Jesus told us, "Where I go you know, and the way you know" (JHN 14:4).

Lady Philosophy will criticize us immediately, saying, "Wait a bit. You jumped from the search for truth to the unwarranted assertion that Jesus is the truth. Why Jesus?"

Are we obliged to justify ourselves before her? What are her credentials? And who is she? From whence is her right to interrogate and investigate?

And who are the philosophers? How much do they love me? Who among them sacrificed a heaven for me? Who among them died on a cross for me?

If religion enters into a discussion with philosophy, its doom is unavoidable. Debating philosophy is a good way to commit spiritual suicide. A Romeo would not think of trying to justify before philosophy his sentiments for Juliet. Nor will we define ourselves before the philosophic sowers of doubt.

The oracle says that Jesus is the truth. Where the oracle has spoken, let all else keep silent.

Ultimate truth is not something to be analyzed or debated. It is something to be practiced.

That Jesus is the truth is an essential fact of human life that only ignorance can deny.

***

The truth has come.

Maritain wrote, "Henceforth, God remains dumb, and has nothing

to say, because what He said in times past to the prophets in a fragmentary manner has now been totally said. He gave us His all, which is His son, which means that to try now to interrogate God or to will to have a vision or a revelation does not only mean stupidity, it is also an offense toward God. We should have our eyes fixed on Christ without seeking anything else.

"God could tell you, 'If I have revealed all things to you in my Word, which is my Son, I have no other

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Word with which to reply or reveal more than that. Fix your eyes upon Him because in Him I have told you everything. I reveal everything to you, and you will find in Him more than what you desire or ask....

"'You desire words and fragments of revelations; but if you fix your eyes upon Him, you will find everything because He is my entire world, and my entire answer. He is my whole vision and revelation. You have all the answers. I have given you the reply - as brother, teacher and companion, atonement, and reward.'"

It seems Maritain was very sure that God had said everything through Christ. Just one little thing was lacking - that Maritain would add his assurance of Christ's relaxation. My oracle might also be needed as well as the private revelations at some children of God received.

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"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary...." So said the angel (MTT 1:20b)

I was also afraid to take Mary into my life and into my love. Then I heard the same words spoken to Joseph. Now she is part of my life too, as well as Joseph and the multitude of angels who prepared for and were present at Jesus' birth.

Mary was obedient when the archangel Gabriel told her God desired that she give birth to the Messiah. She was a faithful Jewess who may have known the prophecies. She may have known from

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Isaiah 53 that her child would be "a man of sorrows acquainted with grief." She may have also known from Psalm 22 that "they [would] pierce His hands and His feet" on a cross, that He would

be rejected by His people, an object of scorn, that His whole life would be full of pain.

She may have known that the calling to be the mother of God's Son was a call to suffer with her child for 33 years and in the end to stand weeping at the foot of the cross. Her quiet acceptance was heroic: "Let it be to me according to your word" (LUK 1:38).

Joseph's decision was also remarkable. He had loved a pure girl and was sure they would have a blessed marriage and would have children to rear in the fear of the Lord. Then his heart was stricken at the discovery that his bride was pregnant. Whose heart would not have been? She never gave him any explanation. Then an angel told him in a dream that what she had conceived was of the Holy Spirit.

Joseph probably knew little about what or who the Holy Spirit was. Such a thing had never happened before. Such a message was not easy to believe. But he must have been a man who always put the best construction on events, even if it didn't seem advisable given difficult circumstances. He decided to obey the dream.

The experience had been hard on both bride-groom and bride. Mary became taciturn and "pondered these things in her heart." Only a few of her

words are reported for 33 years of her life with Jesus. As for Joseph, we are not told of a single word he ever spoke.

The two spent their lives quietly in simple belief. When you have Jesus for a child, there is no need for much talk.

We too have to receive Jesus in faith, even while realizing that we must bear a cross and be crucified with Him.

What proof did Joseph have that the dream was not just a dream? The search for proof comes from doubt, and disbelief is sinful. Atheists may find it difficult to believe, but believers find it difficult to entertain doubt. Disbelief to them is as abhorrent as adultery or killing.

Only those who do not know Jesus question the logical legitimacy of faith. Mary did not doubt when an angel spoke. Neither did Joseph, even if the angel appeared to him only in a dream. How then should we doubt the One who died for us?

When we came to believe in Jesus, it was not the result of reasoning on our part that could very well have been false. When Peter first acknowledged Jesus as the Son of the living God, the Lord assured him, "...flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (MTT 16:17). This also applies to my faith.

We throw in our lot with Jesus because, He has the seeds of truth that contain the fruits of righteousness

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and the flowers of eternity. What philosophers and doubters have to offer is, by comparison, mere husks.

***

Jesus is repeatedly referred to as the Mediator. A mediator never represents only one side - he hears the grievances of both parties and seeks a middle way of peace.

God has many grievances against men. They sin against His law, although as Creator He has the right to require obedience.

In ISA 5:1-3 there is a song that is God's complaint:

Now let me sing to my Well-beloved
A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard:
My Well-beloved has a vineyard
On a very fruitful hill.
He dug it up and cleared out its stones,
And planted it with the choicest vine.
He built a tower in its midst.
And also made a winepress in it;
So He expected it to bring forth good grapes,
But it brought forth wild grapes.
And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem
and men of Judah,
Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard.

Then God asks the question, "What more could have been done to my vineyard?" (ISA 5:4)

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Isaiah had no answer to this question. God did. He knew mankind's complaints were justified, too. And He did the one

thing more that could be done: He came to share human life with all its hardships. How can one reproach a God who is a poor, suffering man just like you? A God who permits pain must show He is ready to bear it Himself. This is what Jesus did when He became God in the flesh. He also satisfied the just demands of God to the human soul. He paid the ransom for us. He bore the punishment for our sins. This is how peace was established.

A pastor stayed overnight at a farm. In the morning the farmer showed him his chicken house. They paused before a nest on which a hen was seated. Under her wings she sheltered her chicks. "Touch her, pastor," said the farmer. She was cold, dead, unmoving. A weasel had sucked out all her blood, but to protect the chicks, which the weasel would also have attacked, she had not moved.

Such a mediator we have in Jesus.

We may have grievances against God. Jesus did not take His defense in many words, though He said, "No one is good but God." Neither did He quarrel with sinners, but simply showed them His love and then died for them.

On Good Friday He was dead, but under His wings lay the assurance of life. Only a week before, He had lamented over His people, "How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen

gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing!" (MTT 23:37b).

Because Jesus is just such a mediator, He split time in two. Recorded history divides time into the era before Christ and the rest after Christ (~Anno Domini~ - "in the year of our Lord"). Even those who hate Him number the years from His birth.

***

During the French Revolution in 1789, a certain Lepaux launched a new religion called "Theophilanthropy." It made no headway, though supported by the government.

Lepaux complained to Talleyrand, a witty statesman, and asked for advice. Talleyrand replied. "There is a sure way to make your religion popular. Get yourself crucified, buried, and then resurrected on the third day. It would be advisable also to

perform some miracles, to heal a multitude of the sick, to feed the hungry, and to bring a couple of dead men back to life."

This is how Jesus introduced His religion. This is how He became our Master - master in the absolute sense of the word. When He was still a babe, Simeon called Him "Lord," using for it the Greek word that means "despot" (LUK 2:29). He is an absolute monarch with unlimited power who is obligated to give account to no one for what He does. Therefore just to question His authority is sin.

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Though endowed with all power, He does not exercise it. He does not dictate. Rather, He reduced Himself to our level and became a man like us, in fact, a man of low social rank. And He "was in all points tempted as we are" (HEB 4:15). Therefore this almighty "despot" can be our understanding friend.

Father Brown, the central character in Chesterton's crime novels, could easily detect murderers and robbers, because he could feel what was happening in someone else's soul. He knew the potential thief, crook and assassin within himself; he was attentive to the bad impulses of his own heart. He knew that he would do it were he to follow these evil inclinations. By identifying with lawbreakers, by infiltrating their skewed mentality, he was able to follow leads invisible to others.

Jesus, by identifying with mankind, was subject to like temptations - which must have caused Him untold suffering beyond anything we know because He never yielded to them. His encounters with evil enabled Him to have great understanding even for the worst of sinners, even for His betrayer and murderers. He identified completely with them. Their sins became His, and He bore their punishment. The "despot" with complete, absolute power consented to die a malefactor's death on a cross.

Therefore God greatly exalted Him (see PHP 2:9).

Bethlehem is a town connected with the name of two despots. Jesus was born there. Herod was buried

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there. Herod, who severely exercised his despotic powers, is dead, and who knows what lies beyond? Jesus, who renounced His despotic powers, still lives and will dwell with His beloved forevermore.

Every one of us has the potential to dominate someone else. Let us learn how to use this potential from the example of Jesus.

***

St. John Berchman wrote these beautiful passages in the seventeenth century:

"Think of Jesus Christ raised up on the cross praying for His enemies; see how His blood flows from every wound...Looking at the head of our Lord crowned with thorns, I will pray for my superiors, both ecclesiastical and civil. Considering the wound in His right hand, I will pray for my relatives, for my brothers, my friends and benefactors. The wound in the left hand will remind me to pray for my enemies, for those who have offended me, for all those whom I myself have caused to be saddened.

"For myself, I will take the wound in His sacred side; I will ask Him for these graces:

"1. to love God with all my heart;

"2. to be on fire with zeal for the salvation of my fellow men;

"3. to persevere in my vocation...

"Seeing the feet of Jesus pierced with nails, I will remember to pray for all, both good and bad."

The images of even the most renowned men of all time pale into insignificance when viewed in the light of Jesus, the Son of righteousness.

An anonymous poet compared Jesus with Alexander the Great, the Macedonian emperor who conquered all the countries from Greece to Egypt in the third century B.C.:

"Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;
one lived and died for self,
one died for you and me.
One died upon a throne,
the other on a cross;
one's life a triumph seemed,
the other's but a loss.

"One led vast armies forth,
the other walked alone;
one shed a whole world's blood,
the other gave His own.
One won the world in life,
and lost it all in death;
the other lost His life,
to win the whole world's faith.

"Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three;
one died in Babylon,
and one in Calvary.

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One gained all for himself,
and one Himself He gave.
One conquered every throne,
the other every grave."

In Shakespeare's King Lear, the good is defeated. Cordelia, the king's only faithful daughter, lies dead at the feet of her father who had unjustly rejected her. In all great dramas – as in real life everything ends in death. Oedipus, Medea, and Clytemnestra; and Macbeth, Othello, and all the Richards and Henrys of Shakespeare's plays – all conclude with the great personalities dead and the curtain falling. What they accomplished, good or bad, was for nought.

John Berchman made the wounds of Jesus his subject of meditation. I also meditate on them. But where are these wounds? They are in the glorified body of Jesus, in the body with which He triumphed over death. He showed them to Thomas, and all the apostles saw them as proof of the resurrection.

He assured us, too, of a glorious resurrection.

Worms, fire, or the sea might consume my body. But my spirit will live in a world with no more wanderings and trials. I do not have to pass through many painful incarnations. Beyond death lies paradise.

page 35 Chapter 3: The Measure of the Soul

The medieval mystic Eckhart wrote, "If you ask how big the soul is, you should know that heaven and earth cannot comprehend its grandness, but only God alone, who cannot be comprehended by

all the heavens."

Long before Eckhart's time, Heraclitus (2500 B.C.) had said, "If you wish to arrive at the limits of your soul, you will not find them no matter which way you go, so great are its depths."

Even if you do not believe the soul to be immortal, you must acknowledge that it has been considered as such by the greatest spirits of mankind, that the soul would deserve to be transmitted to a permanent sphere, and that it would be good if it could bloom in another world and still be useful.

The Greek philosopher Plato wrote,

"The man whose heart is directed toward love of teaching and wisdom and who exercise this

part in himself, will surely have immortal and divine thoughts if he apprehended truth. And in the measure in which it is in human nature to have immortality, he will not miss it."

How little do men value their own soul! Eve sold hers for an apple, Esau for a plate of lentils, and Judas for thirty pieces of silver.

Be careful that you do not sell yours.

***

The Greek philosopher Plotinus wrote,

"Often when I fall asleep and leave the external world, I come to myself. Then I see a wonderful beauty. I believe strongly in my belonging to a better and higher world. I live within myself...the most splendid life... [in union]...with Godhead. After having sojourned with the Godhead, when I descend to the activity of the body, I ask myself why I am descending and how come my soul ever entered a body when it was what it had revealed itself to me to be, in spite of its inhabiting a body."

Plotinus had experienced a portion of his soul through a dream. It is true that no one has ever seen his world, but neither have we seen our pain or our joy. We simply feel them.

It is nonsense to seek the seat of the soul, because, like

life itself, it can be "everywhere."

For years I lived alone in a subterranean Communist prison cell. In solitary confinement we had no

books, no radio. There was no voice, no whisper. Perfect silence reigned. No one ever spoke to us.

But in those years I mentally visited relatives and friends, those alive and those who had died. I remembered many churches in many lands; I thought of other spheres, of angels and glorified saints in Heaven, of devils in hell, of Adam and Eve, and of the generation that will witness Jesus' return.

The soul only visits this material world, but since we do not belong to it, the soul cannot find here the explanation for or definition of itself. It is so different from all that is in this world that it sometimes doubts if it is at all, in the sense this world gives to the word "is." Jesus says of His disciples, "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (MTT 6:3) - now, not in the future.

The soul is the Kingdom's most exquisite toy.

Jesus says, "The kingdom of God is within you" (LUK 17:21), but not all of it is illuminated. The last words of Goethe, the great German poet were, "Light, more light!"

This we should all seek. May this book aid you in the search.

***

Scientists have sought the locus of the soul in laboratories and during autopsies. They have never found it, nor will they ever. It belongs outside the realm of the objects of the inquest.

What then is the soul, and where is it?

It may be that we are trying to solve a problem that is essentially meaningless. The noted British physicist Sir James Jeans wrote, "It is probably as meaningless to discuss how much room an electron makes up as it is to discuss how much room fear and anxiety or an uncertainty takes up." Matter might not be material at all. Perhaps the soul is not a "something" to be

found "somewhere."

Lightning strikes. An artist can paint the splendid flash of light in the dark sky. A scientist describes it as a electrical discharge in the atmosphere. For Luther, lightning was the sign of God's wrath that propelled him into becoming a monk. Which of these perceptions is correct?

A mental event is described by the neurologist as an interplay of nerves, brain cells, and hormones. Shakespeare's Romeo and the early Christians did not even know that hormones existed, yet Romeo died for Juliet, and early believers gave their lives for the ecstasy of their faith.

Will, sentiment, and thought are connected with the body and can be explained in terms of the body. But the contrary is also true. The body and its functions are mental concepts. Our mind tells us (who is the "us" and who does the telling, and who analyzes the relationship between teller and told?) that the different senses give it a multitude of perceptions which it synthesizes into the notion of a body."

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Without a body there is no mind. Without a mind, is there no body, but simply a whirlwind of elementary particles? These too are a product of the mind.

Poets and painters tell us about sunsets. Scientists enjoy the portrayal but are also convinced the sun neither rises nor sets; the earth turns around the sun. Which is the truth? Why should science be the truth, and art and everyday experience not be?

When I speak objectively, I limit myself to physiology and anatomy. Thinking as subject, I know my soul.

Virtually everyone lives in the presumption that space is a kind of receptacle within which things are located. A handful of scientifically trained people know that space is an attribute of matter. It is a relationship between things and would not exist without things.

The scientists who think thus also live and walk around in space and create spaceships.

Souls exist just as all the beauties of nature exist, no matter how much scientists might want to reduce them to cold chemical or physical formulas.

This soul can live eternally in happiness and usefulness, or it can get lost through persistence in sin, refusal of repentance, and denial of faith.

If you proposed to an ass, "I will give you enough straw to fill a house if you will allow me to cut off

your head," the ass would not accept. But we accept such proposals as often as we sin.

We are like a man who has a costly jewel in the safe but cares more about the safe than the jewel. Observing how well Westerners treat their pets, one might prefer to be their pet than their soul.

Jesus has come to save your soul. Listen to Him!

***

An equilibrist stands upside down on a broomstick teetering over several shaky tables and plays the violin. A person in the audience leans over and says to his friend, "I wonder why he plays the violin in public. He's not a virtuoso."

This is how many people adjudge the thoughts of Christian prisoners wrenched from them in extremes of physical and psychological torture.

I shared and viewed the sufferings of many fellow prisoners in an underground Communist prison. What intrigued us most was that we did not obtain from Heaven what it was obviously reasonable to expect: a slight improvement in our situation, food to quiet our hunger, an abatement of the cruel torture. We did not get what we expected because Heaven is not – humanly speaking – reasonable.

Jesus said, "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (see LUK 15:7). This is surely not reasonable.

Jesus also said, "To whom little is forgiven, the same loves little" (LUK 7:47b). Why should one first have to commit many heinous sins before loving Him? Therese of Lisieux objected to these words. Brought up in a devout family, dedicated to the Lord

at a very early age, a Carmelite nun at 15, dead at 24, she used to say to the Lord, "I love you much, ardently, though I had not known the great sins of the world."

Nowhere does the Bible speak about the reasonableness of God, but rather about His foolishness (1CO 1:21). He is as unreasonable as the thoughts of little children. Christ became a child and recommended that we become as children too.

The renowned Franciscan Giacopone was considered mad because of the things he did out of love for Jesus. It is said that once even Jesus appeared to him and asked, "Why do you commit such mad deeds?" He replied, "Because You taught me. If I am mad, You are even more so. Where is the reasonableness of Your dying for me? I am a fool because Thou hast been a greater fool."

A newspaper published the story of a man whose hat was blown off while he was out fishing with friends. Quickly he jumped into the icy water to retrieve it and was never seen again. What a tragedy to risk a life for a hat worth a few dollars!

Was it reasonable to sacrifice the life of the unique Son of God for witless, dirty, dumb sheep? I

have asked many shepherds what they would do if they saw a wolf. They all replied, "We would run for our lives." No man dies for sheep. Yet Jesus did. He died for beings worse than sheep - for those who denied and betrayed Him, for those who demanded His crucifixion. He died for His killers, for all who blaspheme and hate God.

Do not be surprised if you fail to get from God what you might reasonably expect. If He were truly reasonable, He would never listen to the prayers of people like us, nor would we have salvation.

Rather, God loves to the point of folly.

If you are in the sad situation of experiencing neither His reason nor His mad love, you might consider the fact that in the parable of the ninety and nine, only the lost sheep had sure proof of His love and concern. The others could reasonably say they were neglected and abandoned. When the prodigal son returned home, he was embraced with love, given a ring, and feted with the fatted calf, music, and dancing. The faithful son who came in from the fields all tired out and sweaty was not even greeted

with a kind word.

Those who are faithful should simply be glad that others experience His love to folly.

The good Samaritan of the parable was not a tourist. He doubtless was making an important business trip and had appointments to keep. His extraordinary good deed must have delayed him

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considerably. Perhaps he even neglected other duties because he stopped to serve a wounded man.

While in solitary confinement, I waited for years for God to come to my aid. I realized that He tarried and tried to think of Him as the good Samaritan. I was sure He had set out to help but that He Himself might have seen a wounded man whom He stopped to succor and carry to the inn. I thought that He who saw a sparrow fall might also stop to brush the dew from a flower petal weighted down. In solitary, we were happy about His mad love even in moments when we were not its recipients.

Enraptured, Mary Magdalene of Pazzi ran about her convent carrying an image of the crucified Jesus and crying, "O Love, Love! I shall never cease, my God, to call you 'Love.'" She told the sisters, "He too is mad with love."

Do not count on reasonableness in Heaven and you will never be disappointed. Count only on the fact that there is One who loves you to such folly that He died for you. In response, forget about sweet reason and let yourself fall madly in love with Him. These, my words, are oracles of God.

***

To learn from your enemies is the best way to love them because it makes you thankful for them.

Jesus' command that we love our enemies is very different from what the world prescribes. Frederick the Great, king of Prussia, once said, "He is a fool, and that nation is a fool, that, having the power to

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strike his enemy unawares, does not strike and strike him the

deadliest."

To the contrary, in Judaism, love for others is considered a duty.

In ~Baba Quama~, a part of the Talmud, there is an example of some of the beautiful attitudes of love taught by the Jews: "If a companion calls you an ass and asks you to carry him like an ass, put the saddle on yourself immediately." It is better to suffer more injury than to lose your temper. It is better to be among the afflicted than those who afflict.

A very old Amish bishop taught me, "If someone shouts at you or wrongs you, put a thermometer in your mouth immediately to be sure your temperature does not rise."

If someone becomes your adversary, remember that many men are better than they look. There are evil spirits trying to control and direct their lives. Who knows from what pits of corruption they may have arisen? They might not have had opportunity to see the world from an angelic viewpoint.

The Sufites have a beautiful saying: "He who is not my friend, may God be his friend; and he who bears ill will against me, may his joy increase. He who puts thorns in my way on account of enmity, may every flower that blossoms in the garden of his life be without thorns."

In Gethsemane, Jesus called Judas (his betrayer) "Friend."

page 45 Chapter 4: Discern Between Truth and Illusion

There is certain truth: Where lies the difficulty in finding it?

In a free country, many real events take place about which a man can be informed through the media. If he desires, he can check his information by telephoning, writing, or even by traveling to the place where the events took place.

For many years I was a prisoner in a solitary cell without the slightest means of communication with the outside world. There was the world of reality, but I was in no position to ascertain the truth about it because I was in jail.

There is such a thing as truth, but we all are prisoners - of time, space, and our own surroundings. Supposing that ultimate

truth lies outside of time and space, what possibility do I have of finding it?

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A man in a bar asked the bartender, "Billy, do you know what time it is?"

"Two o'clock in the morning," was the reply.

The drunkard commented thickly, "I'm probably crazy. I've been drinking since yesterday morning and have been asking people again and again what time it is, and everyone has a different answer."

We are all caught in time. Because time flows, it enters into conflict with our convictions, which tend to be fixed. "I know what I believe. Don't confuse me with the facts," we say, half-joking. But time constantly brings new facts.

Every time you meet a man, you meet someone different from the one you knew before or who has been described to you. But too often, after one or more meetings with a person, we form an opinion that we tend to cling to, whether good or bad. This opinion, which is progressively more difficult to change, epitomizes our view of natural, psychological, and social reality.

Because we humans are prisoners of space, for thousands of years we accepted as truth the notion that the sun travels around the earth. Now we have discovered that this is an optical illusion. But what if our current belief is only another optical illusion that will be uncovered in future centuries?

A man with defective eyesight may imagine that he sees flies on his plate, for him they have full reality. Though the flies are not real, the illusion is.

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The experience of our phenomenal world is like that of the short-sighted man. We all labor under the constant illusion of perceiving things where, in fact, there is only emptiness.

In Brahman initiations, after a very old ritual, when the disciple asks what the world is, the priest swings around a firebrand, which then resembles a solid wheel of flame. This visual response was a splendid foresight of modern science. We

now know that, contrary to ancient beliefs, there exists no solid world. We ourselves consist of and are surrounded by a whirlwind of elementary particles which, because of the rapidity of their movement and the limitations of our senses, appear to be solid bodies.

Circling at crazy speeds, the particles can look like a bowl into which one can place "solid" objects. The nonexistent "bowl" can hold the nonexistent "objects." What exists is only the circling of ultra-microscopic particles.

The world is like a firebrand swung around in a circle. It took us thousands of years to come to this knowledge, but we do not know if this will be considered the "real thing" after yet another thousand years, if our imprisonment in time and space does not keep us from going even further in our discoveries.

For many prisoners in solitary confinement, the walls of the cell are the ultimate limits of their reality. Free men also have limits – of time, space, and surroundings.

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One thing further: our only means of knowing the truth, our only instrument for apprehending it, seems to be the mind. But to the works of the mind one can apply the same things that Isaiah, the Jewish prophet, wrote some 3,000 years ago about idolatry:

The craftsman stretches out his rule, he marks
it out with chalk; he fashions it with a plane,
and he marks it out with a compass, and makes
it like the figure of a man, according to the
beauty of a man; that it may remain in the
house. He cuts down cedars for himself, and
takes the cypress and the oak; he secures it for
himself among the trees of the forest. He plants
a pine, and the rain nourishes it. Then it shall
be for a man to burn, for he will take some of it
and warm himself; yes, he kindles it and bakes
bread; indeed he makes a god and worships it;
he makes it a carved image, and falls down to
it. He burns half of it in the fire; with this half
he eats meat; he roasts a roast, and is satisfied.
He even warms himself and says, "Ah I am
warm, I have seen the fire" and the rest of it he
makes into a god, his carved image. He falls
down before it and worships it, prays to and
says, "Deliver me, for thou art my god!"

(ISA 44:13-17)

Are not the worshipers of the mind guilty of the same thing? With a part of the mind we think about how to make a living; with another part we seek fun or amusement; with a part we compose jokes

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or poetry; with a part we sometimes dream foolish things; and then with another part of this same mind we conceive a god and bow before it - or what is worse, we deny the very existence of God and the need for Him.

We search for truth with the same mind that composes jokes and fantasizes in dream; that seeks high status in society and picks up a girl in a bar; that creates a beautiful poem and drowns its sensibilities in alcohol or drugs. Then we believe in the product of such an unfastidious mind.

In the Romanian language, the word for "mind" literally means "it lies," because the mind, by its very structure, can only tell lies.

What does the mind know? Its work is done by the brain. What does the mind know about its own brain?

The "text" of the genes of a single ~e. coli~ bacterium cell consists of four million symbols. The human brain is a network of some ten billion nerve cells, each of which has 200,000 contacts with neighboring cells. This huge mechanism, in addition to controlling all sorts of bodily functions, creates symphonies and dirty jokes, decides how to fight for an ideology or religion or rob a bank, plans to woo or deceive, thinks to speak or keep silence. And some of what it thinks, it declares to be the truth. Again, how reliable is this complex organism?

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We see stars in the sky that we know disappeared a long time ago. We see them as fixed, though they move. We have corrected and intensified our eyesight by the use of telescopes. But what if the telescope only magnifies an illusion that will be discovered years hence - supposing, of course, that mankind survives his succession of illusions?

The Bible says of a previous age, "Every intent of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually" (GEN 6:5b).

In such a context, truth seems unattainable. Therefore the psalmist prayed, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (PSA 61:2). The rock that a child finds impossible to climb is within reach if his father lifts him up. This is what God does for us.

***

If you can't find the truth, stand without it and love.

St. John of the Cross said, "On the evening of life, we will be judged according to love." Augustine wrote, "Lord, send into my heart sentiments of clemency so that, being drawn by love of truth, I will never lose the truth of love." St. Francis de Sales echoed these sentiments: "Truth which is not charitable ceases to be the truth, because in God, who is the supreme source of truth, charity is inseparable from truth."

Love must embrace the wicked as well as the good. It is said of St. Paissy that when he prayed for

one of his disciples who had abandoned Christ, the Lord told him, "Paissy, are you praying for the one who has denied me?" Undisturbed, Paissy continued to pray for this man. "Paissy," the Lord then said to him, "you have equaled me in love."

This is how God enables true Christians to think and act.

It is related that when St. John the evangelist was extremely old, his disciples were wearied of his constant repetition of the words, "Little children, love one another." It seemed that this was all he said. When he was carried into their assembly, they asked him why he always repeated these words. "Because," he replied, "it is the Lord's commandment, and if only this one were fulfilled, it would be enough."

Not fulfilling this commandment is the greatest hindrance to the conversion of peoples and nations. No miracle can suffice where there is no love. It is all-powerful and all-inclusive. It centers in God, and God ~is~ love.

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Jesus taught and demonstrated that we should love our enemies. In doing so, we may learn that people often have many faces.

A person's angry words may not actually be directed at their recipient. The anger may have other motivations.

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Frustrated people who cannot convince others of their merits often stir up a great deal of hostility against themselves. Then they feel consoled by believing that these "enemies" stand in the way of the acknowledgment their merits deserve.

If we are having difficulty with "enemies," it would be profitable to ask ourselves if we are engendering this hostility. Are we are behaving like those who irritate us? Are our convictions about them indeed well-founded? Are there overtures we can make to break the bonds of ill will? The history of mankind would have been vastly different if individuals in both high and low positions would have stopped to examine their own hearts and motivations.

Therefore, it is better to love than to hate your enemy because you may not be properly informed about his state of mind. Perhaps you are both seeking truth. Be careful to defend your cause without harming the one who attacks you.

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Don't ask many people about the truth. Rather keep silent. "...The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him" (HAB 2:20).

I greatly miss silence in churches. For years I lived in perfect silence in my solitary underground cell in Communist prisons and have embraced it as a friend.

There have been countless studies about the words of the Bible, but none about its silence on a multitude of subjects that are worthy of notice.

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Most of the great problems of life that concern us certainly troubled such men as Moses and the apostles, all of who met God face to face. Surely they asked difficult questions and received some answers about which the Bible is silent.

A sage once sat in profound meditation. He was asked, "Where is God?" The sage kept silent. The man repeated his question. Again, silence. The question was put the third time. Still, no

reply.

"Don't you want to answer?" the man asked.

Finally, the sage said, "I replied, but you did not hear. God dwells in silence."

The Bible not only reveals many things, but it also keeps silence about many things. What did Jesus think and do between the ages of twelve and thirty? We find no answer to this in the Bible, not because there is a secret to be hidden but because such answers are communicated in silence.

Jesus was a marvelous preacher, but He also knew how to keep silence. He was silent before Herod, thus teaching him that soon his foul mouth would be silenced by death. He was silent when Pilate asked Him, "Where are You from?" (JHN 19:9). Pilate should have understood that He was from the realm of silence.

The historian Macrobius relates that in Crete and Egypt, when worshipers came to the temple, they found it locked. A priest called "the keeper of the threshold" stood at the door and asked, "Do you

know what house you are entering?" They were obliged to reply, "We know." They were then asked, "Do you know before whom you will stand?" They answered, "We know." Only then was the door unlocked. The worshipers thus had time to compose themselves before appearing in the presence of God.

The Spirit of adoption makes us cry out "Abba! Father!" (ROM 8:15). Not much more is needed. A little child embraces his father's leg and simply says lovingly, "Daddy!" Moved by the spontaneous expression of love, the father will surely do his utmost for the child, for he knows better than the child what is best.

Let us speak to God and for God, but - most importantly - let us also have our times of deep silence.

Surely we must pray in words, but let us not neglect silent prayer. Francis de Sales says that in this "the soul becomes quiet wax, waiting for God to impress on it His word."

As long as one prays in words, there are two: God and the soul. In sacred silence, the two become one. The ability to

remain silent in God's arms is the measure of love for God. Mary Magdalene could pass a whole evening quietly at the feet of Jesus, listening to His voice. A bride does not speak when her lips are covered with the kisses of the bridegroom.

The silent no longer need to worry about building on a rock. They become rocks on which others can build.

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As the lotus, rooted in watery darkness, seeks the light and rises to the surface, so the silent, though born and educated in the world, rise above it in unsullied beauty.

St. Francis of Assisi went to town once with another friar to preach. On the way, they were mocked but did not reply. When they returned to the monastery, Francis asked the brother, "How did you like my sermon?"

"You did not say a word."

"We have both preached well," responded Francis. "The message of our sermons was to remain silent when scorned."

Historians report that when King Frederic II asked St. Francis why he was silent, he replied, "Who can put into words the sublimity of silent service?"

How can a God "with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (JMS 1:17) move the whole universe? Only a motor that moves can move a machine.

Let a beautiful girl enter a room and sit down quietly in a chair, and all around her will begin to move. Beauty moves while remaining unmoved. God's splendor moves the universe.

Jesus said to Matthew simply, "Follow, Me," without providing any argument as to why Matthew should abandon his business and go after an unknown (see MTT 9:9). The radiation of Jesus' spiritual

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beauty was sufficient to impel him. Matthew locked his customs office and followed Jesus.

We do not need much talking and moving in prayer. Silent prayer imparts something of Heaven's glory. As we reflect the beauty of holiness, it will move God, Christ, the glorified

saints, angels, and those in this world, without our pronouncing a word.

The jewel of silence is a pearl lost by the Church. Let us practice silence but at the same time keep silent about the practice.

***

The English translation of PSA 109:4 says, "I give myself to prayer." The Hebrew original contains only two words: "I - prayer," not even "I ~am~ prayer," which would establish a relationship between myself and prayer. This would overstate the meaning. I and prayer are identical, as Richard Wurmbrand and myself are identical.

Prayer should consist not only of words but also the spirit and the whole person. Augustine wrote, "The spirit prays, even when the tongue silent," just as the heart and the kidneys function without speaking.

The essence of prayer is quietness, as the beginning of the Orthodox liturgy suggests: "Let us put aside all worldly worry." It is prayer to forsake my opinions, my fantasy, my passions, even my thoughts about God.

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When my son was four, I told him to think about God. He replied, "Why should I think about this big God with my small mind? Let Him with His big mind think about me." Jesus said, "The Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not think..." (MTT 24:44 NAS). Our thoughts play a secondary role in prayer.

At the entrance of a church in Albania, there was this inscription: "Those who wish to enter through the gate of God's house, leave the drunkenness of thoughts to find inside the Judge full of grace."

May prayer be an hour of secret communion with God, but not an hour of self-condemnation (of "down-thinking of yourself," as the Greek in 1 John 3:21 [1JN 3:21] suggests).

Certainly it is proper to review in prayer your past sins one by one, but not as sins attributable to you. They belong to Jesus.

Luther wrote with much boldness, "Christ is the greatest liar,

thief, murderer the world has ever had. Not through committing these deeds, but because He took them all upon Himself. Now they are His. After you have ascertained that, because of his sacrifice, you do not have any more sins, which now lie on His shoulders, meditate slowly on all is attributes, visualizing them not as His, but as yours, because they are His gifts to you. His splendid kingdom is within us."

Emerging from such an hour of prayer, you will be able to sing, whatever others may think, "I am a rose

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of Sharon" (see SOS 2:1); "I am lovely" (see SOS 1:5); "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (PSA 139:14).

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It is not the length of prayer that counts, but its quality. Many believers are sad because they feel they cannot pray much. If that is the case and no words come during your time of prayer, keep silent. Perhaps the Lord does not wish to have words. Do not lakes and forests speak to the human soul though they have no mouth?

Contemplate the beauty of His holiness and meditate on His mercy and loving-kindness. What counts in prayer is above all the state of the heart.

***

I wish to have the truth for myself. There exists something better than this: It is the denial of self. Jesus teaches men to deny themselves for the simple reason that even without our denial, the self is only an illusion. It is we who gather on a string different events of our life, different opinions and convictions that we have maintained over time, and then designate them as the "self."

I am surely not my self. If I were to meet my self on the street as I was at the age of 9, or 14, or 30, or 50, I would not salute him. I would probably not recognize him, except that now we have photographs to remind us of what we once were.

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If I were to read or hear the things I said when was a child,

a teenager, or a mature man before my conversion, I would feel absolutely no sympathy for those opinions. I would not even recognize them as being my own.

From Heaven's viewpoint the words and opinions of even the greatest saints on earth must seem childish; glorified saints would probably not recognize them as ever having been their opinion.

Jesus did not consider it useful for us to know even one of His thoughts or words between the ages of twelve and thirty. Of how much less value are our opinions!

What kind of self, then, can I boast of if I can detach myself from it; if I can deny it; or if I can even commit suicide?

Everything I observe has an objective existence: It can also be observed by other individuals, and I can verify my conclusions. The self can be contemplated by no one but me. I have no witness to corroborate my analyses. My "self" declares what my "self" is, and this "self" is not reliable.

Again, the self has as its material tool the brain. The brain is an apparatus with which we think that we think. But let us be honest with ourselves: How many hours a day do we use our brains for thinking? How much of what we have thought proves to be true?

A false comparison has been made between the human brain and a computer. The computer gives mathematically exact results; the brain does not. The self is a deceiver.

The self is a poor instrument for discovering truth.

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The shortest biblical names of God in Hebrew are ~Yah~ and ~El~. These names are found even in pre-biblical times, in the Ebla tablets.

It is said that the Japanese used to have very long names. By way of illustration, the story is told about a Japanese boy who fell into a well. Another boy desperately tried to explain to an adult that ~Taramceca- patostarnecaton~ was in danger of drowning, but by the time he finished saying the name, the boy in the well went down for the third time and was beyond saving. Ever since then, the story goes, the Japanese have restricted

themselves to short names.

In Hebrew, the name ~Yah~ is constituted of only two letters. By pronouncing just one syllable, a person may be in His presence immediately.

America's fiftieth state, the Hawaiian Islands, were once called the Sandwich Islands after the Earl of Sandwich. From him also comes the name of a popular food often eaten between meals. A passionate gambler, he would not leave the gaming table for lunch or dinner. Therefore, he invented the

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"sandwich," which one can eat while pursuing other interests.

If a passion for gambling can shorten the time for eating, so a passion for Heaven may shorten religious talk, and what good is it anyway? "For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (ROM 10:13). For this purpose, God gives Himself - even in English a monosyllable as a name and puts in one short word the single condition of salvation: "The just shall live by faith" (ROM 1:17b).

***

The truth must also have a short name by which to be known to those who need it immediately. Like a coin or a bill hidden in a wallet, it must be readily available in an emergency.

But just as popularized science is not science itself, so a shortened message about the truth is not the whole truth.

Be happy to have found the truth in a short name and in a short message. Then seek diligently for more treasure when the emergency has passed.

Small nuggets of truth can tell us a great deal about the whole truth; but the whole truth arrived at by conclusions from the few things that are known, must be kept entire. Nothing less than the whole creed will do in religious matters.

There is both an advantage and a disadvantage to short messages.

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Suffering may help one to arrive at truth. "Tears, tears, bitter hulls but with such a sweet kernel," wrote the much-persecuted Romanian Christian poet, Traian Dorz.

Most people have an unjustified phobia against suffering. Unnecessary tragedy should be avoided, but we should also realize that there is much good in suffering.

Milton wrote his finest poetry after he became blind. Beethoven composed his most beautiful music only after he became deaf.

The German philosopher Kant, who suffered from an incurable sickness, wrote, "I have become master of its influence on my thoughts and actions by turning my attention away from this feeling altogether just as if it did not at all concern me." William Wilberforce, hero of the fight against slavery in the British empire, could not live one day without pain-relieving drugs, but he had the willpower to take only a minimum dose.

Henry Stanley, reared in a poor children's orphanage, learned there the endurance he later needed to find the lost Livingstone and to explore the interior of Africa. Kernahan, born without arms or legs, became a member of the British parliament.

Solzhenitsyn wrote, "Blessed be thou, prison." The seven years he spent in Soviet jails made of him the most powerful opponent of Communism.

I can say about myself that my fourteen years in Communist prisons were the most fruitful years of my life.

I know of no great character formed apart from suffering. A world without suffering would consist of weaklings. What kind of love endures without painful sacrifice? He who counts the sufferings involved will never be a daring hero.

Jesus Himself was made perfect through sufferings (HEB 2:10).

When Pope Alexander VI, criticized by Savonarola for his unworthy life, offered him the position of cardinal in order to keep him silent, Savonarola answered, "May God keep me from being unfaithful to Him. I do not desire any other red cap than the crown of a martyr colored with my own blood."

The highest state of a Christian reader, as well that of a Christian writer, is to be Christ-like. (The reader who is not a Christian would please God by becoming one.)

Christ was called a "Man of sorrows (ISA 53:3) and "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world" (REV 13:8).

To be a Christian, whether writer or reader, means to become a co-sufferer with Christ. The more of His pain we are ready to share, the more truth we will receive.

Someday we will sit with Jesus and the Father on the heavenly throne from which universes are

created and administered (REV 3:21). A merciful God "will wipe away all tears" from the eyes of His saints and all will be able to rejoice wholeheartedly (see REV 7:17; REV 21:4).

***

This book claims to contain the truth, "the oracles of God." There exists a justified skepticism regarding the truth.

Anyone who is convinced that he has what he believes to be the truth must first believe that mankind can know truth and that mankind can know the means for discovering it. He must also believe that he personally knows these methods and has used them well.

Whoever is aware of the limitations of these conditions will not lightly assert that he has the truth.

Goethe said in a conversation with Luden, "Truth is something which must necessarily be thought; something which simply cannot be thought otherwise." An example would be that two and two are four.

The most widespread definition of truth is this: "correspondence between thinking and reality." But the question remains: what is reality? Does reality reveal itself to me as it is?

The world, including our bodies, is constituted of atoms, yet for centuries we did not know this. Who can count the multitude of other specks of reality hidden from us? Our thinking might correspond to

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reality as we know it today and still be very far from the truth.

To know a truth, we must first have a true definition of truth. I must know what truth is before I declare or accept a teaching as truth. I would also have to know truth before accepting as true any definition of truth. We therefore need an endless series of preliminary knowledge which is unrealizable.

Philosophically, truth is unattainable, but that is no cause for worry because mining is also philosophically impossible. For mining we need tools of iron. In order to have iron tools, we must first be able to mine for iron. And so the argument runs. Meanwhile, miners mine.

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Jesus, referring to Himself, promised, "You shall know the truth" (JHN 8:32). As a seeker for truth, one must fulfill certain conditions. The first is a readiness to suffer for it when it is discovered.

Four girls once met, whose names were Fire, Air, Water, and Truth. They spoke about many things. On parting, they said, "We are so happy together, let us meet again. Where can we meet? Fire, where do you live?"

Fire replied, "Sisters, rub two pieces of wood together and you will find me."

Air said, "You will find me wherever you see a flower trembling or a leaf moving."

Water said, "Dig in the earth at the roots of trees. I will be there."

Truth said, "I was expelled from the world and no one receives me. Whoever takes my side is crucified."

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It is said that when Pythagoras discovered his renowned theorem, he sacrificed a hundred oxen to the gods. Then the legend states that all the oxen in the world tremble every time a

truth is discovered, and the possessors of oxen kill the possessors of truth. Fearing this fate, most men settle for less than truth.

Not so Jesus. He said, "For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth" (JHN 18:37). He witnesses to the truth and teaches us, by His example, to do the same whatever the result, even if it is a painful and shameful death on a cross.

Second, we must seek the true truth and reject any surrogate. A man went into a shop to buy cloth for a suit. He noticed that the shopkeeper's yardstick was short and asked him why. The merchant answered, "It doesn't matter. It may be short but it's very thick."

Sometimes what is presented as truth might be very beautiful, attractive, or pleasant, and it might give peace or joy, but these qualities cannot replace the most important element we must seek in a religious teaching – its truthfulness.

Third, we must be very careful to examine the words and fruits of those who speak in the name of God. Credulity is dangerous. We can be led astray and lose our souls.

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It is said that when Alexander the Great went to war against Darius, King of the Persians, he took a bath and caught cold. His friend Philip, a physician, cared for him. Just at that time, Alexander received a letter from his most faithful commander advising him to be suspicious of Philip and not to take his medicine because the physician was in collusion with King Darius to poison him. Philip had allegedly received money and the promise of Darius' sister for his wife. When the physician entered the room with his medicine, Alexander took the glass in one hand and with the other gave the letter to Philip. The emperor drank while Philip read. Then Alexander said to him, "I have confidence in your medicine and in your friendship." He regained his health.

This example is often quoted in sermons to suggest that if we can have such confidence in man, then we can have even more in God – our greatest Friend.

It is my firm conviction that, assuming Alexander really responded in this manner and the story is not legend, he was misguided. Many kings and rulers have been poisoned by their

physicians. Many of Stalin's comrades were killed in this manner.

Jesus taught, "Beware of men" (MTT 10:17). We must beware of men in material things, financial matters, and everyday affairs. Even more, we must not easily give our confidence when the eternal destiny of the soul is at stake.

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If anyone desires salvation and sanctification, he might find a religious teacher who is trusted with speaking the oracles of God, but be very choosy.

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One of Romania's richest men told me how he attained his wealth. At ten, he was a poor orphan boy without any income or possibility of schooling. He thought to himself, "What should I do? I can start to sell doughnuts on street corners. Then I will have doughnuts. If I start with gold, I will have gold."

He had seen a sign on a large building designating it as the seat of a gold-mining company, so he applied for the job of elevator boy. Once, the owner of the company rode up the elevator and asked who he was. He told his story including his motivation for applying at a gold-mining company.

The owner, impressed, called him into his office where he questioned him at length. He helped him obtain his schooling and enter the university. Eventually, he gave him his daughter as a wife and made him the heir of the company. This is how he became rich.

Dream big, think big. Old Testament Joseph, a shepherd boy, dreamed he would become something big and that his brothers, and even the sun, moon, and stars, would bow before him. His dreams may have seemed laughable, as yours will seem. But he became prime minister of Egypt, a benefactor to many people and a type of the Messiah to come.

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I was a prisoner of the Communists, confined in an underground cell, but I dreamed about a world- wide mission. My dream came true. This Christian mission (The Voice of the Martyrs) now works in over fifty countries, Communist, former Communist and Muslim, and it prints Christian books in over sixty languages.

Expect great things from God and you will do great things for Him. They might not be spectacular in the eyes of others. Your works might not even be external. They may consist of forming a Christ-like character, rearing a child in the fear of the Lord, witnessing in humility for the Lord; but the results will be of eternal value.

Jesus said, "I will make you fishers of men" (MTT 4:19). The first Christians used a fish as their sign of recognition because the Greek word for for fish spells the initials of "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior" - ~Iesus Christos Theos Hiou Soter~.

Yes, catch fish. Catch first of all the greatest fish, ICHTYS, Jesus Himself. When you have caught Him, you have caught the Truth itself, the most reliable of teachers.

***

A king asked several sages, "How is it that an aquarium filled with water and containing a goldfish weighs as much as the same aquarium with the same amount of water but without the goldfish?" Innumerable answers were given. Even the principle

of Archimedes was quoted until in the end someone said, "But does this equality of weight exist? We should first check." Such individuals are rare.

Truth is not easily found. One would be well advised to beware of the peddlers of cheap truth, who rely on the immense credulity of people.

A story is told that may not be true, but it is an excellent illustration of man's gullibility. Allegedly, someone opened a restaurant but without much success. In danger of failing in his venture, the owner resorted to a device to attract customers. He put in the shop window an aquarium filled with water and an inscription, "Here are invisible fish." Thousands gathered to see the unusual fish, and business prospered.

Lord Boyd-Carpenter, who had been financial secretary of the British government under Churchill, wrote: "Once a gathering of the Defense Committee seemed to go on endlessly, without any progress. Churchill, getting bored, suddenly pointed a finger at the window and asked those present, 'What kind of bird is that?' Everybody stared at the window. One said, 'Probably a jay.' Another, 'Perhaps a sea gull.' And so on. Only one dared to say,

'I didn't see any bird.' To which Churchill replied, with laughter 'There was none.'" In this simple way, he showed the ministers and the generals that they spoke empty words.

Likewise, in your search for truth, be sure you verify facts and challenge assertions before accepting

them - especially if they ring true. No one likes to discover his coins are counterfeit. "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1TH 5:21).

***

In a renowned French movie, ~Typhoon in Nagasaki~, a woman who loves an engineer named Morsac unexpectedly appears on the same train as her dear one who is leaving for Japan. Surprised, he asks, "Why are you here?" She answers, "I didn't stop to think even for a minute. If you leave, I leave too." He then kisses her and tells her, "How beautiful you are when you don't think."

In the Bible it is written that the Son of Man comes in an hour when we do not think (MTT 24:44).

A converted lady who had once been an alcoholic was asked by what method she had overcome her addiction. She replied, "Method? Method takes thinking and repeated endeavors. I knew that my Beloved who died for me willed it, so I promptly obeyed. That was all."

The believer places himself before God like a canvas awaiting a painter. Obedience is taken for granted. The canvas, after all, does not resist the gentle pressure of the artist's brush.

The Christian life is not a life of constant choices between the ways of Christ and those of the world. We are living His life. The choice has already been

made. Our self has merged with His Self. We are one in the Beloved who is the Truth.

***

A soldier by the name of Alexander was brought before Alexander the Great, charged with desertion. Hearing the

accusation, the emperor said, "I do not punish you for your cowardice but because, as a man who trembles in battle, you bear my name and put it to shame. You would have gone free if you had changed your name."

We are sinners because, while bearing the name of Christ, we have not behaved accordingly.

After the fall, Jesus never had to choose between coming to earth and not coming. How beautiful that He did not stop to think. Let us imitate Him in this.

The Hindu, the Buddhist, and the Tibetan religions prescribe lengthy and difficult practices of meditation. Christianity is a natural daily loving fulfillment of the wishes of our Bridegroom.

***

In Carl Maria von Weber's operetta ~Abu Hassan~, a man of Baghdad lived in utter poverty with his wife Fatima. In their desperation, they conceived of the idea that Hassan would feign death for, according to an old custom, every widow or widower without means would receive a big purse from the caliph for the burial. So Fatima ran to the palace with the

false news and received a full purse from Zobeide, the caliph's wife.

Hassan then decided on another trick. Now Fatima would feign death. He ran to the palace and also received a purse, this time from the king. A quarrel arose between the caliph and his wife: Who died first, Hassan or Fatima? They went to the poor cottage and disputed the matter in the presence of the two would-be corpses. With a rising voice, the caliph finally promised loudly a thousand ducats to anyone who could tell him who died first. Immediately, Hassan revived and declared he was the first to "die" and claimed this money as well.

We too are poor creatures who have heard that God is rich in mercy toward those dead in trespasses and sins. He offers them forgiveness, blessings, and an eternal paradise.

Now, from this knowledge about the grace of God, two conclusions can be drawn: 1) we should endeavor to be gracious like Him toward those who sin against us, and 2) we should recognize that we are dead in sins without any possibility of

helping ourselves, in order to obtain without cost, God's free gifts.

Once we have acknowledged that we are sinners by nature and can receive new life only through God's favor, we should not continue to feign death after being revived. We should not stretch out on a couch and let God do everything. Once you are alive,

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says St. Paul, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (PHP 2:12).

If Baghdad has a good caliph, he should be approached only in times of real need, not in place of working honestly for a living.

Similarly, it is not right to expect God to give us what we can obtain by our own endeavors.

***

Jesus said to the community of His disciples, "You are the light of the world" (MTT 5:14). You are one light, not lights.

In the former West Germany one evening, 22 planes took off from a military airport for an exercise. Unexpectedly, a thick fog arose. Eight planes immediately returned to base. Four planes got lost. The pilots of the other planes tried to break through the thick wall of fog.

The local radio station interrupted its programming for an urgent news release: "All drivers are asked to go quickly to the airport and keep their headlights on. They will help the planes that are still lost in the fog to land securely. Please communicate the message to other drivers."

Soon the airport was surrounded by 2,500 cars. The drivers were ordered to turn their lights on bright. The lights of one car would not have helped the pilots, but thousands of massed lights did.

A fool poured a cup of water on a house that was on fire and then said, "You see, it is just superstition

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to believe that water quenches fire. I poured water on the fire, but it continues to burn." He was right, of course. One cup of water will not save a house on fire, but the combined mass of water in fire hoses can.

No one self has all the truth, but only the community of Christians. Let us unite our efforts. We will be able to serve as light to the world and to quench many fires from hell.

***

Ulrich Zwingli was a Catholic priest in Switzerland in the sixteenth century. A personal conversion experience led him to become first an adherent of Erasmus of Rotterdam and then of the reformer Luther. As a result of his influence, the Reformation became law in Zurich.

Many real abuses practiced in the Catholic church were abolished. All images and organs were thrown out of churches, and celibacy in the priesthood was renounced.

He had to fight at the same time on many fronts: against those who did not accept his puritanical morals, against the Baptists who did not recognize infant baptism, which Zwingli endorsed, and then also against Luther with whom he differed in the understanding of the Lord's Supper. Whereas Luther believed in "consubstantiation" (the bread and wine given to the communicant are the flesh and blood of Jesus), Zwingli believed that communion had only

symbolic significance. Because of this difference, Luther refused even to shake hands with him.

Zwingli was very adamant about making the whole of Switzerland forcibly Protestant and urged the "slaughter of the Catholic cantons." He even used terror to encourage respect for his moral rules. In the end, he planned the blockade of food for the Catholic cantons that, with the support of Catholic Austria, then went to war against Zurich. The battle was fierce and hundreds died. The Catholics shouted, "Death to the heretics!" The Protestants replied, "Death to the idolaters!"

Catholics found the dying Zwingli and asked him if he wanted a priest. He made the sign "no." Then they told him, "There is no more time for confessing. Pray to the mother of God and the saints that they may obtain grace for you." When he refused this

too, they decided he did not deserve to live.

After he was killed, opinions differed as to what to do with his body. Some proposed that he be cut in five pieces, one for each canton as a trophy. Others were for burning the corpse.

As for his master Luther, he considered Zwingli's death a judgment of God and wondered if the Swiss reformer could be saved and enter Heaven - not because he fought Catholics, but because he had committed the greater sin of differing with Luther on an understanding of Holy Communion. Yet Jesus, in instituting the Lord's Supper, said "Take and eat," not "Take and philosophize about it."

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Jesus also said, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another," (JHN 13:35 KJV). We should all be ashamed of our past hostilities and the continuation of divisions. Let us be known by our love in spite of differences in opinions. It is clear that any opinion is no more than an opinion, not the truth. The truth is far above opinions.

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On one point all large Christian denominations agree. The Catholics phrase it this way: "Extra ecclesiam nulla salus"-"Outside the Church there is no salvation." Calvin wrote, "Outside the church there is no forgiveness of sins, and you cannot hope for salvation. Abandoning the church is always fatal." Luther said the same: "Outside the Christian church there is no truth, no Christ, no salvation." These statements are of no great help because the question remains: Which is the Church?

The Jews had a church established by God Himself in all its details, yet its leaders consulted on how to kill the Messiah. "All the chief priests and elders...took counsel," (see MTT 27:1). We are told this because the decision did not arise out of personal wickedness, but out of the collective wickedness of the social category to which the ecclesiastical judges belonged, what we term the clergy.

I would advise all seminarians and all students in Bible schools to show great diffidence and take many

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precautions before they seek to become part of the clergy.

In Matthew 23, [MMT 23] Jesus pronounced an eightfold "Woe" over the Pharisees, the religious leaders of His day. He called them "fools and blind"; "hypocrites"; "serpents"; and a "brood of vipers."

Many consider these denunciations too violent and undiscriminating, but they were right.

The Lord does not denounce the existence of scribes or an ecclesiastical authority. But if we honestly view the characteristic vices of the clerical elite throughout the ages, especially when the Church was politically powerful, and their awful hindrance to the kind of spirituality Jesus taught, we are forced to acknowledge that He had good reason to utter these terrible woes.

Surely they can be read by the clergy – as well as the flock – only with a sense of horror, especially since the tragic history of the Church has shown the Christian clergy to be no better than the Jewish hierarchy. But why should men of God be so unreliable in spiritual matters? The reasons are many. I will name just one: The manner of recruiting clergy.

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying .."No man...who has any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God, ...a man blind lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long, a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a

defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch," (LEV 21:16-20).

The Jews in Jesus' time observed such commands punctiliously. In our day there are probably few Christian clergymen with such defects, but we have not delved into the deeper meaning of such words.

Why could a man with a broken leg not be a priest? It is because all men with deformities are in danger of developing an inferiority complex and therefore of over-compensating.

God desires that His servants not have defects in their spiritual body. A minister must have the right proportions; he must walk uprightly; he must grow to a proper stature and be full

of courage; he must see well spiritually. No one should be ordained in a church without the healing of his spiritual infirmities. Then he will be able to impart truth.

***

In a factory where fine linen was produced, the workers were told to push a button if the threads became tangled so that the master could come to correct the work.

The threads at a machine where a young girl was working became tangled. An elderly co-worker came to her rescue, but she tangled the threads even more. When the master came, she apologized, "I did the best I could." The master answered, "The best thing you could have done was to call me in the beginning."

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Mary Magdalene did not try to do anything. She just sat quietly at Jesus' feet and the tangled threads of her life were put in order. God said to Moses, "Tell the people to stand still." When they did, the waters of the Red Sea parted.

We must be like men possessing nothing, poor people following the poor Master in perfect quietness.

The earnest searchers for truth are strangers and pilgrims in this world, dead to its allurements and achievements. Expecting nothing from the world, they seek the truth, they love its message and revel in its beauty.

One of the conditions for obtaining truth is not to have possessions, and not to desire to have them. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor" (MTT 5:3). In Hebrew, the verb "to have" does not exist. You cannot say, "I have a house," "I have a car," because there no concept of "having."

No one can speak the oracles of God, nor can one understand them, if he is attached to possessions.

When St. Francis of Assisi was converted, he threw his purple vestments and all his gold at his father's feet. Standing naked before him, he said, "I will no longer say, 'My father, Peter Bernardone' but, 'Our Father which art in heaven.'"

Because he had the truth, the prophet Jeremiah was taken prisoner and thrown into a muddy pit. He was not success-oriented though he spoke with great earnestness. He was content to fulfill

his task, even

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while knowing his warnings would not be heeded. "Success is not one of God's names," wrote the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber.

A battle over what the truth is rages constantly. In times of war, truth is the first casualty. Everyone engaged in battle proclaims what is profitable for his cause, even if it goes against the truth.

The seeker after truth, then, does not run after the advantages gained from knowing it, reading it, or proclaiming it. He is simply thirsty for truth for truth's sake.

Only when written in this sense and when read with such a spirit will this book be useful.

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We can have full confidence in God, the Author of truth.

Hunter and Percy Mather, missionaries in Mongolia, were lost in the Gobi Desert and could not find their way out. One day their servant came to them and announced, "We have only two handfuls of rice."

Mather answered, "It is not so." We have two handfuls of rice and God." And he sat down and recited Psalm 23, knowing that in difficult or depressing situations, God can introduce entirely new elements to alter circumstances. When he came to the words, "You prepare a table before me...," he looked up and saw the caravan of an English explorer who was passing through this inhospitable

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wilderness for the first time. The Englishman gave the missionaries all they needed and brought them safely out of the desert.

The Mathers knew that it was not admissible to say, "Lord, Lord" and not do His will, neither is it admissible for God to call us "My child" and "My son" and not give us what we ask of Him. They had confidence that their prayers would be answered.

It is wise to be optimistic in one's thoughts and attitudes.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us to think about God as the good Father who feeds even the birds. Now, birds have their predators, but we are enjoined to think about how God provides for them and to consider ourselves of much greater value. Jesus also suggests that we contemplate the lilies of the field, which God clothes with beauty, though they soon fade and die. We are urged to see the beauty, not the dying. It was Jesus' desire that we apply this principle of sanctified optimism to our daily lives.

***

In a Laurel and Hardy movie, Hardy is sick and asks his friend to fetch him a doctor. When he returns with a veterinarian, an indignant Hardy asks, "Why did you bring me a vet?" Laurel replies, "It is wrong to discriminate. A person's religion shouldn't count when you're sick."

This is only a comedy, you say. But for a great many people it just does not matter what religion

they have, provided they have one. They are less choosy about religion than about food or clothes.

Religion shows me the way to Heaven, just as mathematics charts the course of a spacecraft. A small error in calculation and the astronauts would not reach the moon, nor would they return.

Wrong religion might yield some satisfaction – but it might also land us in hell. Right religion is more important than right virtue. The astronauts must first be sure that everything has been done to ensure a safe return to earth. Then they can decide which virtues to exercise.

At a party, the question was asked, "If you were shipwrecked on a lonely island, what one book would you prefer to have?" One said, "Shakespeare." Another, thinking to show himself a profound believer, said, "The Bible." The smartest was the third: "I would like a book that would teach me how to build a boat to help me get back to the mainland." Right religion is just such a boat.

When St. Paul preached in Athens, he did not say one word against sin, but only against false religion. Likewise, the Books of Kings and Chronicles in the Bible categorize the Jewish kings not according to their economics or politics, but only according

to their manner of worship.

Don't accept a veterinarian as your doctor. You are human.

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Every author rejoices when he sees a good review of his book. After we die, God will read the book in which we have inscribed the reality of our lives and will reward us accordingly. It is important to know that we have the possibility of receiving honor and glory from our heavenly Father.

Events on this earth are recorded not only in time and space. When the Russian Communists imprisoned and killed writers and destroyed their literary works, the theologian Bulgakov wrote, "Manuscripts don't burn." There is another world that keeps "photocopies" of all things written on earth.

Over two thousand years ago some obscure Essene scribes in the Qumran community wrote books that remained sealed in jars hidden in caves until the mid-twentieth century. For century after century no one knew of their existence. Then one day an Arab boy found a jar that led to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls that have so marvelously enriched our knowledge of the Bible.

We may feel that our lives have little value or impact. But the life apparently lost on earth will reappear in a new and greatly improved edition. Such a hope cleanses the soul.

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Chapter 6 Receive Truth

The Bible says that Satan deceives the whole world (REV 12:9). Since we are in the world, this means that we can be deceived too. If I am obliged to seek the truth, I might fail as other very sincere seekers have failed. Wariness is an essential part of faith.

Truth is not a butter knife, but a surgeon's scalpel. One must be ready to accept the rigors of its cutting edge.

For example, it is a painful truth that religious as well as non-religious literature is afflicted with the virus of banality. Very often it makes no difference which religious book you read because they all say the same thing. Conversion stories are

virtually identical. Read the first three pages of almost any book and you can usually predict, with little margin for error, the middle and the end. To the contrary, God is never banal.

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The French painter Chirico exhibited a large canvas on which nothing was portrayed and entitled it "Void Space." I prefer this to canvases smeared with banalities.

In another art exhibit an empty canvas was shown with the title, "The Grazing Cow." When the painter was asked7 "Where is the grass?" he said, "The cow has eaten it all up."

"And where is the cow."

"Why should the cow remain if it can no longer find grass?" was the reply.

There is more content in such mockery than in many of today's religious books. If you seek the truth, be prepared for entirely new ideas and be willing to count yourself among the very few who receive the truth. Be ready for the eventuality that you might even have to stand alone in defense of the truth.

Nowadays, many churches believe that the truth is arrived at by taking a poll (a good example is the question of the ordination of women), but truth cannot be replaced with public opinion polls. Voices should be weighed, not counted. We have to distinguish between facts and opinions.

When a journalist writes, "Such and such a house burned down," he states a fact. You can verify it by going to see the rubble and ashes. But when he writes, "The concert was bad," he expresses only an

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opinion. Are you sure you are accepting facts - or merely opinions7

Seek truth even if it comes from very unlikely sources. Occasionally, one can receive fragments of it from untruthful persons. Heaven sometimes speaks through the mouth of Hell. The Apostle John made special note in his gospel of the words of the Jewish high priest Caiaphas who spoke the truth about Jesus' sacrificing His life for the people (JHN 11:49,50), though Caiaphas did not mean to serve the truth. His words were correct,

even prophetic.

The seeker after truth may be obliged to give up the beaten path. In the words of Robert Frost, the American poet, he may need to choose "the road less traveled by."

Bacon was the first to speak out against preconceived ideas, against people who took things for granted because authorities like Aristotle and Socrates had uttered them. He introduced the inductive method, which asks us to step from facts to teachings, instead of the accepted deductive method, in which men judged the facts according to the teachings of philosophers of old - who might be wrong.

Jesus said, "I receive testimony from no man" (see JHN 5:34). No man, apart from Jesus, is reliable enough for us to build the whole edifice of truth upon his sayings alone. Not even my own mind is good enough for that.

When Peter declared that Jesus was the Son of the living God, Jesus immediately explained to him

that these thoughts did not come from Peter's own mind but were a revelation from God.

We have draped over our beds tight mosquito nets of systems, conventions, abstractions, simplifications, and superficialities. We are also victims of the media who always have a bias. They choose to be anti-this or pro-that and then fit the facts into their predetermined mold. If there is an important political upheaval, the appreciation of these very same facts may undergo a radical change and be give a new significance entirely.

When Hitler took over Germany, the whole history of the country as taught in the schools was changed. The Communists used the same tactics when they came to power. Khomeini did the same thing in Iran.

Too often, the mind does not allow the facts to speak for themselves. They are confined in a strait-jacket of preconceptions. Open the gates of your mind to new ideas. Jesus said, "Put new wine into new wineskins" (see MTT 9:17).

Schiller wrote to Korner, "It is disadvantageous to the creative activity of a soul when the intellect examines too closely the ideas that steam towards it. An idea, fantastic in

isolation, might become important through the one which follows it."

Resolve that you will renounce all repugnance toward a new idea simply because it is new.

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If you are a seeker for truth, give up any hope a quiet life. Emerson wrote, "God offers to every man his choice between truth and repose. Take whichever you please, but you can never have both."

Seek the truth, not expecting anything for your self. Remember also that the truth you find might be acceptable for a time but may prove to be insubstantial or unreliable later on.

Rembrandt is the only painter who left 90 self-portraits. He painted pitilessly the slow ruin of his own flesh. His times of skepticism and courage, melancholy and calm, appeared like a full confession before a priest. He also painted fancies about himself. He painted himself as a wealthy nobleman and a flamboyant cavalier. Though by 1640 he had become the most successful artist in Amsterdam, he knew this popularity would not last. So he painted his decline as well. After ten years, his popularity was fading. By 1652, he was bankrupt.

As you view the truth about yourself, be sincere in accepting it.

***

If one were to try to use Hebrew to write a book proving that man has only one life, he could not do it. In the language of the Bible, the word for life is ~haim~, a plural. (All the plural substantives end in -~im~.) In Hebrew one can only say, "I have lives." To say "I have only one life" is impossible.

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There is such a thing as the next life. It is next door to this present life. But we do not have to await death to understand it because faith brings a foretaste of the future into the present.

The renowned English evangelist Charles Spurgeon once asked a

parishioner who was on his deathbed, "Will you go to Heaven when you die?"

"No," was the reply, to the dismay of Spurgeon.

"Have I then preached in vain? Don't you know that believers in Jesus go to Heaven at death?"

The dying man answered, "Let them do as they like. I know better. I don't go to Heaven when I die. I have already been in Heaven for thirty years."

In Tewin churchyard, Hertfordshire, England, there are four trees growing from one root. These trees have an interesting story. When Lady Ann Grimston was dying, she mocked religion, saying, "I shall not live again. It is as unlikely that I shall live again as that a tree will grow out of my body." She died and was laid in a strong marble tomb with tall iron railings to hold the masonry together. Somehow a young tree broke through the masonry and destroyed the walls of the tomb (~The Book of Knowledge~, Educational Books, London, 1921).

Atheists have a vague sense of eternal life. Pasternak, whom I have already quoted, was brought up in a godless environment, but in his renowned ~Doctor Zhivago~, he circles around the problem of eternal life:

> "So what will happen to your consciousness? ~Your~ consciousness, yours, not anyone else's. Well, what are ~you~? There's the point. Let's try to find out. What is it about you that you have always known as yourself? What are you conscious of in yourself? Your kidneys? Your liver? Your blood vessels? No. However far back you go in your memory, it is always in some external, active manifestation of yourself that you come across your identity - in the work of your hands, in your family, in other people. And now listen carefully. You in others - this reflects your soul. This is what you are. This is what your consciousness has breathed and lived on and enjoyed throughout your life - your soul, your immortality, your life in others. And what now? You began in others and you will remain in others. And what does it matter to you if later

on that is called your memory? And now one last point. There is nothing to fear. There is no such thing as death. Death has nothing to do with us...."

This is how much he knew about eternal life. We know more. In no way can we conceive now the depth, the height, the breadth, the duration of God's love for us. So we cannot imagine yet what awaits us in eternal life.

We will continue to live, but not only in the memory of others. Jesus promised, "To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I

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also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (REV 3:21).

Jesus assures us that there is such a thing as a divine throne. And we can be with Him as real beings, in actuality, sitting in the place from which universes are created and ruled.

I realize that words are not the names of things but of our idea of things. The words above are surely only our idea of the things that will be. But what will be are "real things" that will give us unspeakable joy and a rich reward. Life will have meaning and fulfillment there in a way that we cannot even imagine here.

***

There exists eternal life with a Heaven and a hell. Many descriptions of them in the Bible are obviously figurative. For instance, Jesus says of a Jewish city, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell" (MTT 11:23a KJV). Now, Capernaum has never been in Heaven; that was simply a manner of describing how greatly exalted the city was. But then the descent to hell must also be only a figure of speech. Whatever the interpretation, there exists a place or state of reward and one of punishment.

We have to accept the fact that some of us shall be damned. Should we pray that no one will be damned? If lice, rats, and disease viruses could pray, that is what they would pray for. Should we pray

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that guinea pigs not die? Then children must die because of the many sicknesses that can be conquered only through animal experimentation. It is better not to speculate too much about the future, but rather to beware of hell.

We must know about Heaven and hell. Pascal wrote, "The immortality of the soul interests us so much, so touches our lives, that whoever remains disinterested, indifferent to it, must have lost any sentiment."

We need to decide whether we desire to go to hell, the place where men are immobilized in utter selfishness, or to Heaven, the place of utter compassion, of those willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of anyone who suffers in God's great universe if there is the slightest chance to save him.

It is obvious that as long as beings suffer, there will be no possibility of joy for the compassionate except the joy of sharing suffering and trying to be of service. Heaven is a place of love.

The selfish person does not have to die; he is dead already. Those here who are heavenly-minded already have a piece of Heaven and will be in Heaven. Death cannot abolish their existence.

If we are on the way to Heaven, the idea of death should not obsess us. Charles Spurgeon said rightly, "Remember you are immortal until your work is done. If the Lord has more witness for you to bear,

you will live to bear it. Who is he that can break the vessel which the Lord intends again to use?"

During World War II, a bomb blast destroyed the beautiful stained glass windows of a European cathedral. Nobody bothered the man who gathered up the tiny fragments. After two years of assiduous labor, the stained glass windows were as good as new and could again embellish the altar.

God can give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning over the loss of loved ones, and garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness (see ISA 61:3).

Everything that has been wrong in life can be mended. We have only to throw every sin into the fire of Jesus' love. Essentially, hell is also that within us that has refused the

fire of love. What dooms us to hell is only the terrible sense of ownership that claims for itself even sin. Throw sin away in the right manner and in the right place, throw it upon Jesus, and you will find yourself in Heaven.

***

We do not have the choice simply to disappear at death. Sigmund Freud was right when he said, "Fundamentally, nobody believes in his own death." No one could live a day, no one could ever smile, if he were truly convinced that all sense of being in this world is only to prepare a tasty meal for worms in the grave.

Even the heathen philosopher Seneca (the Emperor Nero's advisor) had intimations of immortality,

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for he wrote, "As nine months in a mother's womb keeps and prepares us not for itself, but for a world to which we are alike conveyed as soon as we are able to breathe independently and survive in freedom, just so we mature during the interval from babyhood to old age for another birth. A new birth awaits us, new circumstances. The day you dread as your last is your birthday for eternity."

Life after death is contested, though without conviction, by those who have no life before death, i.e., the quality of life that nothing can destroy, not even death. Most people live lives easily disturbed by minor incidents. How could they believe otherwise than that death will destroy it? Such individuals may vegetate or hibernate, but they do not really live.

Some look down on ascetics, who practice detachment from this life in order to prepare better for the next, but the detachment practiced by the unbeliever demands even greater renunciation and more rigorous effort, because he must detach himself from a fuller, richer life in the here and now.

How much did Napoleon renounce to retain his pride! His last thought was to keep his title as emperor, as evidenced by the fact that he himself wrote the announcement of his death: "The emperor of France, Napoleon I. Bonaparte, died on...1821 after a grave and long sickness." His adjutant had to fill in the date.

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Marshal Ney, who was with Napoleon during the invasion of Russia, signed his last letter with the title "Duke of Moscow." Camille Cemoulins, one of the leaders of the French Revolution, asked that his tombstone bear the inscription, "Here rests a man who has great merit before France."

Who cares today about all the titles these men had? Students become bored simply having to study about them.

The great German poet Goethe, on the contrary, was always a believer in eternal life. In his last letter to Wilhelm Humboldt of March 20, 1832, two days before his death, he wrote: "The thought of death does not frighten me, because I know that our spirit is indestructible and immortal. It is like the sun. It only seems to us that it sets, when in truth it moves continually and shines always."

The French queen Marie Antoinette, beheaded during the Revolution, prayed to God in her last letter that her son might not think to avenge her death, and then she blessed the henchmen who performed the bloody deed.

We need to decide in advance in what spirit to die. We would do well not to wait until the last minute as did Voltaire, the cynical critic of the Church. Only a few hours before death he wrote, "I ardently implore God for forgiveness."

How many funerals have we attended? Some day others will attend my funeral. To prepare silently for a good death is the highest philosophy.

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"In all you say, remember your end and you will never commit sin," (Apocryphal Wisdom of Sirach 7:36). Plato once said, "~Vera philosophia est meditatio morti~. [True philosophy is the meditation on death.]"

Savonarola said,

> "O man, the devil plays chess with you all during your life and waits for the moment of death to call 'Checkmate!' Therefore be ready. Think well about your last move. If you win at this move, you have won all; if you lose, everything has been vain. To win at this last move means to win the battle for life. Therefore

> watch out for the checkmate that threatens you. Always think about death, because if you are not well prepared for this move, you lose all you obtained in this life."

***

Death is the opposite of life. Things contrary to each other provoke sentiments at opposite poles - but not so where love to God intervenes. We must not hate death because we love life, nor the contrary. We can love life as long as its prolongation is possible without abdication of Christian principles. We also love death, God's messenger who brings us to Him.

Paul writes, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain," (PHP 1:21).

Thus the miracle has taken place that overthrows all psychological laws. We can have the same sentiment toward opposites. It would seem logical that

one who loves a friend can only hate his enemy. Not so in Christianity. We love friends and enemies, just as Jesus did.

We do not avoid the thought of death. It does not frighten us any more than life does. We look death in the face, and because it draws nearer every moment of our lives, we earnestly avoid sin.

St. Dionysus said, "No one who delves into the essence of sin wishes to commit it." Take one minute before committing any sin and say to yourself, "It can send me to hell." Then visualize the suffering and the eternal separation from a loving God. You will not sin. Think about the beauty of Heaven that you can inherit by refraining from trespasses, and you will not sin.

Savonarola also illustrates:

> "Look to the hare. When dogs pursue him, he zigzags while fleeing, to deceive the enemy, that the dogs might not catch him. He was taught to do this by nothing more than dread of the dogs. Just so, if you will think about hell as your enemy, you will not sin as you do now, but will learn to flee from it. And when you are tempted to do evil, you will say: 'Shall I lose

heaven, where comfort is eternal, and go to hell where suffering is unceasing, for a little satisfaction, for a little faith, for a little property, all transitory?'

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"The one who thinks seriously about death will also think about Heaven and hell. Then love for God and fear will enter the heart and these will lead toward doing good and avoiding evil.

"In the desire to beware of sin, we must have God's grace. Without it and without the light of faith no one can shield himself from sin, and therefore those who wish to live a good life and to keep themselves pure from sin must first ask God to give them light. Therefore, take this as the first rule; pray every day to God that he might give you His light.

"Christians must wear the glasses of death. ~Qualis unusquisque est, talia et sibi videntur~ - Man looks at things according to his disposition. In wrath, you see one way; in passion, in greed, in love, another. May death always be before our eyes.

"You who wish to enrich yourself through dishonest deals, remember death. Put on the glasses of death and say: In hell none of the things I have will help me. You who run after fame, remember that you will die. Put on the glasses of death and consider that all the honors of the world will profit you nothing if you enter into hell. Woman, if you have the desire for luxury, put on the glasses of death and see how not to suffer eternal condemnation because of it. Youth, when tempted to commit

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sin, put on the glasses of death, remember that you will have to die, and serve Christ with a pure heart and body. Adults, put on the glasses of death and you will find that they will be very useful for the fight against all

temptations."

It is good spiritual exercise to visit cemeteries and the dying. Take a skull as an object of meditation, remembering that this is what your head will one day be like.

Remember the Bible verse, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (PSA 116:15). Pursue righteousness, and then don't worry. Neither future events in our earthly lives nor death can reach us at a speed of more than sixty minutes an hour. If one is a saint, death is no longer hideous.

***

What separates us from God, what hinders us from becoming gods (JHN 10:34), what makes death frightening is the power of sin.

In the museum of Naples one can see an old caricature: a butterfly holding reins put around the neck of a dragon. The illustration represents the philosopher Seneca, who tried to restrain through his philosophy the murderous passions of his disciple, the Emperor Nero.

Philosophy is powerless before passion. It does not restrain even the philosopher who himself is dominated by sin.

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Evolution is impossible in any sphere without differentiation. Inequality is the motive force of the universe. Energy is manifested only where there is a difference of level. Therefore, as the laws of thermodynamics indicate, the difference between God and man had to exist, man of course being on the lower level. Sin is the stubbornness to remain at a low level.

Some people are free of certain sins. The individual who has never loved does not know the sin of jealousy. Those without the slightest bent for fantasy do not lie. The impotent do not commit adultery. But everyone fights sin of some kind and seems to do his best at times to put himself to shame.

Who could possibly enumerate all human sins?

***

The first man born on earth, Cain, was a murderer, but he could easily have found forgiveness.

Jewish legend says that Cain told the Lord, "Well, I killed my brother, but You are the one who put a bad impulse in me. You, the guardian of all creatures, allowed me to kill Abel. You are the one who killed him. If You had received my gifts as You did his, envy would not have arisen in me. You must have informers around You because my father and my mother are here on earth and do not know that I killed Abel. But You are in heaven. How do You know it?"

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The Lord said, "Fool, I carry the whole world. I made it and continue to carry it."

Cain said, "You bear the whole world and don't wish to bear my sin?"

God was in Jesus and bore the sin of the whole world, including the sin of Cain. But since the time of Cain, murder has never ceased.

In fact, sin has blighted the landscape of earth so that everything is tainted. By the time of Noah, God noted that "...the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," (GEN 6:5).

If the dollar bills that pass through our hand could tell their story, we would shun them. How many individuals have sold body and soul for this dollar, how often has it been used for alcohol, gambling, prostitution, for a bribe, or for weapons? It is soiled with tears and blood. No beverage inebriates like money.

How ugly is envy! Men snuff out big candles so that their little lights might be seen. A story is told about an angel who came to an envious man and told him, "God has decided to grant you whatever your heart desires, but only with the proviso that the competitor whom you envy will get double what you receive."

The man was granted 24 hours' time to think. Then he said to the angel, "Gouge out one of my eyes so that my competitor may lose all his sight."

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Man is capable of many things. He can reach for the stars or sink to the level of a brute. He can use his gifts in the service

of others, as Jesus demonstrated, or bury his talents in the ground, thus polluting mother earth. He can enter Heaven by faith or sink into hell by wickedness or indifference.

Heaven or hell – this is the choice. And it must be made.

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Obviously, the intelligent choice is not to sin. Human effort can obtain much, even if not everything in this regard.

Greek mythology tells about the sirens – half woman, half bird who sang songs in the Aegean Sea to entice sailors to abandon their ships and drown. Ulysses escaped the temptation by plugging his sailors' ears with wax and having himself lashed to the mast of his ship so that none of them could respond to the seductive sweetness.

Orpheus, too, passed those rocks where the sirens dwelled, but his method of escape was to play and sing with such surpassing sweetness that he drowned out the ravishing songs of the sirens and caused them to abandon their enterprise.

People today can plug their ears to the temptations of sin. They can refuse to read bad literature, watch bad movies, frequent bad places. They can sing a song more beautiful than the cheap songs of a sinful world.

But even the best succeed only partially. Most don't even try. Mankind is burdened with grave sins.

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Individuals can repress remorse for a long time, though not forever. A man in Tennessee kept for nearly 70 years a secret that could have freed a Jewish factory superintendent who was convicted and later lynched for the murder of a fourteen-year-old girl. At the age of 83, Alonzo Mann signed a sworn affidavit naming a janitor at the factory and claiming that the star prosecution witness against the superintendent had threatened to kill him if he revealed the truth. His parents had also warned him not to get involved. Anti-Semitism, mob violence, and a revival of the Ku Klux Klan followed.

Everyone tries to run away from the memories of his sins, but they will entrap him, if not in this world, then in the next. We

all need forgiveness, and we can have it without charge, with no strings attached. Jesus expressed the desire that those who are forgiven should in turn forgive others. But God forgives before we decide on what to do about those who have wronged us.

In ~The Brothers Karamazov~ by Dostoievsky, Ivan raises objections to forgiveness. The Soviet regime is filled with such unspeakable cruelty that people forget the horrors of the Tsarist regime. Dostoievsky tells about a Tsarist general from whose garden a child stole some apples. Incensed, he had the child

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stripped naked, then forced him to run and ordered dogs to give chase and tear him to pieces. Who would have condemned a Tsarist general?

Ivan says that God refuses even the Virgin Mary's prayers for the forgiveness of such wicked men until all their victims have forgiven them. How can the mother of this child forgive? The past event is irremediable. What has been done cannot be undone.

Ivan concludes:

> "I don't desire that the mother embrace the wicked person who had her son torn by dogs. She should not dare to forgive. If she wishes, she might forgive him for herself; let her forgive the immeasurable pains of a mother; but she is not entitled to forgive the suffering of her child hounded to death. She, as a mother, is not allowed to forgive the wicked person even if the child itself has forgiven."

It is simple to deal with Ivan's objections. We all commit bad deeds in our dreams. We are not bothered by them when we awake. At the resurrection, we will realize that the world from which we have come was not the real world. The man I killed in dream is alive. The girl I polluted is pure. The man from whom I stole lost nothing.

So it will be when we encounter our former acquaintances in the other world. I will have done no one any wrong; on the contrary, I have done them good.

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Jesus tells about a thief named Zacchaeus who had stolen from

many people. He repented and restored fourfold what he had taken unjustly. The man who had lost $1,000 now had $4,000.

Jesus forgives because He is not only compassionate toward His martyred Church, but also full of understanding for the murderous general. He had been a child once and, like all children, had belonged to the Kingdom of Heaven, the kingdom of childish innocence. But He also had been badly treated by those in authority.

No one becomes a murderer just because he likes the idea. Circumstances bring some to this extremity. Even the Nazi and Communist murderers have, each of them, a story about how they became murderers.

A French proverb says, "Who understands all, forgives all." God understands everything. Therefore, everyone can obtain forgiveness.

Stalin was the illegitimate child of a nobleman, who bribed a drunkard, a cobbler, to marry his pregnant mistress. The story became known. As a child, therefore, Stalin was the object of mockery. Children teased him and called him a "bastard," at that time a very degrading appellation.

Then he went to a seminary run by the Russian church that was very chauvinistic. In the seminary of only Georgian students, the mother tongue was forbidden. Stalin was Georgian.

When Stalin was 15, his real father was killed, and he was accused of the murder. Because he was an illegitimate child, he was treated as one belonging to the lower class. For lack of sufficient evidence, he was acquitted.

He later became a member of the Social Democratic Party, as the Bolsheviks were then called. He was given the assignment to commit robberies in order to the finance the party, while his comrades spent their time propagating ideas or organizing strikes against actual injustices. During this period, he fell in love with a girl, but then she was given the assignment to become the mistress of a rich man in order to get money from him for the party. The next day she hanged herself and so on and on his story goes.

We surely deplore Stalin's cruelty toward his victims, but a knowledge of his background helps us understand his moral

deviations and excesses. They can be forgiven, especially since we believe in a resurrection in which the innocent will be rewarded for what they suffered with love and faith.

The feelings of martyrs in Heaven must be ambivalent. They feel that their sufferings must be avenged (REV 6:9,10), but would they have had such shining crowns and the white garments of conquerors if it had not been for those who martyred them?

There is a place for forgiveness.

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An important question was posed by Simon Wiesenthal in his book ~The Sunflower~. Wiesenthal is a Jew who suffered persecution under the Nazis and afterwards dedicated his life to hunting those suspected of Nazi war crimes. (Why only Nazi war crimes? The Soviets and the Western allies also committed crimes.)

He had worked during World War II as a slave laborer in Poland doing repairs in a hospital. A nurse called him to the deathbed of a Nazi officer who, with great remorse, told him this story.

He confessed to Wiesenthal that he had been among those who crammed many Jews into a house together, including women and children. Inflammable canisters were set inside, and then the Nazis tossed in grenades that exploded, causing a conflagration.

An old Jew jumped from a window with a little child whose eyes he covered. His garments were aflame. This officer shot them both.

A few days later, he found himself on the battle-front with an order to attack. As the Russian soldiers advanced, he saw coming toward him the burning Jew and the child and said to himself, "I will not shoot at them the second time." In that moment a grenade exploded near him, mortally wounding him.

Before dying, he had only one desire that he had communicated to the nurse: a Jew should tell him he was forgiven. Wiesenthal heard the confession of the

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repentant Nazi officer but left the room in silence. He did not

say "I forgive."

Since then over forty years have passed, but Wiesenthal has not found peace of heart. He goes from person to person asking, "Did I do right not to say a word of forgiveness? Had I the right to forgive in the name of the Jewish people?" – a question that could also be inverted: "Had I the right to refuse forgiveness in the name of the Jewish people?"

Should he have forgiven? Have the victims of this Nazi officer no right to be avenged, with at least the satisfaction of knowing that he would not die with the serenity of a forgiven man?

Can we be forgiven so easily for all our sins? Can God afford to be so nice? Can man?

Should a mother forgive the one who ordered dogs to maul her child to death? Is she authorized to do so? Who authorized her? The innocent child perhaps?

But again, who gives her the right to be cruel to the murderer and to refuse forgiveness? Does she know how the murdered child thinks about the matter in the next world where he is with Jesus? Jesus forgave those who crucified Him. Is it forbidden to be more than human, far beyond the usual run of men? Is it forbidden to be more than human, better than the best?

Rabbi Hillel advised that we judge no one until we have been in his situation. But have the innocent

necessarily been in the situation of murderers or other kinds of vile sinners?

I prefer the attitude of Mrs. Rathenau to Wiesenthal's. Her husband had been a Jew and served as the finance minister of Germany in the twenties. An anti-Semite killed him only because he was Jewish. The mother of the murderer was in desperation over the crime her son had committed. Mrs. Rathenau, wife of the victim, a Christian herself, went to comfort her. She also visited the murderer in jail and brought him to Christ.

Many years later, the murderer was in a high command position in the German army in Marseille, during the Nazi occupation of France. He did his utmost to help Jews escape from France and thereby saved the lives of a great multitude. In the end he was discovered. The former anti-Semite murderer was executed for

having been a savior of Jews.

***

Full forgiveness and forgetfulness of wrongs endured are both possible. Depth psychology asserts there is no forgetting, but only de-actualization. However, since through the new birth man becomes a new creature, the past is buried, never to be resurrected. Therefore, nothing divides a person from the one who has hurt him the most. Paul became a respected apostle in the community of early Christians, many of whom he had sentenced to death while persuading others to renounce their faith.

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There can be no limit to forgiveness, just as there can be no degree of honesty or virginity. A girl cannot be half-pregnant. Forgiveness is total or it is not forgiveness.

The average man identifies with either the murderer or the victim. Christians can identify with both and love both. In my own case, I always pray for both parties.

The murderer, by killing, has broken a divine law: "Do not kill." Is this law an absolute? The same God ordered the extermination of the Canaanites and the execution of criminals. What if the young German SS officer had been taught to consider the Jews as reprehensible as the Jews in Joshua's time considered the Canaanites?

Why should it have been compulsory for the SS officer to obey the law against killing if we disregard another law of the same God that we must forgive those who trespass against us? The conscience of every person can err. There exist depths in men that attract some to crime, others to sainthood, depths that can also make a criminal become a saint (what every criminal becomes who contritely confesses his sins) and a saint a criminal that is beyond our comprehension. Since every man is a riddle to his fellow man, the best recourse is not to judge but to be helpful.

If Jews will not forgive the death of six million at the hands of the Nazis, neither should the blacks forgive the enslavement of millions who perished in

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slave hunts in Africa, and other millions brought to America by the slave-traders; Armenians and Greeks should not forget the

Turkish massacres; Arabs should not forget their losses during the establishment of Israel; other nations should not forget the Communist mass murders; Protestants should not forgive the Catholics nor Catholics the Protestants; the North and the South should not forget the thousands who died in the fratricidal American Civil War; the Americans should not forget Bataan, nor the Japanese Hiroshima – one could multiply instances of cruelty and barbarism ad nauseam.

If no one could forgive and no one forget, where would we all be? Nations, religions, and alliances exist only through the grace of forgiving and forgetting even heinous crimes.

Spinoza once wrote cynically, "Everyone has as much right as he has might." Men may have the might to kill, but not the right. We recognize only the right to forgive and also to ask forgiveness.

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Chapter 7

Endure the Pain of Truth

A legend says that Jesus was once seated at a banquet in Heaven with His apostles. One place was empty. Jesus had not yet pronounced the blessing, so no one had started eating. At a certain moment, Judas entered the room. Jesus received him as a friend and said, "I have waited for you. Now the meal can begin."

I dreamed one night that I asked Mussolini and some other dictators forgiveness for the fact that I do not have a yielding and humble character, that I do not do gladly what others demand of me and thus oblige them to dictate to me. In my dream, in the measure to which I asked forgiveness, the dictators ceased to exist. I find this dream very significant.

Jesus was modest in His demands but rich in His example. In the Sermon on the Mount, He spoke only about forgiving the one who gives you a slap, or takes away your coat, or compels you to do forced

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labor. But He Himself forgave Caiaphas, Pilate, and His executioners when He said on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (LUK 23:34).

It is well to follow not only His words but also His example, perhaps even to surpass it, as He suggests in His matchless discourse at the Last Supper (JHN 14:12). God is love. We must ~be~ love, not only exercise it.

***

I have known no believer who was not at some time or other troubled in his faith by the fact of pain. Why should a good God have ordained pain? "Pain is a more terrible lord of mankind than even death itself," wrote Albert Schweitzer.

However, we are told that the main function of pain is to signal the body of any harm to its tissues. We need such signals, admittedly, but could we not do with something less traumatic?

Experience has shown that what is not painful does not work. We do harm to our bodies with our smoking, drinking, poor eating habits, and promiscuity. We ourselves cause our own cancer and heart disease, but because we feel no pain before it is too late, we continue these suicidal practices. Pain is a sign of the intense desire of God to do us good.

If not for pain, we would undoubtedly disregard many dangers to the organism and would compromise ourselves still further. The inability to sense

pain is one of the horrors of leprosy. But most of us see pain only as an enemy, and so we consume annually thousands of tons of pain-killers.

Muslims attribute pain to fate, Kismet; Hindus to karma, the result of sin in past incarnation; other Middle Easterners to the evil eye. Pain has meaning. By taking pills, our medicated society deprives itself of the discovery of meaning.

Pain can also be borne courageously; it can be faced. Societies that flee pain in all circumstances turn to horror movies and violence to compensate. Jesus at the cross refused an anesthetic.

Try the experiment of fixing a short time for bearing pain without an analgesic or sorrow without a tranquilizer. Remember that Rachel refused comfort (MTT 2:18).

A man sleeping on the ground with his mouth open had a snake

crawl down his throat. Another man who witnessed the event shook him awake and vigorously pounded him on the back again and again to make him vomit. The first man understandably resented what he considered an unjustified attack and responded violently. When finally he vomited up the snake, he had his explanation and complained, "Why didn't you tell me what you were doing?"

The reply was simple: "You were not receptive to arguments at that point. A person in that predicament needs a kick, not an explanation!"

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If God permits suffering, we can be sure it is more painful for Him who permits it than for us who bear it. If we had His wisdom and sought our salvation as passionately as He seeks it for us, we would choose to pass through the very sufferings that afflict us. Therefore, believers bear with understanding the sufferings imposed upon them.

In ~The Fathers of the Desert~ appears the story of a monk well versed in fasting and asceticism who could not resist the thought of whoredom. With this in mind, he went to Jericho to fulfill his desires, but when he approached the prostitute, he discovered that he was covered with leprosy. Gratefully, he returned to the monastery praising God:" Glory be to Thee, O God, that You gave me this punishment to save my soul."

Some believers choose voluntary sufferings. In the ~Zohar~, an ancient book of the Jewish ~Kabbalah~, it is written, "Why did Jacob choose to work seven years for Rachel and not only a few months?" The reply is, "So that when at last he came to her, he would be as it were the Heaven to her earth."

Suffering works. Exile changed the Fascist dictator Mussolini into a Christian. Dostoievsky, sentenced to death in his youth and pardoned when he was already on the gallows, said that in the moment when he slipped from the noose around his neck, he had an illumination: "As an atheist I had been in prison even when I was free, but now jail has become for me the gate to freedom."

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Dostoievsky remained sick for the rest of his life. God must have had a purpose in this because as a result he created works of art from the sickness of the world in his books ~The Idiot~, ~The Demons~, ~Crime and Punishment~, and so on.

Someday we too may learn that there was a reason for the sufferings we have endured.

***

An artist painted a bad conscience as a galloping horse surrounded by wasps and mosquitoes. The caption read, "Your running is in vain."

Augustine said it in words, "A man bothered by his conscience is his own punishment. A man can run away from his enemies, but where can he find refuge from himself?"

Regrets alone do not help a troubled conscience. The mind that decides to sin then decides to regret, but conscience is not assuaged. Judas regretted profoundly that he had sold his Lord. Then the same mind reverted to despair and soon decided on suicide.

Repentance is something entirely different. In repentance, one ignores the mind that Luther called "the beast reason, whose eyes should be gouged out, the devil's bride, a lovely whore." He said to reason:

> "Listen, you have lied to me often and in weighty matters in which it was not your business to interfere. You have a limited low-ranking job in matters which do not involve religion,

> morals, ultimate truth. Stick to your menial work. For overstepping your attributes, I give you the boot. Out! Henceforth, the mind of Christ will be my mind, I will not be taught anymore to sin, neither to lose my time in vain regrets, nor ever to despair."

This is the change that takes place at the new birth. With such an attitude, even after the betrayal, Judas would have been spared his tragic fate. Saul of Tarsus, the great persecutor of Christians who became the apostle Paul, is an example of what can happen to a person who truly repents.

If Judas had been born again after the betrayal, he would be known today as St. Judas Iscariot. He could have lived out his life and died with peace, understanding that he had been sacrificed on the altar of gathering precious experiences for the

Church, just like the man who was born blind with all the ensuing suffering, for no other purpose than that "the works of God should be revealed in him" (JHN 9:3).

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Truth can be attained only by individuals who have been born again. No one who assumes false names and titles can be considered a gentleman. We bear the name of Christians. Are we entitled to it? Jesus said we must be born again. Have we passed through the new birth? Without this we are fake Christians.

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Nothing except the new birth can enable us to get to Heaven. No amount of religiosity can cleanse us of our sins.

A Samaritan woman asked Jesus some theological questions. His response was, "Go get your husband and bring him here." The man whom she called her husband really belonged to another woman. And this was not her first sin. She had known many men, from whom she had received pleasure or money. Certainly she had not fulfilled the aim for which God brings individuals together to help one another become like Him.

This woman did not need theology. She was lost. And it made no difference whether she worshiped according to the Samaritan or Jewish religion.

No good intention helps. If a person has ink on his fingers, his decision to wash himself will not make him clean. Only the act of washing removes the stain. We need the washing of the new birth. Therefore we extend to all people everywhere the warning, "You must be born again."

A man who was eating his lunch in a restaurant was approached by another man from a nearby table, who said, "Sir, may I tell you something?"

The first man replied, "I see by your face that you mean serious business. I want to enjoy my dinner, so kindly leave me alone." After finishing his ample meal, he turned to his neighbor: "I did not mean to

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be rude, but I was very hungry. Now you can tell me what you had on your mind."

The other responded, "I'm sorry, but it's too late. I only wanted to tell you that you had put your overcoat on a chair too near the stove. By now the heat has burned a large hole in it."

Most people do not wish to be disturbed by serious talk about what follows death and about the need for a new birth in order to enter Heaven. The loss is theirs! After death, they will have to face either Heaven or hell. And "unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (JHN 3:3).

A monk always complained to his abbot about the evils committed by his brethren. Exasperated, the abbot advised him to go on a pilgrimage to Israel and bathe in the river Jordan. "But," he told the monk. "when you bathe, you should wear around your neck a garland of onions, garlic and green peppers." The monk returned from the pilgrimage but was still the same man, delighting in slandering others.

The abbot asked him, "Did you bathe in the Jordan?"

"Yes."

"Did you wear the garland of onions, garlic, and green peppers?"

"Yes, though I saw no sense in doing so."

"Please bite into the onion and the garlic." They were bad-tasting, strong and burned his mouth.

"Now bite into the pepper." The monk spat after having done so. Then the abbot said, "You see, bathing onions and peppers in the Jordan does not help. Neither do the rituals to which you subject yourself."

Nothing helps except becoming an entirely new creature who yields up all his self-will. The newborn man is compared by Jesus to the wind that blows in different directions, simply fulfilling the laws of its nature (JHN 3:8).

Cromwell said, "The man who does not know where he is going, goes the farthest." The Bible asks, "Who is blind but My servant?" (ISA 42:19). Abraham forsook his surroundings to follow God to a country that would be shown to him. He was not told where it would be. The newborn man is like an object without

its own will, like clay in the hands of the Divine Potter.

Before becoming a man, Jesus was a babe; and before that an embryo; before that a divinely fertilized ovum; before that "the holy thing" (LUK 1:35); a conglomerate of molecules that needed to be organized into a living cell.

In 1CO 1:27, it is written that God chose not men, but certain "things" to be his representatives in the world, i.e., men without self-will, like inanimate objects, ready to be used. This is the result of the new birth.

A kingdom was waiting to have Saul proclaimed as king, but he (unaware of the occasion) was seeking asses. The most beautiful kingdom, the kingdom

of Heaven, is awaiting us, on condition of our being born again. Yet we run after trifles.

A king who had a rebellious son sent him into exile. As a result, the son suffered many years of deprivation and even hunger. In the end, the king had compassion on his son, forgave him, and sent emissaries to bring him back. Their instructions were, "Give him whatever he desires." When the prince saw them, he said only, "Give me something good to eat." He could have had his position in the palace restored to him, but he yearned only after a loaf of bread and butter.

We are all in the same situation. Through the new birth, we can become God's children, yet even when we talk with God's messengers, we settle for trivial things.

Express your desire for the new birth today and confess publicly that you belong to Christ. Then your natural desire to be thought consistent will enable you to follow through and investigate Jesus' teachings, and He will give you the grace of being born again.

***

God's great gift is the possibility of being born again. The new birth does more than purify from sin; it deifies men.

The newborn man begins to live and act as if he had seen paradise before his eyes. Then slowly the baptism of action drives away the dark clouds that

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veil Heaven, and as clearly as he sees material things, he gains the intuition of invisible powers because this invisible world will become real.

A newborn man is a man who has found God, and all at once the vague, distant notion of the Godhead is exchanged for a personal, sensible, present, and living reality. Here resides the distinction between repentance and regret.

My five-year-old grandson Alex, on being told that he had to go to the doctor's office, asked, "What for?"

"For the cough."

Later, he cheerfully reported to me, "They were wrong to take me to the doctor. He doesn't cough."

When we have sins, problems, and sorrows, pastors show us the way to Jesus, the great Physician. We return from Him radiant: "He is all right. He does not cough. He has none of our problems and unrest."

Jesus met a persecutor of Christians, a multiple murderer and blasphemer, on the road to Damascus. He asked Saul of Tarsus nothing about his state of mind. He did not examine him, X-ray him, inquire about what he had done, come up with a diagnosis, or give a prescription. Jesus simply revealed Himself in the glory of His resurrection. That was all. Then Saul knew, "The doctor does not cough. There is nothing wrong with Jesus. He is healthy, alive, powerful, loving. Far from telling me I must be hospitalized, He gives me great and noble tasks to perform."

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This is the story when a soul has the privilege of meeting Jesus directly. But rarely does this happen. Usually, we meet Him through our Christian leaders and authors of religious books - all Christ's underlings. These surrogates do not always grasp the deep meaning of Jesus' parable of the lost sheep:

> What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when

> he comes home, he calls together his friends
> and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with
> me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!"
> I say to you that likewise there will be more joy
> in heaven over one sinner who repents than
> over ninety-nine just persons who need no
> repentance (LUK 15:4-7).

When little Alex heard this story and was asked what he understood from it, he replied, "The shepherd should have been more careful not to lose the sheep."

Holding revival meetings over and over is not enough. In fact, why should Christian "patients" have to be revived at all? Once they are newborn in the faith, why should they get lost?

Luther, drastic as usual in his expressions, when asked, "Whom can we call a true Christian?" replied,

"Whoever has once entered a church. That nothing came of it is not his fault, but that of the pastor."

According to the apostle Paul, "God Himself gave some to be pastors and teachers" (EPH 4:11). Why? If Christ is always with His Church, what is the purpose of subsidiary pastors?

One might as well ask why, when electricity is available everywhere, a lamp is needed to give light. Electricity has to have a focal point at which to manifest itself. The pastor is the focal point through whom Christ shows His beauty.

But the pastor should represent Christ faithfully. It is not enough for him to be a good pastor; he must be an excellent one. Observing him, people should be able to conclude, "the doctor does not cough. I don't have to worry."

A child was asked, "What is Sunday school for?" He replied, "To make children good so they can be resurrected." This is the pastor's occupation. He is a maker of saints, not a maker of sermons, and even less of money.

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Who are the pastors one can trust? In 1179, at the third Lateran Council, the papacy decided to uproot heretics. As a result, the Albigenses, the Waldenses, and later the Hussites

were tortured and killed by the thousands. Many were killed merely for possessing a Bible.

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Pope Pius V [Pius IV, probably? - Dido, 12/17/01] was canonized, though the breviary calls him "the ruthless inquisitor." In the same breviary, the lesson for May 30 praised King Ferdinand II of Castile for his zeal against heretics. He himself, eager to perform good deeds, carried the wood for the stakes on which heretics were burned.

Ironically, the Protestant reformers often echoed the sentiments of the Catholics they opposed. Calvin wrote:

> "We should define the power wherewith the priests of the church should be invested, seeing that they are put to administer, to proclaim and to preach the Divine Word. Their duty is to dare everything and to compel all the big and highly situated in this world to bow before the majesty of the Almighty God and to serve Him. It is given to them to command everyone from the highest to the most common. It is their duty to build the Kingdom of God and to destroy the wolves. They have to reprove and to give advice to those who listen; to accuse and to destroy the adversaries. They can bind and loose; they can throw lightning and thunder; but all these things in conformity with the Word of God."

Calvin meant just that. He too burned at the stake those with whom he disagreed. We cannot walk in the footsteps of Catholic inquisitors or Protestant persecutors. To whom then should we go?

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Jesus said, "I will build my church." He used the future tense. He did not say when He would have a church worthy to be called His. Perhaps the churches of today are only the scaffolding for building that one church.

A few have recognized it and have already come to the "church of the firstborn who are registered: in heaven" (HEB 12:23). Seek this church! Seek it within the churches to which you belong!

At a certain moment Jesus gave to Simon a new name – Peter. His true name from then on was the one Jesus had given him, not the one he was known by. He thought of himself as Peter; the past of a certain Simon no longer belonged to him.

We too have to look upon ourselves as Jesus does. We have to call ourselves by the names He gave us: "children of God," "elect," "much beloved," and "apostles."

At a certain point, Simon declared, "I am something entirely different from what I have been. I am not Simon but Peter. When you call 'Simon,' I will not turn my head." If he were here today, he would probably change the name on his driver's license.

The whole world – as well as we ourselves – realizes we are a Church torn asunder by schisms and heresies, hostilities and iniquities, soiled by the blood of innocents shed by fellow Christians.

Neither are we what the world calls us, or what we ourselves think we are. After meeting Jesus, we

were called His "fair bride," "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing" (EPH 5:27). How is this possible? We simply become through His transforming power, what He says we are, though the world may see us differently and we may have misgivings.

We are one because He says so. Peter is Peter and not Simon. Those who can accept this truth are on their way to the true Church.

* * *

Christians are often dissatisfied with their churches and pastors. In some cases, the inner turmoil of the churches has become so great that they ceased to exist.

Bear this patiently. All men defend the institutions of which they are a part, especially if they created them. God allowed His temple, every detail of which He had designed, to be destroyed. The destruction of the temple was a test revealing that His truth remains unaffected by external events, no matter how tragic. The Church will survive no matter what happens to your congregation.

My former church in Bucharest, Romania, has been bulldozed by

the Communists, but I constantly receive testimonies showing that what was previously sown within its walls continues to bear fruit.

The Jews worshiped God before they had the wilderness tabernacle. Their own tents, and before this the shacks in which they lived as slaves in Egypt,

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served as places of worship. Our homes, too, should be churches.

As for the Church itself, why should we look so much to Christian leaders? Have you ever tried to obtain spiritual edification from the janitor of your church? Do you wonder about the propriety of such a question? Well, the Bible provides long lists of priests and singers, but then adds a list of "gatekeepers," who had "duties just like their brethren, to serve in the house of the Lord," (1CH 26:12).

No history book of any other nation or religion would have included such a list. What were the names of the servants of George Washington and of the lackeys in Buckingham Palace? In what church history will you find the names of the caretakers who served in the great cathedrals?

We can learn from caretakers and so can pastors. Wesley, on entering the pulpit one morning, said in dismay, "I am lost; I left my sermon at home."

The janitor asked him, "Do you remember at least what it was about?"

"Yes, it was about trusting God."

"Parson, trust God to help you deliver a sermon without notes." After this, Wesley never again used notes. If the pastor does not know his sermon, how will the audience learn it?

Do not look down on pastors who make but a small contribution to the advancement of the

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Church. During the last two thousand years, millions of men have been educated in Christianity, but this was not the work of great preachers or exceptional pastors. By and large, the average and less than average pastors did the job. For this we should be

grateful. Learn truth from them.

* * *

At the Last Supper, the Lord told His disciples that one of them was a traitor. I have witnessed such scenes often in the underground churches. On these occasions each one begins to guess which of those around him might be the evil man. But the first apostles did otherwise.

None of them thought evil of his brother. Each one, knowing the potential for betrayal that lay hidden in his own heart, asked himself, "Am I not the traitor?" Each knew his own readiness to sell even the One he loved most. Therefore the apostles each asked that most unusual question, "Lord, is it I?" (MTT 26:22)

In my church there was a lady who always congratulated me after every sermon, adding to her praise this comment: "Your sermon was just right for Sister So-and-so." One Sunday, weary of not getting through to her, I mentioned from the pulpit that there are those who always apply the sermons to others, instead of drawing lessons for themselves. Afterwards, I was again congratulated by the same person: "A wonderful sermon! It just suited Mr. So-and-so."

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Let us give up our preoccupation with looking for the speck in a brother's eye and recognize the beam in our own (MTT 7:4).

* * *

We often meet people who appear to be perfect gentlemen. We may know of no great sin they have committed, and they may consider themselves upstanding citizens, moral in every way. But is anyone a true gentleman if he regards everyone but his own father?

God is our heavenly Father, and we owe to Him our whole life. We are guests in His world and enjoy the blessings He confers on us. We usually behave well when we are guests in another's home, but somehow we neglect to thank God for the multitude of things He gives us, and often we don't behave well among His other children.

How to worship God is not a big problem. We may express our gratitude by fulfilling the purpose for which we were created.

Is a man who does not pay his debts - assuming he is able - a gentleman? Yet Christians have a prior debt. The apostle Paul describes the state of us all when he writes, "I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise" (ROM 1:14). As Christians, we are all debtors who owe everyone the greatest opportunity to gain salvation. Do we fulfill this duty?

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Christians must show great determination in this enterprise. If necessary, they must be willing to give their lives that others may come to a knowledge of Christ and be converted. Grateful for their own salvation, and for inner peace, and for the promise of a future life, they are concerned about the salvation of the rest of the world and look for opportunities to serve their fellows.

The world of today is not unbelieving, but ignorant. It includes the heathen, the Jews, those under Communism who are taught atheism, and those who are Christians in name only. In addition, every seventh inhabitant of the earth is a Muslim. How many of these have ever read a Bible or heard an intelligent and loving sermon? Therefore, every one of us must become a missionary.

At a Christian conference in Switzerland, an old man gave his testimony. He told how he had been on the Titanic, which went down in the north Atlantic in 1912 with some 2,200 passengers on board. Among the 700 who survived, he found himself struggling in the cold sea water trying to stay afloat.

Near him swam the American evangelist Harper, who asked him, "Are you saved? Think about your soul." With this, Harper sank under a wave of the icy sea, then after a few seconds reappeared. Again he asked, "Are you prepared to appear before the Lord?"

The man replied, "I don't know how to get saved."

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"Believe in the Lord Jesus. His blood cleanses from all sins."

"These were his last words," continued the old man. "He succumbed to the rigors of the icy Atlantic. A boat then picked me up. I am Harper's last convert."

When we think about men like this evangelist, we have to be

ashamed to call ourselves Christians.

* * *

The initial work of Christian missions among the Matacos and Tobas in Argentina was very difficult. For one thing, the missionaries had to walk fifty miles from their station through the jungle to get to these tribes.

One of their first converts was an Indian who had come ornamented with feathers. In his hand he had a heavy stick with which he had just killed his mother. (It was the custom to kill the dying to free them from evil spirits.) In order to obtain their magical powers, witch doctors ate firstborn children. Yet such men were converted, and some even became evangelists.

William Carey was inflamed for missionary work by reading about Captain Cooke's journeys. He asked himself, "If others can rise so much out of a spirit of adventure or in the desire to serve science, why should we not do the same in the service of Christ?"

In his cobbler shop he put a map on the wall and noted what he knew about the religions of different peoples. He constantly had on his mind the millions who are lost.

As an assistant preacher in a small Baptist community, he attended a church conference and asked whether the commandment to preach to all nations was still binding. He was not allowed to continue. He was called "a miserable enthusiast."

Later, Carey went to India where he proved to be a genius of languages. It was he who translated the New Testament into Bengali. Eventually he was to give to the people of India the New Testament in thirty-four languages.

This cobbler, Carey, became a professor of Oriental languages at the University of Calcutta. He wrote grammars and dictionaries in many Indian dialects. He was also a botanist and introduced to India many new agricultural and gardening methods. He was a creator of schools, a teacher of native evangelists.

Because of his influence, the savage habit of throwing children to crocodiles at religious festivals in Gango-Sangor ceased, as did the burning of widows and their being buried alive with their dead husbands. He also took care of lepers.

When he was on his deathbed, one of those standing in the room praised Carey. His last words were, "You have spoken about Dr. Carey. When I am gone,

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don't speak about Carey but about Carey's Savior." He himself chose the epitaph for his grave: "A miserable worm who appeals to Your compassion."

John Williams at the age of twenty went to preach in the islands of the Pacific. Traveling in a small ship, he went to Raratonga, the Samoa Islands, and Malaysia. Everywhere he went he brought people to Christ and established churches. Idolatry and polygamy disappeared, and many islands became sanctuaries full of the praises of God. Within a circumference of two thousand miles not one island remained without a church. In 1839 on the island of Erromanga, Williams was killed by cannibals after having brought 30,000 souls to Christ.

John Paton came in Williams' place to these volcanic islands. At first he was frightened by the blood-thirsty savages. Because of the influence of traders, they hated the whites who brought new sicknesses to their people. In their culture, a man was free to kill his wife if he no longer favored her, and the killing of children was common among them. They also believed in witchcraft. But with the gospel message Paton conquered the New Hebrides for Christ.

John Elliot, the first missionary to the American Indians in the seventeenth century, was also the first to translate the Bible into a Native American language. Thus the first Bible printed in the United States was for Native American Indians. To do so, he also gave them a written language and a grammar.

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At the age of eighty he still went to visit them in the forests.

David Brainerd, his successor, went to live with Indians in their savagery, sleeping on straw in a wood hut. The Dutch colonists mocked him, but he had only one wish - to win souls for Christ.

He did win souls, but not only among the Indians. Henry Martin read his diary and said to himself, "Now I will spend my life for

God." He became the pioneer missionary among Mohammedans.

In Germany Count Zinzendorf, when he was very young, stood before a picture of the crucified Jesus in the Dusseldorf Art Gallery. The picture bore the caption: "This I have done for you. What are you doing for Me?" Zinzendorf could not forget that question. He said, "A faith that does nothing is just chatter." He formed the community of Moravians, which has as its slogan, "The Saviour deserves everything." Missionaries from this community went to Greenland, to the Indians, and to the blacks.

Zinzendorf asked Sorensen, a person from his community, "Would you be willing to go to Labrador as a missionary?" Sorensen answered, "I would go tomorrow if I could get a pair of shoes." Some of the missionaries were killed by the Eskimos, but others followed. Soon the Moravians had missionary activity in twenty-eight countries.

In 1740, missionary Rauch went to the Mohican Indians. Cioop, one of his converts, later said, "First

we had a preacher coming to us who told us only that there is a God. We finished with him; we had known that. Another told us, 'Don't lie, don't steal, don't get drunk.' We answered him, 'Go and tell it to the white faces. They do these things more than we do.' But then Rauch came. He spoke to us about the love of God shown in the sacrifice of Jesus, and then he went to sleep quietly in my bed, not fearing that I might kill him. So I was won for Christ."

Allen Gardiner (1794-1851) went as a missionary to Patagonia. Darwin had visited the area and believed that the Patagonians were the link uniting man and ape. They had a very low forehead, and their thoughts and habits were debased. But within two decades the missionaries changed everything. Darwin, after revisiting the country, said, "I always believed that civilizing the Japanese was the greatest miracle of history. Now I am convinced that what the missionaries have done in Patagonia by civilizing the natives is at least as wonderful." And he became one of the regular contributors to their Christian mission. Evolutionists today could follow his example!

In recounting these adventures for God, we walk on holy ground; we should take off our shoes.

We remember Henry Thomas, one of the first missionaries to

Korea. While he traveled upriver in a boat, stopping here and there to preach, the natives attacked him from the shore with spears. Wounded,

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he jumped into the water, and in one last effort swam to shore holding up a parcel of gospels in his hand that he threw into the hands of the murderers. His wound was fatal and he drowned. Some of his attackers were converted by reading these very gospels.

We remember Bishop Hannington of Uganda who was eaten by cannibals. While he was being taken to the place of execution, he loudly repeated over and over to himself, "Love your enemies. Pray for those who wrong you. Do good to those who do you evil." When the news of his death reached Britain, two of his sons decided to go as missionaries in his place and had the privilege of baptizing and later giving holy communion to those who had eaten their father.

We think about Devasagayan, a native of India. Because he preached the gospel, he was bound to an ox and led from one village to another where the inhabitants beat him. They put around his bare neck a garland of poisonous plants that pricked the skin. Then they put pepper in his open wounds. When one person expressed compassion for the chains he had to wear, he kissed the man and said, "To me they are like beads of pearls." Devasagayan was a man who could not read, but when the passion of Christ was read to him he said, "O Lord, how bad my life has been in comparison with Yours. How can I live well when You suffer?" His last words were, "Lord Jesus, save me."

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During the war, the Japanese burned alive, crucified, and disemboweled Christians, then hanged them head down. They considered Christ to be the God of the Americans. For many blacks, Jesus is the God of the whites; for Jews, He is the God of the antiSemites; for Communists, He is the God of the capitalists. Missionaries are willing to face all these prejudices as they fulfill Christ's commandment, "Make disciples of all nations."

Strangely, missionaries have also had to fight with some of the churches. Until recently there were still American churches where blacks were not welcome. Mahatma Gandhi did not become a Christian because, being colored, he was not allowed to enter a church in South Africa.

In Romania the synod of the Orthodox church decreed during Nazi times that they would not baptize Jews. In some Lutheran churches, gypsy Christians were given holy communion in a separate cup from that of other believers.

Missionaries have to overcome difficulties created not only by their avowed enemies, but also by their churches. But it still behooves every Christian to be a missionary.

The commandment to go and teach all nations is not given only to professional missionaries. In the Scriptures, we read that it was given to men without schooling: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter

and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus" (ACT 4:13). Jesus enjoined a Galilean who had just been healed of demon possession to go and proclaim the Kingdom of God.

God asks today, as He did in ISA 6:8, "Whom shall I send?" The answer is still, "Lord, send me."

Chapter 8

Proclaim the Truth

The Jewish prayer book contains the following petition: "Lord of the universe, you have commanded that we bring certain sacrifices at certain times and that the priests when they serve, and the Levites in their job, and the children of Israel, should stand in a certain place. But because of our unrighteousness, the Temple is destroyed now, the perpetual sacrifices ceased, and we have neither a priest serving, nor Levites in their office. Therefore may it be pleasant, O Lord, our God, and God of our fathers, that the words of our lips might be accepted before you as if we had brought the perpetual sacrifice and were standing on the chosen place." There is deep meaning in such a prayer.

The religious situation among Christians is in a sense similar to that of the Jews. Ideally, Christ the teacher continues His existence in the Church. St. Augustine said, "Christ and the

church are one and

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the same person." Bossuet wrote, "The church is Jesus Christ spread out and communicated." These sayings remain valid because the treasure of truth possessed by the Church is tremendous.

But tragically much of modern theology could be called the gospel according to Pilate or according to Judas. In Communist countries many of the clergy played treacherous roles and were denouncers of their brethren.

Who are the trustworthy pastors? This is a question that Jesus asks too: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?" (MTT 24:45).

After putting the question, the greatest Teacher gives no answer. There is just a question mark. In the original manuscripts even the question mark is missing.

Let us also live without demanding an answer. One cannot feed his soul with questions. Know that you need good teachers in the Church. Know that they are scarce. Beware of false teachers and trust in God. The right teaching will find you. This book claims to impart it, to be an oracle of God.

***

The modern philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote:

> "There is, to me, something a little old about the ethical values of those who think an omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent Deity,

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> after preparing the ground through millions of years of lifeless nebula, would consider Himself adequately rewarded by the final emergence of Hitler and Stalin and the H-bomb...
>
> "It is clear that fundamental Christian doctrines demand a great deal of ethical perversion before they can be accepted. The world, we are told, was created by a God who is both good and omnipotent. But if, before He created

> the world, He foresaw all the pain and misery it would contain, He would have to be held responsible! It is not sin that causes the river to overflow its banks or the volcano to erupt. And even if this were true, it would make no difference.
>
> "If I were to beget a child, knowing beforehand that this child would become a homicidal maniac I would have to accept responsibility for causing his crimes. If God, as such, knew in advance the sins when He decided to go ahead and create man anyway....
>
> "The usual Christian argument is that the world's suffering is a purification for sin and is therefore a good thing. This argument is, of course, only a rationalization of sadism - but in any case it is a very poor argument. I would invite any Christian to accompany me to the children's ward of any hospital, to watch the suffering endured there, and then to persist

> the assertion that these children are so morally degenerate as to deserve what they are undergoing.
>
> "In order to bring himself to say this, a man must abandon all feelings of mercy and compassion. He must, in short, make himself as cruel as the God, in whom he believes. No man who believes that all is for the best (in this suffering world) can keep his ethical values unimpaired, because he will always find excuses for pain and misery."

Because we do not have all the answers to these questions raised by individuals like Russell, that does not mean God does not exist, but only that we do not understand all His doings.

Atoms existed in reality long before men knew about them, before scientists proved the hypothesis that postulated their existence. Atoms continue to exist, though they still pose mysteries for us.

If we cannot explain why Hitler and Stalin existed in the

creation of an omnipotent, omniscient and benevolent Deity, neither can Bertrand Russel explain why thousands of saints have been ready to give their lives in suffering for love, truth, and God.

Russell has no explanation for why rivers overflow, but neither can he explain why rivers exist in the first place and are a boon to mankind and a delight to the eye.

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When we say God can do everything, it means He can do all things that are consonant with His character. He cannot annul the cause that produces a certain effect, though He can perform miracles. But the miracle does not cancel the laws of nature that He Himself set in motion. It introduces new elements that counteract or accelerate the predictable effects. Even God cannot make wrong thinking yield the truth.

Russell's error consists in judging reality as subject rather than object. There are beauties that can be seen only from a certain position. The position of subject versus object is not the right position to perceive and understand material and spiritual realities as they are.

One of the biblical names for God is ~El Shaddai~, which means "a sufficient God." Since He answers all our needs, we don't need Him plus explanations about Him. A man can live a full life breathing air without having its qualities explained to him.

God is one, the only one. All reality exists in Him. There is no one apart from Him or co-equal with Him to affirm or deny Him. His creation, for which He alone is responsible, does not break up His oneness. "In Him we live and move and have our being" (ACT 17:28).

Billions of bacteria and viruses inhabit our bodies, but if they had Bertrand Russell's mind, they would deny our existence. And if they had some mystical sense of our existence, they would be against us

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because we sometimes take medicines that destroy them. God is far above our categories of believing or non-believing.

* * *

Some years ago while in Norway, I dreamed I heard a voice that said, "You will not always have a God." For a long time the dream troubled me, until finally I grasped its meaning. Meister Eckhardt had a similar intuition: "The man united with God has no God."

The verb "to have" does not exist in Hebrew, the language of the Bible. Even in modern Hebrew no one can say "I have money," "I have a car," or "I have a house"; neither can one say "I have a god."

We are never intended to ~have~ a God. We were meant to realize our high calling by being one with God. Jesus says, "You are gods" (JHN 10:34). We are meant to be overcomers, to whom Jesus gave this promise: "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down My Father on His throne" (REV 3:21). Only God sits on God's throne. This is also my final destination. Then evidently I will no longer have a God. I will be ~with~ God.

Everything less than becoming godlike is unworthy of a child of God. It is a shame for a prince to be only a good shoemaker.

Realize your calling and you will not ask such questions as to why rivers overflow, volcanoes erupt,

children are in hospitals, and tyrants reign. You will sit on the heavenly throne from which universes are created and ruled. You will be above these things.

A good pastor is also godlike in this respect. He does not give many explanations, as God does not explain Himself much. The right pastor will help you realize your calling to be "god." You will no longer ask foolish questions. You will sit on a throne in perfect serenity, doing the right things whether you are understood or misunderstood.

The Hebrew does not have the singular "face," but only the plural "faces" - ~panim~. (Every Hebrew word with ~-im~ at the end is a plural.)

God, too, has many faces. One of His faces is hidden, veiled in deep darkness. Those like Russell who look at that face and see nothing cannot escape the strange impulse to write against this "nothing." They are like today's astronomers who write

volumes about black holes, about whose existence they can only postulate.

But this is not the only face of God. In the Bible God is called "Our Father." The Hebrew word ~av~, meaning "father," is strange. It is a masculine noun, but in the plural it receives the ending characteristic of feminine nouns and becomes ~avot~ instead of the normal ~avim~.

So God is a father who also has female attributes. It is written, "So God created man in His own image;

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in the image of God He created him," and if you ask what this image is, the explanation follows: "male and female He created them" (see GEN 1:27). Furthermore, God compares Himself to a mother: "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you" (ISA 66:13a). Also, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you" (ISA 49:15).

There is no possible good that He does not embody and that, as both father and mother, He would not gladly impart to His children.

A rabbi told a joke from the pulpit: A Jew won a million dollars in a lottery. The agent who sold him the ticket asked how he knew what number to choose. "Well, this is not a problem for a Jew. In our Bible, seven is the holy number: The seventh day is Sabbath, there are seven branches in the candlestick and so on. Seven times seven is forty-eight. So I chose number 748 and won."

The agent replied, "But seven times seven is forty-nine, not forty-eight."

"Well, God knew that I was poor in arithmetic and knew I'd make a mistake, so He made 748, not 749, the winning number."

The rabbi continued, "As long as you are a member of the chosen people, you don't have to worry. God will honor even your mistakes. You will always be on the winning side." This is not simply a joke.

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A few years ago, I met a prince who was a member of an Asian royal house. When young, he had decided to commit suicide. To

give a genteel setting to his intentions, he looked up a radio program in the news paper and fixed his suicide for the next day at 1:00 p.m. when there would be dance music.

According to the radio log, the half-hour musical program was followed by preaching at 10:30. How ever, the man at the radio station made a mistake. At ten o'clock that night, he put on the sermon which began with the words, "Perhaps you are fed up with life and have decided to end it all. This is the right decision. Throw away your life and get another one. Jesus offers you a new, rich life." Through another person's careless mistake, the prince changed his mind and was converted.

Christians too can be quiet about their mistakes. God can use mistakes to glorify His name. He knows if we are poor in arithmetic.

* * *

The first ecumenical council of Nicea (325 A.D.) worked out a method of calculating the date for Easter Sunday for Christians . It had to depend on the Jewish Passover that was celebrated only at the time of the full moon.

However, great care was taken that it not coincide with the Jewish Passover, though the events celebrated at Easter obviously took place at that time.

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Writing about the acts of the first council (which were not preserved in written form), Constantine the Great, emperor at that time, made some very good observations and some that do not bring him credit.

We read: "What could be more beautiful and festive than when a feast that instills within us the hope of immortality is celebrated by everyone without variation, in accordance with a single rite and an established order?"

But he also says: "It appeared unseemly to celebrate this holy feast together with the Jews who, having defiled their hands with an iniquitous act, have rightly been stricken as impure with blindness of soul...Your prudence would have striven in any way to see to it that our pure souls would not in any way have communicated and would not have been taken with the customs of these most worthless people."

Jesus, a Jew, was sentenced by the Jews Annas and Caiaphas, and also by Romans. We have this information from Jews whose aim it was to cause the nations to believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah. This Jew, after being crucified, was resurrected on the third day in Israel. Within weeks, the Holy Spirit fell upon a company of Jews. Thus the first church was established in Jerusalem and was constituted of at least three thousand people – all Jewish.

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Why must these events be celebrated with enmity toward the Jewish people? Why must the rule demand that Easter cannot be celebrated when the Jews have their Passover – even though it commemorates another event?

The Council of Constantinople promulgated a decision in which all innovations regarding the date of the Easter feast were committed to a curse. He who in this regard "does not follow the customs of the church...as well as the impious astronomers who counteract the decrees of the holy councils, let them be cursed, separated from the church of Christ and the assemblies of the faithful."

When some Orthodox churches, under pressure from their respective governments, changed the calendar to make Easter come nearer to Passover, other Orthodox churches considered this betrayal of the faith. A split occurred that resulted in a breach of unity.

Healing of the schisms caused by hatred and discord is a consummation devoutly to be wished!

A Christian must be a valiant fighter for truth, Spurgeon said:

> "When I came to London as a young minister, I knew very well that the doctrines which I preached were by no means popular, but I for that reason brought them out with all the more emphasis. What a storm was raised! I

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> was reading the other day a tirade of abuse which was poured upon me about twenty years ago. I must have been a horridly bad

> fellow according to that description; but I was pleased to observe that it was not I that was bad, but the doctrines which I preached.
>
> "I teach the same truths now; and after having preached them these four-and-twenty years or so, what can I say of the results? Why, that no man loses anything by bringing the truth right straight out.
>
> "I wish to bear this witness, not about myself, but about the truth which I have preached. Nothing has succeeded better than preaching out boldly what I have believed, and standing to it in defiance of all opposition, and never caring a snap of the fingers whether it offended or whether it pleased."

We should imitate Spurgeon in his zeal for truth.

***

I have had a guardian angel for all my eighty-five years; you have also had one since you were born. What did your angel do before your birth? Angels were created long before men.

Perhaps before guarding me, my angel guarded others of former generations which means he possesses a tremendous experience of life to draw from in serving me. Our angels have the experience of the beatific vision; they see God every day (MTT 18:10).

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While in jail, I had occasion to observe fights between two groups of ants. It was always a cruel war. But if one group had one single man as its ally, he could wipe out the whole camp of the enemy with one giant step. Likewise, one angel assured the victory to the Israelites by killing 185,000 Assyrians in one night.

We possess the history of several ancient peoples among which the most important is the history of the Jews. Many of the Jewish people were in communion with angels. Even God was called "the Angel of the Lord" when He appeared to men like Jacob and Moses.

(In my book, ~In God's Underground~, I mentioned briefly how I got acquainted with an angel. It was an illuminating experience,

figuratively and literally.)

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Is it ever lawful to divorce? Jesus said that Moses had permitted it only because men had hardened their hearts. A spouse who is not allowed to divorce can turn his partner's life into hell. The ideal, as expressed by Him, is that those joined by marriage should remain together for life. But where is the ideal husband, the ideal wife? People continue to have hardened hearts.

I knew the wife of a clergyman who constantly had to watch over her daughter of twelve so that her father would not assault her sexually. I advised divorce. I knew that Jesus' point of view was that of the potential victim.

Is it right to be a denunciator? Ahasuerus was a cruel despot and two of his servants had plotted to lay hands on him. Mordecai and Esther denounced the plotters to the king who had them hanged

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(EST 2:21-23). Mordecai and Esther are rightly considered examples for believers.

Not to denounce sin can be a sin. It is written, "If a person sins in hearing the utterance of an oath and is a witness, whether he has seen or known the matter - if he does not tell it, he bears guilt" (LEV 5:1). This refers to a blasphemous or criminal oath.

Old Testament Joseph reported to his father the evil words of his brothers (GEN 37:2). Someone reported to David about Absalom's plan to kill him (2SM 15 and 17). St. Paul's nephew revealed conspiracy to kill the apostle. Were these reprehensible acts?

The majority of Church fathers excuse the actions of Tamar who mated with her father-in-law, knowing that her progeny would be the proper ancestor of the future Messiah. They also excuse the incest of the daughters of Lot who did not wish to have children from idolaters; the ruse by which Jacob obtained the blessing reserved for his older brother because he knew his brother was unfit to receive it; Moses' killing of an Egyptian oppressor; Samson's suicide that killed many of the enemies of God, etc. Is it right to dissimulate (hide under a false or hidden pretense)

for a good purpose?

Jansenius and Duvergier of St. Cyran, when young, decided to dedicate their lives to the reformation of the Catholic church. They also determined to

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keep silent about their purposes until they could insinuate themselves into high places where they would be effective. The first became an abbot, the second a bishop.

I cannot see how we can win any war without dissimulation. Underground churches in Communist and Muslim countries dissimulate constantly. The leaders live and travel under pretended names, hide their whereabouts, mislead the authorities and secret police, and so on.

Sir Stafford Cripps, hearing one of the broadcasts of the British Psychological Warfare branch during World War II, said, "If we have to report to this sort of thing to win the war, I'd rather we lost it." He should have seen what a lost war looks like in the shambles of Germany and Japan; then he would have changed his mind.

Other members of the British war cabinet were wiser than he. They sent an exact double of Marshal Montgomery to Gibraltar while he himself was putting the final touches to the plans for D-Day (the invasion of France). The Germans did not expect an imminent attack, knowing Montgomery to be far away on an inspection.

The British cabinet had followed a biblical pattern in which soldiers were taught to lie in wait under cover of darkness (JDG 9:32). Ruse is an effective weapon for those who have a great calling

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but are weak. If anyone has scruples about dissimulation, certainly we can all agree that it is not morally necessary to disclose all one knows.

During World War II, the German ship ~Graf Spee~ was in Montevideo for repairs for only forty-eight hours, the time limit for a neutral harbor. Two small British ships lay in wait but were impotent to take the ~Graf Spee~. The British Admiralty, aware that the larger ships were too far away to arrive in time,

resorted to deception and signaled that a big battleship with an aircraft carrier would join them soon. The Admiralty was sure the Germans would break the code. The result was that the German Captain Langdorff scuttled the ship and committed suicide. The British won without a battle.

Was it proper for Moses to send some Jews to spy out the land of Canaan?

Newton's laws of mechanics and Maxwell's laws of electro-dynamics are valid up to a point, but they do not work in the infrastructure of the atom. Biblical and moral laws are valid when applied correctly.

To say there exist no absolute moral laws because they do not apply everywhere at all times is wrong. This is the error of situational ethics. To say that those who apply absolute moral laws must not have concrete circumstances in view is also wrong. This is the error of the legalists. An Eskimo has to conform to other circumstances than a Zulu, which does not make either immoral per se.

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Krishna taught that we should be preoccupied only with deeds, not with their fruits. Jesus said, on the other hand, that we will know the moral value of a deed by its fruits. And it is really not of primordial importance to do great works. Whatever we do, even on a small scale, should be done with a great heart. But one cannot recommend a given response for all circumstances.

There are times when we must boast and times when we must humble ourselves. When the devil comes to you with the temptation to be haughty, humble yourself because of your many sins. When he drives you to despair about your salvation, boast your rank as a child of God.

In church confess your sin, and in every day life be a saint. Usually we do the contrary; we sin in everyday life and sing holy songs in church.

***

Jesus was not very polite to the Pharisees when He turned and pronounced His woes against them - especially in public. His confrontation could scarcely have pleased them. From this experience we may conclude that it is not a duty always to be polite. Politeness does not always come first. Nothing comes

first ~always~.

In Scripture there is a very strange expression: "it happened on the second Sabbath after the first" (LUK 6:1). Obviously, any Sabbath can be the second after

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the first. Why the designation? The Greek expression is ~deuteroprotos~, which means literally "the second things first."

The occasion involved the Sabbath on which Jesus' disciples did something forbidden by law. Being hungry, they plucked heads of grain on the Sabbath and ate them.

Now, there are days on which secondary things take first priority. As a general rule, filling the stomach is a secondary matter, but there are times when nagging hunger moves it into first place.

Jesus reminded those who objected that when David was hungry, he had eaten forbidden things of which it was lawful only for the priests to partake. Jesus had no word of condemnation for David, who with his small band of men had been on the run, persecuted because he defended a just cause. In effect, Jesus excused his action.

***

"If the law makes false suppositions," mused Mr. Bumble, a character in Dickens' ~Great Expectations~, "then the law is an ass, an idiot." Laws are asses when they apply ordinary norms to exceptional circumstances.

During World War II, the Nazis wanted to deport and then kill all the Jews of Rome. The city's municipal government could not save all the Jews, but it salvaged the lives of many by changing their

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identities, giving them forged documents, and hiding their true parentage.

For humanitarian reasons the respective employees committed acts that would be considered immoral and would be condemned by the laws of any civilized country. But the circumstances were extraordinary and demanded extrajudicial acts. A man who really

loves another is willing to do extraordinary things, even if it means breaking the rules.

We should be harmless as a dove and wise as a serpent (see (MTT 10:16), not foolish as an ass, and never mindless as a swine. (The atheist philosopher Nietzsche boasted that he was the sow mentioned by Jesus in MTT 7:6!)

Both Judaism and Christianity have at times used questionable methods to establish their religions. Zinzendorf wrote, "If our predecessors had not used methods which our principles no longer admit, Christianity would not be. We have to thank those who did an ugly preparatory work in order that we might remain clean." There exists no ideal crystal or gas. Reality differs from laboratory formulas. So it is with morals.

Must one always speak out for the Savior? When Paul was confronted by his accusers before the governor, Felix, he did not say one word about Jesus (ACT 24:10-21). Under the circumstances, it was more important to defend himself than to witness for Jesus. (Later he did take opportunity to do so.)

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Dr. Fritz, in his ~Pastoral Theology~, says that it is not under all circumstances wrong or contrary to love to omit private admonition. He cites Luther's statement about the Eighth Commandment: "For when the matter is public in the light of day, there can be no slandering or false judging or testifying; as, when we now reprove the Pope and his doctrine which is publicly set forth in books and proclaimed in all the world. For where the sin is public, the reproof also must be public that everyone may learn to guard against it" (pp. 230-232).

Luther also says that false teachers are to be condemned without a hearing, without entering long discussions with them, since their errors have already been sufficiently refuted by the public confessions of the church (Walch edition, IV, 1057). And elsewhere Luther commends the holy fathers of Nicea for not allowing the Arians to defend their heresies out silencing them by "hissing unanimously."

In Dedeken's ~Thesaurus~, an opinion is given regarding the question of whether public sin must first be verified before being rebuked. This is vigorously denied, with the argumentation that John the Baptist didn't ask Herod what he had done (he might have denied it); but condemned his public sin, as also Nathan did with David. Likewise Joseph told his father when there was an

evil report about his brothers (Genesis 37), and Paul wrote public admonitions on the basis of what he had heard (2TH 3:11) (~Thesaurus~, I, 864-865)

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If moral problems are so intricate, where lies the solution? How can one know for sure what is good and what is bad?

Meister Eckhart long ago gave a reply to this question:

> "Everything is good that a man does who has become one with God."

***

It is important to avoid quarreling. ~The Fathers of the Desert~ contains the story of two brethren who decided to live together. One of them said, "Whatever my brother tells me I will do." The other said, "I will always do what my brother decides." For many years they lived together harmoniously. When the enemy saw it, he tried to divide them.

One day, as they sat on a bench in front of the house, he showed himself to one as a dove and to the other as a crow. The one said, "Do you see the dove?" The other said, "It is a crow." They began to quarrel, each claiming to be right. In the end they beat each other until blood flowed, to the great joy of the enemy, and then they separated.

Three days later, distressed over their fractured relationship, they woke up to a realization of the cunning of the enemy. They reunited and lived in harmony until the end. The bird had been a swallow.

How stupid for men who worship the same Christ to fight about the manner of worshiping, especially

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since one's particular Christianity in most cases is due to an accident of birth.

We should also avoid slander and should abstain even from listening to it. Furthermore, if others speak evil of you, you are not permitted to reply in kind.

Michelangelo and Raphael were both great artists, but whereas

the latter was very much beloved, Michelangelo felt himself despised because he was ugly as a result of an accident he had in his youth.

Once, friends came to Raphael and said "Michelangelo is speaking much evil of you." In reply, Raphael arose and said, "As for me, I thank God for having the privilege of living in the same century as the unsurpassed artistic genius Michelangelo."

"Why do you praise him when he insults you?"

Raphael replied, "My attitude toward Michelangelo depends not upon his attitude toward me, but upon the dictates of truth and love."

Remember that not only artists, but also the workers in God's Kingdom are few. We cannot afford to discard a single one. Even if a brother is weak and a sinner, we cannot spend time on anything that would deflect us from effective work for the Kingdom.

I have no artistic talent when it comes to drawing. Once when my granddaughter, then five, saw me sketching some human faces, she said, "Grandpa, you sin. God made men beautiful. You make

them look ugly." Her assessment applies not only to bad painters or to artists like Picasso, but also to those who speak evil of men.

The Bible records a notable example of the virtue of not speaking evil of another. Pilate was the sixth Roman procurator of Judea and held the office for ten years. He has been described by both Josephus and Philo as an arbitrary, tyrannical ruler who, because of this, was recalled by Rome and banished to Gaul where he died by his own hand.

We have the unflattering information about him from other sources as well; the evangelists record nothing bad about him.

The Talmud, in the treatise ~Pesahim 57A~, wrote about the high priest who sentenced Jesus, "Woe over the house of Annas, woe over their curses, woe for their serpent-like hissings."

The Bible does not say one bad word about Jesus' judges.

One cannot over-emphasize the virtue of peace-making. ~Mehilta~, a Jewish religious writing, says, "If in regard to stones which cannot hear or see or talk just because they are the stones of an altar which is to make peace between Israel and their Father in Heaven, you are ordered not to lift up an iron tool upon them, how much more shall no punishment befall him who makes peace between two men, or between a man and his wife, or between two towns and nations, or between families and government."

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Without peacemaking, you will never have the great Christian virtue of calmness and tranquility. Without inner peace, it is difficult to use your time well. A Christian is a lover of peace if for no other reason than that quarrels are a great waste of time.

Euclid, the Greek mathematician of antiquity, once had a misunderstanding with a friend who threatened him by saying, "May I die if I do not avenge myself against you."

The philosopher answered, "May I die if I do not make peace with you." These words ended the quarrel.

We have a Savior who was so intent on making peace between the sinner and an offended God that He gave His life for it. We too should be willing to make this commitment.

Inner peace is a prerequisite for making peace. During a tempest at sea when the ship was tossed to and fro by the angry waves, the wife of a naval officer asked her husband, "How can you be so calm in such a storm?"

The officer drew his sword, pointed it at his wife's breast, and asked, "Why are you calm and unafraid?" Surprised, she protested, "Why should I be afraid? The sword is in the hand of my husband who loves me too much to harm me."

Her husband smiled and said, "This is the source of my calm, too. The wind and the waves are in the hands of my loving Father. Why should I be afraid?"

* * *

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When Jesus preached in the Jewish synagogues His teachings

were different from the rabbis' discourses. If He were here today and were allowed in our churches, He would preach a different message from what is commonly heard in the pulpit.

When He spoke, the common people heard Him gladly, though He said things that might have been considered egocentric: "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (JHN 6:35).

Those who took offense did so because those who had believed in Him did not act at all like men whose hunger and thirst had been satisfied. They were as anxious as ever to enjoy the things and pleasures of this world, along with miracles or high spiritual experiences no longer needed by those whose hunger has been satisfied.

May Jesus have all there is of us, as He has given us all there is of Him. St. Augustine said, "One must be very greedy to have God and to run after other things, too."

Kant testified to Jesus' ideal perfection. Hegel wrote, "He is the union of the human and the divine." Spinoza -"He is the truest symbol of heavenly wisdom." Rousseau - "He is the highest person we can possibly imagine with respect to religion, the Being without whose presence in the mind, perfect piety is impossible." Renan - "He is the most beautiful incarnation of God in the most beautiful of forms."

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It is written that when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast,many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not believe in them" (JHN 2:23-24 - my translation from the original Greek).

May we be such ardent believers in the Perfect One that He in turn might say joyously that He believes in us because we have given Him all that is in us. I will say to men, "I believe in Jesus," and He will say in Heaven, "I believe in Richard Wurmbrand."

* * *

Many readers of this present book love Jesus, I am sure. But there are many degrees of love. The bride in Solomon's song is "lovesick" (SOS 5:8). This is a sickness without recovery. You yearn for the Beloved in the same way that a person with a high

fever yearns for water.

To some people, religion is rooted in fear. In others it is a do-it-or-you-will-be-damned proposition. To still others, it is social service or cultic practice. To the lovesick, it is an ardent passion that leads ultimately to being crucified with Jesus. You live no more; He lives in you. And just as His life was that of a Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief, of a Shepherd whose primary concern was to sacrifice His life to the wolves on behalf of His sheep, so you too will take suffering consciously upon yourself.

To be God-filled, to be Christ-filled, and to be Spirit-filled, are not the same thing. The God-filled

person shares God's serenity. In Him there is no variation or shadow of turning (JMS 1:17). The Christ-filled person knows the Church is the continuation of Christ's incarnation with all the human temptations, sufferings, weaknesses, and triumphs it involves. He continues this fight. The Spirit-filled person sees his main role in being what the Spirit is - a comforter, a guide to light.

This is what I had to tell you and you can be sure these are oracles of God. Is what I gave you much too little? Is it not too big a claim to put the name divine oracles to to thoughts of yours, some of which are simply common sense? You might have expected more.

Those who believe the Bible to be the oracle of God would do well to read the endless genealogies in it and Numbers 1-4 with boring details of a census. The common, the average, the boring also belong to reality and to God's truth - the more simple truths which can be helpful on the way of salvation. We should not expect things too big.

What can Einstein reveal to toddlers? What can God say to little beings like us? We are still in primary grades, but we can get hints of what follows in high school, college, and the university.

Today's partial oracles prepare us for gradually getting the whole truth in all of its beauty.

The End of "THE ORACLES OF GOD"

The Overcomers

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From the back cover:
"I believe it is very profitable to see Christ in the lives of his saints." Richard Wurmbrand

Pastor Wurmbrand has met many heroes of faith. Not all were "heroes" in the world's sense: some were criminals, some even torturers. All, however, have overcome their weaknesses to perform acts of love, humility and self-sacrifice.

"Can we also become the sort of men and women the Bible calls 'more than conquerors'? asks Pastor Wurmbrand. "I have personally known such people. I have known dying men who gave the medicine that could have saved their lives for another sick prisoner. I have seen men who were terribly hungry give their last piece of bread to another. I have seen the joy on their faces. I have heard them singing, their faces shining like the sun."

~The Overcomers~ is not about perfect saints of God. It is about ordinary, sinful, fallible people who found a strength not of their own making: a strength available to us all.

Pastor Wurmbrand spent fourteen years in Romanian prisons for his faith. A gifted teacher and linguist, he is founder of the international organization Voice of the Martyrs.

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PREFACE

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK is to present a series of "overcomers" - men and women who not only endured for the sake of their faith, but used obstacles to ascend to great spiritual heights.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday the crowd chanted to him, "Hosanna in the highest!" "Hosanna" is a contraction of two Hebrew words: ~Hosha~, "save," and ~na~, "please." Hosanna in the "highest" means, "Please save us in the highest sense of this word" (or, "Save us on the highest plane").

I can save a hungry orphan from his hunger by giving a little money for his support. I can save him even better by contributing regularly to his bodily needs. But I can save him best by adopting him and making him heir of all I possess.

Individuals asked and obtained from Jesus different kinds of salvation: from sickness, from immediate trouble, from sins, from death. But he can provide a salvation much higher than all of these: he can save us from being only human. He can give beyond anything we might dare to ask or think. He offers us the privilege of one day sitting with him and his Father on his throne, from which universes are created and ruled (REV 3:21).

Those called to such heights soar even now above average men and women, even if outwardly they are lowly or downtrodden.

I was in jail with a remarkable man, Pastor Francis Vishky, leader of the organization ~Christian Endeavour~ in Romania. He was sentenced to twenty-two years because of sermons that displeased the Communists. His wife and seven children were deported to a desert place, where it was difficult to obtain bread and water. His heavenly calm even in such a situation was amazing. It was the calm of a heavenly throne.

I would like to tell you what happened at the moment of his arrest. On that particular morning the whole family was at the breakfast table, where they read PSA 23:4,5: "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over."

Without knocking, three officers of the Secret Police broke into the house. "This is a search," they said, with no further explanation. But everyone knew that after the search the father would be taken to prison. The family continued to eat quietly. The police wondered that they still had an appetite and remained calm.

Vishky later said that they understood the psalm better under those tense circumstances than they had previously. God had not promised that his children would not pass through the valley of the shadow of death, but that in it they would fear no evil.

"He prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies." On the table we will not always have what we desire. He can serve us with suffering, trials, deportation, jail, even violent death. But the valley through which we pass is called the valley of the ~shadow~ of death, not of death. The shadow of a dog cannot bite; the shadow of death cannot kill.

Vishky added, "The Jews were commanded to eat the whole Passover lamb - with its head, its legs, its entrails" (EXO 12:9). The entrails were far from appetizing, and

on the legs there was not much meat. We have to accept the whole Jesus: what is pleasant to us, but also his crown of thorns .

In jail, Vishky maintained the same calm, the same serenity. This happens when one knows he is destined for a throne. Not only crowned kings but also crown princes have to behave royally. We learn how to obtain such a character from those at this high level of faith. That is why in this

book I will provide many examples of faith under pressure.

Do you perhaps say "too many"?

How much time do we spend watching TV, listening to radio, and reading newspapers and magazines? A poll taken in the USA reveals that only 9% of those who speak to us in the media have a connection with religion of any kind. But by continual repetition they fill the needs of the 80% of American churchgoers with the thoughts of people with no high ideals, or even of bad people who cannot possibly help us live a righteous life.

The Bible is repetitious. It deals with 1,300 persons. Some of them are luminous examples of faith, others average believers. To know their names and something about their lives is extremely useful, just as it was useful to me to have certain contacts when I first came to the USA. Many of these Bible characters will be our friends in heaven. Others show by their ugly lives what kind of people we should be wary of if we wish to enter heaven ourselves. So it is good for you to get acquainted with the heroes of faith I describe .

Since Jesus' ascension to heaven, there have been many who continue in his footsteps. These "fill up in their flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ." These will be the main subJect of the present book.

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The Story of the Rothschild Dynasty

When I speak to Jews about Christ, I often illustrate the significance of what he has done for us by telling them the story of how the Rothschild dynasty of multi-millionaires began. Its founder, Mayer Amshel Rothschild, had been a poor boy who served in the house of Rabbi David Moshe of Chortkov. This rabbi had set aside in a drawer 200 golden coins as a dowry for his daughter.

Rothschild married a girl from another town, where he opened a little shop that did quite well. Years passed, and the time came for the rabbi's daughter to marry. As the wedding approached, the rabbi opened the drawer to take out the coins to give to the bridegroom, only to discover to his horror that the money was not there. No one in the house had any explanation as to how it could have disappeared. The suspicion fell on Rothschild. They asked themselves:
Where did he get the money to open his shop?
Surely he was the thief.

The rabbi defended him: "It is not right to accuse anyone without proof."

But the family insisted, "You must go and speak to him. Otherwise we will be disgraced. The guests have started to arrive, and the wedding will not take place."

Reluctantly the rabbi went, apologized for having to ask such an embarrassing question, but explained the terrible predicament in which he found himself. Looking his former employee in the eye he asked, "Do you know something about the money?"

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Rothschild was silent a few minutes, then said, "I have stolen it. I will repay it here and now. Please forgive me."

The rabbi, who had an understanding for human sin, gladly forgave him. The wedding took place, and he officiated with great joy. Rothschild went broke. Many years later it was discovered that the 200 gold coins had been stolen by a servant girl, who shared it with a lover. At a drunken party the lover bragged how he came to possess the money. He was arrested, and both acknowledged their theft. The rabbi went to Rothschild and asked him pointedly, "Why did you confess to a sin you had not committed? And why did you give me the money?"

He replied, "I saw you terribly sad. I imagined the weeping of your wife and of the girl. I was ready to give you all my money immediately to make up for the loss, but I knew you would not accept such a sacrifice from me. So I had to say it was your money, which I stole. So you were peaceful and had joy."

Then Rabbi David Moshe blessed him: "May God reward this deed of yours by giving you and all your descendants great riches." The blessing was fulfilled. The Rothschilds are among the richest men in the world. One can only admire such a deed. But should we stop at admiration, or should we strive to become heroes ourselves in some area of life?

This Rothschild's deed has the fragrance of our inspiration from Jesus. To make his message and gift more acceptable to us, Jesus took the lowliest appearance of a man, allowing himself to be born not only into a poor family but in a humble stable for beasts. Even more, he became sin for us and ended his earthly life crucified among thieves. He went so far as to declare that my sins are his!

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The Only Female Monk

When I speak in a Christian Orthodox church, I tell the story of Theodora from their ~Lives of Saints~, which - sadly - the average Orthodox never reads.

When Theodora's mother died, her father decided to become a monk and suggested that she enter a convent. But she was so attached to her father that she decided to go to the monastery with him. Since she was not conspicuously feminine in appearance, she was accepted as a monk. Because of her (or more appropriately "his") sweetness, she soon became a favourite among her brethren, whom she served with all devotion. From time to time the abbot sent "him" and two monks to a town far away to purchase what was needed in the monastery. They would spend the night in an inn.

The inn owner had a young daughter. One day he discovered to his horror that she was pregnant, and used violence to find out who had brought this shame upon them. Wanting to protect her lover from her father's fury, the girl said, "The young, handsome monk did it to me."

Her father went to the abbot in a rage and complained to him. He in turn questioned Theodora who, thinking that one of "his" fellow monks was responsible, fell on her knees and said, "Forgive me. I am guilty." Knowing that the monk would be expelled from the monastery for this misdeed, Theodora thought, "If he sinned like this as a monk, he will do even worse things when he is dismissed." So she said only, "Forgive me, Father, I have sinned."

"He" was immediately expelled but did not leave the monastery. For years in heat or cold she stood at the gate asking forgiveness from all who came and went. In the end the abbot had pity on her and took her in again, but until the end of her life she was kept at menial work and was not given any consideration.

When she died and the corpse had to be washed, according to the monastic rules, it was seen that "he" was a woman.

She had taken upon herself another's guilt to keep him in the religious atmosphere of the monastery in the hope that he would not fall even deeper into sin.

The Orthodox church honours the name of Theodora.

Such deeds are so far beyond what we meet in daily life that you wonder if those who act like this are from our world, or if they receive their inspiration from another realm.

Hannah, a personality of the Old Testament, sang with sadness, "There is none holy like the Lord" (1SM 2:2). This song is tragic. God wishes us all to be holy and perfect like himself. Jesus is only adored for his love and self-sacrifice, but he would prefer to see his example followed, to be "one among many brethren."

We are all invited to take decisive steps toward this.

Tso-Po-Tao's Sacrifice

Once when preaching in China (Taiwan), I tried to do so Chinese-style. I told my listeners a story from the Chuen-Chin period of Chinese history (the fifteenth century BC).

Tso-Po-Tao went on a journey with Yang-Chao-Ai, during which they were overtaken by a heavy snowstorm. Unprepared for this, they had neither the clothing nor the food to survive. Tso-Po-Tao offered to undress and give all his clothing and food to Yang-Chao-Ai so that he at least might be saved. Yang refused, but in vain. Tso was already naked and half-frozen. Tso died, and Yang's life was spared.

As is my custom, I had thought much upon my sermon before delivering it. In deep meditation, one has a sense of the reality of the persons who pass through the mind. It was almost as if I had heard with my own ears the words of Tso-Po-Tao: "I give my body for you." I saw him undressing while the snow fell. After removing his jacket and feeling the sharp cold, he surely must have felt a strong temptation

to keep at least his shirt for himself. But his face shone more and more. His features became even more determined. He did not stop before he was completely naked, like the first couple in paradise, who had no cause for shame. I marvelled at his sacrifice and admired him as Yang-Chao-Ai must have admired him. Certainly his surviving friend would never forget this moment that held the grandeur of eternity .

I read this story decades ago and could never forget it. It represents the pinnacle of what the inner man of the heart longs for.

My audience were moved too.

Then I paused - what would music be without pauses? Preachers should not go on and on without interruption - I remained a little time in adoration of the God of love, who taught men and women of all ages to ascend to such heights.

Then I continued: "As in the case of Tso-Po-Tao who travelled with Yang-Chao-Ai, when righteousness and sin travel together both seem doomed to die. In the storms of life, righteousness does not bear sin, and sin cannot bear righteousness. Therefore Jesus, the embodiment of righteousness, chose to die. He gave more than his food and clothes: he gave his body and blood to the sinner that he might survive. Gratitude for this sacrifice changes hearts. The Chinese character for "righteousness" is the "I" covered by a lamb. We live by the fact that Jesus, called the Lamb of God because of his meekness, gave himself for us."

I did not end my sermon with this. I knew some of my listeners had a question: Could only Tso-Po-Tao before Christ and a limited number of such people after Christ have had such beauty of character? Or can we also ascend to such heights? Can we also become masters of love, masters of life, the sort of men and women whom the Bible calls "more than conquerors" - victors over selfishness?

I have personally known such people. I have known dying men in Communist prisons who gave the medicine that could have saved their lives to another sick prisoner,

even to one belonging to a faction utterly opposed to them. I have seen men who were terribly hungry give their last piece of bread to another. I have seen the joy on their faces when they brought the greatest sacrifice. I have heard some of them singing, their faces shining like the sun. Can we also become masters of a joy that persists even in the midst of terrible suffering? What is the key to this palace?

Religious people will say it is the grace of God that makes some men stronger and better than others. It does not depend on us.

But the Bible is a Jewish book. The Jewish mind jumps over a whole chain of intermediary events and explains them by their first cause. In GEN 41:13, we read that a young man by the name of Joseph hanged the baker of an Egyptian king. But in Chapter GEN 40:22, it is written that the one who hanged the baker was the king, not Joseph, who was in prison. This is an insoluble contradiction in the average mind, but not in Jewish thinking. Joseph was the first to inform the baker, with whom he shared prison life, that he would be hanged, so he is considered as the one who hanged him.

In the same way the Bible ascribes to God alone the merit for all the good that is in humanity, but he gives every good thing as a potential. Every child is a potential

grown-up, but he must do his part in feeding, exercising, and developing his abilities. So we receive goodness, love, self-sacrifice, nobility of character in potential. But these qualities must be learned in the school of hard knocks. How to become a person of great stature must be learned with the same earnestness and persistence with which we learn a trade, overcoming failure, rising after falling again and again, always remembering that the primary source of what is good in us is God.

I feel called to write this book because I knew intimately several such people during my many years of work in the Romanian Underground Church under both Fascism and Communism, as well as in jail. T learned much from them.

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I also have first-hand knowledge about others from my twenty-five years of work in the International Christian Mission to the Communist World, which was in regular contact with the heroes of persecuted churches in all parts of the world.

This book will touch on other subjects as well, but more than anything else it will acquaint you with the Garden of Eden. Therese of Avila said: "The soul of the righteous is nothing else than a paradise. It is the world that the Heavenly Bridegroom inhabits and in which he rejoices [PRO 8:31]. How splendid must be a lodging place in which dwells a king so powerful, so wise, so pure, and so rich in all good lives!"

This part of the book will be an ascent to the paradise in which dwell such masters of love and life.

We Can Ascend from the Worst Depths

Some of us live very far from such heights. Some of us wallow in great sin. But some very depraved people have moments of grandeur. There is just a little seed of good in them, but eventually it could grow.

The Talmud, the holy book of the Jews, contains following story:

> Once during a drought, Rabbi Abahu heard a voice: "If Pentikaka [which means in Greek "five evils"] prayed, it would rain.
> Abahu asked Pentikaka about his occupation. He replied, "I provide men with prostitutes, I clean the theatre, I take the clothes of prostitutes to the

laundry, I dance and play the cymbals before them."
The rabbi asked, "Did you ever do good?"
He replied, "While I cleaned the theatre, I saw a woman weeping. She told me, 'My husband is in prison. I will prostitute myself and rescue him.' Then

I sold all I had. even the blanket, and gave the money to the woman. I told her, 'Take this, ransom him, and don't sin.'"
Hearing this, Rabbi Abahu exclaimed, "His prayer is worthy to be accepted."

Such hidden possibilities exist even in bad men.

In Romania, Berila was given a life sentence for murdering a couple together with all their four children - the youngest still a baby - to steal a small sum of money for drink. He had even killed their cat. A baker by profession, he worked in the prison bakery where not only bread was made but also biscuits and cakes for the prison staff. Berila risked heavy beatings by bringing to hungry prisoners some of the goodies reserved only for officers and wardens.

But whence this gem in a dirty place? Could I also be such a jewel? Am I, too, called to ascend?

This is not a book that simply tells a good person how to become better. Those who have wings can fly from peak to peak, each higher than the last. Those who do not can ascend from a deep pit on a ladder, slowly, rung by rung. The Bible uses both these images.

Many former criminals have become exemplary saints.

This Book Will Profit You

Thousands of books appear each year. Why should you read this one? How will you profit from it? Should a person read unprofitable books as well? Must we not be as choosy in reading books as we are in selecting the food we eat?

The wrong kind of book can poison a life. Marx, Nietzsche, Lenin, Hitler, Mao, de Sade and many more wrote books that others read, believe, and act upon. Tens of millions of people have died as a result in wars and revolutions. De Sade wrote books that inflamed the mind to violence and lust. Books can be dangerous. Some have

taught men to hate and despise their fellow men, with the result that they hated and were hated. Mankind would be much better off if some books had never been written.

The Bible says that for fear of the authorities who had just crucified Jesus, his first disciples were assembled behind closed doors (JHN 20:19). It was wise to do so. They too were in danger of being arrested and killed. But if it is wise to keep the doors shut for fear of persecutors who can kill only the body, should we not also keep the gates of the mind shut so that no pernicious ideas, no false images of reality, no lies can enter and destroy the soul?

Evagre of Pantus, the third-century Greek church teacher, wrote "Be the door-keeper of your heart and don't let thoughts enter it without interrogating them first: "On whose side are you, on mine or on my adversary's?'" Readers should ask themselves before starting a book, "How can this book profit me? I have a short life and a very limited time for reading. Why should I spend it on this particular book? What is its importance for me?"

Many have a prejudice against religion. They argue, "It speaks about lofty things without practical usefulness in this world." I once thought like this and was surprised therefore to find what a tremendous role the subJect of "profit" plays in the Bible.

The Communists tried to build an economy on something other than the desire for profit and failed. God himself placed it within the human heart. The Bible warns against "vanity...things wherein there is no profit" (JER 16:19). It teaches men to calculate "what profit he has from all his labour" (ECC 1:3). It claims, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1TM 4:8). It puts the question, "What profit is it that we have kept God's ordinance?" (MAL 3:14).

The Apostle Paul did exactly what I do at this moment. He wrote, "I speak for your own profit" (1CO 7:35). Jesus himself taught explicitly that we should seek what is

profitable. He said, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (MTT 16:26).

My claim is that the present book will profit you.

Siberia's Ice Can Be Melted

Of the contemporary masters of life, I want you to meet

Bishop Victor Belikh, a Ukrainian Christian whom I met in Kishinev. He had spent twenty-four years in Communist jails. The first twenty he passed in solitary confinement without ever knowing anything about his family and friends. He was allowed no family visits and no correspondence.

Every evening a straw mattress was put in the cell for him to sleep on for seven hours. In the morning it was taken away. The rest of the time he was not allowed to lie down even on the cold concrete, nor was he allowed to sit or stand on it. For seventeen hours a day he had to walk around his cell uninterruptedly, as horses do in a circus. He was surveyed by jailors through the peephole in the cell door. If he stopped or broke down, they threw buckets of water on him or beat him and he was forced to continue. After twenty years of such a regime, he was sent to forced labour in northern Siberia, where the ice never melts, for another four years.

I asked him, "How could you bear this suffering after the years in solitary confinement and a starvation diet?"

He replied by singing a song he composed: "With the flames of love's fire that Jesus kindled in my heart, I caused the ice of Siberia to melt. Halleluja!" His face shone. The Bible writes that the face of Stephen, first martyr of Christianity, shone when he was sentenced to death.

I did not feel worthy to stand before such a man. What an honour Jesus gave me to be called a "brother in faith" by such a man to have become a member of a family that breeds such exemplary humans! But more than that, the possibility is given to each of us to become such masters of

life. This is not only the grace of God but also assiduous work on your own character. It is as if at birth we are given a block of marble, a hammer, a chisel, and are told, "You can hew out of this the image of an emperor." Jesus does not wish to be the only most holy Person, but the first among many brethren and sisters of the same kind. We are all called to be holy.

Men put in Belikh's situation are rare, but many men in deportation, in labour camps, in places devastated by war and revolution, even many poor in rich countries, have no shelter from the cold. But there is another kind of cold. It is often icy cold in well-to-do homes. Love has grown cold. There is no longer a smile or pleasant gesture for those who were once loved. Spouses, parents, children, friends have become alienated from each other.

In Jesus' time there was no electricity. The smallest light

had to be kept burning. There were not even matches to kindle a fire. One had to be very thrifty. Jesus says about himself that "He will not quench a smoking flax." [ISA 42:3, MTT 12:20] When I was in jail, we blew again and again on what seemed no more than the remembrance of a fire that had gone out, and we succeeded in bringing it to life again. If everyone around you is icy, don't despair. Ice can be made to melt if the fire of Jesus' love burns in your heart.

A Short, Light Affliction

One of the profits you will have from reading this book is that it will greatly enlarge your vision.

Life is too short to be narrow. You need to enlarge your horizons, sharing the joys and sorrows of your fellow men and having fellowship with angels, glorified saints, and God.

The Hebrew word for "seasons" - ~moadim~ - also means "festivals." The profit of godliness is that it changes all seasons into festivals. We rejoice about all the joys of all who

rejoice. We have a second source of joy that unbelievers don't have. We rejoice also in tribulations.

Nobody is the same person after meeting, as I did, John Jue Han Ding. He is a Chinese pastor who went to Tibet to preach the gospel. For this he was arrested by the Communists and spent twenty years in prison. In him I met a being such as I had never met before. To look into his shining face, to hear the heavenly music coming from his mouth, to get acquainted with his story, enlarged my knowledge of dedication and holiness.

I felt like a botanist discovering in some virgin forest a flower of exquisite beauty, previously completely unknown.

The tortures he endured are beyond description. It is enough to say that at a certain moment they tied his hands behind his back and then emptied a bucket of human waste on his head. He was kept like that for days, without being given any opportunity to clean himself. He was given food, but with his hands tied behind his back he had to lie on the floor and lick it up like an animal. The food had to pass through soiled lips. He still did not deny his faith and refused to admit to crimes he had not committed.

Then his torturers filled with human waste a cell in which he was detained with a multitude of common criminals. Now they all waded and suffocated in it. The common criminals were told they would all be kept like this

indefinitely unless they forced him to comply with the demands of the interrogators. To survive, these criminals now competed in torturing him day and night.

When he came to this point in his story, John Jue Han Ding passed from speaking to singing, with a beautiful voice and an ecstatic face, a text from one of Paul's epistles: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (2CO 4:17,18).

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How heavy our light afflictions seem, and how light for him what we would consider the heaviest affliction imaginable. In his life we see a saint passing through the deepest pits of suffering and reaching the greatest heights of inner peace.

Are such beings only men?

In the Hebrew of 1SM 10:22, referring to Saul, future king of the Jews, after the word ~Ish~, which stands for "man," a big white space is left in the middle of a sentence. Rabbis explain it as showing that Saul, receiving the Spirit from above, has become more than a man. The opportunity has been given to him to reach heavenly heights.

This happened in the case of our Chinese brother.

People are seldom forced to endure cruelties like those he suffered. But everyone has cause for sadness or is acquainted with others in deep sorrow. We can point them to God, to Christ. But it is also very effective to point them to contemporary Christlike exemplars of heroism. Ding refused to the end to sign what the Communists demanded of him, thus demonstrating that one can successfully withstand any evil. Some men are unbreakable, more than conquerors. Under exceptional circumstances Jue Han Ding remained firm. We can take courage from his fortitude so that we too can be more than conquerors.

I believe it is very profitable to see Christ in the lives of his saints.

The first great Christian theologians, known now as "the Church Fathers," called the Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle "Christians before Christ." They were sure that noble truth, even if found among the heathen, is from the eternal Christ. In his epistles, the apostle Paul sometimes proves his point by quoting from heathen poets, even from a poem of praise to the heathen god Zeus in Acts 17.

Christ is eternally self-existent and omnipresent.

Amshel Rothschild was not a Christian. Tso-Po-Tao

lived before Christ came to this earth. They too belonged to the soul of his church, striving after what is noble, true, beautiful, and loving even without knowing him. It is written

that on the eighth day his parents gave the Saviour the name "Jesus." The shepherds in Bethlehem and the Magi believed in him without knowing this most holy name.

Psychotherapist's Soul Healed

Kasparovitch, one of the most famous Soviet psychotherapists, had been educated in atheism like everyone else in Russia. But now that religion is free in that benighted country, he received for the first time a Gospel. Here he found two of Jesus' sayings, through which, he says, God revealed himself to him. The first was, "Not as I will, but as you will" (MTT 26:39). In this he found the key to a healthy mental life and to healthy relations with his fellow men.

Two wills operate in a person's life: that of his own consciousness and that of his Creator. The former appeared yesterday and will disappear tomorrow. It knows as much as a toddler knows. It is determined by the passions, impulses, interests, and pleasures of the self, which must come to realize its own pettiness and unreliability. Therefore it has to say, "Not my will" but "The will of my all-knowing Creator, who loves me and has a host of angels to fulfill his plans for my life."

The experience is like that of a patient who surrenders his consciousness to an anesthetist and surgeon to do with his body what they know to be best. Not the will of the sick, but that of the surgeon. Not my will, but that of God.

Jesus' words "Not as I will, but as you will" apply not only to God but also to relations between men. Our guide in life should be, "Not my will, but as my spouse, my child, my parents, my boss, my employee, the man with whom I am in conflict wills - providing it does not harm him."

Accept these words of Jesus, and you too will be healthy.

Kasparovitch was also struck by Jesus' expressed purpose in his earthly life: "I came not to destroy, but to fulfil";

"I came not to judge, but to save"; "I came to seek and to save that which was lost."

Jesus knew why he came into the world. There is a

purpose also in my appearing in the world. I must fulfill the law of love. If I live according to this law, I will be happy and will make others happy.

In the former USSR, many are now making such discoveries. To bring the light of Christ to those forcibly kept in darkness has been my life's work for over half a century.

Let Us Depart to the Other Side

I am now 83 years old. In the Bible there is a man called Barzillai who is described as "very old," though he was only 80. My life has also been full of suffering, and even now I have many burdens to bear. It is natural for me to ask myself if I will be able to write this new book.

When General Morescat told Napoleon that the crossing of the Alps would be very difficult, the Emperor asked, "But is it possible?"

The general replied, "If you make an extraordinary effort."

"Then let us go," said Napoleon.

Napoleon's army had to cross to the other side of the Alps. I too have to cross a barrier, and I would like us to make the crossing together.

In several places, the gospel tells about Jesus' commandment to his disciples "to depart or go before him to the other side" (of the sea of Galilee). At other times he accompanies them.

The Bible has a mystical as well as a historical meaning. Though we live on earth, we sometimes have to depart to another realm. This was true of the apostle Paul and his companions when they were in jail. For certain periods they were raptured to heavenly places. There were hours of relaxation when they were surrounded not by jailors and

torturers, but by angels. Then they had to "cross the sea" again and return to the material world with its locked doors, iron bars, whips, and crosses. After a time there would be another crossing to the world of the spirit.

Under both Fascism and Communism I endured suffering and strife, and I am sure that those of you in the free world have had your crosses too. But the purpose of this book is to elevate ourselves – author and reader alike – to the realm in which all that is petty in human life is conquered, to a place from which we can better view our lives, our churches, and our countries. This journey will not be

easy, but with God's help we may succeed.

Transparent Angels

It is twenty years since Vania Moiseev, a young Romanian, died a martyr's death in the then USSR. His life can serve as a model for us.

He was a soldier in the Soviet army who had the same faith we all have, but with a difference: his faith was contagious. If one has the flu, the chances are that someone else will catch it. So it is with faith.

Moiseev spoke about his faith to his comrades and officers. And then he sang about the glory of Christ in his barracks, though this was strictly prohibited. To those who threatened him he replied, "A lark threatened with death for singing would still continue to sing. She cannot renounce her nature. Neither can we Christians." His singing brought fellow soldiers to Christ. For punishment he was forced to stand all night long outside the barracks in the depth of winter, clothed only in a summer uniform. He was flogged and finally stabbed in the heart, just like Jesus, whose heart was pierced by a sword; thus he too had an imprint of Jesus' wound .

He took all the suffering valiantly, saying that an angel had shown him heavenly Jerusalem. An uncultured man, he

described angels as no theologian would have done. He said, "Angels are transparent. If an angel stands before you with a man behind him, the presence of the angel does not keep you from seeing the man. On the contrary: looking at a man through an angel makes him more beautiful. I see my torturers through an angel. In that way, even they become lovable."

People have arbitrarily declared that angels are invisible. Yet Jesus said to Nathanael, "You shall see angels of God" (JHN 1:51). If he could see them, why can't we? But you have to understand that they are transparent. Every time you saw the good side of a person you once rejected as totally despicable, an angel was standing between and he altered your perception.

Liuba Ganevskaya had been arrested for her faith by Russian Communists. She was kept in a solitary cell, starved and beaten. One night she said to herself, "Enough is enough. I will not take the blows meekly anymore. Tonight, if they begin again, I will tell the police officer to

his face that he is a criminal." But that night when he insulted her with foul words and was ready to jump at her, somehow she saw him differently. She observed for the first time that he was as tired of beating as she was of being beaten. She was worn out from lack of sleep, and so was he. He was as desperate over not obtaining from her the denunciation of others that he expected as she was about suffering for refusing to comply.

A voice told her, "He is so much like you. You are both caught in the same drama of life. Stalin, the chief Communist dictator, killed thousands of God's children, but he also killed 10,000 officers of his own secret police. Three successive heads of police, Yagoda, Yezhov and Beria, were shot by their comrades, just like the Christians they had persecuted. You and your torturers pass through the same vale of tears." Liuba looked up at the one who had already lifted the whip to beat her and smiled. Stunned, he asked her, "Why do you smile?"

She replied, "I don't see you as a mirror would reflect you right now. I see you as you surely once were, a beautiful innocent child. We are the same age. We could have been playmates. Jesus likened those who would later whip and crucify him to children (MTT 12:17). I see you, too, as I hope you will be. There was once a persecutor worse than you, Saul of Tarsus; and he became an apostle and a saint."

Liuba had seen a transparent angel.

She asked the now pacified torturer what burden so weighed on him that it drove him to the madness of beating a person who had done him no harm. Because of her loving concern, he became a changed man. She had walked in a manner worthy of God.

We too should look like that at spouses, children, parents, brothers, sisters, men and women of other religions, party, class, or race with whom we are in conflict; if we find ourselves beginning to understand, love and forgive them, then we may know that we have seen an angel.

Stealing from God

A Communist officer who came to arrest a pastor asked him, "Do you consider me a monster, as everyone else does?"

The pastor, repressing any natural revulsion toward his oppressor, loved the man and answered, "Monster? No, I

see an unhappy man who believes that no one loves him. But God loves you, and in a special way. It was for evil men that he became man. He did not come to earth because we were nice altar-boys, but because we were dirty. The dirtier we are, the more right we have to his pity."

The officer defended himself. "I am not as bad as that. I am not a thief."

"You are," answered the pastor. "You have stolen from God."

"What?" came the sharp retort. "How?"

"You have robbed him of your sins. Our sins belong to him. To take them as his property, he came to be born as the Son of man. The dirt of our evil deeds are his, not yours. If you refuse to give them to him, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, who has the right to take them away because they are his property, you are a thief. Only a robber keeps what belongs to someone else."

That night the pastor remained unimprisoned.

In our day, Communism is the greatest sin committed by mankind. It robs Jesus of what belongs to him: the sins of all of us. In our fight against the evils of this ideology, we realize we are dealing not with some human weakness but with tremendous devilish forces that control the actions of men.

Jesus equated sin with sickness (MTT 9:11,12). Communists have a disgusting, contagious sickness. Devils rule them, therefore we must love them. But all the while we must hate their sickness. Communism is powerful, but the Saviour has given us even greater power to cast out these devils and heal people of the deadly disease of Communism, and of compromise with Communism.

We as Christians are unworthy to lift our eyes to God, but our vocation can be touched by no one. It pleased God to call such sinners as you and me to heal sickness and to cast out devils. We engage in this fight undaunted by our own frailty because we do so in his strength.

Poet Risks Jail

Solouhin, a Russian Communist, was bitterly attacked by his comrades for writing "wrong" poetry, which might have landed him in jail. One sees in his poems a primitive, unconscious groping for God, a seeking for what is holy without religious knowledge of any kind. They would not

satisfy an American fundamentalist minister, who would find they did not correspond with his Bible and books of

dogma but would fail to see that because of his own failure to engage in secret missionary work in Russia, the young poet probably had never seen a Bible or any other Christian book.

In one poem, Solouhin describes an ancient Orthodox church, with holy images seemingly of burnished gold. When evening came "in the church, even darkness somehow appeared to be golden."

How golden is even darkness when it is a church - this, only a Russian could tell you. Their churches have been taken away; therefore they value them. Westerners have churches on every corner; therefore they criticize them, not observing how golden are even the churches' failures and sins, because there is always in the church not only the human but also the divine.

One ikon there, says Solouhin, is five centuries old. For 500 years the holy mother painted on it wept over her to-be-crucified Son, but also wept with all the sinners who bowed in church confessing their sins. Then the image was thrown on the rubbish heap. The church was transformed into an official building for the Soviets, where no one weeps with those who weep. The holy image was picked up by a farmer lady, who hung it in a place of honour in her home. On a visit to her village, Solouhin saw it and told the lady that she could get good money by selling it to some museum because of its value as an artistic antiquity. The farmer lady answered, "Cut me in pieces, burn out my eyes with red-hot irons - I will not give the mother of the Lord, the luminous Mary's picture, to be mocked by devils. She speaks to me every day."

Solouhin finished his poem by telling us that for years he travelled without ever being able to forget the picture of the holy mother and the Holy Child in her lap.

The Russian publication ~Religion and Atheism in the Soviet Union~ reported the following:

> A teacher, Mrs Ziazeva, wrote to the newspapers and

> to the propagandists of atheism that, after studying the gospel, the Koran [holy book of the Moslems] and the Vedas [holy book of the Hindus], she came to

> Christianity in its Eastern Orthodox form because it gave light and warmth to her philosophical search.
>
> The Soviet historian Anna Tihaia returned her membership card to the Komsomol, the Communist youth organization, because it is atheistic. When interrogated, she explained how she arrived at her belief in God, after having thought critically about the contemporary science of official materialism. She could not remain a university professor. She became a unqualified worker in a factory and a Baptist activist.

The gospel survived in other Communist countries well, even among the ruling class. When the Soviets entered Czechoslovakia the members of the Czech Parliament, surrounded by Russian troops, were in panic. Only one member, a Christian, quietly took out his Bible and read. The others asked him, "Don't you care about the tragedy around us? We ourselves might be arrested and deported to Siberia soon. How can you sit so quietly?"

He answered, "This is the Word of God, which gives comfort to the troubled heart."

Then they invited him to read the Scriptures from the rostrum of the Communist Parliament, from which only bitter Leninist theories had been propagated. Later sixty members of parliament asked for Bibles and received them.

Renowned Beggar in Church History

J. Tauler, the renowned priest and theologian whom Luther calls his teacher, felt that he did not have the real thing - intimacy with Christ - and prayed for years for an encounter with somebody who did. There was nobody among his colleagues.

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One day, he heard a voice: "Go to that church and you will find the one whom you seek."

He went. At the porch was a beggar in rags. Tauler said "Good day."

"I don't remember ever having had a bad day," the beggar responded.

"Well, may you have a happy life."

The beggar said, "I was never unhappy. All my days were good. I praised God when I was hungry, when it rained and snowed, and when I was homeless. When I am despised or

encounter any other evil, I don't cease to give thanks to God. I am always happy, because I will, without any reservation, all that God wills for me. I receive with joy from God whatever he gives me, be it sweet or bitter. This makes me happy."

Tauler asked him, "What would you do if you were damned for eternity?"

"I have two arms: humility and love. With these I would embrace him so mightily that if I had to enter hell, he would have to enter with me. It would be sweeter for me to be with him in hell than without him in heaven."

"When did you find God?"

When I forsook attachment to any creature."

"But who are you?"

"I am a king."

"Where is your kingdom?"

"It is right in my heart. Christ gave it to me when he shed his blood for me."

The churches that have passed through persecution have such saints. The Lutheran pastor Traugott Hahn, who was killed by the Communists in Latvia in 1919, was one. He had written: "Higher Christianity starts only where martyrdom and sacrifice start. Without sacrifice, there is no salvation. It is foolishness to wish happiness on earth. Life is self-denial. To put everything at stake for God and his church, to follow him to the very end, is more than happiness. It is bliss."

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This book was written to enable us to encounter men of this calibre.

Small Gems

Genuine heroes, larger-than-life figures, are very rare. Heroes are persons for whom the exceptional becomes the norm. Frequently they do not last long. Some of them might not have ended up as heroes if they had lived longer. But there are little gems even among those who tried and did not succeed. More souls have been won for Christ by preachers who did what little they could, than by renowned evangelists.

A tiny poodle once stood near a wolfhound. The large dog asked scornfully, "Do you consider yourself a dog?" The little one did not have the courage to stand up to the large dog but nevertheless replied, "Sir, I might not be such a big dog as you, but neither can you say I am a cat."

The smallest dog is still a dog. And a person who shows a little bit of heroism in Christian life is still a hero. Many of the top leaders of the official Baptist Church in the former Soviet Union were stooges of the Communists. Here is a letter of instruction issued by the leadership to the churches in 1960. It was written by the Baptist pastor Karev:

> The young under 18 should not be baptized; baptisms of persons between 18 and 30 have to be reduced to a minimum; gatherings of pastors are forbidden, as are courses for teaching music directors and the gathering of funds for the poor; pastors have to take a stand against missionary activities, since they are "unhealthy."

Such instructions were given not by atheist authorities directly but by Baptist preachers who had become their servants. The rank-and-file Christian knew that his pastor was a traitor. But in the show church in Moscow this same

pastor had to read from the Bible. The songs praised the Saviour. The sermon, though not delivered in the right spirit, mentioned the name of Jesus. What a mighty work of God it was that thousands of Christians did not take offence at the wicked character of their pastor but thronged the church to hear the name of Christ and to adore him! One can worship God even in a religious service led by a Judas.

The same thing happened in the Soviet Orthodox Church. The Christian Nobel prize winner Alexander Solzhenitsyn revealed that the synod of bishops was guided by the Communist state. He wrote:

> A church led in a dictatorial manner by atheists is something unheard of in almost 2,000 years of Christianity. The printed Gospel can be obtained nowhere in our country. We receive the Bible from abroad [a reference to organizations like ours that smuggle Bibles]. But Orthodox believers pack the churches in which the liturgy is said by bishops and priests who are tools of Communism. The traitors chant the praises of Christ. They give a communion which is so holy that not even its being consecrated and imparted by a treacherous priest makes it lose its value.

Not all preachers who do such things are stooges. Some are real Christians who try to serve their Master in this

shameful way. There exists not only the spoken word but also body language. the gestures, facial expressions and tears running down the cheek.

In Japanese there are forty words for "No." Some of them mean "Yes."

I knew a man who had to laud the Communist regime in his speech. These were his words: "Under the wise leadership of the genial Ceausescu and the Communist Party, our country is lifted yearly to a higher and higher and higher way of life, up to the zenith." But as he pronounced these words, he began with his arms lifted high. Every time he

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said the word "higher" he lowered his arms a little bit more. When he said "zenith" his arms were at his side.

Everyone understood what he meant. This is also a way to express the truth.

That man ended up in prison, but he had served the truth in his own way. There had been a spark of heroism in him.

Be Grand Among Dwarfs

Christ invites everyone to grandeur. If one cannot be even the smallest of the giants, he can strive to be the greatest among dwarfs.

The Romanian Orthodox priest X had been an anti-Semite and had written a book proving that a Jew cannot become a Christian. Soon after the Communist takeover, he changed his politics and became a collaborator with the Reds. He won their confidence and was given a high position in the Ministry of Cults.

Later he became converted. He remained in favour with the Communists and so could reveal to us their secrets, including the names of informers within the church. He even told us those who had informed against me; he rendered the Underground Church important services while making a semblance of being loyal to the Reds. At the congress of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala, he spoke publicly against us, but secretly he met with leaders of our Scandinavian missions and assured them that the assertions about the persecutions were correct and all accusations brought against me were slander.

We honour his memory. God will reward him for the good done to the Underground Church, though it would certainly be much better if there were no compromise at all, if every Christian would say a decided "no" to every

temptation of sin or fear.

We cannot point an accusing finger at those who are only half or partial heroes. Half a loaf is better than none. We

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have a modest God. In Numbers 31 [NUM 31], he tells the Jews that he will give them a great victory in battle and much booty. Though the victory will be his, he says he will be satisfied with only one-fiftieth of the booty. No one else would have struck such a deal.

To the weaklings who served God with their weakness, I quote the words of Jesus: "All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given" (MTT 19:11). These words have freed my conscience from many unfounded regrets and much painful remorse. They can free others too.

It is obvious that not all commandments of the Bible are written for all believers. No one is obliged to fulfil all of them, and we must not feel bad when we cannot accomplish them. Some commandments are given only to the Jewish priests, others only to husbands or wives, others to children. The commandments for masters are not the same as those to servants. Many verses concern exclusively the generation that conquered Canaan. Some apply only to farmers. God does not expect the same thing from men of various temperaments and different educational backgrounds. Everyone should serve God according to his calling and his own gifts, without torturing his conscience over the fact that he cannot do other things for which he is not qualified. Not a few of those who were heroes in the encounter with Communist terror and suffered much, once freed, showed no power at all to resist the temptations of sex, money, or pride.

As one body, all together, we should fulfil the whole law, but no individual alone can be expected to fulfil it. Only Jesus was able to say, "I came to fulfil the law" (MTT 5:17).

There are certain commands that can be received only by exceptional beings to whom they are given and only in corresponding situations.

Let us strive to be at least grand dwarfs.

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Compromise and Regret

In Romania, when a nun who had been in hiding was arrested, she cracked under torture and gave the names of

all who had sheltered her and even those who had ever given her something to eat. They were all given life sentences, and their whole families were arrested, including grandparents, parents, and children. Many died. The nun passed her days weeping about what she had done.

An Italian paper told the story of a bishop who returned to his cell from an interrogation under torture, no longer recognizing his friends. He repeated again and again, "I have no other alternative but to hang myself." He was a man of fifty who had been active, capable, courageous.

At the World Baptist Congress in Tokyo, the Soviet delegation lied about religious liberty in their country and paraded the blood-stained flag of Communism along with the flags of the other nations represented. I stood up and protested loudly: "This is not the flag of Russia, but the universal flag of God-hatred. It is red with the blood of the martyrs." Some Baptists used physical violence to drive me out of the Congress, as 10,000 delegates from countries worldwide cheered the Red flag. Not one took up my defence.

But the story does not end there. When I went to the Baptist church in Moscow in 1991, Bytchkov (who had been their General Secretary) kissed me and said publicly, "Fascists and Communists have beaten you. We Baptists have beaten you too." How many preachers who have not sinned like the Russian Baptist collaborators of Communism would have exhibited the heroism of such a humble apology? How many of those who have not sinned like the bishop or nun would have repented, as Jesus said, "in sackcloth and ashes"?

Today we should be slow to condemn believers who, under pressure, did foolish things. We must keep in mind

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how much they have suffered. In Czechoslovakia, the Communists put an empty bucket over the head of a bound prisoner and hammered on it again and again. Laughing contemptuously, they said, "By this method we could make even Jesus say he is not the Saviour."

They were wrong about Jesus. But humans are often very weak and sometimes yield to more than physical tortures .

Iurii Shukevitch was imprisoned as a child for his father's "crime" of being a Ukrainian fighter against Communism. When asked to dissociate himself from his father, he refused, just as my wife and son did when I was thrown into Romanian jails. Shukevitch was in jail and deportation for

thirty-four years (1948-1968 and 1972-1986) for fulfilling the one commandment with a promised blessing: Honour your parents. Then, blind and after all that suffering, he had the great pain inflicted upon him. The Communists published a forged letter in which he allegedly denied his father.

Individuals whose childhood was stolen from them, who are heroes of the faith, are often victims of depression. They are prone to irrational attitudes and aggressiveness, even against friends. Their whole life becomes distorted, even if they are Christians, because in jail they had no opportunity to learn more Christian doctrine.

It is written in REV 4:8 that certain angels are covered with eyes. Therefore they see not only what we do and the conditions that shaped our actions, but also what we would have been under different circumstances. No violinist can play without a violin. Can God's wisdom penetrate a brain damaged by torture? This prisoner probably betrayed someone and then regretted it. Under the influence of drugs, another bishop declared, contrary to his convictions, "The Vatican is an international centre of espionage led by warmongers."

Jesus called Judas, after Judas had betrayed him without any pressure to do so, "friend." Will he not do the same to this nun, this bishop, to you and me when we give way to

impulses stronger than our conscience? If this nun and the bishop had lived in a free country, they might have been model Christians.

Solzhenitsyn, the Christian writer and Nobel prize winner expelled from the Soviet Union, states that in the first thirty-five years of the Communist regime between forty and fifty million citizens passed through concentration camps, and more followed later. But these are not the only victims of Communism. How many millions have become Judases to save their own liberty by causing others to enter prison? How many yielded to the tragedy of becoming torturers and inhumane guards? The faith of how many millions has been destroyed, because they were not able to bear seeing so much suffering in a world created by a loving God?

Rising After a Deep Fall

At least 50,000 Orthodox priests were killed by the Soviets. An Orthodox priest, Father Mihail, was among the few not yet

arrested, but he had lost his faith. The loss came suddenly. He had just chanted during the liturgy "Blessed be God" when he heard a voice whispering, "There is no God."

He looked questioningly at the images of saints hanging on the walls. What did their friendship with God mean? Does such a mighty Friend allow his believers to be thrown before wild beasts, burned on stakes, tortured inhumanely? He tried to repress these thoughts. He repeated to himself again and again the words of the psalm, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God." [PSA 14:1] It did not help.

Subsequent to that moment, he continued to act as a priest out of a sense of duty, but he no longer believed. The sorrow around him was too great. He had to restrain himself to keep from crying out to the peasants who filled the church, "Go home, poor people. There is no God. God, if he existed, would not permit this bloody chaos."

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Drunken Communists arrested him on an Easter eve. Among them was the cantor of his church, whom he had dismissed because of immoral behaviour. Now he too was a Communist. The head of the gang told the priest, "We have decided to kill you. What have you to say?"

Life was worthless for Father Mihail. He answered, "As you like."

But he was given a chance. "If you renounce Christ and trample on a cross, you will be freed."

The thought passed through his mind, I don't believe. What does a cross mean to me? Let me save my life." But when he opened his mouth, he said, to his own surprise, "I believe in one God."

Then the former cantor proposed that he should be crucified. "It is Easter. Let him be resurrected." As a caricature of the crown of thorns, they put his fur cap on his head with the linen on the outside; they put a sack upon his shoulders as a royal garment, and the cantor knelt, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they beat him.

He prayed to the One in whom he did not believe: "If you exist, save me." With a loud voice, he repeated, "I believe in one God."

This made such an impression upon the drunken murderers that they freed him. He came home, prostrated himself on the earth in his prayer corner, and said with tears, "I believe."

By being faithful in spite of extreme doubts, by asserting his belief when dark clouds had separated him from heaven, by sharing the suffering of Christ though he was not even

sure any more of his existence, he won his soul.
Some Christians bear their suffering with patience, resignation and love. Other martyrs ask the torturers who insult and mistreat them to forgive them for not having been even better Christians. A believer once wrote, "The first five years in jail I suffered as an innocent. When I reached twentieth year, I realized my guilt. Everyone is guilty who has been less than a sun, less than Christlike."

Martyrs at Different Levels

Ivan Horev died for Christ in jail. His son Nikolai also went to jail for twenty years.
It is a rule that when an officer enters a cell everyone has to stand to attention. Once, Nikolai Horev was slow to show such respect. For this he was punished with a hundred days in solitary, in which food was given only every second day. After this, a new torture called "Afrikanka" was applied to him. He was put barefoot in a box with room only to stand. On the floor was a multitude of small pyramids with sharp edges. To protect his feet, he could only stand between them on his heels or his toes, both positions excruciatingly painful. Horev fainted.
When he regained consciousness, he remembered being in a most beautiful place, where he was taught, "Never turn your face in anger from your tormentors. Jesus the Master did not turn his face from those who spat on him. Look at your enemies with the same love with which a bride loves her bridegroom."
Horev belongs among those lifted to higher spiritual realms.
Soon after this, his son Benjamin was put in the same cell. In it he found an inscription on the wall made by his father.
Every Christian has a cross to bear, but some bear it loving passionately those who impose it on them. They are able to smile at their torturers.
But not all martyrs are like this, since they are on different spiritual levels. Some, primarily those killed for Christ at an early age of their faith, cry out, "How long, Lord, holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (REV 6:10). Out of caution, God keeps these martyrs under the altar. It would be terrible if such sentiments were to become dominant. But these too have a martyr's crown.
St Catherine of Siena in the fourteenth century brought

to repentance a criminal sentenced to death, whom she had visited in jail. He asked her to be with him when he was beheaded. Early the next morning she went to the place of execution, put her head on the block, and prayed that at the last moment light and peace might be given to him. There is no more effective prayer than that in which you transpose yourself into the situation of the one for whom you pray. The former criminal died with the words "Jesus: Catherine" on his lips and went to the wedding of the Lamb, having been washed in his blood.

We should identify in prayer with the martyrs, especially those who are weak and cannot remain loving and pure to the very end. Pray for them because they too are human and cannot always live on the heights. No ballerina can stand twenty-four hours on tiptoe. No one's behaviour is saintly twenty-four hours a day. Even the noblest sufferer for Christ needs comfort, encouragement, and the willingness of a friend to cover up their sins. And even the least among us can be helpful to this extent.

Those who have passed through Communist prisons are unspeakably poor. When arrested, they suffer the loss of home and furniture. Many are no longer able to work physically or intellectually. Their children were not allowed to study or attend school. Therefore they are in desperate need of material help. St. Ambrose said, "Whosoever can help a poor man and does not do so is a thief, and if the other dies of hunger, he is a murderer." Let us be careful. The one from whom we steal or kill in this way may be a Christian who has suffered for his faith.

Patience with Those Who Waver

Since not all who were persecuted for their faith were strong or bore their cross with dignity and resisted temptation - like us in the free world? - how should we relate to them? Over 700 years before the coming of Jesus, Isaiah prophesied

the appearance of a servant of God in whose name the Gentiles would trust: "A bruised reed shall he not break? and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory" (MTT 12:20).

Often quoted to show the merciful nature of the Lord,

these words should speak to us in a more profound way than just make us beg for his pity. In our age of readily available fire, from matches to blow-torches, it is hard to imagine how important it was in the primitive society of Isaiah's time for someone not to quench smoking flax. But anyone who has tried to light a campfire when drenched by rain or depending on a last match realizes that in order to start a fire, it is not enough to leave smoking twigs or leaves alone, even briefly. One has to blow repeatedly and inhale smoke for a long period, starting and restarting the fire until blood rushes to the head and one feels dizzy. Even in a dry house, the effort needed to start a fire in the fireplace or a primitive stove is considerable, especially if a person is trembling with the cold. Such is the price for keeping smoking flax from being quenched. For in those times, fire was left overnight to smoulder in the ashes so that it could be more easily rekindled the next morning.

The first disciples spoke of this from their own familiar experience. Jesus must have kept many a fire from being quenched. Even after his resurrection, he waited for them on the shores of Lake Tiberias, with a fire on which fish were being broiled (JHN 21:9). This must have been a pleasant surprise for the disciples after a whole night of unsuccessful fishing. All true followers of Jesus also work hard, giving their breath to fan into flame the tiny sparks in the ashes of another's life.

Communists who burned genitals with red-hot iron pokers were able to break even a cardinal. When a Catholic receives a cardinal's beret, the Pope tells him that this is to be a sign that he will defend the faith ~usque ad sanguem~, to the blood. But a cardinal confessed at his trial to having been a spy and a black marketeer.

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The effects of brainwashing last many years: another cardinal, in Rome after eighteen years in Soviet jails, declared, "The Catholic is nowhere in opposition to authority. This certainly applies to the Soviet regime." It was not the cardinal who said this but the Communist brainwasher who had programmed him to do so.

In Russia, Alexander Ogorodnikov organized a Christian seminar. For this he received a mild sentence: one year. But when he had finished this term, he was tried once more for having preached about Christ in prison. The public, gathered in the courtyard of the tribunal, was not allowed to enter. Ogorodnikov opened the window near the dock and shouted the story of Christ to the crowd. For this he was

given another six years, which he served. But then three more years were added on.

He wrote a depressing letter to his mother. Heroes too have their memories of despair when it seems to them that everything is lost. Jesus himself cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" [MTT 27:46; MRK 15:34] Ogorodnikov said he was kept in punishment cells at 30øF. He hoped for death, as the end of pain. He even cut his veins, but was discovered. We should not judge him. The spirit is strong but the flesh is weak. It was after a long hunger strike that he yielded to despair: he had demanded a Bible. What really brought him to desperation was the silence around him. Like all of us, he was hungry for love. Attempts at suicide and harsh words are often simply the expression of one desire: "Show me love and recognition."

He wrote:

> Men are so terribly tortured that they wish for death and no one cares. Soldiers hopelessly wounded are shot to free them from pain, whereas I have to endure it lifelong. Suicide is a terrible, unpardonable sin. I have committed it. If the persecutors killed me, they would free me from suffering. Only publicity can save me, and this is possible only through you.

> Why don't you write me at least to tell me if my son Dima goes to church, takes Communion, wears a cross? He should not enter the Communist children's organization, because he is a Christian. If you don't write me, I will give myself entirely into the hands of the torturers without protesting. Your silence is a stab in my back.
>
> It is difficult to realize that you are not needed by anyone, that you are destined to forgo a life full of energy without receiving sympathy, that you must hunger, suffer cold, be deprived of books, that even life, God's holy gift, must consist of blank pain.
>
> May God protect you.

Paul knew that the best of men pass through such times of despondency; so he wrote, "Strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" (HEB 12:12).

Our mission published Ogorodnikov's letter in many countries, along with his address. We also printed a letter from another prisoner who, when freed, found a hungry family with nothing to give him. Neighbours helped with a

few potatoes. These, cooked without any fat, were his first meal after years of starvation. As a result, some of our readers wrote to these sufferers. Their letters and the information that their families would be cared for lifted the spirits of these despairing souls and gave them hope.

The same Ogorodnikov who wrote such a despondent letter recently communicated the following:

> I bow my head and bend my knees with profound gratitude for your prayers and compassionate activity in defence of the persecuted Russian Christians. In the concentration camps, buried in the gravelike darkness of solitary cells, in the silence that changes even time into torture, when silent yearning erodes the heart, hungry, when it seems that the world has forgotten you - I felt physically how your prayers warmed me in the cold of my cell, tying us together in

> our common faith. Your hand passed through the high wall and barbed wire. The power of your love changed my despair to undefeatable hope. The all-seeing God heard your prayers and opened the prison gates. We see now how your love, faith, and works change history.

Raped Minds

Jesus would not enter the house of a disciple if not invited. The Communists, on the other hand, use even the threat of homosexual rape to subdue the minds of believers. For this purpose they put the brethren Klassen and Tchemodanov in cells reserved for homosexuals.

They forced the Orthodox priest Dudko to recant on nationwide TV. Dudko had been the most renowned evangelist of the USSR. Solzhenitsyn and other prominent Russian personalities consider him their spiritual father. But under threat he expressed his regret for his "fight against atheism, which is a fight against the Soviet regime." He acknowledged that he had done great harm to the church and the country by his preaching.

We feel that Dudko is not guilty before God. One who is injected with depersonalizing chemical substances or subjected to extreme beatings and pressure is no longer himself and is thus not responsible for his actions. Jesus never steps across the threshold of our will, but asks for our consent, as

we should do to others. By contrast, Communist leaders impose their will with cruelty.

When the situation changed in the USSR, Dudko wrote in a new book, ~The Lost Coin~: "I realize that in prison I have betrayed the interests of the church. I have in my soul inexpressible pain. I see no way out. I am ready to do anything to repair my fault. How did I come to such a point? This question gives me no peace day or night."

In a letter he says, "I overestimated my resources, and no

one has ever fallen so low. Why? What happened? Whom should I accuse? First, surely, myself."

The hope for Dudko, as for all of us, is the finished work of Christ. On the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished." He had made perfect expiation for sin, satisfying all the demands of the law. He has paid all our debts. There remains nothing for us to do, however low we may have fallen, except to receive his love with confidence and to continue our life with praise. Though one is abandoned by all others, he is not abandoned by God.

Such men are also counted as heroes before God. Their temporary fall is not imputed to them. The apostle Peter, called "the rock" by Jesus, fell repeatedly into sin. The other apostles fled when Jesus was arrested.

Let us also walk the way of heroism, though we live under entirely different circumstances. Let us do so even with stumbling steps. If we fall seven times a day, we can be forgiven. We are considered as if we had never sinned.

In the free world individuals have temptations that differ from those faced under terrorist governments. Here we are more apt to yield to the temptations of alcohol, drugs, sexual impurity, dishonesty, theft, and the like. Many of us commit such sins again and again, though we strive, some of us heroically, to resist them.

Jumping over Mountains

Before writing again about quite another category of Christians, I offer an "intermezzo" about the organization we started twenty-five years ago: Christian Missions to the Communist World.

In spite of recent events, this Communist world is now enormous: China with its 1.1 billion inhabitants, Vietnam, Laos, Cuba, plus the considerable power it wields in countries that took the path of economic and political reform

and in which forty to seventy years of religious brainwashing continues to exert its influence.

Previously it comprehended as well the USSR, Eastern Europe, and a multitude of African states, such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Congo, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Benin.

We were a small group of people: Bishop Norderval, a Norwegian Lutheran; Stuart Harris, an English Baptist preacher; Hans Braun, a German industrialist; a Dutch pastor Maris; a Swiss lady Hedi Fluri; Hans Zarcher, a Swiss bookkeeper; Pat Henegan, owner of a South African shipping business; Colette Grossu, former prisoner of the Communists, living in France; my wife Sabina, myself, and my son Mihai and his wife Judith.

What could we do against the immense power of Communism, as portrayed in our media? In our planning, we did not consider it so fearsome as it was portrayed.

But hasn't it been a world power? Decidedly not. Communism is only one power on the ridiculously tiny earth, one of the smallest planets orbiting around a modest star, one of 100 billions in our galaxy, one of one billion galaxies. Travelling at the speed of light one can reach the sun, which is 93 million miles away, in eight minutes. To reach the edge of our galaxy would take 100,000 years and that of the universe 10 billion years. Communism, like all earthly "isms," is a very little thing, though to us it seems like a mountain. But can't we move mountains?

I am a Jew. In my youth I was an atheist. The words of Christ had no authority for me. Even after I had accepted him, some of his words seemed fantastic. He says, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove" (MTT 17:20). I tried to move mountains and did not succeed. Neither do I know any child of God who could perform such a deed.

I asked the Lord how it was that his words did not correspond to reality.

Now, a disciple of Christ should not deliver monologues

in prayer, but should expect to receive answers to his questions. I received an answer to mine: "You, my beloved cannot move mountains because your faith is not the size of a grain. You have bushels full of faith. You do not use a thousand-ton hammer, such as those employed by heavy

industry, to crack open a nut. Such a hammer can only perform great works. By the same token, you are called to do greater things than amuse yourself by moving mountains. You can move God. Remember how God decided to destroy the Jewish people after they had worshipped a golden calf, and Moses through his prayer made God change his mind. To produce changes in heavenly decrees is much more important than moving mountains."

Since then, I have stopped trying to move mountains. We are seated with Christ in heavenly places. We participate in things happening there. And when in our earthly life mountains hinder us, we don't command them to move. We follow the example of Christ, about whom his bride says "My beloved comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills" (SOS 2:8).

We need not try to remove mountains of difficulties in our own lives. We should jump over them and do our Christian duty in spite of them.

We knew the words, "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1JN 4:4). But what should we use to start a mission that we conceived of as worldwide in scope? It is written that Jesus took seven loaves that were given to him, gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to the multitude. "They ate and were filled" (MRK 8:6-8). Suppose the disciples had not seven but only three loaves or only one. What would have happened? The multitude would have been satisfied just the same. As a matter of fact, on another occasion Jesus used only five loaves instead of seven. Notwithstanding, he fed an even bigger multitude and a greater number of baskets full of fragments remained behind (MRK 8:19, 20).

We realized we could serve God with the very little we

had. His blessings do not depend upon the size or quantity of what we have but upon the fact that we bring them to him.

But suppose we have nothing to bring - what then? But that is impossible; the Hebrew, Aramean and Greek languages in which the Bible was written did not have the word "zero" or its mathematical symbol "0." A man who has nothing to bring to Jesus does not exist.

He can bring his own person, the very person that says, "I possess nothing." He has something very valuable: himself and his utter poverty. He can bring his sins to Jesus. From the sin of being a fanatical persecutor, God made Saul of Tarsus a zealous apostle. From the sin of a loose life Jesus

made a saint with steadfast love, Mary Magdalene. If we bring our weakness to Christ, which we surely have, his strength will show its perfection in our weakness.

Our mission began with very little, almost nothing in fact; but instead of using this little directly, we brought it to Jesus. And he multiplied it and greatly blessed it.

By All Means

We decided to spread the gospel in Communist countries. By what means? Only one is biblical. Paul writes that it was his purpose to save souls "by all means" (1CO 9:22). He who is choosy about the means of propagating the gospel is not biblical.

While we respected Communist laws, we interpreted them in our own manner or broke them. To give just a few examples, we threw thousands of plastic bags into the Bering Straits separating Alaska from the USSR; in the Black Sea near the shores of the Ukraine; in the sea between the Greek islands and Albania. Each tightly-sealed bag contained a Gospel in the local language or a brochure showing the way of salvation, and a piece of chewing gum to induce even the worst Communist policeman to open the

bag. We also enclosed pieces of straw to make the bag float on the water. Waves brought the bags to shore. We had studied the currents in the sea, to be sure they would arrive as we planned. The method worked.

When Albania opened up for religion recently, we met a man who had found such a Gospel, was converted through reading it, and from then on watched the shore to find others, which he distributed. Discovered, he spent nine years in jail for this "crime."

We asked him, "Are you angry at us? If it weren't for our activity, you wouldn't have been in prison."

He replied, "It was worth it."

After nine years in jail for Christ, he was able for the first time to attend church, and he received a Bible.

We also flew the message of Christ in balloons from West to East Germany, from South to North Korea. People are saved by all means - even by very poor means. The Albanian did not require a whole Bible, much less volumes of theology. He was saved by only one Gospel, which sustained him for nine years as a prisoner of Christ.

Of course, we smuggled in Bibles and Christian literature,

by land, by sea, by tourists, by diplomats, by any means we could devise. We also smuggled in, piece by piece, printing presses, which were then assembled and sometimes put to work literally underground. The work entailed tremendous risks, but the rewards outweighed them by far. We created bookstores, print shops, mission centres in Romania, Hungary, Russia, Ethiopia, China. We were relentless in our endeavours.

Unfounded Hopes Are Founded

From prison, I had written to my family, "The most unfounded hope is much more founded than the most founded despair." At that point I had been sentenced to twenty years of forced labour and was deathly ill. I hoped

then that once I were free and capable of working I would be able to help other persecuted children of God and spread the gospel to Communist countries far and wide. In my case, this hope came true. For twenty-five years I have been in the free world, and God has used me to create an international mission that has fulfilled my dream.

My family and I came to the West as poor, unknown immigrants, our only treasure our vision and our unfounded hope. We had no means to fulfill it. But despair is useless. Hope is a force to be reckoned with.

During these years there have been threats against my life, including the constant danger of being kidnapped. Sometimes simple swindlers, at other times church leaders who perhaps did not realize they served the Communist cause instead of God's attacked us. But I nurtured only hope. In all our adversities God made us more than conquerors. Thousands of believers on earth and angels in heaven made our earnest dream, as are all dreams that come from God, a reality.

At a wedding in Cana, Jesus was told, "Every man at the beginning does set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse. But thou hast kept the good wine until now (JHN 2:10). The devil sometimes gives good things first: beautiful promises, selfish pleasures. After one has drunk deeply, a worse wine follows: wrecked lives, remorse, spiritual blindness, and in the end, the worst, eternal damnation.

Love knows that the best things are yet to come. Now it tastes the joy of obeying God's commands and delights in

the fellowship of Christ, his holy angels, and the great communion of saints. This joy is for the present mingled with the bitterness of the cross. Now it is a glory in tribulations, distress, persecution, and nakedness. But in the midst of tears and the shedding of blood, the bride of Christ never ceases to hope. She knows her Bridegroom has stored up in his banqueting house the best of wines for the future. She is not in a hurry. Loves does not hasten to obtain results. She

can bear with transitory failures, sufferings and defeats. The ultimate victory is hers.

We had nothing to fear. In September 1970 I wrote to all our missions:

> The church of Christ is not endangered by Communism. Even the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. It is Communism that is endangered by the existence of the church, because the final victory is ours. We have won for Christ the daughter of Stalin, the greatest mass-murderer of Christians; Mrs Kosygin, the wife of the Russian dictator; Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn, Siniavski, and other first-rank Soviet writers, formerly members of the Communist Party. We don't tremble before Communism. It should be in a panic because of us. The best of wines are stored up for the children of God.

There were a few little victories that the persecuted church had won by then. It continued to survive on hope, as did we. We fervently believed our teaching was correct: "Hate Communism, but love the Communists. Break through the Iron Curtain with the gospel and the prayers of saints." Communist governments have fallen. The Word of God is now disseminated freely in many countries of the former Communist bloc, whereas only a short time ago it was a crime to own or share a Bible. We helped the churches in Communist countries not only with Bibles, Christian literature, radio, printing facilities, material aid; we were able to give more than these. We gave them our love.

There has always been persecution of religion, as well as heroism. But under Fascism and Communism, mankind saw its spiritual midnight - and God's people their spiritual zenith. Today in many parts of the world there are still atrocities against those of other beliefs, but nowhere have they been practised on such a large scale.

Blessings at Midnight

The earth turns on its axis. Midnight is the moment when a part of the earth is the farthest away from the sun. Spiritual midnight is the period of the greatest departure of men from God. Today our generation has experienced unmentionable events in a midnight of unparalleled darkness. But midnight is not received with the same feelings by the children of God as by the world. At midnight, the firstborn of the Egyptians died, but the chosen people obtained their freedom.

The Lord said, "The night comes when no man can work" (JHN 9:4). But whenever something is declared impossible in the Bible, this does not refer to the faithful. About them Jesus declared, "All things are possible to him that believes" (MRK 9:23).

God's people can work even at midnight. It was at midnight that Samson took the gates of the city of Gaza (JDG 16:3). At midnight, Ruth received from Boaz the promise, "I will do to you all that you require" (RUT 3:11). At midnight, Paul and Silas won for the Lord the jailer of Philippi (ACT 16:25). At midnight, the people of God do their greatest exploits. Therefore, the psalmist says, "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee" (PSA 119:62).

They are not afraid of the darkness in the world. They work. The Bridegroom comes soon. True children of God cannot meet him empty-handed.

Heroes in the Worst of Horrors

No one will ever be able to describe all the horrors of Communism. Edward Buca, a former inmate of Soviet concentration camps, describes in his book ~Vorkuta~ a particular horror. A Communist police officer tied a woman down, took a large candle and pushed it into her private parts, then lit it. He told the woman, "You have a little time to think things over. Soon the flame will reach your body.

When you're ready to sign the confession, give me the signal by blinking three times." As the flame burned down to her body, he watched calmly. Once he took out the candle, lit a cigarette with it, and put it back.

Prisoners who had tried to escape were beaten savagely, then tied behind galloping reindeer and dragged to death. A

prisoner was compelled to play the harmonica near the corpses, which had been exposed to public view.

More gruesome horrors can scarcely be imagined.

But this is only one side of the story. I would never have told it, were there not a transcendent side that more than compensates for the ugliness.

In the third volume of his ~Gulag Archipelago~, Solzhenitsyn tells the story of an evangelist whose name "seems to have been Alexander Sisoiev." He never published volumes of sermons, was never on TV, had no mass rallies. Just as the creed says nothing about the sermons of Jesus but only that he suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified and buried, so history says about Sisoiev only that he was an evangelist and that he was shot in the Kengir concentration camp, after spending many years in prison in quiet communion with his Lord. At that time, shooting of the innocent was an everyday occurrence. But this man "called perhaps Sisoiev" had been a man apart. Those who looked at him "took knowledge that he had been with Jesus," though he was "unlearned and ignorant" like Peter and John (ACT 4:13).

The camp inmates were resigned to the beating and shooting of other prisoners, but when this saint - whose name is not even known for sure - was shot, the whole camp of 2,500 prisoners - among whom were murderers, burglars, thieves, and 500 political prisoners - rebelled. They refused to work and attacked the guards. Their supreme request was that the person responsible for the shooting be punished.

In the end, the Communists quenched the revolt after killing about 700 political prisoners and criminals, who died

showing their love for and solidarity with a man about whom we know nothing except that he knew how to maintain his privacy, how to commune in quietness with God and had an inner closet even in a common prison cell.

Perhaps instead of having conferences about modern evangelization methods it is more important for us to be like the one "whose name was perhaps Sisoiev."

I picked this case at random from countless such stories we have heard. I could as well have spoken about Zdorovets, terribly beaten in a Soviet prison; or Dubizki, to whom poison was administered in jail; or Peter Siemens, whom the Communist poisoners call "a poisoner of souls" in their newspaper because he brought people to Christ. For this he was sentenced to three years in prison.

These men are great not for what they wrote or spoke;

we do not know their words. But we do know that they spent much time alone with the Lord and as a result they shine now like stars in the firmament of the gospel and in the memory of their fellow prisoners.

Mark's Gospel says, "Without a parable Jesus spoke not unto them" (MRK 4:34). Every parable of Jesus has a streak of sadness in it. We know Jesus wept [JHN 11:35], whereas we have no report that he ever laughed or smiled. He must feel uneasy around politicians and evangelists who have a professional smile on their lips. In one parable he says a sower must count on the sad fact that three-quarters of his seed will be lost, while a grain of mustard seed grows out of all proportion and becomes a tree. Such fantastic growth of plants has taken place only after the explosion of atomic bombs in Japan. Tragedy also makes the mustard seed of the Kingdom of Heaven grow exceptionally high. The Church advances by the blood of the martyrs.

All Christians must be prepared to face adversity and personal trauma. God can protect us and give us happy days, but no believer is exempt from tribulations. Let us expect them with serenity.

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The Simplest Way to Obtain God's Love

"There are hundreds of ways to obtain God's love, but only one is certain," said a preacher.

"What's that?" asked a colleague.

"Aha," retorted the first, "I thought you wouldn't know."

The least-known way to obtain God's love is the simplest one: to keep his commandments. Jesus said, "He that has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him" (JHN 14:21). He also said, "If you will enter into life, keep the commandments" (MTT 19:17). Every morning, sing a hymn, read a Bible portion, pray, have a quiet time for listening to what God has to say to you that day, and then set about to fulfill his commands. All his commandments can be resolved into one: to imitate Jesus and the best of men, even though this might involve suffering and possibly death.

In the battle of Waterloo, Napoleon was defeated by the British general Wellington. Lord Hill, showing the latter the corpse of his aide-de-camp Gordon, asked: "What is your instruction, my lord, if you are killed?"

The answer was brief: "Do the same as me."

Jesus died for the glory of the Father and commands all

his disciples to die to sin (ROM 6:2) and to lose, if necessary, their natural life in obedience to the commandments. The Bible teaches, "This is the law: when a man dies..." (NUM 19:14).

A religion is truly religion if you are ready to die for it. What is not worthy of the sacrifice of life is not religion. Your desire to lead a consistent Christian life might lead to renunciation and heavy losses. Jesus was ready to die on a cross at the age of thirty-three, and we are meant to imitate him in dedication to God and love toward our fellow men. Whoever keeps this commandment is his beloved.

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The church urges us to a heroic Christian life. One of the names of Jesus is "Heroic God" (ISA 9:6, in Hebrew).

Orthodox Martyrs

~Give Them Peace with the Saints~, a book secretly compiled by the True Orthodox Church of the Soviet Union, provides the following accounts.

The first Orthodox priest ever killed by the Communists was John Kotchurov. In Essentuke, the priest John Riabuhin, together with many others, had his limbs hacked off and was buried while still breathing. The priest John Krasnov was burned alive in a ship's cauldron. The priest Alexander Podolskii was beaten to death. Those who tried to bury him were shot. The deacon Tikhon sang his burial service, while his son, aged ten, dug his grave, having been compelled by the Reds to do so.

The priest Grigorii Dmitrevskii first had his nose and ears cut off, then his head (exactly what the Communist guerrillas did in Rhodesia). The priest Grigorii Nikolski was shot with a bullet through his mouth after saying the liturgy. The murderers told him, "Now we will give you holy Communion."

The secret police went to search the house of Antonii, the Orthodox bishop of Arkhangelsk. Finding the vessel for holy communion, they threw it to the floor and stomped on it. The bishop threw himself over it, trying to defend it with his body. In the scuffle he lost consciousness. When he awoke he was in jail.

They asked his opinion about the future of the Russian church and wanted to know if he desired the overthrow of the Soviets. He answered that the church would be glorified through the suffering of its martyrs, as in the first centuries, and that he prayed daily that the Soviet government would

not shed blood and would be forgiven of its sins.
First he was threatened with death, then was promised

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freedom if he would become an informer for the police. The bishop was not frightened and could not be bought. Such is the character of all those who see afar, who see the heavenly city where believers will spend eternity.
He was put in a small cell together with five others. They endured bitter cold, received only two glasses of water a day and nothing else. They could not wash or change their clothes, and lived in their stench. They lost their teeth. The bishop became so weak that he could not cleanse his beard from the invading bugs and lice. When he felt death near, he chanted his own funeral service. He died with prayers on his lips.
Dostoievsky, the greatest Russian writer, wrote:

> I believe there is nothing lovelier, deeper, more sympathetic and more perfect than Jesus. I say to myself with jealous love that not only is there no one else like him, but there could be no one. I would say even more. If anyone could prove to me that Christ is outside the truth, and if the truth did really exclude Christ, I should prefer to stay with Christ and not with truth. There is in the world only one figure of absolute beauty: Christ.

So the complete works of Dostoievsky had to be forbidden in Russia. It is like forbidding Shakespeare in English-peaking countries. Eugen Vaghin, who published Dostoievskii, got thirteen years of prison, which meant thirteen years of torture. A document later proved that one of the punishments inflicted in jail was exposure of naked prisoners to mosquitoes. The prisoners had their hands handcuffed behind them and were unable to defend themselves.
Vaghin survived fourteen years of such imprisonment. When he was freed, he was the same man enamoured of Jesus, who left everything for him.

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Baptist Confessors

~The Bulletin of the Council of Relatives of Christian Prisoners in the Soviet Union~ published excerpts of the protocol of a trial.

Brother George Jeltonoshko and Sister Nadeja Troshtshenko were brought before court in Nikolaiev, accused of having spread Bibles, Gospels and spiritual literature.
Jeltonoshko told the court: "I refuse to have a lawyer. I feel I am right. Righteousness needs no defence." (Why do we all attempt to defend ourselves so much when accused?)
The judge asked him, "Do you plead guilty?"
He answered: "No! To spread Christian literature is the duty of a Christian."
The Communist judge asked him to follow the example of the traitors from the official church who respect the Soviet law and do not propagate the gospel.
Jeltonoshko answered that he could not do like them because Christ had said, "Go into the whole world and preach."
The Communist judge took the defence of the official churches, which compromised with Communism, while the Underground churches did not, and asked again, "Why don't you remain in the official churches? They also consist of believers."
He answered, "The devils also believe and tremble."
The judge was inquisitive, "Where do you meet for prayers?"
The answer was, "True worshippers worship everywhere."

At this trial Sister Zinaida Kozakova was mentioned.

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She had distributed among the Red Army leaflets entitled ~Spiritual Passport~. This is what they contained:

~Name~: Christian. ~Father's name~: God. ~Last name~: Blessed. ~Date of Birth~: Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the time of salvation. ~Country of origin~: The holy land. ~Town~: Jerusalem. ~Nationality~: New creation. ~Profession~: Co-worker with God. ~Military duty~: Good soldier of Christ. ~Passport issued by whom~: By faith. ~On the basis of what documents was the passport issued~: Love believes everything. ~To what social category do you belong, rich, poor, or middle class~: In everything we are enriched by Christ. ~Property~: I possess all things present and future. ~Family~: great multitude. ~Education~: We know all things (JHN 2:20). ~Profession~: Prayer and the service of the

Word.

Lost Lives Can No Longer Be Lost

What was the price of faithfully teaching the Scripture? Jeltonoshko was sentenced to three years of prison, Troshtshenko to eighteen months. But it is not the length of the prison term that counts, but the prison regime. In a Soviet jail, no prisoner is allowed to share his beliefs with anyone else. The punishments for doing so are so vicious that in one concentration camp fifteen prisoners sewed their lips together in protest against the terror.

In Bulgaria, in the prison of Belen, there was a pit with hungry dogs. Naked prisoners were thrown into it if they broke some prison rule. In some cases God performed miracles. Brother Trofim Dimitrov was thrown to the dogs. While being led to the place, he prayed for his enemies, who threw him into the pit. Immediately a great howling was heard. When the officers looked into the pit, they saw Brother Dimitrov kneeling in prayer and the dogs in panic,

barking and trying to jump the walls in order to save themselves from the strange power emanating from him. It remains God's mystery why he performs such miracles for some, whereas others have to drink the bitter cup until the end.

In Cuba, there were some 30,000 political prisoners (which includes those sentenced for their faith). In a document smuggled out of Cuban prisons, we were told that our brethren, among others, were forced into an ice-cold shower followed by a hot one. After being thus treated, they had sulphur thrown on them to make their skin burn. Bodies of prisoners were crushed with bulldozers.

The abbot Roman Braga, my former fellow-prisoner, wrote about a Christian to whom the Communists, with revolvers in their hands, offered the alternatives of raping his daughter or being shot. He chose the latter.

I was sometimes accused of dramatizing the situation in Eastern countries, but who in the world can dramatize what is already an unequalled drama?

A Soviet newspaper described certain Christians as "men who have lost the human image" and claimed that

> they destroy their brethren and sisters from their denomination and other witnesses who are dangerous

> to them. So at the liquidation of secret "death chambers" of the ~Innokentists~ [the Innocents - a specific Russian Christian group] approximately twenty corpses of men, women and children between the ages of 14 and 50 were discovered. Many of them had been buried alive. In such sects, men are exhausted through fasting, the forbidding of meat and other nutritious produces, and through the ascetic form of life. The heavy, oppressive conditions in the sectarian communities often lead to crimes or psychic illness (~Sovietskaia Moldavia~, January 16,1973).

These Christians had allegedly been killed by their own brethren. Christians in the Soviet Union were sometimes

charged with ritual murder - that is, with the accusation that in order to receive forgiveness of sins from God they kill a member of the church. This was the first time that we found Christians charged not with murdering one individual, but with ritual mass murder.

Everywhere in the world it is known that Jesus taught Christians to love and to save lives. Only in the Communist camp is the lie spread that at their religious services they kill. In the fifties, in Red China, Catholic nuns were accused of having killed children in hospitals. Nowhere else in the world are nuns charged with such activity. Such monstrous accusations brought against Christians were simply ridiculous.

Soviet Christians have no lives of their own to lose. From the hell of Soviet prisons, a believer smuggled out the following letter, which shows a heart full of peace and adoration that doesn't even seem to be aware of the horrors in the environment.

> "Marvellous are thy works" (PSA 139:14). I greet and congratulate you with these words, dear mother and dear daughter, on your birthday. This was the text of the first cable in the world, in 1845-a verse from the Bible. The inventor of the telegraph was Samuel Morse. As to his father George Morse, it is significant that he was a renowned evangelist. This Bible text was written 3,000 years ago and entered so deeply into the hearts of many generations of men with a living faith in God that it was transcribed faultlessly by hand during 2,500 years. In 1455, it was first printed. The first printed book was the Bible.

> The works of God are really marvellous in all things, in nature and technique, in the lives of all men, in the destiny of people and of mankind, and especially of his church. It is a great joy to contemplate the work of his hand and of his creative mind in all that

> surrounds us. The Bible is also the first book from which men read when circling around the moon ...
> I see from your letters that you are very troubled because of me. My beloved, this should not be. Keep your health, and don't let your heart be troubled. May it be in perfect peace, because everything happens according to his will.

Soviet Christians see God's will and good intentions even while bearing Communist atrocities, whereas unbelievers or those who believe superficially say to Jesus, "Depart from us – you made us lose a herd of swine."

The present book is written with the purpose of offering readers, all of whom encounter hardships in life, though not like the foregoing, the perfect calm of sufferers for Christ. It is a gift of God, but it needs to be cultivated.

Transparent Purity

When the Jew Avram Shifrin was in a Soviet jail for his Zionist activities, he met a 72-year-old Baptist named Solodiankin, about whom he wrote the following:

"The goodness and transparent purity of that man made a huge impression. Even the soldiers who guarded us became better when he was there." He was almost blind, and his glasses had been broken by the interrogator. "Everything he earned as a slave labourer he used like this: half for his sick daughter and 25% for his church. From the rest (7 or 8 rubles) he bought for himself a little sugar and bread; the rest he gave to the sick prisoners in the camp."

Shifrin told him that he had a Bible and was ready to read it to him. In the evening, Solodiankin came. He had changed his shirt and combed his hair with great care. "To read the eternal book is a feast," he said.

The Jew read to the Christian from Isaiah. At a certain moment, he was interrupted:

"You made a mistake."

It was true. "But do you know the text by heart?"

"Of course," replied the Christian.

"Then why should I read it to you?"

"Because it is a joy for me to hear the Scriptures. One gets new ideas."

Once when the prisoners were compelled to listen to a lecture about Lenin, Solodiankin arose and contradicted the speaker publicly: "Why do you make a god out of a simple man? Throughout history many have been honoured like him as big men, but what are they before the Creator?" For this he was punished.

During that time we were smuggling Bibles into the USSR. Some who claimed smuggling was wrong reproached us roundly. But without smuggling, blind Solodiankin and thousands like him would have remained without the Word of God.

We praise God for such men as Solodiankin and Jews who read the Bible to them. We adore God who does these great works, and we will continue to smuggle Christian books wherever barriers exist (certain Christian literature and Bibles are still forbidden in China, Vietnam, and many Moslem countries).

Love "With All Your Very Much"

Micaela was an Orthodox nun who believed that the Communion bread and wine were really the body and blood of our Lord. When the Soviet Army entered the Vladimireshti convent in Romania, she defended the altar with her body, Thrown in prison, she was mistreated beyond description. But from her solitary cell she tapped out prayers in Morse code through the wall to fellow-prisoners until she died.

In another Romanian prison, some guards, pretending to be sympathetic, inquired of female prisoners about their children's birthdays. Those particular days were then

chosen to give them severe beatings with rubber truncheons. Weeping was forbidden. If a mother wept after being beaten, she was beaten again.

In jail, the temptation to abandon the faith is always present. The devil whispers, "Howl with the wolves, and the suffering will end." But the Christian does not wish the suffering to end at the cost of his faith. Those who proclaim

that being a Christian means prosperity, health, and well-being preach "another gospel which is not a gospel" (GAL 1:6, 7). Why should a Christian desire to escape suffering when it is written about him that he "takes pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecution, in distresses for Christ's sake" (2CO 12:10)? Who wants to escape pleasure?

When I was in a Romanian Communist prison, our feet were swollen with oedema caused by hunger. At times we had only one slice of bread a week. Rats jumping over our faces awoke us at night. Rarely, the wind brought a tree-leaf into the barren yard in which we walked, but it reminded us that a world of trees, flowers and joy still existed. A daisy had succeeded in growing between stones in the yard. I plucked its petals, saying over each one, "She loves me, with joy, with sorrow, with little, or nothing." The last petal told me that she - my wife Sabina, who was in another jail - loved me with sorrow.

The cell walls did not tell us that story of those who had been there before us. If we were to die in this cell, the walls would still remain silent. We often felt forsaken, unremembered. The temptation to join the world of wickedness and deceit in order to go free was great. Under totally different circumstances, we all have such temptations. But by the grace of God we had made the decision, like Job, not to speak wickedly and not to utter deceit. Our words will continue to speak of love and faith and truth. God has helped many to fulfill this promise.

In prison our brethren and sisters learn Christlikeness, likeness to the Man of Sorrows.

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Twenty times a night they would be awakened by the guards who watched them through the peephole. "Take your hands out from under the blanket!" "Turn your face to the door!" "Dress yourself for interrogation!" Their eyes would be blindfolded, and like the blind they would be taken before torturers and would not know from which side the next blow would come.

Prisoners were hungry. But a more formidable problem even than eating was going to the toilet. This was a favour granted by the Communists only after pleadings that sometimes lasted a whole night. Even then, female prisoners often had to fulfill their needs in the presence of males.

Our brethren in the faith endured all this, remaining good and faithful. No bad or wicked word escaped their lips. We should emulate their example in our trials and

resolve to guard the words of our mouth and the meditation of our heart, that they may be acceptable in the eyes of him who loves us and gave his life for our sins.

Brother Michael Ershov spent forty-three years in Soviet jails for his faith in Christ. Time and distance quench small loves, but increase great ones. During those years his love for Christ burned ever more brightly as he walked the way of the cross. Such faith seems overdrawn. Everything exaggerated becomes insignificant. But there exists no possibility of exaggeration in the mutual love between God and man. On both sides it is a love with all one's heart, with all one's soul, with all one's might (DEU 6:5). In the Hebrew original it is not "with all thy might," but ~bekol meodha~ which means literally "with all your very much."

Prison Letters

When there were no cars, trains, planes, phones, faxes, and all the gadgets that make modern life easier, men had time to write letters. Today a person who cultivates this art form

is rare. We could well learn from the masters of life and love to write beautifully.

Over the years we have received many letters smuggled out of prisons. The following are representative:

> Thank you for the parcel. The officers took counsel from each other several days on what to do with the parcel. Then in the end the order came that I could receive it on condition that I write back, Please don't send parcels more than four times a year." I answered, "I can write this, but what the others will do I don't know." My beloved, I must confess that I miss nothing. The Lord has given me a good appetite so that I am satisfied even with the food which no pig would eat. [This sentence could inspire us never to bicker about the food we have in the West.] We are bent to the earth with gratitude that so many pray for us, as we have heard from you that it happens. Yes, our well-being depends on this...
>
> My hair becomes gray; I have more and more wrinkles on my face. I have to work in great heat. My work is at an oven in which brooms are dried. I work 18 hours a day, from five in the evening until eight in the morning. During this time I have to be entirely

naked, but still the sweat can be gathered with buckets from my body. You have to wipe yourself continually.

Is the oak in our garden still growing? ["Oak" is the nickname of one of the leaders of the Underground church. In this way our brother inquires about progress of the underground work.] When I was a child, the percentage of Baptists among the active Christians of Russia was small. Now it has greatly increased.

From another letter, from a Christian prisoner in the Soviet Union:

The pressures which are used against us here and which are repugnant to the flesh, cause men to lose completely their honour and to become worse than animals. But these same things are useful and unavoidable, for those who love God, in becoming godly. Therefore we have no reason to complain.

Recently we were brought before a court. It was proposed that we walk crooked ways in order to have things better in the future. One of the judges said, "Is all the pain you have had to endure not enough to have produced in you a change of mind?"

I answered, "I have passed through no pains. Prison is a place in which I have learned very many good things, and which has made me more determined in my faith. You will not be able to understand this riddle because you don't believe in God."

I will now be appointed as the gardener of the prison, and I would be very happy to receive from you some flower seeds. I would like to smell the fragrance of flowers that come from you, who show me so much love. [The seeds were sent by means that would ensure their arrival.]

When you look ahead, everything is dark and horrifying, but we can say, "Up to this point God helped."

We received many letters like this and they were very encouraging, showing us that the faith of our brethren was not only unbroken, but had become more beautiful than ever.

Our suffering brethren followed the advice of the fourth-century saint Ephrem the Syrian: "When attacked, bear it;

when wronged, be patient; when defamed, be forgiving;
when what is yours is taken away, be thankful."
May God help us to have such attitudes!

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Russian Believers in Psychiatric Asylums

While many of our brethren were in prison, some were in psychiatric asylums. There too they praised God. Brother Shimanov wrote from an asylum: "The bedlam, the anxiety about my family, the tension of my nerves all destroy me. But if they drive me mad or if I remain sane, I accept everything God sends, as a child accepts everything from the hand of his father: the sweet and the bitter, folly or reason, light or darkness, every disaster and all clarity. Cowardice is unreasonable. In the asylum, I have thought often that the will of God keeps intact the freedom of man."

We too should lay aside our grumbling and complaining and accept with good grace all the things that befall us. Jesus accepted flogging, mockery, death on the cross, an early tomb, and the descent into hell. A glorious resurrection followed for him. It will follow for us too, if in all circumstances - even in maddening ones - we keep saying, "Let God be magnified."

Where did these Christians get such strength? From a source available to all of us: prayer. Perhaps we can learn from them.

Natalia Gorbanevskaya, who was put in the section for the mentally ill in the Butyrka prison in Moscow, composed the following prayer which she repeated again and again.

> Don't crush me, Lord, don't lose me like a card in a lost game. Don't reject me so as to make me wander through the world not believing anything. You walked on the sea as if it had been dry land. No obstacle can hinder your steps. Don't send me out into this world of suffering without a firm staff, without aim and support. You, God and Son of Man, if it was your will to put on these shoulders the yoke which makes chains rattle at every step, don't allow my soul to freeze outside in the ice, in the cold night.

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The Soviet Hebrew Christian Krasnov-Levitin described his time in jail:

> When I was in prison, I lived every day in the spirit of the liturgy. At eight in the morning I began to walk to and fro in my cell and said the words of the liturgy. In doing so, I felt united with Christendom in the whole world...The prison walls pulled back. The whole universe, the visible and the invisible, became my habitation...After the liturgy I felt a spiritual elation, clarity and inner purity.

Such prayers work. Levitin says that "there is no power in the world that can resist the power of God" obtained by prayer.

However, this assertion must be qualified. The godly character of a newborn person cannot be broken, but the organ through which it expresses itself is the brain - one-and-a-half pounds of tissue, subject to all the laws of matter. Communists destroyed the brains of some believer through doping, hunger, sleep deprivation, and beating on the head. Some Christians treated in this manner beyond endurance could no longer resist.

The most tragic example I know is that of Nikolai Moiseev. He was exposed to the worst treatment for eight years in an asylum, in which he was interned because of his faith. When in the end his family was allowed to visit him, he did not recognize them. They spoke about Jesus. There was no response. He no longer recognized the name. He had sacrificed for Christ more than anyone else: his faith in Christ. Neither the once-cherished name nor the word Christ meant anything to him.

I am sure this man is saved. I would like to have a place like his in heaven. The Communists were able to destroy the most precious organ of his outward man, but like all of us he had the hidden man of the heart, which the poison chemicals did not reach. This hidden man was in the embrace of Christ during those torturous years.

We were spared the worst. We can at least pray and thus obtain strength.

In PSA 138:1, we read, "I will praise thee with my whole heart." The highest form of praise I know is to become silent, overawed by the majesty of God. Kneel silently in adoration before the One who shows his glory in his saints. Here words cease.

Those Who Cannot Be Shaken

While we Christians remain silent, let us allow our Jewish friend Shifrin to say what he saw and rejoice:

> The Christians whom I met in prison were quiet and concentrated. They strongly believed that the Creator leads them the right way, and they received sufferings as blessings. They did not resist the guards in worldly things, but stood firm when their religious convictions were touched. There they could not be shaken...When I looked toward them, I sometimes felt that holy rays came from their barracks filled with holiness and prayers.

The following is a resume of an article that appeared in Soviet newspaper (~Znamia Iunosti~):

> An old man of small size enters the dock of the courtroom. He puts his hands on his breast and says "Peace be with you, brethren and sisters." He is a pastor. We have before us a fisher of men, who by teaching about life after death brought many victims into his clever nets. Outwardly he is a quiet missionary. From the first minute of the trial he ornaments himself with the aureole of a martyr, ready to suffer for the faith, for Christ.
>
> In 1948 he had already been sentenced to jail once for propagation of religion. But he did not learn the

> lesson. He started his underground work again. What is the charge against Artem Hivuk? The following are the words of the attorney of the district of Brest Tarasenko: "For a long time, he was leader of the unregistered congregation of the "rebellious sectarians" [the name given by the Communists to the Underground Christians]. He propagated religion. He trespassed against the law regarding religious cults." Hivuk was extremely zealous to win the youth. And he succeeded often.
>
> Hivuk said to the judges, "All are equal before God. An enemy is also a friend. You have no right to hit him."
>
> Children he won for Christ refused to join the Pioneers [a Communist children's organization]. All, beginning with the director of the school and finishing with the leader of the Pioneers, seem to have

> sympathized with Hivuk. They gave him liberty to work, contrary to the instructions of the Secret Police. Things went so far in the complicity of the local Soviet leaders with Hivuk that he got to the point of asking permission to use the school building for religious services. This could not be allowed, so the Christians gathered in private homes and, during the summer, in nature. There children sang "heavenly melodies." [How heavenly these melodies must have been for Communists to call them so!] Hivuk travelled from place to place preaching, including Moscow.

For these "crimes" he was sentenced to many years.

In the free world we would not be sentenced for shedding light around us. The irony is that we so seldom avail ourselves of our opportunities.

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The Choice to Be a Saint

There still are unnumbered Christian prisoners throughout the world, in such places as China, Vietnam, Burma, and Moslem countries. What happens to them spiritually?

It would seem that the long stretches of barbed-wire fence, the watchtowers, search-lights, long columns of ragged human figures grey in the greyness of the dawn, the shouts and whistles of command that are encountered from the moment one enters prison, all depress and suffocate a person spiritually.

Valentina Saveleva wrote after her release,

> We were often knee-deep in the mud. Our coats and boots were never dry. There was no washroom. The water was not drinkable because of the salt. Many had to sleep on the dirt floor. There were not enough blankets to keep warm. When we awakened in the morning, we had to be careful not to rise too quickly, for our hair was frozen to the dirt floor. It was impossible to remain free from lice. Many died of tuberculosis. Food was scarce and hardly edible. The temperature was seldom above 41øF. The prison was full of demon-possessed criminals, who cursed day and night. They wanted to destroy my faith.

Can love be the absolute law under such circumstances, or do they justify becoming lawless? The renowned psychologist Sigmund Freud, wishing to belittle morality, asserted:

"Let one attempt to expose a number of the most diverse people uniformly to hunger! With the increase of hunger, all individual differences will blur and in their stead will appear the uniform expression of the one instilled urge."

Freud had not known hunger. I have for fourteen years in Communist jails. Hunger, like any other pain, does not produce uniform results. Under pressure, some individuals become swine and others saints. Some grabbed the little piece of bread belonging to a fellow prisoner; others

renounced their only bit of bread and medicine to save another's life.

Christians know how to forgo even life itself. In Zimbabwe, a guerilla lifted his axe to kill a priest. Nearby was another priest, Killian Knoerl, who could have escaped. Instead, he chose to fight for his brother against the guerilla. He himself was killed.

The lawless have no scruples; they steal and betray, so they certainly should have. But they are neurotic and need Jesus' cure. The spiritually healthy, on the other hand, remain loving even if it means suffering pain and even death. The lawless find an excuse for their sins: fate, heredity, or environment. But though God in his providence may have allowed me to pass through trials and tribulations, how I react to them is up to me. As a free moral agent, I can choose to be guided in all things by love or I can choose to be lawless. I can be alive in Christ, certain of a future life - or I can be emotionally dead on this earth.

Paul wrote four of his epistles while in jail. They contain many prayers, but not one for his release. I have read hundreds of letters from Christian prisoners, but not once do they demand prayers for their freedom. During my fourteen years in Communist prisons I composed around 300 poems, some of which were published in ~Sermons in Solitary Confinement~, ~Stronger than Prison Walls~, and ~Alone with God~. Not one shows a desire to be rid of my chains. The Romanian Christian poets Traian Dorz and Moldovanu were also in jail for many years. The songs they composed were all full of the joy produced by the suffering for a glorious cause.

In the USSR, the Communists made a film about the Lithuanian priest Svarinskas, who was in jail. The purpose of the film was to show how dangerous he was to society. Svarinskas is shown preaching: "If a priest under atheism boasts of serving a parish for twenty-five years without being driven out by the atheists, he is a bad priest. Were he

good, they would have chased him out long since. Persecution is the sign that a priest fulfils his duty. Where atheism reigns, the only right place for a priest to die is in jail." The apostle Paul must have thought like this. Therefore he never prayed for his release.

The majority of our prayers are usually for release from difficult situations. But why should I pray to be released from an unhappy marriage, from the brutality of a parent, from a child who breaks my heart, or from other miseries? Missionaries have gone joyfully to savages to show them the love of Christ. Some, like John Williams and Bishop Hannington, were eaten by cannibals. They went to death reciting Jesus' words, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." [MTT 5:44; LUK 6:27]

We too should be patient, though the brain reels. His grace is sufficient to quell the grief.

Our brethren and sisters in jail volunteer to take beatings for others. In Auschwitz, under Hitler, Mary Skobtseva and Maximilian Kolbe stepped forward and asked to be executed in place of others. They died a martyr's death. When it was very cold, prisoners gave away sweaters so that others might feel warm. I have witnessed such scenes myself.

Concern for others drowns out your own troubles. Focus on God as the saints in prison do and you will know that heavenly peace comes from patient cross-bearing. To get out of the neurosis of lawlessness, begin to practice the law of love, at least in little things. Deny yourself for a period the food you love most, or some luxury in clothing, and think of those who eat unbearable food and are in rags. Interrupt your sleep for prayer on behalf of those interrogated during the night. Give up some item of cosmetics for those who cannot even wash. Renounce an hour of TV for those who for years have been in solitary confinement in underground cells and see nothing. Try to be silent for a day in order to empathize with the solitary, who cannot speak to anyone for years.

Sacrifice your complaining and grumbling for one day. Take time from other preoccupations to pray for the persecuted.

The Duty to Remain Sane

Sufferers learned under torture to see the horrors of prison life as no more than the buzzing of tiresome flies, because jail was like Golgotha, where there were not only crosses but also a beautiful garden (JHN 19:41).

Young believers learned from those matured through decades of pain. They had the best theological training, where religion is not simply taught but practised at the highest level. Perhaps we too should look to experienced saints and sit at their feet, as our persecuted brethren have done. They lived under conditions calculated to drive one insane, with criminals and madmen whose behaviour and speech were outrageously obscene. Frequently our hungry brethren and sisters were bullied with unimaginable cruelty. The syncopated beating of hundreds of agonized hearts oppressed the faithful during the night.

If we find ourselves provoked beyond endurance, let us remember and learn from our imprisoned holy brethren. They heed the voice of conscience, which tells them it is their duty to stay sane by being open to the life-giving Spirit of God. Every letter and personal contact with them revealed that they live in a realm of peace. They are burning flames on the altar of Christ. They are kind to all, especially their torturers who, knowing no kindness, need to benefit from a surplus from another source. No suffering is absurd if it generates such love for the wicked.

Our mission has been privileged to be constantly in touch with these saints. It has received and conveyed to the free world great inspiration from them. The National Institute of Mental Health (USA) claims that 62% of Americans suffer from a diagnosable mental illness. One half of all hospital beds in the USA are occupied by mental cases.

In other countries the situation is not much better. Our generation suffers from a wide-spread neurosis: lawlessness. The law is not embedded in our thinking. Everyone walks according to his own fancies without regard to the highest law: an all-absorbing, fervent love for God and man. If I do not have such love as a guide in all my actions, woe is me! I am sick and urgently need the cure that only Jesus can offer.

The Lord met and still meets much apathy, but he also meets ardent love. There are still souls who burn passionately for him, like John and Magdalene.

The Christian student Leonas Sileikis in Soviet Lithuania had to be examined before a commission of seven teachers. She was asked what she thought about atheist books. She

replied, They contain lies and slander."
A Communist delivered to her a speech against religion and then asked, "Do you renounce your faith?"
Her answer was, "I believe and will continue to do so."
The director of the school explained to her father, who was present, the danger of religion. He replied, "It is not true that religion is dangerous. The fruit of treading religion under your feet is that students do not respect the teachers any more; they drink, smoke and are promiscuous."
The teacher showed his wisdom: "Seeing that few go to church nowadays, it is important to join the majority."
The father answered, "Only corpses flow with the current. A living person can swim against it."
The director warned him, With such ideas you will make it impossible for your daughter to continue her studies."
Her father replied, "It isn't I who hinder her, but you. What good is study if you have to renounce the highest value, a personal faith?"
The wise men brought to the holy Child gold, frankincense and myrrh. This family has fulfilled the commandment, with which I challenge you: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (ROM 12:1).

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The Happiest Day

When Nijole Sadunaite, a Catholic, was sentenced in Soviet Lithuania she told the court:

> Truth needs no defence, because it is all-powerful and unconquerable. Only deceit and lies, being powerless before truth, need weapons, soldiers and prisons to prolong their infamous rule for a while. A biased government digs its own grave. I am on the right side and am ready to lose liberty for truth. I will gladly give even my life. Only those who love have the right to blame and criticize the objects of their love. Therefore I speak to you. You rejoice about your victory. Victory over what? Over morality? Over mean and debased men infected by fear?
> Thanks be to God, not all men have compromised yet. We [Christians] are not many in society, but quality is on our side. Without fear of prison, we have to condemn all actions that lead to injustice and humiliation. We must distinguish what is written by men from what is commanded by God.

We owe to Caesar only what remains after having given to God what is his due. The most important thing in life is to free heart and mind from fear, because yielding to evil is the greatest sin.
This day is the happiest of my life. I was judged today for the cause of truth and love toward men. What cause could be more important? I have an enviable fate, a glorious destiny. My condemnation will be my triumph. I regret only having done so little for men. Standing today on the side of the eternal truth of Jesus Christ, I remember his fourth beatitude: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (MTT 5:6). There exists no greater joy than to suffer for truth and for one's fellow men.

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How could I not rejoice when God Almighty has promised that light will overcome darkness and truth will overcome error and lies! May God give us the assurance that his last judgment will be favourable to all of us. I will ask this in prayer for you every day of my life. Let us love each other and we will be happy. Only the one who loves not is unhappy.
We must condemn evil, but we must love the man, even the one in error. This you can learn only at the school of Jesus Christ, who is the only truth for all, the only way and the only life. Good Jesus, your Kingdom comes into our souls.

She was sentenced to three years in prison. When, after being freed, she met the Pope in Rome, he asked her, "How was it in jail?" She replied, "Romantic."

We have our sorrows, troubles, apprehensions, even dramas. But she lifted before court the veil which she, like every other Christian, wears in everyday life and which makes us appear busy only with the things of this world, even if they are good works. She beheld with open face the glory of God and was changed into the same image of our Redeemer (2CO 3:18).

We too are called; we too can resist sinful surroundings.

Evghenii Pushkov was a Baptist music student in Russia who had advanced to the point of playing in the Philharmonic. But he knew he could further his career only by renouncing his faith, since the Soviets would not allow a witnessing Christian to affirm himself in the arts. One day, he invited his father and wife to the concert. The orchestra

played Tchaikovsky's lovely "Dying Swan" based on the legend that the swan sings only once in life, just before its death. Evghenii put all his heart into the music; he had decided that it would be his own swan song. He would henceforth prefer Jesus. His family, sensing his decision, were in tears. After the concert, he embraced them and said, "Henceforth you will not weep for me any more. I

dedicate myself wholly to the Lord." Sadly, such a decision in a Communist country does not banish tears. He went to prison for his faith.

In a Soviet prison there was a Lithuanian Christian lady who as a child had looked down from the attic and seen the Communists kill her whole family of eight, then leave laughing. After that she never spoke. Sentenced to 25 years, she spent them in perfect silence. Only once, in the beginning, did she tell her story to one inmate. After that, she spent all her free time walking alone to and fro through the prison yard, in sunshine, rain and snow. She bore her burden in silence without ever grumbling. She had seen God face to face.

How do we bear our lesser tragedies?

The Orthodox bishop Andrew was sentenced to death. The story is told that before the execution, he asked to be allowed to pray. As he knelt, he simply was no more. The henchmen were in a panic, knowing they would lose their lives if he disappeared. After an hour he reappeared, on his knees in prayer, surrounded by a luminous cloud. The sentence was carried out, but one of the henchmen was converted and told the story.

If it is difficult for you to believe such a tale, then listen to this one. A child came home from Sunday school and told his mother, "We were taught that when the Jews under Joshua had to cross the Jordan, the soldiers built a pontoon bridge, while planes were hovering in the sky to protect them."

The mother objected: "Surely you could not have been taught that."

"No, mother. But if I told you that I was taught a miracle happened and the Jordan was divided so God's people went across on dry land, you would not have believed it."

I believe in biblical miracles. I believe miracles happen even today. The greatest miracle is that the henchman was converted. The fantasy of this man who passed in one minute from a readiness to kill a saint to becoming a saint

himself works powerfully. It also makes him see things that might not have happened. Those who witness God's miracles become very sure of their beliefs.

Praise God in Suffering

"A bishop must be...a lover of good" (TIT 1:8, according to the original).

In the first church "bishop" was not a rank in a hierarchy. All the elders of the church were considered bishops (in Greek ~episkopos~) through the empowering of the Holy Spirit (cf ACT 20:17-28). Even our English word "elder of the church" is misleading. These elders were sometimes very young, as was the case with Timothy. The Greek word for elder means "farseeing".

In plain English, the Scripture quoted above means "an overseer of the church, a church leader, whatever his name - bishop, pastor, priest, preacher, mission director - must be a lover of good." The highest good is to have God living in one's innermost being. A church leader must love to bring men to this stage, to teach them to deny their selves until nothing remains but God. A church leader must also do this work when persecution comes. Some 40,000 clergymen were killed by the Communists, because they fulfilled their duty. Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Kosygin, Mao, Ceausescu, and other butchers were responsible for their deaths.

We thank God that the church has self-sacrificing leaders. The Russian pastor Serghei Golev had been in prison 22 years when his wife came to visit him. She was forbidden to do so because it was discovered that he had a New Testament in hiding. She could see him only from afar. He was in tears. She shouted to him, "I never saw you weeping. Strengthen yourself. Soon everything will end."

From behind the barbed wire, he answered, "I got tired. Greet all those who sincerely love the Lord."

Strength returned to him when, after this, several brethren discussed in the prison cell how they would like to die. One said, "I wish to die while serving the church. Let her bury me." Another, "I desire to be with my family, to bring my children to faith and then to die." Pastor Golev, who had had that one moment of weakness, said, "I wish to

die in prison. Here I passed my best years. Straight from here to the Lord - this is my prayer."

We had this communication from the Underground Church itself. Her communications contain no idle talk. She tells with soberness and humility the story of her heavy suffering, but also praises God for the endurance he has given her amid tribulations.

The same communication tells the story of Sister Nadejda Sloboda. No one would call her a pastor. But she was the first one in her village to be converted through gospel broadcasting in Russian (a work our mission engages in). Don't call her a pastor - but the fact is that she formed a church in her village. The church grew so mightily that the police had to surround the village to keep people from the collective farms around from coming to hear its message. Sister Sloboda was sentenced for this to four years of prison. Her five children were forcibly taken to an atheistic boarding school. Her husband remained alone. In prison, Sister Sloboda was confined for two months in an unheated, isolated cell, where she had to sleep on the concrete floor without a mattress, all because she had told other prisoners about Christ. During the day she worked. Everybody wondered how she could endure it. She answered, "I fall asleep on the cold concrete floor trusting in God and it becomes warm around me. I rest in the arms of God."

The prison director suggested to her that she make a request to be freed from this punishment. She answered, "It was not I who decided to be put in this cell. It is not for me to ask to be released from it" (we are reminded of St Paul's refusal to leave the prison in Philippi until the magistrates

came and besought him to do so - ACT 16:36-39). Such stars exist in the Christian firmament.

In the free world, attending churches, I sometimes say to myself, "If the day of God's judgment were a fashion show, many in this congregation would be saved." Our imprisoned sister Sloboda is clothed in the righteousness of Christ and in the zeal to make God manifest in her life.

In China, a sword was put to the chest of a Christian, who was asked, "Are you a Christian?"

He answered, "Yes."

He would have been killed if an officer had not said, "Free him; he is an idiot."

Someone asked him later, "How could you confess Christ with such courage?"

He replied, "I had read the story of Peter's denial of

Christ, and I did not wish to weep bitterly."

It is stupid to fear those who can kill only the body, instead of fearing the one who can throw body and soul into Gehenna.

The martyr Otto Wiebe wrote before his death in a Soviet prison: "It is a great joy for me to suffer for my Saviour. This is not something unexpected but has been a conscious choice from early youth. And this is proof of his divine power, which enables a child of God to bear in surrender, quietly, to his honour, the cross he lays on us." He left behind eight children. Such martyr families should be helped, but we should also learn from those who give their lives for Christ. Brother Wiebe died in prison after having shared the prophetic calling of his church to oppose devilish Marxism. He died praising God. We too can learn to praise God in our sufferings.

Considered Fools

In forced labour camps the work quotas were high. The hungry prisoners could not fulfil them, so they were

punished by being given less food. Amid sufferings like these, the Christians of Frunze (USSR) could write, "We pray for our persecutors, that the Lord may give them repentance. We ask the children of God to pray with us for a spiritual awakening of our nation." They might have had to walk through a snowstorm to their slave labour camp. But they lived separated from the much worse storms of hate and doubt. They loved and believed, they looked upon men as friends and embraced them all in their heart. Their life was rich. Their sacrifice still burns bright. We are all called to this high stage of salvation.

In a Lithuanian court the priest Seskevicius showed much courage. The prosecutor had asked that he be punished because he taught religion, which is opposed to science. Seskivicius answered, "If religion hinders the progress of science, may I put the question: Who were the first to set foot on the moon? The believers or the unbelievers? They were believers." The first food eaten on the moon was holy communion (by an American astronaut who has since become an evangelist). Seskevicius also said to his judges, "To answer violence with violence is not difficult. It is the natural reaction of all beings. But not to react is a sign of superior spiritual force." He did not react. He went quietly

to prison. Others did react. Christians fought the Soviet troops on the streets of Kaunas in defense of their imprisoned priests.

A. Jaugelis was sentenced to two years for having printed secretly ~The Chronicle of the Catholic Lithuanian Church~. How happy he must be in his prison cell, that God gave him the grace to say as his last words before court: "Millions of martyrs suffered and died for Christ and the truth preached by him. You atheists should not have the illusion that there are no more such heroes who have no fear to suffer for the truth, for the faith, for the church."

Christians are able to retain love for their torturers even in the worst of circumstances. The peak of Communist horrors was attained in the Romanian prison of Piteshti.

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Several would sit on the belly of a prisoner to make him excrete. Then he would be forced to eat his own excrement and drink his urine. Such as the daily routine in this infamous prison. There the Christian Sherban George committed suicide. His last words were: "The Communists' crimes are too horrible. I cannot pray to God for them from a distance. I must go to him to speak on their behalf. Do not avenge my death."

Inspiring, too, was the courage shown by the Ukrainian Christians Shevtchenko, Timtshak, Solovieva, Alekseeva, Borushko, Zaborskii, and Krivoi, who stood trial before the court in Odessa. Brother Krivoi had already spent ten years in prison for his faith. When the court convened and the accused were asked to stand, they fell to their knees instead and one of them began to pray aloud. Why should they pay their respects to the representatives of a state that is not an authority ordained by God, but the apocalyptic beast drunk with the blood of saints? The president of the court asked our sister Alekseeva why she refused to have an attorney. Her reply was, "I have long since taken Jesus Christ as my defender. My witness is in heaven and my record is on high" (JOB 16:19). Shevtchenko also refused to have an attorney, saying, "An atheist cannot defend a believer. God is my protector."

Hundreds of Christians had gathered outside the courthouse. Because they were not allowed to enter, they waited outside during the long bitterly cold hours. The accused refused to answer a single question until their brethren were allowed to enter. And they won!

So the Baptists in chains decided who would enter the

courtroom, not the Communist authorities. Never comply, always resist. This is the lesson which we can take from these heroes of faith. Resist, fight, and you will succeed.

The transcript of this trial tells us the most appalling things. We will mention only one. The Communists charged that the Russian Baptists had cut the veins of the one to be baptized and then all the believers had drunk of his blood.

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Not since Nero's time have such mad lies been told about Christians. Sister Solovieva was accused, among other charges, of organizing a group of young Christians to help an elderly lady work her garden. She said in her own defence, "Article 176 of the law of cults forbids churches to give material assistance to their members. [To help someone work his garden is therefore a punishable act, if it is done by a church member.] I wish to tell the court that to my knowledge nowhere, not even in the most retrograde country, can the law ask the right to control how I use money honestly earned and forbid that I should give it to those in need.

Then Sister Solovieva became the accuser of the Soviets before world opinion, as she said to them, "The legislation about cults has as its aim to deprive the believers of the most elementary rights of citizens. It commits genocide. The existing legislation puts us in such a position as to make the existence of believers impossible...I don't consider the spreading of Christian literature a crime. I spread literature and will continue to do so whenever I have the slightest opportunity."

She went to prison for this. What about those of us who are free to spread Christian literature? When did you last give out a Christian publication? (Our mission can supply very effective Christian literature for free distribution.)

Brother Timtshak began his defence with these words: "I consider myself happy to sit on the bench of the accused not as a thief or a murderer or someone who meddles in another's business. I rejoice about my situation which I am in for Christ's sake...In my sermons I preached about the love of God. I told how Christ loved men even unto death on the cross, so that everyone who believes in him might have life everlasting. I have preached this, I preach it today, and I will continue to preach it."

Brother Krivoi said in his final words, "Suffering as a Christian, I am ready to wear chains. I have been a believer for forty years (ten of which were spent in Siberian prisons).

You will not re-educate me and you will not break me with threats."

These brothers and sisters of ours were sentenced to Siberia, to the land of the white death. There they performed slave labour in ragged clothing. They stood knee-deep in swamps and in snow. Their food was meager and the weak among them died, as Lamdin did. But their names will remain for ever written in heaven and in the hearts of Christians everywhere.

The pastors of the official Russian Church, who willingly inform on their own flock, considered these martyrs fools. Even some American Christian magazines declared the attitude of these martyrs "unwise." The accusation is not new. St Peter considered it unwise for Jesus to go to his death. Brethren begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. The name of St Paul remains. Who today remembers his "kind advisers" or critics?

Charles Spurgeon, the celebrated Baptist preacher, once said, "I cannot do otherwise than contend with those who contend with God." These Russian martyrs belong in the same category as him.

Suffering for Another's Crime

A priest by the name of Nikiforov-Volghin tells in his book ~Dust on the Road~ about an encounter he had in prison with a Christian, who told him this story:

> Once I came home and heard a cry. I found my wife dead, stabbed in the heart by an acquaintance. The murderer fell at my feet asking forgiveness. I said to him, "Go, and never do this again." Then I went to the police and took responsibility for the crime. I was given a sentence.
>
> In Krasnoiarsk jail, one prisoner killed another. I took this crime upon myself also. I am sentenced for

> life. I could not do otherwise. Loving God, I look upon all men as upon angels. My only prayer is, "I am yours and you are mine. Have mercy on me." I would not have told you these things had you not been a priest. You asked me why I am here, and I owed you the truth."

> I was present when this prisoner died. It was as if heaven had opened. The prisoner's last words were, "Lord, I would like to continue to suffer for others, but thy will be done."

What a high calling - to suffer for what others had done! This means, to imitate Jesus exactly.

Once we received an eyewitness report about the stoning to death of a Christian girl in a Communist labour camp. She was bound hand and foot and made to kneel in the center of a circle of people, who were commanded to stone her. Those who refused to do so were shot. She died with her face shining, like St Stephen. One at least of those who saw her then was led to faith in Christ through that girl who sealed her testimony with her blood.

A young man prayed for his persecutors as he hung six days on a cross before he died. Five students who were sent out to dig deep holes, to which they were consigned, sang Christian hymns as they were buried.

The Chinese abbot Tong, decapitated by the Reds for his faith, said, "Toward the Communist initiatives, only one attitude is possible. It is to say "no" and to give your head. If we start a dialogue with them where Communism has power, we are lost." Another Chinese martyr, Pastor Tsand, gave this advice: "If you are arrested, your conduct can be only this: silence."

Brother Kozlov, a man who spent ten years in prison for robbery, was converted in jail and afterwards spent ten years in prison for Christ in the Soviet Union. Risking a new arrest, he wrote to "Kosygin, Brezhnev & Co., Butchers, Inc.": "If you would not prevent Christians who are in

prisons even today from speaking about Christ to this miserable world, how much the life of thousands of sinners would be changed! You would not need to keep one million atheist lecturers propagating an atheist morale."

Courage and continual unrelenting attacks succeed. Kozlov was actually called to a hearing by Soviet rulers. The converted robber spoke to the impenitent robbers as on Golgotha. The one who stole a couple of hundred roubles witnessed for Christ to those who have stolen one-third of the world. But God can do miracles. There are strong indications that Brezhnev died as a convert.

The heroism of Christian martyrs spreads its perfume in spite of the horrors. In one case, male guards tore the clothes off of nuns and carried them naked through the

prison yard. The prison walls are thick. Their cries of shame do not reach the free world, where most Christians sleep undisturbed. A group of thirty Orthodox Christians refused to wear the badge showing their number as prisoners. They were children of God. A child of God does not allow himself to be reduced to a number. Each one is a jewel apart. They declared quietly, "We will not work for Satan and we will not lift our hats before you Communist officers. We show reverence only to God." For this they were punished with half a year in solitary confinement, in unheated small cells where there was scarcely room to turn around. Food was given only every third day. The group passed before the prison director. Approaching him, everyone signed himself with the sign of the cross and exorcised him with the words, "Perish, Satan."

The Strength Not to Become Depressed

In Albania, the first self-declared atheist state in the world, of 200 priests, only fourteen were alive when the country was liberated. Two thousand mosques and churches have

been destroyed. The cathedral of Tirana became a sports hall, mosques were changed into public toilets.

The results of this atheist terror? A group of 116 young couples were discovered to have gathered in Fier for the purpose of a collective marriage ceremony. The Albanian Communist press had declared that some Christians had tattooed a cross on their palm, Moslems a crescent, to make it very clear from the first handshake that they stuck to their faith in God.

In Albania, the priests Fausti and Dajani had been locked for two months in primitive latrines full of excrement. They were then condemned to death and executed. When led to the place of execution together with others, Fausti said, "Let us go to the house of the Lord."

We received the following letter from the mother of the Baptist prisoner Valerii Nasaruk:

> My son wished to come to the West and learn to be a preacher. God said, "No. I lead you into another school, in prison." I attended his trial. It was hard on me. I would have preferred to be in his place. But God gives one power to bear everything. The greatest trial was when they asked me in court - I his

mother - to advise Valerii to change his ways. I could not do it. I comforted him. The world accuses us, his parents, for his being sentenced, saying it is the result of our teaching. Even some believers cannot understand us. But neither was our Saviour understood.
Even Peter warned Jesus about saving his own life.
We can visit Valerii. Thank God he is courageous. He greets you all."

Valerii was courageous in prison. His mother, deprived of her son and condemned by many, through Christ had the strength not to be depressed.

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Courageous Nuns

A document spread secretly in the Soviet Union tells the story of a large group of nuns in a labour camp who had refused to work for the Antichrist. They had been manacled and reduced to hunger. All was to no avail. Common prisoners were converted under their influence. They now had a real convent in the camp. When Irene, the daughter of the prison camp's director, fell gravely sick, he had no choice. He asked for the nuns' prayers. The girl was healed.

The wife of the Communist officer Tcherednitchenko had a difficult birth. Her life and the life of the child were in danger. Someone suggested to him, "Promise the nurse that if everything goes well, you will baptize the child."

"I can lose everything by this."

"Well, choose between what you call "everything" on one hand and your wife and child on the other."

The birth went well, and he baptized the child. He lost his job. The new commander wanted to compel the nuns to abandon their religious vestments and to wear the uniform of prisoners. They answered, "We will not wear the badge of the Antichrist." They were compelled to walk naked through the snow at a freezing temperature. They went, singing the "Our Father." Not one of them fell sick. When a Communist asked the camp's atheist doctor, a Mrs Bravermann, how this was medically possible, she replied, "Didn't you hear them singing about a Father in heaven? Well, this is the scientific explanation."

Our mission has taken up the defence of these persecuted Christians. We could help martyrs with a piece of bread, but they shared with us their nameless joy, their being true to the Truth, Christ the Lord.

Christians Infiltrated the Secret Police

In the sixties, the name of Nikolai Kokhlov appeared in a BBC documentary. A captain of the Soviet Secret Police, he was given the assignment of going to West Germany to infiltrate the Russian Freedom Movement and assassinate its leader, Dr Okolovitch. He simply had to open a box of cigarettes concealing a silent gun firing cyanide bullets and Dr Okolovitch would have been finished.

The infiltrator was received into the Liberation movement - and was invited to the flat of its leader. But instead of killing him, Kokhlov put the murder weapon on the table and told his story. He and his wife were underground Christians - who had infiltrated the Communist Secret Police. His wife had warned him, "If you kill, I shall divorce you." He had no need of this injunction, since he believed in Christ wholeheartedly. He had fulfilled his duty of love and saved the life of a man condemned to death by the Communists. Then the Communists tried to poison their supposed agent, putting a deadly dose of thallium in his coffee in a restaurant in West Germany. They did not succeed.

How did people like Kokhlov become Christians? Probably through a Bible or other Christian book smuggled into Russia by some mission. But why do we assume that it was most probably the work of our organization? For the simple reason that out of all mission organizations claiming to work behind the Iron Curtain, ours seemed to have a monopoly on being constantly attacked by the Communist press.

One such brutal attack that mentioned our name on four pages appeared in the Soviet periodical ~Znanie~ in January of 1974. Shortly after, another appeared in the Soviet newspaper ~Radianska Ukraina~, which contained a gruesome story about the killing of tens of thousands of Jews, Ukrainians, and Poles during the war and about other killings during the Russian Revolution. These mass murders were not perpetrated by counter-revolutionists or Nazis, claim the Soviets, but by Evangelicals and Baptists: not successful

in overthrowing the Soviet regime, these Christians, who are in reality Fascists, tried to kill the souls of the Soviet population by smuggling Bibles. The leaders of this "criminal activity" were Pastor Richard Wurmbrand and the director of the Swedish Slavic mission, Brother Martinson.

Chinese Heroes of Faith

On his deathbed General Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, told his son Bramwell, "Take the gospel to China." Years ago I wrote that if I were on my deathbed, I would say, "Take the gospel to the Communist camp." This wish has been fulfilled.

In China, under the terror of Mao, some Christians prayed in whispers with their wives, to avoid telling about their faith to the children lest they speak about it in school. But others formed secret house churches that eventually mushroomed. When Mao came to power there were no more than three million Christians in China. Now the Protestants alone are said to number seventy million.

During the time of the fiercest terror, Sister Kwang organized small groups of itinerant evangelists who went from place to place forming small congregations. Her twelve-year-old son was beaten by the Red Guards till he died. She and her husband were publicly whipped, yet refused to deny Christ. In jail, she volunteered to clean toilets in order to be able to circulate and tell fellow-prisoners about Christ, bringing many to conversion. Freed for a time "Mother Kwang", as she was called by friends and co-workers, created about 300 congregations, some with hundreds, some with thousands of members. In 1974, she was sentenced to lifelong imprisonment, tortured, and put in an underground cell with only a bucket for sanitary needs as furniture. Since it was rarely emptied, Mother Kwang was plagued with lice and mosquitoes. Her only food was unwashed rice, full of sand. Freed after more than a decade

in prison, she continued to live by laws "different from all other people's," including those who seek peace by conforming to the whims of tyrants.

In Mao's time, in a Chudse hospital, it was required that each morning everyone kowtow to Mao's image. One doctor remembered the three Jews of old who allowed themselves to be thrown into a burning fiery furnace rather than yield to idolatry, so he refused. For this he was beaten daily. He sang while being beaten: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Trouble, distress, persecution?" The Communists beat him with a rope, a metal rod, and a heavy cudgel, yet God's consolation was greater than the suffering. He did not bow.

Then they tried to break him by making his wife and

seven children attend his tortures. His wife pleaded, "What will our children do if you die? For our sake, please do as they demand!" But this Chinese doctor knew the teaching of Jesus: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (LUK 14:26).

From the experience of the universal church throughout the centuries, he could expect some of his children to be traumatized for life and even to doubt for ever his parental love. He could also expect that they would follow their father's example if they were God's elect and in time become heroic believers ready to sacrifice themselves. The Communists hung the doctor up to be beaten; they poked irons in his face, heated in the fire. On another occasion he was stripped naked and forced to stand on a bench in freezing weather. The Lord who protected the three worthies in the furnace protected him in the cold. He survived and remained faithful. For such a one, God becomes the supreme desire and no sacrifice is too great.

A church with such heroes of the faith has power, as the following story indicates.

In Red China, someone wanted to rape a girl on her way

home from a house church, where she had received such teachings. She did not scream, kick, or run. She had been taught to love assailants and to see in them men who have to be brought to salvation. With all meekness, she asked her would-be rapist for permission to pray before he fulfilled his sinful desire. It was granted. She knelt and prayed loudly. There must have been flames of love in this prayer, because when she opened her eyes and arose from kneeling, the rapist was also kneeling, though unable to move. He had become paralyzed. She ran back to the church to tell what had happened. The elders said she must forgive the man (she already understood this) and pray for his healing. As a result, he was restored, and all the non-Christians in her village turned to Christ.

According to another report, two Chinese Christians were led to torture and death. "It is finished," said one in a whisper. His brother answered, "No, that's not what Jesus said when he suffered. He said, "It is accomplished." "

Our brethren and sisters in China were terribly tortured by having water forced up the nose, by having their hands crushed with wood between the knuckles, and by severe electric shocks. Only those who love Christ supremely can resist such inhumanity.

Enlarge Your Self

Please read attentively, because I would like to offer you something that will appeal to your self-interest and still satisfy your most basic spiritual needs and drives.

You and I are by nature insignificant. We dislike some of the shallowness of our work and amusements. All our thoughts are much too petty. However, the self can be enlarged. I will tell you how.

A friend has been described by Plato as one soul in two bosoms. Friendship makes one live the beauty of two lives at once. The church of Christ has been created by God as a

fellowship of friends. It is written that after the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (ACT 4:32). How huge this heart and this soul were! Between Jonathan and David in the Old Testament was a friendship like that. "Jonathan was knit with the soul of David and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1SM 18:1). He did not hesitate a moment in renouncing even the throne to the benefit of his friend.

This is one of the great benefits the real church of Christ has to offer: a tremendous opportunity for growth and enrichment with the experience of saints all over the world. You can share in the most beautiful Christian lives.

The Russian psychiatrist Dr Nikolai Rozanov was an ascetic who never had money except what he needed for charity. Because he told his patients, "Trust in God," he was sentenced to five years of prison. He had engaged in forbidden religious propaganda by saying these few words.

Eventually he left prison strengthened in his faith and always greeted people with the old Russian Christian greeting, "May God save you." He continued to go to church and even sang in the choir. For this he was placed for an additional four years in a psychiatric asylum. As a result of the injections he received there, he could no longer control his arms and legs. Before regaining his freedom, he paid in death the ultimate price for his faith.

The Soviet underground church produced many men like this who were steadfast in the faith amid sufferings. We have the privilege of enlarging our own self by becoming one in heart and soul with such individuals. They, in turn, are one in heart and soul with Christ. Union with such saints

is also union with God.

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Chain Letters

In a Soviet newspaper, ~Molodioj Gruzii~, we learned about the sentencing of three Orthodox Christians, Kasimov, Matchalov and Abramishvili. They had committed the crime of organizing the sending of chain letters.

Since this was a specific Soviet crime unknown in the free world, we should explain. Unable to publish the gospel or print Christian books, our brethren decided to write long-hand or typewritten letters with many carbon copies - they have no copy machines - and send them to addresses picked from the telephone book, or else to put them in mailboxes. Those who received the letters were then asked in turn to multiply and distribute them by the same means. Thus they reached far corners of the Soviet Union. The work began in the Caucasus, but Ukrainian newspapers indicated that such letters circulated in their republic too.

The letter for which our brethren went to prison started with "Our Father," the meaning of which people in the Soviet Union would not know if it were not for such chain letters. Then it continued: "Atheists are the helpers of Antichrist. Have no fellowship with them...The "paradise" that atheists and their government have created on earth is deceptive. The antichrists buy men with movies and other amusements and lead them astray with godless teachings... They take our children and put them into kindergartens and schools which are incubators without love. There they destroy faith in God. They become harsh, thieves, drunkards." The letter finishes with the appeal, "Pray; ask grace from God, forgiveness, and protection."

These letters were of special importance to Soviet children who were not allowed to attend religious services. They were an important means of instructing them in the faith. It was not a question of just a few letters. The newspaper informed us that the Christians flooded the town of Tbilisi with their writings.

Another newspaper, ~Molodioj Moldavii~, spoke of "an

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offensive on the part of the believers." After fifty years of bloody tyranny, the atheists of the Soviet Union were on the defensive. And one of the weapons with which Christians defeated the Communists, who had at their disposal all

the schools, publishing houses, radio and television stations, plus prisons and instruments of torture, were these simple chain letters!

I call upon readers of this book to use similar weapons. The church was never meant to be an organization in which a few do the work and the others contribute money. We are all to be part of the priesthood of all believers, involved in the ministry of spreading the good news far and near.

Suffering Not an Unconquerable Obstacle

Bishop Vladimir Ghica died for Christ in the Jilava jail of Romania (where I too was once imprisoned). When ordained, he had prayed, "Lord, take my heart and never give it back to me. Why was I born if not to love you passionately?" His last words on his deathbed were these: "May the pains inflicted upon me, united to your pain, O Lord, heal and bless those who tortured me to death." Too often when we are wronged by others we become resentful and bitter, instead of putting our sufferings in the service of those who inflict them. Let us learn from saints like this bishop to shed every tear and to utter every groan in the spirit of self-sacrificing love for those who wrong us. Enlarge your bosom by making all these lives yours.

Jail is no hindrance to a useful Christian life.

The American bishop Walsh, who spent twenty years in a solitary prison cell in China, wrote: "I woke up one morning and found myself in jail. The word of the Lord came to me: "This is what you dreamed of - time to say all the prayers you want to." I could not pray much while I was

working. But now I had time to pray for my family, for friends, for everyone under the sun. Prayer is powerful."

If you are depressed, forsaken, idled, bereaved, do as Bishop Walsh did. When I have bouts of depression and am no good for any work, I pray in a depressed manner until the depression is gone. Jesus himself "offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears" (HEB 5:7). At the end of such prayers he could say to others, "I leave you my joy."

Liu Xiaobo was a leader of the protest on Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China, which ended in a massacre. He himself was arrested. But in jail he stopped thinking only about the sins of the Communist oppressors, when the word of the Lord came to him through a Christian fellow-prisoner.

Realizing his own sinfulness, he wrote, "How can a person who has no sense of sin ever hear the voice of God?" He thought to himself: "Jesus was nailed to the cross because of his love for sinners. But Christians I have known in China and those in the West don't come forward to sacrifice themselves for the sins of others. For many, religion has become another form of entertainment."

He changed his perspective: "Instead of fighting Communists because they do sinful things, I must dedicate myself to them, even unto death. If not, we all remain at the bottom of the same chasm instead of climbing to the peaks above. If anti-Communists don't love the Communists ardently and become willing to die for them, instead of fighting against them, it is like a paraplegic fighting a quadriplegic."

His thoughts may be useful to us in our conflicts with others. They can help us ascend to the peaks.

An Arab Girl

Mary Khoury was seventeen when Damour, her village in Lebanon, was raided by Muslim fanatics bent on converting

everyone to Islam by force. She and her parents were confronted with one choice: "If you do not become a Muslim, you will be shot."

She knew Jesus had been given a similar choice: "Give up your plan of saving sinners or you will be crucified." He chose the cross. Therefore she replied, "I was baptized as a Christian and his word came to me: "Don't deny your faith." I will obey him. Go ahead and shoot." A young man did so, and left her for dead. Two days later, the Red Cross came into her village. Mary, alone of her family, was found alive, but the bullet had severed her spinal cord. She was now a paraplegic. Her paralyzed arms were stretched out and bent at the elbows, reminiscent of Christ at his crucifixion.

But words from the Lord had come to her. She knew what she must do with her handicapped life. "Everyone has a vocation," she said. "I can never marry or do any physical work. So I will offer my life for Muslims, like the one who cut my father's throat, stabbed my mother while cursing her, and tried to kill me. My life will be a prayer for them." Such prayers shattered Communism, as billions spent on nuclear weapons could never do. They will also bring Muslims

to the Son of God. Therese of Lisieux said, "Sufferings gladly borne for others convert more people than sermons."

Mary's example encouraged other Christians to take a heroic stand. During 1990, the fiercest year of the fifteen-year Lebanese civil war, 1,000 were killed, 3,000 wounded and 300,000 fled the country - among them missionaries whose duty should have been to stay with their flock. But some remained. Luciem Accad, director of the Bible Society, stayed on, though a family of five was killed next door and a shell exploded in his own home, sending a wall crashing down on him. The blast left him deaf in one ear, but the other is enough for him to use in spreading God's word.

His spirit was good. "People are coming to the Lord every day," he reported.

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Identifying with Christ

If a man stood by a roadside and watched the whole population of China walk past him at the rate of one individual per second, more than twenty years would elapse before the last member of the procession went by. The strictest Leninism rules these people. Lenin wrote, "Everything is moral that is necessary for the annihilation of the old exploiting order." According to Lenin, religion belongs in this category. It must be obliterated.

But Christians in China trust death. It is the way to enter into the embraces of the heavenly Bridegroom and to receive the holy kiss. A strange report comes from the province of Hunan. A preacher was hanged by the Communists, but they left too quickly. The brethren were able to cut him down, and he is still alive. He says that when the rope was around his neck and he was being hauled up over the branch of a tree, all he could think of was our Lord being raised up on the cross.

A Christian poem by Radu Gyn was smuggled out of a Romanian prison. It is characteristic of the belief of the Underground Church. Here are its main thoughts:

> Last night, Jesus entered my cell. How sad, how tall was Christ.
> He stood near my bed and said, "Put your hand on my wounds."
> He had on his ankles marks and rust, as if he had once borne chains.
> I arose from under my gray blanket, "Lord, whence,

from what age, do you come?"
Jesus put a finger to his mouth and made me a sign to be silent.
When I awoke from sleep, the straw smelled like roses.
But Jesus was no more there.
I shouted through iron bars, "Where are You, Lord?"

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Then I saw in my own hands the marks of his nails.

The Underground Church bears in its body the marks of Christ. Whoever blesses her blesses him. Whoever helps her helps him. Whoever learns from her learns from him.
Let us learn from these overcomers of the world!

Like the Day of Annunciation

When I was in prison, a young cellmate Jon Lugajanu was taken to court. When he returned, his face shone. The other prisoners asked what happened.
He answered, "It was like the day of Mary's annunciation. What a beautiful day! A pure virgin sits alone in meditation. At once a radiant angels stands before her. He tells her that she, a creature, will have the Creator as a baby in her arms; that she, a creature, will wash her Creator; that she will wash the One who afterwards will wash millions of men from their sins. She, a creature, will teach her Creator to walk. She will teach the eternal Word of God to speak. He will be the sun and joy of her house. There will be a few difficult moments. She will have to stand weeping at the foot of a cross where God's Son and her Son will die for our salvation, but this will pass. He will be resurrected and will go to heaven and, surely, he will call his mother to be with him. And it will be joy again, without end."
The prisoners thanked him for the nice little sermon, but they insisted, "We asked you something else. How was it in court?"
He repeated, "I told you already. It was like the day of Mary's annunciation. It was announced that I am sentenced to death. Is it not beautiful? Gates of pearl, streets of gold, angels playing harps, the communion of saints, and above all, rest on Jesus' bosom."

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This is how suffering and death are received by Christians in Communist countries. How much we can learn from them!

Those Whom Poison Does Not Kill

In the lives of many prisoners, the Lord's promise is fulfilled: "If those who believe shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them" (MRK 16:18). The Communist Secret Police poison the prisoners slowly, sometimes putting drugs in their food, in order to break them morally and transform them through biological experiments into primitive creatures who will not think. But we have evidence to the contrary. I quote from a letter smuggled out of prison by the Soviet Christian David Klassen (remember: the following lines come from a prison cell):

> At midnight I bowed my knee before God and thanked him for all the graces which he has shown us. He has forgiven all our sins...He places us on the way of truth, he comforts us in our misery, in our suffering, in our separation...We will pray for the cleansing of the church of Christ, that she may bring forth more fruit... We will pray for the ministers, for the youth, for the prisoners and their families, for our country and its government.

From another letter written in prison:

> Don't weep, soul, that griefs surround you. Your lot does not lie in earthly life. The whole of happiness is where the saints who finished their course on earth live peacefully. Yes, I was obliged to go this way. There is no other way for me as a minister. And if someone wishes to be a minister, he must know beforehand that, when the Jews entered into the Holy

> Land, crossing the Jordan, the priests entered first in the dangerous water and were the last to leave it.

How much we who eat dainties can learn from these Christians fed with poisonous food!

The prophet Obadiah charged the Edomites, a people who lived 2,000 years ago at the east of the Dead Sea, with participating in the sacking of Jerusalem and in the desecration of the temple. He said, "Ye have drunk upon my

holy mountain" (OBA 16). The Communists have also changed many churches into cocktail bars. They have done even worse: they have changed churches into courthouses in which Christians are judged for their faith.

The Catholic priest Stephen Kurti was sentenced to death in Albania for having baptized a child. The trial took place in the former church of the town of Milot. The priest pleaded guilty and said, "I am a priest. It is my duty to give the sacraments." He left behind as his only property a radio.

Feeding on Beautiful Examples

The apostle Paul wrote, "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (EPH 4:24).

Ordinarily, men confuse holiness with goodness, though they are very different virtues. "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (GEN 1:31). After this "very good" followed something entirely different: "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (GEN 2:3). Sanctification belongs to another sphere than goodness. A man can be very good without being holy, set apart for God. There are extreme cases when men are holy without being good. Where is the goodness of Gideon, Jael, Joshua? They were fighters for the triumph of the chosen people. In this they were holy. Whoever reads the lives of

Athanasius, Luther, or Calvin sees very little trace of goodness in them. They fought ruthlessly for a truth entrusted to them, relentlessly confronting their adversaries. The truth must be victorious.

We have this commandment: to become holy by putting on the new man. But how can someone "put on a new man" in reality? The answer is, by feeding upon the right spiritual food. Worms that live in darkness have been conditioned to prefer the light. As often as they withdrew into darkness, they would get electric shocks, whereas if they came out into the light they would find abundant food. In time, these creatures "put on a new worm." Contrary to the habit of their species, they preferred light to darkness. Then these worms were cut up into small pieces and added to the food given to other worms, and marvel of marvels, these worms also changed their habits. The RNA in their cells, the depository of memory, had programmed them differently. Similar experiments have been performed on other animals.

If you desire to put on the new man, a man of

righteousness and holiness, feed upon Christ, who called himself the bread of life. He became flesh in order that he might become your daily food. Feed also on the example of saints and martyrs.

By beholding we become changed. A person who feeds his mind on the levity of TV shows, who reads bad books or chooses evil company, becomes superficial in his attitudes and evil in his behaviour. But by faith you can put on the new man, without any effort, by beholding Jesus and by letting your spirit feed on the beautiful examples of faith given by the martyrs. This is why I write about so many.

At one time I was in prison with the Adventist pastor Boian of Ploiesti. Released on the same day as me, he was asked by a Communist officer, "What will you do now?"

He answered, "I will begin again my Christian work, with or without your permission, exactly where I left off when you arrested me."

He kept his word. Eventually he appeared before court

again. The judge asked him, "Do you believe that Jesus will return and destroy his enemies?"

"He surely will."

"Will he destroy me also?"

"Without the slightest doubt I can assure you that you will be destroyed exactly like the others if you don't repent."

The judge went on, "Do you regret having preached illegally?"

"Why do you have stupid laws that forbid what is pleasing to the Lord? If you apply them, God will punish you here and in eternity."

"You were not allowed by us to preach." (In Communist countries, pastors must be licensed by the government.)

Boian's answer was, "God not only allowed me to preach, but commanded me to do so. Read the order yourself in the Bible. You will find it in MTT 28:19, 20."

He was sentenced to eight years in prison. He already had three years of jail behind him.

Such fearlessness is an excellent food for souls. By looking at these examples of courage, by looking upon Christ who has inspired them, we put on, without effort, the new man, just as worms put on "the new worm." A new breed of Christians appears, shunning comfort and seeking new spheres of zealous activity.

Your Life Can Be Exemplary

"And the Lord God prepared a gourd and made it to come up over Jonah that it might be a shadow over his head...So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd" (JON 4:6).

In the Bible the shadow is an image of the transitory. "Our days on earth are a shadow," says Bildad (JOB 8:9). "Man flees as a shadow and continues not," says Job himself (JOB 14:2). "Man spends all the days of his vain life as a shadow," says Solomon (ECC 6:12). He had inherited this

thought from his father David. "Our days on the earth are as a shadow and there is none abiding" (1CH 29:15).

Even prophets like Jonah are sometimes "exceedingly glad" about what is very transitory. He had first made a booth so he could sit under its shadow, forgetting that whatever a man constructs is transitory. A vehement wind overthrew the booth the next day. There is nothing that we construct for ourselves that will not be destroyed. Nothing lasts for ever, not even civilizations, let alone us as individuals on this earth.

Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the shadow given by a gourd. But the next day a worm "smote it." Every gourd dies some day, as well as the worm that has eaten it and the prophet who sat under its shadow. Nineveh, to whom Jonah preached, also passed away, though it was granted another century and a half after its repentance. Believers die, as do unbelievers.

There is no sense in being exceedingly glad because of a shadow. Tomorrow you will wish to die because you lost this joy. But the despair will not last because it too is transitory like every feeling. Then the earth on which the gourd grew, about which men were sometimes glad and sometimes angry, will also burn. Only God is everlasting, and it was he who said, "Should I not spare ...?" (JON 4:11). Nineveh he would not spare for ever. Even Lazarus, whom Jesus resurrected, had to die again. Only God lives for ever. And his word remains: "Shall I not spare?" Shall I not spare in eternity the soul that has trusted in me?

Christians don't seek their comfort in the shadow of what passes. They are not depressed because of defeats and failures; victories might follow. They are not inebriated by successes. These too do not last. They have an unvarying source of joy: their eternal Lord, who will share eternity with them.

According to the law of gravity, all objects are attracted toward the centre of the earth. But flowers grow upward

and planes rise to high altitudes, not because the law of

gravity is false, but because gravity is not the only law. Biological laws are at work in the case of the flower, laws of aerodynamics in the case of the plane. There are forces in nature that overcome the force of gravity. Psychology would say that the result of prolonged persecution united with betrayal on the part of some church leaders who weaken the faith can only wear out the saints. But this depressive force is not the only one. It is counteracted by the power of the Holy Spirit and by the communion of the saints. Paul, writing to Timothy, gives himself as an example: "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience" (2TM 3:10). Modern preachers usually avoid doing this. They speak about the example of Christ, not their own. Is this reasonable?

A madman once asked the cook in an asylum, "Are you able to prepare good food that makes those who eat it look fit and healthy?"

The cook answered, "I surely do."

The madman said, "You"d better become a mental patient in our institution, because you are the cook yet you yourself are thin and pale."

How can someone show me the right doctrine, the right manner of living, the right faith and the right charity, if he does not have them himself? Example is the best witness and the best sermon.

If the apostle gave himself as an example to be followed, it does not mean that he had a sinless life. Only One is sinless. But Christ "was delivered [to death] for our offences and was raised again for our justification" (ROM 4:25). So I am justified, that is, "I'm just-as-if-I'd never sinned." And I can give myself as a model to be followed by others as I myself strive to become more and more Christ-like.

Twenty years ago an Italian magazine told of a Catholic priest, Alexander Zavatta, who had spent ten years in a Soviet prison camp. He asserted at that time that there were still millions of innocents in Soviet jails, and he described

the tortures to which he had been subjected in order to force him to make accusations against other Christians. Fearing that he might crack because of the great pain, he stretched out his tongue and bit it as hard as he could,

hoping in his despair to cut it off so as not to become a traitor. Fortunately he did not succeed. Since the council of Nicea in 325 AD, self-mutilation has been considered unlawful for a Christian. The priest knew it, but he did something unlawful in order to remain loyal to his Christian brethren.

Another Christian prisoner in Cuba was asked to sign a statement containing charges against brethren that would lead to their arrest. He said, "The chain keeps me from signing this."

The Communist officer protested, "But you are not in chains."

"I am," said the Christian. "I am bound by the chain of witnesses who throughout the centuries gave their lives for Christ. I am a link in this chain. I will not break it."

Thomas Aquinas, after calling martyrdom the greatest proof of perfect love, adds: "Words pronounced by martyrs before the authorities are not human words, the simple expression of a human conviction, but words pronounced by the Holy Spirit through the confessors of faith."

We too are links in this chain. We can learn from the martyrs.

Exemplary Chinese Girls

In Kiangsi, Red China, a pastor and two Christian girls were sentenced to death. As on many other occasions in church history, the persecutors mocked them. They promised to release the pastor if he would shoot the girls. He accepted. The girls waited in the prison yard for the announced execution. A fellow-prisoner who watched the scene from his prison cell described their faces as pale but

beautiful beyond belief, infinitely sad but sweet. Humanly speaking, they were fearful, but decided to submit to death without renouncing their faith. Then, flanked by guards, the executioner came with a revolver in his hand: it was their own pastor.

He told them about the deal he had struck with the Communists and how wise it had been to do so. They would have died in any case, but so would he. Is it not better that a pastor should remain alive? The girls whispered to each other, then bowed respectfully before the pastor. One of them said:

"Before being shot by you, we wish to thank you heartily

for what you have meant to us. You baptized us, you taught us the way of eternal life, you gave us holy communion with the same hand in which you now hold the gun. May God reward you for all the good you have done us. You also taught us that Christians are sometimes weak and commit terrible sins, but they can be forgiven again. When you regret what you are about to do to us, do not despair like Judas, but repent like Peter. God bless you. And remember that our last thought was not one of indignation against your failure. Everyone passes through hours of darkness. We die with gratitude."

They bowed again. The pastor's heart was hardened. He shot the girls. Afterwards he was shot by the Communists.

Life often creates conflicts between people, though not always as dramatic as that just recounted. Let us learn from these martyr girls how to meet the betrayal of friendships and the unfaithfulness of those in whom we have confided.

Another episode from Red China: A girl was put through much torture to get her to betray the secrets of the Underground Church. She was asked how she could bear so much suffering.

She replied, "It was not hard. I had been taught by my pastor that the real torture lasts very little. For one minute of torture, there are ten minutes of glancing at the enraged faces and the implements of pain. I decided to keep my eyes

closed the whole time. I did not see the stick before it hit me, nor afterward. The suffering was much reduced. I relied on the promise of Christ: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (MTT 5:8). I purified my heart of fear of men, and I learned to see God. Just so, many had seen him before. When the Communists became aware of my defence, they stuck my eyelids open with tape, but it was too late. My vision had already taken on a new aspect."

Extraordinary Christmas Greeting

A Christmas letter smuggled out of the Soviet Union arrived in the West after much delay. It was written by the Russian Christian writer Alexander Petrov-Agatov, who had spent a total of thirty years in prisons and concentration camps for his faith before being released. This letter is a gem of love. Read it carefully:

On Christmas Eve I remember all men, independent of their faith and colour, of their social position or level of education. I remember men in power and those who suffer in jails and camps, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, those who have risen to peaks and those who have fallen into the abyss, the sick and the healthy, the persecuted and the persecutors. Foremost, I think about those whom I only recently left after having been with them in prison and camps for almost thirty years...

On our festive table there is a small Christmas tree: apples, grapes and other dainties. In my heart words ring like a bell: can you eat all these things while at least one man is hungry? Can you sleep in a warm bed when somewhere a prisoner is not allowed to lie down even on the cold concrete?

Garlands ornament my Christmas tree while the

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heavy chains of slavery and barbed wire surround the camps. I do not write only about Soviet camps and prisons. I think also about those who have no freedom in other countries. I think about all those who do not eat and drink this night, who cannot look at the most sparkling star which made Christ known to the wise men because the prison windows are covered with planks.

I greet, on Christmas day, our eagles and doves - mothers and wives, brides and those who could not become brides - my sisters who take the cross for the word of God, for truth, for righteousness, for faithfulness toward God and love toward men...

Christmas greetings to all the persecuted, the suffering, to all those who seek light. Christmas greetings to all persecutors and oppressors, to all those who curse and confiscate.

Christmas greetings to Helen Zagriazkina, who betrayed me seven years ago. I visited the church in which you worshipped. I wished to see you face to face, but was told that you don't go there any more. But do you ever pray? Pray, pray!

All men, prisoners and guards, men of the secret police and patrol officers, secretaries or the Communist central committees and presidents - pray while it is not too late. There will be no second birth of Christ. There will be a second coming. "Behold, I come soon," says the Lord. Soon, very soon.

Reading such words of wisdom and love from one who has suffered thirty years of jail helps us value our sufferings. "Jesus, though he were a Son, yet learned his obedience by the things which he suffered" (HEB 5:8).

Not favourable, but unfavourable circumstances are the hammers that shape the saints of God. Only men and women of courage who throw themselves into depths of

sorrow come up with pearls, not those who for the sake of comfort shun the sea and the waves.

"Baptize Me or I'll Shoot!"

Those who are badly hurt in the free world usually try to escape from their tormentors. Not so with Annmarie, a young Slovak Christian. While she was being tortured, her main desire was to prevent her torturer from going to perdition. She shared with him again and again the beauty of Christ and his kingdom. His reply was more punches and more whipping, to which she responded by using every pause in the beating to bring him to God.

The holy word worked in the criminal. Once when she was brought before him, he asked her in mockery, "Tell me more about your God." Torturers often got tired of beating and would take coffee breaks. During these pauses, they were ready, while smoking, to listen, to be entertained. Annmarie complied with his request, adding, "In vain you beat me. You will never succeed in beating out of me my love for God nor my ardent love for you."

He mocked her: "Usually girls wait for boys to declare their love first. What is this stupid declaration of love on your part? We are not in the love business here. You should be telling me the secrets of the Underground Church. If you don't, I will beat out of you all your loves, for God, for me, or for other young men."

She replied, "While you beat me, I looked at your hands. They are beautiful. I imagine how your wife enjoys it when you use them to caress her. When one caresses, two persons have pleasure, the caressed and the one caressing. But what is the good of beating? It is terrible for those of us who are victims. But it must be terrible for you too to have your ears deafened with cries of suffering. And this day by day, every day. It must be maddening. So why don't you turn from beating to caressing?

"I will tell you one thing more, something no girl normally tells a young man. But here we are in extraordinary circumstances. You have very attractive lips. How happy your wife must be when you kiss her; what rapture this must be for both of you. May I ask you a simple question? Isn't kissing better than swearing, shouting foul words, or being angry? Both you and the person you address are soiled by such language. Then why not kiss instead of swearing? God created our lips for this."

"Where do you get all these foolish thoughts?" he asked.

She replied, "I have a boyfriend, the sweetest of all. Not that he loves me. He is love, the most exquisite love, love of a kind that does not seek pleasure so much as to fill the beloved with joy. Since knowing this boyfriend, I too can only love. Whether I am caressed or hurt, I can only love. You love hatred now. I call upon you to love love."

He gave her a powerful blow, and she fell to the concrete, hitting her temple and passing out. When she came to, she saw him sitting quietly as if in meditation. He told her, "I have been thinking about your boyfriend. What he says makes sense. Caressing is better than beating and kissing is better than swearing. I"m surprised that this simple truth has not been obvious to me before. Who is this boyfriend of yours?"

Annmarie told him the Name above every name.

He asked simply, "How can I make him be my friend too?"

She replied, "You must repent and be baptized."

"Then baptize me immediately," he demanded.

She replied, "I can't do that!" She did not know that in special circumstances everyone can baptize, even a child.

He pointed a revolver at her: "Baptize me now or I'll shoot you!"

The words seem strange, but they fulfil precisely the words of Jesus, "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (MTT 11:12). This man

wanted the kingdom forcefully and was ready to shoot his way into it.

He dragged her to a pool and dumped her into the water, following after. Annmarie baptized him. After a time, the converted torturer, risking his own liberty, gave her the certificate of release from jail of another prisoner who had

died the day she was to be set free.

Christ Outside the Church

Without churches and without Bibles, people in the Communist camp have suffered from a thirst for God. They find him outside church buildings.

In a capital city, I once entered the tourist agency of a Communist country. When I told them my identity, they immediately called their embassy. The embassy sent over a representative, and I had before me four Communists, considered trustworthy enough to be sent abroad. I told them about Christ. Instead of the expected words of opposition, the one from the embassy told me, "Pastor, I dreamed one night that I was in a meadow. Jesus was also there and caressed my head. Why should I have dreamt about him? I did not believe in him. And why should Jesus have caressed an atheist? The whole of the next day I was in a kind of ecstasy. Could you explain to me what this means?"

What an opportunity for a pastor! I used it to good advantage.

"The most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet" (ACT 7:48). What a shock these words must have been for the Jews of old. Each year they travelled from countries far away or hundreds of miles in their own country to fulfil the obligation, imposed by their religious laws, of making frequent pilgrimages to Jerusalem. When they arrived at the Temple to meet God, the words of the prophet were read to them: "The Most High does not dwell in temples made by hands." Where then

can man find God? And what are temples for if God is not in them?

Temples serve to point to the first real tabernacle, which the will of the Most High placed in a manger in a stable among cattle. God came to "tabernacle" with men as a Baby, in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And in the New Jerusalem the prophet John "saw no temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (REV 21:22).

The Communists, of course, do not know this. They believed that by destroying churches they would destroy people's belief in God. But God can speak to an atheist in his bedroom.

One Russian Orthodox priest, Serghei Zheludkov of

Pskov, publicly aligned himself with Pavel Litvinov, a Russian freedom-fighter, sentenced because he protested against the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union. Zheludkov wrote him a wonderful letter:

> I heard that you are an atheist. This does not hinder my admiration for you...The church, the mystical body of Christ, consists of men of good will and action, independent of their so-called "convictions." As a healthy cell of a living body may know nothing about the head of the body, about the whole body, so a man of good will may be "an unbeliever," may not know and not think about Christ, about God - and, notwithstanding, belong to the church of Christ. Today in Russia many call themselves atheists only because of lack of education... Love, liberty, truth, fearlessness, loyalty, all these are names of our Lord, whom you honour, not knowing him, and whom you preached in your wonderful courageous attitudes.

Some of these ideas may seem strange to Western Christians. But I know of a young Russian scientist who, on a visit to the United States, was asked about religious persecution in Russia. He answered very sincerely, "We have to

put many Christians in prison, because at their religious services they cut off the hands and legs of children as a sacrifice to God." He had been taught such things about Christianity.

If this were all I knew about Christianity, I would be anti-Christian too!

Sacrificing the Dearest

A girl named Mary tells the story of the court trial in Russia in which her mother was deprived of parental rights. The Communists shouted at her, "You are a mother. Deny God. What did he give you? Whom do you love more, your own children or your idol? How can you?"

Her mother sat with her scarf covering her eyes, repeating, "God sees everything. He will reward."

When Mary and the other children cried to her, "Mother, do not leave us!" she did not even turn to them.

It is a scene exactly like those we read about in the history of the early martyrs, who went into the circus arena

to be devoured by wild beasts and would not listen to the pleading of their loved ones who asked them to recant and save their lives, for their children's sake. With God, the mystery of preferring the death of his Son to permitting the eternal death of sinners: with saints, the mystery of preferring to lose their children rather than to deny God. Such is our God: so are we. We can do nothing but sing his praises, whatever the consequences.

The story of Mary shows the strength of a mother's faith. Now let's look at the example of a child. Many little ones often excel in Christian virtues.

A missionary couple named Barendsen - he Dutch, she Finnish - went to Afghanistan to preach the gospel, knowing they would encounter both Communist and Muslim terrorism. Being one in spirit with Christ, they were ready to give their lives for him. Both were stabbed to death. At

their burial, their five-year-old son said loudly, "I am a Christian. I forgive the murderers of my parents." We know of one Muslim who was converted after hearing this child, who had an intimate knowledge of Jesus.

In ~Almanach St Peter Clavier 1990~, Amelio Crotti, who had been a prisoner in China, wrote:

> From my cell I heard a mother speak soothing words to her child of five. She had been arrested with the child because she had protested against the arrest of her bishop. All the prisoners were indignant at seeing the suffering of the child. Even the prison director said to the mother, "Don't you have pity on your daughter? It is sufficient for you to declare that you give up being a Christian and will not go to church any more. Then you and the child will be free."
> In despair, the woman agreed and was released.
> After two weeks she was forced to shout from a stage before 10,000 people, "I am no longer a Christian."
> On their return home, the child, who had stood near her when she denied her faith, said, "Mummy, today Jesus is not satisfied with you."
> The mother explained, "You wept in prison. I had to say this out of love for you."
> Siao-Mei replied, "I promise that if we go to jail again for Jesus, I will not weep."
> The mother ran to the prison director and told him, "You convinced me I should say wrong things for my daughter's sake, but she has more courage than I."

Both went back to prison. But Siao-Mei no longer wept.

Jesus was born in a stable. Children of Christians have been in dreary, damp prison cells with heroic mothers who remind us in their saintliness of the holy virgin Mary.

A Russian, Vladimir Tatishtshev, was arrested in Shanghai. The authorities had iron tubes put on his legs, which they then tightened with screws and hammered until they

broke his bones, to make him confess imaginary crimes. He refused. Then the Communist police went to his home. An officer picked up Tatishtshev's baby and told the mother, "If you don't sign an accusation against the prisoner, we will smash your child's head." The mother could not believe that such a thing could happen, so she refused. Then the police officer, a woman herself, smashed the head of the baby against the wall. The mother stabbed the officer, and the other Communists shot the mother.

Three corpses! Sin unto death. Countless episodes of this nature took place, and still happen in Red China, not to mention India, Tibet, Sudan, and North Vietnam. The free world knows little of real suffering.

The Communist newspaper ~Uchitelskaia Gazeta~ revealed that in the village of Burnii a teacher wrote on the blackboard, "There is no God" and asked the children to read it. One girl raised her hand, stood up, and read loudly and clearly, "God exists." The children told the teacher the parable of the prodigal son. The teacher, Matrena Matveeva, complained that all her pupils were children of believers. Every pupil in the village! She organized an atheist festival. Not even one child came. The children spent two to three hours a day in prayer. You might say that is too much. How many hours do American children spend watching TV?

When we read in the Bible that blessings are promised to children of the faithful, some of us expect a good material position, a happy marriage, high degrees, and positions of honour. But the Bible never deceives us about what is understood by "blessings." The Lord Jesus said, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (MTT 5:10,11).

Christians know only one sadness: not to be saints. They have one suffering: not to share enough the sufferings of Christ and their fellow men. When sorrows are given to

their children because they have the right attitude in life,

Christians rejoice and count them as blessings. I write these things as a parent, grandparent, and great-grandparent myself, having searched my heart thoroughly to determine what I wish for my children and grandchildren. I desire for them "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings," that "they might be made conformable unto his death" so "that they might attain to the resurrection from the dead" (PHP 3:10, 11).

Special Children

"It shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day...blessed shall be the fruit of thy body" (DEU 28:1, 4).

I thought about this promise of God when I read the second volume of Solzhenitsyn, Christian writer and Nobel prize winner expelled by the Soviet government. He relates the story of a Russian couple named Leshtshev, who had been imprisoned for their faith. They left children behind who grew up richly blessed, because their parents hearkened to the voice of God even when it meant heavy suffering. The children also had the privilege of being imprisoned for their belief in Christ. This was their blessing, which once more was multiplied. They too had children, all of whom were sent to concentration camps for their adherence to Christ.

All, that is, except Zoia, who was ten years old. She was put in a home for children to be re-educated. There she declared that she would never part with the cross her mother put around her neck just before leaving the house in handcuffs. To be very sure that the Reds would not take the cross away from her while she slept, she bound the chain tightly around her neck. Considered incurable, Zoia was sent to a home for mentally deficient children. Here she continued the fight for her cross and for the Saviour whom it

symbolized. When other children tried to teach her to blaspheme and steal, she answered, "A holy woman like my mother should not have a criminal child."

She brought several of her schoolmates to faith. As in any school at that time, there was a statue of Stalin in the

yard. These children wrote on it their opinion about this ruling criminal, and expressed their homage to Christ. Then they decided to smash the head of the statue of the greatest murderer in history, who killed countless millions of innocent men, women and children in his lust for power. The Secret Police were alarmed. Declaring it a "terrorist act," they demanded: "Denounce the criminal! If not, all 150 children will be shot."

Zoia Leshtsheva came forward: "I alone have done it. Why should Stalin have a head if he never had loving, righteous, compassionate thoughts?" She had a special blessing promised by God to children of faithful parents. She was sentenced to death at the age of fourteen. Her sentence was changed to ten years of prison, to which another term was added, and then another. Her parents and brethren were long since freed while she continued to enjoy God's blessing in prison.

Pupils of a Soviet high school in Vilnus were taken to the Museum of Atheism. There, a lecturer showed them an ancient crucifix and explained, "This is a symbol of Christian superstition. The Christians irrationally believe that a certain Jesus was the Son of God, that he came down from heaven to die on a cross to atone for the sins we have committed, and to open for us the gates of paradise, which we Communists know does not exist."

A girl exclaimed in tears, "This is what I need. I need Jesus. I love him." The atheist had brought her to Christ.

Below are two letters written by Soviet Christian children to their mothers in prison for their faith:

> God bless you, dear Mummy. Sincere greetings from your loving daughter. Don't be troubled by our temporary

> separation; the mischief is not eternal. Joy will hasten to come back. It will give courage to our family and to your heart. Now you know prison. Little Mummy, I can't imagine the feast we will have when you return. I do my lessons. Now it is evening. Tomorrow it will be morning. So day after day. And one day your release will come. I embrace you.

Another little girl:

> Dear mother, when you come home, I will not think any more about solitude and pain. I made a poem for you:

You have a heart of gold,
You're young at heart, not old.
The Lord observes you from on high.
We'll be together soon, you and I.

I beg you not to weep, though I realize that prison will leave marks on your memory. Your loving daughter ...

The Christians who die in prison leave behind children who eat from garbage, stuffing potato peels and stale bread crusts into their mouths with feverish fingers. But these children have learned from their fathers an earnest faith. The Moscow atheist magazine ~Nauka i Religia~ describes them: "In Kislovodsk, I spoke after a religious service with a girl of eleven. She was sincerely convinced that while she prays the good Lord looks at her and smiles. She says, "There is God; I see him myself. I believe no one who says he does not exist." Another little girl kissed an image of Jesus crucified. Then she made her doll kiss it too. When asked why, she said, "God looked at the doll. I saw it."

The magazine continues to tell us what Iurii, a boy of twelve, says: "In my prayers, I ask God to give me strength to fight those who are against God. We have to fight them not with the sword, but with the Bible." Another boy of the

same age says, "I ask God to forgive my sins, to make me strong, and that there should be no evil in me."

Some years ago we received an open letter from two "small orphan children in the Lord", Shura and Galia Sloboda:

Dear children of God, we, your small sisters in the Lord, have been separated from our dear mother and father and two little sisters and a baby brother, although we are still very young. We have been taken away from them through the People's Court in the Verchedvinskii region, district of Vitebsk, because our dear ones taught us salvation in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...We have been put in the orphanage of Vitebsk. We cannot endure to be away from them, and we have therefore fled home twice, but the mighty of this world have again and again snatched us away from our family and placed us in the orphanage. Every day, we kneel by the side of our beds and pray for you all. And for this, we are

terrorized, and they always threaten to send us to a labour camp.

On December 24, we felt urged to write to Moscow and complain about all threats and persecutions. We demanded to be allowed home during the winter holidays. Moscow gave their permission. But, alas, mother was no longer home! She had been sentenced to loss of freedom for four years because she had witnessed about Jesus Christ. Father received us together with our younger sisters and baby brother. He consoled us for a long time and said that Christians who love their Lord very much have to walk on a heavy path.

Dear mothers and fathers, who have consolation in the Lord, when you gather in your happy families, remember us when it is well with you! We ask you always in your meetings to carry us before our

Almighty God in prayer, so that we can endure also this hard blow in our young lives and even unto death remain faithful in our hearts and trust in our Lord, who loves all."

The faithfulness of little children in Communist countries is often amazing. The son of someone named Ilyinov declared before court, "I will kill nobody. I will not, and that is final." Another child, Lilia Skomorokhova, declared, "I cannot be a member of the Pioneers [Communist children's organization]. Believers can't be members. Mummy told me she wishes to meet me in the other world. Communists don't get there."

A communication smuggled out of the Soviet Union told of the Baptist children Vania Vasiliev, Nadia Zdorova and others between eight and fourteen years of age who were lured or intimidated by the Communist prosecutor Skrortshov into signing statements giving the names of the teachers of their Sunday School. As a result, four leading Christians of the town of Saki have been sentenced. Their conscience will brand these children for ever as Judases; but obviously, at their age they did not realize they were being entrapped.

Also in the Soviet Union, the children of the Baptist family named Vidish were forcibly put in a home for mentally sick children, only because they believed in Christ. After one year of suffering there, they were abducted by their parents, who succeeded in bringing them into another

town where doctors found them to be normal. But will the souls of these children ever recover from what they suffered?

What characterized the literature printed secretly by Christians in Russia was first of all its great care for the children. For instance, the following story appeared. Sister Mary L. had five children: Vania, Pavlik, Andrei, Vera, and Sveta. She bought them a rubber doll. But when the children played "prayer meeting," the knees of this doll

could not be bent. So the children complained to their mother that she had bought them "an unbelieving doll." A believer is recognized by the fact that he bends his knees before the Creator.

Children taught in school that the cosmonauts did not see God in space answered: "But did the cosmonauts have a pure heart? Without it you will never see God, wherever you travel. With it, you can see him everywhere!"

In this secret literature, parents were asked to teach their children to be able to prove in school the existence of God. The leaflets maintained that Christian children in Russia "amaze lecturers and teachers by their steadfastness and religious heroism."

Always Turn to What Is Hardest

Lenin, founder of modern international Communism, was a man who hated God. At the age of sixteen, he became upset by a stupid remark of a priest he overheard talking to his father: "If your son does not go to church willingly, beat him." Lenin tore off the cross he wore around his neck. As often happens, an incident that was really a trifle created in him a complex of antipathy toward religion. He confounded one wrong utterance of a priest with all the realities for which the notion "priest" stands: God, the Bible, eternal life. Then Holbach became his favourite philosopher, and he would later recommend strongly the wide dissemination of the writings of Holbach to the masses. He liked this philosopher, who had written, "God is my personal enemy."

What a small, seemingly insignificant incident led Lenin to become an atheist! It might be useful to note how Sigmund Freud, the renowned psychiatrist, also became an atheist. In his childhood, Freud had greatly admired his father, looking upon him as a hero. When Sigmund was seven, his father told him that he had been attacked once by a gang that shouted:

"Down from the pavement, you dirty Jew! Jews should walk in the middle of the street." They also threw his cap in the mud.

The child asked, "Daddy, what did you do then?"

The father replied, "I grabbed the cap and left the pavement."

That was obviously the right thing to do when dealing with a gang. Heroism is a rare virtue which should not be squandered on minor incidents. But the father did not explain this to Sigmund, and the boy could not have been expected to understand. From that moment on Freud despised and hated his father. This hatred, which began with so small a reason, grew to the point where he dreamed of killing his father. When he matured, he extended his hatred to all fathers. He wrote a book against Moses because he was the father of the Jewish people. Freud also wrote against God, the Father of the universe.

Do our so-called convictions also have trifles as their origin?

Vietnam, Cuba and above all China still apply strictly Lenin's principle:

> Terror must be perpetrated unmercifully and in the shortest time possible, because people cannot endure continued cruelty of the regime... the trials must be conducted promptly, ending in swift sentences for the greatest number of clergy... the confiscation of monasteries and churches should be carried out with the greatest severity, without scruples and in the shortest possible time. The more priests executed during this occasion, the better.

Such adamant terror can be broken only by adamant faithfulness. Lukewarm Christians cannot resist. Elect souls, whom it is good to imitate, should follow the teaching of John of the Cross to "turn always to what is hardest, not to what is easy; to what is most distasteful, not to what

tastes best; to labour, not to rest; to what is lowest and most contemptible, not to the highest and most precious."

Christians in such countries know they must propagate the gospel without counting the cost. We must do the same in our own circumstances.

Great persecution still rages in Vietnam. In the Filipino monthly ~Impact~, the Jesuit priest F. Gomez, who spent fifteen years in Vietnamese jails, described the power of darkness behind this persecution. He had a discussion with a high-ranking Communist official from Hanoi, who told him, "We do not admit the heresy of pluralism, because this means division and weakness. We care only about the people." He immediately added an explanation of what he meant: "'People' are only those who have the correct ideology and live according to it. There are some stubborn, hard-headed men like Archbishop Thuan. These will never become 'people.'" He also told the priest, "Nobody will come out of the concentration camp until he is converted to Communism. Those who do not convert will disappear." When the priest asked if Communists would grant religious freedom, the Communist official answered, "Freedom exists so that you can obey, in different ways, the rules of the Communist Party."

Shocked by the Communist's frankness, the Jesuit said to him, "I am a foreigner who can leave the country. If I repeat what you have said in the free world, it will certainly be bad propaganda for Communism."

The Communist answered, "Priest, no one will believe you."

The wicked are adamant in wickedness. We will be conquerors only if we are adamant in our goodness.

Men's Madness

Jesus must have pondered much about men's madness. While carrying his cross to Golgotha, he quoted the words

of Hosea: "They shall say to the mountains, 'Cover us!' and to the hills, 'Fall on us!'" (HOS 10:8). Only madmen can speak thus, instead of saying, "Let us pray to God that he will protect us" or "Let us seek shelter." What good does it do to have a mountain fall on you?

What would Jesus say about today's madness?

In the nineteenth century, missionaries went to give the gospel to African cannibals. Some missionaries were eaten. When Bishop Hannington was devoured in Uganda, his two sons went to replace him. Eventually they baptized and gave communion to men who had digested their own father's flesh. These men told the sons that the bishop, while being led to his death, repeated unceasingly Jesus'

words, "Love your enemies."

Modern men are worse than cannibals, who, with practical intent, kill men in order to eat them. We do not eat humans, so why did we kill tens of millions in world wars, why did Fascists and Communists kill more tens of millions in the years before and after?

It is folly to ask why men kill. They are mad and must be brought to the fear of God.

Corrie ten Boom related how Christians in Nazi death camps discussed ways to bring Nazis to salvation. God used me to form a mission to Communists and terrorists, men worse than cannibals. Why doesn't the world church declare this as its purpose? Why have there been so many Christian congresses without a word on the subject of winning to Christ the members of Communist parties and youth organizations?

The explanation is that many of us have not become really God-fearing, that many Christians still share the madness of the world. I wish every reader were a Christian, but not an average one. We should be serious in our thinking.

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A Flower in Jesus' Garden

Armando Valladares is a Cuban Christian poet who was kept in jail for twenty-two years. After gaining his freedom, he published his memoirs. In them he described the horrors that took place in these Cuban jails, where there were more than 15,000 prisoners held on religious and political charges. A prisoner of only twelve was put in a cell with criminals. They bound him naked, laid him on his belly, and raped him. (In Russia, too, the brethren Tchemodanov and Klassen were put in cells with homosexuals.) In Cuban jails prisoners were beaten to a pulp. The jail had a large tank containing faeces and urine. Prisoners were forced to stand up to the neck in this filth.

It would seem that under such conditions only one law could work: self-preservation at the expense of belief. But Christians have "laws different from all other people's."

A believer named Geraldo, every time beatings started, shouted unceasingly, "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they do." He was shot while praying this prayer.

Valladares was once in the prison yard. An officer asked him, "Where do you get your power to resist? Why do you endure all this instead of giving up?" He plucked a flower, showed it to the Communist, and said, "Before there were men on earth, there were flowers. When Capitalism and

Communism are long since forgotten, the flowers will still be there. Our holy book compares the faithful with flowers. It is written, 'Like a lily among thorns, so is my beloved among girls' (SOS 2:2). Try to be a flower in Jesus' garden, and you will live for ever."

From that moment, the officer became a different man. He no longer persecuted believers.

We can learn from such brethren to overcome the sorrows of our own lives.

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Seek a Church on Fire

In Vietnam, a number of Buddhist pagodas and churches are kept open in the big cities to preserve appearances, but the majority of the pastors and religious have been sent to concentration camps.

Reverend Thich Quang Do was arrested in 1985. To induce him to collaborate, the Communists also arrested his 85-year-old mother, who was senile. Her hands were so stiff she could no longer hold her bowl, nor could she see to keep herself clean. Thich Quang Do was given the choice of denying his faith or letting his mother perish in suffering and filth.

The same methods are used against many Buddhists.

The world would say, "Do the will of the henchmen and save your mother." But Christians have a "different law." For no reason will they deny the God of Israel, who is the Maker of the universe and the Father of all mankind. He can make a mother's suffering serve her eternal good.

Mordecai's refusal to bow to the tyrant Haman - as recounted in the biblical book of Esther - threatened the existence of the whole Jewish nation, yet he did not bow, and God saved the nation. Haman and his ten sons, who were like him, were hanged.

The Communists trained male and female Secret Police officers to be professional seducers. They sent them to Christian prisoners, who many times had been doped with sexually-stimulating drugs beforehand, to seduce them. The moment the victim had fallen into their net, a snapshot was taken. Then the victim was blackmailed: "If we publish the picture, your family and your church will despise you." Some were asked afterwards to become informers of the Secret Police or were forced to give public statements that they denied Christ.

Mary X was an outstanding example of faith. Judged together with Tchernetskaia for having run secret Sunday

schools, she had been sentenced to four years of prison,

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while Tchernetskaia was sentenced to five. Mary protested against the milder sentence, asking for the privilege of suffering as much as her friend. But towards the end of her sentence a professional seducer was sent to her. She fell into sin and under blackmail gave a shameful declaration denying her faith.

Similar things happen with brethren after they have passed through many years of prison. In the Old Testament, Joseph refused the temptation of a beautiful woman. Many others have done the same, but they had not been administered mind-bending drugs as is the case with our sisters and brethren, and their nerves were not shattered through brainwashing and torture.

Leaders of the Underground church whom we met told us, with tears in their eyes, "We knew how to resist atheist propaganda and torture, but we do not know how to counteract the forced drugging."

There always remains a solution: What one can't resist should be borne in faith as another cross of strange design. Love bears all things - all, without exception. It also bears inescapable sins.

What False Church Leaders Praised

Our heart aches for the leaders of all official denominations in the former USSR. They, along with those who worked with them in the West, praised religious liberty under Communism, which did not exist. To show what these men praised, I quote from the book ~Let History Judge~, by the Russian Communist Roy Medvedev. The source cannot be challenged. In this work he tells some of the tortures applied to prisoners in the Leninist jails of the Soviet Union. Among them were innumerable Christians. Children were killed in the presence of their mothers to make the mother confess to imaginary crimes. When one prisoner refused to denounce innocents, a person completely

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unknown to him was brought in. The prisoner was told, "He will be shot if you do not sign what we ask." Thinking it a joke, the prisoner refused. The man was shot. After a few days, a second youngster was shot before his eyes. To avoid

the killing of others, the prisoner then denounced his friends, who afterwards were also killed. The prisoner never recovered, knowing himself to be guilty of the death of many.

The Communists gouged out the eyes of prisoners and perforated eardrums. They put out their cigarettes on the naked bodies of prisoners and ripped open stomachs. In Leningrad, prisoners were covered by a box with nails driven in from all four sides. Others were forced to drink urine. Medvedev, himself a Leninist and a partisan of terror, criticized only what he called "excess." A Communist exposed Communist cruelty.

Official church leaders praised the one who initiated it. At the same time, they called the brethren of the Underground Church "the devil's fire."

We should not swallow the lie that there was terror only in Stalin's day. His successors were equally guilty. It seems that the extent of their crimes becomes known only after their downfall. Tortures like those described above might have broken our sister Mary X, who was sentenced to five years of prison for her faith. In a Communist newspaper she acknowledged that she had been imprisoned justly because she had really committed the crime of teaching children about Christ. She asked people abroad not to bother about her but to take up the defence of Angela Davis, the American Communist charged with the murder of four people. She finished her article with the words, "I ask parents and educators to warn their children about men of the church and of the sects."

How much urine were Christian girls compelled to drink before writing such things? Were their mothers beaten in their presence? They were weak. A Christian should fear nothing except God and fear. But a church leader who

praises Lenin, the initiator of this system, is a disgrace. And church leaders who praise the one who praised Lenin are another disgrace.

Bishop Marshall of the Lutheran Church of America wrote sympathetically about his meeting with the Lutheran bishop of Hungary, Kaldy, a man whom he described as "enthusiastic about the Communist economic and political system." Enthusiastic about the political system that kept in prison the pastors Hegyeman, Turi, Katona, and many other Christians? Enthusiastic about a system imposed on Hungary by Russian tanks? A system that forbade pastors any contact with youth? Bishops should be "lovers of good,"

not of regimes that torture and poison children with atheism.

There are faithful bishops who give their lives for the church. There are other men of high rank in the church who are not "lovers of good." Be very careful to whom you entrust your soul. God gave some to be pastors and teachers "for the perfecting of the saints," to make them grow "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (EPH 4:11-13). A bishop should lead you to high fellowship with God. If he does not, find someone better.

If you have been unsuccessful in finding the right pastor in your community, take the faithful pastors of the Underground Church as your example. Prayer will unite you with them. You will catch their fire and you will set your church on fire.

Somewhere a church was burning down. Among the spectators was a well-known atheist. The pastor said to him, "While the church was in good condition, you did not attend. But now that it is on fire, you come."

The atheist replied, "If your church had always been on fire, I would have attended regularly."

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Faith Overcomes Everything

The Serbian female lieutenant Vidal Neditch specialized in beating men on the genitals with a rod (later she was imprisoned and tortured by her own comrades). Prisoners were given salty food and then kept without water. They were forced to run around their own cells, as in a circus ring, day and night without interruption. Trained dogs would jump at them if they stopped even for a moment. This is how confessions were obtained; these confessions in turn would lead to other sentences.

One torturer, in a moment of relaxation between two sessions of beatings, told his victim that torture was the most ancient of the fine arts, older than love, and certainly much richer and more varied. "Torture is what makes the difference between a man and an animal. Animals can't torture. In the human body, the zones of pleasure are fewer than the zones of pain. Pain is more intense and can last longer than pleasure." This monster believed that if there were a God, he made man to be tortured. "Everything that speeds up the coming of Communism is good. I have no scruples." This torturer ended up in a lunatic asylum.

For hours, prisoners had to listen to lectures about the beauty of the Communist regime. Driven to despair, one

prisoner, not wishing to listen any more, cut off his own ears and sent them in a parcel to the Central Committee of the Communist Party. In Romania, a prisoner tattooed on his chest the words "Slave of the Communist Party." For this he was sentenced to death.

A Czech Communist newspaper wrote:

> The church as a whole has been in prison since 1950...Her press resembles letters from a jail...In prison, guards fired from the observation towers into prison cells, dogs without muzzles were let in the prison hospital, the inmates were beaten on their heads with horsewhips and sprayed with water from

> hoses, and the investigator yelled:..."Do you desire human rights? We do not recognize any humanitarianism." Many of the inmates suffered internal injuries. Some, like Hermanovsky, a very young man, became insane from the torture. In one of the transports was also the 75-year-old bishop Vohtassak. They stripped him naked, and he had to stand for several hours on the stone floor and, when he could not continue the squatting exercises, they yelled at him, "Squat until you spit your soul, you ___!"

Communists have developed almost irresistible methods of torture. Brigadier-General John Flinn declared, "They could bring me to a state of mind in which, if they had ordered it, I would have shot my own mother." The United States Government did well to absolve all former prisoners of war of what they said under such extreme duress.

The Albanian prisoner G. Gardin, who served ten years, wrote that on the way to work prisoners passed long blackberry hedges.

> One day a young man slowed down to pick some. The guard who followed the line of prisoners found him in the bushes. The marshal was informed, and at dinner time the poor man was hung from the torture-pole, his hands tied with metal wire. At first, he resisted the pain caused by the weight of his body suspended from his wrists. He soon started to yell and implore, "Kill me! ...Please...one shot!" His breathing became difficult and he stopped talking; his face turned purple, and after a while his head bent forward.

Only then did they take him down.

The work-day of prisoners was fifteen hours. Sick prisoners were forced to work until they died of exhaustion. The food ration consisted of a ladle of soup twice a day, two pounds of bread, and meat only once a week. If a prisoner failed to meet the work quota by the end of the day, he

received no food in the evening. Sometimes men with no other guilt than pure exhaustion were hung by their feet to a peg and left there for hours head-down. In the heat of summer they were deprived of even a drop of water, just as the damned receive not a drop of water in hell. A Communist jail is its ante-chamber.

The priests Fausti and Dajani were locked for two months in primitive latrines full of excrement. They were then condemned to death, while other Christians were sentenced to life-long imprisonment. When the two priests were led to execution with others, Fausti said, "Let us go to the house of the Lord."

The Absolute Torture

In Romania, unspeakable things happened. D. Bacu reported the following:

> We had to scrub the floors, while two or three other prisoners rode on us...We were obliged to eat like pigs. We had to kneel, with our hands handcuffed behind us, and lap hot soup from the dish. At noon, bread was thrown to us, which we had to eat in the same position, using only the mouth. The last crumb had to be gathered from the floor with the lips or tongue. We had to wash the dish with our tongues.
>
> The whole day you had to sit at the bedside, with your feet stretched out, with your hands on your knees, head up, looking straight forward, without the right to move. After sixteen hours of such torture, you were allowed to sleep but only on your back, face upwards, your body perfectly stretched out, with your hands over the blanket. If you changed your position, you were hit powerfully with a stick by the one who watched.
>
> Sixteen prisoners were once put one on top of the

other. Under the pressure of this weight, the abdominal muscles of the lowest yielded. He did in the cell what he was not allowed to do in the toilet. He was compelled to clean his underpants with his tongue. At first he refused. Then his fingers were bruised between two pieces of wood. In the end...

The student A.O. was compelled to fulfil his necessities in his dish, then to receive food in the same dish and eat. The student N.V., unable to cut his veins, stuck his head in a bucket of hot food, hoping to die. He did not succeed. [Christians trying to commit suicide! What a good subject for moral indignation in the free world on the part of those who eat apple pie...] Some tried to tear open their veins with their teeth.

It was forbidden to hit a prisoner in the temples, in the region of the heart, in the neck, wherever death might follow. The Communists did not wish physical death. ..They made a devilish experiment: the death of the soul, to be replaced by conditioned reflexes. Not physical, but moral death.

At Easter, they clothed a prisoner in sheets and made him play the role of Jesus Christ. Out of soap they made a genital organ, which a theological student, the would-be Christ, had to wear on his chest instead of the cross. He was forced to walk around the room, beaten with sticks, as if he were on the road to Golgotha. Other Christians had to bow before him, to kiss this genital organ and to say, "I bow before your Almightiness." There was only one who did not stoop to such blasphemy. He was tortured for hours.

The Christian teacher Antonio Borro succeeded in escaping miraculously from Cuba some years ago. Having passed through prison himself, he told how the prisoners were treated. He was put in a cell, a kind of cage, in which he could only sit. He was dragged by the feet to

interrogations, during which he was beaten with a rope on his face and with sticks on his back.

Borro was exchanged for some adherents of Castro in Honduras. Otherwise he would have experienced the other tortures applied to prisoners in Cuba. Among them he recounts the following: Our brethren were bathed in acid; a hammer and sickle were tattooed on the skin with a red-hot iron poker; their heads were put in a box of bees. He

himself was shown a picture of medical students practicing vivisection on men who were still alive, and was threatened with having to undergo this. So he "confessed" to having committed immoral acts, being an agent of the CIA and an opponent of Communism, the last of course being true.

In China, Christians were forced to stand at attention for two hours before a picture of Mao-Tse-Tung with three bricks on each shoulder. Every twenty minutes a brick was added. In the end they had to carry eighteen bricks. If their knees buckled for a moment, the torture would begin again. Other Christians had their heads shaved. On the bald head were placed hot ashes, while the victim stood at attention before the idol of Mao.

The Chinese church has not only survived in spite of these happenings; it has mushroomed. When Mao came to power in 1948, there were 3.5 million Christians in China. After decades of fierce terror, Evangelicals alone are presumed to be 70 million. The number of Catholics has grown too.

Lenin's Alleged Conversion

In June of 1926, ~Osservatore Romano~, official organ of the Vatican, published an account claiming that the Hungarian priest Vittorio Bodo, friend of Lenin from the time of his youth as an emigrant in the West, visited him when he was fatally ill.

Lenin allegedly told the priest, "I have erred. No doubt

many oppressed had to be freed, but our method has provoked other oppressions and horrible massacres. My mortal grief is to be immersed in an ocean of blood of innumerable victims. It is too late to turn back, though what we would have needed in order to save Russia was ten St Francis' of Assisi."

Mgr D"Herbigny, bishop of llio, doubting the story, spoke personally with the priest Bodo and had it confirmed from his mouth. He spoke about this encounter in a lecture published in an Italian magazine in 1946.

Lenin had been under Christian influence. His wife Krupskaia wrote in her memoirs that he had met the Orthodox priest Gapon, later hanged by the Communists. But most amazing is what ~Nauka I Religia~, the Soviet atheist magazine, published in December 1973:

> Lenin showed great interest in the writings of Christian sectarians, which a fellow-Communist had gathered, especially in the old manuscripts. studied them thoroughly... He was especially interested in their philosophical writings. Once after thoroughly reading the manuscripts of "the spiritual Molokani" [a specific Russian sect, afterwards almost uprooted by the Communists], he said, "How interesting. This has been created by simple people. Whole books."

The Communist magazine says this much. Who knows how much more is behind the story? Perhaps a deathbed conversion due to some primitive writings of old believers or due to some book about Francis of Assisi given to him by the priest Bodo. We don't know. Heaven is a place of surprises. We might be surprised to find there the converted mass-slaughterer of Christians Vladimir Lenin. Some dissidents who emerged from the Soviet Union asserted that they knew Lenin had confessed to a priest before his death. His Christian victims suffered and died praying for him. Their prayers may very well have been accepted.

We have always urged people to write to Communist

leaders and to left wing personalities in our own country, as well as to leaders in the free world. In Judah, "the princes went in to the king in the court...and told all the words of Jeremiah the prophet in the ears of the king" (JER 36:20). We should catch big fish for Christ!

Malenkov, first co-worker and successor to Stalin who collaborated in the killing of millions of innocents, died a born-again Christian. His conversion came about one day when he, the privileged Communist ruler who enjoyed all the luxuries of life, took it upon himself to join poor citizens who were waiting in a long line to get bread. A slavemaster wanted to find out how it was to feel the other end of the whip. The KGB officers Ataiev and I. Konnikov, after torturing many Christians, died as Christian martyrs themselves. They came to the Saviour by bowing over their victims to try to feel how it was to be tortured.

If we practice faith consistently as our persecuted brethren do, we will also acquire enormous spiritual power and will be able to overcome seemingly invincible enmity.

Letters from Families of Martyrs

In religious life, as in every craft, there are three steps. First, one starts as a learner, a disciple. Then he becomes a worker, and finally, if he persists, a master. The apostle Paul calls himself a master-builder.

I am saddened when I meet Christians who have remained disciples for decades, never becoming reliable workers. As for becoming masters, able to disciple others, they do not even have this as their aim. The Bible tells us to compete with each other and to run so that we might get the prize, which can be obtained only by outrunning all the others (1CO 9:24, 25).

When I became a missionary, I read the history of renowned preachers and missionaries of old and strove to attain their level of competence and if possible to surpass it.

However, I realized that one must be prompted by a desire to serve God better, not by personal ambition.

There are many callings in the service of the Lord, and everyone has some gift, however modest. The calling of those of us who work in Christian Missions to the Communist World has always been to help the persecuted church. One privilege we have in this work is to give support to families of martyrs. Over the years we have received countless letters from those to whom our mission has sent help by secret channels. These have served to validate the work of our mission. I would like to share a few:

> Only God knows how many are in prison for their faith...Many are expelled from their jobs for their faith...In the churches you see thin and worn-out faces. You can see that many have come from prison...A mother has died. The family went to the burial and they read the Holy Scriptures. But there were some spies there. These spies have lied that brethren have delivered a sermon and they were sentenced (these brethren left behind children: five for one and nine for the other)...I had to serve in the Army three years. Instead, I went to prison for five years because of the Word of God...But many of the wicked people have repented and we rejoice with them in the Word of God. Then I was taken out of the concentration camp. They told us that we have filled the camp with our religion...
>
> There was one who could write a whole page only with Bible verses. I asked him how he knew them. He answered that his beloved mother had fed him from

> childhood with the Word of God...Only God knows the sorrow which is in that house, because they have small children. They ask mother where father has gone and why he does not come back. And now mother too has to leave the children to work in a collective farm... A young brother by the name of

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> Vasile was on the field. They came there and bound him and took him to prison. They have taken George too ...

A mother who was left with nine children wrote:

> Glory be to the Lord that he has given us also a little chip of his cross to bear. May he only give us strength and help to bear it and to pass through the straight way reserved for Christians...We must eat our bread with tears, but the Lord be praised for everything...I thank you with tears that the Lord has opened your hearts at such a big distance. May God bless and reward you for your work. May he give you long and happy life and life eternal beyond. When we remained alone, the wicked ones said that we will not have the wherewithal to live, but praised be the Lord that he takes care, as he took care of Elijah, Daniel and of all who served him... God has given me nine children who wait now for their father to come home, but their father put his life at stake for Christ and left his children to suffer for the faith once for all delivered by God to the saints.

From another letter from the family in which both parents died for Christ:

> Know about us that we have remained orphans. May God reward your care for us and bless you with all blessings. The brethren who preached at the burial of mother were arrested...You cannot imagine how life is here. You go to bed with fear and arise with fear... The persecution is very heavy, and there are many prisoners.

Here is a letter from another family of Christian martyrs:

> May the Lord Jesus who out of his free will stretched his hands on the cross to pass us from death to life

reward you with eternal life for what you sent us. I am

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content that I share the sufferings of Christ, because if we suffer with him, we will also rejoice with him...A glass of water given in his name will not be forgotten ...A man offered 300 roubles for my New Testament. Men are hungry for the Word of God.

The Urgency of God's Tasks

We have had great satisfaction in the work of supporting martyrs' families. Serving God according to the gifts he has given us always produces joy. But no one can do the work of God, of whatever kind, in a world of rebels against God without encountering great difficulties, problems, criticism, attacks, and even persecution. Our mission is no exception.

In the hope that our experiences might help you overcome difficulties of your own, I will share a few of ours.

We have assisted the suffering church in Communist countries by smuggling in Bibles, Christian literature, and in some places printing machines. For this we have occasionally been attacked, even in Christian circles. It is said that such secret work cannot be done without deception and that it is better to leave a third of the world unevangelized than to tell a lie. We will not quarrel with those who think like this. We tell them, "We have seen another angel" than they have seen. This other angel has sealed us with the seal of God on which it is written, "Save some by all means" (1CO 9:22), through ordinary or extraordinary methods.

At the beginning of the last century, an unusually intelligent girl by the name of Barry felt the call to become a physician. Because girls were not accepted in universities she disguised herself as a boy. She passed her exams at the age of ten. At fourteen she was a doctor in the army and in time rose to a high military rank, nobody suspecting she was a woman. She dedicated all her life to the medical care of convicts, paupers, lunatics, and lepers, as well as the

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military of South Africa and Jamaica. Only at her death was it discovered that she was a female.

If one calls her life a perpetual lie because she was acting as a man, who is to blame? The dedicated physician, or those who made laws forbidding even exceptionally gifted

girls to fulfil their God-given vocation?

The same principle applied to the work of smuggling Bibles and Christian literature where they are forbidden. Our couriers have acted as tourists, diplomats, sportsmen, newspapermen, etc. They have had to use disguises. If this is a sin, the Communists are responsible for it. We contest their right to forbid the life-giving gospel to whole nations, and we defy their laws. The same principle also applies to one's personal life. If marriage partners and friends acted joyous even when they felt depressed, if they smiled at each other even when they felt like weeping, if they were gentle even when indignant, their lives would change significantly. There exists a saintly honesty and a saintly acting. You need to be aware of the difference and the reasons for employing each of them.

A Christian in Romania told another, "I was questioned by the police about whether you distribute Bibles secretly. I did not wish to lose my salvation by telling a lie, so I gave incriminating declarations against you. Be prepared to be arrested." I scorn such "truthful" speech.

Working with a Sense of Urgency

The Orthodox Jews of Jesus' time were extremely reluctant to allow any work to be done on the seventh day of the week. The Sabbath was a day for worshipping in the temple. Jesus no doubt startled them by asking, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?" (LUK 14:5).

At first glance, many words of Jesus seem to us childishly

simple to understand, and we marvel why his contemporaries had difficulty with their meaning. Jesus healed several sick people on the Sabbath and, as if this were not enough to upset the religious authorities, he even commanded one of them to carry his own bed during the Sabbath day. While those around him may have wondered why healing could not be postponed another day, since these people had been sick for years, Jesus treated the afflicted as total emergencies. He illustrated the same urgency on other occasions. When the Jews were upset that his disciples plucked and ate ears of corn on the Sabbath day, Jesus compared their action to King David's. When fleeing in great haste from Saul's wrath he ate of the consecrated temple bread (MTT 12:3).

If we look superficially, like the Jews of Jesus' time, we

too will fail to perceive the urgency. Why not postpone by one day the healing of a condition that existed for many years, or the carrying of one's bed? What could this hurry have to do with Jesus' spiritual message on earth?

The falling of an ox into a well or pit was indeed a dire emergency that would not have allowed its owner to have an easy day. In fact, it might have wrecked more than the Sabbath, and perhaps his whole livelihood. A drowned ox was a big loss, for it was the animal used to pull the plough and thus obtain a crop of wheat to feed the family.

The donkey was used for transportation and for carrying loads. Its falling into a well must have been, in those times, a bigger disaster than wrecking a car nowadays. Also, how long could a family survive without water? The situation could not be ignored or postponed.

There is no step-by-step procedure on how to hoist an ox out of a narrow well, yet great skill is needed. It is difficult to get an ass moving even on a straight road, let alone climbing or backing out of a well. The carrot and stick would be useless as threats. The one suffering the loss would try all orthodox and unorthodox methods, use all approved and unapproved, pleasant and unpleasant means

in order to get his animal out, in whatever shape. There is no indication as to how much time or financial and emotional effort the task would take. The owner would work frantically against time and most likely alone, for the place is narrow. Such a disaster occurs suddenly. A small slip and the damage is done.

Those who don't know Jesus live without knowing real life. Lives without Jesus are irremediably lost. In such cases, one should not be choosy about the means of rescue.

The work of spreading the gospel where it is forbidden or hindered must be treated as an emergency.

The Greek word ~eutheos~, here translated in LUK 14:5 as "straightaway," is the most characteristic word of Mark"s Gospel. It is found more often in Mark than in all the other Gospels combined. The reason is as follows. Tradition identifies Mark with the rich man to whom Jesus said that, in order to be perfect, he should sell everything he had and give to the poor. It seemed to him at that time too big a price, and he left the place with sadness. Later he repented and fulfilled the commandment of the Lord, but there remained remorse in his heart for the time lost in disobedience. Therefore he repeats continually in his Gospel the

word ~eutheos~ - straightaway.

What is good must be done straightaway. Only this moment is ours. The next moment might belong to death, even if we are young and in perfect health. If we don't act straightaway, other cares might make us forget our duty. So if our hearts are moved by the suffering of our fellow-believers, wherever they might be today, let us act on our convictions and loving impulses. Tomorrow may be too late. Those who work with such a sense of urgency make a great impact.

A report out of China revealed how Christianity spread in that repressive society:

> Ten brethren and sisters were imprisoned, beaten and

> bound. They regarded their sufferings for the Lord as more precious than the treasures of Egypt. They had preached with tears streaming down, causing the passers-by and street-sellers, Christians and non-Christians to stand still and listen. Even the fortune tellers were moved by the Holy Spirit and burst out crying. Many people hearing the Word forgot to eat, work, or even return home.
>
> The brethren and sisters preached until they were exhausted, but the crowd would not let them leave. However, the authorities came and dragged the Christians away one by one, binding them with ropes and beating them with electric-shock poles, knocking them unconscious. But when they revived, they continued to pray, sing and preach to the bystanders.
>
> When they were bound and beaten, many people noticed a strange expression on their faces, and the crowd saw to their amazement that they were smiling. Their spirit and appearance was so lively and gracious that many were led to believe in Jesus by their example. When the brothers and sisters in that area saw them bound and forced to kneel on the ground for more than three days without food or water, and beaten with sticks until their faces were covered with blood, with their hands made black by the ropes - but still praying, singing and praising the Lord - then they too wished to share persecution. So in this area recently the flame of the gospel has spread everywhere.
>
> In men's eyes this is an unfortunate happening, but for Christians it is like a rich banquet. This lesson cannot be learned from books, and this sweetness is

not usually tasted by men. This rich life does not exist in a comfortable environment. Where there is no cross, there is no crown. If the spices are not refined to become oil, the fragrance of the perfume cannot

flow forth; and if the grapes are not crushed in the vat, they will not become wine.

"Dear brethren," concludes the one who recounted this incident, "these saints who have gone down into the furnace, far from being harmed, have had their faces glorified."

God's Smuggling Work

Some critics have advised us over the years, though in vain, to stop smuggling Christian literature because smuggling is immoral. If smuggling is immoral, why does God engage in the practice?

Let's look back at the story of Jesus. The Jewish high priests had a promise from God that he would speak to them from between the two cherubim on the ark of the covenant in the Temple. They felt safe. Never would the Messiah dare to come without telling them in advance. No ruler from abroad would visit a country without giving notice. Thus the Roman governor was also sure. The King of the Jews could not appear in the world without his knowledge.

One night, the Light of the world "smuggled" himself into Palestine as a baby, after having been in the womb of a holy virgin, contrary to accepted moral standards and the laws of biology. What a pity that the critics of Bible-smuggling did not live at that time! They would have had something against which to protest.

Some Soviet church leaders, knowing that if arrested they might be tortured to death, went into hiding, which is possible only by assuming a false identity. "Deceit!" some cry. "Lack of integrity!" But God lived on earth without telling people who he was. The people of Nazareth thought they were dealing with a carpenter bearing the common Jewish name "Jeshua." Later, when some began to believe he was the Messiah, he entreated them not to tell anyone,

exactly as an underground worker under Communism or

Islam would do.

Then he was crucified and buried. A seal was put on his grave by the authorities. Now everyone knows that one is not supposed to break a seal. But angels are not bound by earthly laws. An angel just rolled away the stone, without worrying about the seal.

Would today's Christian magazines have advised Jesus to abide by the law and remain in the tomb after the authorities had sealed it? But Jesus "smuggled" himself out of the grave into life again. Some tell us that we should not break the laws of Communist tyrants. Jesus "broke" the law of gravity and ascended into heaven!

What do these critics really know about love for the Word of God and for the church? In some cases, Christians in the Soviet Union did not fret when a church was locked and sealed by the authorities. They cautiously unlocked it with another key so as not to damage the seal in its place.

We continue to denounce the crimes of the Communists and Islam and to smuggle Christian literature into the Communist and Moslem camp, telling people about the resurrected Saviour who makes possible our resurrection.

We asked a Russian brother who collaborated with us in this secret work if his conscience did not tell him to be submissive to the authorities. His answer amazed us:

> If we are wrong, the whole Baptist religion is wrong. I read an article in our secret magazine that told about Thomas Helwys, pastor of the first Baptist church on English soil. He went to prison because he had said that the king had no power over the immortal souls of his subjects, to make laws and ordinances for them and to put spiritual rulers over them. I read about a letter smuggled out of prison in England in 1620 by a Baptist, John. The letter was written in milk, just as we do now. The jailers would not notice. Our families would know how to make the letters readable. He

> wrote, "The magistrate can only compel the body, not the mind and the conscience."
>
> If we are wrong, John Bunyan was a fool! He preferred to sit twelve years in prison rather than worship in a manner determined by someone else. And for him it was only a matter of complying with another form of Christian religion, whereas we have had to comply with regulations imposed by atheists.
>
> Some feared and went back to the official church

> under pressure. But they were an infinitesimal minority. The Underground Church continued. The Christian people stood with us. Even some Communists and police officers rendered us a precious service.

Men saved in the highest sense of the word are also saved from codes of conduct purportedly established once and for ever for all circumstances. They have the Holy Spirit to give them personal guidance in extraordinary situations.

From a subterranean prison in Rome, St Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (PHP 4:13). However, he was not tortured as Communists have tortured Christians in our day.

In Red China's prisons, some of our brethren and sisters in the faith had to sit motionless, leaning toward the wall, from five in the morning until nine o'clock at night, day after day, month after month, for years. Every day was like an enemy determined to torture them to death. They were not allowed to speak to the other inmates of the cell and were forbidden either to laugh or to weep. If a prisoner had to cough, he had to say to the warden who continually spied on him, "Bau-gau," which means "Please give me permission." It was "Bau-gau" for spitting, for scratching oneself, for killing vermin, for using the toilet.

If all at once someone in the cell went mad and began to sing, the rest had to sit motionless while their fellow-prisoner was silenced through beatings. With chains on their hands and feet, they could not even help him.

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In HEB 13:3, it is written, "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." Try to sit for as little as six hours like this, motionless, on the floor (in prison, on the cold concrete) to see how your brethren fare!

Don't Repress Evil Memories

"Zacharias praised God" (LUK 1:64).

Zacharias and Elisabeth, parents of John the Baptist, were well along in years when the child was born to them. While he was a normal child, his father had a vision telling him that his son would be a prophet of the Highest. Zacharias knew what this meant. Prophets are predestined to live a dramatic life. Their tragedy is that they learn early what is right and as a rule end up by being slain, either physically or by slander. Today Christians may acknowledge

that the biblical prophets were right, but their own generations rejected them.

The prophet's life is by its very nature thorny. He never compromises the truth in order to make a friend, never withholds a blow at error to avoid making an enemy. With the firm assurance that he speaks for God, he pursues his course unmoved by the prospect of temporal advantage. He is ever outspoken and straightforward, believing that in the end his message will weld believers into a God-conscious body actively involved in warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil.

Prophets have friends but also implacable and often influential enemies. Zacharias knew that this would be the fate of his son, but he praised God. He probably did not live to see his son beheaded by King Herod for fulfilling his prophetic duty, but he may have done so.

The word "prophet" comes from ~pro-phemi~ in Greek, which means "to speak for." Prophets speak for God. In the name of God, John the Baptist would condemn the king's sin, and pay the price for doing so. His father could very

well have foreseen such an eventuality. Still he was able to praise God for giving him a son predestined to be a man of sorrows. We too can praise God in spite of present or future pains. We can see in them the tender mercy of God expressed in a manner unintelligible to our limited reason.

The Underground Church in Communist countries has had a prophetic calling. We are one of its mouthpieces. Although God has laid upon us a heavy burden, we praise him, as did Zacharias. This task of ours impels us to catalogue its pain, to recount again and again its atrocious suffering, to diagnose its evil origin. I have done this for half a century.

You may ask why I bring up so much ugliness and so many terrible memories. Some of my best friends have told me that it is hard for them to listen to my painful accounts. Isn't it better to forget the tragic side of life and stop wallowing in adversity? Every knowledgeable psychologist will insist that the repression of bitter memories is a sure path to neurosis. The Bible recounts not only the beauties of life but also the worst deeds committed by individuals, the worst calamities that befell people, even the degrading sins committed by saints in moments of temptation or darkness. The events of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus are not pleasant to read. It is both wrong and futile to try to forget the past. Rather, one gets rid of this burden by

re-actualizing it.

My recommendation is that you seat yourself comfortably and then call up before your eyes the circumstances of the past that burden you most, especially any encounters with those against whom you have sinned or who have sinned against you.

Then evoke the presence of Jesus. We all can evoke a beloved person and see him with our heart's eyes. Relive the tragic or sordid events of the past, all the while looking at the face of Jesus to see how he feels about them. You will discover that he is not judgmental, censorious or bitter

about anything we have done, no matter how reprehensible. He himself stood in line with sinners to be baptized by John. Having been tempted in all things like us, he does not look down upon us. Imagine how the best of men would judge you for what you have done; then remember that he is better than the best. In Hebrew the word "mercy" does not exist, but only the plural ~rahamim~, "mercies". No one can exhaust his mercy.

With Jesus by your side, walk again the way of your past sins, knowing that nothing is too degrading for him. Tell him you love him and claim his forgiveness. Then accept the fact that not only does he understand and forgive, but he also forgets.

Do this for all who have hurt you terribly, those who insulted, robbed, demeaned, molested, raped, tortured you. Look upon them with the eyes of the all-understanding and all-forgiving Jesus. Then you will be able to forgive them too and to love them with all your heart.

Your memory will be healed. This has worked for me; it will work for you too.

Don't Believe Only in a Historic Christ

Not all Christians think alike. Some believe that Christ was born only in Bethlehem for our salvation, and they celebrate this event at Christmas. Others, rejecting the spiritual contraceptives of unbelief and pride, have allowed Christ to be born also in their own souls after being touched by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, they have kept worldliness and false teaching from bringing the Divine embryo to abortion. He lives within their hearts.

When Michelangelo used a stone-mason as a model for a statue of Christ, he was criticized by his teacher Ghirlandio.

Michelangelo defended himself: "But Christ was also a working-man, a carpenter."

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The master replied, "Florence won't accept a working-class Christ. They are used to having him as a nobleman."

So some are accustomed only to a historical Saviour. They would not accept an inner Christ, though to be real, Christ must dwell within the heart. To all outward appearances, Jesus was a Jewish carpenter and rabbi. Thousands knew him without observing that he was more. His being Christ became visible only through spiritual insight.

Thus it is today. I invite you to take a step forward from celebrating only Jesus' birth in Bethlehem two thousand years ago. We must become Christian "in the inward parts" (PSA 51:6).

A Christmas focusing only on the outward, historical event is perilous to the soul. It brings death in the disguise of merriment, whereas Christ born within brings life eternal. Once Christ lives in us, we are "the light of the world" and "the salt of the earth" (MTT 5:13,14), "partakers of the divine nature" (2PE 1:4), children of God. Then we can rejoice about, and in spite of, everything. When the sea becomes stormy, fish descend to the depths, where it is calm. When suffering and disappointment of all kinds accumulate in your life, add to them the suffering of others. With Christ, enter into the depths of even greater sorrows freely chosen. Go willingly to Gethsemane!

We are told only once that Jesus and his disciples sang. It was just after the Last Supper, when he went to Gethsemane to be betrayed, forsaken, bound, and delivered into the hands of murderers. "Rejoice!" he says. Deep joy is the privilege of those who, prompted by love, choose heavy crosses. Jesus sang a psalm of praise knowing that, in addition to dying on a cross for us, according to a prophecy, he would bear a suffering not prophesied: descending into hell. This joy out of the depths he communicates to us. Add to your suffering the weeping with those who weep. This will give you joy.

We can rejoice because there are Christians like the

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Russian Mary Avinova, who told her Communist interrogators, "I believe in God, in truth, nobility and beauty, and I hope to do so until I die. I don't fear the sufferings you impose upon me. Dostoievski once said, 'Where there is

sorrow and pain, the soil is sacred.'"

She was in jail not only with fellow Christians and criminals but also with Communists who had some quarrel with their Party and were now sentenced. One of them, a woman, told Mary, "I have one son. I wanted to make him a first-class Communist, but he was too soft-hearted. So I got together two dozen puppies and kittens in a basket and ordered him to drown them. He burst into tears, but I made him do it. He had to be a ruthless fighter for Communism. We know no pity, compassion, or other bourgeois weaknesses." Such a son now tortured his mother and Mary without compunction.

But this picture is not all dark. There is reason to rejoice. Avinova was able to give comfort and light and eternal hope to this monstrous mother.

Martyrs of Our Mission

The dictator Idi Amin killed Brother Joseph Kiwanuka, trustee of our mission in Uganda. Amin had falsely accused him of belonging to the CIA, only because he distributed our literature.

At that time, Amin was the only ruler who received arms from the Soviet Union as a gift, so he obeyed his benefactors. In his eyes, everyone who denounced the crimes of Communism, showing the better way of Christ, was an agent of "American imperialism."

Brother Kiwanuka received a warning and fled to neighbouring Kenya. The Ugandan police kidnapped him out of a flying helicopter. His crushed body was drowned in Lake Victoria. He left behind a widow and many children. In

addition, the whole Christian tribe of Lugbanas was killed by Amin.

Wang-Shin-Mei was beaten to death while on assignment to smuggle Christian literature into Red China for us, while another man involved in our courier work disappeared in Cuba. The translator of my book ~Tortured for Christ~ in Amharic (Ethiopia) was put in jail. To make this book known was considered a crime by the Communists. Today he still suffers from the mistreatment he endured. Now he leads our mission centre in Addis Ababa. His name is Testsray Neffrim.

The Burmese pastor Wy-Foo died by being hanged head-down in China. He had been caught smuggling our

literature over the frontier.

Your life might be smooth if you decide to walk with Jesus all the way, but it might also be very tempestuous at times. The reward is that if Jesus lives within you, you will be an overcomer and will sit with him on his throne.

Personal Attacks

I have to warn you that the disciple cannot be above his master. Jesus was attacked personally with insults and slander. If you walk the road toward master-hood, you can expect the same treatment.

The apostle Paul's main subject in his epistles was the One whose countenance shines like the sun releasing its splendour, whose eyes are pure, and whose whole being is as snowy as white jade. Christ is the main subject - but not the only one. Sometimes Paul wrote about himself and his co-workers. So you will forgive us if we give ourselves as examples in this matter.

Over the years our mission specifically, and I personally, have been the targets of fierce criticism and vilification on the part of the Communists and their stooges. The Soviet Union sent a protest to the French government for allowing

Solzhenitsyn to speak on television. The Swiss authorities informed our mission that they received a similar protest against the advertisements announcing my books. In Finland, where the film of Solzhenitsyn's novel ~One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch~ was forbidden, the government, acting under Soviet pressure, asked the Lutheran bishops not to grant me the use of churches. As a result, I had to preach in privately-owned halls.

The Communists forced the owners of the hall in Helsinki to cancel the agreement. The administrator of a hall in Turku belonging to the fire brigade replied to the Communists, "When a fire breaks out, our boys go to quench it, risking their lives without asking to what party the man belongs whose house is burning. The cry of every suffering person can be shouted in this hall. Wurmbrand brings the cries of martyrs. He will speak here." She had more courage than the bishops.

A book published in Russia, ~Diversion Without Dynamite~, by Belov and Shilkin, concentrated heavily on our international organization, on me and my son. It described our activities as "tempestuous." The story told about me was

that I was allegedly sentenced in Romania for anti-Communist activity under the guise of religion. Then the authors claimed that all our assertions about persecution in the Soviets were fanciful. What hurt them most was my book ~Was Marx a Satanist?~ (now titled ~Marx and Satan~), which has been translated and continually reprinted in many languages. "Wurmbrand is among the most ardent opponents of detente" - the authors even praised anti-Communists if they have the one virtue of also being anti-Wurmbrand.

In an article in ~Nauka i Religia~, principal atheist magazine of Moscow, these same authors said that "Wurmbrand's temperament might be envied by the greatest football players. His shouting is savage. This fighter calls for a crusade against Socialism, which he calls an offspring of Satan. He was imprisoned in Romania for distributing religious literature inciting against the government." In this

article, two things were remarkable. First, that I was called a "devilish pastor" for my book on Marx, though the authors produced not one single fact to refute the documentation of my thesis. Second, the article congratulated Christian leaders, even anti-Communists, who took a stand against me. They might be adversaries of Communism, but as long as they opposed me, chief enemy of Communism, they were approved by Moscow.

In view of the foregoing, we are not surprised about attacks against us in the West. These attacks have occurred in many countries. For instance, an Italian paper lambasted our Italian director, Dr Laiso, for his anti-Communist speeches over our radio station in Marchirolo, calling them "infamies." It is "infamy" in their view to say that Communists have killed and continue to kill millions of innocents and that they aim at abolishing all religion.

In a book entitled ~Soviet Evangelicals~, a Mr Savatsky attacked us as follows:

> The Wurmbrand mission fits the image of 19th-century mission imperialism. It is anti-Communist. It is as much committed to the overthrow of Communism as to helping believers in Communist societies. In Wurmbrand's world view, a Christian must oppose Communism, which logically means Soviet Christians must be anti-Communist, perhaps also unpatriotic. The Wurmbrand position confirms the charges of Soviet writers that religion is the servant of reactionary capitalism. In Wurmbrand's view, genuine

> Christians in the USSR can be only those who are suffering. Those who are not apparently suffering, as the official Baptist leadership, must obviously be tools of the political police. Wurmbrand insists that in a battle situation one can have only friends and enemies and therefore one plays into the enemy's hands if one acknowledges complex nuances, draws attention to gray areas. Wurmbrand's writings are predominant in

> the religious bookstores of America and Europe, which means the majority of concerned Christians have formed their image of Christians in the USSR through his influence and distortions.

Then follows the greatest compliment of all: "Through these missions large numbers of Bibles and other Christian literature have become available in the Soviet Union, and the Bible hunger has eased noticeably."

This admission we cherished!

Doubtless you have never heard of Klaus Kempner, but at one time he wore the imposing title of Supreme National Counsellor of the Lutheran Church in West Germany. He circulated behind our back a letter indicating that he had spent three years studying "the problem of Wurmbrand." Now, the devil tries hard to trick me into pride. To be the object of study of a Supreme Counsellor for three years could mean something! This study was so important that the Counsellor forgot to warn his parishioners about the Communist danger and never told them about the martyrs of today. After three years, he found out that I put much sentiment into my messages. The Counsellor considered this a mistake. But should sermons be dry and boring? He accuses me also of being a mystic. This Supreme Lutheran Counsellor does not know that Luther took his teaching from the mystic Tauler.

Another accusation: "Wurmbrand paints only with black and white and knows with absolute surety who are the children of light and the children of darkness." I accept this accusation. The Communist torturers and those who cover up their crimes are darker than the night; those who give their lives for Christ in Communist prisons and those who help them are whiter than snow. So we think.

The Supreme Counsellor did not approve of my followers. He emphasized that they were mostly men of personal piety, without academic degrees. He, the Counsellor, forgot that the apostles were such men. He also said that it

was not good to call Wurmbrand a deceiver or a psychopath, since these things have always been said about the prophets, so he called me the creator of a new sect. He went on to say that in my view salvation depends not on faith in Jesus Christ but upon my own message. These accusations were patently ridiculous. The Lutheran Church of West Germany, as well as other churches, should have been helping families of Christian martyrs with a piece of bread and fighting Communism in their own country, instead of trying to feed my pride.

The principal slander against us is that we engage in politics, not religion.

Christians should not get involved in cheap politics, but they should join in the battle to free the whole world from the rule of Satan, because it is commanded by Jesus, though it is unpopular and might lead to loss of life. Jesus praised a good Samaritan who helped a man wounded by robbers. Suppose the Samaritan had come that way half an hour earlier, while the robbers were beating the victim? Would he have said, "I am a pacifist; I don't mix in violent fights; finish beating him up, and then I will pour wine and oil on his wounds"? Or would he have organized a protest march against the beating, announcing to the robbers that the police force had been withdrawn? Or would love have prompted him to fight in defence of the innocent?

We know the answer. Divine love would not have allowed the good Samaritan to stand aside, and the commandment to us is: imitate him. Whoever keeps this commandment will be beloved by Christ. It is the government"s calling to lead the fight on the diplomatic, military, cultural, and economic fields. As a religious organization, we lead only a spiritual fight. This has to be consistent, without the slightest compromise, like our personal fight against sin. We belong to a heroic God.

The best thing is to concur with your slanderer and help him spread his slander. Although not everything he says about you might be true, basically he is right in describing

you as a sinner. He helps you by destroying your pride and depriving you of glory which is due only to God. So you will not mind false accusations, let alone true, against you. They will not hurt you a bit if you fulfil the first command of Jesus: "If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny

himself" (MTT 16:24).

A Christian can listen quietly to all evil spoken about him. He is not the person attacked. He has abandoned the old personality and has identified with Jesus. I myself have the worst opinion about everything in Wurmbrand that is a remnant of the old, which is not from Jesus.

Begin with Little Things

The thought might occur to you: "The height to which this book calls me is not for me." This then would also be your reply to Jesus' call, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (MTT 5:48). I have invented nothing. The challenge I gave is from Jesus. But perhaps there is still a misunderstanding.

Let us suppose you have a child in elementary school who is a perfect pupil. His penmanship is beautiful; he writes as he is taught. He gets all A's. He is perfect for his age. Later he can be a perfect teenager, a perfect college student, a perfect son. There are stages in perfection.

Ascent toward heaven's perfection starts with a descent, with a split in a man's consciousness. He realizes that he is constituted of two persons. God calls "Abraham, Abraham" (GEN 22:11), "Samuel, Samuel" (1SM 3:10) with a line between the two names called a disjunctive sign, showing separation. It could be translated "the two persons living in Abraham." You are at the same time what you are and what you must become; you are a fact and an ideal; you are a chaos and an incipient cosmos; you are a compound of vague desires and firm decisions.

The fight begins within yourself to become a harmonious

personality, a fulfillment of the ideal. When God says "Moses, Moses," there is no more a disjunctive sign. The two sides serve the Lord. This is the fulfillment of the commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart (LUK 10:27).

Nowadays one can be a church-goer all his life and never hear a word about mortification, though the Bible recommends it, just as it teaches that salvation is by faith. "Mortify your members," says the apostle Paul.

Practice humility, which Vincent de Paul calls the most powerful weapon to overcome the devil, because he neither knows how to use it nor does he understand how to defend himself against it.

Deny yourself in little things to learn the great denial: that of the self.

Don't complain about your crosses. By the very fact that we call our sufferings crosses, we acknowledge their holiness. Receive them with great affection.

Give evidence of meekness through your words, gestures, actions.

Give up commanding and start obeying, in all matters except sin.

Be simple like little children, who think, speak and act sincerely.

Don't lose time. Bonaventure said that one loses glory in proportion to the number of good deeds he could have done in that hour.

Use more and more of your time in prayer.

Believing that God is omnipotent, wise and good, have full confidence in him.

Love and love some more. Choose this above every other attitude. God knows how weak we are and appreciates good intentions, which you are too weak to fulfil, as if they were good deeds.

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Don't Retire Because of Age

Just as you have to overcome the difficulties of beginning, so you must resist the temptation to finish your work before the last breath.

To abandon the cause at an age when one has accumulated valuable experience is selfish. Getting old does not necessarily mean becoming weak. The Greek dramatist Sophocles wrote Oedipus at the age of ninety. Titian painted at ninety-nine, the Russian painter Repin at eighty-six. Verdi wrote his last opera at the age of eighty. "When Isaac was old, his eyes were dim" (GEN 27:1). "Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim" (1SM 4:15). Moses was 120 and his eyes were not dim. He could lead his people to the very end, and before his death he delivered important speeches that have guided the faithful for thousands of years. It is because Moses was privileged to see God face to face. But we too may have this privilege, which enables us to be useful in his kingdom whatever our age or outward condition.

The blessings we hear in church-"The Lord make his face to shine upon you" and "the Lord lift up his countenance upon you" (NUM 6:25, 26)-would be meaningless if we could not see God's face. In Jesus, God became

real and visible. I can evoke his face before my eyes just like the face of anyone else dear to me. Knowing how my wife relates to me, I can be sure of her expression if I wish to "see" her in my mind's eye. So also can I see the face of God in relation to me.

A courier of our mission found an underground church in China whose pastor was 103. He had not retired at seventy, nor at eighty. Why then should he retire at 103? He lived in a hut with no furniture but a straw mattress. He was a successful pastor, with as many disciples as Jesus: twelve were gathered in his home.

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A Language Without the Word "To Have"

Luke records that "There was a certain rich man which had ..." (LUK 16:1) and "A certain man had ..." (LUK 15:11).

The Bible is God's revelation. Revelation is a word of Latin origin that has two meanings. It discovers hidden things unknown before, but it also re-veils them, it puts them behind a veil. From the beginning, the words of our Lord were conveyed to us in Greek, a language other than that spoken by Jesus. We have his words in the veil of a translation, which can never convey the full sense of the original, and even the Hebrew of the Old Testament veils the thoughts of God, wrapping them in the poor language of men. The purpose of the Bible is to awaken in us a longing for the blessed state when there was no Creator and no creation, when there was only God and we were all in him; when there was no communication among men in words unfit to express the highest thoughts, and we were one in him; as it will be again at the consummation of the ages.

Jesus spoke Aramaic, a dialect of the Hebrew language. Neither in Aramaic nor in Hebrew does the word "to have" exist. So Jesus never pronounced this word. Jesus never said about anything that he "had" it. Therefore he could retain perfect joy when he was undressed to be scourged, since he had never said about his clothes, "I have them."

He had never said, "I have a body." The body that was tortured was not his. He owned nothing. He had yielded his body to his Father as a living sacrifice before being killed. He never said, "I have a mother." As you cannot be separated from what you don't have, he did not feel death as a separation from her.

He taught his first disciples to think in the same manner. "Neither said any of them that any of the things which he possessed was his own" (ACT 4:32). Everything belongs to

God and we are the stewards of his possessions. He is free

to take away at any time the material riches, health, a beloved child, a good name, a friend, fame. These things are only entrusted to us. If they are taken away we lose nothing. They are not ours.

This constitutes one of the joys of the Christian life. All Christians are "have-nots" and do not desire to be "haves." Those who have, worry about possible losses. This is not possible for us. Our life is one of full serenity.

In his book ~The Release of the Spirit~, Watchman Nee, who died in a Chinese jail, takes this thought the furthest when he writes, "If we have to remember to pray, this shows that our outer man has not been broken; for if it were, unceasing communion with the Lord would exist."

A Christian does not have a Lord, because this implies one other than he. The Christian is one with the Lord, a part of his mystical body.

Having nothing of our own, but being one with the compassionate Lord, we look with his eyes upon this troubled world.

A Few More Examples

To encourage individuals in their ascent, I will give a few more examples of those who were conquerors.

When the Russian Baptist pastor P. Rumatchik was in jail for the fifth time, he wrote these heartening words from his cell: "With him, my beloved Master, it is good everywhere. With him I have light in the dark dungeon. I had asked him to be where I am needed, not where it is better for the outward man, but where I can bear fruit. This is my calling."

If church leaders speak about our relations with the Communist world, they should also question why we should disarm before those who imprison such saints.

Another Russian Christian prisoner also wrote a moving letter:

> I meditate here on the words of Jesus: "That whosoever believes in him should...have everlasting life" (JHN 3:16). I am among criminals. It is an understatement that men can become like animals. Animals

> are without sin. But the men surrounding me in jail reach depths of devilish darkness unreachable for animals. It would be easier to live in a stable than among these criminals. Every word of theirs is filthy, every gesture repugnant. "Their throat is an open sepulchre;...[their] mouth is full of cursing and bitterness" (ROM 3:13, 14). But against this background shines the love of God. Whosoever believes - even such men - can have eternal life. God sent me to prison to bring them this good news.

In Cuba, Armando Valladares was arrested at the age of twenty-three, swiftly tried, and sentenced to thirty years in prison. He served twenty-two years of terrible torture, yet he remained a Christian. Eventually he succeeded in coming to the United States. Here he wrote how betrayed he felt by Western religious leaders who advocate disarmament instead of pleading for the Christians persecuted and tortured by the Communists. He wrote:

> During those years, with the purpose of forcing us to abandon our religious beliefs and to demoralize us, the Cuban Communist indoctrinators repeatedly used the statements of support for Castro's revolution made by some representatives of Western Christian churches. Every time that a pamphlet was published in the United States, every time a clergyman would write an article in support of Fidel Castro's dictatorship, a translation would reach us and that was worse for the Christian political prisoners than the beatings or the hunger. While we waited for the solidarity embrace from our brothers in Christ, incomprehensively to us, those who were embraced were our tormentors.

> To be Christian under those circumstances meant that I could not hate my tormentors; it meant maintaining the belief that suffering was meaningful, because if man gives up his moral and religious values, or if he allows himself to be carried by a desire to hate or revenge his existence loses all meaning. I should add that this experience has not been mine only - I saw dozens of Christians suffering and dying - committed like myself to maintaining their dignity and their richness of spirit beyond misery and pain. Today, I remember with emotion Gerardo Gonzalez, a Protestant preacher, who knew by heart

> whole biblical passages and who would copy them by hand to share with his brothers in belief. I cannot forget this man whom all of us called "Brother in Faith." He interposed himself before a burst of machine-gun fire to save other prisoners who were beaten in what is known now as the massacre of Boniato prison. Gerardo repeated before dying the words said by Christ on the cross: "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do." And all of us, when the blood had dried, struggled with our consciences to attain something so difficult yet so beautiful: the ability to forgive our enemies.

In La Cabana, called the Widow-maker, Valladares lived with 300 other prisoners in a dark humid dungeon designed to house 30 inmates. They slept in shifts on straw pallets crawling with bedbugs and lice. Flies and mosquitoes buzzed everywhere, attracted by the overflowing toilet buckets. Leeches dropped from walls; cockroaches scurried into the prisoners' rations as they ate. And hordes of rats prowled the prison, unafraid of the weakened, dying men.

Death was everywhere. The infamous ~El Paredon~ - the firing-squad wall - resounded continually. Yet Valladares prayed and wrote daily and shared his spirit of ~esperanza~. And endured.

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From a Soviet prison Pastor M. Horev wrote: "I remember when my father was taken to jail. I was six. He let the police officers wait while we all knelt and prayed - the little children, mother, and then father. I remember his words: "Lord, I love my family very much. But I love you more than anything else. Therefore I choose the thorny road. I entrust my family with all its needs to you. I allow you to take responsibility for them. I trust that when my sufferings end I will see them before your throne. Bless our separation."

Horev and thousands like him entrusted their children to the heavenly Father. Where is God? He has made his home with us (JHN 14:23). Our homes are God's address, which means that the children of martyrs have been entrusted to us. Have we provided for these children, or have we neglected even to think about them?

In Sofia, Bulgaria, an imprisoned Christian was put in a cell the size of a man, with nails inside that pressed into his flesh at the slightest movement. When the door was locked, his first words were, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." When the warden asked what this meant,

he was told about the gospel. As a result, he opened the door. When the officer came, he found both prisoner and warden kneeling in adoration before God. The warden told him, "I am no longer under your orders. I belong to Christ." He too was put in prison.

Every church service should mention the martyrs and engender among believers respect for those who were willing to sacrifice all for the Christ they adored.

Two Opposite Attitudes

The Communists know this better than we do. At one point the Hungarian government allowed religious instruction in schools, but on one condition: the saints and martyrs of all times were not to be mentioned. They understand all too

well what effect their lives would have on students. A church that does not teach the example of saints is purposeless- and surely harmless, as far as the atheists are concerned.

Therefore our mission has done just the opposite. During a session of the Anglican Synod in London, Canon Stephens paid us a great compliment: "Wurmbrand provided the church with a dimension which was necessary... a great, moving sense of the presence of Christ in the modern confessors and martyrs."

"Absence of martyrs and saints in religious teaching" is a commandment of the Communists that is also respected by innumerable Western churches. But our mission has pointed to the example of martyrs in order to open hearts to the communion of angels and Christ. This is the proper teaching.

When Georgi Vins was first sentenced to five years in jail and five years of deportation, he addressed the prosecutor and judges at his trial as follows: "I don't see in you enemies. You are my brothers and sisters in the great human family. After I have left the courthouse, I will pray in my cell to God for you all, that he may reveal to you his divine truth and the marvellous sense of life. It is the Bible which formed me. It is the Bible which has taught me always to tell the truth."

It is significant that Vins understood the importance of learning from martyrs. His book ~The Family Chronicle~, originally smuggled out of Russia, was nothing more than a series of lives of martyrs, beginning with his own parents and relatives. This is how a real Christian leader writes

church history.

Read again his words of love toward his persecutors, who destroyed his parents and himself in jails. Look with the same love upon your enemies. Then you will begin to realize that they have guardian angels too, and you will have opened your heart to the unseen world.

Five hundred years ago Savonarola said, "Death is the

most solemn moment of our life. Then it is that the evil one makes his last attack on us. It is as though he were always playing chess with man, and awaiting the approach of death to give checkmate. He who wins at that moment wins the battle of life."

We lead you to the bare boards on which a Christian martyr dies and conquers. We urge you to become this kind of follower of Christ.

Devout Souls

In Lebanon, Christians were killed by Palestinians, but God's true children do not lose their lives by bullets. They have lost them already at the moment of their conversion. Life is no more theirs. I share with joy a letter found on the corpse of a Christian student of twenty-two, who was shot while peacefully on his way to Nabha to share Christmas with his family there.

> If my foreboding is fulfilled that I will be killed on this journey, I tell my mother and my family: Don't be sad, don't weep exceedingly. My absence will be short and we will see each other in heaven. There joy reigns. Don't fear. God's mercy will reunite us. I have only one request. Forgive with all your heart those who have killed me. Pray with me that my blood, though it is that of a sinner, might be accepted for the sins of Lebanon, that it might be accepted together with the blood of the victims of all religions... May my death teach men love...Pray and pray and love your enemies. If Abou-Khalil can give some of his planks for a coffin, I will lie very well in it. Please, make no burial meal. May men forgive me. I am dust. I, a sinner, in Jesus Christ, Ghasibe Hayrouz.

As a Jew, I feel proud to have such an Arab as my brother in Christ. When he accepted Jesus, he had lost

everything, even the desire to live on earth one more day than God had ordained. He had lost all enmity toward those who might take his life. Forgiving his murderers was as easy for him as breathing.

A former Soviet prisoner remembers:

> There were several nuns in our camp. Christmas day fell on a Sunday. The nuns, taking advantage of this day of rest, scattered all over the camp and began to glorify Christ. One of these carollers came to our barracks and, standing in the doorway, in a voice filled with enthusiasm and emotion, began to sing about the Saviour's birth. Not everyone in the barracks immediately grasped what she was singing, and some in the rear corners even began to crack flat jokes about her. But then someone said "A carol," in a voice full of inspiration. Everyone fell silent. Suddenly the walls seemed to have disappeared; so did the strict-regime Siberian labour camp of the KGB. Each and every one of us, swept up on the wings of overpowering emotion, was carried far, far away from these "oases of death" [as the prisoners called the camps]. Each one lowered his head and remembered his distant childhood: carolling in front of village huts on happy evenings like Christmas, the New Year, Epiphany, or celebrating with joy and gladness within the family. And the voice of the nun, formerly a young peasant girl, overcome with emotion, gained strength and glorified Christ:
>
> Thy Nativity, O Christ our God,
> hath shined upon the world
> the light of knowledge;
> for thereby, they that worshipped the stars
> were taught by a star
> to worship and know thee,
> the Sun of Righteousness.
> O Lord, glory be to thee.

And then the barracks resounded with the second stanza:

> Today, a Virgin gives birth to him

who is transcendent in essence;
and the earth offereth a cave
to him who is intangible.
Angels with shepherds give glory;
with a star, the Magi do journey;
for our sake a young Child is born,
who is the pre-eternal God.

Even some of those near death raised themselves on their plank beds and listened with wonder. The singing gradually died away. The nun sighed with emotion and began to extend Christmas greetings: "I greet all of you, God's martyrs, on this great day of Christ's birth!" Dozens of voices, weighed down with grief and fear, answered with friendly emotion from all the corners of the barracks: "Thank you, friend, and to you a Blessed Christmas, too!" It would seem that this Christmas prayer contained no counter-revolutionary phrases, but the stool pigeons had already reported the incident to the camp authorities. Barely had the nun stepped out of the barracks when the camp guard swooped down, seized her, and led her to the commandant's office. A quarter of an hour later, all the other nuns were rounded up in a convoy and taken to the camp zone where there was an underground isolation cell.

On the way, the nuns fearlessly continued to sing: "Christ is born, glorify him." No force exerted could break the feeling of that joyous religious uplifting shared by those who professed their faith in Christ. Suddenly one of the dying men, gathering up all his remaining strength, in premortal anguish shouted, "Death to the butchers!" It was a cry of a dying man who had been driven to insanity by suffering, who as

prisoners say "has come to the doorknob of the morgue." After two days the order of the camp commandant was posted on the bulletin board: "For a display of religious feelings and a demonstration of obscurantism in the prisoner barracks, former nun prisoners (names) are to be moved to the camp isolation cell for a period of three months where they must remain in total isolation from other prisoners; they are deprived of the right to correspond with relatives for a period of one year, and without fail are to be taken out to work. Prisoner (name of dying man) for counter-revolutionary

cries in Barracks No. 27, as witnessed by all other occupants, also to be moved to an isolation cell."
Within a few days the poor man was already dead. His thin body was taken to the mass grave and thrown on top of the other corpses which were dumped there earlier, and covered with lime.

I promised to give you the examples of overcomers, masters of life and love, men and women who are more than conquerors. I have provided but a few of these often nameless heroes. Follow their example and you too will become a model person, as God wishes us all to be.

Why the Suffering?

Suffering drives some to despair, to suicide. It torments some souls. Others are grateful for it. I have seen faithful Christian prisoners dancing for joy. They have recognized God as almighty and in patience they show love toward the evil men who torture them. They know this love of God is irresistible. It will conquer.

Even the best of Christians are troubled by the question, "Why does an almighty God send, or at least allow, suffering?" When you are nagged by thoughts like this, say to yourself, "I am still in elementary school. When I graduate

from the university of Christian life, I will understand his ways better and doubts will cease."

We do not have the right notion of might, which to us means the power to crush, to subdue, to suppress, to punish. There exists another might: it is the might to love, to be patient and quiet, to suffer innocently, and to be good to the wrongdoer. When we think about energy, we think of it as kinetic, a quality that makes all things move. But there exists the huge reservoir of potential energy, of energy at rest. There exists the power of quietness, of serenity.

A Communist officer told a Christian while beating him, "I am almighty, as you suppose your God to be. I can kill you ."

The Christian answered, "The power is all on my side. I can love you while you torture me to death."

Such is God's almightiness - it is reflected in the deep tranquility of the souls of saints. They do not ask the troublesome question, "Why all the sorrow?" because they learned to love the Cross and to be rejected without

comfort. Once you take this attitude, the perplexity ceases. What child is troubled when he receives a much-desired gift?

The peak of holiness is never to ask anything for yourself and never to refuse a cross with which God honours you, and then to accept life meekly as it comes, without questions. We are not ready to understand the answers yet. Some day we will know as also we are known by God (2CO 13:12).

The saint is not a man who has much light from God. He is a nothing, through whom shines God's power to endure, to hope, and to love even the worst of men. Who knows if the murderer of today will not be a future apostle, if today"s loose woman will not be a Magdalene? And cannot God compensate in eternity the wrong suffered here for a little while?

We bless the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We say to the Lord, "Blessed is the womb that bore thee" (LUK 11:27)

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and advance on the path of faith, without tormenting ourselves with many "Whys" about suffering, which we welcome because in them we can glorify Christ joyfully.

How impressive is the prayer of a woman in the camp of Vorkuta in Siberia: "O God, accept all my sufferings, my tiredness, my humiliations, my tears, my nostalgia, my being hungry, my suffering of cold, all the bitterness accumulated in my soul...Dear Lord, have pity also on those who persecute and torture us day and night. Grant them, too, the divine grace of knowing the sweetness and happiness of your love."

Children of Promise

The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son" (ROM 9:8, 9).

The Bible divides men into two categories: the children of the flesh, who have been born naturally and live the usual way in the world, and the children of promise, who are born again by a miracle of God and live, on this earth, the holy life expected of citizens in the promised land of heaven.

Isaac is the first man in the Bible called a "child of promise." His life is an example for us. Children of promise have a good conscience, which keeps them from killing

someone or even hurting his reputation or well-being.

Don't add to your suffering the futile exercise of trying to find out its cause. When Isaac was still young and could not possibly understand what was happening, his father Abraham bound him and lifted his knife to kill him (Genesis 22). When his life was saved, he did not say a word of reproach to his father, nor did he question him. He could have sued his father for attempted murder and would have won the court case, but he was a child of promise. He continued to

love and respect his father until he could understand more fully what had happened.

A servant of his father decided on his behalf who would be his wife. He did not insist upon his right to choose for himself. The servant had chosen Rebekah, and "he loved her" (GEN 24:67). He would have loved any other girl an old servant might have picked for him.

When Isaac dug a well of water, other men contended, "The well is ours." Isaac did not go to court. He left them the well and dug another. When that was taken over by herdsmen too, without a word of quarrel he dug a third, until he had satisfied all his covetous neighbours with wells. In the end he had one for himself. When his son Jacob cheated him, he uttered no word of reproach. "Isaac called Jacob and blessed him" (GEN 28:1).

Accept quietly what an as yet unintelligible God gives you, and do not fear. Do not fear even torture. Christians are under no obligation to be in their bodies while being tortured. Paul wrote about a man caught up to the third heaven, "whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell" (2CO 12:2). If you learn to dwell out of the body, the wrongs in your life are no longer committed by you but by the sin that dwells in you (ROM 7:17). The daily afflictions and even tortures do not make you lose your inner peace.

Indifference or Refusal

Some wonder why the churches haven't cared about the multitude of Christians persecuted in Communist countries. This kind of neglect has a long history.

St Paul wrote, "No church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving" (PHP 4:15). He had founded many churches himself, but when he, and probably many others, entered prison for the faith, his brethren did

not realize that prison means hunger, destitution, anguish of

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soul. They did not realize that prisons also have much to give to the churches. For Christian prisoners, the fact that Jesus enters through locked doors bringing peace is not simply an old Easter story. It happens every day in their cells. Their experiences can enrich the followers of Christ. Christians did not sense that the suffering of some is a rich treasure from which all can draw; that hands wearing chains can bless well. So it happened that no church had communicated with Paul when he was a prisoner, concerning giving and receiving, except the Philippians.

There exists an invincible indifference, insensitivity, apathy toward suffering. We sometimes wonder why people do not react when they are told the story of the cross of Christ, why they remain unmoved when they hear about the sufferings of Christians in Communist countries.

There was a multitude on Golgotha who attended the crucifixion of men and who actually heard their cries when nails were hammered into their hands and feet. They must have known that at least One of them was the best of men. Otherwise he would not have prayed for his torturers or cared to bring a robber to God, while passing through unspeakable physical suffering himself. Now this Jesus cried, as in despair, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And what was the reaction of the multitude? They said to each other, "Let be, let us see..." It did not pass through their minds to alleviate his suffering by at least giving him a little bit of water or a word of compassion. "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him."

Elias is not only the proper name of a prophet of old. It is in Hebrew a short sentence which means, "Jehovah is my God." In this sense everyone can be an Elias. In this sense the Lord said that St John the Baptist was Elias. Each of us must have Jehovah as our God. If the compassionate God Jehovah is master of our life, we will never remain impassive when we see innocent suffering.

Those who are in reality without God have this attitude, "Let be, let us see." Men of this type attended the crucifixion

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on Golgotha and were not moved by it. They were not moved by the message of the Underground Church. They do not care if the little brethren of Jesus are hungry or in jail. They will answer at the judgment for their indifference

and neglect. We pity them.

There exists an even worse category.

"Gadarenes began to pray Jesus to depart out of their coasts" (MRK 5:17). They had good reason to do so. Jesus had chased demons out of a man by ordering them to enter into a herd of swine, which then ran down a slope straight into the sea and drowned. The Gadarenes thus lost their whole property, the bread for themselves and their children. It meant nothing to them that the man had been cured.

How would you react if the entrance of Jesus into your life meant the loss of your house, your car, your bank account, and your job? You might perhaps continue to use holy phrases without meaning them. The Gadarenes uttered a prayer that was at least sincere: "Depart from us, Jesus."

Jesus is used to being driven out. When Holman Hunt painted his renowned picture "The Light of the World," in which the Lord is shown begging entrance, knocking at the door of a house, his feet are turned not toward the door but the roadway. He has more chance to be refused than accepted, because to accept him costs much.

The apostle Paul writes, "For Christ Jesus my Lord, I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (PHP 3:8). Do we also look upon our nice furniture, a new car, the better job we just got, the money we possess, as upon repulsive dung? When someone encounters dung, he wishes to get away from it - the sooner the better. Is this our attitude toward earthly possessions? Whoever wishes to win Christ must lose his attachment to them.

Friendship with Jesus is costly. Faith alone saves, but

saving faith is never alone. It is always accompanied by great sacrifices for Christ's sake.

As we bring sacrifices to him, let us have full understanding for those who do not have the power to offer them, who remain indifferent to our sufferings or even increase them.

Prepare to Enter Through the Veil

There is a special manner of worshipping God: it involves action.

A man dug weeds together with his wife in their garden. Looking up, he saw an angel, who said to him, "It is time to

come to your eternal abode."

The man answered, "It would leave so much more work for my wife to do. Please allow me to finish." The angel nodded his assent. In the evening, the man helped his wife wash the dishes. The angel came again, calling him to the eternal abode. But they had had guests and the dishes were many. The man said, "I don't want to leave the whole burden of putting the house in order to my wife. Please let me tarry a little bit longer." Again the angel acquiesced. Later, when the man had gone to bed, he called the angel and said, "Now you can come and take me to the eternal abode."

The angel appeared and answered, "That is where you have been this whole day."

To work for the Kingdom of heaven is heaven. To work for the glory of God is to worship. God calls Christians to be active in his harvest.

"Ye become followers of us and of the Lord" (1TH 1:6). St. Paul considered himself the chief of sinners. He surely did not lie when he referred to himself this way, nor did he display false humility. He must have had serious motives to describe himself like this. Notwithstanding, he was sure that whoever followed him and his co-workers

became by this very fact also a follower of Christ. He had this confidence in his calling.

From the Experience of Our Missions

Jesus said, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out" (MRK 9:47). The Aramaean language that Jesus spoke was extremely poor. It did not have the words "idea, sentiment, passion, intention, intuition, perspective, manner of looking at things." For all these different notions Jesus had to use the word "eye." He never intended that we should pluck out our physical eye, which never offends. Plucking it out would not be helpful, since blind men commit as many sins as those who see.

But he taught us to pluck out decidedly from our mind a certain manner of looking at reality. We have a lacrimal system given by God, and we are meant to use it rightly. "Weep with those who weep," wrote Paul (ROM 12:15). Jesus wept when he saw his friends Mary and Martha in grief. Don't use your tears so much for your own sorrows! What you think about the events of your life may be wrong.

The tears of two women were floating side by side down the Mississippi River. The first tear said, "I am the tear of a woman who lost her lover." The second tear replied, "And I am the tear of the woman who got him."

Shed tears for the sufferings of others, thus showing them your love and sympathy. It is only with tears in your eyes that you can see reality clearly. Weep with God's weeping about the sins of the world, including your own.

When our political leadership discussed the relative merits of various weapons systems, we advocated the love bomb and the gospel missile. Mao said rightly, "It is not important what weapons the enemy has, but rather what the man who uses the weapons thinks." We felt that the Soviet Union should be "attacked" on a large front with the gospel, with the teaching of love. Every converted Soviet citizen

would then be a sympathizer of the West. where Christianity is free, and a foe of the satanic system oppressing him. The church is separate from the state in most countries of the free world. This is an arrangement benefiting the inner life of a nation, but the gospel can be a powerful weapon for winning a large population of an inimical country to our side. Then the terrible option of killer weapons systems will be avoided.

There are always Christians who say, "We should just preach the gospel and not bother about Communism or democracy." They have expressed their disagreement with my anti-Communism. "Christianity can live in every form of society," they claim.

I wonder where they learned their gospel.

Did Livingstone know the gospel? When he went to Africa, there existed a booming slave trade. According to the theology of my critics, he should have allowed the slaves to remain slaves and not have preached to them about Christ. He had read in the Bible about how God freed the Jewish slaves. He could not remain unmoved when he saw the gangs of slaves, bound at the wrist to a long chain, beaten with whips, exactly like prisoners of the Communists in Red China and the Soviet Union as they were being transported.

"These terrible things made Dr Livingstone burn with anger," wrote Maskey Miller in his ~History of South Africa~. Many Christians today have lost the virtue of becoming angry about slavery. Some never get angry except at a Wurmbrand and our missions, which have always fought against Communist slavery. Livingstone never forgot to beg

the British people to put down the terrible trade in human flesh and blood. He succeeded. Slavery was abolished in the British empire - only to be reintroduced in our day by Communist African governments.

Today Livingstone's body lies in Westminster Abbey, while those in our churches who claim to honour his memory criticize us for opposing a form of slavery that has

engulfed whole nations. The gospel we preach includes the mandate, "Let my people go!"

From our first beginnings twenty-five years ago, we always aimed to create a spirit of concern for the persecuted, to stimulate prayer for them everywhere, and to encourage Christians in many lands to supply Bibles and literature for areas where they were forbidden. Other similar organizations acknowledged their indebtedness to us. As a result, millions have been reached by our work in Communist countries and the free world.

It began with very few who remembered the words of John Chrysostom:

> The power of the righteous consists not in their number but in the grace of the Spirit. There were twelve apostles. How little leaven! All men were unbelievers. How much the dough! But those twelve turned the world upside down. Let only ten change, and soon they will be twenty, the twenty will become 100, the 100 will become 1,000, and the 1,000 a whole town. Just as the lighting of ten candles can give light to a whole house, so it is with spiritual acts. Let only ten change and we can start a fire that will give light to all.

To do this we needed sanctification. We had to strive hard for this. The Greek word for sanctification is ~haghiasmos~, which means to become unearthly (~ha~, not, and ~gheos~, earthly). We were human and had our temptations. We could not fight Communism outwardly without fighting inwardly as well.

Sexual impulses are very strong. They have defeated many Christians, but we fought to subdue them. There have been fallings into sin, but also rising from sin to even greater purity. We had to be honest in money matters and strive to attain the other virtues as well. Yet sanctification comprehends more than this: it means accepting lovingly any cross given by God; it means putting Christ above any earthly attachment, even our own families and our own lives.

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We sing easily, "Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also." We had to do more than sing. We had to let them go. We had great examples before us.

The Russian monk Amphilochia, while in prison, had cold water poured on his naked body in freezing weather. Another, Gregor, had been tortured to death. His fingers had been cut off and his back flayed in the sign of the cross.

Macarius knew something similar might happen to him. He was asked to give statements about other monks, which the Secret Police would then use as evidence to imprison them. Macarius replied, "My beloved, I did not become a monk to serve as a traitor, but to perfect my life through prayer, imitating my predecessors in faith."

The police officer promised that if he complied he would be appointed bishop, a real honour. (In the Soviet Union, the atheist government decided who would lead a church.)

He replied, "Better to be a small daisy." For his steadfastness, Macarius was beaten until blood flowed from his mouth, nose, and ears, yet he remained alive.

Looking at such heroes of faith, we had to sanctify ourselves, bearing with love, joy, and humility the crosses we received. Millions are in danger of not knowing about the great and dreadful day of the Lord. What preparation does one need for this? Just readiness for sacrifice. During the nineteenth century, when the story of West Indian slavery became known to the Moravian church, the news was that it was impossible to reach the slaves because slaveholders would not allow evangelizing. So two missionaries went to the West Indies and worked on the plantations as slaves under the lash. The slaves themselves, touched by their sacrifice, were thus prepared for "that great day."

This is the spirit that animates our mission. We unleashed a storm of prayer for Communist countries. We bombarded them with the gospel. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall represent God"s answer. We give him the glory.

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The same fire will burn in you when you fulfil your calling, in whatever work is allotted to you.

Parables of the Three Trees

In underground churches the parable of the three trees is often told. It also comforts prisoners of faith. We think it is useful for children and adults in the West as well.

In a forest, the story goes, three young trees were great friends. They all agreed to pray not to die by decaying in old age, but to be felled so that their wood might be useful to men.

The first tree desired to become a manger in which tired cattle would feed after a long day's work. God rewarded its modesty. It became a very special manger - the one in which was laid the very Son of God. It saw the angels watching over the Child. It heard the blessed virgin's lullabies. Wise men and shepherds bowed before it. What tree had ever had a more beautiful fate?

The second tree, looking at the boats on the lake below, prayed that its wood might be used for making a boat. The prayer was answered, and many travellers embarked and disembarked as they went about their business. On a particular day it had a special passenger: the Son of God. It heard Jesus speak words of love and wisdom never known before. In a fierce storm, it seemed that the boat would perish, but he said, "Peace, be still!" and the tempest stopped immediately. It had been worthwhile to die as a tree to witness such a scene.

The third tree did not know what it wanted to be, so others decided for it. They made out of it a large cross to serve as an instrument of torture. Who was ever sadder than this tree? One day the Son of God was nailed to it. But the cross did not hear groaning and swearing as on other crosses. It heard words of divine forgiveness, words opening the gates of heaven even to a repenting thief, caring words

for his mother, and words of confidence to his Father. The wood then understood that its part in the crucifixion of Jesus provided for the salvation of mankind.

We also rejoice about our crosses and tribulations.

Ordinarily, no one seeks pain. Only exceptional souls are called to great renunciation: voluntary poverty, chastity, obedience, even unto death. We others do not rejoice because of tribulations. We could well go on without them, yet we rejoice in them at least if they cannot be avoided.

Tribulations can also be a source of happiness and peace.

The Humble Glorify Christ

Paul was able to write, "Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ" (1TH 2:6).

A Christian is supposed to be humble in his private affairs. When hit on one cheek he turns the other. The canvas never quarrels with the painter. He is free to paint on it what he likes, be it a beggar or a king. The Christian accepts any condition in life as coming from God. If he is successful, he does not boast of it. Can a brush boast that a beautiful picture has been drawn with it? Only the master-painter deserves glory. So is our relationship with Christ. A Christian seeks glory from no one.

Therese of Lisieux gives a little illustration in her autobiography. One day while standing near a sister who was washing the laundry, she was inadvertently splashed in her face with dirty water. If Therese had left suddenly without uttering a word of reproach, the sister might have guessed that she had done something wrong and been sad about it. If she had said, 'Stop it!'" a quarrel might have arisen.

Therese said to herself, "What is wrong with being splashed with dirty water? Jesus, the Son of God, allowed himself to be spat upon." Thinking like this, she began to like the dirt with which she was sprinkled. For you too this

is the best response when subjected to humiliations in private life.

Christ was humble, as was St Paul, though their humility had a special feature: it was difficult to make others understand it. Jesus had to say, "I seek not mine own glory" (JHN 8:50), and "I am meek and lowly in heart" (MTT 11:29). Paul also had to assure men that he sought no glory. Normally, a humble man does not go around boasting about his humility. It is only when he makes an impression of great pride, or even arrogance that he has to explain what is in him.

Don't worry if, when you humble yourself, others consider you haughty. A Christian is humble in his own affairs, yet he is very sure that he has a message from God. This he asserts with full authority, ready to contend with anyone, even to the point of being considered burdensome or annoying, or giving the impression of being an "I-know-better" man. "Apostles of Christ might be burdensome" 1TH 2:6). Paul was such when he wrote that he sought no glory from men.

We too are unworthy messengers, but we have a worthy message. We once received a highly interesting letter from an American Christian:

> In my neighbourhood I am considered a poor man, because my income is low, but I am respected. Others have less than I. But I have enough even to give aid to the poor. So I am wealthy. I am also rich with children. I have twelve. When I read R. Wurmbrand's book ~Tortured for Christ~, I decided to do something for the persecuted Christians. So I got more copies and placed them in obvious places where they would be found. I put my name and phone in each book, so that those touched by the message might contact me for common prayer. I thought: Should I pray? If my house caught fire, I would not only pray for the burning to cease or for the fire department to come,

> I would pray and call the firemen too, and I would get out my own fire hose. I decided to prepare a talk on this subject and send it to all churches, asking the pastors to invite me to deliver it. I will take your books about atrocities suffered by Christians in Communist lands to all Christian bookstores and will ask them to display them well. My brethren who live under Communism risk imprisonment and death for delivering a written message. Should I not risk some inconvenience?
>
> I am a man with only one year of high school and do hard work. I was a drunkard. A brother prayed for me and now I am God's child.

I recommend that you be as enthusiastic and practical as this brother in the service of the Lord, wherever he might call you.

Nowadays, people suffer from neglect, from the fact that no one converses with them. Their loved ones prefer to watch TV. Knock at the doors of friends and neighbours; assure them that you don't wish to disturb their privacy but, on the contrary, wish to help them learn of communion with God by giving them the examples of those who achieved it even under bloody dictatorship. Such a programme is not utopian. We rejoice now that Communism has suffered a huge defeat at our hands.

The Soviets themselves had a foreboding of what was to come. Their publishing house "Politicheskoye Izdatelstvo" issued in 1972 a book called ~Subversion Without Dynamite~, by Belov and Shilkin. It showed pictures of Christian literature smuggled in, of cars with special hiding places,

Christian books imported disguised in covers of novels, magazines found under the carpets of trains arriving from the West, balloons flying over their territory and releasing Christian tracts, and so on. The Soviets described as "a bunch of criminals" all missions like ours. They call our books "dynamite." They were right.

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The Secret of Success

Old Testament Joseph said, "Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt" (GEN 41:29). Why this exceptional blessing over Egypt? Why should it have great plenty and be warned of famine in meager years to follow? There are three reasons for this that are also the secrets of a successful mission:

1. ~The Pharaoh of that time was every inch a king.~ He acted as a king not only when awake. His subconscious was also filled with concern for the welfare of his people and so he dreamt about it at night.

Every Christian is a king. Luther said, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none." But a Christian is a loving king. Therefore, Luther adds, "A Christian is a dutiful servant of all, subject to all." A Christian does not have to strive to be a soul-winner; it is no imposition to him to place the well-being of the church first. His Christian belief has pervaded his subconscious. He simply is a soul-winner, a man who puts God's Kingdom first. When he falls asleep, when the power of will disappears, the extension of God's Kingdom is his dream. My dream, from the first day of my conversion, was to witness for Christ to the Russians. Such dreams are always fulfilled.

2. ~Pharaoh, the dreamer of good, met another dreamer of dreams, Joseph, and united with him.~ When I came to the West after many years of dreaming in Communist prisons about a mission to the Communist world, I met Western pastors and believers who had had the same dream but did not know how to fulfil it. We could unite.

3. ~Pharaoh was completely unprejudiced.~ He was advised to call to his court a foreigner with another colour of skin, a man with what must have seemed to Pharaoh a queer religion, a man who worshipped only one unseen God, a prisoner with a very bad reputation. The charge for which he had been jailed was assault on a woman with intent to rape.

But for this Pharaoh, every man was first of all a man.

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Every man could be used for the welfare of the country. Men who had committed very bad deeds yesterday could have become good men this morning. And besides, who knew if the charges against Joseph were true? Slave-holders like Potiphar often jailed their slaves without a fair trial.

We too have also maintained an attitude devoid of prejudice. Is a man a Communist torturer? St Paul was also a torturer of Christians. A torturer can be a future apostle. We know no prejudice against him. We just love him and try to win him for Christ.

Is someone a traitor of the Underground Church, or is there a church leader in the West who compromises with Communism? We realize that the heart of every man is easily deceived. We love him and try to win him for the right attitude.

Communism wanted to dominate the white, black, and yellow peoples of the earth. Death and Communism, one of its harbingers, want men of all races. But so does love, and "Love is strong as death" (SOS 8:6). We can love the political right-winger and left-winger, the fundamentalist or modernist, and all those in between. We can love the Khmer Rouge and the North Koreans, as well as those who oppose them. We do not admit any prejudice in our heart. We are serious when we sing, "Crown Him King of all."

The fulfilling of these conditions gave Egypt great plenty and provision for themselves and their neighbours in the days of famine. The fulfilling of these conditions also made our mission work obtain great victories, which were followed by even greater ones.

I offer you the examples of valiant men and women of our missions, along with heroes of faith in conditions of great suffering. Inspired by them, you too may lead a life of true fulfillment and usefulness for the Kingdom of God. You too may cause him to "rejoice over you with singing" (ZEP 3:17).

Pastor Wurmbrand welcomes correspondence. Please write to the appropriate address:

Christian Mission to the Communist World
P.O. Box 19
Bromley, Kent, BR2 9T2, England

Jesus to the Communist World
P.O. Box 69-158
Glendene, Auckland 8, New Zealand

Christian Mission International
P.O. Box 7157
Primrose Hill 1417, South Africa

The Voice of the Martyrs
P.O. Box 117 Port Credit
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada L5G 4LS

The Voice of the Martyrs
P.O. Box 598
Penrith
NSW 2751, Australia

The Voice of the Martyrs
P.O. Box 2273
Bartlesville, OK 74005
U.S.A.

The End of "The Overcomers"

The Pastor's Wife

Sabina Wurmbrand
Copyright 1970, 1989
Edited by Charles Foley

The incredible story of Sabina Wurmbrand's imprisonment and survival during her husband's 14 years' persecution in Communist prisons for underground Christian activities.

In 1948, when Soviet propaganda was asserting that free Christian worship was being tolerated behind the Iron Curtain, the Communists arrested Pastor Richard Wurmbrand in Rumania for secret Christian activities.

~The Pastor's Wife~ is Sabina Wurmbrand's true story of her efforts to get her husband released, her subsequent imprisonment and, above all, her unceasing efforts to help build a Christian underground church in the shadow of Communist repression and its dummy churches.

For the truth is that the Communists to this day cannot

tolerate genuine Christianity, and are still executing or imprisoning underground Christians. This is the urgent message of ~The Pastor's Wife~.

In order to preserve certain people from identification by the Communist authorities, names of people and places have been deliberately disguised in this narrative. S.W.

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PART ONE

I MEET THE SOVIET ARMY

In the summer of 1944, when Hitler's Germany began to collapse, a million Soviet troops entered Rumania. As the first columns approached Bucharest we went to meet them on a No. 7 tram.

It was the last day of August. Cloudless and hot. The guns were silent. Somewhere across the fields, bells were pealing.

My husband Richard, as a wartime pastor, had known many Russians in Rumanian prison camps. They were by nature instinctively religious, he said, and not less so for twenty-five years drilling in atheism.

"We must go out and meet them," said Richard. "To speak to Russians about Christ is heaven on earth."

When we dropped off at the suburban crossroads I saw a group of red flags, carried by local Communists who had come out of hiding to greet the "glorious Red Army." They looked at us in doubt. Most people were keeping out of the way of the liberators for the time being, although a big official reception had been prepared in Bucharest.

Richard was a striking young man. Tall and broad-shouldered, with a confident air that sprung from sureness in his faith. I stood beside him, half his height. Smiling, since the war was over now and we would all be friends again.

In a patch of shade two or three Rumanian officials waited. Nervously they rehearsed some words in Russian. They had come to make the age-old gift to the stranger - a loaf of bread, a handful of salt.

We gazed up the empty road, wondering what to expect. The Russians were our allies now. But also a conquering army with known tastes in rape and robbery.

In the distance appeared a boy on a bicycle, pedalling for dear life.

"They're coming," he shrilled. "The Russians are coming!"

The Communists fell into line. Up went the wilting red flags. The officials, who had been discussing plans for celebrations in the capital, stood like sacrificial victims under the hot sun. Roaring motor-cycles approached. Then the first tanks.

From their turrets sprouted red-starred helmets. The Communists quavered out the "Internationale." The macadamed road shook under the weight of the invaders. Great treads slowed and stopped. The leading tank towered over us. Dusty grey scarred steel. A huge gun-barrel pointing skywards. As the welcoming speech ended, an officer leant

over and took the bread and salt which was held up. He stared at the black loaf as if it might explode. And laughed. The young sergeant beside him caught my eye. "Well, sweetheart," he grinned. "And what have you to offer?" Few women were out on the streets that day. I said: "I've brought you the Holy Bible." I handed up a copy. "Bread, salt and Bibles. All we want is a drink!" He guffawed and pushed back his helmet. The fair hair glittered in the sun. "Thanks, anyway!" he said. Metal tracks bit into the road. Engines belched black fumes. The column thundered past. We choked and wiped our eyes. From the tram on the way home we saw Russians looting; wine-casks being rolled out on to the pavement, chickens, hams, sausages vanishing into sacks. Soldiers pointed excitedly into the windows of suburban shops. Bucharest was then a sad shell of its old self but to these giant Russian children it was rich beyond belief. Richard spoke to some of them when we got out, but the only answer was: "Where can we find vodka?" So we returned home to make new plans. From these poor souls God had been stolen in exchange for the promise of an earthly paradise, which can never be fulfilled by human means alone. One thing everyone knew: the Nazi terror was over at last. People hoped that the Russians would calm down and soon go their way in peace. Few guessed that a new and more lasting tyranny had begun. Certainly I did not know that we had just set out on a road that led to prison and would be marked by the graves of friends.

I didn't believe Richard when he warned me, before we married, "You'll have no easy life with me."

In those days we cared little about God. Nor, very much, about other people. We didn't want children. We wanted pleasure.

Then we became Christians. Richard worked for Norwegian and Swedish and British missions. He became a pastor. He played a role in the World Council of Churches. He preached in churches of many denominations, and in bars, brothels and prisons.

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I was thirty-one years old when the Russians came, and by then Richard was a well-known preacher and author.

We suffered both as Jews and as Christians under the Rumanian fascists led by Marshal Antonescu, Hitler's puppet. Richard was arrested three times. We were both among a group of seven Jews court-martialled on charges of holding "illegal religious meetings." A Rumanian woman came to the police station and told the officer: "You have detained my Jewish brethren. It would be a privilege for me to

suffer with them."

It was enough. She was arrested and tried with us. God put many such friends on our way. They seemed like angels in the shape of men, working day and night for our good, appearing at every turning in our lives. God has thousands and thousands of such angels and he uses a multitude of them to make us what we are.

One was an influential priest within the Orthodox church, which was favoured by Antonescu. He spoke for us at our trial, saying we were his brothers in Christ. A German Baptist, Pastor Fleischer, and others, gave evidence for us, saying we did great work for Christianity. They risked their lives, and shamed the judges - who knew we were innocent - into acquitting us.

Each time Richard was in trouble there was a powerful trio that interceded for him: Pastor Solheim and his wife, and the Swedish Ambassador, von Reutersw„rd, to whom they introduced us. Without their repeated interventions, Richard would have passed the whole Nazi era in prison. The Ambassador had considerable influence, since Marshal Antonescu used his neutral embassy to keep in contact with Moscow. (Antonescu's ally Hitler, after all, might lose the war.) Once when Richard was seized in a round-up of Jews and put to work with a labour gang, Reutersward's strong protests saved him. He helped us countless times.

Bucharest was lucky. Terrible pogroms occurred in the provinces. In one day at Iasi, 11,000 Jews were slaughtered. Perhaps in Bucharest there were the ten righteous people of whom the Bible speaks as being a reason for saving Sodom and Gomorrah. We heard that seven young girls had survived in Tassy with the Norwegian missionary, Sister Olga, who had brought them to Christ. How could we smuggle them into Bucharest before the next massacre? Jews were not permitted to travel.

A Christian friend in the police had the girls arrested and sent to the capital. We met the train and brought them to our home and safety. Another young man reached the capital from this district with his girl friend and stayed with us. What help and comfort they all were in years to come - especially the young man. He became my successor as pastor when I was arrested.

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Where there's a will there's a way, and we willed this: we could save these girls from the slaughter that threatened. But so many people wished only not to be involved and failed in their Christian duty and allowed thousands who might have been saved to perish. There

was no one to rescue the tens of thousands of Jews deported from provincial towns, including my own family who lived near the frontier town of Czernowitz. It was winter. Many captives collapsed in the snow. Others died of starvation. Soldiers massacred the rest. My parents, my brother and three sisters, many friends and relatives never came back. Even today the thought is like a wound; it bleeds whenever it is touched.

Jewish history is full of such traumatic events. Remembrance of them is inscribed deeply in the heart of every Jew. This can carry them beyond self, to weep with the multitudes from other nations who mourn over similar tragedies.

Our only son Mihai was five years old by the time Nazism was overthrown. He"d taken in more than a child would in normal times. Fear and death were everywhere. He missed nothing. Our apartment was a gathering place and every night people came to tell their troubles. He listened and learnt early of cruelty and suffering. Richard taught him, told him stories. Mihai adored his father who, although always busy with his mission, found time every day to speak and play with him. Once he explained how John the Baptist said that a man with two coats should give "to him that hath none." "You've got two suits, Daddy," said Mihai. "So I have," Richard replied. He"d just bought his first new suit in years. "You can give the new one to old, Mr. Ionescu who always wears that smelly jacket." Richard promised he would and Mihai went content to bed. He always took what he was told very seriously and drew his own conclusions. He was very attentive to how his father worked on the hearts of others. Sometimes the conversions produced by Richard's work had side results for Mihai - he became a favourite with the converts, who brought him toys and candy.

During the war we had moved to a smaller apartment. Our neighbours in the new block were violently anti-Jewish. This hatred pervaded Rumania and even Christians, particularly Christian prelates, played a role in inciting it. Few failed to succumb to the phobia.

In our courtyard were pasted big posters of Corneliu Codreanu, the Iron Guard leader - a symbol of everything anti-semitic. And JEW was stamped on our identity cards, as on our hearts. We didn't feel very comfortable. But Richard went from neighbour to neighbour breaking the ice. He had a confidence that souls

can be won for Christ, and a trust that was not easily dismayed by worldly cynicism or brutality. He could find the right word about the Saviour for different people or warn about the punishment of God without giving offence. He could charm or cajole, yet be very direct.

His blue eyes could look into your soul.

Richard went to work strategically, first on our new landlord, then one by one on neighbours. He began by trying to make them laugh.

Mr. Parvalescu, on the third floor, exploded: "You Jews have never done a damned thing that's any good!"

Richard, who was standing in their parlour simply replied: That's a fine sewing-machine. What's its make? A Singer! Hold on - wasn't that invented by a Jew? Mr. Parvalescu, if you really think the Jews are so useless, you"d better get rid of it!"

Across the landing from us was waspish, middle-aged Mrs. Georgescu, who raged about "those Jews." But soon she was confiding her woes to Richard. Her husband had left her. Her young son was wild. She feared he would catch venereal disease. Richard promised to speak to him.

"But even if he was to catch something," said Richard, "these things can be cured now. Although the remedy was invented by a Jew."

He broke down their prejudice. Then he told them the Gospel message. Soon they began to change. We met a new politeness; then affection. Posters of Codreanu were replaced by Bible verses. And in that small block, when hell raged outside, we lived as in another world of friendship and peace.

One new friend was a policeman with a motor-cycle. He drank and beat his wife, until Richard spoke to him and Christ gave him a new heart. Then he took Mihai for rides. A motor-cycle was a rarity in those days. Mihai was the happiest of boys.

When air-raids began we couldn't leave the city. Jews were not allowed to travel. But the policeman took Mihai out to stay with friends in the country until the worst was over. If they were challenged, Mihai was to give the fine old Rumanian name of "Jon M. Vlad." He was thrilled by the adventure.

Mihai heard much about cruelty and suffering but in this house he knew also great goodness. He was surrounded only by friends and from their love he learnt many lessons that were of great value to him later.

Anutza, one of my closest friends, called one day for coffee at our flat. Small and fair, pretty and gay, she came from Norway. And she talked like a flowing river.

"Oh these Russians! Have you heard about our new deal with

Moscow? They take all our wheat and in return we give the all our oil. Yesterday I saw a Red Army man with three wristwatches on each arm. They take them from people in the streets as if they were collecting bus tickets!"

She laughed, but for the country it was no laughing matter. The Soviet Army looted goods worth thousands of millions of dollars. Then, on orders from the Kremlin, our navy, our merchant fleet, half the rolling stock and every car was carried off to Russia. The shops were empty. Endless queues waited every where. But Stalin said the Red Army would leave when Germany was finally beaten. Perhaps it would all be over soon.

"Oh, let's talk about something nice! Sabina, I heard you speak at the ladies" guild; what a lawyer the world lost in you! It was beautiful, and your husband's sermon was wonderful too. So much history and art and philosophy, and isn't two hours rather long?" We in Norway aren't used to such long ones, although for myself I just wish he"d keep on and on."

Anutza loved to chatter. She'd come to collect another pile of our church magazine, ~The Friend~. The fascists had banned it. Now we were all working to put out issues.

Briefly we enjoyed a spell of religious freedom. The dictator Antonescu had been taken to Moscow, then brought back and shot. Orthodox church prelates who had exercised tyranny over Jews and Protestants had lost their absolute dominion.

At last we had a democratic government. To please the Russians, Communists filled a few posts. Scarcely anyone realized what lay ahead.

"After all," they said, "this is a country of twenty million people. We haven't got enough real Communists to fill a football stadium."

All through the war we had worked to help victims of the Nazis - Jews in concentration camps, children left parentless by the massacres, Rumanian Protestants who were greatly persecuted under Antonescu. We organized the first relief to Hungarian Jews and to another oppressed minority - the gypsies.

But now a new minority had been created. The hunter had become the hunted. German troops left behind in the retreat had to fend for themselves and many died.

We were utterly opposed to the Nazis: they had killed millions; they had devastated whole countries, leaving cities in ruins; our friends and relatives had been thrown into their furnaces. But now they were defeated and offered no danger. Most of the soldiers who remained were like ourselves, simply victims of war. They were starving and terrified. We could not refuse them help.

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People said: "You're taking foolish risks for the sake of murderers."

"God is always on the side of the persecuted," Richard answered. It was not only Martin Bormann and Co. who were being hunted like animals: it was also the silly boys who had paraded in Brown Shirts on Sunday afternoons and become soldiers by order. And not everyone was brave enough to prefer death to taking part in Nazi massacres. Anti-semitism had prevailed among Germans and Rumanians, but there existed also small groups who had risked their lives to help Jews. Why hate a whole people because of a Hitler and his many followers? Why not rather love this people for the sake of its saints and the few who resisted the tyrants.

The Bible tells us what it really means to be a Jew. The Biblical word for Hebrew (~Ivri~) means etymologically to ~stand on the other side~. The first Hebrew was Abraham, and he was one in a real sense of the word, standing on the other side. When all men worshipped idols, Abraham worshipped the living God. When others are bent on revenge, on ways of doing more evil than their neighbour, God gives to some the ability to return good for evil.

Once three German officers hid in a tiny outhouse in our yard. It was a dark little garage, half-buried in snow. We fed them, and emptied their buckets at night. We hated their former atrocities. We ourselves had been the victims. But now we talked to them, trying to make them feel less like caged beasts.

One evening when I called, their captain said: "I must tell you something that's on my mind. You know that it is death to shelter a German soldier. Yet you do it - and you are Jews! I must tell you that when the German army recaptures Bucharest, which it surely will, I'll never do for you what you have done for us."

He looked at me strangely. I thought I should try to explain. Sitting down on an upturned box, I said: "I am your host. My family were killed by the Nazis, but even so, as long as you are under my roof I owe you not only protection, but the respect due to a guest. You will suffer. The Bible says, "Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." I will protect you as much as I can from the police, but I cannot protect you from the wrath of God."

"Humbug," he answered.

He patted me on the shoulder. I drew back. His hand had shed innocent blood. He apologized: "I did not mean it badly. I just wondered why a Jewess should risk her life for a German soldier. I do not like Jews. And I do not fear God."

"Let us leave it," I said. We remember a word of God in the

Old Testament, 'Give love to strangers, for you, too, have been strangers in the land of Egypt.'"

He seemed puzzled.

"That was thousands of years ago. What is it to you if your forefathers suffered in Egypt?"

I said: "To God a thousand years are as one day. Wise men tell us we store the experience of past generations like memorybooks. In our unconscious are written the events of the past. We don't know them, but they are determining our feelings and our judgements.

"And secondly, God says with good reason, love strangers; for in the last resort we are all strangers to each other ... even to ourselves."

"Wait a minute!" said the officer. "Jews have committed crimes against the German people and mankind. Honesty makes me tell you this to your face. But you must look on us as men who have committed crimes against the Jews. And you forgive them all?"

I answered very earnestly, "Even the worst crimes are forgiven by faith in Jesus Christ. I have no authority to forgive. Jesus can do so, if you repent."

The soft crunch of footsteps on loose snow came from the yard outside. I peered out through a crack. But it was only the deaf old janitor from next door. The captain lit one of the cigarettes Richard

had found for them (although he himself hated smoking). He inhaled and passed the butt to his friend. He said:

"~Gn„dige Frau~, I won't say I understand you. But perhaps if no one had this gift of returning good for evil you talk about, then there would never be an end to killing."

When I stood up to leave, they rose and gave little formal bows. I put their laundry in my shopping bag and went out.

These men eventually crossed the frontier safely into Germany. But many thousands like them were rounded up and died after spending years in Soviet labour camps, together with Russian Christians who might have taught them further.

Every German at that time wanted to get rid of his Wehrmacht uniform. How proudly they had once worn those well-cut tunics, the badges and the medals. How hard it was now to accept in exchange the poor civilian clothes we offered.

It was at this time that Richard began to bring home Russian soldiers. He was determined to tell them about Christ. Others rightly believed the country should be rid of them.

"Do be careful, Sabina!" said Anutza. "What will you do if the two armies meet in your home?"

We took care not to let that happen.

Richard began by entering Red Army barracks posing as a

black-market dealer in cheap watches. A group would gather round. After a time, he would lead the talk away from bargaining to the Bible.

"You haven't come for a watch," an older man would say, "you want to tell us about the saints."

As Richard spoke, one would put a warning hand on his knee.

"Talk watches. The company informer's coming."

The Red army was full of them. They spied on comrades and reported all they said. The young soldiers knew nothing about God. They had never seen a Bible, or been inside a church. Now I learnt why Richard said it was "heaven on earth" to bring the Gospel to Russians.

I found some educated men who knew German or French. I told them the Creed.

"It begins with the words ~I believe~. It isn't like a Party order that tells you what to think. It says that you must become an "I," a personality in your own right. You must think for yourselves.

"An army moves at the speed of the slowest truck. And if men advance in the mass, it will be at the rate of the slowest man. Christ calls you out of the mass. Man's greatest privilege is the right to say Yes or No, even to God."

It was beautiful to see men awakening to Truth.

The work involved a great part of our church. Using dodges to mislead the censor, we printed thousands of Gospels in Russian. Red soldiers went about in groups. They were hard to approach. We invented manoeuvres. Troops moved in goods boarded trains alongside them. When one train began to move wagons which sat for hours in sidings, waiting to move, we hastily handed out Gospels.

Red soldiers often slept in our spare room. Once six stayed, on the same evening, all boots and rifles. I had great trouble keeping the house free from lice. But it was the soldiers, rather than us, who were nervous. It was a long time since they"d lived in a house. How happy they were to be away from their noisy barracks for an hour. But that didn't stop their stealing. Two boys in uniform with country faces came to the door.

"D'you want to buy an umbrella?" they asked, offering three stolen samples.

"Ah, but we are Christians," Richard replied. We don't buy, we have something to sell." He invited them in. I brought them some milk to drink. Then the elder of them, who was fair-haired and hardly more than twenty, stared at me.

"Why, it was you who gave me the Bible!" he exclaimed. In the same moment I recognized him.

"You're the sergeant from the first tank into Bucharest!" I said.

He had the Bible still, in his locker. He had read in it, and settled a question that puzzled him.

Ivan told us over a meal how he had fought his way across Eastern Europe. In his Company was a Jew who, like the rest of them, had been brought up without religion.

"An older man in our unit used to rant at this Jew, 'You killed Christ.' The Jew thought he was crazy. He'd been killing people all the way from Stalingrad to Bucharest. How did he know who he had killed?"

The name of Christ was totally unknown to him.

Ivan brought the Jew to our home. Richard told them everything - from Adam to the Revelation. Stalin ceased to be their God.

They came often to see us. When his regiment moved out, Ivan left a farewell gift - a shining new electric stove.

I looked at Richard. We knew it had not been paid for.

"It's beautiful!" cried Anutza. "Just what the Liebmanns need!" This family had returned from Auschwitz, destitute. We sent them the stove. It had been stolen out of gratitude for being shown the way of Christ. A simple soul's love may show itself in strange ways. If God were really to judge man for all his deeds scarcely anyone would be saved. How good it was that the blood of Jesus Christ covered even such sins.

Richard and his colleague at the Lutheran Church, Pastor Magne Solheim, started a canteen to feed war victims. Our flat, which was rather a guest-house, was always overflowing with friends and strangers. Many were ex-convicts won for Christ by the zealous work in prison of another friend, Milly. We never sat down to luncheon on Sunday with less than a dozen people around the table.

Young girls worked with us. They asked advice sometimes about moral questions. One in particular I didn't know how to answer correctly, because it had been my problem too.

At the age of seventeen I lived in Paris. For the first time, I was free of parental control. I'd been brought up in a strictly Orthodox Jewish family in a small town, hedged about with prohibitions, inhibitions, rules. And now I was up at university, and the first boy in my life took me out. He wanted to kiss me, and I repelled him. I told him a little about how I'd been brought up.

The boy asked simply: "If you believe in God, wouldn't you say that the same God made the hands and the lips? And if I

can touch your hand to mine, why is it wrong to touch your lips or to embrace you?"

Teachers, parents, no one had warned me of this question. I had no answer to it. And the boy was very appealing. So I altered my convictions to suit the gay life of Paris. An atheist is free to kiss and to behave as she likes.

His eyes and his hands were the brokers of sin. And as for my eyes and my heart, they were his handmaiden.

But conscience won't be stifled for ever. The problem nagged. Why should a girl keep herself pure? It is at the heart of many moral codes. But what purpose does it serve?

I did not know. Only many years later I learnt the answer.

A pastor's wife doesn't usually discuss sexual questions. Still less is she expected to experience such temptations herself. But both pastors and their wives are human. And in the past Richard and I had led such thoughtless, self-indulgent lives. We were converts, insecure about some things which lifelong Christians took for granted. Sexuality is vital to human nature, and in our marriage the stresses it caused were sometimes great. Richard was so good, so handsome and so brilliant that I feared all the adulation he was given might turn his head. Many girls fell in love with him, and to one he was much attracted. I must say she was lovely: it was a joy to look at her. I saw that Richard was being torn in two. Quietly, I tried to help him. Sin is often the result of occasion. It is a wife's duty to stay close to her husband in crises like these.

He said nothing, but one day, as he played a Christian hymn on the piano, he came to the words, "I need you every hour"; and all the strings of the piano seemed to sing together, and he wept. I put my arms around him and said, "Richard, you're not an angel, don't take it so hard. You are only a man. These things will pass." They did pass. But when I was left alone for fourteen years after Richard's arrest, temptations came to me also. And to some I nearly yielded in my loneliness. Then I understood him better.

THE TERROR

My family grew overnight from one son to four - and three daughters. Thousands of orphaned Jewish children were returning from

the concentration camps, often wrapped in paper for warmth, with only rags to wear. I love children. So we were happy to take in six. It was a joy to have them about the house.

Mihai was delighted. He said, "But Mummy, you said I wouldn't be having any more brothers and sisters and look what I have now!"

They were lovely children, but so thin. And with such haunted eyes. What had they seen? All their relatives and friends ha been killed.

Soon their hollow cheeks filled out. They began to laugh and play. The Russian soldiers loved them. They had families of their own, unseen for years. Often Russians talked to Mihai and the children in the street.

"Have a sweet," they offered. And placed a hand on a small head. The children smiled and thanked them. And in turn they gave the soldiers Gospels.

It was dangerous for adults, but children were safe. Russians adore children, and many soldiers who would not otherwise have done so became aware of God. So Mihai began work as a missionary at the age of five.

Our church members went out almost nightly with posters to stick on walls, doors, sides of buses, in railway waiting rooms. Each carried Bible verses or a Christian message. Although friends were arrested for work among the Russians, none betrayed us. As fast as the Communists tore down the posters, we put them back. One of our workers Gabriella, was beautiful. She had no difficulties approaching Russian soldiers, and she gave Bibles to several high-ranking officers. But one day she was arrested and handed by the Soviets to the Rumanian militia. While she sat in prison awaiting trial a man came to her cell. He asked why she was there. As she explained a smile crossed his face. "I'll try to help you," he said. Soon a second stranger appeared and unlocked her cell. He led her out into the street by a side door.

"Now disappear-quickly!" She walked away, free, thanking God. The man was the recently-converted head of police.

We saw many miracles. A friend, Mrs. Georgescu, was ill, but wouldn't see a doctor. She belonged to a strict sect which disapproved of human medicine; it was for God to cure the sickness, they said. All her free time was spent in missionary work to the Russians. She was caught and taken before the Commandant, a petulant red-faced man.

Suddenly, as he shouted at her, she had a violent haemorrhage. The officer saw the blood and paled. "Throw her out!" he cried. Mrs. Georgescu was hustled out into the street. By God's will, she had escaped.

"My poor feet! I queued five hours in Victoria Street this morning and this is all I got." Anutza had a little coffee and some greyish sausage in her bag, the first we had seen in weeks.

It was the anniversary of the Russian "liberation." For two days there was food in the shops. Then shelves were bare again, and windows displayed dusty cardboard meat, empty wine bottles. Rumania was faced by famine.

On top of Soviet looting and extortions ("war damage" claims had come drought, shrivelling crops, leaving millions to exist on starvation level. People made soup from leaves and the roots of trees.

A section of the World Council of Churches sent food, clothes and money and we organized relief for the hungry. A canteen run by Pastor Solheim and Richard fed 200 each day in the church hall. Administrative work was heavy and the Communist government tried to sabotage the effort but we had many voluntary workers.

It was arranged that children in areas worst hit by famine should be brought to Bucharest to live in the houses of brethren. We took a small girl of six. She was thin as a lathe and came to us with only the clothes she wore. I gave her good food - to start with, cereal with sugar and milk. She wouldn't eat. She was a peasant girl and she wanted her own food: ~mamaliga~, a sort of maize cake that was about all she knew. We had to speak very severely to make her taste our food. Slowly she began to put on weight.

We grew very fond of her. Once she said, "You I will love until the autumn." Then the new crop would come and she would return to her parents.

When the Russians occupied Budapest we needed someone to take money for relief work to the mission there. Richard could not leave Bucharest and no one else could take the responsibility. I had to go.

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"You mustn't!" exclaimed Anutza. "These Russian soldiers are hungry for women. You walk in the streets and you find girls with their throats cut and no one does a thing!"

In normal times it wasn't a long journey. But the Red Army was seizing every train and car for their own use. At the stations there was unimaginable confusion and panic as swarms of hungry and displaced people tried to crowd into the few wagons available. After a long search I found a corner. For days we rumbled across the country to Budapest. I was the one woman in a train full of Russian soldiers.

When I arrived German troops were still engaged in house to house fighting. All was in ruins. There was no bus, no taxi, no transport of any kind. I walked everywhere past smoking ruins, unable to find any of the people I sought. The Germans had deported many who never returned. Others had been killed in the last days of street fighting. At last I found Pastor Johnson, leader of the Norwegian mission and Pastor Ungar, a Hebrew Christian who led the free church where Jews and other nationalities worshipped. They couldn't believe their eyes. I seemed like an angel sent by God, they said, coming from nowhere with help just as the famine was at its worst. As people emerged from the cellars food grew scarcer. There was nothing. A horse, killed in the fighting, was cut up for meat and eaten.

Many church buildings had been razed to the ground and hundreds of brethren were homeless. The help I brought was very welcome.

I met Prof. Langley, the Red Cross representative in Budapest, who never tired in his relief work. We ate a meal together before I departed. I said, "May Christ reward you for what you have done."

Langley replied: "When I boarded a tram once and found I had no money for the fare, someone paid for me. And when I tried to thank him, he said, "Don't thank me, I"m repaying what somebody did for me yesterday when I was in the same situation." So it isn't Christ who has to reward me - but I who pay a debt towards him."

From Budapest I went to Vienna. Normally, it's a four-hour journey. Now it took six days!

I found a train about to leave early one morning. People were clinging to the doors and sitting on the roof. It seemed impossible that anyone else could get aboard.

Then I heard my name called. Perched on top of a goods wagon were a group of girls, all Auschwitz refugees, who'd stayed with us in Bucharest. "There's no room, but well make room!" they laughed. So from Tuesday until Sunday we sat on that roof and

reached Vienna. This city too, was starving and badly damaged. I contacted friends and Christian leaders there after many adventures and returned only when the work was completed.

For weeks I was completely out of touch with home. Richard told me: "We feared terribly for you. I saw you in visions, in daydreams." When he opened a book, he saw before it my face. When a branch tapped the pane he awoke thinking I was back. "I walked in the mountains," he said, "and called your name aloud. It seemed to me that I heard you answer."

And I had heard, I had answered. I'd found myself searching those littered streets and calling, "Richard! Richard!" We were so close.

The country was now run from Moscow. But the local Communists still played at democracy. "We want friendship with everybody!" they said. "Freedom of worship? Certainly. An all-party Cabinet with King Michael as constitutional monarch? Why not?" It was done simply to dupe the Western powers.

The mask was dropped when the Soviet Minister Vishinsky marched into the palace one morning and gave orders. The army and police must be disbanded. The King must appoint trusted Communists to key posts, or else ... We knew how in Russia the Church had been made a tool of the state. How long would it be before they got to work in Rumania?

I was arranging the church for Sunday service when Solheim came in, looking disturbed.

He said, "Strange news. The Government is summoning what it calls a Congress of Cults. Every confession, ever religion in fact, is asked to send a big delegation. And the conference is to be held in the Parliament building! Who ever heard such a thing? What can they be planning now?"

Everyone had a guess or a rumour to tell. Many churchmen believed what the Government had said about "full religious freedom."

But Richard wondered, "Is it not happening here as it happened in Russia? Lenin strongly defended the persecuted sects, until he came to power. Then tens of thousands of them died in concentration camps. First the church is lulled into acceptance. Then the blow falls."

We conferred with Solheim. He was head of the Mission and he must decide.

"We'll go, and we'll speak out," he said.

On the chosen morning we climbed Parliament Hill. There they all sat, crowded into the galleries and on the floor of the

great hall, Moslem and Jew, Protestant and Orthodox, some 4,000 bishops, pastors and priests, rabbis and mullahs.

Red flags hung everywhere. Stalin was formally chosen as honorary president of the Congress. Up on the dais were all the top Communists: the puppet Premier, Petru Groza, the powerful Minister of the Interior, Theoharo Georgescu.

There was even a service in the Patriarchy beforehand. The Communist leaders crossed themselves. They kissed the ikons. They kissed the Patriarch's hand.

The speeches began. Groza, who was simply a quisling of Moscow, explained that the new Rumanian Government was in favour of Faith, any faith, and they would continue to pay the clergy. In fact, they planned to raise stipends. Warm applause greeted this news.

Priests and pastors replied. One after another, they said how happy they were about this appreciation of religion. The State could count on the Church if the Church could count on the State. A bishop remarked that streams of all political colours had joined the church in its history. Now Red would enter, and he was glad. Everyone was glad. All their gladness was broadcast to the world over the radio, direct from the hall.

It was absurd and horrible. Communism was dedicated to the destruction of religion. It had shown its true face in Russia. They spoke out of fear for their families, for their jobs, for their salaries. They could at least have kept silent, instead of filling the air with flattery and lies.

It was as if they spat in Christ's face. I could feel that Richard was boiling. So I told him what was already in his heart and said: "Will you not wash this shame from the face of Christ?"

Richard knew what would happen: "If I speak, you will lose a husband."

At once I replied – it was not my courage, but given to me for the moment: "I don't need a coward for a husband."

He sent up his card. The Communists were delighted. A representative of the World Council of Churches and of foreign missions was going to make propaganda for them. Richard went up to speak and at once a great silence fell on the hall. It was as if the Spirit of the Lord was drawing near.

Richard said that when the children of God meet, the angels also gather there to hear about the wisdom of God. So it was the duty of all present not to praise earthly powers that come and go, but to glorify God the Creator and Christ the Saviour, who died for us on the Cross.

As he spoke the whole atmosphere in the hall began to change.

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My heart filled with joy to think that this message was going out to the entire country.

Suddenly the Minister of Cults, Burducea, jumped to his feet.

"Your right to speak is withdrawn!" he shouted. He bawled orders from the dais to minions.

Richard ignored him and went on. The audience began to applaud. He was saying what they had all wanted to say.

Burducea bellowed, "Cut that microphone!"

The congress shouted him down.

"Pastorul! Pastorul!" they chanted rythmically. "The Pastor! The Pastor!" From 'a pastor," Richard had become 'The Pastor.'

The uproar lasted minutes. The shouting and clapping went on long after the microphone wires were severed and Richard had stepped down. That ended the Congress for the day. We made our way out through noise and confusion.

At home, Richard's mother had heard everything on the radio. When the broadcast was interrupted she imagined she would never see him again.

"I thought they'd arrested you both. What will happen now?" she asked, white-faced.

"Mother," he replied, "I have a powerful Saviour. He'll do what

is best for me."

No official move was made. But soon Communist hecklers were sent to break up our meetings. Recently we had opened a new and bigger church hall. Week after week rough-looking youths pushed their way in at the back to whistle, jeer and interrupt.

"We ought to be glad," said Solheim. "Better a rowdy audience that cares than a silent one that only pretends to listen!"

We worked out street-preaching tactics. Many souls were too shy to join us in church. This way we could reach them. We would meet in a group on a street corner to sing hymns. This was totally unknown in Rumania and a crowd always gathered. Then I'd deliver my message, which had to be short and sharp.

Outside the great Malaxa factory one afternoon there was a protest meeting against the Communist take-over. I spoke to workers gathered there about salvation. For some it was the last warning. Next day police opened fire on a crowd at the factory. Many workers were shot.

And once I spoke from the steps of the University. The crowd grew until it filled the square. I'd never had such an audience. People came running from side-streets. Traffic was jammed along one of Bucharest's biggest boulevards. There was no heckling. Just prolonged applause.

While I was telling Richard about my success, Anutza burst in.

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"It's all over town that Ana Pauker made a speech outside the University. They say she's been sent back from Moscow to run Rumania for Stalin!"

Mrs. Pauker was a Communist schoolteacher who had gone to Russia. She became an officer in the Red Army. She was dark and Jewish, and when I began to speak in such a public place, the rumour spread that the notorious Ana Pauker - who had shot her husband Marcel with her own hand for 'deviation' was back.

But no one could understand why Comrade Pauker was telling them to repent of their sins. We roared with laughter.

In 1947 the arrests began. Rigged elections, in which every

fraudulent and violent device was used, put the Communists in full control. Leaders of the opposition, honest and dishonest police chiefs, and civil servants were liquidated in a wave of terror. Then came the turn of all the Catholic bishops and innumerable clergy, monks and nuns. On the night they were arrested religious broadcasts were made as usual to the West. Tens of thousands of ordinary people disappeared into jails and labour camps. Others joined freedom fighters in the mountains.

The Jews, who had been able to leave Rumania in the early confusion under the Russians, were now trapped. The borders were closed. By then thousands had fled, leaving all they possessed, preferring life as destitute refugees to 'freedom' under the Soviets. Anutza had reason to believe she was on the list of Jews to be arrested - suspected of heaven knows what "crime against the state." Anyone who had had to do with foreigners was suspect - even the barbers who shaved them.

It was a sad farewell. We had become so close.

"Like David and Jonathan," cried Anutza. "Only I am Jonathan. Jonathan loved most!"

We embraced in tears. Anutza said, "I'll work to get you both out of the country. We'll meet again in freedom."

Richard was sick in bed that day. She knew that he was in great danger of arrest. She leant over the bed and kissed him, making some promise.

And she did work, we did meet. Only it took twenty years.

The terror spread. Secret police burst into homes and made long searches. Then you were taken off to "make a statement."

They said, "Bring nothing, it'll be only for a few hours."

Foreign newspapermen saw vans going through the streets labelled "Meat "Fish," "Bread," and so could report that the population

was being provided for; they did not know the vans carried not food but prisoners.

Then we had our first warning. Richard was working in the mission when a plain-clothes man walked in.

"Inspector Riosanu," he introduced himself. "You're Wurmbrand? Then you're the man I hate most in life."

Richard stared at him.

"We've never met before. What do you mean?"

"You remember about ten years ago you used to go out with a girl named Betty? A frizzy blonde who talked a lot?"

"Well, what about it?"

"Tell me why you didn't marry her?"

"I never thought of it."

"No, but I did! Wurmbrand, if you'd on]y married her. You'd have made me a happy man." And he meant it.

"But just to show there's no hard feelings," said the magnanimous Inspector, "I've come to give you a tip. There's a big fat file on you at secret police HQ. I've seen it. Someone's informed against you lately. Been talking to a lot of Russian friends, haven't you?"

Riosanu rasped his sandpapery hands together.

"But I thought we might come to an agreement."

For a bribe, he would destroy the report.

I joined the discussion, and we agreed on a sum. Stuffing the money into his pocket, Riosanu said, "You've got a bargain. The informer's name is ..."

"No!" I broke in, quickly. "We don't want to know."

I wished to feel no resentment against the man. Silly, perhaps. But in those days we couldn't know how many lives informers would destroy.

Riosanu shrugged. "As you please," he said. And he was gone.

Shortly after this, Richard was taken in for questioning. Nothing was said about 'subverting' the Red Army. We still had some influential friends, and through them we obtained Richard's release after three weeks. But we knew it was no more than a respite.

More and more of our friends and helpers were arrested.

I remember the day I first saw a man who'd been tortured by the Secret Police. He could hardly speak through purple and swollen lips. He'd been a kind, friendly man, with a word for everyone. Now in his eyes you saw only hatred and despair.

With bribes and threats, the Communists put certain church leaders to work for them. They threw suspicion of treachery on those who refused to become traitors. The most obstinate went earliest to prison.

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One political obstacle remained. Our beloved young King Michael would not give in without a fight. Only in December 1947, after the United States and Britain recognized the Kremlin's puppet, Groza, was he forced to leave. Groza and Gheorghiu-Dej, a fraudulent lawyer and an ex-railwayman, were the rulers of the country. They ordered the king to abdicate. The palace was surrounded by troops. He had no choice. On that day, the "Rumanian Popular Republic" was born.

I remembered a proverb: ~The earth trembles when a servant becomes a king.~

It seemed a very small cough, and so much was waiting to be done. But in a week I was in bed with bronchitis. Hunger, shortages and the Budapest adventure brought me down with a thump. So I was on my back, feeling exhausted and ethereal, when an uninvited visitor called. A Russian woman doctor. Her face was a mask of tragedy.

Mrs. Vera Yakovlena knew us only slightly. She'd come from a town in the Ukraine where countless priests and churchpeople, including herself, had been deported to Siberian labor camps. From which few returned.

She wasn't interested in my illness. She had a message to impart.

"We worked to clear the woods, men and women together. We had equal rights: we could die of starvation or freeze to death."

Mrs. Yakovlena touched my arm with a hand that bore thick white scars. And trembled with memory. "Every day people died, collapsing from overwork in the snow."

Her punishment when she was found witnessing for Christ was to stand for hours barefoot on ice. When she failed to fulfill her work

quota, the guards struck her with their fists. She fell in the snow. And went without the watery broth which was allowed them when they returned to camp.

Weeping, she wandered out into the yard to be alone. And in her misery crossed into the forbidden area near the wire, where prisoners were shot at sight.

A harsh voice yelled, "Hey! is your mother a believer?"

Frightened, Mrs. Yakovlena gasped, "Why do you ask?" For in that moment she had been thinking of her mother.

The guard said, "Because I've been watching you for ten minutes, but I haven't been able to shoot you. I can't move my arm. It's a healthy arm. I've moved it all day. So your mother must be praying for you." His voice warmed. "Run back. I'll look the other way."

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Mrs. Yakovlena saw the soldier later that day. He laughed and raised his arm. "Now I can move it again."

She survived ten years in this camp. Most of the others died. But she came back to tell how, in sorrow and need, God had shown his might. Now she was a doctor in the Soviet Army.

My head ached. Instead of pondering on the miracle, I could think of nothing but her sufferings. What did it mean? Why had she come to tell me such things?

As she stood up to leave, I struggled dimly with my weakness and asked her to stay the night. To wait at least until Richard returned. But already she was at the door. Briefly she paused to say: "My husband was also taken by the GPH. He's been in prison twelve years now. I wonder if we'll ever meet again on this earth." Then she was gone.

Twelve years? I couldn't understand. Much later I learned that this messenger from God meant to tell about the sufferings which I and my husband could expect. Ananias, the head of the Christian Church in Damascus, was also told two thousand years ago, "Show to the new convert, Paul, the future Apostle, all the things which he will have to suffer for my sake."

It wasn't too late to leave the country. Although it grew more

difficult every day, thousands were still buying their way out. I knew that Richard didn't really want to go. But he said:

"Under Antonescu's rule we were never imprisoned or more than two or three weeks at a time. With the Communists, it can last for years. And they may take you, too. And Mihai who will look after him, and the other children?"

Then another odd thing happened. A pastor we hadn't seen for a year came to the house. God had used Richard to convert him. He'd been an alcoholic, going from bar to bar, and Richard, meeting him one night, had gone with him, talking, arguing, persuading. When he awoke the next day from his drunkenness, he was a changed man.

Now he reminded us of this. And several times as we talked, he repeated: "What struck me most in what you said then was a verse: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee." The angel's words to Lot."

When he left, Richard asked me: "Don't you think that may have been a message from God? Why should he come to see us after so long, and repeat over and over, "Escape for thy life"? Wasn't it a warning that I must save my life by fleeing?"

I said, "Escape for what life?" Then I went into the bedroom and opened the scripture where Jesus says: "Whosoever will

save his life shall lose it and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (MTT 16:25)

I asked Richard, "If you leave now, will you ever be able again to preach about this text?"

We didn't speak again that night about leaving.

But a few days later, Richard said, "If we go to the West, won't we be able to do more for the church in Rumania? If we stay I'll follow the others into prison. It'll be the end of our life together. I'll be tortured, perhaps killed. And if you're imprisoned too, it's the end of the mission. The Solheims are foreigners. They won't be allowed to stay. Mihai will be brought up on the streets - a Communist. What good will it do to anyone?"

I said, "I think we'll have to stay."

Then came a last sign. We'd begun to hold meetings in private

houses around Bucharest. They were safer than churches. And never had we had such blessed services, so many conversions. As if God, knowing what lay before us, gave greatest comfort before gravest trouble.

One night we met at the home of a rich man who had lost everything except his great house - soon that would go, too. We took it in turn to keep guard. A secret prayer meeting like this could have landed us all in jail.

Some fifty of us were gathered for an all-night vigil. Towards midnight, a woman kneeling with the rest cried aloud, "And you, the one who thinks of leaving! Remember that the good shepherd did not desert his flock. He stayed to the last."

She had no knowledge of Richard's problem. We all looked at her, puzzled, but she didn't speak again.

When dawn came we walked home through cold streets. It was January and fine grains of snow were falling. I said: "We can't leave now."

Richard agreed. We told everyone, "We're here to stay." They were very happy.

The woman who had this warning presage about Richard was at the station when he came back fourteen years later. She came to meet him with flowers. He remembered her, and said:

"I don't regret taking your advice. I'm thankful for it."

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RICHARD VANISHES

"Richard, what do you think hell is?"

We had spent an evening with friends, and inevitably talk had turned to the Communists. A politician we all knew, a good, upright man, had been arrested, and after a few weeks had hanged himself in his cell. What had he suffered to drive him to suicide? Someone had said: "He must have gone through hell."

"Hell is to sit alone in darkness remembering evil you have done," Richard replied.

Within a few days he was in that hell himself.

On Sunday morning – February 29th, 1948 – Richard walked alone to church. I followed and found Pastor Solheim in the small office, looking upset.

"Richard hasn't turned up," he said. "But he has so much on his mind. He must have remembered some urgent appointment and forgotten he has to come here."

"But he promised he'd see me here in half an hour."

"Perhaps he met a friend who wanted help," said Solheim. "He'll come."

Pastor Solheim took the service. I telephoned friends, but he wasn't with any of them. Fear grew in my heart.

In the afternoon Richard was due to marry a young couple we knew.

"Now don't worry," said Solheim. "You never know with Richard. Remember the time we had that summer camp, and he went off to buy a newspaper in the morning and then telephoned at lunch-time to say he wouldn't be back for breakfast?"

I smiled at the thought. Richard had remembered some urgent business and got a lift into Bucharest. He must have done something like that again. Sunday lunch at our flat was usually a happy crowded occasion. It was not much of a meal. But we talked and sang, and for many who came it was the great event of the week.

Now we sat silently, waiting for Richard. But he didn't come. The night before we'd also had many guests. Richard was talking away happily. Suddenly he stopped. Someone said, "Richard,

you look sad – why?" He answered strangely, with a quotation from Ecclesiastes: "I said of laughter, it is mad." (ECC 2:2) It was quite outside our discussion. It came from the depths of his heart. And now we did understand what madness it is to laugh. No one spoke.

Pastor Solheim had to perform the afternoon's wedding. We telephoned all the hospitals. I went around casualty wards thinking he might have been in a street accident. No sign.

I admitted to myself at last what I must do. I must go to the Ministry of the Interior. He had been arrested.

And then began the hours and weeks and years of searching. Of

trailing from office to office. Of pushing at any door that might open.

I learnt that important prisoners were kept in cells in the Interior Ministry's basements. So many women were seeking arrested husbands, sons and fathers that an "information office" was opened to handle inquiries. The stairs were crowded with mothers and children. They stood hopelessly waiting to ask for news. A slogan decorated the otherwise bare wall:

WE WILL BE RUTHLESS TO THE CLASS ENEMY

Each in turn put her question. The officials pretended to examine lists of typed names. They peered into filing cabinets. But of all those missing men, no trace could they find.

A rumour spread that Richard had been taken to Moscow. (It had happened to Antonescu and others.) But I couldn't believe he'd gone from my life. Evening after evening, I made a meal and sat by the window. I thought, he'll come tonight. He's done nothing. He'll soon be free. The Communists cannot be worse than the fascists, who always let him go after a week or two.

He didn't come. I put my forehead against the pane and wept. I went to bed late, but couldn't sleep. In the morning, Pastor Solheim went with me to ask the help of the Swedish Ambassador, our ally in the past. Mr. Reutersw„rd said he would speak at once to the Foreign Minister, Ana Pauker.

Mrs. Pauker's answer was ready: "Our information is that Pastor Wurmbrand has absconded from the country with a suitcase full of dollars entrusted to him for famine relief work. They say he is in Denmark."

The Ambassador brought the case up with the Prime Minister. Groza repeated Pauker's version, with a jovial promise: "So Wurmbrand's supposed to be in our jails? If you can prove that, I'll release him!"

The Communists were so sure of themselves. Once in the Secret Police cells, a man ceased to exist.

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No one else could intervene now. The only hope left - which thousands were trying - was bribery.

"You know Theoharo Georgescu, the Cabinet Minister?" asked Klari Meir, a friend of my schooldays. "His brother lives near us, and I've heard that he can open prison doors for the right sum. I'll talk to his wife for you."

Mr. Georgescu was willing. So long as everything was kept absolutely secret. But the price of his favours was high.

I met him, as he wished, in a squalid hovel on the outskirts of town. He was a squat little man in a smart new suit.

"I'm Georgescu," he said "I arrange things. A word to my brother and it's as good as done. Guarantee? You have my word."

We could find the sum he asked, though with great difficulty. It was handed over.

Nothing happened.

It was not the first nor the last time we were swindled in this way. There was nothing we could do. I'd met thieves and criminals in plenty, but these professional tricksters were in a class of their own. Some were high-ranking officials. Few were Communist in anything but name.

"Who knows what's coming?" said a high Party man who'd come to our flat by night. "Perhaps the British and the Americans."

With this in mind for the future (and a cash reward for the present) he tried to help. He would do what he could so long as it did not endanger his job.

A third Communist official was reached through a woman friend who'd known him as a student. They had secret meetings, as if they were lovers, to disguise negotiations.

Nothing came of it all.

After some months of wasted effort a stranger came one evening to the door. The man was unshaven and reeked of plum brandy. He insisted that we talk alone.

"I've met your husband," he said. And my heart turned over. "I'm a warder - don't ask what prison. But I take him his food, and he said you'd pay me well for a bit of news."

"It depends...how much?" I said. We'd had so many failures.

"I'm risking my neck, you know."

The sum he named was huge. He would not bargain.

Pastor Solheim was as doubtful as me. He told the warder: "Bring me a few words in Wurmbrand's writing."

He gave him a bar of chocolate from the famine relief stores.

"Take this to Wurmbrand and bring back a message with his signature."

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Two days later the man returned. He removed his cap. He felt in the lining. And handed me the wrapper from the chocolate bar. I read:

"My dearest wife - I thank you for your sweetness. I'm well Richard."

It was his handwriting. Bold and clear, determined and yet troubled. No possibility of mistaking the tempestuous serenity of those lines.

"He's all right," said the warder. "Some can't take it, in solitary. Don't like their own company." He breathed brandy. "He sends you his love."

We agreed to pay the money if he would continue to carry messages. Finally he said: "All right. But people have got twelve years for this. You know, it's not just the cash."

He risked his freedom out of a divided love: he loved the money, loved the drink it bought. And he also loved Richard. Sometimes he slipped him extra bread. He continued to bring us verbal messages.

"What do you do with this money we pay you?" I asked.

"Get drunk!" he laughed. But the Lord had touched his heart, if not yet about drinking.

Solheim and his dear wife Cilgia, friends in time of trouble, dropped everything and worked only to keep my courage up and rescue Richard. Pastor Solheim came with me to the Swedish Embassy where we were at once received by the Ambassador. When he saw the scrap of paper with Richard's writing he quickly drafted a note to the Premier: "You promised to release Pastor Wurmbrand if we could prove that he is

in a Rumanian prison. I now have that proof in my hands."

Groza passed the note on to Ana Pauker at the Foreign Ministry. His joke had misfired. She sent for Mr. von Reutersw„rd and stormed at him. If she said that Wurmbrand had fled to Denmark, then so he had. She would not be insulted by the envoy of a minor power who was poking his nose into a purely domestic matter. She was not a liar!

The Ambassador was declared persona non grata. His superiors questioned the wisdom of his intervention. Richard was a Rumanian national, even if he did work for a foreign mission. Von Reutersw„rd replied that his conscience obliged him to help a man whom he knew to be innocent. He'd been lied to by a Minister of State, and it was his duty to protest. The Ambassador was a man of God and Governments do not always take kindly to such men. He was recalled to Stockholm and retired from the diplomatic service.

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Soon after this, Groza was hoisted to the even emptier position of President of the Grand National Assembly. Once he met Pastorel, the famous Rumanian satirist, and taxed him with putting out malicious jokes about him.

"I'm entitled to respect - I'm the President."

Pastorel: "That's a joke I've never made."

In bitter jokes, the heart finds its revenge. This is what inspires the tragic jokes for which the Jews are known. Now you could be jailed for telling one: Pastorel was sent to prison for six years.

Next, Solheim - who thought of Richard as his other self and of Rumania as his second homeland - was obliged to leave the country. He had identified himself with us and his mission-station, as all good missionaries do. He could help no more. But we still had loyal friends, although to be friendly with us was to put oneself in danger.

The wife of a political prisoner could get no ration card. They were only for "workers." The wife of a political prisoner could not work. Why? Because she had no ration card, and therefore did not exist.

I didn't argue that the highest authorities in the land denied that Richard was in prison.

"How am I to live? And my son?"

"That's your business."

Mihai had become again my only child. Before Richard's arrest we had lost the orphaned children who had come to us from the Nazi massacres in Eastern Rumania. Hearing that the Russians had decided to repopulate, with refugees, the two Eastern provinces (Bessarabia and Bucovina) which they had annexed, we realized that sooner or later the children would be taken from us. Hundreds of Jewish orphans faced this plight. How much better if we could get them to Palestine, where the new State of Israel was about to be born! In agony of mind, we decided to let our boys and girls go. It seemed so much better than waiting for an unknown fate to catch them under the Soviets.

They joined a little army of refugees aboard the Turkish steamer ~Bulbul~. Weeks passed. No news came of their arrival. Each day Richard looked more haggard. An international search began, spreading from the Black Sea to the Eastern Mediterranean. Gradually, hope faded. It was thought that the ~Bulbul~ had hit a wartime mine and gone down with all aboard. But to this day, no one knows. The ship set out. It did not arrive. There were no survivors.

The pain was terrible. We had loved them as our own. When

we finally accepted the truth that they were lost, I didn't want to see or speak to anyone. Rare are the men who can comfort men. All my beliefs, in the Resurrection, in everlasting life, were put to a hard test. I had to understand that it is not among the dead that you must seek your lost children, but among the living. Many times I thought I could never overcome this pain; but the Lord gave me strength to go on. Then one day, the word of God slipped quietly into my heart, saying, "My peace I give unto you." I understood anew the word Patience which is repeated so often in the New Testament. In the Greek this word - ~hypomone~ - means "To remain under": to accept, to bear the pain as given from God. It will bear much fruit. God gives as well as takes away, and he put around me many new young people. It remained only not to forget: to have a pitiful heart after all that I had learned.

In my grief I had to comfort Mihai. How bitterly he wept. I held him in my arms and told him a story which I'd often heard on Richard's lips. It comes from the Talmud, a book of great human wisdom.

It is said that during the absence of a famous rabbi from his

house his two sons died, both of them of uncommon beauty and enlightened in the Law. His wife bore them to her bedchamber and spread a white covering over their bodies. In the evening the rabbi came home.

"Where are my sons?" he asked. "I repeatedly looked round the School, and I did not see them there." She brought him a cup. He praised the Lord at the going out of the Sabbath, drank, and asked again: "Where are my sons?"

"They will not be afar off," she said, and placed food before him that he might eat.

When he had said grace after the meal she addressed him: "With your permission, I wish to ask you a question."

"Ask it then," he replied.

"A few days ago a person entrusted to me some jewels, and now he demands them back; should I return them?"

"What?" said the rabbi. "Would you hesitate to return to everyone his own?"

"No," she replied. "Yet I thought it best not restore them without first acquainting you."

She then led him to the room, and took the white covering from the dead bodies. "My sons! my sons!" loudly lamented the father. "My sons, the light of my eyes!" The mother turned away and wept bitterly.

At length she took her husband by the hand and said, "Did

you not teach me that we must not be reluctant to restore that which was entrusted to our keeping? The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

At this time, when so many tragedies were pressing down on us, I found great joy in one of the greatest events in history. The State of Israel came into being in 1948, fulfilling the Bible's prophecies about the return of the Jewish people to their homeland.

"I will gather them from all the countries whither I scattered them in my wrath," says God to the prophet Jeremiah. The return was part of a plan which God laid down, when he blessed the father of

Jews, Abraham, and all the world partook of that blessing. Now I saw God's plan coming true, to remain so for ever. When the prophets pledged that God would gather his people from the corners of the earth, they did not know how many nations and continents the Jews would be scattered among. People were eager now to interpret the great events they were witnessing. Men who had not looked at a Bible for years began to search the Scriptures as if they had just been published. Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Amos were pored over, in the hunt for clues as to the next step.

A great new exodus began from Rumania. The Nazis had massacred half a million Rumanian Jews. Those who were left had had more than enough of the Communists, who had once seemed liberators. Jews in the Eastern provinces seized by Russia were being gathered from the street for labour in Soviet mines. The one difference this time was that the Soviets took Rumanians as well as Jews. They were driven off in trucks without a word to their families. Few ever returned.

A young man from my home in Bucovina told me, "My brother spent four months hidden in a hole behind a cupboard to avoid deportation. I got out with only the clothes on my back. I told a Soviet bureaucrat that he could have my flat with all its contents and every penny I had in return for a passport. I got it and left. So much for Communism - it's simply thieving of everything by everyone from everyone."

That was how it was: people gave all they had to get out.

Not long after the birth of the State of Israel, Ana Pauker signed a pact with the new state. It allowed Jews to leave the Communist paradise, for hard cash. The Rumanian People's Republic was in need of foreign currency. It sold Jews for so much per head, depending upon how much brain was in the head. Scientists, doctors and professors cost most.

Every night crowds waited outside the visa office. Old people and young, grandparents with babies wrapped in blankets slept

on the pavement. The story was told of the stranger who saw line of Jews that stretched from the police station to Parliament Square. "What is this queue for?" he asked. "Oranges." "But in that shop across the street they're selling oranges with no queue." "Ah, but we wish to eat them from the tree."

The Government wanted to keep "Operation Israel" secret. Special trains left from out-of-the-way stations and obscure sidings. None went from Bucharest Central. Only after dark, from remote suburbs. But

each one was packed.

Night after night, we went to see off friends with tears in our eyes.

"Next year in Jerusalem!" The cry has echoed from ghettos and synagogues for centuries. To know that this time it was true brought such joy to my heart.

In the Book of Exodus it says that "a mixed multitude" left Egypt with the Jews. And this proved again true. Many fled from Communism with forged exit visas, pretending to be Jews. A multitude of strangers found a refuge with the departing crowds.

A high-ranking police officer told me, "If you give me money and help in getting a visa, as a Jew, to leave the country, I can get your husband out of jail." A friend I trusted said that this policeman could do what he promised. The offer gave me new hope. I told Mihai.

He was by that time ten years old. Tall for his age, and with sharp cheekbones and questioning eyes. At school he was learning to be the son of a "social outcast." It was a hard lesson. Mihai adored his father. It was not easy to explain why he should be taken from us and locked in prison. Sometimes I trembled for Mihai's faith. When I told him about the new hope, he was excited. Next morning, his elation had gone. He said:

"Mummy, I had a dream. I saw our neighbour holding out his hat and begging two birds to come into it. They fluttered around - and then they flew away."

He said it meant that nothing would come of our scheme. A few days later we heard that the policeman who had offered to help us was himself under arrest. Mihai has had many premonitions in dreams.

Every day more people vanished. Once a number of well-known prisoners were released. They came home in ambulances and showed their bruises and scars and told of the tortures they had suffered. When the required impression had been made, all were re-arrested.

I wept to think that Richard might be at that moment bearing torture. I feared that he might break, and betray his friends.

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He had promised that he would die rather than do so, but who can say how much a man can bear? St. Peter promised that he would not deny Christ.

If Richard died I knew we would meet in the next life. We had agreed to wait for each other at one of the twelve gates of Heaven. We had decided that our rendezvous would be at the Benjamin Gate. Jesus made an appointment like this with his disciples, to meet them after his death, in Galilee. And He kept it.

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MY ARREST

One evening in August I came home late. Mihai was staying with friends in the country so I was free to go my rounds. We women did pastoral work for the church in secret, under the guise of nurses or charwomen. And the hours were long. It was almost 11 p.m. when I finished cleaning the house and caring for the six children of a man whose wife was in hospital. He'd had land and money, but both had been confiscated by the Communists.

I came home through streets that were being decorated with Red flags for the annual celebration of the Red Army's arrival. I was too tired to eat and planned to go straight to bed.

But I found my cousin, who was staying with us while waiting to leave for Israel, very alarmed. A suspicious visitor had called.

"He said he came from the Living Space Office," my relative told me. "Talked about putting more people in the flat. But I'm sure what he really wanted to know was how many exits you have apart from the front door."

I knew then what to expect. A police raid. I wasn't surprised. Just too exhausted, almost, to care. Mihai was in God's good hands. That was what mattered. I went to sleep, commending my husband, my son and all my loved ones to God's care.

At 5 a.m. they hammered on the door. My cousin opened. I heard shouting. Boots clattering on the stairs.

"What's your name?"

"Hitler," stuttered my cousin, who did indeed have that distressing name.

"What! Arrest him!"

My poor cousin tried to explain. His mother had married an

Orthodox Jew with beard and curls called Haskel Hitler, who refused to change his name, despite the terrible complications it produced. But the farce ended. They realized he had no connection with his namesake. They pushed him aside and shoved their way into the bedroom.

I was sharing it with a woman guest, a dear sister in the faith. We sat up in bed, clutching the clothes round us.

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"Sabina Wurmbrand?" shouted a bull-necked man in charge, who never stopped shouting as long as he was in the flat. "We know you're hiding arms here. Show us where they are - now!"

Before I could argue they were pulling out trunks, opening cupboards, emptying drawers on the floor. A shelf of books crashed down. My friend sprang from the bed to retrieve them.

"Never mind that! Get your clothes on."

We had to dress in front of six men. They trampled over our things. From time to time they shouted out, as if to encourage each other to keep up the meaningless search.

"So you won't tell us where the arms are hidden!"

"We'll tear this place apart?"

I said, "The only weapon we have in this house is here." And picked up the Bible from under their feet.

Bull-neck roared, "You're coming with us to make a full statement about those arms!"

I laid the Bible on the table and said, "Please allow us a few moments to pray. Then I'll go with you."

They stood gaping while my friend and I prayed together. I embraced my cousin and his mother.

"Next year in Jerusalem!"

Their eyes were full of tears.

"~Leshana haba be-Jerushalaim!~" they answered.

As they led me out, the last thing I did was to snatch up a

little parcel from the sideboard. It contained a pair of stockings and underwear. A day or two before a girl from our church had made me the gift. I'd put it aside, unopened, never guessing that it would be the most important thing I took with me to prison.

I was pushed into the back of an Oldsmobile. Blacked-out motor-cycle goggles went over my eyes so that I wouldn't know where we were going. The drive was brief. Minutes later I was lifted out and swept across the pavement. My feet hardly touched the stairs as I was dragged upwards like a bound sheep. I bruised my shins as they hustled me round a corner. The goggles came off. There was a push in the small of the back. A door slammed behind me.

I was in a long bare room crowded with women. They sat on benches, on the floor. The door kept opening to admit more. I saw the wife of a liberal politician. A society woman whose features I'd seen in the newspapers. An actress in a thin low-cut dress. A lady-in-waiting from the Palace.

We were the dangerous, the "socially rotten" elements of Rumania.

By evening several hundred women were crammed into the

room. The round-up was on national scale for the anniversary of August 23rd Freedom Day, the Communists called it. The day of the capitulation before Russia.

We huddled together under a single ceiling bulb. No food or drink came.

Each woman was cocooned in her own fears.

How long would it last? What would happen to our children? Mihai had lost his dear father. Now his mother was taken from him. Our home and everything it held would be confiscated. He'd be thrown on the kindness of friends, who were themselves in danger. As I prayed for him, a woman leapt up and beat on the door with her fists. She screamed:

"My children! My children!"

Others cried out for husbands, lovers, sons. A woman beside me collapsed in hysterics. Another was sick. The single toilet overflowed. The door opened only to admit more women, who shouted indignantly at the guards: "But I've done nothing?"

The actress confided, "I'll be released. You'll see!" They thought their innocence would save them! As if this were not 1950, and a Communist State.

All of them had been told, "You're wanted by the police to make a statement." Some passed ten years making the statements.

Next morning we heard brass bands. The Freedom Day parade (attendance compulsory) was on. The windows were painted over. But if the parade was passing below we must be in the police lock-up in Bucharest's main street, which was called Victory Street.

Thousands of boots tramped by. Slogans were rythmically chanted:

"AUGUST 23rd HAS BROUGHT US FREEDOM."

One was a rhyming jingle:

"DEATH TO THE THIEVES AND TRAITORS IN PRISON!"

"Shame!" murmured the socially-rotten elements.

The new national anthem was roared out in march time:

"BROKEN CHAINS REMAIN BEHIND US ..."

Never in the history of Rumania had so many people been in chains.

How the hours dragged, with nothing to do but wait. The day and the night I passed in that room were timeless, a taste of hell which never ends.

At last guards brought black bread and watery soup in heavy metal cans.

Next day a sergeant began calling out names. Were they letting us out?

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My name was on the first list. Again the blacked-out goggles. I was put in a van and taken to what I learnt later was Secret Police headquarters, on Rahova Street.

Before pushing me into a small cell, a woman guard asked those already inside: "Any of you know this woman?"

Nobody did. I was allowed to join them. The policy was never to put friends together. You were permitted no comfort. You were to be alone. During the interrogation stage you never stayed long enough in one cell to make a friend you could trust. Each new arrival could be an informer, planted to spy on prisoners.

Apart from a young medical student, my companions were peasant women, arrested at random. Terror was being used to enforce collectivization on the land. Fierce battles had been fought with officials sent to seize farm property. An unknown number of peasants were executed at drumhead trials, and nearly 100,000 had been given jail sentences.

Days later I was moved into solitary confinement. My cell contained only an iron cot. No bucket - the first thing a prisoner looks for. How I mourned the missing bucket. It meant more than food or warmth or light. Stomach upsets caused by the food, "interrogation fright" on hearing your name called meant nothing to the guards. You were let out at 5 a.m., 3 p.m. and at 10 p.m.

High in the wall was a small window, secured from outside with an iron grill. The cell was damp and chill, even in August. How glad I was of my light summer coat and those woollen stockings.

How long before they called me? What would they ask? I remembered past troubles with the police: waiting for Richard in the cafe across the road from the station; the fear that he'd never leave. He'd said, "Hell is to sit in darkness remembering past sins." I had so many, and now they were vivid before my eyes.

The warder who brought food - boiled oats - was an older man. They were better than the young ones. Often he said a sympathetic word.

"Thicker today!" he murmured, winking at the gruel. Plainly he was one of those who still thought the Americans might come and turn the situation on its head.

Once he offered to smuggle out a letter. But I suspected it might be used to trap friends who received it.

He whispered a hoarse story of how he had asked an officer: "Why are there so many people in jail?" "Mind your business, or there'll be one more," said the officer.

The warder grinned delightedly. "And what happened? Next day they arrested him! Nobody knows why. Never saw him

again! Ah, them that judge today, tomorrow will be judged!"

At night I lay trying to block my ears against the crash of steel doors, the scrape of studded boots, the guards' obscenities.

Doors were unlocked near me. Each time I thought: mine next. But it was several claustrophobic days before they came.

The cell door opened.

"Turn your back!"

Goggles snapped over my eyes. I felt black panic as they pulled me by the arms along passages. Left, right, left right. Round corners. Were they going to shoot me? To die without warning in the darkness!

We stopped. The goggles came off. I stood blinded by sunshine in a big room. Guided by the warder, I sat in a real chair and steadied myself with a hand on a real desk. A big oak desk stained with ink. Behind it sat two men wearing the blue-tabbed uniforms of the Secret Police. A heavy middle-aged major cultivating a moustache. A young fair-haired lieutenant who had been present at the raid on my flat. The lieutenant stared at me with a curious knowingness. He had clear blue eyes. His blond good looks reminded me of someone. Unaccountably, he smiled

I shivered. Then I realized: he looked like the boy I'd loved so many years before in Paris. The resemblance was extraordinary.

I expected to hear that some charge had been made against me. But the major said, with weary patience: "You know, Mrs. Wurmbrand what your offence against the state has been. Now you will write for us a detailed statement about it."

"But what should I write? I don't know why you've brought me here."

"You know very well," he said. On a side table were pen and paper. I wrote a few lines saying that I had no idea I why I'd been arrested. He glanced at them, nodded, and asked for the next prisoner.

All the way back to the cell the guard shouted and pushed me blindfolded, into walls. When the door shut behind me I saw his eye through the small spyhole.

"Now you'll sit and think until you write what the officer told you! Or you'll get the treatment!"

Torture. Bullying, mockery, humiliation. Mental torture to soften you up for interrogation. Tape-recorded voices screaming. A firing-squad volley on loudspeakers in the corridors. The torture of being a mother parted from her child.

Physical torture. I'd seen the results of what they did in these cells.

The problem of what to tell interrogators was not new. We'd

faced it in Nazi times. Some believed that you must not lie even to save others. They acted on the belief. But love is higher than truth. I don't tell a thief where money is kept in the house. A doctor is right to deceive a madman who has a gun, so that he may be disarmed. Communist hatred is unreasoning madness. We have a duty to mislead those whose sole aim is to destroy.

The major and his assistant were waiting for me next day. He had a string of questions on a pad which he ticked off in turn. Their aim was to extract information that could be used against Richard.

I remember one thing the major said: "Every man has his weak point." And the lieutenant turned his sculptured blonde head and gave his knowing smile.

They would be trying to find Richard's weaknesses. His interrogation would be ruthless. The major was a long time coming to the point. He made a little speech about the blessings of Communism. He assured me that they were my friends. Pastor Wurmbrand's friends, too. They wished to release him, but needed some information first. He asked what Richard had said on this or that occasion to colleagues.

I replied that we discussed religion, never politics.

The major smiled, very sincerely, and said, "Mrs. Wurmbrand, the Bible is full of politics. Prophets who rebelled and complained against Egyptian rule. Jesus spoke out against the ruling class of his day. If your husband is a Christian he must have clear views about the Government."

"My husband doesn't interest himself in politics."

"Yet he had an audience with King Michael before the king left the country. Why?"

"It was not secret. The king gave audiences to many people."

"How long did this audience last?"

"About two hours."

"And in all that time there was no reference to politics?"

"As I say, my husband isn't interested in politics."

"Well, what did he talk about?"

"About the Gospel."

"And what did the king say?"

"He was in favour of it."

The lieutenant gave a little snort of laughter and quickly put his hand to his mouth. From the look in the major's eye, I thought he was due for a resounding reprimand later.

The major's smile became more sincere than ever.

"Now, Mrs. Wurmbrand. You're a very intelligent woman. I

can't understand your attitude. You and your husband are Jews. We Communists saved you from the Nazis. You should be grateful. You should be on our side!"

His eyes narrowed. He spoke more slowly.

"Your husband is accused of counter-revolutionary activities. He could be shot. His colleagues have spoken. They support the charge against him."

My heart turned over. He was lying, of course. And watching for my reaction. I tried to look blank. He continued:

"They may just be trying to save themselves. Perhaps ~they~ are the real counter-revolutionaries. We can't judge, unless you tell us everything that people working with the mission used to say.

Everything. Speak out, denounce the real counter-revolutionaries and your husband will be free tomorrow."

The major turned and smiled at his aide, inviting him to share in the happy vision. His pupil said encouragingly: "You could go home to your family."

How sweet that thought was. I put it away, and said: "I know nothing."

Back in the cell at night, nursing bruises won from the guard, I felt my feet against the end of the cot and thought: "Poor Richard, his feet will be hanging over the end." He was so tall.

What were they doing to him now? At one moment I was ready to say anything to be safe with him again; the next, I trembled. I wanted him to live and I wanted him to resist, and the two wishes struggled within me.

The major looked tired, his eyes were slightly bleary but in them there was also a glint of triumph. He drummed his fingers impatiently on the desk-top. The questioning this time centred on the Nazis. What Germans did I know? What were our connections with them? Was I aware that people were being shot for harbouring Nazis? Why had I hidden officers in my home?

I could truthfully say that I had not hidden Nazis. To me they had been simply men. They were in need, and we tried to help them whatever their beliefs, as we'd helped persecuted Jews and gypsies earlier.

"You deny the charge then. Well, we have a surprise for you.

He pressed a buzzer under his desk. Guards brought in a man who I recognized at once: Stefanescu had been with us in 1945. He knew everything that we had done for the Germans.

He shuffled forward. Nervous eyes flickered from the major to his aide, to me. He swallowed, and his eyes closed, shutting out the world.

"Now, Stefanescu," said the major, lighting a cheroot. "Tell us

how the Wurmbrands kept Nazis in their home. You know this woman, of course?"

"No."

"What!"

"I've never seen her."

"You're lying!"

"No, sir."

Stefanescu closed his eyes again.

The major shouted and ranted. He put his face an inch from Stefanescu's and bawled at the top of his lungs.

Dazed Stefanescu kept on repeating that he didn't know me.

Yet he knew me well. And he had no good intentions toward me. God had blinded him for that moment.

Finally, the major impatiently told the guards to take him away. He looked at me with speculative eyes, stubbing out the cheroot. After all, he seemed to be thinking, it's absurd: a Jewess, who loses all her family in Nazi pogroms, hiding Nazis in her cellar. Risking her husband's life as well as her own. He switched to asking me about our work in the Red Army.

I managed to dodge the dangerous questions.

Lying awake in the cell later I remembered the big gangly Red Army boys who'd once filled the flat. With what wonderful simplicity they had heard the word of God. One had danced around the room with joy when Richard told him that on the third day Christ had risen from the dead.

The day's events encouraged me. I had a strong feeling of the divine presence in my solitary cell. God had given me the strength and wit to fend off questions about printing Russian Gospels and receiving relief funds. Perhaps the worst was over.

A piece of chalky plaster had worked lose from the wall. I picked it up and drew on the dark blanket a big cross, in thankfulness.

The new interrogator was a big sweating man with a bald head. I stood a long time before the ink-stained desk while he read documents in a brown file.

The blond lieutenant was making notes from a thick text-book. Now and again he looked up at me, slyly. As if he knew something I didn't know. The look on his handsome face was amused and excited like a child in a cinema who knows that something splendidly nasty is going to happen in the next minute.

The bald interrogator's arms were covered in thick hair. At last he began. The questions were all personal. My family, friends trips abroad. Days as a student in Paris. He was warm and friendly. Smooth.

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"And now," he said, in the nondescript official voice of one giving instructions about filling up a form, "we want you to write down your sexual history."

I was slow to understand. He explained patiently.

"Your sexual history. You have one, I suppose? Your first experience. The first boy you went with. How he fondled you. How you returned his kisses. What happened next. Did he possess you on the spot, and which spot? Or was that left to the next one who came along? Tell us about ~his~ embraces. Compare the two. Or three. Continue with your other lovers. We want a complete account, blow by blow, so to speak."

The polite calm tone was like a slap in the face.

The lieutenant was looking at me. His tongue passed over his lips until it found a small red sore at the side of his mouth.

"Write it all down. We want every detail. I'm sure there are plenty."

I tried to keep calm.

"You have no right to ask such a thing. You may accuse me of being a counter-revolutionary or what you like, but this isn't a court of morals."

The hairy fingers tapped the desk-top.

"This is whatever we choose to make it. The story is spread that you are some kind of saint. We think otherwise. We ~know~ otherwise. Now we mean to show in your true colours."

He stared at me, unblinking.

"As a whore," said the lieutenant.

"I shan't do as you ask, of course."

"We'll see about that!"

The bald interrogator blazed, firing obscene questions at me. A stream of four-letter words poured out of his mouth. He punctuated questions by slapping a meaty palm on the desk.

I was soaked in sweat. My head swam. I thought I might faint. I kept refusing to write.

After an hour he stopped. The lieutenant by then had gone back to his book. They'd done all this before, it was a bore.

"Time is on our side," said the bald interrogator.

He had saved up a last twist of the knife.

"Your husband has already confessed to being a traitor and a spy. You're on your way to the rubbish heap." He came round from behind the desk and breathed in my face. "But you won't leave this place without telling us the facts about your sex life."

He glowered at me for a long moment.

I was trembling, convulsively.

Back to the cell, along sour-smelling corridors. The goggles

came off a moment before they pushed me inside, and for the first time I saw the number above the door.

Seven.

I was in Cell 7. The holy number. Number of the days of creation. The seven-branched candlestick.

I lay on the cot and sobbed. After a while I grew calmer. My body lay there in the darkness, but my spirit rose and passed the bounds of prison.

I remembered the words, "We are crucified with Christ." If a time came when I had to say, "It is finished," I wanted to give only last words of love to parents and friends and the thief near me, like Jesus. God was with me in my affliction.

"Get up!"

Mielu, the red-faced head warder, was in the doorway. I rose and faced the wall.

"It's not a hotel here. If everyone lay around putting on fat they'd be fighting to get in. You're going to learn what prison's for."

Mielu means in Rumanian "Lamb" but he was not lamb. Besides the regular morning inspection he prowled corridors making snap checks.

"Turn to face me. Anything to report?"

"Can I have a spoon to eat the soup?"

"If you want to speak to me keep your mouth shut."

He cackled at his own joke. It had made him well-known in Rumanian prisons. They said he'd sold bootlaces in cafes before the war. He owed his present position to efficiency as an informer. He had to prove his importance to everyone, on every occasion.

At midday a greasy soup arrived. You had to drink it all. That was the rule. Hunger-strikers were forcibly fed. Two guards held you while a third poured it into your mouth. When this happened you got a soup that was slightly richer than usual: Egg yolk and sugar was added to keep the "patients" strength up. It contained, they said, as much nutrition as three days' of the normal brew. So people refused to eat in the hope of being forcibly fed!

I smiled, remembering how fastidious Richard had been about his food when we first married. How glad he'd be to return to home-cooking now!

Both of us knew by heart passages from the second book of Moses, Exodus. It tells how the children of Israel came out of slavery in Egypt. God delivered them.

Every night in Cell 7 I recited these verses. I knew that Richard, somewhere, was doing the same. God would deliver us.

"Ready to answer my questions now?" Hairy-fingers came close, giving off a smell of alcohol and tobacco. "Are we to be edified by the sex-life of a saint?"

The blond lieutenant glanced at his older colleague, looking a little shocked at this coarse opening.

He had his textbook and notepad again. I suppose he was one of the new "proletarian leaders." A bright lad off the factory floor. Trying to pass exams and win promotion while the interrogation mill ground on around him.

The bald interrogator ran through his routine of obscene questions for twenty minutes. I kept repeating that he had no right to ask such things. Then he paused and lit a cigarette. I imagined the lieutenant would take over. But when the older man walked out the young officer went on studying.

I stared at him, trembling a little. My eyes wouldn't focus properly and my knees felt as if they might give out. I hadn't slept.

How he reminded me of the boy in Paris, long ago. Where was he now? Both were handsome. But how many things a beautiful face can hide. Now and again he looked up from his book and gave that knowing smile. As if he knew the answers to all his coarse colleague's questions.

I stood for three hours. It was a fairly common practice. To avoid wasting their free time, they called a prisoner and let her stand there while they studied. They signed a receipt when the prisoner arrived, another when she left. That officially accounted for their time.

The older man returned and grilled me for another hour. Who I'd slept with, what I did with them.

I was very tired. Exhaustion came in black waves. But I found the strength to say: "I will not tell you what you want." I could give him one piece of information, though - the worst "sexual history" will not prevent a person becoming a great saint if God wills it. Mary Magdalene was a harlot once. But she will be revered when we have been long forgotten.

The interrogator grunted an obscenity. "Take her away," he said.

The blond lieutenant yawned and stretched as I was led out.

Days later I moved back to a communal cell. It was like an icebox. Winter was approaching now. My summer coat and wool stockings were the envy of the cell. I was rich!

I tried to share my riches. The coat served others as a blanket, a dressing-gown, as gala wear for interrogations. I offered the stockings to a girl wearing only a thin cotton dress. Tears ran unchecked down her white face.

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The four other women in this cell, to my astonishment, were wearing full evening dress. Only it was not very full. Low-cut, sleeveless gowns of white satin that trail on the filthy cement floor are not ideal prison dress.

"We'd been to see a film at the American Embassy," one of them told me. "It was about polar bears. On the way home in a taxi we were stopped and pulled out into the street. They took us to Secret Police headquarters. 'We know everything. You're American spies!' they said."

Interrogated for days on end, starved and kept without sleep, they denied the charges. Now they were awaiting trial. The elegant dresses were reduced to rags. Strips had been torn from them for handkerchiefs and towels and other needs.

Each woman in turn handled my coat with delighted cries. It might have been a mink stole.

"Would you like to wear it at your next interrogation?"

"Oh, that ~is~ kind. I feel so naked with bare shoulders before those beasts. It'll give me courage."

The door opened sharply and all our hearts jumped.

"You," said the guard. They could never pronounce my name. Like many other Jewish names, Wurmbrand is of German origin, and the "W" sound baffled them.

"Put the goggles on."

The blind-march along the smelly corridors began.

I entered a room full of men's voices. A silence fell. I could feel them staring at me. It was eerie. Hearing nothing, blindfold,

aware of the eyes on me. What now?

"Take the goggles off!"

Bright lights dazzled me. The new, long interrogation room had no windows. It seemed to be underground. Behind a long table sat ten uniformed officers, including the three I'd already met. They stared at me.

"Do you know what has happened to your husband?"

"But don't you know?" I said. "You should be telling me!"

"Sit down," said the major with the moustache. "If you cooperate and answer all our questions, we may allow you to see him."

I really believed they might. We'd committed no crime. Perhaps he'd been tried, acquitted. How na‹ve I was in those days

They had batches of photographs spread out on the desk. Men and women. A sergeant held them up, one by one.

"Who's this?"

"Who's this?"

"You know this man?"

"You know this man?"

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Of the lot, I recognized one man. I tried to keep my eyes blank, and go on steadily saying no.

He was a dear friend. A Russian soldier, baptized in our home. It was a police full-face and profile shot, not a good one. But how he had changed! Where was he now? I kept on saying No. No. No. Shaking my head.

They shouted and bullied. Questions. Questions. Some I couldn't answer. Some I wouldn't. It was a long session and I became confused by the noise and blinding light. My head whirled.

"We have methods of making you talk which you won't like. Don't try to be clever with us. It wastes our time. It wastes your life."

The repetition, the insistence were maddening. My nerves were stretched to breaking point.

It was hours before they sent me back to the cell. I lay on the straw mattress and sobbed wildly, noisily.

"You're not allowed to cry."

The guard stood in the doorway.

But I could not stop. My tears affected the others. They began to weep, too.

The guard, wooden-faced, turned and closed the door.

I sobbed for two hours. Then I picked myself up and tried to think. The questioning led from subject to subject and person to person. Anyone I named would be arrested and grilled in turn. I must name no names. I didn't think I could bear many more sessions like that.

But the next cross-examination was played with new tactics. The bald interrogator was alone, and smiling.

"Mrs. Wurmbrand, you're only thirty-six years old. The best years of a woman's life are before you. Why are you so obstinate? Why do you refuse to co-operate with us? You could go free tomorrow if you'd only give us the names of these traitors ..."

I didn't answer.

"Let's talk sense. Every man has his price, every woman too. D'you know the story of the man in the nightclub who asked the waiter: "How much is that blonde at the bar." "She charges 100 francs." "And that brunette." "Very special. 500 francs." "Well, how about that girl in the corner with a man." "Oh no sir, she's married to him, you couldn't have her for less than 1,000!"

He roared at his own joke, and wiped his face with a handkerchief.

"You're an honest woman. You can raise your price. Judas was a fool to sell his boss for thirty pieces of silver. He could have held out for 300. Tell us what you want? Freedom for you and

your husband? A good parish for him? We'd look after your family. You

could be very valuable to us. Well?"

When he had finished talking there was a silence in the room. At last I broke it.

"Thanks, but I've sold myself already. The Son of God was tortured and gave his life for me. Through him I can reach heaven. Can you offer a higher prize than that?"

The bald man suddenly looked very tired. His voice was frustrated. He clenched his hairy fist and I thought he might hit me. The hand went back. But he only smoothed his pate and sighed deeply.

October 23rd was our wedding anniversary. But remembering the happiness of that day made me more miserable.

Winter had come. Mihai always caught cold so easily. He slept the sleep of the young, full of small movements, and often tossed the coverlets to the floor. Who would put them back?

Sometimes Mihai was wilful. Once we'd gone for a picnic, and he'd drunk from a stagnant stream although I told him not to. He had a bad throat for weeks. Then he'd climbed a tree and fallen out. He nearly died that time. Who would stop him taking risks now? There was his Aunt Suzanne, whom he loved. But she had her own troubles. A hundred doubts and anxieties pierced me every day.

In November, the prison director came personally to the cell. A small group of women were told to be ready to leave in ten minutes. No questions were allowed. Fearfully, we gathered our poor bits and pieces. We expected either to be freed or shot.

In fact, I had been sentenced to forced labour. A board simply decided, in my absence, that I should serve twenty-four months. When that time ran out a new sentence would be imposed. I was one of many thousands of prisoners classed as " administrative." We went without benefit of trial to the slave camps. At that time we did not know we had been sentenced.

They were an essential part of the economy now. The camps had gone up all over the country. "Saboteurs" who failed to fulfil worknorms, gypsies, criminals, priests, prostitutes, wealthy bourgeois - the whole gamut of people who failed to fit into the Communist world went there for re-education. The camps were huge, with a permanent population of 200,000. Men, women and children. Their ages ranged from twelve years to seventy and over. By such methods "socialist reconstruction" went forward in all the satellite countries.

The State did what it liked and published what it liked. No word appeared in the newspaper about trials and sentences.

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Only congratulations to the Government in creating jobs for all. What marvels it was doing. So unlike the West, where millions were unemployed.

Prominent people in the West pointed to Rumania as an example of a country which had satisfactorily solved its unemployment problems.

Before partaking in this satisfactory solution, I was moved to a transit prison, Jilava, the most feared jail in the country.

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JILAVA

When the truck dipped suddenly and went down a ramp all the women squealed. The light cut out. There was a hollow clang of steel. We stopped, waiting in uneasy silence for orders.

"Take the goggles off!"

It was a big underground basement without windows. Walls shiny with damp. Greasy stone floors. Uniformed women guards milled about. A squat muscular figure with ginger hair wagged a finger and warned:

"I'm Sergeant Aspra, hard by name and hard by nature. Don't you forget it."

She sat down with a colleague, as attractive as herself, behind a trestle table. A clerk was entering names in a ledger.

"All superfluous articles of clothing," declaimed raucous Aspra, "are deposited on joining this establishment. So get out of your clothes."

They took away my summer coat. But left the thin dress, the stockings, now full of holes. An inventory was made. Hours later we tramped along dark passages, vaulted and arched. A smell of decay hung on the humid air. Behind steel grilles stood security troops in khaki forage caps.

I wasn't wholly a stranger to Jilava. It was a fort built in the

last century. The cells were deep underground. I'd come here when mass arrests started, with a girl who thought a friend was among the inmates. They ran a finger through the files and said they had no trace of him.

I made the same eight-mile journey from Bucharest after Richard disappeared. I filled in long forms and waited long hours, to be told that nothing was known about him.

Once two fifteen-year-old schoolgirls had shared our cell in the interrogation centre. They had joined a secret patriotic group. "God help you if you ever get to know what it's like at Jilava in Cell Four," whispered the elder girl.

Sergeant Aspra unlocked a heavy door crossed with iron bars.

"This lot for Cell 4!"

*~Aspra~ - in Romanian, "harsh."

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It was the middle of the morning, but the cell was almost dark. A weak electric bulb hung from the ceiling. Two long tiers of wooden bunks lined the sides of a high vaulted room. A narrow corridor ran down the middle. At the far end was a small window, painted over and barred.

Dozens of eyes stared down at me.

"I'm Viorica, your room-chief," said a voice. A hand waved. "Give her the end place."

At the darkest end of the cell stood one lavatory bucket, beside an open drain. The bunk given to me was directly above it. The bucket was shared by fifty women, most of them with bowel trouble from the foul food.

It was airless and suffocatingly hot on the top tier. Sweating women lay half-naked. Wherever you turned your eyes you saw thin arms and crooked legs, fallen chests and sores. It seemed a medieval charnel house.

On some bodies there were marks and scars of torture.

Women lay on the concrete near the door, hoping to breath a little air.

"They're fools!" said a girl near me. "The damp from the floor is more deadly."

Jilava is a Romanian word meaning "damp." The fort was surrounded by a moat. There, dangling from what looked like a small gibbet was a length of railway line. When it was struck with an iron bar at 5 a.m. we rose. A queue formed for the bucket. The cell filled with talk and argument. Canteens clattered as they were filled with water for washing.

On my first morning in Jilava I heard someone singing a hymn.

"There go the nuns!"

My heart lifted. "Nuns, here in Jilava?" I asked.

"Yes, and if Aspra hears them carolling she'll tie their hands behind their backs again. She did it for three hours last time"

A pale girl of about eighteen stopped chewing a crust and said:

"That's nothing! In my last prison, Mislea, they tied the religious women up and put gas masks on their faces. It was horrible!"

Other nuns were held in adjoining cells. Through walls twelve feet thick women could still communicate, at great risk, by placing a tin mug against the stone to listen for tapping. The sound was amplified and could be plainly heard. But one had to watch constantly for guards, who put their eye to the spyhole.

Messages were passed in a kind of prison morse. We learnt that 200 women lived in the four cells of our wing. And up to 3,000 men elsewhere. In a fortress intended for 600!

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People learn what it means to be on this earth with nothing to do when they enter prison. Not to wash, or sew, or work. Women talked with longing about cooking and cleaning. How they would like to bake a cake for their children, then go round the house with a duster, and clean the windows, and scrub the tables. We had nothing even to look at. Time did not pass. It stood still.

"When I think how I used to complain about being overworked," said my neighbour. "I must have been mad!"

A mother understands when the children leave home what a joy working for them was, what wretchedness it is to have nothing to do.

We stood in line at 11 a.m. for soup. Each woman received a slice of black bread. Calmed by the thought of food to come, they waited quietly.

The moment the steaming keg was out of the cell, quarrels flared. Women fought over a piece of bread which they thought was bigger than its neighbours. It began always in the same way, "You bitch, you know it was my turn for first today." Insults were screamed. The cell rang with a hideous caterwauling.

The door burst open. Guards rushed in, striking out with sticks. Aspra bellowed: "We're too good to you, you *** If this goes on, you'll starve tomorrow!"

Spilled soup lay in pools on the floor. Sobbing came from dark bunks. When the guards had gone, with a crash of the door, uproar broke loose. Fifty women shouted the rights and wrongs, until Aspra came in again, trumpeting. "There'll be no more food today, or tomorrow either!"

When they'd gone, recriminations were hissed and muttered.

The girl next to me touched my arm.

"You poor thing. You didn't eat."

"Never mind, it wasn't very appetizing."

"It's the rotten carrots. The State vegetable trust dumped 300 tons here. Nobody would buy them even for pigs. We've been swallowing it for weeks. Look - my skin is quite yellow. We call it 'Carrotitis'!"

Her name was Elena, she said.

A big masterful woman peered at me.

"And who are you? Why are you here?" she demanded. "You haven't said a word since you arrived."

I told them my name, and that I was a pastor's wife.

"Religious, eh? Know any Bible stories?" asked a grey-haired peasant woman.

"Yes, tell us something," came other voices. "It's so boring here."

But the masculine woman became still more hostile.

"You'll turn this place into a vicarage."

And she walked off, stiff with rage.

"Don't mind Elsa Gavriloiu," said Elena. "She's an old Party member. Ever so grateful for the chance she's been given to study her ideological errors in Jilava re-educational institute!"

The other ladies laughed and were briefly comforted, until they remembered that for the next thirty-six hours there would be no food.

To cheer them up, I told the story of Joseph and his brethren, which shows how the wheel of life can turn when everything looks hopeless. While their faces were alight with interest I told them some of the story's many meanings.

"You remember that Joseph's father gave him a coat of many colours. In it were dark threads as well as bright ones. Both belong to life. Though his envious brothers sold him as a slave, Joseph lived to become overseer of a great household in Egypt.

"Again the wheel turned, and he was thrown into prison. Yet he rose to be ruler over all Egypt and saved the country from famine. When his brothers, not recognizing him, came seeking corn, they feared that this great lord of Egypt might steal their asses. That's how it is often with us. We worry over little things, and lose sight of the deep meaning which might be hidden in them. Some sorrows are only great because we look at them from a narrow human perspective. We cannot see to the end. Joseph in the end was Egypt's first minister and the rescuer of the brothers who had sold him."

While a handful of women listened, the rest of the cell hummed and squawked like an aviary.

I caught a glance from gingery Viorica.

"Be careful," whispered the peasant woman. "If Aspra hears you talking of God in here, there'll be trouble."

Next morning Viorica appeared in the lane between bunks.

"I know who you are!" she pointed a finger at me. "Hours I've been puzzling my head. Now I know."

I thought she'd heard about my small sermon and meant to deliver justice.

"I knew your name was familiar. I said to myself, where have I heard that name ..."

The others stared. I sat on the top tier like something in a side-show.

"Yes," said stringy Viorica, triumphantly. "She's a preacher. The wife of that Pastor Wurmbrand!"

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The room chief proudly explained that her uncle had charge of an Orthodox church in Bucharest. He had heard Richard's speech at the Congress of Cults.

"The only one in 4,000 to stand up and speak like a man of God, when all the others cheered the Communists," said Viorica. "You know they sacked the Minister of Cults afterwards?"

She turned to me.

"I've been to your church. I thought the service was lovely."

So I was the heroine of the hour. I came down from my purgatorial perch above the bucket. Viorica found me a better bunk ten feet away, which had become vacant. There she paid me a state visit.

"It's no joke being room chief," she said. "Another day like yesterday, dear, and I shall go mad."

Viorica's powers were great. She recommended to Sergeant Aspra who should do the coveted laundry jobs. How humbly women begged to be allowed to wash the guards' dirty underwear. It was hard work, but infinitely preferable to sitting in the darkness and stench of Cell 4, doing nothing.

I received my first dishful of ~tertch~ - maize boiled in water - and looked round for something to eat it with.

"She wants a spoon!" jeered Mrs. Gavriloiu. "Lap it up!"

I tried to eat the thin, damp-smelling gruel from the shallow tin dish. But it dribbled down my chin. To lap seemed too animal, and I gave away my morning ~tertch~.

But the saving thought came, Why not wish to be humbled. Our Lord was, to the utmost. I remembered Gideon, the Biblical hero who went to fight the enemies of Israel. God told him to take as soldiers only those who lapped the water of the river with their tongues "as a dog lappeth" - that is, those who were prepared to accept the last humiliations. (JDG 7:5)

When the next meal came I lapped my food.

Later, Elena showed me how a piece of wood could be splintered off and with a fragment of broken glass carved into something resembling a spoon.

A woman from Mislea jail told how an extra ration had been given there to nursing mothers and pregnant women. "But then it stopped."

"What happened?"

"Half the women immediately said they were pregnant, the others were jealous and caused scenes."

None of us was fat enough to pass as pregnant, though some were becoming swollen with hunger. Only later did we decide that starvation was official policy. It made us listless and so less troublesome. Then, when they wanted people for the labour

camps the thought of better food made us keen to "volunteer." Usually we gathered around the nuns' bunks.

"Put your experience with the ladies's guild to work - keep us from squabbling," said Mrs. Stupineanu, Elena's closest ally.

A tall stately woman, she had been left a widow of some means Until Communism came. Then, having lost everything, she survived by selling candles and sweeping out the church of which she'd once been a generous patron. She told a strange story.

One morning in church, as she stood beside her table of candles, she saw a stranger. He crossed himself, not from right to left like the Orthodox worshipper, but from left to right, in Catholic style. He

bought a candle but seemed to know little Rumanian. It emerged that he was a seminarist from France, travelling in Europe. How distressed he was at what he'd seen of the persecution of the church!

Mrs. Stupineanu exercised her French, telling him more. Why, in that very church, before that very altar, police thugs had obscenely tortured the priest!

Next day Mrs. Stepineanu was arrested. The Frenchman was a Communist agent. The widow was offered the alternatives of keeping the Secret Police informed about churchgoers - who they were, what they said - or going to jail.

"I've been in Jilava a year now," she said. At forty-six, her hair was white.

There were two Catholic sisters who glowed with calm goodness. Uncomplaining, they looked after the older women. They washed sore bodies. They sang hymns. They brought comfort where none was looked for.

"But are you allowed to sing?" I asked, at our first meeting.

"We are allowed to sing, and they are allowed to beat us," Sister Veronica replied.

Sister Sophia, the younger of the two, showed livid bruises on her arms and neck.

"We sang very softly," she said. "But someone informed on us. They ran in kicking and beating and slapping. Afterwards Sergeant Aspra banned all talking. But how can you keep fifty women quiet!"

Sophia had played the organ in churches and led us in hymns. Others knew songs written for the Army of the Lord, a Salvation Army-type movement rooted in the peasantry.

Most women were of the Orthodox denomination. The illiterate countrywomen greatly feared dying without the priest's last rites. They believed that they became ghosts, unable to enter heaven. Nuns repeated the words of the funeral service, and although

the women were not sure that this would work, it seemed better than nothing.

"Lord, give rest among the saints to thy servant who has fallen

asleep," the nuns chanted. "Give her rest among green pastures."

Green pastures. We were under the earth. Over our cells grass grew. Cows pastured there. How happy they must be in the sun with plenty to eat!

The nuns in Jilava included Mother Superiors, novices, lay sisters who did social work. Girls of eighteen, women of sixty. When the Government abolished the Greek Catholic church, monks, priests and nuns who refused to merge with the Orthodox church (which was under Communist control) were imprisoned. There they joined their Roman Catholic brethren.

Sergeant Aspra's deputy was Corporal Georgescu, a dull slow girl with a flat face and a still flatter voice. She mustered prisoners for exercise.

"When I say get outside, no one is to be last. All out together!"

Fifty women cannot use one door simultaneously. But nor could you argue with Georgescu.

"When I give an order, you obey," she droned. Behind her back women giggled, imitating the nasal tones, until they grew quite hysterical with laughter. But they scuttled out quickly when she began to shout. It was always the old and infirm who received her blows, since they were the last in the rush.

"Don't you know what pity is!?" I cried. "It's written that those who show no pity will have none from God in the end."

"No, I don't know," she crowed. "And I don't want to know."

But even Georgescu had a weak spot. Although she never gave permission for medical treatment as long as I was in Cell 4, she would allow women suffering from toothache to visit the dentist.

She'd suffered, too, from toothache. She knew what it was.

How wooden these women guards were!

I was used to people who loved, hated, reacted in some personal way. But these girls in uniform had been turned into puppets. If the order was to beat, they beat you. We might have been carpets. And if the order was to go slow, they ignored us. They had passed through security police schools where blind obedience was taught. Most were peasants, who had never owned anything so smart as their new uniforms,

nor possessed such expensive toys as their revolvers. They ruled Rumania, and Rumania was their world.

Their demonstrations of the dictatorship of the proletariat in action were directed chiefly at teachers, professor's wives and other people of culture. It was not simply the resentment

of the unlettered. They were indoctrinated with the idea that "bourgeois intellectuals" menaced the progress of world Communism. They still believed in the Party and its promises.

To look at Sanda you would have thought her one of the saner people in the cell. She was young and clear-eyed. Tall, with long dark hair. She'd taken a science degree only a month before her arrest, she told me. Her light voice seemed to skim along over the surface of things. You never knew where it would settle next. She had been arrested because of her brother, who was with Colonel Arsenescu's freedom fighters in the mountains. Some of her remarks at university had been reported to the police.

At times, as we talked, a frightening blankness would glaze her eyes. The voice would die out in mid-sentence. I'd seen this before in prisoners and it alarmed me.

One evening, bunks around Sanda's bed were vacated.

A woman clambered up to join me on the second tier.

"Please let me sit with you," she begged. "Sanda's been so strange. I think she's going to have another of her turns."

I went to look at the girl. Tears were flowing unchecked down her face. Her long fingers twisted a strand of hair, nervously.

Suddenly she cried out: "I don't know, I don't remember, I've never seen him before ..."

Viorica ran down the gangway.

"It's too bad!" she whined. "Why don't they take her out? As if I didn't have enough on my hands."

Women crossed themselves in panic.

Sanda was breathing hard: her face reddened. Then with a shrill

yelp, like an animal with its leg in a trap, she leapt from the bunk. Arms flailing. Black hair flying. Striking out at anyone in her path. Seizing a pile of mess tins from the sill she hurled them at Viorica's head. They missed and smashed against the door.

Heads vanished under blankets. Screams, noisy weeping filled the air.

Two strong girls wrestled with Sandra. They struggled back and forth in the narrow lane. Viorica shouted useless advice.

"Grab her, trip her! O God, O God!"

A legion of invisible devils seemed to have poured in.

It was Sister Veronica in the end who had the presence of mind to throw a blanket over Sanda's head from behind. They tumbled on the floor. The two girls held Sanda down. Her writhings ceased.

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She was still. They lifted her into a bunk, unconscious, clothes torn and wet with sweat.

Then my flesh began to crawl.

From the far side of the cell came a man's voice.

The cold, controlled voice of an interrogator. Asking questions. The same questions. Over and over again.

Trembling, I went to the other end of the cell. A pale young girl cowered in a bunk, knees up to her chest, rigid with fear.

She began, in her own voice, to give replies: "I don't know. I wasn't there."

Then screams: "Please don't hit me! No please. PLEASE. AhhhhH!"

Her eyes were open. She was reliving, in a trance of fright, her interrogation in a secret police cell. With eerie and mechanical exactness she reproduced the interrogator's deep voice, and answered with a breathless litany of "don't knows." And made choking, coughing noises as if with pain from some kind of torture.

It was only the start.

For an hour the cell was filled with the appalling cacophony of

cries and sobs. One woman after another succumbed. An evil force seemed to surround us in the fetid darkness. The single bulb cast mad shadows on the vaulted ceiling.

At first I felt numb with shock.

Then, like an iron that reddens in the fire I felt something swelling in my breast, and found myself living again my interrogation. The nights of fear, the wondering what they were doing with Richard, what was happening to Mihai.

I fought off madness with prayer. Not acting consciously, but letting the words well up in a stream. The nuns were doing the same.

As if it were the one safe place in hell, women crowded round our bunks. Prisoners squeezed in beside me, clasping my hands, they seemed to be fleeing from a nightmare pogrom.

The guards had experienced these tragic scenes before. They kept out.

Sanda, who had set the match to the fuse, lay sleeping, hearing nothing.

The sound of sobbing began to fade. In an hour only exhausted snuffles from the dark broke the silence. The sense of fear dissolved.

For a long time I lay awake, praying silently: "Lord, if you have given me some influence among these women, give me also wisdom of heart to win their souls for you."

Outside in the long corridor the steps of a guard retreated,

becoming fainter, and somewhere in the recesses of the prison a great door shut with a hollow boom. I thought I could hear, in another cell, a woman coughing. Tiny, faint jungle noises echoed in the vast warren of Jilava as 3,000 souls tried to sleep and forget.

Next morning I came face to face with Elsa Gavriloiu, the old Party member. She was rumoured to be a former Secret Police officer, who had fallen from grace. Many victims of Party purges were now entering the prisons.

Elsa stuck out her large jaw at me.

"Start that preaching in here again and I'll hammer on the door until the guard comes."

I said, "Elsa, do you still believe in the Party?"

"Certainly. I haven't changed my beliefs. My arrest was all a mistake."

"Nor has my arrest altered my faith. In fact, it's stronger. I want to tell people what a friend they have in Jesus."

"You'll get the whole cell punished. I don't intend to suffer for you and your God. Anyway, he hasn't helped you much."

"This God you so dislike," I wondered. "What sort of being is he? If you say "I don't like Jack" you know what type of character Jack has. What is your idea of God?"

"Ha!" She relished the chance for a textbook reply. God was the fanatic who wouldn't let science tell the truth. The patron of the exploiters of the proletariat. With the money they squeezed they built churches to Him. He blesses weapons of destruction on both sides.

I said, "What you call God is certainly very unlovable. The God I love is another. He shared the poverty of the workers. He was brought up among the oppressed. He fed the hungry and healed the sick. He teaches love. He died for us ..."

"Love!" Her voice cracked. "What good is that? To me, anyway. I tell you, I'm all hate! If you knew how I loathed those treacherous comrades who put me here. I wish them in hell! I gave my whole life to the Party, and this is what they do to me." She bowed her head. There was a hint of a tear in her eye. It didn't seem that there was anything I could do at that moment.

"Praying? Forgive them, Father?" She hissed the words. "I don't accept forgiveness, it's lies." She began to weep.

"It's all the same," she sobbed. "If the Yanks come, I'll be hanged. If the Communists stay, I'm stuck in jail. Forgiveness!"

The tears ran. After a while she sat up and wiped her grey face with an edge of her skirt. Then she began to look at me with a speculative glance.

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"Sabina Wurmbrand, you're sly. I tell you to stop preaching and in five minutes you're preaching to me."

But Mrs. Gavriloiu didn't threaten to call the guards this time.

Now I was known to everyone in Cell 4. Women came for French and German lessons.

"All Mrs. Wurmbrand's lessons start with the words 'Dieu' or 'Gott,'" laughed Fanny Marinescu, my best pupil.

Some came to me because it passed the time. Others thought it would be useful when they were freed. With Bucharest full of Allied troops, interpreters would be in demand.

Fanny's husband and her mother were both in prison. She was twenty-five years old, quiet and shy, with cropped hair and large round eyes.

We spoke first in the courtyard, after the morning count. Sergeant Aspra and her aides were bawling the odds like bookies.

"Look, a blade of grass," she whispered. "Fancy it growing down here.

"How powerful life is!" She put the grass to her lips.

We became close friends. Our French lessons were conducted by writing on the soles of shoes greased with soap. Nothing was supplied in Jilava. Neither paper, nor clothes, nor linen, nor parcels from home. But periodically DDT was dusted about. If you spread it on the soapy sole you could write fairly plainly on it with a splinter.

Sometimes we had to stop the lesson, because she was in pain.

"I don't know what it is," she'd gasp. "It comes in waves."

But to see a doctor was virtually impossible. At long intervals a medical orderly might appear. Sick women mobbed her, shouting, begging for aid and drugs. The orderly allowed three or four "urgent cases" – ones that made most trouble – go to the infirmary.

Treatment took two forms; sulphur pills for diarrhea; aspirins for anything else.

Then Fanny Marinescu collapsed. She was carried out on a blanket. In a few days she was back: a doctor had diagnosed intestinal tuberculosis.

"They promise that I'll be given an operation," she whispered, trying to smile wanly.

Weeks later Fanny was moved to a prison hospital where she died.

The disease had revealed itself to be not tuberculosis, but cancer.

Later, I met Fanny Marinescu's mother in a labour camp, and had to break the news of the tragedy.

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Across the gangway, in the bunk opposite mine, was Mrs. Ioanid. Her son was in the mountains with Colonel Arsenecu's ~maquis~. Her two daughters were also in jail - one in Mislea, the other with us in Jilava, but in an adjoining cell.

The mother saw her daughter walking in the exercise yard. She had scratched a tiny peep-hole in the painted-out window. Anyone caught near it was immediately punished. But sixty-year-old Mrs. Ioanid was prepared to take any risk for this glimpse of her youngest child. As she gazed tears ran down her face.

Sometimes she clambered painfully up to my bunk and talked of her husband and children. She asked about Richard, who was known to many prisoners by name. How did we first meet? Was he always a pastor? A Jew converted to Christianity? Wasn't that rather rare?

"It's a long story," I said. "And sad and bad at times, as well as happy."

I hadn't until now allowed myself to go far back in memory. But Mrs. Ioanid listened so quietly, sitting in the drab light, her lined face in shadow, that I seemed almost to be talking to myself.

From time to time she would murmur, "Yes?" or make a small exclamation of surprise at what, I had to agree, was a strange story. It began with our first meeting. Richard was twenty-seven and I was four years younger.

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MY CONVERSION

I turned into a street in Bucharest where the Wurmbrands lived. An

uncle of mine was a regular caller there and I accompanied him for the first time. I looked up at the house. There was a young man, standing on the balcony and wearing such an angry expression that I almost turned back. Seeing my uncle, he waved and came down. When the greetings and introductions were over he told me bluntly why he had been looking so cross.

"My mother is nagging me to get married. She has the very girl - an heiress with a family business, two houses and million dowry."

"It sounds very nice."

"Yes, I don't mind having the business and the inheritance." He laughed. "It's the girl I don't like! But mother says the best way if I want us all to be rich. And I came out on the balcony and saw you."

He added, jokingly, "The thought came into my mind that if I could have a girl like you I wouldn't care about the million."

I didn't go back to Paris. I took a job in Bucharest, and we met every evening. Richard and I found we had everything in common. Both of us had been poor as children, both of us were Jews who'd put aside our religion.

Richard was an up-and-coming business man, using his keen wits to make good money for the first time. He enjoyed spending it and we went together to night clubs and theatres and didn't think too much about tomorrow. Yet something made him say one evening: "I'm not an easy person. You would suffer a lot with me."

But we were too deeply in love to think of anything else.

We had a religious wedding. A wineglass was smashed on the floor in the traditional way. It was meant to remind us of Jerusalem trodden under the feet of the Gentiles.

Happiness lasted less than a year. Then Richard developed an annoying cough. He came back from the doctor white-faced. It was a tuberculosis: there was a patch on one lung. He must go into a sanatorium at once.

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At that time T.B. was a lingering disease which often proved fatal. I felt as if Richard had been sentenced to death. It seemed the worst tragedy of my life, a cruel and horrible trick which was being played on me at my moment of greatest happiness.

When Richard left for the mountain sanatorium, I went to live with his mother. She was kind but many nights I cried myself to sleep.

Every fortnight I went by train to visit him. The place was beautiful. Calm, with great views across hills and valleys covered with green woods. Richard, after a time, seemed almost content there. He said: "For the first time in my life, I'm resting."

He seemed thankful, and grew better. But a strange change was coming over him.

"I've been thinking about the past. All the people I've harmed. My mother. And many girls you don't know about. I've thought only about myself."

"Don't grieve about it," I said. "I've also lived such a life. This is youth."

One day I found him reading a book given to him by a woman patient in the sanatorium.

"It's about the Brothers Ratisbonne," he said. "They founded an order to convert Jews. Others have been praying for me while I wasted my life."

He talked about Jesus Christ. It was the greatest shock he could have given me. In Orthodox Jewish families like mine it was forbidden at that time to mention Christ's name. We had to look away when we passed a church. I'd outgrown my strict Jewish upbringing, I thought. But that Richard should even think about such things upset me terribly.

I knew all the history of Christian persecution of my people. How Jews were forcibly baptized, and how they had killed their own children and then themselves, in thousands, rather than change their religion. How they were forced to listen to Catholic Masses, and stopped their ears with wax to avoid hearing what they considered blasphemy.

And what we saw around us was not encouraging. The Orthodox church was strongly anti-semitic. So was the Lutheran. The biggest anti-semite body in the country was called the "National Christian Defence League." Its chief activity seemed to consist in beating Jewish students and smashing Jewish shops.

So I couldn't see what, in past or present, might persuade Richard to turn Christian. No one had ever explained to me what it was

really about.

Richard grew slowly better. I tried to talk to him about the good times we'd have when he got back to Bucharest. He tried

to tell me about his discovery of the New Testament, which told the life of Christ. Before, we hadn't thought of having children. Now Richard was talking about how we should bring them up.

He convalesced in a mountain village. And an uncanny thing happened there. An old man, a carpenter, passed the time of day with us. When he heard that Richard was a Jew, his eyes lit up with excitement. Putting a rough hand on his arm he made this little speech: "I asked God to grant me one favour at the end of my life. Because Christ was a Jew, I wanted to bring a Jew to him. And since there are none here, and I cannot leave the village, God must send me one. And here you are, in answer to my prayer!"

Richard was deeply moved, but my heart sank. Before we left, the carpenter gave him a worn Bible, saying, "my wife and I have prayed for hours over this, asking for your conversion."

Richard read and read in it.

I didn't know what to do. I was utterly dismayed. Few outsiders can guess how strong a hold anti-Christian feelings may have on a Jewish heart. Besides the historical reasons, there were nearly always personal ones. As a child I had to walk home from school past a corner where two bigger girls lay in wait to pull my hair "because you're a dirty little Jewess." And they were Christians. It was a game, of a kind. And then, when I grew up, the Nazi persecution of Jews in Germany began.

Richard told me that Jesus himself was a victim of injustice, but I couldn't bear to hear that forbidden name on his lips.

"I don't need him," I said. "You don't need him. It isn't natural. We're ~Jewish~ - it's another way of life!"

And when he spoke of being baptized, I quite lost my head. "I'd rather die than see you become a Christian. It isn't natural!"

I said that if he had to have religion he could practise his own Jewish faith. And for a time he did. He went to the synagogue, but even there he talked about Christ. Then he persuaded me, frightened but also a little curious, to look inside a church.

It was full of pictures of the saints, and he showed me that half of them were Jews, as were Jesus and his holy Mother Mary. The commandments taught to every child were those of the Jewish Book of Moses. The psalms were the Jewish psalms of King David. The Old Testament was full of arguments and prophecies about Christ.

"The fact is," said Richard as he led me around the strange, vaulted building, "that the Christian religion is simply our Jewish faith opened to all the nations of the earth."

Who made it possible that Jewish values, morals and wisdom

should prevail throughout the world? Should reach to so many hundreds of millions over two thousand years? Only Christ could have done it. Because of his work the Holy Book of the Jews had been translated from Hebrew into a thousand languages and dialects. And now the Bible was read by ignorant peasants and by the greatest scientists - Pasteur, Einstein ...

So with patient arguments over many nights, Richard wore down my objections. I read the New Testament. I admired and loved the Saviour. But I felt in sympathy with Gandhi when he said: "From Christianity give me Christ and you can keep all the rest." I wanted nothing to do with his followers who had wronged my people.

Richard wouldn't have this. "You can't accept Jesus without accepting his disciples. He would not leave them to come to you. And you can't accept the disciples without calling even Judas a friend, as Jesus did."

In time, my intellectual objections were overcome, but I knew that the emotional ones were still there. They grew not weaker but stronger: for while my mind whispered: "He's right," my heart, my whole upbringing were in revolt. For weeks more this internal struggle raged within me.

One evening Richard walked in from a prayer meeting at the Anglican Church Mission to the Jews. He took my hands in his and said he had "surrendered his heart to Christ." Soon he would be baptized.

I'd thought of myself as a tough, resilient character. But the news was more than I could bear. I shut myself alone in my room for hours. And I decided that on the day he was baptized I would kill myself.

When it came, and I was left alone, I locked my door and threw myself down on the floor, wracked with dry sobs. A terrible emptiness, a windy desert, stretched away inside me. In my desperation, I cried aloud: "Jesus, I can't come to you, I don't want Richard to be yours, I can't bear any more!"

I shocked myself with the force of my own cry. I lay there for a long time, sobbing.

And then, slowly, I grew calmer.

Something had changed within me. Life began to flow back.

When Richard returned from baptism, which had been done in another town, I went with flowers to meet him at the station. He was so happy. And we sat up until late at night, discussing all that had happened. I saw now that I had been quietly moving towards this change with a silent force I hadn't understood, although all the while I'd thought my mind was in charge.

But if I'd given way, I wasn't yet prepared to call myself a

Christian. I was young. I wanted to go to parties and dances and cinemas. Not to sit listening to sermons in churches.

To humour me, sometimes Richard would agree. At a party we went to one Sunday evening I suddenly realized that I was not enjoying myself in the least. The noise and the drink and the smoke and the jokes grew worse. And everything about the conversation was either boring or disgusting. My thoughts were no longer there. I said to Richard, "Can't we leave?"

To my surprise, he said it would be rude to go so early. Reading my mind, he kept me there on one pretext or another. Until I felt sick of the whole thing. Until I felt almost physically unclean.

Very late, as we were going home, I said impulsively, "Richard, I'd like to be baptized at once!"

He smiled.

"You've waited a long time. Let's wait now until tomorrow."

He took me next day to meet his new friends from the Anglican Mission, Pastor Adeney, a saintly man, and Pastor Ellison, who also seemed to me to belong to another world. Both had given up everything

for their ministry and from them I learnt a Christianity that meant sacrifice and self-renunciation.

I was overflowing with such happiness that I had to share it. On the day after my baptism I hurried to work and told a friend, a Jewish girl, never doubting that she'd be won over too. (I'd forgotten already what I'd been through myself!) But the more I said about my change of heart, the less she wished to hear.

"So now I've lost you!" she said, and turned away, weeping. We'd been very close.

It was only the first lesson.

After my conversion I had a child. We hadn't wanted children in the past, fearing that they'd interfere with our gay life. Our son Mihai was born in 1939. Already the darkest clouds were gathered over Rumania. We were in Hitler's orbit, and we knew that Jews must soon be uprooted. So everything in reason pointed against having a child. But we had Mihai. How glad we are today to have him!

Richard's mother was almost as proud as we were. On the first day she hurried to tell all the relations: "The very image of Richard, and so intelligent!"

Richard told me, "He's dark like you, and very beautiful. But he only cries; when will he say something clever?"

We were so happy.

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By the time I had finished my story, the evening was almost

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gone. Around the cell, quarrels and arguments were taking their inevitable course. Arms and gesturing hands cast an embroidery of shadows on the ceiling and the cell hummed like an angry hive, as women settled slowly in for the night.

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PROMISES

Men's voices sounded in the corridor. Boots stamped smartly. The great

door swung open.

"Stand up!"

A posse of guards filed through the door. After them came nine officers. They stood in a semicircle just inside the cell. Braid glittered on their clean, well-pressed uniforms. Facing them, the ragged band of women with long, greasy hair. No one spoke. The officers stared at us in disgust, and one held a handkerchief to his nose. Then they filed out again, with no word said. The door crashed shut.

We had been inspected for the first and last time in Jilava.

Uproar! Everyone had a theory as to what it meant, for in prison it means something if there are three beans rather than two in the soup.

"Don't ask me how I know, dear," Viorica told her friends. "But the Americans have delivered an ultimatum to Moscow! I heard it yesterday, but I didn't believe it then. Now, this is for your ears only!"

The "secret" was around the cell in a flash. Chattering women in every bunk played endless variations on the theme. They saw themselves free and acclaimed as national heroines. The Americans were coming! If they hadn't already arrived.

It kept us happy until the door was again flung open.

"Come and get it! Carrot soup, my ladies!"

The stench of the steaming keg had preceded its arrival. But many older women didn't stir. They were by now too weak. This lethal diet - although we couldn't guess it then - was part of our preparation for the labour camps. It certainly exposed the weak ones. The "inspection," too, was a preliminary to the move. Our fate had been decided without reference to America.

"It's slave labour, of course," a young teacher told us. "But at the Canal you get a pound and a half of bread a day. And macaroni!"

What bliss! Jilava overflowed with rumours. Every neweomer had something to add about the Canal's wonders. The

huge project, which would cost billions, had long been talked about.

The Canal was to run for forty miles across the bare plains of southern Rumania, to link the Danube with the Black Sea.

Millions of tons of rock had to be blasted. Special factories were built to make the cement. Plant was hired from Russia at exorbitant fees. An army of engineers, clerks, administrators was already at work. An entire new government department had been set up, and all Rumania's economy centred on the Canal.

In the labour camps which had gone up along the route it was said that one might even receive parcels.

"Whatever you like from home!"

"Chocolate!"

Chocolate was everyone's dream.

Warm clothes were freely available, and medical attention, at the Canal.

But better than all this: at the Canal you could see your children and your husband – not merely for a brief visit, but for the whole day.

We believed all this. We thought about little else.

"But not everyone will have the right to go," warned Viorica. "As the political officer said to me just the other day, 'in a Socialist society work is a privilege that's not for bandits.'"

Overcrowding in Jilava grew worse. Cell 4 had space for thirty people. By Christmas 1950 there were eighty. You couldn't move without treading on bodies lying in the aisle. How the air stank!

We were overjoyed to be taken out, one morning, for a bath. But this happiness, like all prison delights, was short-lived. Along dark corridors we hurried, pushed and pummelled by male warders. The sudden exercise was too much for women who had lain on their backs for months, and some collapsed.

"Five minutes! Five minutes!" bellowed a young lieutenant with a gypsy face. "Undress, shower and get out here again. And no talking! Or you'll all be punished."

Immediately a woman screeched. And turned on the woman behind her.

"You trod on my sore heel!"

A murmured apology came.

"Perhaps you don't know who I am?"

But we all knew that: she was one of the worst informers in the cell. Calmly, although still breathless from the race along the passages, the offending woman – who was nearly seventy replied:

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"My dear, I scarcely know who I am myself. How could I know who you are?"

A frenzied shrilling rent the air. The lieutenant blew fiercely on a whistle. Red with anger, he shouted:

"No showers! Back to your cells! Move!"

And along the dark corridors, smelling of urine, guards struck out. And swore.

Back in Cell 4, we heard shouting from next door. Some were demanding revenge on the informer. Others wanted to punish the frail old lady who, it appeared, was the wife of a former National Party Leader, one of the country's greatest democrats. Poor Mrs. Mihalache! She played only an accidental role in this farce.

The truth came later – the showers didn't work. The plumbing had broken down. Yet the order had come from above: baths! How to wash so many women without water? The head warder solved the problem by arranging for the informer to create a disturbance.

Mrs. Mihalache's poignant answer spread through the jail. How could we know who we were? Our families, belongings, identities had been taken away. But does a caterpillar know that it will turn into a butterfly? Perhaps in Cell 4, cocooned in suffering, future saints were being made.

Corporal Georgescu arrived next morning with a sheet of paper in her hand. "Everyone on this list must be ready to move at once!"

Expectant silence.

"May we know who's on the list?" Mrs. Gavriloiu dared.

"Don't give ~me~ orders!" She grasped Mrs. Gavriloiu's dress threateningly. "Here!" she pushed the list at her. "Go on, read it to them. You all make me sick!"

Georgescu read with difficulty, and the list was handwritten. The names were read out and the group left the cell. No reason was given for their departure. Few now believed they could be going home. But nothing could be worse than Jilava!

We watched them go enviously. Taking pity, women who were leaving gave away precious odds and ends.

"Would you like this handkerchief, Sabina? I'm afraid it's not too clean." Mrs. Ioanid offered the article that had served her as towel, table napkin and much else.

Sister Veronica, the nun, gave me a long, pleated black underskirt. "Take it, take it!" she begged. "I have another one and there must be ten degrees of frost outside."

I took it. The skirt trailed on the ground, but my legs were

warm. Sister Veronica kissed me cheerfully and hurried off, perhaps to her death.

And I went on waiting, day by day, for my name to be called.

I remember January 6th, 1951 I'd been lying in my bunk with my head full of memories, for it was Mihai's birthday. Richard had decided before the birth that we'd have a boy, and even when he'd arrive. One evening he said, "Enough is enough. If he doesn't appear by 9 p.m. I'll call a taxi and take you to the hospital." "But I have no pangs." "I'll decide in this family when you have pangs!" So he did take me to hospital and when he came next morning he had a son to look at.

After a difficult birth, I was in the post-operation ward. "How about another," he said. "I'd like two. But quicker this time." And I'd smiled and said, "Sorry - it can't be done." But how happy we'd been. Now Mihai was eleven.

That day my name was on the list.

I was out of Cell 4 by 8 a.m. and waiting in the corridor. My light summer coat was returned. Georgescu and the guards were quite

comically polite to the line of waiting women. They knew no more than we did about our fate. And perhaps we'd meet again in altered circumstances. The Americans might yet come!

All day we hung about, bitterly cold. Women from other cells joined us. At last we climbed into trucks which drove to Ghencea, a transit camp near Bucharest.

I saw barrack huts where men and women sat working. We were led across iron-hard earth, under the winter stars. What heaven! After so many months underground in Jilava, I could look up and see the moon sailing through little clouds. Friend of lovers! How often she'd obliged by hiding her face in the old days, when Richard kissed me in the street!

Ghencea was an old German army barracks, a great barbed-wire-enclosed space of dilapidated wooden huts with outside lavatories. Discipline was lax. You could walk through a door and talk to people from the other huts unhindered. For a moment, unhappiness was washed from our minds. Through the clear, frosty air came cries of greeting.

"Release?!" cried a lanky girl with dark eyes, on hearing the hopeful talk of new arrivals. "What an idea! This is the departure point for the Canal. You'll be packed off there in a few days."

Now there was more news of the Canal. How labour camps and new towns were springing up along the route. A new deep sea harbour was being built at Tasaul. The whole Karasu Valley must be drained.

On the third day I was brought before the commandant, Captain Zaharia Ion, who had been a Party member since the Twenties.

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His emaciated body moved loosely in the carapace of its grandiose uniform. I must have looked startled. He smiled from a skull-like head.

"Do you know why I look like this?" he demanded. "Because I starved in jail under the bourgeoisie! People like you!"

I said I was sorry if he had been unjustly imprisoned. "But I don't belong to the bourgoisie." He looked at me thoughtfully.

"I'll make you an offer."

Instead of going to work on the Canal I could stay as a privileged detainee in comparative comfort at Ghencea. All I need do

was report to him in confidence on the prisoners from time to time.

"Thank you," I said. "But in the Bible you can read of two traitors, one who betrayed King David and one who betrayed Jesus. Both hanged themselves. I don't want such an end, so I won't become an informer."

"Then you won't see freedom again!"

As for Captain Zaharia Ion, none of his 'bourgeois' persecutors was as merciless as his Communist comrades proved to be, for they arrested him on false charges later and he died in prison. Now he has been officially 'rehabilitated.' Will this comfort the soul in whose existence neither he nor his brutal masters believed?

In a shunting yard near Bucharest we boarded a train at last for the Canal. The long, black ~duba~ (prison wagon) was crowded not only with "politicals' but with thieves, street-walkers and gypsies. We were pushed through the sliding doors by ill-tempered guards. We sat in half-darkness waiting to move. Light filtered through small, barred windows, high up. At last we began to creak slowly south.

Once I glimpsed a shining stretch of water. River banks of thick green grass. I remembered the river Prut which ran near my home town. In the woods we picked wild strawberries to eat with sugar and cream.

It was many hours later that the train stopped and we tumbled out, tired and aching. CERNAVODA, read a sign on the platform. The name of a small town by the Danube. The camp was miles away. We began to march through the black, wintry night. At last we passed through gates strung with barbed-wire, under tall watch-towers. Searchlights played over rows of identical huts.

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PART 2:

THEL

As our group entered one of the huts at the end of the line a shout of greeting went up from the crowd gathered inside.

"Valiea! Good old Valiea!"

She ran forward to be embraced.

Valiea was a gypsy of a girl of about twenty-six, and an accomplished thief. Many gypsies stole, but Valiea's exploits were

famous. She was taken under the wing of the gypsy leader, an older woman with a lovely hooked nose and torrents of jet-black hair. They found her a bed, gave her food, chattered together like starlings.

I knew no one and no one knew me. Or looked at me. It was late on Saturday evening, and they were sprawling about after the day's work. I looked around for a place, but there were already too many prisoners for the few beds. So I sat down on the floor, and at once a woman on the next bed began to tell me about her daughter. She didn't know if the girl had also been arrested, or if she'd been thrown out on the street.

"But the great thing here is that we can hope for a ~vorbitor~ (official permit for visits from relatives). We can even ask them to bring clothes!"

This news, the thought that I might see Mihai kept me awake all night. I turned it over and over in my head. Towards dawn I dozed. And woke up with heart pounding. There was a scuttling and squeaking in the dark.

"Beast!" gasped the woman beside me. "It jumped on my bed!"

Now I recognized that acrid, animal smell. Rats!

An educated voice a little further on said mildly, "Really, the rats have more reason to consider us a nuisance than we them. They've been here longer. By some generations."

Another said, cheerfully, "You should save some bread for them at night. Keeps them from biting."

On Sunday morning, after a night on the floorboards, I hoped

for rest and a chance to wash and repair our clothes. It was a vain hope.

The whole female section of the camp was ruled by a woman prisoner with a long criminal record. Biddable Rina had been chosen by the camp commandant for her hatred of politicals. While the criminal prisoners lounged about, the politicals were down on their knees scrubbing and scraping the floor.

"All new arrivals will gather outside for a visit to the bathhouse," she cried.

We lined up and were marched away over the frozen mud under an escort of armed guards.

Among the educated women and well brought-up young girls were a handful of prostitutes. They squeaked and shrieked and, in the way of obscenity, gave as good as they got.

The guards laughed, and stamped their boots. Rina had wrapped her head in a coloured scarf, from which her small nose emerged like a pig's snout as, cackling, she urged them on.

The world spun round. The wet concrete floor came up to hit me. The strain of the journey, the hunger and shame made me faint. I was carried back to the hut and placed on a bed.

Now a strange thing happened. I was thrown a jacket and skirt of sack-like material in dirty grey and white stripes. My stockings were full of holes. But I still wore the long, pleated skirt given me by the nun in Jilava. With my black hair and Jewish looks, I must have had an outlandish appearance.

The politicals looked me over and decided I was not one of them. So reasoned the gypsies, I was one of ~them~.

I said, "I assure you I'm not. I can't speak your language."

The hook-nosed old woman looked wise, and patted my arm. "We know, dear. We know." They were convinced that, for some reason of my own, I was trying to hide my race. From that time on in Cernavoda, I was an adopted gypsy.

Wherever they are, gypsies live a life apart. But in Eastern Europe, Rumania was their favourite country. They roamed about in their caravans, the men wearing their hair long and well-oiled, the women in ankle-length skirts and rich petticoats. They were strikingly beautiful and many of them stole anything they put their hands on.

The Communists sent thousands of them to prisons or to the labour camps, where they continued to steal. It was impossible to hang up an old piece of clothing or a rag. Anything, everything vanished under those capacious petticoats.

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Almost alone among political prisoners at the Canal, I lost nothing.

Richard and I helped the gypsies when they poured from Nazi camps at the end of the war. Now I had my reward.

They said I'd be re-united with my husband and child and travel over many seas and lands to find happiness. I didn't expect to wait fifteen years, though.

They did a good business out of fortune-telling. Women would give their bread away for the sake of hearing that they would be released soon, that their families would prosper. The gypsies had no cards, but they foretold the future by a still older means which may go back to their time under Tamerlane and Genghis Khan. They threw grains of corn on the floor and found hopeful wonders in the pattern they made.

Being nomads, gypsies settled anywhere. Even in prison, they were like a great family. Later, when we were allowed to send postcards to relatives, I acted as their scribe - none of them could read or write - and every message had to begin: "To all the gypsy folk, greetings!"

Sometimes furious quarrels flared among them - it is no legend that sometimes gypsy women use their babies as clubs to beat each other and do not stop until both children are dead. At other times they would dance and sing wildly to forget where they were.

In time I came to know everyone in the hut, including the street girls. Some had beautiful natures, and when they heard the call of Jesus did their best to rise above the mud into which they had been thrown by life.

Next day, early in the morning, we left the camp. A cold wind blew across the plain from the Black Sea. The guards chafed their hands as we waited to move off, surly and resentful at parting from their warm bunks. If we stirred, they worked off their feelings with blows and swearing.

At the gates, under the iron watch-towers, the leading guard shouted: "Taking out 2,000 criminals and counter- revolutionaries!" Or whatever was the number for the day.

The bitter wind blew in our faces and tore at our clothing. The column, it seemed, was endless. I looked forward and saw only ranks of prisoners with armed guards stamping at their sides. Sometimes I dared to look back (which was forbidden) and saw the column stretching away into the distance like one single, enormous beast, an entity with a life of its own. A blind, hopeless beast, the sum of all those bodies and arms and legs,

with no purpose but to toil until it dropped. I thought of the slaves in ancient times. Of my forefathers in Egypt who laboured on the Pharaonic works.

We were building an embankment, men and women together.

I had to keep filling a wheelbarrow with earth. Each time the barrow was full a male prisoner had to push it 200 yards, then run with it up a sharp incline to the parapet of the dam. He tipped out the earth and ran back for more. The men's task was harder than ours, but after the first few barrow-loads I staggered whenever I tried to lift the heavy shovel of earth over the side.

Each gang had a "brigade-chief" with several helpers to check how much work you could do. The "norm" required could be anything up to eight cubic metres a day. If, after tremendous efforts, we fulfilled the norm it was raised next day by so many barrowloads. If we failed to fulfill it we were punished.

The "brigadiers" were trusted prisoners. They had special rations - even some pay. And never did a stroke of work themselves. They ruled with powers of life and death. Rina wielded hers to the full.

Talking, and all other forms of human contact were forbidden, but I risked saying a few cheerful words to my companion as I filled the barrow, and quoted the Bible. He looked at me startled - a middle-aged man who looked like a peasant. Then he seized his wheelbarrow and trundled away. Another man came, another barrow. And another. And another.

Then a fourth man said, "Count Rakosi thanks you for your beautiful words and he wants to know who you are."

The "peasant" was a Hungarian aristocrat from Transylvania, a Rumanian province thickly populated with Hungarians which had been under Habsburg rule for centuries. I was so surprised that I left my spade for a moment in the earth.

"Come on! Wake up!" It was Rina's voice from twenty yards off. "Do you want a night in the carcer?"

I began to dig with frenzied strength. The man lifted his barrow and scuttled away.

"Carcer" was a word to freeze the blood. A box six feet high and two and a half foot wide, it was a common punishment in Canal camps. There, after a day's work, you had to stand without moving the whole

night. Next day you went back to work again, with a good chance if tired of being ordered back to the carcer that night for not working quickly enough.

We were given a pound of bread at midday, with some soup

and oats. It was an improvement on Jilava, but a mockery of our hopes. And on this we had to work on until the end of the day.

Looking around at our emaciated crew, I thought it was no wonder that I hadn't recognized a Count. It was hard to tell one man from the next. All were in patched and ragged clothes. All wore the same expression, in which a kind of blank longing was replaced only by fear.

Yet some had been university dons and some editors; some priests, or business men, or high civil servants. Impossible now to tell them from the thieves, pimps and pickpockets who worked beside them.

We toiled on for another four hours. Light failed, and the great column formed up for the return to camp. On the way several prisoners collapsed. One fell beside me: without a word, two of the stronger men picked him up, placed his arms around their shoulders and moved on. An old woman was borne pick- aback, her stiff legs stood out in stockings full of holes. There was a disturbance up ahead. A man had fallen and couldn't be revived. He was dragged to the side of the road. And hoisted on to the shoulders of three grumbling shapes in the growing dusk. The wind never stopped blowing.

At the gates, the leading guard shouted again: "Returning 2,000 bandits!"

It was dark. In the West, the sky still glowed with a reddish tint.

"Bracing breeze!" one of the guards called, cheerfully, wrapped in his greateoat.

I was chilled to the marrow. My hands and feet were blistered. Every muscle ached and my head felt as if it was someone else's property. Tomorrow, I'd have a streaming cold.

And now we had to wait, a dark herd huddling in the wind, as the head of the column squeezed through the gates. Other columns from different work-points had converged on the entrance, causing a long delay.

When at last we got inside the hut, a squabble broke out. One of the street girls discovered that something she'd hidden beneath her mattress was gone.

"Thieving gypsies!" she cried. "I may be a whore, but at least I keep my hands off other people's things!"

Which brought a reply from Tania, a gypsy girl, who added: "I might have stolen, but at least I never slept with anyone but my own man."

Lisa a Moldavian, shrieked, "Who's that? Your brother?" and

cackled at her sad joke. Gypsies often had to sleep in one room: man, wife, mother, mother-in-law, sister-in-law; sometimes in the same bed.

But Lisa was herself a murderer. She'd killed her woman-chasing husband with a shotgun, out of jealousy.

"Don't teach me how to behave!" Tania cried. "I can give back what I take if I want. You who've taken a man's life, can you give it back?"

I tried to shut my ears to this high moral argument. After further rowdy exchanges, Tania stalked back to the thieves' corner. The others received her with cheers, which she acknowledged with a grin.

Tall and pretty, with glistening black hair, Tania was highly respected by her colleagues. And feared, too. The adventures she recounted with such gusto had earned her the name ~ Black-Hand Tania~. Anyone who offended her ran the risk of being expelled from the circle. Anyone who cheated her ran the risk of a night in the carcer, for Tania was not above tipping off the guards about some real or invented crime to punish an enemy. Yet her loyalty to friends was absolute and touching. And she was so proud of her skills. Her riotous account of half-emptying a dress shop had the younger girls in fits of laughter. She picked out the sharpest among them for private tuition, and showed keen character judgement.

The girls had an almost mystical admiration for her ability. They reported that Tania was "always reading books and stuff outside prison, and had once broken into a house when the owners were out and found herself in a library. She began reading and became engrossed, but after a time fell asleep in an armchair with a volume in her hand.

The owners discovered her there when they returned from the theatre. Tania herself didn't admit to being literate, considering it bad for her reputation.

One learnt to distinguish quickly between thieves, prostitutes, gangster's ~molls~ and so on. Years spent in a specific sin had left deep imprints on their souls. By their tricks of speech and behaviour you knew immediately, with no questions asked, what you were dealing with. But Tania was an independent. She was not without nobility.

To me she would say jokingly, "Don't believe that we thieves are without morals. On moral grounds I am decidedly against any theft committed by another gang than mine."

I tried, cautiously, to knock at the door of her heart. I wanted to understand her better. I asked if, as so many were leaving Rumania, Jews and refugees from Communism, she wouldn't also like to get out.

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"To hell with that!" She looked at me scomfully. "All I'm waiting for is to get out of this dump and be together with my boy friend. They couldn't catch ~him~! I'm going to show these so-and-so Communists what we can do." Without any restraint she tattled on about this paragon's underworld adventure, his looks and other abilities.

What about her parents?

"Oh, my parents!" As if she spoke of some worn-out pieces of furniture. "They're a useless pair. My mother had looks as a girl so she had men, too. Then she had me. Exit Dad! Whoever he was. She ended up with a dirty old drunk who used to wallop her every night. And lots of other kids."

Tania pepper-and-salted her talk with so many obscenities that after a time you ceased to hear them. It was like becoming used to a speech defect. I pitied her. I longed to touch just one string of her soul and start an echo there. I hated to see her corrupting others with no trace to regret.

And the great lover, it turned out, was her brother-in-law. The prostitute's gibe had been near the mark. She'd had to share a room with six others, and a bed with her sister and the husband. So it happened. She was twelve at the time. And had been taught to steal from the age of five.

Another day, she burst out:

"Yes, I know - 'thou shalt not steal.' That's what the police said when they beat me up, the so-and-sos. I told them , ~you~ are the so-and-so thieves. You've pinched all the land, all the houses, the whole so-and-so country. Are you telling ~me~ what to do? Sitting on your fat so-and-sos in plushy offices. You ought to try sleeping summer and winter under the bridges in Bucharest and then come and tell me not to steal." She laughed harshly. "Oh, they lammed into me. I lost all my front teeth. I've got this new plate now." She took it out to show me.

Her eyes flashed. A few of her admirers who'd gathered around nodded sympathy.

"Tania, you're wonderful. I'd never have the nerve," said Joana, a fluffy young girl who'd been doxy to a Bucharest gangster. He'd ditched her when the police came and was now safe in Paris.

The other girls looked at me for approval. I said:

"Tania, you have great courage. With your energy and sharpness, you could do a lot better for yourself. Just because your parents were duds, it doesn't mean that you have to be. Lots of great men and women had useless parents, or grew up as orphans. If you directed your mind in the right way, perhaps you could reach greatness, too."

"Me, famous? Doing what?" She suggested some profane possibilities. "Don't get me wrong. I LIKE stealing. It's my life, it's what I'm born to do?"

I ventured an example. "One very great man began life as a swindler, a racketeer. He was called Matthew. But when he met the Lord, he was so moved, so enchanted with his goodness, that he left everything he had and became Matthew the Disciple. A thief became a saint, forgiven and loved throughout the world to this day. A martyr of the church, the author of the gospel read in the whole world."

"Disciple, saint, martyr! Where does she find all these words?" Tania mocked.

The gulf between criminal and political prisoners (all those arrested for religious motives were considered politicals) was not often bridged. It was always the convicted women who got the jobs as norm-checkers or room-chiefs, making life hell for any member of the former middle or upper classes. The thieves addressed them

sarcastically as "Madam" and found a hundred small ways to take their revenge. The politicals neither wanted nor tried to make contact with their neighbours. Standing half-way between the two groups - a gypsy-Jewish-Christian talking with love to the worst criminals in the hut and reproaching sin in ladies of high rank - I naturally earned black looks from several sides.

Cernavoda was full of famous names. A breezy society column could have been composed about their doings. In the third person, perhaps. "Queuing for the toilet this morning, Bystander noticed Countess X chatting with former lady-in-waiting, Baroness Y, over the latest kitchen rumour that all graves of socially opprobrious personalities are to be opened and gold and jewelry removed for the benefit of the State."

What strange meetings we saw!

One working party consisted of fascist women. Their chief was Mrs. Codreanu, wife of the Iron Guard leader who had helped to push Rumania into alliance with the Nazis. He had boasted in a book that he'd never shaken hands with a Jew, or entered a Jewish shop.

Now Mrs. Codreanu slaved for the Communists alongside Jewish women. But the prejudice was unchanged.

"That criminal Churchill!" she raged. "A Zionist, a Jewish stooge And Roosevelt, surely a Jew himself! It's because of them we're here today."

The guards were ruthless to these women. Fellow-prisoners attacked them. But they had courage. Because I tried to show them understanding and love, one of them approached me:

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"My friends and I have decided that when all Rumania's Jews are wiped out, dear, you and your family will be spared."

She was surprised that I didn't receive the news with enthusiasm.

Wives of other politicians and women who'd been involved in politics themselves held long discussions on how the world should be run. One said to me, "I've been awake all night thinking out a plan for the future - do you want to hear it?"

I wasn't given any alternative.

"First, there must be a complete military reform. All the uniforms must be royal blue with big shakoes ..."

I said: "Thank you very much - there's no need to develop the plan further. If all the uniforms are royal blue, that'll be just enough."

But sometimes people who seemed foolish or downright wicked had lessons to teach. An Orthodox sister in our hut swore, told spicy stories and stole like a gypsy.

I asked, "But think, how will you be saved?"

She laughed. "A monk taught me how to be saved. I keep two commandments without fail. I never judge another. And I always forgive those who sin against me. So God will be obliged to forgive me, too."

Not the best theology; but I was glad to hear it, for she really had the virtues she claimed.

In 1951 more and more Communist women began appearing in the camps and prisons. At Cernavoda I met Marioara Dragoescu, who'd been imprisoned by the old regime as a leading revolutionary. Now she was sent to forced labour by her comrades as a "counter-revolutionary."

But she would go on fighting for the Communist ideal. The Great Marxist Society was around the corner. In Mislea, the big women's prison, she had nursed her two-month child - then it had been taken from her and put in a State orphanage. She didn't know if she'd ever see it again.

She'd commiserated with George Cristescu, one of the Party founders, who'd served his first prison sentence for Socialism in 1907. He'd also been the first Secretary-General of the Communist Party. Now, at seventy-two, he worked alongside us in the fields from sunrise to sunset, in snow, rain and wind.

Sometimes I filled his barrow with earth. He'd hitched himself to it like a beast. It was easier to pull than to push up the slopes. I remembered something Richard said shortly before his arrest and repeated it to him: "Under a tyranny, prison is the most honourable place to be."

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A smile lit his face. A guard shouted at him and he hurried off,

yoked to his load. Next day when we were out together, I whispered: "I'm sorry to get you into trouble with my speaking."

"No, speak! It's like music to hear something different after so long. I've hungered to hear a gentle voice as I hunger for colour after so much grey."

Later he told me of his disillusion. "This Communism they practise is not the ideal I fought and suffered for. I felt it would be dishonest on my part not to protest."

Those of us who had faith realized for the first time how rich we were. The youngest Christians and the weakest had more resources to call upon than the wealthiest old ladies and the most brilliant intellectuals.

People with good brains, education, wit, when deprived of their books and concerts, often seemed to dry up like indoor plants exposed to the winds. Heart and mind were empty.

Mrs. Nailescu, the professor's wife from Cluj, said one day: "How happy you must be to be able to think and keep your mind busy and pray! I can't. I try to remember a poem, and in comes the guard shouting. At once my mind goes back to this everlasting camp. I can't concentrate. I can't discipline myself."

"Society" women were often the most pitiful. Life was harder for them than for anyone. They'd lost most, in the material sense; and they had fewest inner resources to fill the gap. A rubble of old games of bridge, hats, hotels, first-nights, lost weekends and lovers rattled about in their heads like junk in the back seat of a car. Their nerves gave way first, as did their soft white hands.

After work, women came to religious prisoners and asked, begged even, to be told something of what we remembered from the Bible. The words gave hope, comfort, life.

We had no Bible. We ourselves hungered for it more than bread. How I wished I'd learnt more of it by heart! But we repeated daily those passages we knew. And at night also, when we held vigils for prayer. Other Christians, like me, had deliberately committed long passages to memory, knowing that soon their turn would come for arrest. They brought riches to prison. While others quarrelled and fought, we lay on our mattresses and used the Bible for prayer and meditation, and repeated its verses to ourselves through the long nights. We learnt what neweomers brought and taught them what we knew. So an unwritten Bible circulated through all Rumania's prisons.

Meditation goes deeper and deeper. In the first stage, what meditates is not your true self, but what you had mistakenly supposed to be yourself - that is, a conglomerate of what you know from newspapers, books and the cinema. What is You in yourself

is very small. In the second stage you must put aside more and more what is not You, what is borrowed, so as to reach the final reality in You. Once you have become Yourself again, it becomes relatively easy to communicate with a person whom you love. At a certain moment, as with a writer when an idea becomes a picture in his mind, you see the one on whom you meditate. Jesus said: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God," but not only God.

I conversed often with Richard, especially during the years he spent in solitary confinement. He transmitted messages to me. I had a deep inner certainty that we were in contact, that he was present. I was quite sure that he received my thoughts too. These moments recurred through all the fourteen years of his imprisonment, and for long after I was free. I have a note in my Bible, dated in pencil, 1953, some months after my release: Richard came to see me today; he bent over me as I was reading.

I always feared that he, too, might have been sent to one of the slave camps. How could he stand up to such work? Just writing and preaching used to consume all his strength. When a woman told me he was dead, I didn't believe her.

I'd asked everyone at the Canal if they'd had word of Richard, always frightened of the wrong answer, but no one knew anything. Then, three women arrived from Vacaresti, a prison where many of the sick were taken. Every new arrival was like the coming of the postman. We asked the usual questions, hoping for news of our relatives in jail. None had heard of Richard.

A few days later a woman from this group came to me.

"Every time you speak of God I remember Vacaresti," she said. "I was only there a short time, but we had a preacher there, too."

Vacaresti was a converted monastery. Walls between the monks' rooms had been knocked down to make bigger cells. But a few small alcoves remained where special prisoners could be isolated.

"We were waiting on the landing to use the bathroom," said the woman, "when a man was heard talking from behind a locked door. He was saying, "Love Jesus and trust in God's kindness." We were so

surprised. Everyone in the prison asked who he was. But it was kept secret, of course."

Now she had met me, she was sure it was Richard. He seemed very ill. After some days he stopped preaching. She heard that he had died.

How many tears, in secrecy, streamed down my face. How the pain tore at my heart. But through this grief, hope grew. I

continued to pray, and asked the Lord to add years of life and health to the man who served him faithfully even in the isolation cell.

I was worried that even Mihai might be arrested and sent to the Canal. He was twelve, and boys no older were there. Every day I saw a boy called Marin Motza, of the same age, with his fourteen-year-old sister. Their father was a former Iron Guard leader. He had mixed anti-semitism with a deep orthodox faith. When during the Spanish Civil War anarchists desecrated the churches, he said, "They are shooting in the face of Christ. I can bear no more." And he went to Spain and died there fighting on the side of the future dictator, Franco.

What contradictions there are in the human heart! He left a wonderful Christian testament. In this he said: "When Christ promised that the gates of hell should not prevail against his church, he counted on the church fighting. This assurance doesn't stand if Christians do not do their duty." How true a thought!

Now his wife and children were imprisoned simply because they had belonged to him. Mrs. Motza had an ~id,e fixe~: "My son Marin will be king of Rumania when Communism is overthrown, since the exiled King Michael will never come back."

The whole Iron Guard movement was full of inner contradictions. Its founder, Codreanu, killed and patronized the killings of men who hadn't even committed the crime of being Jews. But among his last words were: "It does not count how a man dies; only how he resurrects." He was strangled by his adversaries.

At Cernavoda camp we were given postcards and told we might write to invite our families to visit us on a certain Sunday. I suspected a trick: weren't we being duped into naming some friend who would then be watched and followed by the Secret Police? So I spent days asking myself: who can I write to? And will they be still there to receive my card? So many had been arrested.

Everyone around me was writing postcards. Each asking herself if there was someone at home to answer. If there was a home. There would be sons who had lost their faith or been arrested, husbands in prison or living with other women. I saw so many tragedies ahead.

But when the great day arrived, no tragedies were revealed; for though our relatives came we were not permitted to meet them.

I woke on Sunday long before reveille was sounded at 5 a.m. The light was on (it was forbidden to switch it off) and outside

it looked still like the middle of the night. There was ice on the panes. I longed for morning to come.

And at last it did. I ran out hoping to see the visitors waiting in the compound by the gates. It was a long way off, separated from the camp itself by three fences of barbed wire and an outer zone - no-man's-land that you could not enter.

There I saw my son. Taller, slimmer, in poor clothes. I recognized the man at his side as the pastor of our church. (Since then tragic events have created a gap between him and us, but we remember and are thankful for the great help he and his wife gave in difficult times and if he hates us now we never cease to love him.)

I waved and waved, but they could not see me among all the other women lining the wire. I hurried back to the hut to tell the lady who had the bed next to mine.

She looked at me. At my stained and ragged dress, my odd shoes, the remains of my light summer coat, the piece of string that was my belt.

"You'll frighten the poor child if he sees you like that," she said. "Borrow my blouse - at least it's in one piece."

Tania offered a long, bright gypsy skirt. Valia draped a white headscarf around my hair. Stockings, even a grubby handkerchief, were loaned to me. While we were admiring my new elegance a row broke out in the room.

Rina was in the middle of it, crowing triumphantly. We were to be punished. So many people had failed to fulfill their work norms over the past week that the visit was cancelled.

They had travelled all night from Bucharest, had spent the savings they needed so desperately, for nothing. We could not speak. We could not even receive the clothes and food they'd brought with them.

The group of visitors, about thirty, waited all day at the gates in the hope that the Commandant would change her mind. She didn't. We had no chance even to look at them or wave any more. Throughout the day, guards drove us away from the fence. Guns in the watch-towers were trained on us. From time to time a woman who'd been able to pass by the wire reported: "They're still there!" But in the evening they were gone.

It seemed unlikely that I should ever see Mihai if they were going to insist on everyone fulfilling the work norms. A great number of prisoners had come from Jilava. Hunger and illness left them too weak to meet the ever-increasing demands made upon them.

But we could write again. There was another issue of postcards.

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And several Sundays later, Mihai again made the journey to Cernavoda. This time there was no punishment. But the visitors proceeded alphabetically, and my name always came last. The day might pass without my turn arriving.

Borrowed clothes went from woman to woman.

"How do I look?"

"Perfect!"

Most of them had been awake all night thinking what they would say, rehearsing the words over and over. But usually, when the moment came, they were too overcome to speak. And if you tried to ask about relatives or friends, the guards would stop you. Even the gifts of clothes, which we'd been told we could receive, were rejected on this or that pretext. The meetings gave to many more misery than joy. They hurried back to return the borrowed things, which were snatched up by the next person.

The others watched us sadly. Perhaps, on the next visiting day - in two more months - it would be their turn.

We were taken out to another barrack-hut near the gates. It was not, of course, the "whole day with your families" we'd been promised

at Jilava. It was fifteen minutes, standing in the same room, ten yards apart, with the guards listening to every word.

But when I saw my son, I forgot I was a prisoner and what I looked like and where I was, and simply with my eyes I embraced him. How thin he was, and serious! I gazed at him and he at me, and in a flash the fifteen minutes had passed. Our emotion wiped out time. We barely spoke. Not that it was possible to say anything intimate.

I remember that I called across the space that separated us: "Mihai, believe in Jesus with all your heart!" Giving him the best counsel I could; knowing from my experience in prison among so many people, old and young, that only Christ can give the hope that lights the darkest place.

He'd been left like thousands of other boys and girls without a guide. The Communists would profit from that. As it happened in the parable of the prodigal son who wasted all he had and then turned for help to an elder who made him tend swine, men sent the young to live on ideas fit for pigs. I said, "Believe in Jesus' knowing that Jesus alone has the words of eternal life and is the best guide for a motherless child.

He appeared to me very beautiful; every mother is convinced that her son is the most handsome. What was important in this encounter flowered later, as a tree from a small seed. How he had received my words I learnt only after my release.

I was pushed roughly on the shoulder and led out by the

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guards. In our barrack-hut everyone crowded around, asking what Mihai had said, how he was. But I just shook my head. For hours I couldn't speak. I was somewhere else. I was not in prison.

In the evening there were many who had waited for someone who never came. Now they were weeping aloud as they lay on their straw mattresses.

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THE CARCER

At night, in every hut, a woman had to stay awake on guard duty. What you were supposed to be guarding was never explained (I imagine it was to prevent suicides), but you had to keep on your feet. Punishments for falling asleep were brutal.

A naked light bulb, dangling in the middle of the room, swung gently in the draught. Rows of women tossed and turned. Some snored loudly. Some cried out in nightmare. Every face showed marks of suffering and fear. How long were the hours. How desolately the wind howled outside. As if it had blown all these strangers here together: old, young; women of fashion, vagrants from under the city bridges. All they had in common was pain.

When I was a child I disliked night. Now I longed for it, as the one release from murderous work. Yet when dark came I couldn't sleep. I would rise and pray for the women in our hut, in our camp, for the millions of prisoners in the Communist world, and also for Christians who slept peacefully in the West, and those I imagined were praying for us.

Once, being in any case awake, I offered to take on a shift. It was Tania's. She had no trouble sleeping. But she refused, brusquely.

She said, "Sleep yourself." But meant it kindly.

Later, seeing me still awake, she came to sit on my bed. We talked in whispers. She told me one of her thieves' tales. She'd been in a prison which held 4,000 women. Among them was one who had been governor of that very jail under the old regime.

"She'd had a go at Communist prisoners during the war," said Tania, "and now she was inside herself, which was just where she belonged. It wasn't just that she cooked the books and pinched the food money. They all did that. But this one used to let out the smartest girls for a few days, then bring them in and take a cut of what they'd stolen.

When I tried to speak to her about God, Tania answered: "Before you reach God, the saints kill you!"

It was a common saying in Rumania. There was no lack of

outward devotion to the saints, but few had any real idea who they were. I told her that the saints help and intercede for us and really can bring us to God. Saints kill nobody.

I said, "Two worlds exist, the material and the spiritual - but only in the material do the laws of God and man say, "Don't steal." In the spiritual world, steal all you can is the rule. Steal whatever knowledge, manners, wit you can. In the material world, if you steal

from me, I lose. But in the spiritual world I lose nothing. I am not against your being a thief. The trouble is that you don't know what to steal. Whatever you take today you'll lose, if not tomorrow, at death. But wisdom and knowledge of God, once taken from somebody, you have eternally."

Perhaps the word did not fall in vain. Buried within us is a deep knowledge that "Do not steal," with the exception above, is one of the fundamental rules of the universe. Something in us says, "Don't desire another's property. And be discrete. Not only his possessions but his being is his sacred property." God has ordained that people, like stars in the sky, shall be at a certain distance from one another. He has given us shyness, shame, pride, dignity, fear as a fence around one's individuality, and no one may jump this fence. Every man is like an atom which cannot be penetrated by force without disintegration, a release of destructive revolutionary energies that may destroy the world.

Although so often hungry, Tania did not forget the birds. Each prisoner ate her small bread ration on her bed, carefully catching the crumbs. Every scrap was valuable: it was the only solid thing we had. But Tania took her hoarded crumbs and and spread them out on the window-sill for the sparrows.

Once she said to a neighbour, "Some Christian you are! You're all talk. You never give to the birds."

To see girls like her giving away these precious crumbs caused me to believe that no man is wholly evil. Human nature when left to itself will show good will at least in such things as this: feeding birds when you are starving.

I was impressed to find in thieves a feature of character which is distinctive to the Tibetans, the people who, for thousands of years, has had the strongest sense of metaphysics. Sven Hedin tells the story that while we in Europe feed only domestic birds for the purpose of later feeding on them, the Tibetans put little cakes on the rocks for the wild birds. Sven Hedin himself, when he got lost, lived on these cakes. Is not wild life also a part of Brahman, the one great All?

In women murderers and in every kind of criminal prisoner you could find a small piece of disinterested goodness.

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At Cernavoda we had to suffer indoctrination lectures every

Sunday, when we hoped for rest. In the afternoon the room-chief marched us to the assembly hall, where a woman speaker addressed us. She began by telling us what she thought about God, which was not much, and she warned that anyone who spoke about Him would be punished.

"Outside, everyone is now Communist," she explained. "Only you persist in this religious folly, and we mean to educate you out of it. The Party is in power now and it knows best. You're not here in prison. I won't even hear the word! You are in an institution for re-education. You'll be building your own future happiness! Working for future generations! And by passing the norms of work laid down you may well hasten your own liberty as a rehabilitated citizen."

Then came a propaganda concert. Among us were cabaret singers and small-time actresses, some from the German minority. They had to sing Communist songs mocking Germany, praising the Soviet victors. I felt the pain of their humiliation. Physical hurt passes and in a few hours may be forgotten. But humiliation, even when it seems trivial, sears the heart. Only now was I beginning to understand why Jesus spoke of being "mocked and crucified." I'd wondered before why mockery was worth mentioning in the same breath. Now I knew how it could hurt, and go on hurting.

A German woman was standing on the platform at the end of the hall. She was middle-aged, had once been plump and pretty. She clasped her hands pathetically as she sang, her voice cracking on high notes.

The officers in the front row hooted with laughter. What could be funnier than a faded fraulein making fun of herself?" Tears ran down her cheeks as she quavered on.

Next came a woman, still quite young, who read a poem dripping with gratitude to the Soviets for saving us from the Nazis: "Mother Russia, thank you for what you've done today! "The glorious Red army has shown us all the way ..." etc, etc.

This doggerel was loudly cheered by all present, the room-chiefs leading. Anyone showing a lack of enthusiasm was in for trouble. Informers were watching closely for socially-rotten reactions.

I couldn't condemn the women who took part in these charades. They were worn down with suffering. What was a misery to some of us was an hour's escape for others. And everyone was doing it: hadn't Rumania's most famous religious composer,

Aurel Baranga, turned his hand to writing Communist anthems? He was a

prisoner at one of the Canal camps now.

Few resisted. And those who did were not unaffected by these indoctrination hours which went on every Sunday at almost every camp on the Canal. Some of the rubbish they threw at you was bound to stick.

I couldn't applaud at the meetings. Everyone said, "Pretend, what does it matter? Is it worth a beating? But when I heard God and fatherland slandered and saw beauty trampled in the dirt, I couldn't. There were always people standing at the back of the hall and I buried myself among them.

But I didn't escape. Someone reported me, and in the evening I was marched into the Commandant's office. Her eyes were unwinking under the peaked cap.

"I have information that you failed to clap during this afternoon's lecture and re-education class, Wurmbrand. All your behaviour here has shown you to be a counter-revolutionary force, unamenable to proper re-education." She mouthed the ritual phrases, then licked her lips. "We've tried to be good to you. Now other methods will be used."

I wasn't allowed to return to the hut that night. I was marched to the guard-room and put into a carcer. It was a narrow cupboard built into the wall in which you could just stand. The iron door had a few holes to admit air and food was passed through a small slit at the bottom.

Carcers existed in every prison. They helped break down resistance before the extortion of a false confession. At the Canal it was the commonest punishment.

After a few hours, my feet were burning. The blood in my temples beat with slow, painful thuds. How many hours would they keep me here? How many years could I last in such conditions? I thought: this evil is spreading over the whole world, it will torment new millions; no one will escape. But this was the path of madness. I knew people had been driven insane in these boxes. They had let these thoughts of horror overcome them. But how to escape?

Richard had told me about the monks of Mount Athos, who repeat incessantly the "prayer of the heart." They say, with every heartbeat, "Lord Jesus, Son of God, have pity on me." I had used the prayer myself.

Then I remembered Richard had passed evenings explaining to me

the numerical secrets of the Bible. Neither the Hebrews nor the Greeks had numbers as well as letters. The letters of the Bible are also numbers (a=one, b=two, and so on) and every number has a symbolic value. So I tried to count.

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Drops of water were falling from somewhere on the roof of the box. It was a desolate sound. I counted them to make time pass.

One: there is one God.

Two: there are two tables of the Law.

Three: is for the Trinity.

Four: Christ will gather his elect from the four corners of

the earth.

Five: for the Five Books of Moses.

Six: the number of the beast in Revelation is 666.

Seven: is the holy number.

But the sound of dripping water went on, and when I reached fifteen, sixteen, the numbers meant nothing and I went back to the start: One, two, three, four.

I don't know how long I did this, but at a certain moment I simply began to cry aloud to avoid despair.

"One, two, three, four," I cried, and again, "One, two, three, four..." After a time the words became inarticulate. I didn't know what I said. My mind had moved into rest. It blacked out. Yet my spirit continued to say something to God.

I should explain this further, for it is one of the keys to survival in prison. With all the worry and misery you wished often to black out the mind. You sought desperately to escape, but you were hounded and obsessed by thoughts that could lead you into deeper mental trouble. Just as an injured leg is put into plaster to rest, so a tormented mind, a sick mind, a mind grieved by remorse needs rest if it is to be healthy.

It is known that there existed in the early church (and also in

the Greek mysteries) a phenomenon known as ~ glossolalia~ speaking in unknown tongues. Religion could never find expression only in words. From the beginning it has been shown also in music, the dance and painting. Language is an imperfect tool: when I say, I love apple pie, I love my wife, I love God, I express three utterly different feelings with one word. And between love and hatred there are as many nuances of feeling that cannot be put into words as there are fractions between one and two. What a mother feels for her child cannot be fitted into words, and frequently she does not use them: she says ~calam-lumsy toodleums~, or whatever, and the child is very happy to hear it.

So there is this phenomenon of glossolalia, of unknown tongues, of unarticulated words. Out of the depths of the heart, in moments of ecstasy or terrible suffering, come sounds, come expressions of love towards God, towards fellow men, made up of words that exist in no dictionary. The mind blacks out: as the Bible

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puts it, "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaks not unto men, but unto God."

In the carcer, this blacking out of the mind, so as to allow unreasoning sounds to come out from the depths of the subconscious saved my sanity. After an hour or two my mind came back, rested. I found, too, that speaking in these unintelligible tongues has one great advantage. You never lie, you deceive no one.

One day soon after this we had an inspection from Colonel Albon, an official touring the Canal camps. It was short and sharp. He walked around Cernavoda, saying nothing, gave a contemptuous glance at the ranks of the grey and ghostly women and was about to leave when a gypsy girl ran up to him. It didn't take her long to say what was on her mind. She'd been secretly meeting a lieutenant in the Security Police and now she was pregnant.

The upshot of this was that Albon made a report to Bucharest, an inquiry was held, and much of what had been happening came out. So all the women were moved out of Cernavoda to a labour colony apart from the men a few miles further down the Canal. This was Camp "Kilometre 4."

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CAMP K4: WINTER

We left camp early in the morning to work on the bank of the Danube. A bed of stones had to be laid in the water. From morning to evening we loaded heavy rocks aboard a barge. Then the barge was ferried out into the river and the rocks were dropped over the side. It was impossible to do this without making a huge splash and within minutes of starting work we were all drenched. The icy wind blowing across the plain of the Baragan froze our clothes stiff. It was like being encased in metal armour. My fingers were cracked and swollen from the cold, crushed by the heavy stones.

In the evening, when we returned to the hut, we could only go to bed in our wet clothes. There was nowhere to dry them, and if you did hang something up overnight it was sure to be stolen. Usually I slept with my damp dress under my head as a pillow and put it on, still damp, in the morning. It dried out on the way to work, just in time to get soaked again. How I longed for a little sun, shivering in the wind that rocked our barge. I was thin as a hurdle, and it seemed to blow right through me.

In the second week I was put to load stones into barrows. Other women wheeled them to the barges and flung them into the Danube. At least I stayed dry. But the stones were sharp and constantly tore the hands. My knuckles were raw, my nails broken and bloody. Sheer exhaustion somehow spared me pain. But I seemed to float a few inches above the ground, as in a dream.

Pick up a rock. Heave it, bent double, for 200 yards. Into the stockpile. Pick up a rock...I wondered if I'd ever be able to straighten again.

In the afternoon, a car appeared on the horizon at the height of a guard's belt. The women glanced at it quickly, fearfully. No one spoke. Even the guards were afraid. The light flashed on its bonnet. A new, highly-polished car. It could mean only one thing. The Secret Police. Some prisoner was wanted for further questioning.

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Every woman there was silently praying. Not back to the cells, the nights of torture!

At once the guards began to shout. The norm-checkers, always more slavishly vicious than their masters, scuttled about repeating their orders.

But for once, to our relief, no one was taken. Instead, a young woman was handed over to the guards. The wind flattened her cotton

dress against her thin frame. Grey-faced, she stared at us in horror. We were caked in white stone-dust, the eyes big in our faces like death-masks at a carnival.

The guards gave her a push forward. I saw that she was barefoot. She began to work. It was pitiful to watch. She would drag a stone a few inches. Then her legs faltered and she fell on her knees, cutting them. She struggled up and moved it a few inches. The ghastly pallor of her face could only mean that she'd spent months, perhaps years in underground cells.

It was impossible to talk to her that afternoon. Somehow she survived the march back to camp. We passed under the watchtowers and the guard leading the column cried out, "Reporting back with 350 bandits!"

Late in the evening, after I'd completed two hours of potato-peeling in the kitchens, I got back to the hut to find the girl lying on her bed, which had been pushed in between mine and the next. The white dust stuck to her features, except where tears had carved channels through it. I brought some water and helped her to wash. She blinked her eyes and peered at me as if half-blind.

As she revived a little, others gathered around.

"Poor thing, she can hardly be thirty!"

"She's rather lovely, isn't she?"

"We must find her something for her feet."

"And that dress - it's just a rag."

One of the German actresses, Clara Strauss, rummaged in her bundle and produced a crushed old dress. From someone else came a pair of sandals. These treasures, so generously given, brought fresh tears to her eyes. And slowly she began to tell us a little of her story.

For two years she'd been in solitary confinement in the cells under the Ministry of the Interior. During this interrogation in Bucharest she had been kept without sleep for ten days, while the inquisitors worked on her in relays. Powerful lights and reflectors were turned on her face, night and day. Now she could only see objects within arm's reach.

But none of this mattered much, it seemed, beside the one great question.

"Is it true that we can see our children here? I have a boy and a girl, and I haven't seen them for two years, or heard of them. I left them with my mother, but she was nearly seventy and not well. Is there any way of getting news?"

Her demands were like begging-bowls held out to us. We tried to comfort her. I told her of my meeting with Mihai. But that was a mistake.

"You mean we'll be separated by the length of a room?! But I can't see that far!"

She wept, and turned her face to the grey pillow.

In the following days, some of the women tried to discover the rest of her story. But she had retired behind a wall of reserve. Because she was so desperately weak, we gave her all the help we could in the quarry. It wasn't much. I made her eat a little of my bread, and chatted to her.

"Now we know why Christ at the last supper blessed the bread and then the cup. Usually, one says grace at the start of the whole meal and that's that. But here I've learnt that each thing has its own value. No one ever says here, "I had some bean soup," if there was a bit of bread with it. They say, 'I had bean soup with bread.' It's a treat on its own to thank God for."

Suddenly she fell into my arms, sobbing.

After a time, she grew calmer.

"My mother, she's religious, like you. How I wish I could see her now! Or touch her. She had all the strength. She was the rock to which we clung. And I've been so stupid. If only I'd listened."

She told me the rest of her story. It was a variation on a tragic theme which was becoming ever more commonplace: that of the Faithful Communist. In 1951 more and more Party members came into prison, arrested by former comrades. It was pitiful to see their confusion. Fascists could wallow in contempt and hate; they'd had their day of glory. Christians could love; theirs was to come. But the Communist women were lost. They'd trusted the Party like a God. Now it was like watching a massacre of the innocents. They suffered more than people like myself, who were ready for what was to come, who had seen what sort of regime was over us from the start.

Poor Helena Coliu! She'd been quite high in the Educational Department. Her husband was also a loyal Party man with a good post in the government. Helena worked selflessly for Communism. "Proletarian spirit" was her watchword. The two children were brought up as faithful little members of the Communist Youth.

"I'd honestly have died for Communism," she said. "I believed

that when the Party came to power it would turn Rumania into a paradise."

Then she had a love affair with a sculptor.

"He was quite successful, if you judge by the number of busts of Stalin he was able to turn out in a week."

But the sculptor grew bored, and left her. Helena, who had taken their affair seriously, felt bitter. In an unguarded moment she said to a friend, "He's the sort of crank who'd help the partisans in the mountains. I wasted myself on a counter- revolutionary.

The friend was also a fanatical Communist. She denounced the sculptor to the Secret Police, and he was savagely tortured. So tortured that he went mad.

Then Helena was herself arrested. She'd been sleeping with this man. She knew what his dealings were with the counter-revolutionaries. Now she was going to talk! Useless for her to say she'd made it up in a moment of temper, that she was a loyal Party member. Her two-year nightmare began.

At last she was brought to court. The sculptor was there, too, for a ten-minute hearing and a ten-year sentence. The man was completely broken. He neither looked at her nor spoke throughout the trial.

Worst of all, her husband was also present, with her two children. The Secret Police, of course, had not spared them. He had lost his good job. The children had been turned out of their school. They were cut in the street by their playmates.

"I dream about it every night. Even in the daytime I have hallucinations about Gregory. I see him as he was in court, grey in the face, and his eyes dead like a fish. Why did I have to do it! Why did we ever meet!"

I recalled again Richard's words: Hell is to sit alone in darkness remembering past sins. Old memories burnt like fire. You had no defence: no books, no radio, no distraction, no place to go when they came buzzing at you. Here self-deception ceased. Theories about new moral concepts didn't help. Here you knew that the new morality was the old lasciviousness. Helena's remorse was terrible. I knew what she was feeling.

Nearly every woman in prison felt similar burning remorse. Nearly everyone was religious in some degree. Outspoken atheists surprised themselves by calling on God. Everyone wished to have her prayer heard.

But their prayers were wrong. It was like praying that two and two should be something other than four. Accumulation of sins can only bring unhappiness and remorse. It was over sexual failings - adulteries, betrayals, abortions - that regret was most

poignant. Women longed to talk about it and ease the pain. I remembered the words of David who had committed such a sin: "Blessed is he...whose sin is covered." So covered by God that there is no need to uncover it before men.

In our hut was Mrs. Radu, wife of a well-known Bucharest business man. She had been a great figure in pre-war society, but her old friends would never have recognized now the gay Zenaida Radu whose hats and Paris frocks and jewels had been their envy.

The fashionable accent sounded strange, coming from that haggard face.

In the evening, as we sat on our straw mattresses, she saw me looking around at our extraordinary gathering of criminals, prostitutes, nuns, peasants and professors.

"What's your conclusion?" she asked, brushing back her greasy hair with a gesture which belonged to her 'smart set' days. "You've seen it all - what do you think? For myself, I've only one thought left: if I could go free, I'd live happily on a crust for the rest of my life."

Like many of her type, she had a deep sense of guilt for frittering her life away. Often she's spoken to me hesitatingly, hinting at some inner torment that she'd like to reveal. Coming to sit on my bed. Or staring at me from across the room. Always, I smiled

back.

After several weeks, she told me her trouble. When the Communists took power she was left a widow with a small child. The parties were over, the money was gone, her beauty was going.

"All my lovely things were taken from me," She sobbed at the memory. "I had to work. My hands were ~ruined~. All my old friends avoided me. And then - I had a chance to marry again."

Again that gesture to quell her untidy hair.

"But men just do not want other men's children. I ~knew~ that my poor Jenny - and she was three at the time - was the obstacle. And I ..."

Sweat broke out on her forehead. It was a struggle to tell, and not to tell. I put my hand on her's. She began again quickly:

"I began to neglect her. I didn't feed her properly. It wasn't a conscious thing. At least...she cried too much. I used to shout at her, 'Shut up, little wretch!' She grew thinner and thinner. But I didn't care."

It was if she would die, bringing this out. She gripped my hand and twisted it as if she were in childbirth agony. And if she held anything back there would be no relief.

"I didn't care," the dry voice repeated. "I'd leave her alone and go out. To have fun! With him! I thought he was my salvation."

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"Then on cold winter nights after she fell asleep I'd open the window. The chances were that she might uncover herself and catch cold. Of course, I realize that now. At the time I told myself, 'Fresh air is good for a child and I mustn't overfeed her.' I didn't kill her. But I let her die of neglect."

She whispered the last words of her confession. Not that anyone else was listening. Fifty voices were raised in the usual medley of complaints and quarrels and remembrances. Swearing. Singing bawdy songs.

"I've never told anyone. And I know already there can be no forgiveness for me."

I tried to persuade her that this was not so. I said that in the original Greek of the gospel, Christ is Christos, which is almost identical with the word ~chrestos~, meaning "gracious' We cannot think of him in any other way. Grace and forgiveness are in his very title.

She said, "If ever I get out, I've only one wish, and that is to be good - because here I've seen in every way what it means not to be good."

I replied, "But no one's really good. Therefore the Apostle tells us that if we say we have no sins we are liars. But if we confess our sins then he, Jesus, is righteous to forgive."

Zena finished her story. The prospective husband had turned out to be a philanderer. But she became his mistress and the small allowances he made kept her from factory work. This, combined with her "bourgeois" past, was the only "charge" against her. She'd been denounced by an envious neighbour as being of "socially-rotten" origin and given a two-year "administrative sentence" without trial.

During my journey through different camps and prisons I met many who had been arrested for absurd and fantastic reasons. At Camp K.4 was an old lady, universally known as Granny Apostol, whose crime was that she had once been kind to a lunatic.

The lunatic was an elderly metallurgist who'd made some small coins with the words "NICOLAI, EMPEROR OF RUMANIA" stamped on them. He, of course, was Nicolai, and his chief pleasure was to give these coins to people. "Keep this," he would explain, "because everyone who owns one will become my minister when I come to the throne."

The Secret Police arrested this poor emperor and investigated all his friends and acquaintances. Whenever they found a coin, a man or a woman was tried. Sentences of fifteen and twenty years were handed out by rubber-stamp tribunals.

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"How shameful!" cried Helena, the devoted Party worker. "Couldn't you prove your innocence?"

"I could prove it all right. But who could I prove it to? God and the king are a long way off, as they said when I was a girl. It's still the same. What can you do with that lot? Ignorant, they are. Or frightened."

Granny Apostol was a clever old thing, although she'd spent her life as a servant. She had a simplicity that saw through pretence to the reality of things.

It wasn't that our new rulers were ignorant, but that they were so conceited in their ignorance. Office-boys had become officers in the Secret Police. And this elevation of ignorance ran all the way through the Government to the top where Georghiu-Dej, the ex-railway worker, was establishing himself as Party boss. A joke went round at that time: Georghiu-Dej boasted to de Gaulle that he had liquidated illiteracy in Rumania. He asked, "Do you still have illiterates?" The General answered, "Yes, but not in the government."

The officers at the Canal would not dream of conversing with ragged and dirty women. But if circumstances forced them to talk to us, we heard again and again the same parroted Party slogans. How many times I've been told, "Humanity has produced four great geniuses: Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin." If you could have asked about Plato or Bergson or Edison they would have had nothing to say, because they'd never heard of them.

The foolishness of those in power and the fright of the bewildered bureaucrats below them added to the long list of harmless and innocent people in prison.

There was the woman doctor who had casually remarked that she always used a thermometer made in the West. It was so much easier to read than the Russian model. Shortly after she arrived in prison for making this counter-revolutionary statement, she was joined by a nurse who was accused of "non-denunciation" - failure to report the wicked words of her superior as a more "loyal" nurse had done.

Another strange confrontation was between two ladies of pleasure. One had been, briefly, mistress to King Carol. And the other to the Communist Interior Minister, Georgescu. Both had made the mistake of boasting about their days of splendour. The royal companion was automatically contaminated by her contact with the Court. Georgescu's mistress had revealed too much about the luxury in which the new Minister lived, his fifty suits, his champagne and caviar parties. He had her arrested and sent to jail. Later he came to jail, too, imprisoned by his own comrades.

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I met hundreds of people from religious sects who refused to conform. Christian Science ladies, Theosophists, Jehovah's Witnesses.

"It's Saturday," little Annie Stanescu cried. "It must be. They're beating the Seventh Day Adventists!"

Every Saturday the women from this sect were paraded and ordered to work. And every time they refused. They were savagely ill-treated, but nothing could move them. Orthodox and Catholic and Protestant believers would work on Sunday to avoid a beating, but the Adventists went on suffering week after week.

Scores of women came to jail because of an alleged apparition of the Virgin Mary. It occurred in one of Bucharest's main streets. Someone pointed to a church window and shouted, "Look! The Virgin Mary!" And immediately hundreds began sighting the vision. Priests warned. The police made arrests. And still the crowds came.

The police thought they would resolve the question by smashing the window. Immediately, the Virgin Mary appeared in the next pane. So a whole series of windows were smashed. Then the Virgin moved up Victory Street and appeared in the windows of Police Headquarters!

It was when policemen themselves began seeing this vision (many of them had strong Orthodox backgrounds) that mass arrests began.

And so it went on. "It's a great lottery," said Clara, the German cabaret queen. "Sometimes you draw a ticket marked "Prison" and sometimes one marked "Freedom."

Zenaida Radu said: "The ticket I want is marked "The West."" She turned to me: "What do you say?"

I said: "I drew my ticket long ago. On it is written, "Paradise."

At 11 p.m. the door of the hut burst open. Half a dozen guards marched in, shouting at the top of their voices.

"Everybody up!"

"Commandant's inspection!"

Clang, Clang! Clang! on the steel rail.

Dazzled, frightened women jumped shivering from the grey blankets. We struggled and scrambled to gather all our things. Perhaps it was a move!

Our square-shouldered commandant walked in in full uniform with cap and polished boots, as if she were taking a military march-past.

"Women! I want all those who can speak a foreign language to take a pace forward. And I mean a foreign language. Not Russian or Serbian. English, French-that sort of thing."

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A number of women stepped forward. Teachers, journalists former ladies of the Court - a cross-section of bourgeois days. Our names were laboriously copied down. The guards became so cross in their efforts not to look foolish. This performance was always a misery. At last "Double-V. Wurmbrand" was entered as a speaker of French and German and off they went. We had lost two hours' sleep, and for two more hours anguished arguments continued. What did it mean?

"Translators, that's what it is," Clara affirmed.

"The Americans are coming!"

"And the French!"

"Lucky bitches," said one of the prostitutes. "Why should you have some cushy job just because you say you know a few words of frog?"

"And how about you, Clara Strauss, saying you speak French. We know you're a kraut!"

"Not speak French!" Clara gave her stagiest laugh. "My darlings, my PhŠdre was famous. ~Oui, prince, je languis, je brule pour Thes,e.~" Clasping her hand to her throat, she glared at Granny Apostol. "~Que dis-je? Il n'est point mort puisqu'il respire en vous. Toujours devant mes yeux ...~"

"Oh, please let's get some sleep!"

But the criminal prisoners were bursting with malice and jealousy. And it was almost dawn when I fell into a sleep filled with restless dreams.

Yet, as we tramped to work across the plain that morning, my heart felt light. Could it be true? Work as a translator in some warm office, out of this eternal wind? Had some great international upheaval taken place? Our quarrying party was full of rumours.

I worked that day next to a tiny Jewish woman called Jessica. I'd noticed her about the camp many times. She had a calm, sweet smile

which was like a promise of peace among so many anguished faces. Keeping an eye on the guards, I explained what had happened in our hut during the night.

"It happens in every hut," she told me. "And in every camp. Sometimes they come in and ask who is a foreigner. And the Germans and Jews hurry to give their non-Rumanian names, thinking they'll be allowed to emigrate. But there is no meaning in it at all. It is just to make you suffer."

Before long I discovered she was right. It was simply another torment to exhaust the mind and sap the will. Many times the hut was dragged from bed after midnight for another instalment of this bitter farce. Once they came for lists of sportswomen. The rumour was that Rumania was short of competitors for the

Olympic games - anyone who could run or jump or swim might be taken for training! Most could hardly walk, yet this was accepted as an article of faith.

It made us more susceptible for re-education. A female choir had now been recruited and was learning Communist songs, starting with the ~Internationale~:

"Raise up all the hungry of the earth ..."

"And make a start with us!" carolled Annie Stanescu.

A play called "The True Happiness" was also performed. It showed how true happiness consisted in building a Canal for Socialism. And had rhymes exposing the horrors of capitalist exploitation. And when we were told to weep for America's starving millions, I saw women actually in tears.

After villainous Uncle Sam's efforts to sabotage the Canal had been put to naught, an upstanding Young Communist sang in a soprano, like squeaking glass:

"How we love our father Stalin,

Never will our joy in Party fade ..."

The saddest part was the applause and cheering at the end. Some, at least, was genuine. Between tortured and torturer a love-hate relationship can arise. Guards who beat and mocked us were often called by endearing diminutives of their names.

"Before a house can be built, the swamp must be cleaned out, and all the vermin in it!" The younger guards, who'd been taught that we were all "bandits," repeated these catch-phrases learnt in training-school. And we learnt to beware of blank-eyed girls in their early twenties. They could be more brutal than any man. So long as their indoctrination lasted.

But then they were posted to the Canal and for months and years they lived beside their prisoners in this desert place. They marched the long miles with us to the quarries. They stood over us as we laboured. And, although it was strictly forbidden, sometimes they talked with us.

They saw after a while that they were not dealing merely with 'vermin' and 'bandits' but very often with simple peasant women like those of their own family. It was the time of enforced collectivization, when land and beasts were being torn from their owners. As the guards came to learn that their own relatives were starving and being arrested, they began to doubt.

They lost their pride in the job. Then their faith in the Party. The assault on the church went hand in hand with the seizure of all the things they were attached to. This rising revulsion against the consequences of Communism brought about a wonderful change in some of our guards.

We had several schoolgirls at Camp K4, sent there because

they had joined patriotic student groups. Among them, fifteen-year-old Maria Tilea was a great beauty. Slave labour seemed only to improve Maria's looks. The skin became translucent, the dark eyes more vivid, the delicate bone structure more clearly marked. She had the self-confidence that came from a growing realization that she was liked and admired by everyone.

Nina, an apple-cheeked guard who had shown me some kindness in the past, was very attentive to this delicately-nurtured girl from another world.

"What a shame, poor girl. Why, she's just a child! They told me I'd be handling thieves and murderesses, but she's such a young lady!"

One day Nina asked Carine, one of my Christian friends: "Are you one of the nuns?"

"No, I"m the wife of a pastor."

"Ah, they told me about you. Giving your bread away and such. You'll make yourself ill. Here - you go to the toilet in a minute and put your hand up to the window ledge on the right."

She went. She reached up and her hand met something wrapped in paper. A sandwich. It would have got Nina sent to a labour camp herself if her generosity had been discovered.

Carine and I had several talks with her. She told us how she had always gone to church as a child. And even when she had to join the Communist Youth she continued to attend - but walked miles to the next village where she wasn't known.

"Once on the way back I met one of the Youth leaders. She kept asking me where I'd been. 'It's Sunday - you haven't been to church, have you?' I said I'd given up all that years ago. I wish I'd had the guts to tell her to mind her own business, but what was the use. I had a good cry when I got home. I felt like Peter denying Christ."

She had cried, but to repent like Peter was something beyond Nina's strength. She let herself be parted from the church, drifted into the militia and became a camp guard. She swallowed the talk about building a better world (and wiping out the middle-class vermin in the process). She'd beaten and ill-treated prisoners to order. Now she saw what Communism had done in villages like her own. And she felt guilt.

Carine was not the only one she helped. I guessed by certain signs that she was befriending young Maria Tilea. The schoolgirl told me, months later when Nina was no longer with us, what she had done for her."

"My parents had still a little money left. And a few things were saved somehow when our property was taken over. I asked Nina if she'd take a message to them that I was well. When she went,

Daddy promised her money or a present if she brought me some things - aspirin, chocolate, a woollen pullover."

It could have cost Nina her life. But she did it, smuggling the things into camp, refusing the bribe. The visit to Maria's home was a revelation to Nina. The pretty things, the restful house, the kindness of the Telias were all a new experience. Her belief in Communism was further shaken.

When first I began to talk to her, it was hard going. At that time she still parroted the gibes about religion they all picked up at the training-school. Her heart was closed. When I spoke of Christ she said: "But we Communists are the best friends of Christ! If there is a heaven and Christ is judge, we'll be the most favoured of all. Your husband's a pastor; how many people do you think he's brought to Christ? A few score? A few hundreds? But we Communists take care that Christ gets every year thousands of customers who die with his name on their lips. We're filling his heaven. He ought to be grateful!"

I pointed out that this might mean more than she thought. The wicked man who made a sinner of Mary Magdalene also prepared her to be a saint. The one who instilled in Saul of Tarsus hatred of Christianity also laid the foundations for the future Paul. The Bible says where sin abounds, grace aboundeth even more. And I wondered if the Communists with their jokes about sending Christians to heaven don't attract the pity of heaven on them for their wickedness. This was a step to her conversion.

Nina became a Christian again, and this is something not easily concealed. A traitor like Kim Philby can work undiscovered for two decades because badness is all around and he may hide in it. Under every stone is another beetle. But goodness is a rare butterfly that strikes even insensitive eyes. No one can miss it, and some will want to kill it.

Some time in 1951 Nina vanished from Camp K4.

For long we didn't know what had become of her. Then three new arrivals turned out to be former guards from Canal camps who'd been sentenced for taking bribes from prisoners. Nina had been tried with them and given ten years.

Poor Maria was horribly upset.

"It's all my fault!" she wept.

I said, "Don't take it so badly. It was what she wanted to do in her heart. She'll have greater joy as a prisoner than she ever had as a guard."

We often talked about Nina. Carine said that she knew what lay ahead of her and she would come out at the end as a very

strong Christian. Suffering would give her great authority to speak to others. But what if she died in prison? It would be for a good cause

and God does not leave unrewarded even a cup of water given to one in suffering. He will reward her, too. Those who die for their faith leave behind the greatest legacy of influence for good.

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THE DANUBE

It snowed heavily during the night. As we formed up before the rows of huts, thick flakes continued to fall. The skeletal guard-towers had almost vanished behind the white veil. But the wind had dropped. Every sound was dull and dead.

From the distant kitchens steam was rising through a ventilator. That promise of warmth was only an additional affliction. Few "politicals" were ever granted kitchen work. The laundry ran it a close second. The daily quota there was tough - thirty sheets, thirty pillow-cases, plus shirts and underpants, all done by hand with scraps of low-grade soap. But at least it was inside.

That morning more than the usual number of women tried to report sick. Ana Cretzeanu, camp doctor and herself a prisoner, was not interested.

"Nothing wrong with you!" she said. "Passed fit for work."

How prisoners loathed that whining voice. Dr. Cretzeanu had sold herself for the right to stay indoors out of the snow and rain. She had powers of life and death in a sense that must have been new to the medical profession. She knew that in sending out certain women to work, she was condemning them to death. Some were so weak that they fainted on hearing that they must go out again to the quarries. But she had her orders from the medical board. The more women she allowed to go sick, the less was her own chance of survival or release.

In Hut 10 was another doctor prisoner who had kept her integrity. The inmates used every subterfuge to keep her, if only for a few days, inside the camp. She was over sixty and unfit to march miles to the quarry, let alone work there. And she knew her medicine far better than Cretzeanu. But the camp commandant was well satisfied with her choice of physician. The Hut 10 doctor had to push wheelbarrows.

An aspirin, a warm drink, any kind of pain-reliever was just a dream to us. Toothache had to be borne. The camp was rife with a variety of female diseases brought on by hard work. They were correctly diagnosed by teams of prisoner-doctors. Treatment was another matter.

As we tramped through the snow, Carine said, "Let's not think about Cretzeanu. She's to be pitied. Whenever I hear her crying, "Fit for work!" I remember a friend of mine, a woman doctor, who deliberately joined the militia. For Christ's sake she put on that hateful uniform and played the convinced Communist only to help others. She did wonderful work for the sick before she was betrayed by an informer. She's in prison now."

"Poor soul. She must have been a kind of saint."

We stumbled on over the white plain under a dark sky. In the muffled silence the noise of hammering from the quarry sounded strangely desolate.

During the morning I crushed my fingers between two heavy blocks of stone. It was agony lifting each block into the truck. An elderly woman, a neweomer, noticed my trouble and tried to help me. She asked whether in prison I'd come across a girl called Fanny Marinescu.

"Yes," I said. "I knew her well. I used to teach her French in Jilava, and we became friends."

"What happened to her?"

I said, "She went to Heaven. She died of cancer, left too long untreated."

Then the woman began to weep, and somehow I understood that she was Fanny's mother.

A guard posted himself next to us, and we couldn't talk. One didn't stop work because one's child had died. She stumbled blindly about, clutching the boulders, with tears running down her face. Our hearts and cut hands bled in equal measure.

It wasn't until next day that I could try to offer a few words of comfort. We were waiting at the midday break for the food to come.

"Fanny is in heaven now," I said. "She died in faith in the Redeemer, who is the giver of life everlasting."

"In heaven! Easily said. If it was ~your~ daughter ..."

So I told her how I had lost my own family under the Nazis and my orphan children on the ship to Israel.

"Yet one need not lose peace and serenity. We are all transitory beings - but there is also an eternal existence with God. That is our comfort."

We sat together, nursing our crushed fingers, waiting for the greasy soup. Our legs and arms trembled with exhaustion. She told me her name was Cornelia.

I said: "Your daughter helped many prisoners through hours of depression, telling them about eternal life. I helped others.

And you help me to lift these stones. And in heaven is the great helper who cares for those whom we have lost."

She seemed a little comforted.

One evening she came to my hut. Not many guards were about on cold nights and she had slipped across the yard unseen.

I felt someone sit down on the bed and touch my arm. I opened my eyes and sat up.

Cornelia smiled tremulously. "Let me sit here a little. The devils don't seem to have so much power beside you."

Every Christian reflects a little of the glory of the Lord. In times of suffering others might observe it.

"All our hut has been punished," said Cornelia. I couldn't get out before. We've had to clean the floor every evening this week."

She stroked her thin arms within the old cardigan, for warmth.

"But I didn't come here to complain. I want to tell you something I'll never tell anyone else as long as I live."

The delicate face became transparent, the suffering was transfigured with joy.

"I fell asleep last night without undressing. And at once I was in a great field, as wide as the plain of Baragan where we work. But as far as the eye could see it was full of flowers. The air was filled with a piercing sweet fragrance. Like lily of the valley, and I felt that my daughter was there. Although it was so vast, it was also somehow homely. I'd never seen so many herbs and flowers in one place.

There was a sound of wasps and bees. And clouds of butterflies, great masses of them, all glittering with colour, came towards me. I felt such tranquility of the spirit. All the beauty and majesty of the earth seemed to be gathered in one place.

"Standing alone in a corner I saw a woman who came towards me. She had eyes that looked gently into your very heart, and she put into my hands a bunch of white lily of the valley. Oh, the fragrance was sweet! It hasn't left me yet. From the center of the field I heard the voice of a man, strong and sweet, saying clearly the words of Solomon's song: 'As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters.'

"And then I woke up and realized I was still at the Canal. And those fearful madmen the guards were waiting for me. But when they banged the rail at five I got up and went out to the quarries as if I'd been dancing in meadows to delight my Beloved one.

"I still see the field of flowers and smell their fragrance and hear that voice. And the woman, I'll never forget her."

The memory lived in her heart. She looked with new eyes on

the thousands of small kindnesses, beauties, signs and wonders that are evidence of His presence.

Sometimes the stones of remembrance which we took from the valley of suffering were beautiful.

Days later, the thaw came. I woke to the sound of water dripping from the hut eaves. The iron earth had changed to mud. Blackened patches of snow still hugged the walls where drifts had been, but the mild air was defeating them. How we'd all longed, in these months, to be free of winter's grip!

Even the guards were feeling frisky. They shouted and barked at us and each other like playful dogs. A light breeze blowing from the south bore some undefined scent. Of the sea, perhaps. Or spring.

I was working again on the ferry barges. Out we went into the smooth, black waters of the Danube to heave our great stones with huge splashes into the steam. Great hunks of dark ice floated past. My hands and feet were numb, blue. Big gashes of bland, blue sky appeared among the clouds of a new whiteness.

Male guards always came with the column to and from camp. They were the only men the women ever saw and ribald jokes sometimes flew around their heads. Today there were more than ever.

Annie Stanescu, a shrewish little prostitute, always led these sessions.

"How you dare!" said Zenaida. "That Peter has hands like a gorilla. And all that black hair on the backs! I'm sure he's covered in it, from head to foot. If one could see."

"And there's women here that have!" Annie showed a mouthful of gold teeth. A laugh went up.

"Ugh!" Zenaida was all refined horror.

"Though what they see in us to attract them," wondered Zenaida, "I cannot think. Can you picture a more unappetizing and sexless band of creatures than ourselves? I'm sure we must all smell dreadfully!"

Annie's retort to this brought screams of laughter from her friends. Soiled words went to and fro. No shutting them out.

"Our little saint doesn't like nasty talk!" cried Annie. The guards, loafing and smoking as we worked, looked at me, grinning. "Thinks we're horrid!"

I kept silent. Which was, of course, reproof. But Annie, whose loose chatter was rarely maliciously directed, had done me a worse turn than she intended.

At the end of the day we lined up, worn and sore.

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"Fall in! Fall in!" bellowed the guards. We marched, on this job, to an assembly point where trucks waited.

The muddy path ran along the riverside. I was aware that the eyes of the guard, the man Peter, where fixed on me. An ugly little grin narrowed his gaze. He nudged his companion, a dumb-looking youth with a flattened nose. Then he stuck out a boot so that I fell in the mud which had turned the path to slush.

The women guards roared with laughter.

A hand reached out and dragged me up. Slippery with mud, I

struggled and cried out in Peter's grasp.

"What you need now, my lady," he growled, "is a wash."

"Chuck her in the Danube!" screamed a woman's voice.

I felt the other man's paws on me. One caught my wrists and the other my ankles. I was jerked off my feet, swung once and flung through the air. I landed in the rocky shallows with a splash. The breath was knocked out of my body. I was stunned, but still conscious. Icy water poured over me, flowing fast so that it dragged me over the rocks. The current swirled around me. There were shouts from the bank, but I couldn't understand them. Every time I tried to get up the rushing water brought me down. I thrashed about in a futile way, wounding myself on the stones.

Two hands seized me beneath the arms. I was dragged through the shallows. The man who had hold of me tripped and fell backwards, sitting down in the water. Then I was lying flat on the bank.

Someone forced me to sit up, slapping my back. I felt hollow and sick. For the first time I was aware of a sharp pain in my side. Dizziness made me lie down again. When the sick feeling had passed I lay for a while hearing the river – was it the water of life which flows through Paradise? But then I looked up at the sky through black, wet, naked bushes. It was not heaven yet.

"She's all right. Get up!" A woman's voice. She stood looking down at me. "Get moving, or you'll freeze."

The young guard with the peasant face helped me to sit up. Hairy Peter was nowhere in sight. I tried to wring out the edges of my long skirt.

"Come on, come on!"

They pulled me up. I was shivering now, but with shock more than cold. The column was moving along a few hundred yards ahead. I limped after it, helped on by pushes from the woman guard.

When we joined the main party the women cast sympathetic glances towards me. We waited for the trucks.

Hairy Peter shouted, "That's better. Nothing like a cold bath!"

My clothes were cold and clammy and my shoes squelched. I hugged myself and wondered about the pain in my side. It was growing worse. Once we were in the truck, every bump sent a red-hot stab of agony through me .The swaying truck made me feel very sick.

"That brute Peter?" Zenaida muttered her indignation: Our team boss, a criminal prisoner, was in the truck. They'd fished me out quickly once they'd had their laugh. After all, they had to report back to the guard-room with the same number of prisoners as had set out that morning. A slave-labourer less would have been a loss to the State.

Somehow we got back to the hut, where I wrung out my wet things. My side was badly swollen, and the skin had been scraped from my hands and legs. It was agony to raise my arms. Every few minutes during the night I tried to find a more comfortable position. But there was none.

In the morning I saw "Doctor" Cretzeanu. A huge purple and yellow bruise like a map of Africa spread down one side of my body and it was impossible to raise my arm above waist level.

"Fit for work!" she pronounced.

I fell in with the others.

"What's the matter with you?"

The woman overseer was glaring. Perhaps I had swayed. I felt faint. I said, "I can't go to work today. I'm in great pain. I think my ribs are broken."

But Hairy Peter was watching out for me. He caught my wrist and pulled me out of the rank. "What's wrong with her is that she didn't fulfill her norm yesterday. Get on with it!"

He spun me around and planted a large boot in my back. I wasn't so much kicked as heaved forward into the line of women.

So I went to work that day and every following day. I had broken two ribs (doctors established this after my release) but God healed them. We have seen in prison many miraculous healings.

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CAMP K4: SUMMER

The spring arrived. Patches of palest new green sprouted among the shabby grass that grew alongside the road to the stone- quarries. A

little sweet grass in the tepid water called ~soup~ which came at midday was a great treat. But on that raw plain, though the rain fell and fell, good edible grass was rarer than bitter weed. Only the tougher forms of life survived, in that streaming wind, which took the soup from our spoons before they reached our mouths.

Eating grass was forbidden as was everything by which the politicals might better their condition. We pastured on it, like cattle, when the guards weren't looking. And we watched for informers, who spied on us even in this, believing promises that by doing so they would earn quicker release.

Frogs were also fair game, since their raw meat was considered quite a delicacy. They were surprisingly hard to catch. But sometimes an adventurous ~batrachian~ would hop into the quarry, where at once he paid the supreme penalty.

They lived in large numbers by the river. At night the sound of their voices carried for miles over the fields. I remembered that the Bible speaks of "frog-like spirits." I'd wondered often in the past about this comparison. Then came the Communists with their endless croaking of party slogans. "Long live the Party, croak-croak! Long live the People's Republic, croak-croak-croak! Down with the warlike Imperialists, croak!" And I understood.

Snakes were less popular. The fat green grassy variety were devoured, but noise around the work sites frightened them off. A few were caught by those who worked to clear the stunted scrub and plant in its place ~marram~ grass to prevent soil erosion. Once a wild cat ran across the path with a grass snake in its mouth. A hail of stones and shovels were aimed at the startled creature. It fled without giving up its prey.

The longing for meat, or any protein, was the result of our soupy diet. Call it potato, bean or cabbage, none of it had any goodness. Vitamin deficiency diseases were common. Almost everyone suffered from bouts of diarrhea. Scurvy occurred, and

mysterious skin troubles. Cuts and bruises became infected and ulcers up to four inches in diameter formed on legs and feet. The poisons spread through the system and reduced us to utter exhaustion.

But we suffered less than the men. Special sections for priests and Iron Guardsmen at Peninsula camp were totally cut off from other prisoners. They worked longer hours and received less food. Staying alive depended on a prisoner's ingenuity. Or ruthlessness.

Anything that moved was eaten.

"Dog is quite good," a priest who survived this camp assured me. "But I cannot honestly recommend rat."

At Cape Midia, the labour colony was composed chiefly of elderly men, many in their seventies. Harnessed like beasts to barrows of earth, often working barefoot, they could never fulfill the norms. But if a man once did, then the norms were raised. It was a policy of extermination.

Those who did not die, when they collapsed were often beaten to death. "The graveyard at Peninsula," we were told, "is twice the size of the camp."

The work norm is not a Communist invention. The Bible says that the Jews in Egypt were slaves who also had to fulfill a norm, which was constantly raised. At first they received straw to make bricks. Then they had to find it themselves. And they had to make the same number of bricks without straw supplies.

What distinguishes Pharaoh from the Reds is that he did not try and label his exploitation paradise on earth.

All our news was gleaned from new arrivals, of whom there was no lack. One evening the door of our crowded hut opened to admit another twenty women. They were all prostitutes, swept from the streets, dragged from their houses in police round-ups. This was the Communist way of "liquidating the social problems of capitalism"; as usual the remedy was worse than the cure. The new batch had all come from the same prison and they were the most debased women we had yet encountered. Perhaps it was merely that they had suffered their own unrelieved company for too long.

Now with screams, punches and savage obscenities they cleared out a nest for themselves. A little group of nuns was ruthlessly bundled aside. They took refuge with the politicals on the other side of the room. Optimistically, the politicals tried to reason with the neweomers. The whores shrieked with laughter, imitating their accents. The common-law convicts looked on with

sickly grins. As for the gypsies, the nuns' troubles left them indifferent, like most other intrusions into their own small world of chatter and squabbles and song.

Many of the prostitutes had open syphilitic sores on their lips. They would be using the same mugs and plates as us. Where they gathered the air seemed a degree more fetid. Sorrily, some had hearts which were as diseased as their bodies

The shorn nuns huddled together under the reddish glow of a naked bulb, like a flock of bald young birds around their mother. Sister Mary was an elderly nun of ascetic looks and limpid spirit whose sore and sculpted face, sharp nose and round steel spectacles (preserved by some miracle of patient subterfuge) reminded me always of Pope Pius XII. Her beatific smile, delicate as a child's, was in itself a treasure.

"But if only she would stop lecturing about the flesh!" complained Zenaida. "It isn't as if, poor soul, she has any herself to worry about."

How hard she struggled to preserve her little flock in faith. And night after night the whores turned to rend them. Old Sister Mary told of St. Bernard of Clairvaux who, it seemed, had once in an inattentive moment, looked at a woman. Horrified at what he had done, he mortified the flesh by standing all night up to his neck in a freezing lake.

"What's she want to do that for?" The whores listened always with half an ear. "The things people do to get a thrill!"

How they giggled and nudged and, occasionally, scratched.

The old nun warned her younger Sisters against even raising their eyes to the guards...some were young and handsome ... they were in mortal danger...even to harbour the thought was sin...turn their eyes to the example of the saints ...

"Funny how some people have all the luck. I never met none of these saints. Though I'd seen it all. Such tricks people get up to. D'you remember the bishop?"

They remembered the bishop at length. The nuns blushed.

The woman called Victoria was, appearances proclaimed, a madam.

Sagging Victoria had somehow adapted her prison dress into something loose which positively frilled and frothed above the waist and fitted like bark below. Whether she had altered them or they had taken on her fearful personality was not clear.

"When I used to go for my weekly medical (prostitution was

state-controlled) the police officer always picked me out of the line. Oh, I was quite something. Though you may laugh now. And that cop would take me along to the bishop's palace for the night. Old blackbeard! I'ad to wear trousers like a boy."

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They rather approved, it was felt, of the roguish bishop. Who paid well, and confirmed everyone's opinion of the world.

"Chastity," the old nun continued, smoothing one withered hand patiently against its neighbour, "is like a mirror. Even a breath can spot its surface. Never let an evil thought mar your mind ..."

She might have been carved from some hard durable wood. It was the durability that invited attack.

"You dunno much about your priests, do you?" One of the younger girls joined in the mocking game. "Now I was taken along to do it with some of them. Oh, they knew all about women. They never thought much about their souls. A mirror indeed!"

"And St. Thomas received the gift of chastity so greatly that an angel promised that never would he lose it again, never would he be tempted. Notwithstanding, he avoided looking at a woman in case the occasion for sin arose."

The whores were struck all of a heap with laughter. They shrieked and yelled and fell about in entanglements of flesh.

"Poor old guy! A nice promise! Not what he was praying for at all!" moaned Victoria, pressing one hand to her undisciplined stomach.

All shrieked again. Victoria wiped her eyes.

"Ah, we see through you!"

Whoever was being seen through, Sister Mary abandoned her lecture for something still more limpid. She said firmly:

"Let us say the rosary."

Together they murmured, "Hail Mary, full of grace ..."

And all the whores together made the sign of the cross. They mocked everything holy. But ceremonial, the making of signs, unnerved them. Or brought them to the beginnings of respect.

It takes some time to say the rosary, and they let it end. But could not let well alone. It was as if Mary had stared them in the face.

A younger girl, with crimped gingery hair like wire, began again. But this time it was to blasphemous words about the Virgin.

But at this such a shouting and protesting broke out among the other occupants of the hut that the alarmed prostitutes clustered cawing around the gingery blasphemer to succour and protect.

"We've had more than enough of you!" shouted Annie Stanescu. And slapped the gingery one in the face. She told her what she was, where she came from, where she might yet go.

"Some women," she further explained, "are just low."

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The whores considered doubtfully the degree of their lowness, quite quelled for the moment by this fury and indignation. On learning that this little spitfire was of their own profession they looked nonplussed.

Annie was not one to let religion interfere with her "work," nor was she on very familiar terms with the Gospel or God; but no one was going to insult the Virgin Mary in her presence. The Holy Virgin she understood and revered and would defend as her own mother.

Why is it that the Virgin inspires in so many, who are otherwise blind to God, this deep love?

The prostitutes took from life all moral standards; but nor could I agree with the nun's viewpoint, which simply contradicted life. There is potential good in evil.

I said that in Hebrew, the word ~kedesha~ has a root that means both prostitute and holy. Because holiness is to give yourself lovingly to anyone without distinction of race or creed; to give what is best in your soul.

St. Mary Magdalene was a ~kedesha~. But she changed. And now instead of passing from the arms of one man to the next, she gave freely of what was good in her soul to everyone.

There is a real love that can help others. It means that you live

and die in the struggle to help them become higher beings. And there is a base means of giving love; to be attached to a bit of flesh like a cow. Flesh decays and is eaten by worms; spiritual love is everlasting.

As for the bishop whom the prostitutes had ridiculed, I knew him. For all his weaknesses, he could say to the Communists who arrested him: "I have not led a Christian life; I can die a Christian death." The sinner these women mocked was now a saint in heaven. He had died under torture.

Two girls who arrived with this group were of a different class. They were known to the street women but spoke little to them, and they found beds in a far corner of the room.

They were sisters, dark intense girls with good manners and quiet voices. But prostitutes, said their companions, swept up like the others to serve "administrative" sentences at the Canal.

An aura of sadness and mystery surrounded these sisters. No one knew much about their past. Though many poked and pried. Personal revelations were hoped for.

Victoria, while smoothing down her hair with water, or examining the development of her varicose veins, would say:

"Some girls just do not know how to mix. But we are all in the

same boat, I say. If we cannot tell our troubles to our friends, then what are friends for, I should like to know?"

But Diana, who was nineteen years old, and seventeen-year-old Floarea did not tell her, although Victoria, perhaps from force of professional habit, continued to be solicitous towards the girls.

Such ingratitude made Victoria angry. She would tread about with her puffy, dainty feet on other people's property and persons and thoughts. And laugh at smutty stories. And smoke, messily. I'd seen women fight over a guard's discarded cigarette-end; but Victoria, it seemed, had her own sources of supply.

So the sisters slaved and slept and might have remained a mystery to me if Diana had not heard my name spelt out by a guard. She asked at once if I knew Richard Wurmbrand. I said I was his wife.

"Oh!" she said. Then, quickly, "What can you think of me?"

I asked her what she meant. She said her father was a lay preacher. He used to read to her from Richard's books, which he called his "spiritual food." He'd been sent to prison for his faith, leaving a sick wife and six children. Diana and Florea were the eldest. Both lost their factory jobs when their father went to jail. Soon the family faced starvation.

A youth called Silviu took her to the cinema one evening. He said he could get her a work permit. They went to a restaurant. After a meal with plenty of wine he made love to her.

Soon it happened again. Nothing more was said about work permits, but he gave her a money present. To help the family, she did not refuse it. And a week later he introduced a friend and left them together. When this man in turn tried to make love to her, she was angry. But he too produced badly needed money, and said he had only acted on Silviu's suggestion. She gave way.

Shame wore away under a stream of clients produced by Silviu. She grew accustomed to the life, even preferring it to factory drudgery.

I knew by the way she told the story that Diana was holding something back. She stopped and searched my face.

"I thought you'd be disgusted. Doesn't it upset you that I became a prostitute?"

I said, "You're not a prostitute, you're a prisoner. And nobody is a prostitute or a saint or even a cook or a carpenter all the time. Everyone is himself – the things you do are attributes of only a part of your being. They can change at any time. And I believe you've changed already in telling me about it."

But Diana was not comforted. She sat on the narrow bed in

the bare hut, her hands clenched, her face taut with distress and guilt.

"If it was only me," she burst out at last. "It wouldn't be so bad, But I made my sister join me. Silviu suggested it, and said it wasn't fair that I should carry all the responsibility for the family. So in the end I introduced them and let him take her out."

Soon, Florea, too, had been initiated. And the main difficulty

was how to keep their secret from their eldest brother, a boy of fifteen, who adored them both. Like his father, he was religious, with a keenly sensitive temperament, but no knowledge of the world. "He wouldn't like a fly to suffer," as Diana put it.

But the sisters' new way of life, their late hours and the money in the house soon told neighbours what was happening, and they told the boy. The shock drove him mad. He ended in a mental home.

Not long afterwards, the father was released. When he discovered the truth, he said: "I ask God for only one thing – that he will send me back to jail, so that I may not see."

Now the tears were flowing unchecked down Diana's face.

"He had his way. He began giving children Gospel lessons and was denounced to the police. The informer told me later that he had done it to get the old man out of the way of our trade. It was Silviu."

Before such a tragedy of betrayal, it was not easy to find words. I said at last:

"You feel shame over what you have done, and rightly. In a world of suffering, where even God is nailed to a cross, you can't allow his name, which you bear as a Christian, to be defiled. But this sense of pain and guilt will lead you to a shining righteousness. Remember, the soldiers not so much pierced Christ's side as "opened" it, that sinners might easily enter his heart and find forgiveness."

She thought, and replied slowly. "Shame, suffering. Yes, I've known them. But there is still something else to say. I didn't always hate the work I was doing. And now all the time bad thoughts come into my head. I can't keep them out. What shall I do? What can I do?"

Diana prayed for help, and it was given. They say that the more perfect a soul is, the more it feels pain. It was terrible to see how souls like hers asked in despair where they could find refuge now that this concupiscence had entered their hearts. Who is to judge Diana, one of many daughters of Christian martyrs? She sinned to get bread for her family. Perhaps the greater sin was that of Christians of the free world who did not trouble to send a piece of bread to save such as her.

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The spring days began to lengthen. Wonderful gold and crimson sunsets filled the sky at evening in the West, beyond the Danube. It

became a joy to march to work. Clouds of nettles and pearly cow-parsley sprang from the ditches, smelling moist and green. The earth grew black and oozy. Trees dared to put out shiny young leaves. One longed to touch, they were so small.

The balmy air affected us all. Light, leaves, grass, the sun, everything was changing. We couldn't help changing a little, too. New friendships blossomed.

Maria sat twisting her hair into a schoolgirl's pigtail as she sat in a patch of early morning sunlight.

The teacher, Paula Vieru, who liked to think herself cynical and hard, helped her and talked of books. Maria, eyes alight with interest, asked questions about this writer and that.

Zenaida and Clara were thick as thieves, swapping stories of gowns worn at pre-war opera nights. Of parties attended by royalty, and controversies over hats and hemlines.

Everyone became more willing to love, less ready to wound. But one of the norm-checkers surprised me with an accusation:

"Wurmbrand keeps herself to herself. Doesn't make friends."

I said, "Everyone here is my friend."

The woman was angry.

"You and your clever talk."

I wondered if it was true. I tried to help others. Some women reacted in a very exaggerated way, as if I had been sent directly from heaven. Others were puzzled, and suspected me of some darker motive. It was widely believed in Rumania that there was a Jewish plot to destroy Christianity by infiltrating it. I was Jewish - perhaps I belonged to the plot!

But I did have one friend who was truly close.

It was not speech that first linked us together, but silence. When even the nuns were sighing and complaining, she was silent. It said more than her neighbours' chatter. My eyes would sometimes rest on her as she sat, trying to repair clothes by night. She would look up and meet my gaze calmly. Or working at the quarries I would sense that she was close. There existed between us a thread.

She was in her early thirties. Small and dark, with black eyes

that were deep and kind.

"I was quite sure you were a Christian."

She smiled and looked at me with challenging eyes.

"I had wondered if you were perhaps one of us."

I laughed and felt almost gay.

"Have you many years to serve?"

"No, only twelve."

"Only. Then it doesn't worry you?"

"God can release us if he wills. And if he wishes me to stay here, I will stay."

Mrs. Djamil was the wife of a hodja. She had worked for an organization called "Help Crimea." It had tried to help people who had suffered during the Nazi occupation of that area. Fascist connections! She and her husband were arrested, then jailed.

The commandant of Camp K4 once asked her why she was there. She tried to explain. But the commandant had never heard of Crimea.

"You mean Korea, of course," she said. "You've been helping the South Koreans!"

Mrs. Djamil came from Ada-Kaleh, an island in the Danube, and she seemed undismayed at finding herself among so many Christians.

Catholics, Adventists, Jehovah Witnesses, Theosophists explained the errors of the Moslem faith, but Mrs. Djamil did not dispute.

"Mahomet is named ~al amin~, "the Faithful," so I trust what he says," she answered. She did not agree with the Lord's Prayer.

"To call God a Father brings too mild and human an idea to mind. For us God is the master."

Even in our condition, she washed all she ate, and would not touch soup if there was a suspicion that it had been prepared with pork fat. Orthodox Jewesses followed this rule.

"Superstitious prejudice!" said Paula. "Two thousand years ago perhaps there was a reason ..."

But the devotion of these women to their religion won them respect. Prisoners asked them, not Paula, to share out the food equally.

With so many different sects and religions, we had our share of religious argument. But the virulence of former days was gone, in great part. A new understanding arose, at least among the women. Outside, we could not share the world without quarrelling. Here, we shared a hut, a lavatory bucket, everything. We were sisters.

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THE BARAGAN PLAIN

An error had been made in planning the Canal. The smaller irrigation projects would be flooded by the Danube's waters unless banks were built higher and root crops planted to prevent soil erosion. So we moved from the quarries to the fields, to dig and hoe at the height of summer.

The August sun blazed down over the vast plain of the Baragan. We rose at 5 a.m. and hurried out for muster. Hoes and spades (most of them worn out) were issued.

Then the long serpent-column set off, trailing a cloud of white dust like a pillar of fire.

I worked beside Janetta, the daughter of a former merchant. She was to become one of my closest friends and collaborators in the Underground Church. (She is now one of its leading personalities.) She would fulfill the norm for me and others who could not work well. We discovered that we'd been born on the same day. On birthdays, by way of a present, we would exchange some raw potato.

A great field of parsley stretched away before us to the horizon. It grew hotter as the day wore on. The trees quivered in the shimmering air. Not a cart, no living soul appeared.

Only the line of 500 struggling women, strung out across the earth.

Behind us the guards barked, wearily.

"Shut your mouths!"

"Work faster!"

"Hey! This isn't an ass braying. It's a guard giving orders. Move!"

They passed up the line, croaking.

Janetta said, "How we used to long for summer!"

We worked dizzily in the scorching sun, in a waking dream of women hoeing on an empty plain. There was no scrap of shade.

I remembered the words of Job:

~The servant earnestly desireth the shadow.~

The schoolgirl Maria Tilea worked beside us, hacking with lean sunburnt arms at the dusty soil.

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"We can't keep up with you!" gasped Janetta.

"Try my hoe! It's better."

No, it'll just mean a different set of blisters."

"You try, Mrs. Wurmbrand."

So we argued, politely. The schoolgirl, the society woman and the pastor's wife.

The guards approached, shouting threats.

And passed on. Maria would have liked to hear of Janetta's gay life. The luncheons, the race meetings, the charity balls.

"I never think about all that now," said Janetta. "In solitary confinement I learnt that a kind smile is worth them all."

We hoed another hundred yards. Sweat ran down our faces, mingling with dust and dirt. Valeria seemed to wear an antique tragic mask.

"In solitary," she continued, "I had a dream. I saw one of our Communist torturers taking a bath in my bath tub. And other officers were queuing at the door of the bath room to do the same. I shouted at

the naked man "Out of here. It is not your place." He answered, "I believe that you Christians have a pool in your hearts like that in Bethesda. Men enter in it dirty and leave it cleansed." He left the tub. His naked body was now whiter than snow. And he had a lovely face. It was no more the man who had beaten me. Then others undressed and entered the tub. With this I awoke. I had had a revelation in my sleep. When any man enters a Christian's life, even by torturing him, he finds there a place where his image is cleared, beautified. We understand him. He might be a criminal for others. For us he becomes a forever beloved being."

The story cheered us. And in that place it was a holy duty to keep up hope in others.

How slowly the hours passed in the big field. How the breath rasped in our throats and our tongues turned to felt. We hoed on, like pieces of machinery that can perform only one movement.

"Can you see it?"

A voice croaked, down the line.

"It must come soon."

But the water-truck did not come.

Even the guards, who carried water-bottles, gazed anxiously towards the horizon. It was late. Hoarse from yelling and marching up the line, they relaxed.

We could stretch our backs. The relief!

"I'll faint if we don't drink soon." Maria looked pale.

"Don't faint. They'll kick you."

The sun climbed higher.

As we worked, I thought of Mihai. I saw his small figure,

thin-faced and tearful. Communism loves to steal youth, and they would steal him. What would they make of him, those men who didn't know what kindness is?

How many desperate prayers arose from mothers at that Canal!

I was brought back to reality by shouting down the line. A woman had fainted. The guards were beating her to make her stand. She flopped about in their arms like a fish.

Maria was afraid, and scratched faster at the dust.

"Maria look! The water-truck!"

A dark spot was moving down the road, far away.

The field buzzed with thirsty voices.

"Shut up! Get to work!" yelled the guards.

The truck was exposed to the sun all morning. The water would be far from refreshing by the time it reached us. We could see the old horse that pulled it, now.

We watched as if it were a mirage that might dissolve in the tremulous air.

"I'd like a dozen cool glasses of ice-water," said Zenaida. "A greasy pork chop and a mountain of fruit. Oranges, grapes..."

Cries of "Stop it!"

Prisoners were constantly dropping out to squat by the neld's edge, under the eyes of guards. Dysentery was rife in camp, which was alive with flies and bluebottles. Many were affected. Their limbs were thin as sticks, and their skin grey with the trouble.

We had not eaten or drunk since dawn. Now it was past midday, on that furnace-plain. Eight hours.

A guard walked up the road towards the advancing truck. Then stopped, and turned back.

"It's the food truck," Zenaida wailed. The women began to murmur, angrily.

The common-law prisoners, working near the road, flung down their tools. They began to shout.

The guards pulled out their guns.

A horde of shrieking women menaced them. One burst of automatic fire into that pack would kill scores. Maria buried her face in my shoulder.

For ten minutes the confrontation went on. The women refused to start work.

"Water!" they chanted. We want water!"

Guns were jammed into our ribs. We were herded into a group with the common-law prisoners. Ropes of arms and cold steel pressed back the furious mob. I caught Maria to me.

Now the food truck arrived on the spot. But the frightened driver, gaping at our rebellious swarms, was careless. The cart bounced over a rock, he pulled the wrong rein, the horse veered

and for a moment the wagon tottered on its side. Guards yelled and tried to save it. The horse reared.

Over went the canisters.

Half a hundredweight of boiled macaroni tumbled soggily in the dust.

A howl of rage went up. Water, guards, the heat were forgotten.

The food, the precious food was down in the dust!

The women charged the cordon, broke it, and fell on the macaroni.

They snatched sticky handfuls and pushed it into their mouths. They pushed and shoved and fought.

Other women looked on in horror at the fearful show.

Janetta began to laugh, a terrible Homeric laughter, that shook her thin body.

"Luncheon is served!" she gasped. And put her hands to her head.

The guards were content. Danger was past.

An hour later, whistles shrilled and we went back to work.

No water came that day.

In the afternoon two more truckloads of security militia arrived.

As I worked, veils of darkness moved before my eyes. My tongue seemed enormous. I remembered the last words of Jesus on the cross:

~I thirst.~

There is no water in hell.

I remembered the ~pizzicato~ at the start of "I thirst" in Haydn's oratorio, ~The Seven Last Words on the Cross~. He wished to convey an illusion of the crucified Christ, who seemed to feel on His lips drops of falling rain. I was envious, not having even the illusion.

At last, towards sunset, we formed up on the road for the march back. A mile short of the camp gates we passed some puddles of water in a swampy hollow.

Woman after woman fell on hands and knees to lap the muddy stagnant liquid.

A guard was posted at the spot to prevent them.

The next day an inquiry began in camp. Our 'rebellion' earned us some hours of extra punishment work on Sunday.

"This isn't a health resort!" said the commandant.

"Friends, the class struggle is reaching a climax!" Paula had captured our attention. "There are only two classes left in Rumania: optimists and pessimists. Optimists think all Rumanians

will be transported to Siberia. Pessimists say they will have to walk."

But now few of us felt like laughing. Women collapsed every day in the fields. At night, in the stifling heat of the hut, they lay half-naked on their beds, in attitudes of utter exhaustion. We seemed scarcely to have lain down before the clanging steel rail sounded reveille. A night's unbroken sleep was rare.

Once I was woken by Paula shaking my arm.

"They've beaten up Diana! Come quickly, she's badly hurt."

The girl was lying, unconscious but breathing heavily, on the

bare floor. Blood ran from her nose, and a patch of her hair was matted and sticky. Her lips were swollen. We loosened her clothes and found her body cruelly bruised.

"What kind of game have they been playing, these guards!"

Paula was trembling. Diana moaned and stirred. Her eyes opened.

"It's all right...I didn't let them," she whispered.

We made her drink. When she'd recovered a little, she explained that two of the prostitutes had lured her from the hut to where some guards were waiting. She was nineteen, pretty, and her modesty provoked them. She would not submit. Finally, they threw her into the nearest hut and ran off.

We spread both our blankets over her, for even in that stuffy shed she was shivering. Paula and I sat beside her until daybreak, talking in whispers.

"She has an intelligent face. She might have been a teacher." Paula was always looking for fellow spirits. She'd been a student and then a teacher all her life.

"I dream about taking class," she often said. "I see rows of faces waiting for me to speak. I see myself walk through the pillared entrance, I hear all the sounds of school."

She had written stories, which had earned her a place in the Writers' Union. She marched in their ranks on August 23rd, in the "liberation day" celebrations. She knew some of Rumania's famous authors: the poet Mihai Beniuc, novelists – approved writers who turned out books glorifying Communism and denigrating the West. Agitprop saw to it that everything she wrote contributed to "furthering Socialism." One produced straight propaganda, or one wrote about topics that were remote from the contemporary world.

Paula agreed that hymns praising 'full-of-genius' Stalin were silly. "But all those battle-hymns addressed to God are not so different!"

I said, "The difference is that one praises the Creator of all

living things, and the other lauds a sick creature who's killed millions."

I asked why she'd been arrested.

"I made an unwise remark about falsifications in history textbooks. They were choosing people to re-write things as the Russians wanted."

"All the muses are in chains."

"Oh, but writers are very well-treated. We had special privileges and high pay and holiday centres ..."

"But the high pay - which is only high for Rumania - is simply an insurance against your writing anything they dislike. Art and religion are equally persecuted. They survive only underground..."

So we argued the night away. The prisoners murmured and grimaced in their sleep. Names were muttered, or cried aloud; of children, fathers, lovers, friends. But most often, the word "Mother!" Age and class had lost all meaning as they dreamt, and the soul in distress whispered from its depths the old cry.

It went deeper than a simple appeal to one's own parent. It was a cry for the eternal female tenderness and motherly care which exists for us in heaven. I remembered the vision of St. John the Evangelist, to whom the crucified Lord had entrusted his holy mother. It was given to him to see a great wonder in heaven - a woman clothed with the sun and with the moon under her feet.

I was brought before the deputy camp commandant, a red-faced woman with heavy broiled forearms and large, splendid teeth. Her uniform seemed to encumber her movements like chain-mail.

"You've been preaching about God to the prisoners. It must stop!" she warned.

I said that nothing could stop it. Furiously, she raised her fist to strike me.

Then stopped, and stared.

"What are you smiling about?" she demanded, her face quite blotchy with rage.

I said, "If I am smiling, it is because of what I see in your eyes."

"And what's that?"

"Myself. Anyone who comes close to another person can see themselves in her. I was impulsive, too. I used to rage and strike out. Until I learnt what it really means to love. That is to be one who can sacrifice self for truth. Since then, my hands do not clench into fists."

Her hand dropped.

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"If you look into my eyes, you'll see yourself as God could make you!"

She seemed turned to stone.

She said quietly, "Go away."

I have wondered often if Pilate did not look into Jesus' eye and see the ruler he might have been in the "king of the Jews" whom his own wife represented to him as innocent and just. The two names have come down the centuries bound together: "Christ...suffered under Pontius Pilate," say Christians everywhere.

I continued to witness for Christ among the prisoners. The deputy commandant did not interfere.

As we hoed in the fields, Maria worked her way towards me along the row, changing places with her neighbour. Once the guard almost caught her. But at last she was beside me, offering help.

The guards spotted us whispering.

"Get to work!"

We hoed, vigorously. But that morning I was also feeling ill. Dizzy spells made me halt often, and each time I dared straighten my back, the guards would shout:

"You're for the carcer tonight!"

Waves of darkness washed over me. Maria's voice seemed to come from a great distance as she chattered, trying to make me forget how I felt.

I managed to stay on my feet until midday. I drank the cup of

rank, watery soup and nibbled at the bread. But in the afternoon I collapsed.

The blazing sun seemed to spin round the sky. Then I saw Maria's face above me, her mouth moving, seeming to shout silently from a well of darkness.

Guards dragged me to my feet. Water was poured down my throat until I choked.

"She's all right."

They swore at Maria: Don't stand gaping. Get to work!" Then straddled off, bobbing through the trembling air.

"You frightened me!" she said.

I had frightened myself. There is something specially frightening for a believer in fainting. You return to yourself, and realize that you have had a complete black-out. It makes you doubt the existence of the soul as a separate entity - a thought more frightening than the thought of death. Only in time could I convince myself that it meant no more than a dreamless sleep. Why should the soul always be self-conscious, always saying to itself,

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"I am"? It is a poor existence if one must constantly tell oneself that one exists.

We went back to work, hacking at the tight-rooted weeds. The merciless sun sapped all our strength. I could barely hold the hoe.

Late in the afternoon, storm clouds piled up on the horizon.

When whistles blew for the end of work, the sky was low and heavy. It hadn't rained for weeks, and we longed for it.

We were working far from camp, and battered lorries waited on the road to take us back. As we crowded in - unable to sit, but at least unable to fall - there was a flash of lightning, and the first warm drops touched our upturned faces.

Then the rain came, moving across the plain like a wall. In seconds we were drenched.

Maria cried, "Lovely, lovely water!"

But the lovely water continued to descend as if tipped from a giant tub. Bellows of thunder split the sky. A bolt of lightning made the women scream.

The truck skidded and stopped. Its back wheels were sunk deep in liquid mud.

"Everyone out! Quickly!"

The guards conferred.

"Fetch wood," they decided. But there was no wood.

In the torrential downpour, up to our knees in water, we women put our backs to the truck and heaved, while the men looked on.

The wheels spun, sending mud flying.

The truck stayed where it was. For an hour we worked in vain, until the sergeant ordered us to march back to camp. Boots squelching, clothes clinging, we tramped through the rain.

The guards struck out at women who stumbled.

At last the ragged column of grey ghosts reached the gates.

"Reporting back with sixty-two bandits, Comrade Commander!" shouted the sergeant.

The damp bandits struggled to their huts. Some were at once put on kitchen fatigues. The rest tried to dry their clothes and fell asleep.

How queer the human mind is. Just before dropping off, there came into my head a joke Richard had told once. A man decided that to complain was futile: he decided that he would in future make the best of things. Just at that moment a wheel came off his cart. "Never mind," he said. "Cabs have only two wheels. I have three. "I'm rich." Then a second wheel came off. "Why worry," he said. "A wheelbarrow has only one wheel. I have two." A third wheel came off. "Well, sleighs have no wheels at all and they still

get along," he said. Then he lost the last wheel. "I always wanted to be a sleigh-driver," he exclaimed joyfully.

I fell asleep smiling.

Time stood still. Slavery was our whole life, the Canal our world. We were worn down into a hopeless acceptance of our lot. Even the news from outside never changed. Hunger, queues and oppression. And the eternal, "The Americans are coming, they won't let you remain slaves."

Despondency meant that work levels fell, and strange tricks were played in an attempt to raise them.

At a meeting, twenty women were picked out of the ranks, and told: "You have been the hardest workers here. For this you will be released."

The Commandant made a speech.

"So it's farewell and thanks, Comrades. Together we have struggled to build Communism and now the time has come to share the fruits of our labour! Now you are free! As a parting gift we give you an extra loaf of bread each!"

The twenty heroines leaned out of the back of the truck, waving Red flags and singing the International.

Again a deception. Ten miles down the Canal road, at the next labour colony, they stopped and were put back to work.

The effect on work norms at Camp K4 was electric. But this trick was performed in other camps, and soon we learnt the truth.

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THE TRAIN

One morning directly after reveille the guards crashed in. " Everyone to be ready to move within the hour!"

This wasn't a matter of two or three detachments. The whole camp was being alerted. Hundreds of women were preparing their bundles, rushing about like chickens, trying to embrace friends they might never see again. The guards added to the tension with their own unease. They knew no more than we.

The Americans had broken through the Iron Curtain! The Russians had occupied West Berlin! We were being taken to be shot!

"Not actually boots!" cried Zenaida's clear voice. Our first issue of footwear was in progress. They were being thrown out of a

cart by the hut-leader without reference to size or aim. I won a pair three sizes too large.

When all was ready, the cases and bundles piled, the women lined up in ragged rows, the waiting began. What were we waiting for? No one knew. Where were we going? Everyone "knew" something different. Prison life is one enormous wait, and this time we hung about until almost dark before boarding the trucks. We were driven to the marshalling yards.

No riots at K4. The sidings were deserted except for a few railwaymen. They'd seen it all before. The train was made up of goods wagons and a string of long, black prison carriages. Each of them was self-contained, with a heavy sliding door and a few small windows high up, covered by metal grilles. In appearance, a luggage van.

"Move! Everyone in!" The train guards specialized in this work. Sloppy-looking men on an "easy number." They let the K4 men shove us into the wagons, which took time. There was barely room to stand.

"We can't take anymore here!"

"My God, we'll suffocate!"

But more and more women were pushed in, until we were eighty-four in a carriage intended for forty. The big sliding door

at last smashed shut and the bar was secured. The couplings clanged as the train jolted into life throwing us all together.

Our carriage contained some benches. One, it was revealed, concealed a W.C. - waterless, of course, and paperless, but no one thought of complaining about that. And it had a lid!

Women were settling down for the night, or quarrelling, or weeping - for what, they were not sure. The windy huts of Camp K4 had become home. And the unknown threatened. The rumour-merchants were predicting our mass execution. We were to be machine-gunned and thrown into the grave we ourselves had dug. And we would be better off that way, mumbled some of the simpler minds.

But no, assured a woman from Ploesti, in tones of authority: we were bound for Ghencea transit camp and an early release. She'd heard that Ana Pauker's clique had fallen from power and the Party line was being revised.

The wagon buzzed with surmise. That the horrid Ana should taste a little of her own poison! Few really believed it, but everyone seemed cheered.

A joke was told. "What's the difference between a zebra and a Communist?" "With zebras the lines are on the animal; with the Party the animals have to stay on the line."

It was hard to find a space to sit, impossible to stretch out. We dozed in snatches and were woken often by the grinding of brakes, announcing yet another mysterious halt. Outside the narrow windows there was only darkness.

Slowly the autumn landscape was revealed. Cows grazed peacefully in the fields. The very sight of these homely beasts gave hope, after the long empty plains of the Baragan. And trees: leafless already, but holding their black branches to the sky as if in supplication. Then some peasants, free men and women, spreading dung over the dark earth. Three little girls waved and waved, never knowing that they had caused a hundred women to weep.

The train puffed and lurched across Rumania, always northwards. After an hour it stopped at a junction. We heard the sound of doors sliding back and bars rattling. Some buckets of water were handed in by the guards, while others stood by with machine-guns.

But the surly peasant youth in uniform was used to watering beasts and knew one did not answer their cries. And there was, anyway, no bread.

As the train moved on, speculation began again. The gypsies were babbling incomprehensibly among themselves, as always.

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The peasant women from the collectives had already given way to remembering and mourning lost cattle and children.

Only a few old acquaintances were in the carriage. Helena Coliu, the girl who still believed in Communism despite her beatings; Annie Stanescu, the cheerful little prostitute, and Maria Tilea were there. But no Zenaida, no Clara Strauss, no Granny Apostol, no Cornelia Marinescu. I didn't even know if they were on the train.

Amateur politicians near me were discussing the American elections. We knew they were to take place that winter. Truman had served his four years and Eisenhower - who had been Supreme Commander in Europe for so long - was going to save us.

"Of course he'll be elected," cried the well-informed lady from Ploesti. "My information is that he'll ask special powers as President to free the captive countries of Eastern Europe."

Sensation! And since the woman had passed through Ghencea transit camp only a month earlier she was believed beyond the dictates of her listeners' need for comfort.

I wanted to say that this same Eisenhower had handed hundreds of thousands of refugees from Communism at the end of the war to "Uncle Joe," as Roosevelt called Stalin. Some committed suicide, some were hanged, some perished in Siberian camps. But I kept quiet. Why dispel illusions, when people needed them as a thirsty man needs water?

How slowly the train crept through the damp countryside. It groaned and grated over the points. It stopped and started. It stood for long hours in nameless sidings. Women took turns to crowd around the small windows, savouring the sight of farmhouses, of smouldering bonfires tended by silent peasants; tasting the first nip of frost in the autumn air.

The excitement of being on the move had worn off, the panic of being crammed into that rocking, lurching black tube turned to discomfort, and soon, with so many women ill, to misery. Despite numerous draughts, the wagon achieved a smelly airlessness.

There were many literary women there: writers, journalists, poets - published and otherwise - even some novelists. Gaunt, dark-haired Marina Capoianu, who'd taught English and French literature at Cluj, displayed an astonishing gift as a story-teller, recounting with a wealth of incident the classic novels she had once urged on unwilling pupils. At dramatic moments her strong, reach-to-the-back-of-the-classroom voice would boom out with Bill Sykes' curses on Nancy or Madame Bovary's passionate cries: "L,on L,on! Till Thursday, till Thursday!"

One of the most popular of her stories was the melodramatic

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"Portrait of Dorian Gray." Wilde's novel of crime and punishment, told over three hours while we were stuck in a silent and deserted siding that evening, was a howling success. In the murder scene, she slapped a clenched fist repeatedly into the palm of her hand as Dorian Gray stabbed and stabbed again. Her audience almost burst into applause. (Oscar Wilde complained of the prison conditions of his time. If he'd

seen these women, travelling like cattle, what would he have said?)

"Isn't it wonderful, education!" The peasants were astonished and amused. "To be able to say all that without the book!" The intellectuals had been no less absorbed, but now began to run down poor Oscar for frivolity, or snobbishness and more febrile failings. In the argument, Janetta said that Wilde had put an allegorical meaning into a book of deep religious feeling. In Dorian Gray, the painter represents Christ, who paints his image in the heart of every man. But as Dorian's innocence is corrupted, the image of Christ becomes more and more distorted until Dorian can no longer bear to look at it. He puts it away from him as all men do. Then one day the painter knocks at the door and asks to see the picture. But Dorian cannot bear that it should be seen. He made it what it is. So people do what Dorian Gray did: he killed the painter - Christ is killed - and in the moment he does, he kills the sense of his own life.

It is an allegory of Deicide, the greatest of crimes, but also that which at last brings pardon for all things and renewal. The blood shed on Golgotha saved even Christ's murderers. Wilde's symbolism of the painter continues here: he knew that death would be his fate if he asked to see the painting; yet he came. By his sacrifice the picture of Dorian Gray was restored to its original beauty.

Now it was Marina's turn to look startled. "Utterly far-fetched!" she cried. "It's really an unconscious portrait of Wilde's own psychology. ~He~ was the fat, hideous, bloated portrait, and Dorian Gray represents his boyhood which he so longed for that he was prepared to kill his genius - represented by the painter - in order to restore it. Which, of course, is what he later did."

Others eagerly interpreted the book in terms of the class struggle (that poor, cast-off waif and the downfall of the idle rich).

It was plainly a parable, said Mrs. Capoianu, ambiguous and many-sided like all good art. "But not a very ~English~ book; quite Russian, in some ways." So eighty women, trundling by train across Rumania, forgot fears of execution for a while and were entertained by Oscar Wilde.

At one stop the doors were wrenched open and a bag of

rations was thrown in. The loaves of black bread were newly-baked and smelled delicious; but had to be carefully portioned out among the groups. We gobbled it all down at once. At any moment we might arrive. Food saved up is food lost - it was the rule of prison life. For a

moment the trainload of women forgot how their poor skins rubbed and fretted against the wood, how their bodies ached and itched and tormented them.

For two days we rattled on, with stops and starts, through this limbo. But on the third, though the halts grew longer, neither water nor bread came. Until late in the evening the doors were opened and the dishevelled sergeant in person was revealed. He had been drinking. Tzuica – sticky Rumanian plum brandy no doubt. His boots crunched on the flints as he rocked on his heels, watching the surly escort throw in the bag of bread.

"You women are lucky tonight." Our silence was solidly doubtful. "There's a spoonful of jam each to go with the bread."

Perhaps the Tzuica would induce further condescensions. Maria asked boldly: "How much further to go, Sergeant-major?"

Flattered, the sergeant said: "Another day."

"And where are we headed?"

He hiccuped. "To be shot, of course!" And roared with laughter.

The sliding doors crashed shut. And the carriage broke into noisy argument. Those who had not begun to weep and wail were again asking each other questions: Could it be true? But he was drunk. That was just why you could believe him! Sobbing Jewish women began to clasp one another and exchange kisses of farewell. To have escaped the Nazi camps, and now this!

The train moved on, with painful slowness. And stopped after an hour. And moved on again.

Mrs. Capoianu, who had been lost in a waking dream beside me, asked suddenly: "Sabina, are we all simply the victims of a madman? What does it all mean? They say he sits behind locked steel doors, terrified, ordering more and more deaths. And when the foreign Ambassadors come, he never speaks, but draws and draws with a red pencil on a scrap of paper. Over and over again, drawings of women in postures of torture." She shivered convulsively. "And they all speak of him so, as if he were a god. 'Full-of-genius Stalin!' 'Father Stalin!'"

I said: "It wouldn't be the first time men had become victims of a dictator who tried to sit on God's throne. They accuse Him, and try to take His place. When I think of Stalin, I always remember Pharaoh. The slave-labour, the pogroms, the terror here it is all over again. A

man has tried to steal God's place. You know how Pharaoh ordered all male children of the Jews thrown into the Nile. And then Pharaoh brought up as one of his own

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family the man who was to carry out God's plan against him. It's said, in the 2nd Psalm, that God laughs sometimes." (After many years I thought I heard God's laughter again: Stalin's daughter, a convert of the underground Church in Russia!)

"I know he can't last forever," Mrs. Capoianu said. "But what makes a man into a fiend like that?"

"Often circumstances." I said. "They don't explain everything, but they explain a lot." He was the illegitimate son of a police officer. His mother had to work as a servant in his house, and so she became pregnant with the future Stalin. His legal father was a drunkard who knew the boy was not his and he beat him mercilessly. Then Stalin entered an Orthodox seminary where the boys were more prisoners than scholars, and there was the aggravating circumstance that he was a Georgian at a time when the Russians had closed down and oppressed the Georgian Orthodox Church. So he became a revolutionary. Now we see how such revolutionaries are made.

It was a night of dread. At every halt we feared that the crunching boots would stop, the doors be opened and women dragged out to their deaths. For hours the Christian prisoners tried to calm and comfort the rest. Yet nothing happened that day, or the next. At sunset the peaks of distant mountains were seen, touched with gold. As darkness fell again, the women sank into a stupor of exhaustion and misery.

"Out! Everyone OUT!"

The bolts were drawn back to reveal a night as black as pitch. There was no station, no siding, even. Dear God, was it true, were they really going to massacre us all? Crying, screaming, swearing, the women leapt or fell out onto the flinty tracks. There were no steps down and I fell painfully on my knees. Several others were helped down – but not by the guards, who stood waving machine-guns and shouting like lunatics at the terrified prisoners. Probably a long wait in the cold and wet was to blame for their mood. But to us they seemed devils out of hell.

Women were punched in the face, flung aside, slapped, struck with gun-butts. We had not the faintest notion of what we were supposed to do.

"Line up, line up! Keep near the sergeant!" But there was nowhere to line up to. Women slipped and tumbled down a muddy embankment into a wire fence. One young guard assumed they were trying to escape and lashed out with his fists. Mrs. Capoianu caught a swinging blow and staggered into her neighbours.

After an hour of utter confusion, several hundred of us were herded into fields beside the track.

"Everyone down! Lie down on your bellies! Get down!"

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We were forced to lie face down in the mud. A ring of swearing guards encircled us.

"Oh God, oh God, they're going to shoot us!" the woman next to me murmured over and over. "Don't let it happen, don't let it happen. I'll never complain again." She gabbled prayers and pleas. I think we all did.

"On the road! Bandits, are you all deaf?"

We marched very quickly through the darkness, spurred on by threats and blows. Struggling with our bundles. Falling, skidding, gasping for breath. Stunned with shock after four days of stiff-backed inactivity.

"Hold it! Get them into that field! Everyone down!"

Down we went on our faces or knees again. Half the column was lost, and we had to wait for it to catch up.

How long we marched, I don't know. It seemed hours before we saw the high walls of a new prison, long stretches of pallid blankness under the glare of electric lamps. The heavy steel and wood gates opened and we passed through in straggly rows of fives.

In the courtyard word went round: this was Tirgusor.

A new name, new guards. The same curses. The same routine

The checking of names and numbers began. It was long past midnight when we reached our cells.

Why here? Why Tirgusor? everyone asked. It was a maximum security

prison where murderers convicted of violent crimes were held. The name was famous in Rumania. What a mystery! What could it mean?

"That they have no other prisons left," murmured Mrs. Capoianu.

But no one was comforted.

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TIRGUSOR

I was put to work in the sewing shop at Tirgusor. Women worked round the clock in twelve-hour shifts, sitting at benches in a big high room with barred windows near the ceiling.

The sewing machines appeared to date from the last century and broke down at least once a day. I soon ceased to share Richard's pride about Singer, the Jew who invented sewing machines.

We stitched thick thread into prison mattresses. The heavy material had to be turned and twisted constantly, while the sewing-machine pedals were pumped by foot.

The night-shift women regularly fell asleep over their machines. (You couldn't sleep by day because of the prison noise). So warders patrolled the rows, dealing out slaps and punches. Not a few women wondered, in the small hours of morning, if life had not been better at the Canal.

Tirgusor contained the country's most hardened criminals. Murderers, sex offenders, swindlers, sadists - some clearly insane.

On the machine next to me sat a hysterical woman. She had stabbed a doctor to death with a pair of scissors. Several times a day she borrowed the scissors shared by the whole bench. She seemed not to notice the nervous glances of her neighbours as she snipped away. Often she would stare at the scissors before putting them aside.

Poor "Mad Anna" lived in a world of fantasy. She believed she'd had intimate relations with the doctor she had killed. Now she wrote, with a needle on soap, letters to herself from imaginary lovers. They were numerous, and had distinct characters. Peter's letters were high-flown. John's were passionate. Henry's were homely. All were read aloud to her startled cell companions.

Anna had occasional fits of hysterical weeping, but for most of the day lived happily in her illusory world. In prison or out, it made small difference to her.

How many tearful recognition scenes I saw in prisons: when the cell door opened it seemed to be always to admit the mother or sister or cousin of one already there. They had each thought

the other was free, and looking after the children. With that hope gone, their grief was terrible to see.

We saw some very odd meetings, too. One morning a new arrival announced herself: "I'm Mrs. Cornilescu from Cluj."

That was a coincidence. We already had one Mrs. Cornilescu from Cluj. Heads emerged from bunks to watch the confrontation. It seemed that both the Mr. Cornilescus were called Emil. And both were former Iron Guards. But the first was tall and dark. A charming man, so well-bred. The second Mrs. Cornilescu paled. Her Emil was also tall and dark. With such lovely manners.

"Pardon me," said my neighbour. "But in Cell 3 I happen to know there is a third Mrs. Cornilescu. Her husband also fits this description!"

Neither of our Mrs. Cornilescus could be called beautiful. One was small and sly with brown teeth, the other tall and haggard with legs thin as sticks. Both had snapped up the offer of marriage.

A furious argument began. The first Mrs. C. slapped her rival's face. The second pulled the first's hair. Guards rushed in to part them.

"My dear, it's an old story," said my neighbour. "The man's on the run from the Secret Police like all the old Iron Guards. He's got no home, no papers, no money. He lives off one woman after another, marrying them or promising to. Then the wives are arrested and meet in jail. I've seen some frightful fights in my time."

Meetings between relatives also came about because entire families had been arrested for helping fugitives in the mountains. The resistance leader, Colonel Arsenescu, was a popular figure and hundreds of people were arrested for helping his men. His wife was in prison. She was told, by stool-pigeons, that her husband had been shot: the lie was fed to her in a bid to break her spirit.

We heard that General Eisenhower had been elected President of the U.S.A. Then, that several Communist leaders had been overthrown and purged from the Party. Was it the start of liberalization?

"What do such puppets count?" said Silvia, a woman journalist. "Russia controls everything. Nothing will change until Stalin goes."

But a rumour began to spread throughout Rumania: the Canal was to be abandoned. The great labour colonies were to be shut down. The basic plan was at fault.

Rumour hardened into a fact. An eye-witness from Camp K4

told us that the camp was closing. Officers were being arrested. The Canal engineers were to be tried as criminals for "stealing State funds."

The thought was in every mind: what use would they have now for these tens of thousands of prisoners? Would they set us free?

A young woman from Ana Pauker's ministry was put in our cell. She upset everyone with her bitter tirades. We were the bandits, she the suffering innocent. Jenny Silvestru couldn't believe it had happened.

"I'm a victim of injustice!" she declared, several times a day.

"For injustice, read Communism," Mrs. Iliescu, wife of an Iron Guard officer told her.

"The Party should shoot the likes of you. You're treated too well!"

"My dear girl, I was in prison under Antonescu. I was freed for a few months before the Communists put me back. This is my sixth year in jail. Your threats mean nothing to me."

Mrs. Iliescu was as troublesome as Jenny. Her contempt for the Communists was boundless.

"We must show our superiority to these scum by working above their wretched norms. Under Communism or not, what we do will benefit the Fatherland!"

She worked so hard in the sweatshop that the norms were raised and everyone suffered. It was a stupid and revolting attitude. Yet it was hard not to respect her. She had suffered so much. She had such courage.

One of her often-repeated stories was of a woman interrogator who

had a sadistic taste for torturing men prisoners. She landed in Jilava after the first Party purge. "Women whose husbands and sons had borne pain and indignity at her hands fell on her," said Mrs. Iliescu. "They threw a blanket over her head and beat her black and blue."

Even when such unspeakable hatreds existed, reconciliation was still possible. There is a huge power in the word of God. Once, when asked, I refused to lead prayers in the cell so long as there were women present who would not make peace. I quoted Matthew 5:23 [MTT 5:23]:

> "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift."

Men and women were persuaded to end long and bitter quarrels with these words. Their lives were changed. As an apocryphal

word of Jesus has it: "You will never be happy until you look on your brother with love."

But an atmosphere of intense fear and suspicion reigned throughout Tirgusor. We had no wall-tapping grapevine. The Communists were trying to use such things for their own purposes. In every cell stool-pigeons spied and tapped out false messages. The answers obtained from unsuspecting new arrivals were used in the intense interrogations then in progress.

The Communists in prison were sure they would be shot. They had been ruthless, ruthlessness would be returned.

In the meantime the loving and the lovable were executed.

A happening in Jilava.

The daughter of a high Communist official, herself a Christian, learnt one evening that she must face the firing squad at midnight. Executions were frequent, and death sentences were passed on paltry pretexts, often for revenge.

This girl, before going to meet "the midnight bride" - as execution was known - held a last supper of oat-gruel and water with her cell companions. Calmly she lifted the earthenware vessel which

had contained the food.

"Soon I shall be earth again," she said. "Of the same stuff as this vessel. Who knows what it was before? Perhaps the handsome body of a young man. Soon out of my body grass will grow. But there is more to death than this, and it is for this that we are on earth, to tend our souls regally while we live."

As the girl was taken out, she raised her voice in the Creed. Passing through the vaulted gallery, it echoed from wall to wall. The words were those we say in church. But it was a different Creed, because she meant every word. She went to death for the one God, and was received into life everlasting.

Weeks passed. Twice daily at Tirgusor, we were counted. But few guards could count. Fewer still could add the front ranks to the rear. The business took hours. Then came cell checks. The bars were tested with wooden truncheons. It was very cold in the yard and we used to pray each morning that there would not be too many miscounts.

One day the count passed with amazing speed. And immediately after came the ominous call:

"Gather all your things!"

We were on the move.

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THE PIG FARM

In open trucks we drove towards the collective farm of Ferma Rosie. We started work at once in the fields. We had no cover vines with earth to save them from the cold. But the earth was like iron and the poor plants were long since frozen dry. The work had been left too late. There would be no vineyard next year. And no one seemed to care. It was not their business. They made a play of carrying out the useless work and sent in their report.

This vineyard had been one of the most famous in Rumania. Its owner was now in prison. But the victims of forcible collectivization were by no means only big landlords. Small farmers and peasants were the hardest hit. Their attempts to revolt against the system were ruthlessly crushed and they became sullen and indifferent. They worked as little as possible. Then, for "failing to discharge their obligations to the State" they were jailed by the thousand. The land remained untilled. The former "granary of Europe" faced famine. And

the State's answer was to send prisoners as slave labour on the collectives.

It was the same everywhere: the fields were cultivated so badly that little grew. The guards put to watch over us were often peasants themselves. One told how he had been ordered to shoot the first man he saw in a village. Then the villagers were gathered and invited to join the collective of their own free will.

Officials searched the homes of unwilling farmers. Always they found that they were 'hiding arms' – guns the police had planted.

Farmers' wives told how the collectivization teams had taken everything they owned, cattle, carts, farming tools.

Mrs. Manuila, a big-boned peasant woman who worked beside me, said: "When everything was gone, my husband said, 'Our hymn book remains. Let us sing to the Lord and thank him for the greater possessions we have in heaven.'"

Mrs. Manuila possessed a favourite cow. She spoke of it tenderly. How she embraced its neck on cold-mornings. How its warmth had spread through her body.

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"Cows don't give good milk unless you love them," she said. "Now it's just a beast like other beasts."

On the collectives, nothing was done with love: there was no blessing from God.

While working in the fields one morning, I collapsed. The sweatshop, the collectives, had ended my resistance. Guards put me on an improvised stretcher. I was carried to the truck and taken to Vacaresti prison hospital. On the way my head had swollen until I guessed it must have taken the shape of a melon.

I knew the prison well. Richard had preached there in the old days. I'd come at Christmas with parcels, to help prepare a tree. Instead of a hospital ward I was put in an isolated cell in which there was nothing except a dirty bucket in the corner. I slept on the bare concrete.

Next morning, looking out through the window, I saw male prisoners taking their exercise. When they passed my window I asked if they had heard anything about Richard Wurmbrand. The first and second

man shook their head. The guard was taking a nap. The third, when he heard my request said: " Wurmbrand? The Pastor?" "Yes," I replied, "he is my husband."

He bowed to the earth as the Orthodox do in church. "I met him," he whispered. "I do not regret my ten years in prison. They were worthwhile because the pastor brought me to Christ. And now I meet his wife!" He had to pass on, but he had not told me if Richard still lived.

He went around the yard, head down, hands behind his back. When he passed near the window again, he added: "I met him in Tirgul-Ocna. He was in the cell for the dying. He always spoke about Christ."

On his next trip round the yard I found my new friend was a school teacher. The guard yawned. His nap was over and he ordered the prisoners back to their cells. But I knew that Richard continued to be Richard, to exalt Christ, to win souls. Or was he referring to a past long ago?

As to the mark of high respect, I was not surprised. Rumanians generally had a deep respect for those who brought them to Christ.

I remained another day in the cell, no doctor calling to examine me, but I was happy to remain there, hoping to see the teacher again. I did not believe that Richard was dead. I cannot say why. But a verse from the Bible came like music to my mind. It concerned Jacob's son, Reuben, which is Richard's Hebrew name: "Let Reuben live and not die." [DEU 33:6] It was to me a promise.

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After forty-eight hours the hospital authorities remembered I had been admitted as an urgent case. I was put in a bed with sheets and blankets.

A woman doctor in clean white coat walked the wards.

"Now you must eat everything you're given she said. The kindness of her voice brought tears to my eyes.

Dr. Maria Cresin was fresh from medical school. With courage and patience, she worked in understaffed, overcrowded Vacaresti, adored by her patients.

I had an ugly skin trouble. A kind of scurvy, she said, resulting

from malnutrition. I must eat: it was the only cure. She gave me injections, and the trouble began to fade. Sores and scabs on my body began to heal. The colitis and diarrhea ceased. I could even see more clearly: lack of vitamins plays tricks with the eyesight, and many prisoners were blind by night.

In the next bed was a once-wealthy woman. She wasn't too upset at being in prison. She was sure she'd be free soon. Wasn't Eisenhower America's President? And Winston Churchill Britain's Prime Minister? Two great soldiers would not let East Europe remain in slavery.

"When the Americans come, they'll make the Russians pay war compensation. Taking into account my former income, I shall ask 5,000 lei a day for the six months I've been in prison. That is one million lei! I shall be secure for the rest of my life."

I suggested that she might as well ask for 10,000 lei a day. Then she'd have two millions.

"What a good idea," she said. "You Jews are clever people!"

The other prisoners called her "The Millionairess."

We played games in the ward, which often ended in tears. We tried to imagine how life would be when we were deaf old women. A word was passed from one end of a row to the other. Each patient distorted it a little, so that it emerged as something different. But the laughter and the excitement upset us. And once it had changed to weeping the ward was caught up in a crisis of grief. Many were young, and they saw their youth passing away. The game would become reality.

Vacaresti was supervised by a political officer. (Medicine, like everything else, had to be practised in the spirit of the class struggle.) One evening he came into the ward with some uniformed colleagues and made a pompous speech about the joys of Communism. When such fine hospitals as this were freely available, who needed God? he asked.

I said, "Lieutenant, as long as there will be people on earth,

we will need God and we will need Jesus, who gives life and

He was outraged. How did I dare to interrupt? How could I go on believing such stuff?

I said, "Everyone who lives in a house knows it has been built by

an architect, just as everyone who attends a banquet knows it was prepared by a cook. We are all invited to the banquet of this world, which is so full of wonderful things, the sun, the moon, stars and rain and fruits of all kinds; and we know that the one who has prepared this is God."

The political officer laughed and scoffed and walked out with his friends, banging the door.

Next morning a guard came and told me to pack. The same day I was sent back to the labour colonies.

This time it was a State pig farm, where fifty women tended several hundred swine. The years had been hard, but this was the hardest of all. Food was at starvation level. We dragged ourselves from our beds at 5 a.m., still wearing the filthy rags in which we had lain down, and went out into the cold and darkness to feed the pigs.

The sties were ankle-deep in liquid filth - the one substance that never froze. A vile, nauseating stench hung over the place and penetrated every angle of our huts. It hung about the body and hair. The very skilly we slopped up with our wooden spoons savoured of it. We were better off than the prodigal son; we filled our bellies with the husks that the swine did eat.

The meaning fell away from things. Death stared me in the face. The whole world was made of tears and despair as never before and a cry rose from my heart: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" [PSA 22:1, MRK 15:34]

Trying to clean their sties was as hopeless as trying to clean the world. Each day we started afresh, wet, hungry and half-dead, to cart away in barrows the mountains of filth.

I knew there was no hope for me, nor for the world, and expected only to die.

And perhaps, in a psychological condition such as this, I should not have survived for long. But happily it did not last for many weeks. I am convinced that the Lord heard my prayers and took me out according to his plan. I had only to learn a very deep lesson, to drink the cup to its bitterest dregs; and now I am thankful that I passed through this hard school, which teaches you the highest love, love towards God, even when He gives nothing but suffering.

From the back of an open truck I watched the pig farm

receding, a dark huddle of huts in the white landscape. The wind was like a cold, steel hand. It tugged at the flaps of our clothes and sent fine skeins of snow skittering across the land. No one knew or asked or greatly cared where we were headed. One collective was identical with the next.

But unexpectedly we came to Ghencea, the transit camp from which, over two years ago, I had set out for the Canal.

"What crowds of women! The place is busier than ever," we whispered among ourselves as we waited to be checked and numbered. "What's going on?"

It was after dark before they'd finished with us and we could be marched off to the huts. The circulation returned to our stiff limbs. Inside, in the comparative warmth, hope began to seep through us like a thaw. The hundreds of women who packed this and every other hut in Ghencea came from camps all over Rumania. Either they planned some big new slave labour scheme, or ...

But no one dared to voice the hope. We'd been through too much, we'd gulled ourselves too often.

On the second day a rumour spread; in the offices at Ghencea ten men from Security H.Q. were working on dossiers. Our dossiers! They'd arrived from Bucharest two days ago. Could it really mean freedom?

I looked around the hut. Under the dim, unshaded lights, scarecrow-women sat and talked in low voices, turning over the rumour, pulling it inside out, talking, talking - and all the while our minds were planning for the future. The smell of sour food and sour bodies hung like a miasma in the air. Loudspeakers had been added to the camp equipment. From time to time they gave forth vast, crackling sounds, like amplified frying eggs, and roared out incomprehensible distorted messages. When the first sensation had passed you saw women sitting blank-eyed for hours at a time, waiting. No, they didn't believe they would leave it behind - ever.

Some of the gypsy girls I'd known at Cernavoda were there. And one day I heard my name called.

"Sabina, Sabina!" It was Zenaida, who had queened it in pre-war Bucharest, from K4. She had done a round of collectives, too. We tried to clasp each others hands, then stopped. For all our fingers were swollen and cracked with chilblains.

We laughed and told our stories, or as much of them as we could bear. She insisted that I take a pair of men's trousers and a warm jacket which she'd scrounged from somewhere. I did so gratefully.

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"It's Charlie Chaplin to the life!" The others stood back to take in the effect. "Even her boots have tabs on the back!"

Soon enough, we came around to discussion of the vital topic.

"How much longer?"

"Does it mean what we think it means?"

Then guards began to take us for questioning at the camp offices. Zenaida was in one of the early groups. She told me:

"It was just like any old interrogation, really, only very polite. And instead of asking about you, they asked what ~we~ thought about them!"

The customary three officers in uniform sat behind desks covered with papers, Zenaida said. After a few questions about her health, and how we were enjoying our stay and did we have relatives outside, things took a more unusual turn.

They asked: Do you know how wrong you were to oppose the building of Socialism? What do you think of your re-education in prison? Do you understand that the State was right to give you this chance to reform? That nothing and no one will be able to turn back the tide of Communism?

"Naturally, I told them I'd enjoyed every minute," said Zenaida. "What a pompous ass in charge. Ranting on about national achievements and our fine farms and splendid camps. To ~me~, dear, after three years and nine months of it!"

Like most prisoners, she did her best to give the impression that she had seen the error of her ways, and was now eager to work for a place in society.

Before the month was out, small groups of women began to leave Ghencea. As always, we didn't know where they might be headed. Lists of names were read out, parties were marched to the camp offices, then driven off in trucks. But it was one more small, hopeful sign.

Eventually, my turn came. The major behind the desk was stout and pink as a baby. He had hands like fat little bunches of sausages and with them he kept clearing the objects on his desk while he talked, as if he might need to jump up on it later to round off his speech.

There were a few special questions reserved for religious prisoners.

"In this place, Mrs. Wurmbrand (Mrs.!) you must know that I am more powerful than God. At least, he has not so far made any interventions in this office." He took as his due the appreciative smiles of the two assistants. "But have you really accepted this? Have you really seen through the sham of religion? Have you realized that in a Communist society, God is superfluous? That you don't need him any more? If you are ever released

from here you'll be astonished at the achievements of recent years, and we are only beginning!"

The gold braid on his epaulettes was new and glittering. Under his sausage-hand was a buff file stuffed with papers which might be mine.

I said: "I see that you are powerful. And probably you have papers and documents there about me that I've never seen and can decide my fate. But God keeps records, too, and neither you nor I would have life without him. So whether he keeps me here or sets me free, I'll accept that as best for me."

The major banged both fists on the desk, as if it were something he could hurt. "Ungrateful, Mrs. Wurmbrand, ungrateful! I'm sorry to see that you've failed to learn your lesson, and I shall make a report to that effect." He shouted in mock-rage for a few minutes.

But three days later my name was read out. Higher authorities than the major were, indeed, deciding my future.

We stood waiting in the snow-covered yard outside the camp offices with our poor bundles. Even now we weren't at all sure that we'd be freed. It was only when we'd been marched out through the gates of twanging barbed-wire and stood shivering in the road that the guard began the long process of handing out slips of paper.

The wind carried his hoarse voice away.

"Wurmbrand, Sabina, born Cernauti 1913...resident at ..."

I took the document ordering my release. "Certificate of Liberation," was the heading, but it was growing too dark to read. The last bars of copper showed in the sky as we piled into a truck and drove off. Ghencea is only a few miles from Bucharest, but we were dropped well outside the outskirts of the town.

I walked with my greasy, smelly bundle through the suburbs. For the first time in nearly three years I saw people, hurrying home after work, shopping for their families.

"Home!" That was where I was heading. If it existed.

If anything existed. Homes, friends, family – I didn't know what had happened to any of them. Mihai would be fourteen now. What had the years done to him? I was almost frightened of finding out; and longed to see him at the same time.

How the lights dazzled my eyes, and the smells of food from restaurants shocked my senses! I wanted to cover my ears against the screeching metal of the trams, to cower from their plumes of falling blue sparks. As the stream of people hustled past indifferently a sense of dismay came over me. I looked for the No. 7 tram stop. Perhaps it didn't exist any longer. Yes, there it was.

I suppressed my panic and climbed aboard, then realized I had no money.

I said loudly: Could someone be so kind as to pay my fare!

All heads turned to see who made this unusual request. And a glance was enough to know why it was made. A dozen people immediately offered to pay for me. They crowded around, their eyes full of sympathy. This kind of thing was a part of life now. Everyone there, it seemed, had a relative or friend in prison. They asked no questions – only mentioned names of their dear ones whom I might know.

We passed near Victory Street with sad memories of the police station where I'd first been held. Nothing had changed. The gigantic portraits of mankind's four geniuses – Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin – still stared down on the crowds who tramped through the slush. I left the tram near a block of flats I knew and climbed the stairs. The door was opened by a friend.

"Sabina!" She put her hands to her mouth and stepped back. "Is it possible?" We embraced. "I feel quite faint," she said. And began to

cry.

Someone ran to fetch Mihai. My heart seemed to stop as I saw him come through the door. He was tall and pale. And so thin.

But a young man, now.

As we embraced, the tears began to flow down my cheeks at last. He wiped them away with his hands.

"Don't cry too much, Mother," he said.

At that moment it seemed to me that all my troubles were over and that I would never need to cry again.

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HOME AGAIN

We walked together next day in Bucharest's big park, Cishmigiu. I had to discover my son again. I didn't know him any more. When Mihai was very young, we almost feared for him. He seemed consumed by religious feelings. He put such searching questions. He was precocious, a keen evangelist at the age of five. When he was seven he brought to Christ a professor who became a member of our congregation.

Would the good in him have been destroyed in our absence by the Communists - by men who did not know what kindness was?

I rejoiced to find in him at once fine traits of character. We spoke of my years of imprisonment and forced labour. He said, "We don't criticize nature for the fact that it contains both day and night, light and darkness. So I accept the badness of men. Let us try not to call them brutes."

I, still wondering, told him about the Way of the Cross. He listened attentively, until his eye was caught on our walk by a fruit tree bursting into bud. It was one of those heavenly spring days that come before their time, as if the fine weather can't wait to be born. Snowdrops were breaking through the neglected beds. Hyacinths were unfolding.

When I was done, he said: "You, Mother, and Father, too, have chosen the way of the Cross as the best way to serve God. I don't know if I would choose it, too. I feel nearest to God in a place like this. Somewhere there is beauty. Not suffering and shame."

He'd had so few of life's pleasures and he valued the little joys

at hand. God's lilies cost no money to look at. He said: "Why not just stay in a garden, smell the flowers and love God in that way?"

I replied: "You know that when Jesus was crucified it is said that there was a garden nearby. What would you do if, being in a garden, you heard the shrieks of an innocent man being crucified? The jails of Vacaresti and Jilava are not far. People are

being tortured in them as we look at the flowers, and in the Ministry of the Interior across the way."

He asked, quietly: "Was it very hard for you, Mother?"

I answered: "Mihai, we are Hebrew and we are children of God. What oppressed us most was not the physical side. It was that we were put to labour for the illusory world and were taken away from the spiritual. The story of the Canal shows how illusory this physical labour can be if God is not behind it.

"The Canal came to nothing in the end. So did the Roman empire, the Greek republics, the first Jewish state, the Egyptian and Chinese civilizations. Now the British Empire is going, too. All belonged to the world of illusions.

"So this was our greatest suffering. To have to live in an illusory world - not in our own Hebrew spiritual one of "those who come from the other side," which is etymologically the sense of the name."

One evening he came to my room and read to me from Plutarch's ~Life of Cato~. It said that the tyrant Sulla's palace was nothing more than a place of execution, so many were tortured there and put to death. Cato was then in his fourteenth year, the same age as Mihai now. And when he saw the heads of illustrious persons carried out and observed that men sighed in secret at these sights, Cato inquired why someone did not kill Sulla. His preceptor replied that the people feared him even more than they hated him. Cato then said, "Give me a sword that I may kill the man and deliver my country."

Mihai put down the book.

"It's true. I feel a bit like that. I'd like just to enjoy life, but sometimes I wonder why so many young people don't do something. Just one boy like me could rid the country of a tyrant. That's what all the Old Testament is about. Is it not from God?"

I said I thought it wouldn't help in modern circumstances. And it wasn't the best way. We should try to kill the tyranny, not the tyrant. We should hate the sin, but love the sinner.

Mihai replied: "Mother, that will be the hardest thing."

In those first few days I was like a woman back from the dead. I was free! For so many years in prison, all problems had seemed trifling beside that. Blithely we said, "If I could get out of here, I'd live happily on bread and water for the rest of my days. You'd never hear a word of complaint." And live on bread and water most of us did.

Now the real problems began. The worries, large and small.

It was a shock to see the abject need and hunger all around. The people I called on were reduced to almost nothing. Worn

blankets on beds, but no sheets and pillowcases. On many days they couldn't afford to buy black bread or use a little electricity to warm the place.

"We've had to sell everything," a friend explained. "Cutlery, linen, carpets. Even our books. No! Don't sit on that chair! The leg's broken."

Most of the money had been used to buy precious medicines for her father, who lived with the family in that tiny flat.

"Sabina, do be careful what you tell people," she begged. "There are informers everywhere! The church is riddled with them."

A stream of friends and strangers came to see me, all begging in the most heart-breaking way for news of relatives in jail. Only rarely could I help them or answer their question: Was it an amnesty? A thaw? A new policy? Why had I been released? Who should they apply to?

I quickly learnt all about "applying" to officialdom. The queues at Government offices were worse than at the food stores. I needed a ration card. Without one, I couldn't even buy bread. I waited in line four hours one morning. When I reached the small window, the girl snapped:

"Where's your work card? Without that you can't get a ration card."

"But I'm an ex-prisoner."

"I can't help that. No work card and number, no ration book."

So I had to survive on the charity of others.

For a time we shared a room with a woman friend. But Mihai was a young man now. It wasn't possible for us all to live jammed together. I began a long, long search for another room.

Our old home had been confiscated. So had all its contents, furniture, bedding, books. But friends lived in the house where our flat had been once. They said there was a small attic free. Small it certainly was: one room was four yards by five, the other three by two.

After days of queuing and form-filling I was allowed to occupy this "accommodation space." The only furniture was some rickety old beds with broken springs. No water, no toilet. In winter it was bitterly cold, in summer too hot. The window looked out on to a blank brick wall.

Here we lived and cooked and slept. Mihai and I moved in. Janetta, when released, came to stay with us. We had no beds so we shared a sofa. Then there was Marietta.

She came to our door one day. And stood there, smiling girlishly, timidly, with dark blue rings under her eyes, in a mangy-looking black coat. She held out a little parcel tied with string.

"It's nothing really," she said. "Two French pastries." Which she

had queued two hours to buy. And which were not very French.

Marietta was an old member of our congregation. She was a sweet, good-natured girl, but not too bright. People were a little afraid of her. She suffered from epileptic fits.

I was happy to see her. She had a quality of innocence that was always a delight.

"Come in and sit down, Marietta." I stepped back to let her enter and the door banged against the end of Mihai's bed. "We haven't been in long and we're very untidy."

She squeezed past and sat down on one of the rickety chairs we had acquired. The back fell off. Mihai went to help Marietta.

"How cozy you are here?" she said, looking round at the stove on which I was frying potatoes in cheap fat.

"Pity about the roof," said Mihai. The sloping ceiling was marked by big patches of damp on which a dark mossy fungus grew every day. Whenever one of us moved, we all had to move to make way.

Marietta shared our fried potatoes. Later, when Mihai had gone off into his bedroom to study, she told me that she had nobody in the world now and after a week would have no roof over her head. The family she stayed with had asked her to leave. Relatives were coming from Cluj, they needed the bed ...

"Well, Marietta, as you see, this isn't a flat. It's just the old box-room we used to keep junk in when we lived downstairs. But if you like we could squeeze another bed in here. I expect we can find a mattress somewhere."

Her face lit up with joy. "Really? Are you sure the boy won't mind? I have a few things - blankets and some plates and cutlery. I'd so much like to be with you!"

So Marietta came to live with us in Olteni Street.

It was a week or so after my release. The air was sparkling, the tram cars seemed to swirl along as if in a funfair, the drab grey people moved in the streets with a lighter step. It had been a ferocious winter, one of the worst in thirty years. Now the mild, warm sunshine melted even our hearts.

Suddenly, church bells began to toll. How many years it was since I'd heard that sound. A deep, solemn note of mourning, that came first from the cathedral, then from St. Spiridion's, then from all the other churches in Bucharest which remained open.

The city has many bells. (Rumania in the Middle Ages was a bastion of Christendom against the Turks and the country is filled with monasteries and churches.) Now they all sounded together. But the lovely noise was also frightening. People stopped in the streets and asked each other what had happened. Despite

the police ban on public gatherings, small crowds gathered in the

squares and whispered together.

Then the loudspeakers on Victory Street crackled into life:

"Dear Comrades and Friends! Workers of the Rumanian People's Republic! The Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. informs the Party and all Rumanian workers with deep sorrow that on March 5th, 1953, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union and Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Josef Vissarionovich Stalin, died after a grave illness. The life of the wise leader and teacher of the People, Lenin's comrade and faithful disciple, is over." The speakers blared martial, funeral music.

The sound of bells meant not death, but the dawn of new hope to most of us. "But why are they doing it?" everyone asked. Especially when they heard that religious services had been ordered to mark the demise of the President of the World Atheists' Organization, who had devoted so much effort to destroying Christianity.

Rumours spread that Stalin, in terror on his death-bed, had asked for the last rites and begged to be buried with a cross. The shadow of his millions of victims (the Soviet author Ilya Ehrenburg wrote later that if he'd spent his lifetime simply writing their names, he would not have had time to finish the list) fell across his bed, and he asked all Christians to pray for him. So it was whispered.

Schools and shops closed down. Mihai came home with the special edition of ~Scintea~. Our one and only newspaper, the Party organ, contained of course nothing but columns of eulogy. All the vast slogans and banners in streets and cinemas and cafes hymned Soviet-Rumanian friendship. The radio trumpeted the same tune.

At great risk we could listen to foreign broadcasts. From one of these stations we heard a reading of Isaiah Chapter 14 - a terrible chapter which describes the death of an oppressor. He goes down into hell, where he is mocked and told:

"Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? The worms cover thee...how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!" [ISA 14:10-12] The chapter is triumphant and vengeful.

"What do you think of that?" asked Mihai, as it ended.

I said I didn't feel that way. In a man's last moments, as he sees death before him, great changes can happen. I recalled that Stalin's mother was a good and devout woman. How she must have prayed for him! A bishop told St. Monica [mother of St. Augustine], who wept

over her son's sinfulness, "The son of such tears cannot be lost."

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And now we have the testimony of his daughter, who turned Christian in spite of all his teaching and escaped to the West. Who knows what the dying Stalin meant by that " incomprehensible and awesome gesture" Svetlana describes when "he suddenly lifted his left hand as though pointing up to something...the next moment the spirit wrenched itself free of the flesh"? The Pope said a Mass for Stalin's soul. Should Jesus have loved Stalin's soul less than the Pope?

The other side of the coin was joy at the start of what we hoped would be a new era, the end of slave labour camps and projects like the Canal. For all the rumours were coming true: the Canal was really being abandoned. After four years the scheme was dropped, with only a seventh of the work completed. More than 200,000 men and women had slaved there. No one knows how many thousands died. Billions were thrown away and the country's economy was wrecked. For nothing.

In ~Scintea~ we read that the State was now switching over from construction of major social works to producing consumer goods. Living standards must be raised. But the fact was that the Canal was a failure. It could never have worked. A final great survey was made by engineers. Some say they discovered that the Baragan plain would be flooded. Others that there would never be enough water to supply both Canal and irrigation projects.

What is certain is that the chief engineers and planners were arrested. Death sentences for "economic sabotage" were passed. At least two men were executed on the spot. Another thirty received sentences of up to twenty-five years each.

I said to myself the Passover Prayer: "We were slaves with Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord with a mighty hand freed us." Again, it was true. Barracks and labour colonies were closed down. The huts crumbled away. Grass and weeds burst through the concrete. The huge, empty plain was given back to the wilderness.

It is a wild and lonely place today. Snakes rustle through the undergrowth, no longer hunted for food. And no one now lays out crumbs for migrant birds. Rusting equipment lies in the deserted vegetable fields and the cold wind from the Black Sea erodes the last traces of what was to be a wonder of the world.

Little by little I regained my health and some of my old

strength. The ribs that had been broken when I was thrown into the Danube hurt me, but the doctor said that was only because they were not yet fully healed. He advised some weeks in bed.

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And said it was a miracle that I had survived. But there was too much waiting to be done.

Walking one morning in Olteni Street, I saw a shabby little man with thinning hair. He stared at me hard as we passed. When next I put my hand into a coat pocket, I found a little, folded leaflet. He had slipped it in without my noticing, then disappeared.

"And it shall come to pass that the Lord shall give thee rest from sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve ..." [ISA 14:3]

I read the text, and I knew that the fight continued. Perhaps it was not on show, but everywhere around me was the love of God. In passing faces that betrayed nothing. In hearts that no Stalin could touch.

A new happiness flowed through me. I was a member of the Underground Church.

You won't find its title in directories, or its buildings in the cities of Eastern Europe. It has no cathedrals. Its priests are in worn working suits. They have no theological training. They know little of sectarian squabbles. The Underground Church has no name even behind the Iron Curtain. Only after we reached the West did I come to know that we were referred to by this title among the few people abroad who knew what we were doing. If I'd been asked earlier, "Have you an Underground Church in Rumania?" I wouldn't have understood the question. Like Moliere's Monsieur Jourdain, who'd been speaking prose all his life without knowing it. We simply did our Christian duty. We paid no heed to Communist laws. And we did not need to give our attitude a name.

For the next twelve years this was to be my life.

At first I'd been distressed by the plight of churchgoers. They were persecuted by the police, harried by informers. Through radio, schools, cinema, theatre and press the campaign to stamp out belief was relentlessly pursued. The old could worship, with difficulty, and under observation. But the young might not believe.

I saw how many former friends, afraid of losing their jobs, didn't dare come near our house. Others wouldn't even admit they had once worshipped beside us.

Passing the university, I saw a teacher we'd known well and went to greet him. He was with a colleague.

"You're making a mistake, Madam. I don't you." He turned away, unable to look me in the face.

People were so frightened, while they were "free." In prison,

even at the worst times, we'd seen God's hand at work. We came to know that although we suffered he would not leave us. We could trust him. So a vital part of work in our Underground Church was to teach people this. And, with a prison background, it was easier to win their trust.

I also had to keep myself in my place. Our church was now run by two young Lutheran pastors. But it was embarrassing to find so many of their people knocking at my door to ask advice or tell their troubles. Believers who had suffered for their faith were treated with something like idolatry by other Christians. Everything we said was "gospel."

It's a dangerous idea. Martyrs don't make the truth. The Truth makes the martyr. I had to be very firm and stop people from treating me with exaggerated reverence.

Keeping my opinions to myself wasn't easy, either. The two young pastors did their best, but they could only teach what they had learnt from Lutheran professors and from books often based on other books, written many centuries ago, in a world which did not look like ours. I didn't have as much respect for these ideas as I used to have. Not everything the books taught fitted the lessons I had learnt in prison.

Communist methods of brainwashing and indoctrination were new. They needed new answers. And these were found, by the Underground Church, as time went by.

"Mother, I've finished with school."

Mihai came home early one day, with bright eyes and set mouth.

"What do you mean, finished?"

"I'm not going back."

"But you must go on with your studies."

"Not there!"

I got the story from him by degrees. The Communist Youth Movement was being built up and the best pupils were given the privilege of wearing a red tie. The children were told to propose a candidate for the honour. And they proposed Mihai who refused. He said, "I won't wear the red tie. It's the sign of the Party that keeps my father in prison."

Consternation! The teacher, a Jewish girl, didn't know what to say. But she had to play the Communist. She scolded Mihai and sent him home.

But the fact was that the teachers, almost all of them, hated what they had to do and the people who made them do it. Next day Mihai's teacher smuggled him back into class and gave him a hug.

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From that day on, he was the most protected boy in the school. Atheistic propaganda began in the classroom and time after time Mihai would stand up to argue with his instructors. He sometimes lost the arguments, because he couldn't follow their twists and turns, but he stood up just the same. And the teachers, knowing he was the son of a political prisoner, loved him for this. Rumania is not a Communist country, but a country oppressed by the Communists.

While I was in prison, Mihai had been cared for by our old friend Alice, a Sunday school mistress. Once she had been head of a department in an important Ministry, but when she refused to join the Party she was thrown out. She eked a living teaching French and coaching for examinations. After I'd been taken off, Mihai simply went to his "Auntie Alice" and said: "You'll be my mummy, now."

She was very poor and also had to look after an elderly father. All three of them lived in a single room. Since there was simply no space for other children she wanted to take in, she helped them with love and such pennies as she could spare. They would have gone hungry but for Christian brethren who sacrificed for them.

Thanks to Alice, Mihai could resist all the blows which rained on

him between the ages of nine and thirteen, and still tell me when I came back: "Mother, I'm on your side and I love the Lord."

But the propaganda in the schools was intense. With films and lectures the teachers had to work hard to prove that God didn't exist. So Mihai asked me often for proofs that He did.

I remembered what Richard had said that nobody asks for proof that nature exists. It is there, and we're part of it. And spiritual things are just as self-evident as material things. A genius says he has been inspired – by what? By something higher than himself. A spiritual experience, a closeness with God.

In every school there was a "godless corner" with pictures and books deriding the clergy. And Mihai knew that some of the stories were true. He had known pastors who behaved badly, who betrayed their brothers.

I tried to show him that the Church has a human as well as a divine side. And that every Christian has this dual nature.

Day after day, he'd come home with examples he'd been given of the Church's errors or the failings of priests.

I would say, "But they never tell you about the remorse a pastor feels when he does wrong. They just show you the sinful side. They hide the good. Anyone can go wrong. It's when we're sorry

for it that we show what is divine in us." So I dispelled his doubts. Until the next onslaught.

Every Christian mother had this struggle. Life was a battlefield, and every evening we made up the ground gained by the Communists during the day.

"Our professor says Joseph was a grain speculator."

"Why did King David want to marry Uriah's wife?"

I replied, "The Bible does not hide the truth. It tells of men who can sin and make mistakes. But when you read these stories for yourself, you see it's the Communists who are lying and distorting."

In this struggle for youth, they seemed to have all the weapons: the schools, the radio, the press. But Mihai had always had before him the example of Christianity in action.

When I was at the Canal in 1951, people from our church risked their liberty to help him. An elderly couple spent two days travelling - by roundabout routes to avoid detection - and put a large slice of their savings in the hands of someone who could help Alice.

Old Mrs. Mihailovici, who'd also been like an aunt to Mihai, came hundreds of miles from her village after my arrest with a bag of potatoes, all she had to offer. Her visit was reported by informers, who always watch relatives of political prisoners. When she got home she was summoned by the militia and so badly beaten that she never recovered her health.

In spite of such treatment, the people of the Underground Church never forgot their duty to the children of those in jails.

Sometimes we lost a battle.

I remember a woman who came to me in tears.

"My child is working for the Secret Police," she said. "He's meeting a man regularly who asks him about everyone who comes to the house. I don't know what to do."

She couldn't turn her son out. She couldn't let him betray Christians who came to see them. I advised her to break contact with us for some time.

Sometimes late at night a man - or more often his wife - came to my attic and confessed that they were informing. "We're in a trap," one woman told me. "We love the Lord. We love you and Mihai - but we can't resist all these threats and menaces. My husband will lose his job or be sent to prison. We have to report on everyone who attends church and what they say. We try to tell them only what'll do you no harm - but you must beware!"

Others left Bucharest and moved from town to town to avoid these weekly summonses to the Secret Police.

Your home under Communism is always divided. If they can't

find a child or a relative to tell how much bread you're buying, what you cook and who visits you, there's always a neighbour or a colleague who will. Girls are questioned about boys they go out with. And everything goes down in the file, to be used in one way or another against you.

From this system arises the phenomenon of thousands and thousands of secret Christians who wear the red tie or the Party badge. Some even hold high State posts while belonging to the Underground Church. They call a priest to baptize a child by night. They travel to a remote town to be secretly married by a pastor. And many informers came to me to tell of all they had to do and seek forgiveness for their betrayals.

I'd say to them, "Prove the sincerity of your repentance by telling us now about how we're spied on. Let's have the names of the officers you took orders from. Tell us when and where you meet."

If they were in the habit of handing over their information at a certain street corner, one of us would sit in a cafe nearby to take a snapshot of the Secret Policeman concerned. Then we'd follow him to see whom he met next. If their meetings took place, as often happened, in a "safe" house of the Secret Police, we'd watch the place and photograph those who came and went.

It was risky work, but we were able by these methods to list most of the informers, including Colonel Shircanu, who headed police spywork against the Church. We watched him as closely as he watched us. We pinned down his chief informers.

Some we succeeded in bringing to repentance. Others had to be dealt with by sterner means. In these ways we defended the Underground Church and enabled it to continue its work.

I was lucky in having Mihai. My son was more than faithful. He was at a very difficult age for boys and we gave him the hardest tasks. On top of his own problems he had to be constantly on the watch. He had to take decisions that might land us both in prison. Yet we could often laugh together at the absurd things his teachers were obliged to say, and the strange things that happened.

One evening a few months after she'd come to live with us, Marietta came in much later than usual and all evening said scarcely a word. I'd noticed that she'd been late several times in recent weeks. And that she seemed not happier - because she was a happy girl - but calmer, more self-assured.

All of a sudden, she said: "There's something...I don't quite know how to tell you...Well, I have a boy I'm very fond of."

She had met him on a hospital visit to a cousin. He was a cripple. The whole left side of his body had been paralyzed in

a factory accident, and this had affected his speech. For months he'd been completely dumb, and unable to move without a wheelchair.

"But now he's ever so much better and can get about with his sticks very slowly. He's not good at speaking, though. I understand, but other people can't at first."

Next evening the young man came to see us. Laboriously, he climbed three flights of stairs. As Marietta said, it was difficult to understand him, and that night we had several friends from another town staying, sleeping on the floor. But it did emerge that Peter, too, had nowhere to go. He'd been sleeping in someone's cellar since he came out of hospital, and now he'd lost even that.

The epileptic Marietta married the dumb cripple and Peter came to live with us. Now we were four, not counting the almost nightly guests who stayed in our tiny flat: wives of pastors who'd been arrested, Christians who didn't dare make contact with an ex-prisoner by daylight.

One of these was a youth who worked as cook in a police barracks. They never ran short of food there, and he often brought us his bread.

THE UNDERGROUND CHURCH

Mihai came home with a story which he certainly had not been taught in his history class. Hitler, Napoleon and Alexander the Great took the day off from hell to watch a parade in Moscow's Red Square. As the columns of tanks rolled by Hitler said, "If I'd known the Red Army was so powerful, I'd never have attacked Russia." Alexander commented, "If I'd had an army like this I could have conquered the world." Napoleon, studying a Russian newspaper, looked up to say, "If only I'd a newspaper as obedient as ~Pravda~ the world would not have known about Waterloo."

Mihai was collecting jokes about Communism. Having finished his elementary schooling, he could go no further. No higher education was permitted to the children of political prisoners and he had time on his hands as he looked for a job. Then an old friend of Richard's heard him play the piano and offered him work.

"I look after the instruments at the State Opera House," he said. "I need an apprentice with fine fingers and a good ear."

To get this job, Mihai had to fill up a sixteen-page questionnaire. He had to supply, among much else, the addresses of two neighbours in every street and town he'd lived in "over the last twenty years." He was fifteen.

"And you'd better be sure they know what to say when the Secret Police come round," warned the tuner.

After receiving the form, Mihai went round to the personnel officer and said he'd spoilt it with ink blots - could he have another? Then he filled in the two copies, one to keep so that he could check on what he'd written in years to come. The questionnaire would follow him from job to job for many years, and if he contradicted it in any way there would be trouble.

There was a question: Has your father ever been arrested? He simply wrote "NO," saying to himself: "He was kidnapped in the street. That is not an arrest." Was he wrong?

He was taken on, at a salary of œ8 a month. It was a very big sum to us. And he had the ration card allowing him to buy bread.

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The tuner found that Mihai had an excellent ear and could identify pitch and sound easily. "He's better at it than me, and I've been doing this job for forty years."

And he became expert at repairing every kind of musical instrument. So that when, after 18 months, he was discovered to be the son of a political prisoner after all, he had a small clientele of his own among Bucharest's musicians. In this way, though he lost his job he was able to earn a little for tuition and bought books to study at home.

I took on all sorts of strange jobs to keep the family going.

First there was the Silkworm Rearing Co-operative.

Marietta read about it in a magazine. "Rear silkworms at home. Supplement your income and help build Socialism."

Mihai grinned. "Marietta sees herself in a swishy evening gown all made from home-grown silk."

"No, seriously," said Marietta. "Silk is worth a lot of money."

Mihai reached for the magazine. "Ah, but you have to take anything you produce to the State Co-operative. What do you suppose they'll give you for it? Anyway, where could we put them? If you think I'm going to eat my meals with a box of dirty old silkworms in the middle of the table you're wrong."

"You could keep it under your bed."

"Under your bed."

"What do silkworms eat?"

"Mulberry leaves, stupid, everyone knows that!"

"Mihai, remember when you lived with Aunt Alice, and on the next corner was the hospital and across the street, facing the house, was the cemetery?"

"Yes. It really used to cheer me up."

"But that cemetery was full of mulberry trees. At least we could always feed these silkworms."

So we set up shop with a box containing 100 of the little grubs and a leaflet of instructions from the Silkworm Rearing Co- operative.

Mihai read out passages. "'When the silkworm is ready to change into a moth, it spins around itself a cocoon made of matter from its own body.' I say, I never knew they turned into moths. You'd better be careful, Mother. One day you'll take the lid off and they'll fly away." He studied the leaflet. "'When the cocoon is unwound it gives a silk thread many hundreds of yards long.' That's going to be a bit awkward in here, isn't it?"

We peered into the cardboard box, in which Mihai had pierced air-holes. The caterpillars were not exactly handsome, being of an ashy-grey hue and about three inches long. And they were voracious eaters. The life of silkworms seems to be one continuous

communal meal; at the end of which they roll themselves up in a cocoon made of their own silk thread. This you can wind on to a reel.

At first Mihai helped himself freely to mulberry leaves from the cemetery. But soon the caretaker spotted him and chased him out.

"We'll have to make a raid under cover of darkness!" Mihai said.

Next evening, armed with paper bags, he climbed the cemetery fence and came back triumphantly with several days' supply.

"The dead don't need them," Mihai said.

I recalled that the Book of Revelation says that in the heavenly Jerusalem the leaves of the tree of life are used for healing. [REV 22:2]

"I'm glad," Marietta said. "Because that goes to prove that very sick souls can also have a place there."

Silkworm larvae are fussy creatures, having been artificially cultivated for 4000 years. They don't like temperatures of more than 78øF, or less than 62ø. They like light, but not too much. When they are moulting, which happens every few days, they must not be disturbed.

"Ssh!" whispered Mihai, quoting the leaflet: "'The larvae must be kept free from noise during each period of change!'"

After about a month, and repeated raids on the cemetery, we had 100 little cocoons. These were taken to the Co-operative - and we were paid enough to buy two days' food. Well, two days' food was welcome. I took home another 100 newly-hatched grubs.

"Oh, no!" groaned Mihai.

But for several months our silkworm farm thrived.

Until one day I found the grubs looking pale and swollen, as if they might be about to burst. Mihai whistled Chopin's Funeral March, and went off to the library to check up in a book on silkworm cultivation he'd found.

"Yes," he reported. "It's quite common - they call it ~grasserie~. It comes from letting the poor things stand in a draught."

I said, "But grasserie only means fatness."

"That's right, it said in the book - 'a form of dropsy.'"

Jesus healed a woman sick of the dropsy, but there was no sign that he would repeat the miracle for my silkworms. So we had to throw them out.

I turned to other cottage industry ventures like sewing and knitting jerseys. And so between the small sums I could earn and the money gained by Mihai, we survived.

That was the year of the International Youth Festival. Young

Communists and sympathizers from many parts of the world came to Bucharest; and for three months before it began there was nothing, nothing in the shops. Queues for bread and anything edible were huge. Just once in a while, after endless waiting, you found a scrap of butter or a few ounces of flour.

Then the Festival began. And the shops were crammed with goods. For three wonderful weeks we saw a host of things that hadn't been seen in Rumania since before the war. Mihai would come in: "I saw boxes of dates in the State Grocery! And there are chocolates wrapped in gold paper, too!"

Then the Festival ended. For months after, the shortages were worse than ever. They had squandered all the reserves on this prodigal display to deceive foreign visitors.

Mihai said that these young Communists from abroad were just as infected with the blight of spying as our own youth. Many Rumanians who made unwise remarks to youngsters from France or Italy were reported to the Secret Police. An acquaintance of Mihai's was arrested.

It was all so wrong and false and ugly! When I heard such things, I hated this evil system which had destroyed decent thought and life over one third of the world. Peasants forced to steal from land that was once theirs. Workers terrorized in the factories and deprived of their rights. The corruption went all through life from top to bottom. The managers of the big State stores were leaders of a black market in their own goods which was worth millions. Lies and spies filled our lives. It fell often to ex-prisoners, just those who had suffered most, to teach people that hatred towards the Communists was negative and wrong. Only understanding and love could triumph.

Mihai told a story that shows how the Communists were hated.

Two friends meet in a bus. In a whisper one asks the other, "What do you think about the Prime Minister, Georghiu-Dej?" His neighbour puts a finger to his lips: "Are you mad?" he mutters. "People listen." They get off the bus and walk through a park. "Really," insists the

first man. "What's your opinion?" Some strangers are sitting about 500 yards off. "Hush," says the neighbour. "They may hear." At last they reach a wholly isolated place with no one in sight. "So now, tell me what you think of Georghiu-Dej," says the first man. The neighbour replies, "I have the highest opinion about him."

The subterfuges and the way we scraped a living were not the truly important thing. That was to gather and keep in a life of prayer and trust our Christian brethren, and the wives and children of prisoners. This was Janetta's and my real work over the years while Richard was in prison.

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Since so many honest and good pastors were by now arrested, it fell more and more upon their wives to build up the Underground Church. Dozens of us became self-taught "Ministers"; through talking to people we learned to preach. Women came from every part of the country to Bucharest to ask advice and report on how the church fared with them. Soon we found that early all our time went to this work.

The West is still arguing about whether women should be ordained. In the East this problem has found its own solution. For wherever, under Communism, pastors are imprisoned, their wives become pastors in their place, ordained by Jesus' pierced hands.

The Underground Church had innumerable secret meeting places in the city. Often in cellars and attics like our own. On dark nights a light would show in a window and people would flit up the stairs and give a special knock on the door. We crammed into spaces so hot and close that there wasn't enough air for the flame of the lamp by the window. It guttered, and the room was in half-darkness.

The ideas of using the tactics of the Communist cell against the Party arose in conversation with pastor Grecu, who sometimes joined us late at night. He was a minister of the approved church, and they allowed him some licence because he was known to drink. Drunken priests made good Communist propaganda. They did not know that he drank in order to stay on, and only as much as was needed to throw dust in their eyes.

Pastor Grecu's heart was with us. He was of enormous help. He carried on a secret ministry which went far beyond the limits imposed by the State. Many priests did this: there was no clear dividing line between the Show-Church and the Underground Church. They were interwoven.

Under persecution, sectarian barriers fell more and more: Catholic or Orthodox or Lutheran, we came down to the pure elements of faith. It was like the church of the first centuries.

Pastor Grecu and I had many discussions on tactics. Janetta had now become a pillar of our church. We'd both read Lenin's ~What is to be done?~, in which he set out his plan to conquer the world. It was written in 1903, when all the Bolsheviks in existence could be seated on one sofa - in fact, there's a picture of them doing so. One of Lenin's first principles is to infiltrate rival organizations - this, at least, is a rule that works. After the Communists took power in Rumania we found they had long insinuated themselves into both "bourgeois' Ministries and the leadership of anti-Communist bodies. Seminaries and the priesthood itself were infiltrated.

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Now the roles must be reversed. They were the bosses. And we saw that the Underground Church could not work unless we infiltrated the Communist organizations which were trying to destroy us.

It seemed at first to be against our principles. But Pastor Grecu had an answer pat:

"Christ called the temple a den of robbers, but the Apostles deliberately worked there after his death and resurrection. Strange circumstances call for unusual actions. ~A voleur, voleur et demi~ - to catch a thief you have to be a thief and a half."

Still, I was hesitant. "Many of our brothers and sisters are going to have moral scruples. If they join Communist bodies they'll be asked to do so much that's wrong. People with Church backgrounds are bound to give themselves away. They'd be weeded out in a month."

Pastor Grecu said: "Some of them may be good actors. The younger people will find it much easier. No trouble in getting them into the Communist Youth. And from there into the militia. And then into the Secret Police and the Party."

I agreed that we must take a lesson from the Russians. And apply it with the aid of those who came to our secret meetings.

The people who came to these services were all enthusiastic and eager to help, but as I went among them I mentally divided them into two groups.

Most would shrink from playing a false role. I knew what they

would answer if I proposed infiltrating the Communists. They would reason that it would need a great deal of deception which could not be justified.

A second, much smaller group, would think like St. Paul, the great soul-winner. He made himself Jew with the Jew and Greek with the Greeks thus winning both. Even in this group, only a chosen few were admitted into our confidence. They agreed at once that they could not leave the Underground Church unprotected to preserve their own integrity. The selfish end, to be personally righteous, does not justify allowing innumerable Christians to go to prison. Only one in a hundred of our members knew what we were doing. That was our way of safety.

Pastor Grecu wondered whether parents would not object if they thought their children were taking on dangerous tasks.

I said: "When I was at school they used to tell us about King Stephen the Great. Once he was wounded and came to the gates of his castle. His mother said, "Who's there?" He said, "It's your son, Stephen." She replied 'You can't be my son. He would not leave the field while his army was still there. He stays and fights.

I know no other son.' Many mothers I know have been brought up in this tradition."

"They must be dedicated women."

"I know how they feel, the mothers who come here. If the Communists were to prove to me now that Richard had died in prison, I wouldn't be simply sad. I'd be proud too. This spirit is spreading day by day. If one can be proud of a son who dies for his country how much more one could be proud of a son who was a martyr for Christ."

Pastor Grecu smiled, a shade bitterly. "Dying is at least a quick process. There are other martyrdoms."

Janetta said, "Yes, there are many. And it may be a higher thing to sacrifice one's integrity in the cause than it is to sacrifice liberty, or even perhaps life."

He stood up to leave and brushed some crumbs from his shabby suit. "How curious it must be to live in a world where one is called on to give up none of these things."

Marietta had a friend, a pretty girl from a country town whom I shall call Trudi. She was eighteen, with dark, fluffy hair and sparkling eyes. When she'd visited us several times, I said: "In prison the guard used to tell us before we got a beating, 'You wanted to be martyrs, so now suffer!' And we did. But even at the worst times there was the joy of knowing that it was for Jesus. Like early Christians. But now there is something that goes further. And, Trudi, you can help us here."

She looked at me with her brown eyes. Trudi was a quiet, intelligent girl. She wasn't frightened by work. Her large, but shapely limbs, the deliberate way she handed you a plate or closed a door, encouraged you to believe that here was someone who wouldn't easily break. She was the eldest girl of a large family. For years, she had been their nurse and guardian spirit.

I explained that I'd been watching her, and how we were looking for girls to join the Communist Youth.

"Now something new has come up. It may be a wonderful opportunity. A Colonel Shircanu, who works for the Secret Police, has been asking his sergeant if he knows a girl to help in the house. They have a big place in one of the best quarters of the city. His wife seems rather extravagant and silly, but kind enough. If you were to apply for this job through their special employment office you might find out a lot that would help us."

She didn't speak and her face didn't change. But the brown eyes gleamed. I went on: "They wouldn't suspect anything. The

sergeant has asked his wife to ask her friends, and one of then comes to our services. Nobody knows she's a Christian."

"What would I have to do?"

"Nothing, at first. Get the feel of the house. Get to know everyone. I've noticed that people enjoy telling you their troubles. Look how old Mrs. Tomaziu was showing you her varicose veins yesterday."

Trudi laughed.

"As if you were a nurse."

She thought about it for a while. Then she accepted.

One evening Pastor Grecu told me he'd found a curious passage in the Gospel of St. John which hinted at some kind of infiltration of the high priest's court by the disciples.

"It says that one of the disciples was known to the high priest Caiaphas – so well known, in fact, that on the very night that Christ was on trial, this disciple could enter the temple precincts and even get Peter in, too." [JHN 18:15-16]

He suggested it was something to tell young people starting on this secret work of ours, if they objected. But few of the youth did.

I sent a few girls to join the Communist Youth, but I did not let Pastor Grecu know their names. The clergy of the official church were under constant pressure to inform on congregations. It was best for him not to know.

We'd seen such tragedies caused by this endless spying. Once in our rooms Mihai's "Aunt Alice" asked: "In the Bible it says that "all things work together for the good" [ROM 8:28] – but what good, I'd like to know, is served by informers? I'm afraid to open my mouth these days."

At first I had no answer. I could think only of the terrible harm they did. But the question worried me. Lying in bed that night, I saw that there was spiritual significance even in this. Informers taught us that while we live we are constantly surveyed. Angels watch all we do and say; but they are invisible, so we do not care. These informers reminded us that our every action counts.

I had my own detecting system. Police agents came to our rooms to spy, pretending to be believers. The first time it happened I suspected the man at once.

He stopped me in Olteni Street.

"Excuse me – you ~are~ Sister Wurmbrand?"

"Yes, but I'm afraid I don't remember where ..."

His raincoat was rather too new, and he was a little too anxious. The eyes were furtive. In his early thirties.

"At Cernavoda. I was in Gang 4. I used to see you some days

for a month before I was moved to Cape Midia. You were a great help to us - people you've never met still talk about your speaking out for Christ!"

He paid some fulsome compliments. As we walked along, I asked a few questions about his time at the Canal. His answers were vague. I was sure he'd never been there. But I couldn't catch him out.

He asked where I lived, what I did, how I made a living, and so on.

He said, "I'm a believer, you know. I was converted in prison." He told a rambling story about a Christian who persuaded him at the Canal to return to the faith of his childhood.

The upshot was that he invited himself to our rooms. I let him come up the dingy staircase and said: "Welcome to our home."

He began asking questions about my political feelings and those of my friends which only a provocateur would have put. So I asked a question of my own.

"Do you read the Bible much?

"Yes, yes. Very often."

"Perhaps you'd like to read something to us, then." And I gave him my Bible. Mihai, Janetta, Marietta, Peter and a woman visitor were there.

He read something from the Psalms, and even managed to add a few sanctimonious words of his own.

"Now let us pray," I said. "Will you lead us in prayer?"

And we knelt around him, and waited for him to start.

He muttered a few words and stopped. He coloured, and there was a long silence. He couldn't find anything to say. He knew we all were aware of his job now.

It was Janetta who finally spoke. "What you are doing is very wrong!" she said, angrily. "You'd do yourself a favour if you dropped it."

Richard gave me a Bible in 1938, the year of my conversion. Every other page was left blank for notes. And as often as we came together to read and study it in the early years, I wrote down thoughts,

comments and spiritual experiences; so that after a time I had a whole book of precious words and memories, which brought in friends living and dead from every part of the country.

Many of my notes were in a private code, making it doubly an article of suspicion. But even after my own arrest Mihai was able to rescue it and keep it safe.

When I opened and read so many thoughts of Richard I had noted in the past, it was as if he stood in the room with me. I had the strongest sense of his presence, leaning over me, encouraging

and comforting. I noted these visits down in my shorthand. And when I open my Bible now I live these years again. It has become worn and tattered over thirty years, but it is always with me; for it is the sum total of my wealth. A courier of our Mission smuggled it out.

Bibles were rare in Rumania (then as now), and many came to our rooms to hear readings. I could not go easily to Underground Church meetings elsewhere. I was watched and not allowed to leave the town.

But Mihai could attend both secret and open meetings. They were held under the guise of parties. As many as thirty young people would turn up at the home of whoever had the biggest flat. They'd greet each other noisily at the door. Then the record player would be turned up. A pop tune blared out and passersby could see them dancing. After a time, the record-player was switched off. Someone would speak about the gospel. There were prayers. Then they'd play a few more records, and make party noises for the neighbours' benefit.

"Emil's had three birthdays already this year," Mihai laughed. "And his sister's had two wedding anniversaries. Next time we're going on a picnic."

And they took the record-player with them into the countryside for Sunday excursions - which became a prayer meeting. Lookouts were posted at all paths approaching the spot. If anyone came near, they'd give a warning sign.

All this gave great intensity to the services. Every detail was planned in advance: the place, the hour, the password. Those who went knew they might never come back. It was very unlike a service in the free world. And every preacher spoke his sermon as if it were his last: the words could mean prison and death, and there was weight in them.

Most of our pastors were members of the official church. Faced with controls that made a mockery of "religious freedom," they carried on a secret ministry. It was the only way they could reach the young, the only way they could preach freely about Christ. Every word they said in church was liable to be reported.

Mihai told us the latest joke: "The Housing Ministry has ordered that all new blocks of flats are to be built with specially thin walls so that neighbours can spy on each other."

But was it just a joke?

At meetings, I was often asked about my life in prison and at

the Canal. At first I couldn't talk much about it. I couldn't find the words.

Little by little, Mihai got me to talk. When he learnt how we'd been beaten, or forced to eat grass to stay alive, he asked: "How could you bear all this without giving way and denying Christ?"

I answered by telling him of a peculiarity in the Hebrew language. In Hebrew, amazingly, some future events are described in the perfect tense. Now the perfect tense is so called because it refers to actions completed, perfected, at the time of speaking. So, in the great 53rd chapter of Isaiah [ISA 53] which foretells the coming of the Messiah and his sufferings, the writer speaks of these events as belonging to the past, not the future. Yet the words were written 800 years before the coming of Christ.

When Jesus read the prediction of his heavy sufferings, they had already begun. He was then rejected and despised of men. It was his present, and his future. But he read of them in Hebrew as if they'd happened in the past.

Now that is exactly how I felt in the midst of suffering. I tried to explain: Joy is the everlasting present of the Christian spirit. I was in a heavenly place from which no one could move me. Where was the affliction through which I passed? To that most inviolable part of my mind, it belonged to the past. I lived the suffering long ago, while the present reality was delight in the closeness of the Lord.

This certainty that it had already happened saved me. Catastrophes come to us all, but once they're over, they're done with. That is taught in this oddity of Hebrew. We experience now past

dramas.

Years later, I discussed this with Richard. In solitary confinement he said, he had felt the same thing in exactly the same way. I wondered if it wasn't another example of communication in the spirit between us.

A month after Trudi had installed herself in Col. Shircanu's home, after interviews with Secret Police officers and much form-filling, she sent me an urgent message. She came to our rooms no longer, but left information at a certain house. Miss Landauer, a teacher, passed it on.

The news was bad. She had heard Shircanu mention the name of Pastor N., who often came to our meetings, on the telephone. "I'm sure he'll help," he said.

Challenged, the pastor told us he had been threatened with long prison sentence. His health was failing. He could not face it. A few days earlier he had promised to "co-operate" with Shircanu. But he had done nothing for him yet.

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Deeply ashamed, Pastor N. left Bucharest for a provincial town. Then Trudi gave us the name of a girl student whom Shircanu had mentioned in similar terms.

At first she denied everything. I put my hand on hers.

"Please, be truthful. We know well the kind of pressure they'll have used on you. Many people have told us before - of their own free will - how they're forced to inform. You owe it to your real friends to let them know what happened."

She broke down and knelt beside me.

"I was just walking in the street," she sobbed, "when a car drew up and two men said, "We're police. Get in." They didn't take me anywhere, just drove me around for hours. They kept telling me I had to report every week about everything that was said and done in your house and in the church. If I didn't, they said, awful things would happen to my family."

So she agreed. But swore to me that she had reported nothing very damaging. I could only hope not.

Again and again, Trudi turned up valuable information. But her most spectacular coup was to turn the colonel's home into a secret refuge for the very people he was trying to hunt down.

Now that he'd "arrived" in the Communist hierarchy, Shircanu began to enjoy its privileges. He took his family off on leisurely holidays to the mountains or the sea. The trusted Trudi was left in charge as caretaker. Mrs. Shircanu caller her, "My little treasure."

One day a message came through Miss Landauer: "Why not have a meeting here, in the Shircanus' home? They're away for several days and it's a big house with several exits. No one will suspect."

And, indeed, who could suspect that Christians would hold a secret meeting in the home of the man who headed the spy work against them? I thought it was worth trying. Rather nervously, half a dozen leaders of the Underground Church arrived on the appointed evening, one by one, at spaced intervals. We were received by a smiling Trudi. Everything went off perfectly.

From then on, we met quite regularly at Shircanu's house whenever the colonel was away.

Trudi played her double role well. As time passed, more and more of our people learned to do the same. They had to sing Red songs and the Party's praises. Most of them succeeded. Several rose high in the ranks.

We learnt from the experience of the Underground Church in Russia, which had survived thirty years of persecution. Brethren from Bessarabia, a province stolen from us during the war

by the Soviets, told how Christians resisted there. So we knew how to act in similar conditions.

We had our failures, inevitably. For some workers the strain of a double life proved too heavy. Others became too bold and paid the price.

One of our men was manager of the State book store, a huge place of several floors. He had, of course, no Bibles for sale, but he did have large stocks of anti-God textbooks, which contained a great treasury of texts and verses from the Bible. These were accompanied by comments holding them up to ridicule, but most readers simply laughed at the criticisms. Many were sold.

It was this success, perhaps, which stimulated the manager to go too far.

On August 23rd, "Freedom Day," his window display drew appreciative crowds. But when people continued to gather around it, smiling and even clapping, the Secret Police grew curious. It was Colonel Shircanu, Trudi told us later, who solved the riddle. Pushing his way to the front of the crowd in Victory Street, he inspected the portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin which took up most of the window space. Nothing to smile at there. Then he noticed that under the pictures was a poster advertising a cheap edition of Victor Hugo's masterpiece. Two words stood out in large black letters: LES MISERABLES.

He had the manager arrested and sent to a labour camp where he was put to cutting reeds - another State project of the day - at the mouth of the Danube.

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FIGHTING BACK

Up the dank staircase some months after my release came an official from the Ministry of the Interior. A fat man with a booming voice and black hair parted in the middle. He carried a briefease, bursting at the seams, full of papers.

Was I a mother? he wanted to know. I was? But what sort of mother could I be? Didn't I care for my child at all? Didn't I want to see him get the very best in education? Didn't I want to see him placed in jobs with good pay and state pensions and ration cards? Of course I did, so WHY DIDN'T I CHANGE MY NAME? HOW DARED I CALL MYSELF A MOTHER!

He shouted and ranted in this vein for several minutes. I sat silent and looked at him. The less I said, the sooner he would get to the point. And I knew what it was.

Divorce. What possible use, he said at last, was it to remain tied to my husband? A counter-revolutionary whom I should never see again? It was only a question of commonsense for an intelligent young woman like myself to get a divorce from an enemy of the State. If I didn't do so now, I certainly would later. How long did I think I could stand up against the State in this blind, stupid disobedience?

So he bullied and cajoled and painted heartbreaking pictures -If our ultimate fate. Love, he jeered, ~love~! It was all rubbish, didn't

exist. What I needed was a new husband and father for my children. There was no love for counter-revolutionaries.

I thought: You dare say this to me in my home.

But my best defence was to be silent.

"I didn't marry my husband only for happy times. We were united for ever, and whatever may come I will not divorce him."

He argued and urged for another half-hour and in that time I answered nothing. Even God cannot contradict someone who remains silent. Finally the man retreated, shaking his round head.

"Sooner or later you'll come to us," he said. "They all do, you know."

I heard him go noisily down the stairs. Off to his next victim. With whom, as likely as not, he would have more luck.

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Every effort was made to force prisoners' wives to ask for a divorce. Firstly, a prisoner's will to resist, even to live, was often shattered when he heard he had been abandoned. Secondly, it helped to get the wives involved in the Communist way of life. Once the divorce was accomplished, women were anxious to forget their husbands and the easiest way to do this was to swallow the Party line. I knew scores of divorced women who parroted slogans mocking political prisoners - the men they had loved and whose children they had borne. Thirdly, the fatherless children were at the mercy of the State, to be indoctrinated from the earliest age.

Only one word was needed to make the break. You said "Yes" when the official called. He would see to all the rest.

A few days later, the husband would be informed before his cell companions: "Your wife has decided to divorce you."

The man would think: "Who cares about me now? I'm a fool not to give in and sign whatever nonsense they want, and so go free." But even if he did sign, he might not be released for several years, and meanwhile his wife had children by another man. So homes and families were destroyed. One book couldn't hold the many tragedies of this kind which I found after my release.

In prison, women used to say, "How stupid I was, quarrelling with

my husband over nothing. What a good, loving wife I'll be – if ever we get out!"

But outside, they often changed their tune. "Why shouldn't I divorce him, if that's what they want? He may remain in prison all his life. How can I feed the children without ration cards, how can I get work? He didn't really care ..." So they would talk themselves into saying "Yes' to the Ministry.

I told women like this that we must love men as they are, not for what we think they should be. I advised them to think of the happy moments of their married life, and use them to overcome temptation.

All too often, I failed. The pressures were too severe.

But sometimes I could help people to see matrimonial troubles in a new light with a simple joke. I remembered an old Jewish story. A bewildered husband came to a rabbi complaining that his wife had given birth to a child three months after their marriage. "She must have betrayed me!" he said. The rabbi answered, "Not at all. You have lived with your wife three months. She has lived with you three months. You have lived together three months. This makes a total of nine months. Everything is in perfect order."

Often I had recourse to compromises a little bit like this in attempting to patch up a marriage.

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Or when women came to me saying that they meant to divorce a husband in prison, I would tell them the beautiful story of how it is with the Malagasy, the people of Madagascar. There, when a couple wish to divorce they come separately before the judge who inquires in great detail about how they have lived. He writes from this two declarations and when the day comes for judgement the judge says that a divorce is possible, but first the couple must read what he has written.

The wife reads: "My beloved – On this day when we must divorce I remember the beauty of the day when we first met. How I longed to be in your arms, how I longed to become your husband! I couldn't wait for work to end so that I could be near you. Do you remember our first kiss ..." And so he describes all the happiest moments and memories of a shared life. Meanwhile the husband is reading a similar declaration made up of his wife's memories of the marriage, which ends with deep thanks for all the good times, despite the present conflict. More often than not the couple end up in tears, and they go home in peace.

You never reach the end of marriage or the break-up of a friendship when you recall the beautiful things that happened. But too often we don't remember.

Janetta and I knew an attractive young woman, Maura Dalea, with two young children, and a husband in jail. A political prisoner. For seven years she heard nothing. She became involved with another man. The children grew up, filled with Communist propaganda.

Then, at last, a postcard came from prison. She sent him a parcel. But said nothing of her affair.

After eleven years, he was released. He traced his family. The children, a boy and a girl, were now twelve and thirteen.

"We don't know who you are," they said, cruelly. "Father? We've got a father already!"

He tried to win Maura back. But it was too late. She divorced him and married the other man.

It broke the husband. I saw him sometimes in the street, with his terrible, wounded face. But he avoided me. A few years later, crushed by years of prison and disappointment, he died.

Janetta said: "What is happening in the prisons is the lesser part of the tragedy. Hundreds of thousands of people, this whole generation and the generation conceived in these years, will bear the marks of what Communism has done to us."

Sometimes I could help people escape from these troubles, because I knew them myself. More than once I was tempted during Richard's fourteen years in prison.

The most serious occasion was about a year after my release

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A man who came to our meetings fell in love with me. I was then aged forty-three, alone, with a son to help through the most difficult stage of adolescence when boys need a father. The years were flashing by at alarming speed. And of Richard there was no word, no news.

He was a bachelor of about my age, a solid, steady man of whom Mihai was very fond. A Jewish Christian, he lived in a single room with his elderly parents. We exchanged visits and sometimes he'd take Mihai to the cinema or help him with his studies. Mihai was working very hard over his books at home now.

He was a kind and gentle man, who knew how to make me laugh. The thought crossed my mind: here is someone with whom a woman could live in love and trust. Sometimes he caught hold of my hand while he talked, and looked into my eyes with such longing. I couldn't take my hand away. It never came to what the church or the law would call adultery. But it was adultery in God's eyes. And in my heart.

Luckily, Pastor Grecu saw what was happening and spoke to me as I wish all who see a friend about to fall into such trouble would do.

"You know how much I love and appreciate you," he said. "And that couldn't change, whatever happened."

He spoke with rare emotion and sincerity.

"I've known both you and Richard for many years. And I hope you know that whether you sin or you don't, whether you lose faith or keep it, I would still care for you in the same way. Because of what I know you are, not what you do.

"So forgive me if I ask – how is it between you and Paul?"

For a moment I was silent.

He went on: "Don't imagine that I haven't had such trials, too. Please answer my question."

"He's in love with me."

"And are you in love with him?"

"I don't know. Perhaps."

He said: "I remember something Richard used to say: "No passion resists before the bar of reason. If you delay, if you give yourself time to think, you see all the harm you could do to your husband or your wife, to your children, too." I want you to make a hard decision – the hardest there is. Don't see this man again."

I knew that he was right. With some difficulty, I avoided Paul week after week. Then he stopped trying to see me. Later I learnt that Pastor Grecu had spoken to him, too, reminding him of Richard, in prison. Only then did I see how close I'd

come to betraying all the years of waiting and trust. I knelt and

prayed.

There were other temptations. Fourteen years is a long time. Sometimes I came near to yielding. Sometimes it was merely a passing weakness of the flesh. Sexuality is a remorseless driving force and one must, at times, not accuse oneself too harshly. One can remember to have understanding for one's own weaknesses as well as for those of others.

One morning I was in church, scrubbing the floor, when Marietta rushed in, waving a postcard.

Tears ran down her cheeks. "I think - I think it's from ..."

She could not continue, but knelt on the damp boards beside me, breathless.

I turned the cheap little card over. It was signed "Vasile Georgescu" - but Richard's handwriting, large and irregular and beautiful, was unmistakable. My eyes hazed over.

I knew that political prisoners might write only ten censored lines. What could he say, after so many years, not knowing if his wife and family lived? I looked.

This dear, long dreamed-of message began: "Time and distance quench a small love, but make a great love grow stronger ..." And he asked me to come and see him on a certain date in Tirgul-Ocna, the prison hospital.

Soon the news spread through the Underground Church. The message was learnt by heart by people all over the country. It became a talisman of faith.

In prison, they had taken away even Richard's name. He was "Vasile Georgescu." The guards weren't allowed to know his identity. If the secret leaked out, questions might be asked abroad. He had to vanish without trace. But that was in 1948.

Now Khrushchev was working his way towards supreme power in Russia and there were signs of great changes to come. Throughout 1954, after Stalin's death, we hoped the West would do something for us. But with 1955 came the Geneva Summit conference, then Rumania's entry into the United Nations. We were shocked at the news. Tens of thousands of political prisoners filled the country's jails. No one imagined that Rumania could be welcomed to U.N. membership before they were set free.

But if the U.N. charter binding members to religious and political freedom was ignored, the summit conference brought some improvements in the prisons. We heard that food was better and medicine available. There were rumours of an amnesty. More visits were allowed.

Richard's postcard was the best news I could have had. But

I, who so longed to see him, couldn't go. Every week I had to present myself at the police station. They refused to revoke the ban on my leaving Bucharest. So Mihai had to take my place.

Tirgul-Ocna is a small town far to the north, on the other side of the Carpathians. The train makes a journey of several hundred miles around the mountains. I arranged with "Aunt Alice" to go with Mihai. Not that she could meet Richard - the only visitors permitted were wife and child.

I waited behind. They were away two days, and all the time the worries went through my head: Would they see him? (I remembered how Mihai had travelled so far to visit me at the Canal, and then been turned back.) Would Richard be allowed to receive the few warm clothes and food I'd packed? Since he was in a prison sanatorium, he must be very sick. Would he be able to stand, or even talk to Mihai?

They came back, late on a December evening. We heard them climbing the stairs.

"We saw him! We saw him!" Alice called before she was through the door. Following it up with, "He's alive. He's up and about!"

They came in with snow on their shoulders.

"Mihai!"

"Mother! Daddy's well and he says to tell you that he knows he'll come back to us soon. If God can perform one miracle and let him see me, he said, then he can perform two and bring us all together."

Soon we were all in tears. And then we made them something hot to drink, and they told the story. Marietta and Peter were there. We became quite gay. To be a dumb cripple, an epileptic, a prisoner's wife and son, are no hindrances to joy. Alice's cheeks coloured and her thin hands fluttered with excitement as she talked.

"We had to wait hours and hours in the snow. They let us in through the main gateway, then we stood about in a wired-off compound away from the sanatorium buildings. The prisoners had to cross an open space to get to a big tin hut where they received their visitors. It was terrible to see them. Frightening! Gangs of muffled shapes against the dazzling snow. Like grey ghosts. And among them, going along, I saw Richard. You couldn't miss him, he's so tall. I waved like a mad thing, but he couldn't pick me out. We were all in a huddle, and everyone waving. Only Mihai was allowed to speak with him."

When at last they got away there was no train back, and they stayed with peasant friends in the little town.

Mihai had been so overcome at seeing his father that at first I

couldn't get much from him. But I was too happy to mind. He'd been allowed to leave the food and clothes.

Only later did I realize what a shock it must have been for him. To see the father he loved and respected behind bars, shaven-headed, skeleton-thin.

Mihai had burst out immediately with the words he'd been preparing: "Mummy says not to be afraid, because if we don't meet again on earth we will in heaven." Comforting words! Richard smiled and asked, "Have you enough to eat?" Mihai replied, "Oh yes, Our Father looks after us!" The political officer of the jail, who was listening, grinned at this. He thought it meant that I had married again.

In such conditions they could say little. Richard's last words were: "Mihai, the only gift I can give you as a father is to tell you this: always seek the highest of Christian virtues, which is to keep the right measure in all things."

I put Richard's postcard between the pages of my Bible. Now and then I went to look at it, and read for the hundredth time. In prison he became a master at writing these minuscule letters. He told me later that others came to him for help because he could squeeze in so much meaning. They also asked each other what he'd said, and Richard's words went around. The result was that dozens of prisoners began their postcards: "Time and distance quench a small love, but make a great love stronger." So messages of love and hope were going out far and wide.

The year 1956 began with the whole Communist bloc in rebellious mood. "Five Year Plans" had got nowhere. Food was as short as ever. Wages were kept low. All the hopes raised after Stalin's death had faded.

Then, in February, at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party, Khrushchev made his secret speech denouncing Stalin and his works. The Russians never published it, but before long in every country of Eastern Europe people felt the warm breeze of the thaw from Moscow.

Faster and faster came the signs of de-stalinization. The huge forces of militia and Secret Police were reduced in size. Million-dollar trade contracts were negotiated with Western countries to rescue the economy. Collectivization was relaxed. Struggles began in several Communist bloc countries for the Party leadership. And most wonderful of all, hundreds of political prisoners were being freed under an amnesty each day.

I didn't dare to hope that Richard would be among them. We had no hint, no news. He had still almost twelve years to serve.

One lovely morning in June 1956 I went out to visit friends

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And when I returned, there he was. He put his arms around me.

It was an evening of laughter and tears and greetings to friends who came from all over Bucharest. Long after midnight, we borrowed a mattress from a neighbour and made up a bed. Richard is so tall we had to put a cushion on a chair for his feet.

He didn't sleep. I know because Janetta and I couldn't sleep. In the small hours he got up and walked quietly to look for a long time at Mihai as if to make sure that he was really there.

Richard had suffered beating and doping in prison. He had eighteen torture scars on his wasted body, but had not talked. Doctors found that his lungs were covered with the healed scars of tuberculosis. They simply couldn't believe he had survived eight and a half years (almost three of them in solitary confinement in an underground cell) virtually untreated. He was now given the best bed in a hospital ward. All released prisoners were treated with kindness and generosity by the people wherever they went. They were the most privileged group in Rumania, which infuriated the Communists.

Richard had to move continually. Brethren gathered from all over

the country to see him. So he had to go from one hospital to another to avoid attracting the Secret Police.

Soon after he got better we celebrated our twentieth wedding anniversary. Richard hadn't a penny to buy me a present. But he obtained a pretty, bound notebook and in it, every evening he wrote verses, love-poems, addressed to me. Mihai and other close friends also wrote little messages in it. And on the day of our anniversary, he gave it to me. But this lovely gift was not mine for long.

In the first flush of the political thaw, Richard was allowed a licence to preach. Persecution had brought the churches much closer, and he was invited first to speak in the Orthodox cathedral at Sibiu, where the priest was an old friend.

"The only trouble is that I've the Metropolitan to think about," he said. "You'll be expected to make the sign of the cross and so forth."

Richard said: "I'll make however many signs are prescribed in Orthodox ritual so long as I can speak about His cross.

I went to Sibiu with him. He was still weak and they had to find something for him to sit on while he spoke. They decided to bring out the Metropolitan's throne. And when this was seen the rumour went around that the Metropolitan himself was to preach. And instead there came this man. Who was, people said, a Jew.

Richard not only made the sign of the cross, he preached

about the cross, and its meaning. It was a sermon without political content, on the surface. Nevertheless informers in the church reported every word, and the Secret Police understood its hidden meaning, sometimes better than some Christians.

When next Richard spoke, giving a series of talks to students at Cluj University, one of the top men from the Ministry of Cults was sent to listen. This man reported that Richard's lectures were a "torrent of sedition." The sedition consisted in the fact that he answered one after another all the Marxist arguments against religion and defeated them. The Lutheran bishop was pressured, unwillingly, into depriving Richard of his right to preach in Rumania. He had possessed it for six weeks.

The representative of the Ministry of Cults said at the next meeting of Lutheran pastors, with hatred in his voice "Wurmbrand is

finished, finished!" And walked from the building.

A few minutes later there was a screech of brakes and a terrible crash. The man had been knocked down and crushed against the wall by a car that inexplicably mounted the pavement.

Richard went on preaching in secret. He sped from place to place. He spoke briefly in small churches and at underground meetings and left at once before anyone could report to the local police. He left the house without telling even me where he was going, and I lived in constant fear.

Mihai called him "The Phantom Preacher," but knew it was not much of a joke. At any moment he might be arrested.

Before the year was out the risings in Poland and Hungary blazed briefly and were stamped out. The "thaw" had been short-lived.

But in the four months between Richard's release and the October revolutions, we had a respite. A small theological seminary at Sibiu was allowed to train a few new pastors. Mihai decided he would join.

He was now eighteen, and had a character of steel. He bore little resemblance to the boy Richard had left behind so many years ago. He had gone through intense spiritual struggles as well as physical hardship in that time. But, through all the doubts and in spite of indoctrination, he remained a Christian.

Richard helped now to strengthen his belief. But from the start he said, "Father, I love and respect you, but you're you and I'm me. We don't think alike on everything. I've a personality of my own!"

Mihai had passed all his high school examinations without a day's schooling after the age of fifteen. Now he was set on entering the ministry.

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Richard said, "Are you sure you want to go to this seminary? I seriously don't recommend it. For any young man."

"Why ever not?"

"Because the way seminaries teach in these days is mostly destructive. You won't be taught love towards God, or to the Bible, or the best way to follow the saints. You'll dissect the Bible, you'll pick away at the word of God. It could be poison to your soul. Some of

the professors are saints, others are far from being so."

But Mihai had decided.

When he came home for the Christmas holidays I had a bad shock. At family prayer, Richard read something from the Gospels in which Jesus quotes the Old Testament.

"Oh," said Mihai later. "I don't think it means that. Anyway, Jesus didn't have the knowledge and background needed for a correct interpretation of the Old Testament by scientific standards."

"He didn't?" I said, wanting to burst into tears. "Let us be thankful for that."

Mihai overcame this early brashness. We talked to him, and in the end he opposed the Communist-inspired teachings of his professors. Which got him into much trouble.

His ideal was to become a missionary in India at that time. He studied Indian religions and Hindu practices. I was a little afraid when I saw him standing on his head for several minutes, according to the rules of Hata-Yoga. I asked: "Don't you think God made the legs to stand on?"

For his thesis he began work on a study of British nonconformist preachers, Booth and Spurgeon, men who cared little about official theological studies.

The Communists wished to keep the school open to impress the West (Rumania had just entered the World Council of Churches) but with as few students as possible. When 400 applied to join, the authorities were alarmed. They let the boys know that if they insisted, their fathers might lose their jobs. So many withdrew, "voluntarily." By 1965 the Lutheran seminary in Cluj had only five students left. There were six students in the Baptist seminary of Bucharest.

But for three years Mihai managed to carry on his studies at Sibiu. There was a fine library and some of the professors were excellent men. So he was not at home when they came to arrest his father for the second time.

We knew it was coming. The new wave of terror began in 1958. And we all saw now how we'd been tricked. Many really thought the Communists were interested in coming to some kind of terms with the West. That they would mellow. People had

lived through all the deceit of the past yet even now they did not realize the depth of the lie.

In July 1958 a series of laws was enacted tougher than anything yet seen in the satellite countries. The death penalty was ordered for scores of minor offences, and was being liberally applied by the autumn. Mass arrests returned. Thousands were sent to new slave labour projects, such as the clearing of the Danube Delta marshes. All juvenile delinquents (i.e. young people who criticized the Government) were sent "to the reeds."

A new purge began in official ranks. All those of socially doubtful origin who had found jobs in the "thaw" were now sacked. A rule forbade them, and their children, from working for any branch of the public services.

The fight against religion was renewed. On Khrushchev's orders churches were closed and priests arrested throughout Eastern Europe as part of a seven-year drive "to eradicate the vestiges of superstition."

Our attic was now more than ever a center for the Underground Church. It could not escape attention for much longer. Every evening Richard prayed: "God, if you know some prisoner to whom I could be of use, send me back to jail." To this prayer, I said a hesitant Amen.

One Tuesday evening in January, 1959, a woman from our church arrived in tears. The week before she had borrowed some copies of Richard's sermons. Hundreds of these, cyclostyled, were circulating throughout Rumania. It was strictly against the law. Now the police had raided the woman's flat and taken off the copies.

We also learnt through an informant in the Party that Richard had been denounced by a young pastor who claimed to be his friend. He may have been blackmailed - made to sign the denunciation under threat of prison. Anyhow, he did this and it is not for me to judge his motives. We were fond of him, and it is better simply to continue to love.

On Wednesday, January 15th, at 1 a.m., the police battered on the door and burst into our attic before we could get out of bed. The light came on.

"You're Richard Wurmbrand? Get into the other room. And stay there."

Our tiny flat was full of men opening cupboards, turning out

drawers, throwing papers on the floor. On Richard's desk, where he wrote, they found pages of notes, typewritten sermons, worn Bibles. All were seized.

Then they found my anniversary gift, the notebook in which Richard and Mihai had written verses to me.

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"Please don't take that. It's a personal thing, a present. It's of no use to you."

They took it.

The captain in charge brought Richard out of the other room. He had been handcuffed.

I said, "Aren't you ashamed to treat innocent people like this?

Richard moved towards me. They caught his arms. He warned "I shan't leave this house without a struggle unless you allow me to embrace my wife."

"Let him go," said the captain.

We knelt together in prayer, with the Secret Police standing around us. Then we sang the hymn, "The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord."

A hand fell on Richard's shoulder. We've got to get going. It's nearly 5 a.m.," the Captain said. But he spoke quietly and his eyes glistened.

I went after them down the staircase. Richard turned his head to say, "Give all my love to Mihai and the pastor who denounced me." They pushed him into a van.

When it started up, I began to cry out, "Richard! Richard!"

I ran after the van, calling out and weeping. Along the icy street. Then it vanished around a corner. I had to stop, breathless, confused.

Back at the attic the door stood open. Weeping, I fell on the floor.

I cried out, "Lord, I give my husband into your hands. I can do

nothing, but you can pass through locked doors. You can put angels around him. You can bring him back!"

I sat in the darkness, praying. Until the new day arrived. Then I began to remember what I still had to do. Alice came to see me. I told her, "Again they have stolen my Richard."

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THE NEW TERROR

First, Mihai had to be told. It wouldn't be easy. He'd been through so many tragedies. And the news had to be kept from informers at the university, or he would be expelled. So I couldn't go myself to Sibiu. They knew me there.

Early next morning Alice took the train, and waited in a small park near the theological faculty for Mihai to pass. She dared not ask the other students. If they reported her visit (and it was an offence not to do so) the news would come out.

She could only hope that Mihai would pass that way. It was bitterly cold in the park. Snow clung to the branches of trees and lay thick on the benches. Towards evening, he came.

"Yes," he said. "I've been expecting it. Tell Mother I'll come home at once. They may take her, too."

"But your studies," said Suzanne. "Nearly three years you've worked ..."

"What does it matter? It's sometimes the pastors with degrees who betray and destroy what the real "fishers of men" have built. Better without a degree. I'll be thrown out soon, anyway. When they feel like it."

It was very late when Alice returned to the attic, and told me all they'd said.

I did see Richard once more before he vanished for another six years. There was a trial. Relatives could attend. The Party had grown a little more formal since the heady days of 1948. We don't jail men for nothing, they said to the world; we have our tribunals, our judges.

There they sat, five of them, on a raised platform under a red banner which read: JUSTICE FOR THE PEOPLE IN THE SERVICE OF THE

PEOPLE. Above this were portraits of Gheorghiu-Dej and other well-fed Party faces.

Enemies of the People came through one door and went out of another - case heard, defence offered, sentence given within minutes. Priests, peasants, gypsies, journalists moved through as if on a conveyor belt.

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A sweeper had got drunk and shouted, "Gheorghiu-Dej is an old idiot. He ought to go back to driving his puff-puff!" (Dej was a former railwayman). This insult was tossed about the court until the sweeper's lawyer asked for clemency. "Two years," said the President. Out went the sweeper. And in came Richard.

I did not hear one word of what followed, and nor did he. We simply looked at each other. For the last time, it might have been.

Mihai told me afterwards that it was a re-hearing of his old, secret trial, which took place in 1951. The amnesty was cancelled, the old sentence restored. And as he went out he turned his head and gave us a last, cheerful smile. It had taken a couple of minutes.

The clerk, a small, exhausted man, came and handed me a piece of paper. It said that Wurmbrand, R., born 1909 etc., etc., was sentenced to twenty-five years. An increase of five years.

Later we discovered that the sentence also included a heavy fine, plus "legal expenses." And all our property was once more confiscated; this happened to every political prisoner's family. We had no money, so two officials from the tax office came and wrangled about it. They went off with the few precious things we'd collected since my release in 1953.

They left us the beds, a table and two chairs. We thought ourselves quite lucky. But over the next six years they came again and again, demanding money, confiscating. Winter and summer, I battled with bureaucracy over our few poor sticks.

It was a time of frantic fear. Every day friends were arrested. Nearly all our dear ones were back in jail. Night and day ceased to exist for us. People came from every part of the country with stories of terror, of churches closed and menfolk kidnapped.

While all this was happening to us, Khrushchev paid his "ice-breaking" visit to the U.S.A. and there was talk of a major Summit

meeting in Paris for May 1960.

We were discussing the prospects in Miss Landauer's flat.

"You'll see, Sabina," she said. "After this conference your husband will be freed. They'll come to an agreement. The prison doors will open!"

Then the telephone rang – a neighbour to say that the police were in our attic.

"Don't come back tonight! You'll be arrested for certain. They've already taken Alice.

Alice was perhaps the most unselfish, generous woman I know. All she had she gave to others. She cared for the children of political prisoners. Children who were literally turned out on to the street. This was her crime.

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Because she refused to inform on friends during her interrogation she was terribly beaten up. Her teeth were kicked out, bones broken. Then she was sentenced to eight years imprisonment.

The police searched our attic for two hours that night. Besides Alice they arrested a girl who happened to call in – a common practice.

We came back later to the wrecked flat. Clothes and papers were strewn about. The beds upended. Even the mattresses slashed.

Mihai said, "D'you know what they've taken? The Great Rheumatism Cure!"

Old Mrs. Tomaziu had copied out by hand pages and pages from a book by a German doctor which gave a rather dubious course of treatment for rheumatism. She'd insisted on lending them to me. "It's a very rare book, dear. I could only borrow it for a day. So don't lose my notes, whatever you do." I had a hard time explaining to her that they had been seized by the Secret Police. I don't think she was ever fully convinced.

Hours and days were spent in trying to get news from the police of Alice and other friends who were arrested every day. Success was rare. They'd vanished into the bottomless well of prison. Perhaps, one day, we'd hear of them again. (It was a long time after Alice's arrest

that we discovered what had happened to her.)

All our closest friends seemed to be going.

Elderly Mr. Trifu, who had been like a grandfather to Mihai. He was a poet in the mould of W. H. Davies – without a formal education, a countryman who wrote lyrics of heavenly simplicity and depth. Mihai was, so to speak, brought up in his lap.

And Nailescu, perhaps the greatest composer of religious music in the country. He left a wife and four children, who were turned out of their home on to the street.

And Pastor Armeanu. I've told people in the West his story. They think I'm joking. He was sentenced to twenty years for preaching on the text: "Cast your nets on the right side ..."

"Aha!" they said. "Why not on the left side? Imperialist propaganda!"

An informer reported this sermon. It was made the pretext for his arrest.

Pastor Armeanu left behind a wife and five young children. They were deported to a desert place, the Baragan. One day, Mrs. Armeanu came to our door, exhausted and sick. We took

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her in. She was no trouble. On the contrary, her sweet nature, which bore everything without complaint, helped us all. But now we were five.

The man we all suspected of denouncing Pastor Armeanu came to an Underground Church meeting.

Mrs. Armeanu whispered: "Leave him be. He was forced to do it." She wanted to forgive and forget.

But I didn't. I taxed him: Why had he done it?

He blustered. "They pestered me for months. Anyway, I didn't say anything that wasn't the truth. He did say the things I reported and even if I agreed with them, they were counter- revolutionary. I did my duty, as I saw it."

"But then you're on the side of a regime that stops at nothing? That kills and arrests innocent men, that poisons children with

atheism?"

He shifted uneasily. "Oh no. Of course not."

"Then why didn't you inform them that you yourself are against the regime, instead of saying that your brother is?"

There was bitterness in my heart. I knew that pastors and friends and even a bishop had some guilt for Richard's arrest. They loved themselves more than the principles they preached. I fought with myself, feeling hatred enter me towards those who had taken my husband. And so many husbands. I prayed, but could not find peace.

Then Marietta cut from somewhere a picture of Christ on the cross, by one of the Italian masters. Often my eyes strayed to where it was pinned on the attic wall. And each time I remembered His last words: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And also: I thirst.

How they thirsted, the betrayers, for forgiveness! Which I would not give them. Which in my bitterness I withheld.

And with that thought something changed in me. I knew that even for saints a time may come when self-love is stronger than love of God. The Lutheran bishop Mueller, a good friend, used to say that those whom others call a traitor might be seen by God as a weak saint. He said it not minding at all that others might consider him a weak bishop for this. I resolved to give love and expect nothing in return.

In the winter of 1960 snow came early. The streets were deep in it and no one went out if they could avoid it. A pane of glass had gone from the window. Mihai nailed a piece of old carpet over the hole, but nothing stops a determined wind. It whined mournfully under the door.

"We might as well be sitting outside," Marietta said. "It isn't a bit warmer in here."

The carpet blocked the light and in spite of the draught our leaky little attic was horribly stuffy at night, with five people in it.

When I wasn't busy with the Underground Church I tramped the streets from Government office to office, trying to win a respite over

the fine imposed on Richard. Unless so much was paid within a certain time, they would come and take all we had left. I waited on benches in draughty halls to see officials, and filled in dozens of complicated forms.

It didn't do us any good.

One day two tax department officials hammered on the door. Mihai opened it and called to me. They wanted more money. I couldn't pay? Too bad. They'd make a list of all furnishings and household goods, so that I might reclaim them when I found the cash.

I said, "That won't take you long."

They noted down chairs, tables, cutlery, the cabinet of an old gramophone with its works missing (a relic of Mihai's musical repair days). The beds we could keep. They were, anyhow, too broken to move.

"Carpet, brown, small," said the first man, and gave it a tug. It came away from the window, letting in an icy, hissing wind.

"No. Better count that as part of the window," he said. "They've got people sleeping here." And they put it back.

I thanked them. But that was a mistake. They were reminded of their duty.

"You've got three days to pay. Otherwise you've had it."

And off they went.

I spent the next morning trying to see the correct functionary. At last my turn came. He sat in a cubicle with pasteboard walls.

"You mean they haven't cleared you out yet!" He was furious. "What business is it of mine what you do next? The court instructions are clear. Either you pay immediately, and pay it all, or your property's confiscated. You can't pay? That's it. They'll be round tomorrow, first thing."

I walked down the stairs. I couldn't stop the tears running down my cheeks. Shivering and coughing, I paused in the big hall a moment before taking the plunge into the icy street. Then someone touched my arm.

A tall, bespectacled man in a dark suit had followed me down. I supposed he was another official, with some new threat. He glanced quickly round.

"I know your case," he said. "Here. Take this."

And he vanished, hurrying back the way he had come.

I looked at the folded notes he'd slipped into my hand. Enough to stall them off for weeks!

Walking home, I didn't notice my sodden shoes, my frozen hands, my exhaustion. My heart was filled with glowing calm. That kind, that generous man, who had shown me a sign of God's love. Who could he be?

Mihai made discreet inquiries and found he was from a department of the tax office. One of the many friends of the Underground Church. We could not meet – it was too dangerous but every month from then on, as long as Richard was in prison he sent a sum out of his small salary.

Mihai had been duly expelled from his seminary. Our friend Bishop Mueller did all he could to keep him in. Dr. Mueller was despised by many of his Lutheran flock because of his open collaboration with the Communists, who even honoured him with decorations. They did not know that he reported to the Underground Church every discussion with high officials. He also secretly protected and helped families of Christian martyrs. I can say this now openly, because he is dead.

Mihai managed to make his way into the engineering and construction faculty of the university. Not admitting, of course, that he was the son of a political prisoner.

"They'll find out in a few months or so," he said. "Then I'll be thrown out and can join something else."

I was trying to earn a little money by working at home. I'd found an old knitting machine, designed to turn out jerseys and pullovers. The trouble was that when I wanted to work, the machine didn't.

The friend who had given it to me soon discovered that he'd given himself as well. He was a mechanic, and hardly a day passed without my calling on him for some repair.

At last he said, "Bearings have gone."

"What does that mean?"

"It means we throw it out. Scrap it. I can't get spares."

"Oh dear." My pullovers, if sometimes a little unusual in shape, had sold well.

"I'll look around. Perhaps I can get you another cheap."

A week later he arrived with a pair of simpler machines for making socks. Now Mrs. Armeanu and I were busy. Needles were the problem. They broke often, and replacements were simply unobtainable in the new Rumania. All supplies went into the factories. The mechanic tried to take a few from his place of work. But employees were searched as they left. I couldn't

let him risk imprisonment for a needle. So sock production often stopped for months at a time.

We had a socks black-market. Since no one could sell goods without State permission (it was illegal to make them privately, come to that) our friends sold them at factory gates. Or in the flea market. Or at bus stations. Anywhere that offered the safety of a crowd.

Finally, we gave it up. In the sixties, economic barriers with the West were eased. Rumania got Western machinery and know-how. When nylon socks appeared, mine had to disappear. I was quite happy about it.

After this, I kept my money-making ventures to language-teaching.

"Comrade Sabina Wurmbrand?"

A young man in a dark raincoat had come to the door after dark.

"I am Mrs. Wurmbrand."

"Tomorrow at 9 a.m. you're to report to the Ministry of the Interior. You'll show this card to the guards and ask for the room indicated on it." He gave me a cold stare. "Good night!" And clattered down the stairs.

There was no more frightening summons. Visitors to the Ministry usually became guests for an indefinite spell. Had someone denounced me? We were a sad little family in the attic that night.

Early next morning I packed a small bag with toilet things and warm clothes. I said goodbye to them all, and set off.

The office was rather grand, with a carpet and curtains and pretty girl secretaries. The portraits of Lenin and Co. were in colour and well-framed. Behind a desk the size of a grand piano sat a plump man in civilian clothes, about forty years old.

"Sit down, Comrade Wurmbrand." He waved to an armchair. "We've asked you to come here because we're taking an interest in your case. Tell me about yourself and your family. Don't worry! Nothing will go beyond these walls. You have a son (he glanced at the papers on his desk) Mihai...How are his studies proceeding...?"

I'd caught the drift. It was another attempt to persuade me into divorce. Politeness would be applied where pressure had failed.

He was suave and confident, leaning back expansively in his chair.

I answered, "I love my husband, and whatever happens I shall stay married to him. We are united for ever."

"Well now, let me make a little proposal. You want your child

to complete his education. You want the right to work, to live your own life. You can have all this, very simply. Just leave your identity card with me. And in forty-eight hours we'll send it round to you endorsed in your own name. Forget about big words like divorce. This is just a simple formality the State asks of you. Isn't it the intelligent thing to do?" He paused playing with a pencil. "Of course, if you don't co- operate, there are other ways. When we want something, we get it..."

I looked at the political officer. Into his eyes.

"Suppose one day ~you~ are in prison, like so many other officials? Would you want your wife to divorce you?"

At this he sat up with a jerk. Then he exploded.

"Don't you know where you are, who I am? How dare you put questions to me!" He flung the pencil into the fireplace. "Now get out, get out! And don't forget what I've told you! Understand?"

I picked up the little bag and went to the door without

answering.

"Understand?"

But he had understood, too, for that was their last attempt to make me divorce Richard.

Instead, they told me: he is dead.

It happened on two occasions.

First, a couple of haggard young men came to the door saying they were ex-prisoners. I believe they were. But they couldn't look me in the eyes. When they began to describe seeing Richard in jail, I knew at once that I was dealing with provocateurs.

"Poor Pastor Wurmbrand," said the bolder of the two. "We don't know exactly what happened to him. He became very moody before the end. Wouldn't talk to anyone. Or so we heard in Gherla prison."

"What are you trying to tell me? That he committed suicide?"

"You can never be sure. But we know he was taken first. And who could blame him if he did?"

He tried to be cunning. But could not have chosen a stupider lie.

"Poor Pastor Wurmbrand. A real saint, he was. Everyone said so."

"Please go, now." I couldn't find anything else to say.

"We want to say, Mrs. Wurmbrand, how sorry ..."

"Please go."

They looked horribly guilty and ashamed. Probably they did it just for the sake of a ration card, or the promise of a job. The second time, it was officially stated that Richard was

dead. But not directly to me. A plain-clothes man called at a friend's house. They didn't want to break the sad news to Mrs. Wurmbrand personally. Would the friend oblige? Then just say Pastor Wurmbrand had died after some weeks' of illness and was buried in prison.

I was glad to be spared another sickening interview.

But they didn't stop there. Richard's name was by now being whispered all over the country. He was becoming a legend. Children would not go to bed without praying for his safety. To put an end to it released prisoners were sent to Christian homes in several of the bigger towns to persuade people that he had died in prison by his own hand. Nobody believed them.

Then Mihai was expelled from his faculty. He had refused categorically to comply with Communist teachings and practices. Now he discovered that they knew all about him: his hours, his friends. They kept files on every Christian. You had to be a virtuoso of underground work, which few of us were, to keep things hidden from the Secret Police. We knew people informed on us. It was an inevitable part of life. But Mihai said the church had been too deeply infiltrated.

"Mother, I hate to say it, but you're too soft-hearted. You let all these people come to the flat: they've only got to say 'Praise the Lord!' and they're in. But we've got to be hard with these informers."

I would have liked to argue, but he went on: "I'm frightened they'll arrest you again, Mother. And me. They know I'm up to the neck in your secret work. But it isn't just people like us, who at least know the risks and have a purpose in life. I'm thinking about the boys I used to know in Sibiu who got taken in twice a week and beaten up until they promised to inform. About the kids in Brasov who tried to form a freedom party. It was a childish game. They even kept a diary and records of their meetings. But the Communists like to play, too. They're all in jail now. Perhaps being beaten to death."

I thought of Alice. That sweet, gentle woman. Stretched out on a bench with her feet and hands tied and her teeth kicked in. Richard had been horribly tortured, too, on his first arrest. Though he never spoke of it. What was he suffering now?

We knew that although several Underground Church meetings had recently been broken up by the police, others had been left alone. Deliberately, so that informers could work in peace. Now we made a new effort against them.

Our meetings were increasing in size. Up to fifty or sixty people at a time. We had to be specially careful if someone at a meeting had rank - a university professor, or a Party member.

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They would be watching him. Then we kept numbers down to half a dozen trusted friends.

One way of spotting informers was to plant false news. Word was passed to a suspect that a gathering was to be held at the address of a friend. If an unusual number of plain-clothes snoopers were seen near the house, then we knew he was guilty.

Generally, we kept our knowledge from him. Sorry the house was empty, we smiled. We had to change the address at the last minute - didn't have time to tell you.

A known informer is valuable. You can mislead him. If you drive him out of the church, he's replaced at once by one you don't know. So the rule was: keep friendly.

Sometimes we traced informers through information from arrested men. The questions which interrogators didn't ask them were often more important to us than those they did.

One of our members had been secretly printing Russian gospels. Yet he was never asked about it during interrogation. We guessed why - his fellow-printer was the informer. He was a Christian - caught in the net of blackmail and threats.

He still worked and prayed with us in love; and yet was their agent, out of fear.

So it went on. On the one hand the struggle to keep out wind and rain, tax-collectors and Secret Police; on the other the battle to hold together the Underground Church. We lived dangerously. And were never bored.

In November I made a trip to Cluj. A show trial had been arranged there for leaders of the Army of the Lord, the forbidden religious organization which Richard had done much to help. I heard that a close friend of ours, a teacher, was among them.

The Army is made up mostly of country folk and hundreds of them came to Cluj on the day of the trial. They stood in a silent mass outside the gates of the military tribunal. It was raining heavily.

They'd come from all over Rumania, in spite of the dangers of being noted and denounced, to show their loyalty to those who were to be court-martialled for their faith.

When the prison vans arrived, the crowd surged forward to catch a glimpse of their dear ones. In dirty, coarse prison clothes the accused men and women were hustled into the court.

Wives and families called out to them, clutching bundles of warm clothes and food.

"Get back! Get back!" The militia brandished their rifles. A couple of younger soldiers, rattled made as if to shoot. There was a moment of panic.

An officer was shouting to someone in the building, "Phone for reinforcements!" Using their guns as staves, the guards pushed the crowd out of the yard, into the street, men, women and children, then tried to close the gates. The cry went up: ~Take us, too. We are their brethren. We believe like them!~

At the end of the street a car appeared, full of police with threatening guns. People ran and scattered into doorways. But the moment the car passed, they churned out again and pressed against the gates.

In the end the police, who were totally unprepared for such a demonstration, agreed to let in close relatives only. A handful of wives and children were admitted. The rest stood all day outside the gates, trying to persuade the guards to let them in. Late at night the crowd was as big as ever.

The court was trying to avoid further trouble by rushing through all the trials at a single sitting.

At dusk the prisoners were led out, back to their cells. An officer emerged to say that sentences would not be known until next day. Those who'd come from out of town were found beds for the night by the local people who sympathized with them. Most of us were in tears. None of the wives had a chance to say a last word to their husbands or to give them the precious bundles.

I was taken to the home of an Underground Church member, with half a dozen wives of arrested men. We decided to spend the night in prayer for them.

"Announce it or not tomorrow," sighed one wife, "it will be heavy."

It wasn't the first trial for Army of the Lord followers. Far from it. From twenty-year-olds to people in their sixties, they had been hunted down for years.

Next morning I went to the courts. A list had been nailed to the gates, which were locked, and a sad group stood around it. My friend's sentence was eight years.

I walked to the railway station in the rain and sat down to wait for the train back to Bucharest.

I was asked to come urgently to the house of a secret Christian. Trudi was there. Not the smiling, capable Trudi who welcomed us to Colonel Shircanu's house and eavesdropped on his telephone, but a crumpled, woebegone girl. For a moment I thought they had found her out.

"What is it?" I asked. The others were out and we could talk freely.

It was about her fiance, a young man of the same age. They had not yet money to set up a home and in any case Trudi felt

that she must keep to her post of danger, at least for the time being. Now the boy was pressing for proof of her affections. "If you really loved me," he said at every meeting, "you would not hold me off like this." She was desperately afraid of losing him. What could she do?

So with Trudi, as with so many other girls, the problem of purity arose. To touch, or not to touch? Now, looking back over thirty years towards the question I'd faced as a girl in Paris, and having seen so much, and had so long to think about it in prison and while waiting for Richard, I knew the answer.

To ask ~Why purity?~ is as wrong as to ask ~Why life?~ It is one of the great gifts of nature. Since life began, the ideal put before man in the great religions everywhere, in China, in the Greek mysteries, has been purity: the dream of a pure woman. The Gospel begins with the story of a virgin, as opposed to the Messalinas of that time. Joan of Arc had to be a virgin to save France. Reading the life of St. Therese of Lisieux, you love her for that virtue. Would Spinoza or Beethoven have produced such exalted work if they had not been pure?

To ask, "Why be pure?" is like asking, "Why be honest?" Ask, and you reveal a little of your soul.

In all the world of literature I have two favourite characters: Solveig in ~Peer Gynt~ and Gretchen in Goethe's ~Faust~.

Peer Gynt was a scoundrel and a drunkard, but he met on his way one pure and devout girl. Peer was sure she would wait for him. Decades passed, in which Peer went from bad to worse, but he always remembered that he had known a pure girl. Her image was continually before his eyes. When he returned to her he was old, but she had been the means of his salvation.

Gretchen was seen by Faust walking to church and she, too would not lift her eyes to him. In a moment of madness, tempted by Mephistopheles, she fell into sin with him, but she atoned for it in prison (which she called a holy place) and won back her purity. She longed for Faust in heaven, and the thought of her put him on the way to salvation.

Why should a girl keep herself pure? Because in this way she can inspire mankind and lead humanity higher. I saw the value of purity in jail, where the purest women could most deeply help others.

We live as it were in the cellar of this world far from God. Every time we expose our soul to His light and love, it may grow.

But we must have understanding for human failure (in ourselves as well as in others). The Talmud says that God is longsuffering towards every sin except unchastity. The rabbi who thought this did not know God. Just the contrary is the truth.

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There is no sin which Jesus so easily forgave as this. Jesus knew the almost irresistible drive of sexuality. Therefore he did not condemn the adulteress. He tells us to do our utmost to beware of this sin, but keeps us at his loving bosom if we do commit it, notwithstanding. We might succeed later where we have failed today. There is no limit to the long-suffering of God and there is no sin for which the Church does not have full understanding and forgiveness.

I could give young people like Trudi one piece of practical advice. When you strive to get rid of erotic thoughts or sinful sexuality, the results are often the contrary of what you expect. Concupiscence is a huge power. Struggles to escape it only tighten the bonds.

It is the indirect way that succeeds. Don't try to eliminate thoughts which you abhor. They will not go. They have come to stay. But fill your mind with beautiful and pure ideas. Throw yourself into whole-hearted, time and energy-absorbing religious, social, political, philanthropic or educational work. The taking upon yourself of

Christ's responsibilities in some field will make you Christlike in time.

New ideals have this great expulsive force. But if you fall, remember that there is no limit to forgiveness. Nobody becomes a saint in three days. It took St. Anthony thirty years.

In 1962 a warmer wind began to blow from Moscow. We sniffed it cautiously. There was talk of a new "thaw." We received more letters from abroad. Rumours spread that Rumania was trying to break away from Comecon, the Soviet-controlled common market. There were even rumours of an amnesty.

People joked more freely:

Khrushchev: Mr. Kennedy, what can I do: I've tried brainwashing, I've tried prison but these stupid Christians still go church. How can I stop them?

Kennedy: Try replacing the ikons in the churches with your portrait.

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TO FREEDOM

On every Communist festival we listened intently to the radio, hoping for some announcement about a release of prisoners. I couldn't sleep at night for thinking about it.

May 1st, 1962, Labour Day. Nothing.

August 23rd, Freedom Day. Nothing.

November 7th. Russian Revolution Day. A few hundred criminal convicts were set free. No news of the politicals.

And yet, the small signs continued to multiply. A huge trade deal was made with Yugoslavia. The "Institute for Russian Studies" became a lesser part of the "Institute for Foreign Languages." The "Russian Bookshop" - a big State store became the "Universal Bookshop."

In August, 1963, jamming of Rumanian language broadcasts from the West stopped.

How breathlessly we sat by the radio that August 23rd, longing for news. There was none.

Early in 1964, without an announcement, a handful of politicals were released. A few were our friends.

We asked them: What does it mean?

They didn't know. "The guard came in and read out a list of names, and that was that!" How many names? About eighty.

Eighty! So many! Now we were sure that an amnesty was on the way. It had happened just like this in 1956. Would it be on May 1st?

But there was no news that day.

One morning I was in my attic when Marietta rushed in, out of breath:

"Alice is home!" After four years! We snatched up our coats and ran outside and jumped on a tram.

There she was, thin and worn and smiling. How many things she had to say! But she had nothing, nothing. Just the patched rags on her back.

"Tomorrow we'll bring you some things," I promised.

"But I know you haven't anything yourself," she said.

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"Oh, but we live in the lap of luxury," laughed Mihai. "You should see our penthouse flat."

"Carpets on the walls," said Marietta.

"On the windows, too!"

"Running water."

"Straight through the ceiling!"

How lucky we were, I thought, compared with so many other women. We were surrounded with love. Everywhere it was working for us, running secretly like sap in the great tree of the Underground Church.

All night I couldn't close my eyes. In the morning we gathered a few things and took them to Alice, to the cousin's flat where she had

slept.

Now, indeed, we had reason to hope that our dear ones would come home. But weeks passed, and months.

Every few weeks a friend named Marcia came running to the attic.

"The amnesty! It's coming next week! This time it's really true."

Soon she was nicknamed Sister Amnesty. Marcia worked hard for the church, and she had a husband in an official post. So her rumours were taken more seriously.

The real amnesty, when it came, took us all unawares.

I'd risen early and gone out shopping for the family. It was a Wednesday in June, warm and blue. When I came home I found the daily paper waiting for me. A friend had brought it on his way to work.

In a modest space on page 1 was the news: AMNESTY.

It was not for every political prisoner. In fact, it was not clear who it was for at all. I read and re-read it. The announcement was hedged about with protective phrases. They couldn't admit that thousands of people, having been unjustly locked up for years, would now be freed. It made them look too silly. And Moscow was watching.

I hurried round to a friend's room. A little group had already gathered to discuss the news.

"Oh, it'll be like last year. Criminals only!" said Miss Landauer.

But Sister Amnesty was there, too.

"No, no! Haven't I told you so often! Let us pray and thank God, and you'll see!"

So we prayed, and returned home. I hadn't been back five minutes when a neighbour came running. A telephone call had come from an old friend who'd been released that morning from Gherla.

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"He says your husband was on the list for today! He saw him waiting in the yard! He's coming!"

When she'd gone, I tried to peel the potatoes. But my heart was beating so fast I had to sit down. Hours passed.

Another knock on the door. Mr. Ionescu, an old friend who lived on the floor below and had a telephone, stood there smiling.

He took my hand, and said: "It's someone calling you from out of town."

So I went down and picked up the receiver and on the other end was Richard. When I heard his voice, I couldn't speak. I felt myself falling, falling, and a noise roared in my ears like the sea and then darkness poured over me.

I opened my eyes again on worried faces staring down.

"She's all right!"

"You fainted!"

They'd brought Mihai down now. He was laughing and talking on the telephone. Richard was in the home of friends in Cluj.

"I didn't know if I still had a wife and children," he said. "I thought I'd better find out!" He was well, and free. He was coming home as soon as he could. Gherla was hundreds of miles away in the western provinces. He'd catch a train from Cluj, the nearest railway point. But not today. His first underground meeting had already been arranged there that evening.

During the afternoon other friends came home, from prisons all over the country. A score of us, wives and friends, waited and talked in the attic, anxious, hopeful. There was a commotion on the staircase. A telegram. I tore it open.

"Richard says he's coming on the overnight train. He'll be here at 8.30 tomorrow morning!"

With a moan, Sister Amnesty slipped to the floor. This time she had fainted! They crowded round, slapping her cheeks, sprinkling cold water.

Of course we had no sleep that night. Every hour news came of fresh releases. Men and women we hadn't seen for ten, fifteen years walked in through the door. As if back from the dead. The whole house was full of people greeting each other, remembering, making plans in a fever of talk. Flowers kept arriving. Big bunches of summer roses that had cost the earth. From friends who could not come themselves,

because of the danger.

They couldn't be seen at the station, these people - so we took their flowers instead, to show their love. I hadn't realized there were so many. Sister Amnesty had her arms full of gladioli. Marietta carried roses. Mrs. Armeanu and Alice had big white michaelmas daisies. The sun shone down with the lovely freshness of early morning light.

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Crowds of anxious, expectant people were meeting every train. Hoping against hope that their prisoners would come. They had no news.

Then the train arrived. The big, droning diesel engine slipped past and my eyes searched the carriages. A loudspeaker announcement blared. The crowd churned round, pushing and jostling.

I saw Richard before he saw me. He was leaning from a carriage window. Thin and pale, with a shaven head.

God had given him back to me.

His clothes were very shabby. His boots had no laces they weren't allowed - and they were too big. He came towards me, walking so slowly, tall and smiling, swimming about in his boots, and embraced Mihai and me. The station rocked with the noise of shouts and greetings. Someone with a camera lined the three of us up for a photograph.

People crowded round asking Richard for news of their friends and relatives, the ones who had not come back on that train.

Then I remembered how many had not come back, and never would, for they had died in prison.

"Don't speak," Richard said. "Let me just look at you."

Day and night the attic was packed with friends and strangers who came from all over the country to see Richard again. Standing, sitting, squeezing in the ever-open door - everyone had to have a word with him. The Secret Police didn't try to break it up, because they could only have done so with a machine gun. They watched and made their little notes in the background.

Richard was thin as a stick and weighed about seven stone. He'd

survived beating and brainwashing. He had to go into hospital at once. But even there, people continued to flock in to see him, until the director said apologetically he'd have to move. The Secret Police were complaining. He went from hospital to hospital, and finally landed in the sanatorium at Sinaia, one of the most beautiful mountain towns, where the Royal summer palace was once. But still people came, by motor-cycle and bicycle and bus. The Secret Police sent another warning. He decided to leave. There was nothing else to do.

In Bucharest, things were chaotic. Tens of thousands of political prisoners were freed that year. They sought jobs and wives and children, and they tried - sometimes with terrible results - to fit into a life they hadn't known for fifteen or twenty years. There were tragedies in hearts and homes and on the streets.

The police couldn't cope with all the confusion. And so Richard seized the chance to preach, secretly, in any church where the pastor would have him. And we were able to help many friends.

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We sent Mrs. Armeanu down to Constanza for a Black Sea holiday. Her husband had not been released.

Richard even managed to obtain a licence to preach. But it was limited to a church in the village of Orsova, which had an officially restricted congregation of thirty-six members.

"If there's one more," the Secret Police warned, "there'll be trouble. We know you, and we're watching you."

Richard told me, "I don't think I can speak there. Other people are bound to turn up when the word gets round that I'm preaching. We'll only harm the people at Orsova."

So we decided for the time being not to go. In any case, the Underground Church work in Bucharest was keeping us too busy to permit it. In secret gatherings here and there - because meetings in houses were illegal - Richard brought hundreds of souls to Christ. But still he didn't seem to think that he was doing enough and we didn't know how long he would be able to keep out of police hands. When I asked him what his plans were for the future, he said:

"Ideally, I'd like to be a recluse, to retire into a desert place like the hermits of old and spend the rest of my life in contemplation of God and in meditation. But things are very far from ideal."

Once more he saw how little freedom the church had, how it was

infested with informers – from the highest bishops to the humblest members of the congregation. Priests told him that if they failed to report on their flocks, their churches would be closed. Children and young people were indoctrinated with atheism more fiercely than ever.

But what disturbed Richard most deeply was to learn how ignorant and how naively credulous, people were in the West over Communism and its attempts to destroy religion.

At this time I began to have contact with certain high dignitaries of the Russian Church, by means which I cannot disclose. Many were Party tools, and they told us so openly and with sorrow. They had no choice, they said.

Other prelates from behind the Iron Curtain who went to international conferences, men chosen by the Party and playing the role ascribed to them by the Communists, were in fact working for the Underground Church.

When they got back, we were given their impressions. They were horrified to find what dupes some of the British and American delegates to these conferences are. "They believe absolutely anything they're told," they said. "Some are more enthusiastic about Communism than any real Communist."

What could be done about it?

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Leaders of the Underground Church met and decided that Richard should make the attempt to reach the West. His task would be to make people understand the reality of what was happening to us – and what might happen to them.

Since 1948 Rumania had been selling Jews to Israel. Our hopes of leaving were pinned on this traffic. Thousands upon thousands of Jews were still trying to get out. Long lines of them waited at militia H.Q. for application forms. The exodus had already offended Arab nations and the Government was cautious, but official scruples could be overcome on payment of a large sum to the authorities.

Negotiations were long and tedious for us. And all they produced was a tip from a high official that our dossiers were stamped NEVER TO LEAVE. But we didn't give up. Friends suggested Mihai should go ahead of us. At that time he seemed to be in the greatest danger. Others said I should try to leave alone and raise money in the West to "bail

us out."

Now that the first confusion of the mass release was over, oppressive measures returned. Richard was watched everywhere. He could not enter a church without its pastor being warned or threatened.

Our own former church was closed and turned into a cartoon-film studio. Pews and altar were torn out, windows blocked. In one way it was a blessing in disguise: it made our attic on the top floor of the block very difficult to watch closely. Studio technicians, musicians, secretaries and so on came and went all day and couldn't be distinguished easily from our brethren.

Through secret channels we got word to our friend Anutza in Norway. She set to work raising money towards our ransom. Our families abroad also did their best. But it was through Anutza more than anyone that we were finally able to leave. She persuaded the Norwegians to grant us visas. She raised $7,000 from the Norwegian Israel Mission and the Hebrew Christian Alliance (to which I express here my thankfulness). Another source supplied $3,000. My family also contributed and helped in many ways. They were all love.

Our first visitors from the West, the Rev. Stuart Harris, chairman of the British Mission to the Communist World and American Pastor John Moseley arrived secretly by night bringing the first relief for needy families. Mihai spotted police outside. We'd been informed on! The visitors stayed with us until 1 a.m. By then the agents, believing that it had been a false alarm, had left. Next day we collected some Bibles from the two men in a park. We were spied on even here. An informer came later to the flat

asking insinuating questions. Harris and Moseley were also permitted to hand out Bibles next day at the Baptist seminary. They heard afterwards from me that the students were obliged to return them all the day after Harris and Moseley left.

Our next visitors came out of the blue, some Americans and a Swiss. They didn't even know Richard's address. So they went to an official church organization to inquire.

Pastor Wurmbrand? Goodness gracious yes, they knew Pastor Wurmbrand. They'd send one of their men along as a guide. Oh, no trouble at all, pleased to help. So this man came along with them to the attic. Obviously, he'd go straight back and inform on all we said.

But the meeting took a comic turn. The guide spoke French but no

English. So Richard talked to the visitors in English and I had to translate for the informer.

"Now my husband explains what liberty the church has here, and now he speaks about the great possibilities for tourism and now about the weather ..."

Richard meanwhile was talking like a runaway train about everything that happened to us and the real condition of the church. He was lively and brilliant and made them laugh with his account of things which had not been so funny at the time.

Then one of the Americans said, "Well, this is very interesting, Mister, but our time's short and we'd like before going to have a word with Pastor Wurmbrand."

"But I am Pastor Wurmbrand!"

"Impossible!"

"But true!"

"If you say so, it must be. But after fourteen years in prison! We expected to meet someone in the last stages of depression. And instead, we find a happy man."

At last, after more than a year's work and pressure from friends in the West, we were told: ~Your exit visas will be granted, the dollars have been received.~

Richard was called for a last encounter with the Secret Police. They told him: "Now you can leave. Preach all you like abroad. But speak against us - and you'll be silenced."

We have had evidence since then that the threat has not been forgotten.

I, too, had a last meeting with officialdom. It was the bailiff, knocking on the door, a list of property to be confiscated in his hand. "This is absolutely your last chance to pay!"

"Come tomorrow," I said. "And you can take everything."

Brethren and sisters came from far-off villages and towns to

say farewell. Friends in Bucharest arrived every hour to wish us well.

Early next morning we were at the airport.

It was December 6th, the feast of St. Nicholas, patron of prisoners in the Rumanian Orthodox calendar. A damp mist seemed to dissolve the buildings and the grey aircraft out on the runway.

Ours was an old DC-7 and there were sixty of us, all ransomed, and nearly all Jews. We'd been there since dawn, and a warm sense of oneness, of deep gratitude at our good fortune in escaping from Communism, and of deeper grief for those whom we left behind in its grip, held us together. The officials, the passport men, the girls in uniform with lists in their hands, looked at us with envious eyes. We were going to live in the West. In the West!

They had tried to stop a crowd gathering at the airport. But a crowd had come to see us off just the same. Looking back, waving towards them through sheets of plate-glass, we trooped out over the wet, grey asphalt. The mist was lifting.

We boarded the plane. Mihai found himself next to the only foreign passenger, an Italian businessman, who at once began to talk. Cheerfully, he asked Mihai a score of questions. He hadn't thought it was as bad as they said. All those stories one heard about life under Communism. He'd had some very good meals at the Athen,e Palace (Bucharest's most luxurious hotel, dating from pre-war days).

Mihai was silent.

They went down the steps together at Rome airport.

Mihai asked: "This is really Rome? Not East Berlin or somewhere?"

"Sure, sure!" laughed the businessman. "See that sign over there: ~Bevete Coca-Cola~. You're on Italian soil."

"So. Then I am a free man." And he began to weep.

Finally, he said, "Now, if you like, I'll tell you how it really is in Rumania, but I don't know if I could ever make you, or anyone else, understand."

And with that, we advanced towards the customs. My brother and sister-in-law waited for us at the airport. Love had urged them to come specially from Paris.

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EPILOGUE

From Rome we flew to Oslo. Richard would have liked to stop at Geneva, to report on the persecution in Rumania. But a secretary of the Lutheran World Federation begged Richard over the telephone not to come, "because the Russians will know it." I wondered why someone should fear the Russians at the World Council of Churches, when we had not feared them where they ruled.

In Norway, the lovely country which offered us a home, we were met by members of the Israel Mission which had paid part of the ransom, and by other church officials. But first and foremost by Anutza. She had worked fifteen years for this reunion. Nor had we been forgotten by Pastor Hedenquist, head of the Swedish Israel Mission. He came specially from Stockholm. Over the years he had prayed for us every day. The Hebrew Christian Alliance, which had paid another part of the ransom, inquired immediately about our needs.

Then we went to Britain. Here our friend Stuart Harris opened to us the doors of universities and a multitude of churches of all denominations. People heard at last about the martyrs and victories of the Underground Church, which had been almost unknown until then. British Christians were not aware of the facts: the persecution of their brethren in the third of the world under Communist domination had been barely mentioned to them. In most places my husband spoke; in some, I did. An awakening took place in Great Britain.

As they made acquaintance with the unknown world of "God's Underground," we made acquaintance here, and later in America, with the Anglo-Saxon world. We could understand, now, Pope Gregory the Great. As a youthful deacon he noticed the fair faces and white bodies of some young people standing bound in the slave-market of Rome, and asked: "From what country are they?" He was told that they were English (~Angles~ in Latin). "Angels," he said, "not ~Angles~. Their faces are so angel-like. What is the name of their king?" The reply was "Aella" Cregory said, "Alleluia shall be sung in Aella's land." When he

became head of the church, he saw to this. Now we heard the Alleluias sung by thousands who showed towards the Underground Church an angel-like love. The first mission to the Communist world was founded.

Friends made in Oslo, Pastors Sturdy and Knutson, saw to it that we should go to America. Richard and I spoke again in churches, at big rallies, seminaries, ladies' guilds.

Richard was called to testify before committees of the U.S Senate and later of Congress. I sat near him when he spoke. Not only senators, but representatives of newspapers and radio stations around the world were there. Batteries of T.V. cameras were turned on him as he spoke about the suffering of the Underground Church:

"One third of the world is entitled to one third of your prayers, of your concerns, of your gifts...In prison I saw men with 50 lb. chains at their feet, praying for America. But in America you seldom hear in a church a prayer for those in chains in Communist prisons."

Asked by a senator if he bore any marks of torture, he stripped himself to the waist and showed eighteen scars on his body. People wept at his words, "I don't boast of these scars. I show the tortured body of my church and my country. I speak for the heroes and saints who cannot speak for themselves: Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox and Jews who died under torture for their religion."

Tears flowed down my face as I sat near him. I had before my eyes the farm women, the nuns, the many young girls, the Protestants and the Catholics, the Zionist ladies who slaved over new Pharaonic works because they had wished to see God's promise to the Jewish people fulfilled. I remembered those who had died. I knew that by death they had passed into the loving hands of the One who made lilies and carnations. But still I could not stop weeping.

Richard said later, "Your tears made a greater impression than all my words. Tears undermine the strongest walls."

Richard dictated his first book, ~Today's Martyred Church Tortured for Christ~. I listened, sitting on a sofa, trying to knit. He wept. I wept, too. It was a very simple book. But written not with ink, rather with the tears and blood of martyrs. Unexpectedly, it became a best-seller in a score of languages. This book and our visits to different countries and continents became the starting point for the creation of nineteen missions in the free nations of Europe and Asia, in Australia and America. They work together to bring to the Underground Church Christian literature, radio broadcasts in their language and relief for families of martyrs.

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One book after another came from Richard's pen. He was tireless in preaching, but didn't simply talk - he created efficient organizations to work secretly in the Red camp. Some questioned his methods, but their criticisms came always too late. Richard acted,

considering that there would be time enough for justifications later.

We were happy among all peoples, in every country we saw. We felt at home with our German Brethren. Between the German and the Jewish people there are rivers of blood. But perhaps it was not by accident that the sea which God parted for the Jews was called the Red Sea. Those who love can come through even a sea of blood. Only those who persist in hatred are drowned in it. We were happy with Australasians, with our Maori brethren, with white, black and Indians in Africa. We had meetings without apartheid in South Africa. Intermingled Christians of all races and colours of skin listened in tears to the message of Christ as taught in the Underground Church.

I remembered a sad reflection of Mihai's, made years before: "Even if Father returns, he will be no more the man we knew, but a ghost, incapable of serving anybody." In Africa, a newspaper wrote of our visit: "We were hit by a hurricane called Richard."

Richard's teaching, "Hate Communism, but love and win the Communists for Christ" was accepted by millions everywhere. There is now prayer, concern and active help for the Underground Church. Its oppressors are embraced in Christian love, though a fight against their evil conduct goes on. In this fight, Richard attacks also church leaders who compromise with Communism, or even become its stooges.

Richard is Richard and I am I. For me, his fighting against so many people is too much. I would like him to be quieter. I tell him sometimes, "In the Song of Solomon, Christ is compared with a flower. The flower is plucked, or it withers, having done nothing in all its life other than to delight onlookers with its perfume and splendour. It does not oppose those who wish to kill it. This, I think, is the ideal Christian life."

Richard replies, "If we don't fight Communism and its infiltration of the churches, the oppressors will defeat us." I wonder why he worried about this. Wasn't the church born crucified, defeated? Was it not more beautiful in the catacombs than sharing the throne with emperors? Did not our underground services compare favourably with those in Western cathedrals, where no one wept when the passion of the Lord was mentioned, nor shouted with joy on hearing of his resurrection?

My husband couldn't be reached by such arguments. He

asked, "To what flower is Jesus compared in the Song of Songs? Mystified, I said, "To a rose." He answered promptly, "The rose has

thorns. Don't touch her, She will prick you."

I have known him for thirty years. I will not change him. So I chose the quieter part. I organize the affairs of couriers of our mission who go to Communist countries and return. You have to instruct them, to gather information about the state of the church from them, to provide them with Bibles, literature and tapes, with money for relief.

Hundreds of thousands of Christians are in Communist prisons. In Rumania, many of our friends are there. And news of what people are suffering elsewhere daily makes me live again the past. In June 1969, the Soviet press boasted of arresting, for their faith, a man named Rabinchuk and all his five sons. I could not take my mind off Mrs. Rabinchuk. How terribly she must suffer in her empty house. In Albania, clergy have been rolled through streets in barrels and thrown into the sea. In North Korea, forty-five Christians were killed in one day in 1969. The families of these people, and innumerable others, are starving; and everywhere thirsty souls ask for the Word of God.

Taking many precautionary measures, I meet couriers and hear these things from them personally. The work has been going on for four years now, but not one of our couriers, nor any of their contacts in Communist countries, has yet been arrested.

I had also other people to meet. Clergy come to the free world, to conferences of the World Council of Churches, to Baptist and Orthodox conferences, or simply to preach and to deceive the West about non-existent religious liberties in the Communist camp. They are a special breed of men, these leaders of the official churches in the Red camp. Richard calls them "traitors." I would not call them so. Who am I to judge? They are unhappy beings. They are Red puppets. But what choice did they have? Some waited decades in the hope of seeing their countries freed. Much was promised by U.S. Presidents, but not performed.

Despairing of help from the West, they have learned to live with the regime. Their brethren chose the martyrdom of prison. They have chosen the martyrdom of the conscious lie in order to keep a few churches open, to be able to perform a few baptisms, marriages, burials. They travel around the free world telling of the full liberty they enjoy in the Soviet Union, hoping that be neath their forced cries of enthusiasm Christians in the West will perceive how bad things really are. (Do British or American Christians go around the world asserting that they have liberty?) But Western church leaders cannot look into hearts. They are

unaware of the tragedy, and propagate what they hear: "There is liberty in the Communist camp!" That these unhappy creatures must denounce to the police those whom they know to be faithful is not known. It is part of the Communist "morality," which the West seems unable to understand.

With many of these official church leaders from the East I and certain other women friends of mine meet, usually by night in their hotel rooms. I am no longer young. But the Communist agents who spy continuously on these delegates assume that bishops with beards and robes cannot be choosers. So they interpret our visits in their own way.

We pray with them. Some become very helpful. The Communists cannot guess who has been won over to our side. It could be the bishop. It could be the K.G.B. agent sent to watch him. It could be the Soviet Ambassador. Or even the member of the Government to whom one of these reports. An Underground Church that has won Svetlana Stalina, Mrs. Kosygin and the greatest contemporary Russian writer, Solzhenitsyn, has proved that it knows how to work.

Our personal life has also changed a great deal. Richard had been for years a prisoner treated with contempt, accustomed to mockery, and beatings. Now he is given adulation which might turn another man's head. But Richard has passed through the fiery furnace. He knows that the applause is not his due, that glory belongs only to God. The publicity helps those who have few other spokesmen. Fame, as well as shame, can be borne humbly.

At first I feared the great wealth around us in the United States. Though in the beginning ours was the poorest house in a Californian suburb, it was palatial after the attic in Bucharest. Some furniture was bought. We received a car as a gift. I worried about these "luxuries." But Richard quoted the German mystic, Meister Eckhardt: "If you despise money, try to be rich, because you will be able to use your possessions well. Why not be rich? The Bible says, "The Lord was with Joseph and he was a prosperous man." Let us just have, knowing that what we have is not ours but the Lord's. And he allows us to give not only to others, but also to ourselves. Whence is the stupid idea that God created the bees to produce honey only for sinners? Saints have also the right to enjoy dainties. We have known how to be abased: let us know how to abound."

I love the asceticism of chosen souls like St. Therese of Lisieux. I think about Russian brethren in the town of Nijnaia-Tagila, who have fasted uninterruptedly for a whole week, praying to be spared payment of heavy fines (already to pay such

fines they have sold furniture, tools, homes). The food stays in your throat when you remember them. Richard cares for many like them in every practical way he can. In prison there was a time when he fasted four days a week.

But, knowing Richard as I do, I see in him also what I have seen in everyone who has passed through terrible years of torture. The inevitable laws of reaction come into play, and after such deprivation of life, of even simple sunlight, you have a fierce impulse to taste at once every joy there is. I wasn't afraid: God is not unrighteous, he doesn't forget old sacrifices. Richard is aware of the danger. And every danger of which you are aware ceases to be a real danger.

I told him this much: "I'm pleased to hear you despise money - mind you don't stop when you've made the first million." (There is no danger of this for the moment.)

We have the help of Mihai and his young wife Judith in our mission work. What a consolation they are for us. They had been friends in Bucharest, when he was sixteen and she was ten. Her parents took her to Israel, where she was converted by a woman whom Richard had brought to Christ thirty years before. After we reached the West, Judith came to visit us. Mihai said to her on the first day, "Is it not so that you will stay with me for ever?" She answered, "Of course." And so it happened.

We have had great joys. We have also had our anxieties. Within the past year, six men from Iron Curtain countries who have fought against Communism in the West have been killed. Four in Germany, one in Italy, one in Spain. A Catholic prelate, Mgr. Draganovic, has been kidnapped from Trieste and is now held in a Yugoslav prison. Documents forged by the Communists have been put out to show that others have been in prison not for their faith, but for embezzling church money or homosexuality. Whenever I am away from Richard I feel fear. But if it is dangerous to do God's work, how much more dangerous it is to leave it undone. No man can stop a hurricane. Neither can I stop Richard from exposing more and more the cruelties and subtle infiltrations of Communism, so rousing the fury of Communist leaders and their tools in the church. May the angels of God protect him.

Those whom Richard attacks certainly don't remain passive; they put barriers in his path. If they had studied his character first, they might realize it was hopeless! The higher the barrier, the greater his leap. He started his Christian life facing grave external obstacles, and turned them into assets.

My travels on behalf of the mission led me also to Israel. I

saw there the holy places. I saw many of our former congregation, my family and my cousin who had told me on the day of my arrest: "Leshanah habe-Jerushalaim!" (Next year in Jerusalem!) Nearly twenty years had passed.

In Israel men walk on holy ground. There is a seemliness that stops you from saying what you experience when you worship where the cross of Christ once stood. Magdalene wept silently here; never did she tell anyone what she had felt then. I surely cannot compare myself with her. But I also prefer to be silent.

I was grieved to see that part of the chapel belonged to one denomination (word that sounds to me a little like "damnation"!) and part to another. I have my evangelical faith, but it will never make me quarrel with a Christian of another conviction. Roses spread their fragrance in every country, though they are called by different names. So do Christians.

I left a free Israel, free though surrounded by enemies. Czechoslovakia had a mighty "friend" near it, but it is in chains. Which should teach me to value the enemies of our work: they make it prosper. The dream of Zionists has been fulfilled and my Jewish prison friends had not suffered in vain. Their dream is my dream too - I feel one with them, for Christianity has taught me to love my own people more and to work for their good.

What these friends did not know was that in a different country God was performing another mighty work through the Jewish people. Boris Pasternak risked his all, and just he, a Jew, brought Jesus back into Russian literature, from which He had been banished since the Communist revolution. Daniel and Ginzburg, Jewish writers, and Litvinov, a Jewish political fighter, went to prison for Russian liberty. There Jews lead the struggle against Communism. Two Orthodox priests (both of Jewish descent) dared to protest against the Patriarchy's collaboration with the Soviet Government. The greatest hero of the Rumanian Underground Church is a Jew, Milan Haimovici. He passed through seven years of prison and torture. How often I spent nights with his wife Monica, talking of our lost husbands. Now the Lutheran Church has rewarded him. He is caretaker of a church building in West Germany. He was considered one of the best pastors and preachers in Rumania. But in a German pulpit he could be "dangerous": he might expose the atrocities of Communism. He had to be silenced.

God gave Israel back to the Jews. He will give them also great men dedicated to Christ, King of the Jews.

And now I am back at work. The work of a smuggler. Not a nice word, except that the smuggled goods are Bibles. The work of helping the families of Christian martyrs and underground

pastors. The work of fighting the Communist poison in Western youth.

This work grows every day. The names of martyrs are known now throughout the whole world and children go to bed remembering them in their prayers. Will not these prayers be heard?

As the pastor's wife, I have often told youngsters a story of the boy who stood on the shore and waved to a ship at sea. A man beside him said, "Don't be silly. The steamer will not change its course because you wave." But the ship turned, came to shore and picked up the boy. From the bridge he shouted, "Sir, I'm not a fool. The captain is my father!"

We also know that he who steers the universe on its course is our Father and that he hears our prayers.

The End of "The Pastor's Wife"

The Sweetest Song

by Richard Wurmbrand
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Introduction

In ~Zohar~ (The Light), main book of the Kabbalah, a work which contains the Jewish mystical tradition, it is written:

The Song of Songs is superior to all songs that preceded it, for those which were sung by Solomon's predecessors ascended only to join with the songs chanted by the company of angels; as for instance, the "Song of Degrees to David" [the literal translation of the Hebrew ~le David~], which means "The song which celestial grades sing to David" to solicit nourishment from him ... But when Solomon came, he sang a song that is higher even than David's song, one that is the very same as that sung by the great ones of the realms above, the pillars of the universe, in honour of the Supernal King who is the Lord in all peace and harmony. Other men send up praises by means of lower chariots, but King Solomon by means of higher chariots ...

On the day when this song was revealed the ~Shekinah~ (God's glory) descended to earth, as it is written, "And the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud." Why? Because "the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord" (1KI 8:11). On that day this hymn was revealed, and Solomon sang this song in the power of the Holy Spirit, wherein is to be found the summary of the whole Law of Moses, the whole work of creation, the mystery of the Patriarchs, the story of the Egyptian exile, and the Exodus therefrom, and the Song of the Sea. It is the quintessence of the Decalogue of the Sinaitic covenant, of the significance of Israel's

wanderings through the desert until their arrival in the Promised Land and the building of the Temple. It contains the crowning of the Holy Name with love and joy, the prophecy of Israel's exile among the nations, of their redemption, of the resurrection of the dead, and all else until that day which is "Sabbath to the Lord." All that was, and shall be, is contained in it; and, indeed, even that which will take place on the "Seventh Day," which will be the "Lord's Sabbath," is indicated in this song.

It is a song in which those who are above and those who are below participate; a song formed in the likeness of the world above, which is the supernal Sabbath, a song through which the supernal Holy Name is

crowned. Therefore it is holy of holies. Why so? Because all its words are full of love and joy.

In the ~Babylonian Talmud~ (another sacred book of the Jewish people) the following words spoken by Rabbi Akiba are recorded: "No day in the history of the world is so precious as the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; for all the other Scriptures are holy, but the Song of Songs is holiest of all." By the same token, we could say that the lives of all those who really deserve the name of "Christian" are holy. We are all sanctified by faith, by the blood shed for us, because that blood was Divine. But there are lives which are holiest of all - the lives of the persecuted Church, the lives of those who suffer in jail or in psychiatric asylums, in chains and in hunger, deprived of their loved ones, because they follow faithfully in the footsteps of the Master.

This book will be a kind of commentary upon Solomon's Song. It will be a unique commentary - or rather, a new translation of the Song. It will be a translation of it into the lives of saints and martyrs, most of them from our own times, who belong to the Underground Church in the Communist countries.

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The decision about which Jewish books should be included in, and which excluded from the Old Testament was taken by the Synod of Jabneh. The Synod debated very heatedly over the inclusion of the Song of Songs as a sacred book. It was accused of being a worldly book, because it spoke with simplicity about love between a man and woman, and sometimes it employed sexual imagery. But in the end the Song's opponents were overruled.

In this book, as in many other parts of the Bible, the images of relationships such as those between bridegroom and bride are only poetic devices to represent the union of the believing soul and God, of the chosen people and their Master. The author of Solomon's Song is a mystic: he expresses himself in the normal language of mysticism.

If the inclusion of the Song in the Bible was a matter for heated debate, it is no wonder that the Underground Church in Communist countries is also hotly debated. Some prelates and theologians consider it to be a bunch of fanatics without any justification.

It is alleged that those who are imprisoned for Christ's sake in Communist countries suffer from masochistic tendencies, that they want to suffer, that they have a

"martyr complex." It is said that they are not reasonable. They refuse to make the compromise demanded by life and by a dictatorship - compromises which would result in liberty to worship within the limits prescribed by the atheist government.

Not all souls are the same. Some rivers flow quietly between their banks; others overflow. There exist choice souls, whose love of God cannot be confined to the narrow limits of what is considered a normal faith. Their cup runs over. Their love of God burns.

Solomon's Song answers to the desires of such hearts. Only men such as these are found in the Underground Church.

Rabia of Basra, a Moslem mystic, used to pray: "O Lord, in public I invoke You in the way one invokes his

master. In public I say, "O my God," but when we are alone I say, "O my Beloved." She also said: "O Lord, if I adore You because I fear hell, let me burn in hell; and if I adore You because I hope for paradise, exclude me from paradise. But if I adore You for what You Yourself are, do not deprive me of the vision of Your eternal beauty." She said to God, "I do not desire from You either this world or the one to come. You are enough for me."

Solomon's Song is written for such hearts. It is a poem of love between Israel and his Saviour.

Spiritual greed

There is a burning spiritual desire which might well be called 'spiritual greed" by sceptics, because it is outwardly very similar to fleshly greed.

A beggar once said to an emperor who wished to give him charity, "Give me anything you like; but I will impose a condition."

The emperor was intrigued. He had never met such a beggar. "And what is that condition?" he asked.

"You must fill my bowl up completely."

The emperor laughed. "I can certainly do that," he replied. "I can even fill your bowl with diamonds!"

He called for diamonds to be poured into the beggar's bowl. As they fell in, they disappeared.

The emperor roared in fury. "I will not be shamed by this beggar, even if my whole kingdom disappears!"

But no precious stones that were poured into the bowl ever stayed there; they always disappeared.

Finally the emperor swallowed his pride and asked the beggar to tell him the secret of the bowl.

"It is made out of human selfishness," he explained. "It covets all things, yet it remains always empty, always hungry, never satisfied."

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Luxurious cars, big bank accounts, fine houses, high position and reputation - they are only challenges to the ego, serving only to whet its appetite for more. This, then is fleshly greed.

Spiritual greed exists too. Some of the disciples asked Jesus, "Grant unto us that we may sit, one on Your right hand, and the other on Your left, in Your glory" (MRK 10:37). They did not know what they were asking for.

In spiritual matters, the only real glory is in the renunciation of glory. The jewels of personal glory and self-aggrandizement will be swallowed up by the beggar's bowl, even if they are jewels of the spirit. The bowl is never satisfied. It is never filled.

Solomon's Song belongs to those who have made the greatest renunciation of all: the renunciation of themselves. For them, only the Beloved counts.

Singing the Jesus Song

The famous pianist Rubinstein was in the company of a large number of music-lovers who were discussing the works of Chopin. One of them asked, "How would Chopin himself have played his compositions?" Rubinstein sat down at the piano and began to play. When he finished, there were tears in his listeners' eyes as they said, "Now we have heard Chopin himself."

Comment upon what King Solomon sang to the praise of the Saviour in his rare moments of spiritual exultation must be made in the same state of the spirit as Solomon's when he composed his Song. When reading a commentary upon the Song of Songs, the reader should feel that he has heard Solomon himself at his best.

It is said that when David was a young boy at the court of King Saul, he asked permission to play on a beautiful

harp that was lying unused in the throneroom. The king said, "It's useless - I have been cheated. I paid a great deal for that harp, because it was spoken of highly. But the best harpists have tried it, and it was painful to hear the ugly sounds it produced. It's the worst harp that you could imagine."

But David persisted, and because the king loved him greatly, permission was granted. When he played, the music was so beautiful that when it ended, all the court wept. They had been moved to the depths of their hearts.

"How is it," demanded the king, "that so many tried to play this harp, and only you succeeded?"

David replied, "All the others tried to play their own songs, and the harp refused to yield to their wishes. I played to the harp its own song. You saw its joy when I reminded it of the days when it was a young tree in the forest. I told it about sunbeams playing in its branches, about chirping birds, and about lovers embracing each other in its shadow. The harp was glad to remember those days.

"Then I told the story of the evil men who came and felled the innocent tree. It was a sad day. Its life as a tree had finished. But I told the harp that death cannot triumph over life. The tree has died as a tree, but its wood has become a harp which can sing forever the glories of the eternal God. And the harp, which had wept when I told about her death, now rejoiced, made jubilant again.

"When the Messiah comes, many will try to play their own songs on his harp. The results will be tragically dissonant. On the Messiah's harp, you must play his own song - the song of his eternal glory with God, the song of his humiliation as a babe in a manger, the song of a life in sorrow, opposition and poverty on earth, the song of his being whipped and crucified and buried. But then also the song of his resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven.

"Then the harp will give a beautiful sound. Then his congregation will shine like a sun."

In writing this book, I have no song of my own to sing. I sing the Song of Jesus and of His bride as Solomon sang it; and to make the song resound more beautifully than ever, I illustrate it with lives of saints and martyrs. Let us sing for him with the same burning love and adoration with which the angels sang in Bethlehem at Jesus' birth.

A great sinner's song

There is something remarkable in the title of the book, The Song of Songs which is Solomon's. God arranged that the holiest book of the Bible should be written by one of its worst characters.

There was much that was positive in King Solomon's reign over Israel. He secured the nation a long period of peace, but in his personal life he was beneath contempt.

He had a large number of wives and concubines. Every one of them lived in palaces and was provided with luxuries. He indulged in all the pleasures which fleshly life can provide. This cost enormous amounts of money which had to be raised by slave labour. He frequently flogged men into complying with the demands of his debauchery.

In the light of all this, many theologians have expressed doubts as to whether Solomon has any part in God's salvation. Happily, God does not always agree with the theologians: he saves whom he wishes. Salvation is all by grace and condescension. To demonstrate this, he gave the inspiration to write his most beautiful book to one whose moral achievements were very few.

Miracles are signs of the presence of God. Divine inspiration of this book is proved by the miracle that such a bad man wrote it. You would not have thought he was capable of it. The only man we know for sure is in

paradise (because Jesus confirmed it) is a man who had been a robber all of his adult life and only in his very last moments said a few words expressing faith. One of the foremost apostles, Saint Paul, had been a murderer. Mary Magdalene had been a loose woman. One of the most moral and profound of love stories, ~The Happy Prince~ was written by Oscar Wilde, a man convicted for debauchery. There are many other similar instances. So we should not be surprised that the most beautiful song in the Bible was composed by a great sinner.

Think of Richard Wagner. He is described as ungrateful in love and irresponsible in politics. He was conceited and suffered from senile erotomania; he was also a fierce anti-Semite. But this in no way diminishes the value of his

music.

We must learn to distinguish the value of a work from the value of the man who is behind it. The fact is that God sometimes uses very bad men for very good deeds, and that sometimes very good men do poor work.

All the "types" or foreshadowings of Jesus in the Old Testament were men who had committed many bad deeds. We could not expect it to be otherwise; the type is always inferior to the typified.

Only one thing counts

One of the greatest accusations of the Soviet press against the Underground Church is that many of its leaders are former thieves, murderers and even war criminals whose hands are stained with blood. This would not discredit those church leaders in our sight, even if the things being said against them were true.

The Russian poet, Tiutchev, wrote: "You can't understand Russia with your mind. You can't measure it

with the usual yardstick. Russia is something unique; you can only have confidence in it." These words are even truer when applied to the most beautiful part of the Russian nation – its Christians gathered in the Underground Church.

Where unique events happen, as in biblical times, very bad characters can be inspired with the most beautiful thoughts; robbers and murderers become illustrious saints. The children of God can rejoice about this.

The following is one of the oldest sermon illustrations used in the Christian Church. It is also a good test of one's understanding of what Christianity is about.

There once lived a dwarf who was also a hunchback and very, very ugly. Nobody ever invited him to a party; nobody showed him love, or even attention. He became disillusioned with life and decided to climb a mountain and throw himself from its peak into the abyss.

When he ascended the mountain, he met a very beautiful girl. He talked to her and discovered that she was climbing the mountain for the same purpose. Her suffering was at the other extreme. She had everybody's attention and love, but the one whom she loved and who

had loved her too had forsaken her for another girl, because the other was rich. She felt life had no meaning for her any more. They decided to make the ascent together.

While they continued to climb, they met a man who introduced himself as a police officer in search of a very dangerous bandit who had robbed and murdered many people. The king had promised a large reward to the person who captured him. The police officer was very confident: "I will catch him because I know he has a feature by which he can be recognized. He has six fingers on his right hand. The police have been looking for him for years. For the last two or three, nothing has been heard from him, but he has to pay for a multitude of crimes in the past."

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mm, The three climbed the mountain. Near its peak was a monastery. Its abbot, although he had become a monk only recently, had quickly attained great renown for saintliness. When they entered the monastery, he came to meet them. You could see the glory of God in his face. As the girl bowed to kiss his right hand, she saw he had six fingers. With this, the story ends.

Those who hear this story are perplexed; it can't finish like this! What happened to the dwarf, the girl, the policeman; and was the criminal caught?

The beauty of the story is that it does finish here. Something beautiful has happened: a criminal hunted because of his many robberies and murders has become a great saint, renowned for his godly life. All the rest is of no further interest. The great miracle has been performed. Christ has been born in the heart of a man of very low character.

The Hebrew language has no superlative. It says "vanity of vanities" for "the most worthless vanity" or "the heaven of heavens" for "the highest heaven." With God everything is possible: the Song of Songs (which means in Hebrew, "the superlative song") is written by a superlative sinner.

Because of this, the heights of Solomon's song are accessible to every one of us, whatever our past has been and however deep we may have fallen in sin.

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÷ Chapter 1 ÷

Only his kiss

The bride says, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for your love is better than wine" (SOS 1:2).

The ~Zohar~ says that at Mount Sinai, when the Law was given, every individual Israelite was asked by God if he would accept him and all his commandments, to which the reply came, "Yes." He was asked again, "Will you accept me and all the penalties attached to my Law?" And again he answered, "Yes." Then he was kissed on the mouth. Similarly, the bride in Solomon's Song says, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." The ~Zohar~ continues:

"No other love is like unto the ecstasy of the moment when spirit cleaves to spirit in a kiss, more especially a kiss on the mouth, which is the well of the spirit and its medium. When mouth meets mouth, spirits unite one with the other and become one - one love."

The Hebrew word for "love" is written A H B H. The ~Zohar~ says, "First comes the letter Aleph (our A). Then comes the letter H which unites itself with the Aleph in love. From these two other letters issue and spirits are interlocked with spirits of love."

Let us compare these words with the boring, prosaic, annoying prayers which we say usually and we will realize the distance between us and the soul enamoured with God - a soul which has a burning love like that of the ideal bride. She knows no peace nor rest until she finds God

himself. Every other being, every other thing, only increases her desire, her thirst to see him. She is never satisfied with anybody or anything except himself. She has drunk enough of the water of this world and she has remained thirsty. Now she desires him, saying: "Let ~him~ kiss me with the kisses of ~his~ mouth."

A believer is attached to his spiritual leader - to his pastor. But if the pastor is aware of his responsibilities, he must strive to make the believer more and more independent of him. A psychiatrist, having solved the complexes of his patient, has a duty to free him also from the complex of dependence upon the physician which has arisen during the treatment.

A pastor must be like a matchmaker, who persuades a

girl to marry somebody else. He must be very careful that the girl does not fall in love with himself, the matchmaker. The pastor must be a guide enabling the believer to reach the bridegroom. He must ignite a love for the bridegroom in the hearts of the believers, so that after hearing one of his sermons the congregation should not say, "How beautifully he has preached" but "How wonderful Jesus is!" Remaining attached to the pastor and not passing through him to the Saviour about whom he preaches can be a deadly danger for the believer. Pastors are men and have all the temptations of men. Some of them are very, very weak.

The movement called "Christian Endeavour" within the reformed churches is forbidden in Communist Rumania, but exists underground. A girl belonging to this movement was beaten and tortured to force her to make accusing statements against her pastor. She remained faithful to Christ and refused. But to her surprise, when she was brought before a court that same pastor came as a prosecution witness against her. He had yielded to pressure without much resistance. His testimony against her contributed to her being sentenced, but her love for Christ did not depend upon the attitudes

and behaviour of the pastor who had brought her to salvation. She had been freed from that attachment to him. She continued to remain faithful, and she never said one bitter word about the pastor who had been so treacherous.

This was a soul who had a right to receive the kisses of Jesus himself. When you are in his embrace, disappointments with pastors don't count anymore. The soul which burns with love for Christ is not satisfied with his messengers, even his finest messengers. They don't answer the deep need of the soul. Their presence serves only to irritate. The duty of a pastor is only to reveal to men how unhappy they are without Jesus. Then he must tell them how he has found Jesus, and how they can find him too.

For the bride, the simple fact that she is surrounded by messengers of the bridegroom is a proof of the sad fact that the bridegroom himself is absent. She desires him, only him. None of his messengers can adequately represent him. None of them can take his place. The most gifted preachers can only stutter about him. She has one desire: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." She

longs for him, and yearns that his presence should show itself through a kiss. In biblical times people kissed the hand of the king, and even this was considered a privilege. Until quite recently, everyone who approached the Pope had to kiss his foot. The faithful Christian soul desires a kiss from Jesus' mouth.

The relationship between God and the faithful soul is really like the relationship between a bridegroom and a bride. Both desire kisses. The heavenly Father, who knows the desires of Jesus, in Psalm 2:12 [PSA 2:12] commands us to "Kiss the Son." Jesus reproves a Pharisee, telling him, "You gave me no kiss" (LUK 7:45). He could make this reproach to many of us. We gave him many words; we gave him our energy and our time; we put our money in the collection boxes of the church. But we did not give

him the one, supreme thing for which he longs - a kiss. The faithful soul's desire is the same as his. She sighs, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth."

This reciprocal desire has been frequently satisfied. Mary Magdalene kissed the feet of Jesus. After her, many penitents have done likewise, and many prodigal sons who have returned to the Father have seen him coming to meet them, embracing them and kissing them repeatedly.

Only those who have ever received such a kiss can know the sweetness of Jesus. Only the person who has humbled himself for his sins or entrusted himself to God in great dangers can say how dear are his promises: that now there is peace between him and God, that God loves him and will protect him.

We have to be careful that the kiss should be Jesus' kiss. Souls in sorrow seek comfort, and accept it readily from wherever it comes. But not so the true Bride of Christ. There is only one object of her love. She does not even consider it necessary to say whose kisses she receives. She doesn't name him. For example, Mary Magdalene, seeing the empty tomb of Jesus, tells the man whom she supposed to be the gardener, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." (JHN 20:13). Who is the Lord about whom she speaks? Does she have to pronounce his name? She thinks that on]y one can be "the Lord."

For the Bride, only one person exists. She assumes that others feel the same. She does not profane the Holy Name by pronouncing it too often. The elect of God will understand. The Beloved can't be anybody else but Jesus.

Young brides

Souls who have such an intimate knowledge of Jesus

adopt unique attitudes. One such soul is Leonas Sileikis. When a seventh grade pupil at school, he was summoned to a meeting of the school administration where his faith was to be considered. Leonas' father came to the meeting uninvited. Leonas was asked whether he had read the atheistic books his teacher had given him. He had - six of them in all.

"What do you think of these books?" they asked him.

"They're lies and slander," Leonas replied.

After a long discourse against religion, the teacher, Miss Misiuniene, asked Leonas, "Do you renounce your faith?"

"I believe, and I will continue to believe," was the reply.

The teacher then explained to the father how religion supposedly damages children. "Nowadays, very few people go to church, so one must go along with the majority," she said.

To this, Leonas replied, "Only a dead body is carried along with the current. A live person can always swim against the stream."

Leonas will have to suffer for his faith. But he has known the kiss of Jesus, and so the adversity of the world does not count for him.

In Rumania, you cannot study in a university without being a member of the Communist youth organization. You must render lip service to its God-hating doctrines. Lydia C. had been the first in all grades of high school. Now a university education was guaranteed. As an exceptional student she would also receive an allowance for her further education. She had only to deliver a speech at the inauguration of the year of study. The big shots of the Communist Party were there.

She praised Communism, all right. She got great applause. But she finished with the words: "These things one has to say, if you wish to advance in our society. But I don't believe one word of what I just said. I believe in God and will follow him."

With this, she had ruined her whole future. Instead of becoming a doctor as she had desired, she became a seamstress. But souls who have received Jesus' kiss cannot compromise. They can praise only him.

Where can you get his kiss?

It is not difficult to receive his kiss. This was no problem for the Virgin Mary. Her Saviour was her obedient child. She could receive his caresses whenever she desired. Mary Magdalene and even Judas could kiss him. And there is no doubt that he reciprocated their kisses.

Christ lives with every believer as much as he lived in his mother's home, (though as a diamond yet unearthed, enclosed within the ground), because we are his image, members of his body. The Virgin Mary kissed Jesus' lips, and his hair, his hands and his breast. She could kiss his physical body. But Jesus is the only person who has two bodies: that of the Jewish carpenter who lived 2,000 years ago, which is seated now in heaven, and that of the Church. So we can kiss him when we kiss our brothers and sisters, and in the same way we can receive his kisses.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (MTT 5:8). They will see him not only in the next world. They will see him in every brother - yes, in every human being. Those who sentenced to death St. Stephen, the first martyr of Christianity, "looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (ACT 6:15). They could see the angel in their victim. Let us at least learn from them how to look upon our brethren. Then we will be able to receive as many holy kisses as the Virgin Mary was able to obtain from Jesus.

Jesus taught also that anyone who feeds the hungry,

gives drink to the thirsty, takes in strangers, clothes the naked or visits the sick and the prisoners does this to him (MTT 25:35-40). He identifies himself with the sufferers. The kiss of a person starving, oppressed or longing after love is his kiss.

For example, I know of a Christian prisoner in a

Communist prison camp. He was near to death; his wasted body lay on the floor. Then he saw what seemed to be a girl bathed in glory. She looked like a nun. In her hand she held the living bread, and put it to his parched mouth. I know, too, of a sister in the USA. She had a vision in which she saw herself in a Communist prison, putting bread to a prisoner's mouth.

No walls separate the persecuted Church from that which enjoys freedom. The most amazing letter I ever received came from Canada. It was from a man who had been in jail for robbery. As a punishment for misbehaviour he had been put into solitary confinement. There he sought God, but had difficulty finding him. Then he heard an inner voice speaking to him, comforting him and giving him counsel. He was converted. Once out of jail, he joined a church. In a bookshop he found a book that caught his interest. It was my book, ~Sermons in Solitary Confinement~. He recognized the sermons. It had been my voice that had spoken to him. We had been in solitary confinement at the same time - he in Canada, I in Rumania. Angels carried my words to him. Prison walls, two continents and an ocean had been no barriers to them.

The kisses of his glorified body

The Bride desires Jesus' kisses. She wants her mouth to be touched. Jeremiah says, "The Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth" (JER 1:9). Isaiah says, "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

and he laid it upon my mouth" (ISA 6:6-7). Thus the iniquity of Isaiah was removed. The church fathers saw in this burning coal a symbol of the Son of God incarnate. In Christian Syriac poetry, Jesus is called ~Kemurta Denura~, which means "the burning coal." He must touch our lips, so that we can praise him with fire.

I can be kissed by those who belong to his body on earth, but is it possible to kiss Jesus who is in heaven? Can the lips of his glorified body touch our lips? How can I know if my prayer has been heard? How can I know if I have received that kiss which I desire?

Some prominent saints have had this privilege. Saint Anthony held Jesus at his breast. According to a legend, Hermann Joseph presented an apple to an image of the child

Jesus;Jesus put aside his sceptre, descended from the image and took the apple.

Henry Suso asked the Virgin Mary to show him the baby and to allow him to kiss Jesus. He took Jesus into his arms; he held in his arms the small baby who is bigger than the universe. One minute of such an experience transforms wolves into meek men, angry people into quiet people, the proud into the humble.

To St. Mechtild, Henry's sister, the Child said, "When I was born into the world I was immediately wrapped in swaddling clothes in which I could not move; it demonstrated that I and all that I brought with me have been given into the hands of men, who may dispose of us as they wish. The bound man has no might. He cannot defend himself. You can take from him what he has. When I left the world I was nailed to a cross. I could not move. It was a sign that I left all men the good I had done for them."

Saint Birgit of Sweden saw Jesus' birth. He was born painlessly, in a moment, looking towards the east, while the Virgin knelt in prayer. He lay naked and shining on the ground, more radiant than the sun. When Mary realized that he was born, she adored the child with great reverence. "Welcome, my Lord and my son," she said.

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Therese of Lisieux became Jesus' toy. Charles de Foucauld received at Bethlehem the illuminating revelation that he ought always to take the least significant place, in order to be small and helpless like his Master at his birth.

But what should we others do, who are not capable of such mystic elevations?

Sanctified imagination

We all know the plague of erotic fantasies. In prison, sexual obsession is one of the greatest sufferings of saints, especially the younger ones. Many of them never saw their girlfriends or their wives. I myself saw virtually no women or girls for fourteen years. You sat on concrete in a common cell with hands on knees, and you were forbidden to move. You never had a book; you were not allowed to speak, even whisper, to your cellmate; sometimes you were on your own; you could do nothing but fantasize or think. For hours, erotic images paraded

before the Christians' eyes. The more they were suppressed, the more powerful they became.

Sometimes the Communist jails are very refined. They used to parade girls in miniskirts in front of the sexually hungry prisoners. They took prisoners to the beaches and showed them girls in bikinis. They told them, "This is what you can have if you deny your faith."

When Milan Haimovici, a Rumanian Hebrew Christian pastor, was in prison they brought a prostitute into his solitary cell and forced him to share his bed with her, night after night, when for years he had been isolated from the world. The wardens spied through the peephole, watching to see if anything happened. They had cameras ready to photograph him embracing her, so that they could disgrace him.

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Girls or men whom you see only in your imagination, when you kiss, embrace or mate in your sexual fantasy, might not be physically present, but they are very real - so real that they can drive you mad.

The only defence against erotic obsession is to spiritualize it, to see in every erotic image (as Solomon teaches us) an image of our intimate love as brides of Christ for our Bridegroom. Everybody can become a bride of Christ, through faith. A male who is converted becomes not a bridegroom, but a bride. (It was Jung who identified a female element in men which he called the ~anima~, just as in women there is a male element, the ~animus~). Through assiduous spiritual exercises we can train our imaginations. We can adopt the posture of the bride longing for the Bridegroom, desiring and receiving the kisses of the holy Lover and finding our full joy in him. Like many other visions of the saints, this can become a spiritual reality in our lives. By dreaming about an ardent union of his soul with Jesus, Pastor Milan Haimovici overcame the temptations of the prostitute.

Souls who know the spiritual realities no more doubt such kisses than one doubts a kiss received from an earthly lover.

Saint Therese of Avila writes, "As those who love each other do not allow themselves to be disturbed, those who have received this kiss despise all the things of the world, according them very small worth. Having seen the vanity of material things they despise them." The person who has received the kiss knows he has received it. Then he desires

to be kissed more and more, and to be left undisturbed by anybody or anything, in sweet fellowship with Jesus.

Don't try to fight erotic fantasies head-on. Use the expulsive power of sanctified imagination. You can't stop a little girl playing with dolls. No educator's theories can achieve that. But there comes a time when the girl grows up. She acquires new interests, and these displace from her heart the pleasure of playing with dolls. In the same

way, if you let sexual imaginings alone, and if every moment you are free of them you cultivate more and more spiritual imaginings, in time the spiritual fantasy will expel the mind's erotic obsessions.

In ~Nash Sovremennik~, a Soviet magazine, the writer J. Kasakov wrote in 1977 that he sometimes observed his baby smiling in his dreams. His mother interpreted this to mean that angels were playing with the child. (They were Communists, who had not been taught about angels.) Kasakov wrote, "What is the smile? What does a babe know that is concealed from grown-ups?"

Another Soviet writer, L. Vorobiov, tells of a father and daughter eating in a monastery in Russia, which the Communists had transformed into a restaurant. The daughter said reproachfully, "We drink beer and become gluttons, where once monks ate their meals in piety."

The father replied that the monks also drank.

She upbraided him for condemning monks for hypocrisy, when the Communists today were no better. Then she told him that she wanted to enter a convent.

"I suggest that you read some pornography," he answered

"I have," she said. "I am bored by it."

On the way back home, travelling by boat, the father had a mystical experience in which he saw the golden cupola of a cathedral advancing towards him. This happened in 1976 in Moscow.

If the Communists can spontaneously experience spiritual imaginings, how much more can the bride of Christ, versed in Scripture, consciously bring before her imagination the heavenly things. She can rejoice in them with jubilation, and expel much of the harm of erotic fantasies.

I will not, however, gloss over one difficulty. Many who, over decades of imprisonment, have conquered erotic obsessions, cannot so easily master themselves when, freed, they see real females again. It is the same for

Christian women when they were released. Instincts, long restrained, took their revenge. Even with the best of brides, the struggle never ends. But they can be finally victorious, if they never give up. They can come to rejoice in the embraces of Christ.

The mouth which is covered by kisses only momentarily breaks free to speak words of love to the beloved, which will indicate more kissing. When one has received the heavenly kiss of unspeakable sweetness one falls silent. One lady for years told everybody about her experiences with Jesus. Then one day she had a real experience with him. From that time on, she kept quiet. Sometimes those who receive the heavenly kiss do not know the Bible well, and cannot speak in biblical language; but they too can know the Bridegroom's embraces.

The Christian Mission to the Communist World has often been threatened by terrorists. Its Swiss branch, called "Relief Action for the Martyr Church," received a threatening letter from a group called the Red Army Faction. The Swiss Christians remained unafraid and continued their work, for which they were rewarded by the Lord. One day they received a letter from a terrorist. "l had an experience with Jesus and hesitate between terrorism and God," it read. "I am out of balance, please advise." Anyone who has been kissed by someone previously unknown but very lovable will know how he felt.

The Christians established contact with him immediately. Soon they received a second letter: "Since the age of seventeen I have been a terrorist. Now I have surrendered my heart to Christ. It was terrible when I realized how huge my sins were, they were higher than the Himalayas. I was also an adorer of Satan. Now I would not like to be the sort of Christian who only prays a little and reads the Bible rarely, but rather a fighter in the front line."

His two natures

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth," says the bride at the beginning of Solomon's Song, "for your love

is better than wine." It is as if the bride is speaking about two different persons: "Let him kiss me ... for your love ..." The bride is thinking about the two natures which combine in the person of Jesus - the human nature and the divine.

The love of Jesus' human nature is better than wine, better than all the pleasures this world can offer. But the bride wants more. She wishes to see the glorified Son of God in all his splendour, and she desires the kisses of his divine nature.

Some Christians' lives and deaths are far more painful than our own. Equatorial Guinea was for many years under the oppression of the dictator Macias Nguema, who was supported by Soviet, Cuban and East German advisers. At the time, refugees fleeing to Gabon from there told of thirty-six Christians who were buried up to the neck in the forest. The next day only two heads were still moving. They were disfigured by insect bites and the eyes had been eaten. In another incident, a prisoner had his feet hacked off; in another, a girl who refused the sexual advances made by her guards was tortured unspeakably with a burning torch. [Reported in ~Deutschland Magazine~, July 1978]

Lukewarm Christians cannot endure such things. The privilege of bearing such a heavy cross and remaining faithful and hopeful is the monopoly of those who have received the holy kiss of his divine nature, though they may not have thought about or even heard of this biblical phrase.

Bonaventure was the first Superior of the Franciscan Order after the death of its founder. He was once asked by Saint Thomas Aquinas where all his extensive knowledge came from. He pointed to the crucifix on his

desk. "That is the source of all my knowledge," he said. "I study only Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Bonaventure had received the holy kiss of the divine nature of Jesus.

The savour of his ointments

In the Orient, perfumed wood was sometimes used in the building of mosques. It is like hearing sermons preached in a church in which incense is burned or in one decorated with sweet-smelling flowers. But I have heard

the Word preached or recited in Communist prison cells, in which sometimes 200 prisoners were crammed together, in indescribable squalor. Some of us were unable to wash for years. Our clothes were filthy. Water was scarce, and so was soap. Overflowing barrels in the cell served as lavatories for 200 people. Faeces and urine filled one corner. Many of the prisoners simply suffocated. The windows were shuttered so that air could not enter. Men would lie down on the floor so as to breathe the draught from the tiny gap at the bottom of the door.

In that situation there were some believers who dwelt not only in these terrible earthly surroundings, but at the same time in heavenly places. Scarcely breathing, like asthmatics, they talked among themselves and with others about the sweet savour of sacrifices brought to God and of fragrances like those of heaven. They quoted scriptures about frankincense and myrrh, about roses and lilies.

The Jewish ~Talmud~ states that every meal at which the conversation is about something other than the Word of God is an idolatrous meal. When Christians were in the Rumanian prison of Piteshti, they tried to think about the Word of God while they ate, and to speak to each

other about it. However, their torturers then decided to make them eat their own bodily waste. In Piteshti eating excrement and drinking urine was a daily routine. But while they did this, they thought of the Bible's words about the savour of God's good ointments. They meditated upon the perfumes described in the Word of God. So in prison one is made aware of how independent the spiritual life is from the life of the flesh.

A Russian priest, Nikiforov-Volghin, tells in his book ~Dust on the Road~ of the following story, told to him by a Christian he met in prison:

> One day I arrived home and heard somebody cry out. I found my wife, stabbed in the heart by somebody we knew. The murderer fell at my feet, begging my forgiveness. I said to him, "Go, and do not do so anymore." I went to the police and accepted responsibility for the crime. I was sentenced. Then in Krasnoyarsk prison one prisoner murdered another. For that, too, I accepted the blame. Now I am sentenced to life imprisonment. I could not do other

than I did.
Loving God, I look on all men as I look upon angels.
My only prayer is, "I am yours and you are
mine - have mercy on me." If you had not been a priest
I would not have told you these things. You asked me
why I am here, and you are entitled to the truth.

When this prisoner died it was as though heaven had opened. His last words were, "Lord, I would like to continue to suffer for others; but thy will be done." Those who are present at such a death, though prison squalor surrounds them, sometimes detect a heavenly fragrance. It is the odour of the high places in which the bride of Christ lives.

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What is in his name?

In Shakespeare's ~Romeo and Juliet~, the girl thought of her lover's name. The two belonged to warring families. He was a Montague, she a Capulet. Her family would never have consented to their marriage. So she advised him to change his name. "What's in a name?" she asked. "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." She was right about roses. A rose is called a "rose" only in the English language; in other languages it has different names. And she was probably right about Romeo as well. She could have loved him even if his name had been Sebastian or Antonio.

I do not rule out the possibility that some love Jesus by another name. They have never heard the name "Jesus" but they love Love. They love self-sacrifice, they love forgiveness and goodness. They love Divinity coming down to earth, and earthly beings uniting with Divinity. They love the poor and oppressed, those who represent Jesus on earth. You can love Jesus without knowing his name.

Many who call in prayer upon Krishna, Buddha or some other name may perhaps in reality mean "Jesus."

But with Jesus his name is important. In Hebrew it is ~Yeshua~, which means "salvation." His very name proclaims what he stands for! You say "Jesus," and it is like the pouring-out of ointment. Because of that name you know that there is salvation for you and for all people. Another of his names, "Immanuel," means "God is with us."

Only the bride can say to the Saviour, "Your name is an ointment poured forth." Jesus did not have a good

name in the world. He was called a glutton, a winebibber, a Samaritan (which at that time was the same as calling him a heretic); he was called a deceiver, they said that he had a devil, and so on. To this evil talk about Jesus the bride is deaf.

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Souls who truly believe in Jesus are also widely slandered. In the Soviet press faithful pastors are called "scoundrels, hooligans and villains." They call Solzhenitsyn, the distinguished Nobel prizewinner, a traitor.

Concerning the finest Christians of all, the Communists spread the rumour that they are stool-pigeons of the Communist authorities and secret agents of the police. As a result they are beaten up by their fellow-prisoners. However, they know that in the eyes of their Bridegroom, their name is good.

Holy love

The bride says, "No wonder the virgins love you!" (SOS 1:3), and there is no jealousy in what she says. This is what distinguishes holy love from worldly love: not merely that we who love him are not jealous, but that we want many other souls to love him as well, and we desire him to pour out on them his caresses and his kisses.

In Australia a Christian lady stopped a young girl in the street. "You look so sad! You are crying. I am a Christian. Could I be of help? Could I share your sorrow?"

"Thank you for your kindness," replied the girl, "but nobody can help me. The man I love has left me."

Our sister said, "Don't worry. I have a beautiful Bridegroom. I will give him to you."

The girl, thinking she was being made fun of, said "Why are you mocking my grief?"

Then our sister spoke to her about her heavenly Bridegroom - about Jesus. She explained that he can share his love with many, and yet to every one of them he gives all his love. The girl was brought to Christ.

Those who preach Jesus are not in competition with

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one another. They are fellow-workers. So if a soul that was attached to one flock moves to join another, there is

no need for sadness. It simply means that the spiritual atmosphere of the first flock did not suit that particular soul. No Christian teacher can claim that he is equally helpful to every individual.

It is not absolutely necessary that somebody should be a member of my church. Let him go to any church where he can grow spiritually, and I will accompany him there with my prayers.

"Draw me"

The bride says, "Draw me, we will run after you. The king has brought me into his chambers; we will be glad and rejoice in you, we will remember your love more than wine; the upright love you" (SOS 1:4). She prays, "Draw me." She prays like this because she knows that she is still very far from him. "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord" (2CO 5:6). She prays like this because she longs to arrive at union with him.

It is not enough that he should draw her by convincing her. She does not have the moral power to follow her convictions. He must draw her with supernatural grace. He has to give her the will to come to him and the means to fulfill that will. He has said it himself: "No man can come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him" (JHN 6:44). Nobody can come to Jesus by his own will.

Looking to the ascended Jesus, my prayer is "Draw me." What could hinder the fulfillment of this prayer? The way of ascension is open for everyone. Elijah was a man who had the same weaknesses as we all have, and he ascended into heaven. Everyone who consents to ride in a chariot of fire, as Elijah did, can ascend like him. Jesus said, "He that shall

humble himself shall be exalted" (MTT 23:12).

We can come to where Jesus is; we can sit with him on his throne (REV 3:21). But we have to follow the way he went, "Who, being in the form of God ... made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Wherefore God has also highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name." (PHP 2:6-9).

God is not only the Father of the Lord Jesus, but also

our Father; and we can all ascend to him if we follow the way of Jesus. He lived for thirty-four years on earth in misery, poverty and unmeasured sorrows. Let us beware of wealth and exalted situations as of a burning fire, and our prayer to be drawn by him will be fulfilled.

Running after him

The bride says, "Draw me, we will run after you." We have not to walk after the Lord, but to run. The apostle Paul tells the believers, "Let us ~run~ with patience" (HEB 12:1), "So ~run~ that you may obtain the prize" (1CO 9:24); "I therefore so ~run~, not as uncertainly" (1CO 9:26). Only running can symbolize a living longing for God and a vigorous faith in him. PSA 119:32 says, "I will ~run~ the way of your commandments."

It is written of the children of Israel that when they worshipped the golden calf, they "sat down to eat and to drink" (EXO 32:6). While Joseph was sitting, his brothers conferred as to how to sell him. (GEN 37:25) It is a great catastrophe when the people of God sit down; they must run - run with all their heart, not listening to whispers or shouts from different sides, but violently

rejecting any hindrance to their running. We have to run with our bodies stretched forward to seize the prize, before our feet arrive at our goal.

We have to run with extreme speed. Jesus told us we are lights. Light has greater speed than anything else in the natural world. In telling us that we are lights, Jesus told us to run with the speed of light. It is not the case that souls who run slower don't arrive in the end, but they do lose the prize reserved for those who arrive first.

In the bride's words, "Draw ~me~, ~we~ will run after ~you~," we observe the sudden passing from the singular to the plural in the midst of the sentence. The bride is saying, "Jesus should draw ~me~ alone; then ~we~ - many of us - will run after him. You, Jesus, take care of me, drawing me with all your might, that I might influence others." King David, too, says, "Restore unto me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free spirit, then I will teach transgressors your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto you." (PSA 51:12-13).

Let the words, "We will run" stay in our minds. Are we believers who are running? This is easy to find out. The one who runs quickly covers a great distance in a short time. How great a distance have you covered since you came to God?

Communists who found Christ

Communists hate not only Christians, Jews, Moslems, patriots and those belonging to other political parties; they also hate one another. It once happened that five Russian Communists were in a prison cell, sentenced to death by their own comrades. While awaiting execution, one of them paced up and down in the cell, singing over and over, ~Safe in the arms of Jesus.~ Just those few words. The others asked him what he meant, but he did not

know. He only knew that his mother had sung a song that began with those words. His mother died when he was young. What had remained fixed in his memory was that there is a place where one is safe. This place is called "In the arms of Jesus."

Another of the Communists said, "I once saw an ikon of Jesus with his arms stretched out on a cross." Now they knew two things - that Jesus died on a cross and that, in his arms, you are safe. A third said, "In Russia, even now, we call the first day of the week ~Voskresenie~ (Resurrection). Is the one who was resurrected the same one who stretched out his arms on the cross? Is this what gives us safety, even in death?"

From these fragments of knowledge the Communists reconstructed the essence of the gospel. They went to their deaths singing, ~Safe in the arms of Jesus.~

That is the speed at which the light was spread in death row. In no time at all, one had been drawn by Christ; and all the others followed him. You may not know very much about Jesus. But share quickly the little that you do know with others. There could be great consequences.

In Red China, where Christians were fiercely persecuted, somebody wrote on a wall, ~God loves every man~. The next day he found more writing below: ~even the Communists~. These words were probably written by a Red Guard who had found assurance that God loved him, too. The light had passed quickly from one soul to another.

The responsibility of soul-winners

The bride says, "Draw me, we will run after you" (SOS 1:4). The faithful soul wins other people for Christ. By so doing, it takes upon itself a huge responsibility. In the Free World a soul-winner does not readily perceive this.

The man he wins for Christ will become a church member, sing in the choir, marry a nice Christian girl and lead a quiet Christian life. But to be a soul-winner in a Communist country - to be an evangelist in the Underground Church - burdens you with heavy problems.

When St. Paul preached in Rome he knew that those who responded to his message could be thrown to the wild beasts and devoured in the circus arena. They could be crucified or burnt on stakes. Should he preach, in such circumstances? Or would it be better for him to remain silent? Is it right to propagate an idea if it will bring men to prison, to torture and to death? How many unbelieving wives, parents and children must have cursed Paul, because his preaching brought such sorrow to their families? But when you are drawn by Jesus, you must make others run after him.

I was in jail with a man whom Traian Dorz, the famous Rumanian poet, had brought to Christ. He was sentenced for his faith, and he had left a wife and six children at home. I asked him, "Are you resentful towards Dorz, for taking you out of your life of tranquility and setting you upon this dangerous path?" He said, "I can't thank him enough."

During World War II, Mrs. Roosevelt, the wife of the President of the USA, carried in her purse this prayer:

Dear Lord,
Lest I continue
My complacent way,
Help me to remember
Somewhere out there
A man died for me today.
As long as this fight continues,
I then must ask and answer -
Am I worth dying for?

Every ruler and every officer who sends soldiers to die - yes, every conscientious citizen - must ask himself or herself the same question.

In the Underground Church the pastor gives assignments to his church members which might result in their death. He asks them to organize secret printing presses, to secretly transport Christian literature from place to place. If they are caught these people will go to prison. Because of those printing presses, many people have died.

The Christian Mission to the Communist World has sent couriers into Communist countries to smuggle holy books in. One of these, Wang-Shin-Mei, was beaten to death in China. Two others, Tom White and Mel Bailey, were caught in Cuba; they received prison sentences of twenty-three years each. Others were wounded while taking Bibles into Communist Mozambique.

A soul-winner in the Underground Church is not allowed to be complacent. He must remember that his brothers and sisters may die for what he has told them to believe and to do.

In the Free World, Christians must be taught to carry crosses and to learn to renounce. The soul-winner must know and practise this himself, before he teaches it to others.

In the king's chambers

The bride prayed, "Draw me," and the prayer was granted immediately. The king brought her into his chambers.

We read of Blessed Ann Marie Taigi (1769-1837), a woman of simple background and mother of seven children, that she saw a mysterious sun suspended before her, a little above head height. By its light she saw all the

visible and invisible things of earth. She penetrated also into the depths of the abyss and into the high places of heaven, just as St. Paul rose to the third heaven (2CO 12:2). With great clarity she observed the fates of diverse men and the secrets of nature and grace.

She could discern the secret thoughts of people near at hand and far away.

For her, there was no time; she could see men and events in the past and the future. Everything happened in that single moment, in the mystical sun. In one glance she perceived a multitude of things, with perfect knowledge and in complete detail.

Ignatius of Loyola saw, in a rapture, divine things. While sitting near a river and allowing his eyes to rest on the water, his sight was opened and he understood many things - secrets of faith and revelations from the realm of natural science - with such an overwhelming clarity that he had no doubt it was a revelation from God.

These were people who had been in the King's chambers. I have myself known men who have been there. In jail, I was thrown together with a Christian sentenced to death. He sang songs which he had composed. He told us, "Death does not scare me. I sing here; I will do the same after I am shot. Only the songs will be different. Here, my hymns somehow center around myself, telling of my longings, how sinful I have been, how I was saved, although the Lord taught us in his prayer to pray without using the word "I." Heavenly songs are different. The angels sing that God is thrice holy, and that the earth is filled with his glory. They rejoice over it, and they have nothing to ask. About themselves they say nothing, neither good nor bad. At Christ's birth they sang "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to men on whom his favour rests." There was no petition for personal needs."

My Christian cellmate went to his execution singing one of the new songs which he had learned in the

chambers of Jesus. In his spirit, he had been in heavenly Jerusalem, the city far away, before his physical death. We are all meant to visit the chambers of Jesus and to learn these new songs.

"We will be glad"

The bride says, "The king has brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in you" (SOS 1:4). The grace given her affects many others. Once again she

passes from the singular case to the plural: "The king has brought ~me~ into his chambers; ~we~ will rejoice." It is enough that one single soul should be in right fellowship with God, and the whole Church of which he is a part will be blessed, and will have joy and gladness.

There are no useless words in the Bible. It is written, "We will be glad and rejoice," and it might seem that this is repetitious. But there is a progression here from inner joy to outward gladness. Gladness can be faked. It must be united to a joy in the heart which makes it genuine.

Many people display gladness even though their stony hearts have been long incapable of knowing true joy. God continually insists that joy and gladness must go together; there should be neither laughter without the heart's participation, nor a joy in the heart too miserly to show itself outwardly and thus gladden others. The archangel Gabriel said to Zacharias the priest, "You shall have joy and gladness" (LUK 1:14). The prodigal son's father said to his other son, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this your brother was dead, and is alive again" (LUK 15:32). Jesus tells us to "rejoice ... and leap for joy" (LUK 6:23). So rejoicing should be accompanied by outward signs of jubilation.

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Loving unto death

The bride says, "We will remember your love more than wine" (SOS 1:4). The wine represents the king's gifts, as distinguished from his person. That he himself unites with us is of more value to humanity than all the things he gives to us.

"The upright [literally, "uprighteousnesses"] love you." They love Jesus even unto death. Bishop Seraphim of Phanarion in Greece was martyred, on 4 December 1601. He had been falsely accused of plotting and rebelling against the Turks. They shouted at him, "Rebel and subverter of our authority! Behold, thou hast come into our hands, and thou wilt receive that which is thy due – unless, perchance, thou shouldst wish to abandon thy faith and become a Moslem. Then we would forgive thee, and honour thee greatly, for by this we would know that thou hadst repented and become as one with us."

The saint was an upright man who loved Jesus. He desired martyrdom for Christ and did not become in the

least fainthearted. He said to them with a clear and serene countenance, "I will never agree in any circumstances to forsake my faith, so that I might be spared my death. I will never forsake my most sweet Jesus, my God and my Creator.

"Now, because I suffer unjustly, I have the more hope on that account that I shall receive from my Master even greater honour. I would never deny my faith; nor shall I ever be separated from my sweetest Master and God, Jesus Christ. Though I shall die ten thousand deaths for his holy name, I would count it all joy and gladness. O, Ruler! Be it slaughter or mutilation, do whatsoever is within thy power."

The ruler, Hamouza Bey, then ordered him to be flogged and his nose to be cut into small pieces. This upright man loved Jesus. He endured all these torments

as if they were happening to somebody else, thanking God and blessing him.

The next morning he appeared before Hamouza Bey again, and his attitude was the same. "I will never abandon my Lord Jesus, my Creator who shaped me, only to believe in a mortal man - an illiterate - an enemy and blasphemer of my Christ!"

They tore him to pieces. But even his merciless executioners marvelled to see that he endured it all with thanksgiving, and that his face was bright and joyous as if he were at a feast. In the end he was impaled.

Legends often arise around such great saints. It is said that his head and those of others condemned as criminals were placed on spears and arranged in a row facing west. This was done each evening, and by morning the heads would be as they had left them, except for that of Seraphim: his head would be found looking toward the east, towards Jerusalem, the Holy City.

The Kenyan periodical ~Target~ reported that the Anglican Bishop of Uganda, Janani Luwum, was shot in front of President Amin because he refused to kneel and beg for mercy. The same demonic spirit seems to be at work in Communist Cuba as well. Fidel Castro attended the execution by firing squad of a Christian. As his hands were tied behind his back, Castro urged him, "Kneel, and beg for your life." The Christian shouted back "I kneel for no man!" A sharp-shooter put a bullet first through one knee, then the other. Castro exulted: "See! We have made you kneel!" The man was finished off slowly by being shot

through the non-vital parts of the body, so that the agony was prolonged. This incident is described by John Martino in his book ~I Was Castro's Prisoner~.

The devil himself works through these anti-Christian dictators. We are reminded of the words he addressed to the Lord: "All these things will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me" (MTT 4:9).

Christians such as these I have described are each one a

personification of "uprighteousness." Therefore the Hebrew text says, "Uprighteousnesses love you."

"Black and comely"

The bride says," I am black [but] comely, O you daughters of Jerusalem," (SOS 1:5). An important emendation to the translation is needed here in the Authorized Version. We read, "I am black but comely." This gives the impression that black people are usually ugly, and that Solomon's bride was an exception, comely despite her blackness. There is no trace of this idea in the Hebrew original, which reads simply, "I am black and comely." There are as many beautiful black girls as beautiful white girls or yellow girls. There is no hint of racism in this verse.

Blackness is absence of light, and it is in this sense that the Bible uses the term. The Church is black because some believers do not obey God; but she is beautiful because of her saints and perfect Christians. She is black in the eyes of men, because those whose souls are blind cannot perceive the beauty of the kingdom of God within us, but she is beautiful before God.

We are black because of our own weakness, but beautiful and strong through God's grace, which is ours in abundance. A man can be black because he is guilty of many sins, but beautiful in God's eyes from the very moment he puts his joyful trust in Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, who forgives him and will change his soul.

Today's decayed Church can be black on account of her deeds, but she is beautiful on account of those who have gone before in faith. She is beloved because of the first generation of Christians who were aflame with gentle love, just as Israel, even though it rejected Jesus,

remains beloved because of the Jewish patriarchs. Though she may be blackened by persecution, the Church is beautiful through her penitence. She may be weak, but the words of Psalm 45 apply to her: "The king's daughter is all glorious within" (PSA 45:13).

Never be afraid when you discover your weakness and sinfulness, when you discover the lack of light or blackness. You are only one in a large flock. A small part of a body can be affected by disease while the body as a whole remains healthy. Similarly you are "healthy" or beautiful by virtue of the Church to which you belong, which possesses the beautiful characters of the saints. Their beauty reflects upon you.

In Red China, a wedding took place at an execution ground. Zhou Wen Yong and Chen Tie-Zhun had been workers together in the Underground Church and had both been sentenced to death. They were in love. At the place of execution Zhou asked Chen, "Will you be my wife?" She consented. He declared "So we are married before God! Let the Communist bullet be the seal of our wedding. We will feast our marriage in paradise."

A Soviet prisoner wrote from jail: "I bow my head in humility before our mother, the Church. I thank God for the education she gave me. The Church of Christ has many sufferings, but also an overflow of joy. In the Siberian cold, we warmed the icy winter's embraces with the Word of God."

Let us thank God that we belong to this Church which has such saints as members, even if we ourselves are unworthy. We are black and beautiful.

Every believer is tempted at some time to think, "You, who are so black - how can you speak about the Lord?" Every preacher at some time thinks, "How can I, who am so wicked, even climb into the pulpit?" Our courage evaporates when we consider what state we are in.

But look at the apostle Peter. He, who had denied Christ with oaths and curses, stood in the Jerusalem

marketplace and rebuked the people: "~You~ denied the Holy One and the Just" (ACT 3:14). He who had himself committed this very sin, in the most heinous manner, rebuked others for the same sin, though they were much less guilty. He could do this because he knew that he was

not only black but beautiful - not only sinful, but also forgiven and beloved by God. The darkness in him did not make Peter despair. He knew he was wicked, but he also knew that when he preached, it was not him speaking but Christ, who lived in him.

The night is black, but it gives rest to the earth. Black bread is very nutritious. A pastor who by his own deeds is in darkness but is beautiful by the grace he receives from God, can feed a hungry flock. I trust Jesus' taste more than my own! I see myself as black, he sees me as beautiful. He sees himself mirrored in us. He sees us as we shall be.

The bride compares her blackness to that of the tents of Kedar and the curtains of Solomon (SOS 1:5). Kedar was a district of Arabia inhabited by Bedouins. They made their tents from black goat hair. The curtains at Solomon's palace were also said to be black. Black curtains keep out the light from a room. This image means that great care was necessary to ensure that the many sins committed by the bride should not come to light.

Do not be critical

The bride admonishes, "Look not upon me as being blackish" [the meaning of the Hebrew word] "because the sun has looked upon me" (SOS 1:6). She had described herself as "black" (shechorah), but now, pondering the fact that she is also beautiful, she no longer calls herself "black" She is only "blackish" (shecharchoret). Men

should not even regard her as that. They should learn to see her beautiful side.

The believer should regard nobody as "black"; he should be careful not to slander even his weakest brother. The apostle Peter says, "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (ACT 10:28). The bride is blackish, but listen to her defence! "I am blackish because the sun has looked upon me. My mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards." If my brother has sinned, the reason may be the many sufferings, temptations and persecutions which he has endured. When the Spirit of God does his work, my brother will confess his sins himself, like the

bride in Solomon's Song.

To explain how she came to be "blackish," she reviews her past life. "My mother's children" - that is, the members of the Church, which is the believer's mother - "were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards" - an occupation in which you get heavily sunburnt. "I have been given great assignments," the bride complains. "I have been appointed a pastor, a teacher of the brethren." Other believers might well envy her situation, but it was in that situation that she was burned by the sun and became blackish.

Christians, don't compete for the honour of being leaders in the Church. It is a calling that should make you tremble. Saint James writes, "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (JMS 3:1). Christians, don't judge. Coventry Cathedral in England was destroyed by German bombs during World War II. When it was rebuilt two charred logs from the old building were made into a cross bearing the inscription, "Father, forgive." There was no "them" at the end. The British knew that they too needed to be forgiven.

Terrorists sin. So do all Arabs who do not love Zionists.

And Zionists have committed sins towards Arabs. Communists sin. Christians in Communist countries sin too, because they are not being holy and zealous enough to prevent men from becoming Communists. The best of pastors sin more than all of these. God gives them a vision, but they neglect many of their duties.

For all of us, our only hope is the Lord's sacrifice on Good Friday; the Easter event, his resurrection, is our only source of peace. So do not misuse your mouth by criticizing, and especially by criticizing the bride of Christ.

The dangers of the pastorate

Be very cautious before you accept the office of pastor, a keeper in God's vineyard. The believer's preference is for a hidden life with God. Listen to a biblical parable:

Once, the trees went forth to anoint a king over them. And they said to the olive tree, "Reign over us." But the olive tree said unto them, "Should I leave my fatness wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?"

And the trees said to the fig tree, "You come and reign over us." But the fig tree said unto them, "Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?"

Then said the trees unto the vine, "You come and reign over us." And the vine said to them, "Should I leave my wine, which cheers God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?"

Then said all the trees unto the bramble, "You come and reign over us."

And the bramble said unto the trees, "If in truth you

anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow. And if not, let fire come out of the thistle and devour the cedars of Lebanon (JDG 9:8-17).

Only valueless Christians long for important positions in the Church of God and rejoice when they are given them. They are misguided, because important positions in the Church leave no time for maintaining the beauty of your own vineyard. You become so concerned with caring for others that you don't care about yourself. You will be in danger of the same catastrophe which overcame ancient Israel, to whom the apostle Paul wrote: "You therefore who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say that a man should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you commit sacrilege?" (ROM 2:21-22).

The only man who should become a pastor or a missionary is the man who cannot be anything else. He who can say with the prophet Jeremiah, "His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forebearing, and I could not stay" (JER 20:9). Young converts, don't push yourselves forward for leading positions in the churches and in missions! Don't begin preaching at the earliest opportunity out of a sense of obligation! It is better to keep the beauty of your own vineyard.

Where can he be found?

The bride says, "Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, where you feed, where you make your flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of your companions?" (SOS 1:7). She gives Jesus a

beautiful name, "You Whom My Soul Loves" . The Church is the beloved of God's soul, and God is the Beloved of our souls.

The bride wants to know the exact place where her Beloved is. She wants to go to the place where he rests, where he feeds his flock, because in her diffidence she does not want to distract him from his preoccupations by asking him to come to her. She will go to him, and will be able to speak with him while helping him in his work. She will not abuse his time. But she must know exactly where he is. She does not want to wander around among his companions' flocks. She does not want to find herself among the flocks of the other founders of religions, who are not like him.

Jesus has given us an exact address where we can find him. It is written that on the day of the Last Judgement, men will hear these words from him: "I was in prison and you came to me," or these: "I was in prison, and you visited me not" (MTT 25:36, 43). And then he will explain: "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as you have done it ... [or] did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it ... [or] did it not unto me" (MTT 25:40, 45). Whoever wishes to meet Jesus must meet him in places where brothers and sisters of Jesus are hungry, thirsty, naked, unwanted, sick or in prison. Whoever keeps himself distant from these places remains distant from Jesus.

In his book ~The Unmasking~, G. Dumitrescu - a former jail inmate in Communist Rumania - writes:

> Prisoners were so tortured that nobody dared to use a hand for making the sign of the Cross. We did it with our tongues. We had to stay the whole day with hands lifted, even when at toilet. We had to put the dish with food on the floor, kneel near it, and lick the food without using the hands. We were animals. The food burned our lips. We were beaten with sticks on the

> shinbones, but could not rub our feet. The hands had to stay unmoved. Every prisoner was asked to beat his best friend, his brother in faith. If he refused, the brethren were tortured until they agreed to beat him with truncheons on the soles.
>
> The prisoner, Nuti Patrashcanu, had become a sadistic torturer of his friends. Then they tortured him almost to death. Twelve of them sat on his body; he excreted and was made to eat his own excrement.

The Patrashcanu mentioned above later shared a prison cell with me, and God gave me the grace to bring him to Christ. His bride, who was free, was also converted. He later died in jail.

The last words of the Christian Sherban Gheorge, who was killed in an atrocious manner in Piteshti, still echo in our ears: "The Communists' crimes are too horrible. I can't pray for them to God from a distance. I must go to him to speak on their behalf. Do not avenge my death."

Jesus' companions

The bride says, "Why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of your companions?" (SOS 1:7). In this verse the founders of other religions are called the companions of Jesus, not his competitors. Jesus has no competition. He is not threatened by all those who have inscribed high thoughts about God in the Vedas of the Indians and in the holy books of other nations; he is not threatened by Confucius, Lao-Tzu, Buddha, Muhammed and other founders of religion who, in the measure of the light which they had, tried to bring men to better ways.

The bride's question as to where the Beloved sleeps arises from a legitimate desire to see his face; but it does

not receive a direct answer. On the last evening, Thomas asked the Lord, "We know not where you are going: and how can we know the way?" (JHN 14:5). But Jesus had already replied: "Where I go you know, and the way you know" (JHN 14:4). He concedes to no man the possibility

that he would not know what his duty is, that somebody sincerely seeking the King of Kings would not be able to distinguish between him and one of his companions or a deceiver, that he would not know how to distinguish between the lilies with which he feeds his flock and the simple grass of the others. That would be to despair of human thought. Jesus believes that men are capable of thinking correctly.

Only love Jesus with a perfect love, from your whole heart, and you will know where he feeds his flock as surely as every man who loves drugs or alcohol knows where to find them. "What man is he that fears the Lord? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose" (PSA 25:12). The difficulty is not lack of knowledge, but a moral weakness. His bride cannot make the decision to go to the place of deep suffering, which is the surest place of encounter with the greatly-Beloved.

Would you like to know where Jesus feeds his flock? Deny yourself and take up your cross. Then you can be sure of following him. Would you like to know where he rests at noon? Once, he rested in the bosom of the Father; now he rests in the heart of every believer who gives him room. But he is pre-eminently resting in the hearts of the believers who are undergoing suffering; in the hearts of those who have purified themselves from attachment to created things, so that they may remain entirely indwelling in the Creator.

I remember a Good Friday in a cell in the Rumanian jail, Jilava. We were all very hungry, but that day when the bowl of gruel was brought we refused to eat. We fasted. Good Friday is the only fast-day described by the Lord himself: "The days will come, when the bridegroom

shall be taken from them, and then they shall fast" (MTT 9:15). Days of fasting, with deep repentance for our past sins, are the greatest gifts anybody can give to the Underground Church and the missions which help it.

As a punishment for refusing the food on Good Friday we were made to stand to attention for the whole of Easter morning. That provided a captive audience for a sermon! If anybody had desired to be with Jesus on that day, he should have travelled in spirit to be in fellowship with us. Jesus was in jail with his disciples on that day. Prison is one of the places where we should look for him. I wonder at the numbers of Christians from the Free World who visit Communist countries but never ask permission to

visit a jail and encourage their brothers and sisters in pain.

In Solomon's Song Jesus did not say directly where he feeds his flock. He wants us to think for ourselves. But on the Day of Judgement we will be reproached or approved, according to whether or not we have been among this world's sufferers.

By the footsteps of the flock

In the Song, Jesus' reply to the bride's question is: "If you do not know yourself" - so the Hebrew reads - "O you fairest among women, go your way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed your kids by the shepherds' tents" (SOS 1:8). The Bridegroom calls her, "The fairest among women." Nothing is more beautiful in God's sight than a believing soul. He is blind to its weaknesses.

The Bridegroom shows us a simple way to find him. If she wishes with all her heart to come to where he is, the bride must "go by the footsteps of the flock." In this world there are men who bear the visible sign of being Jesus'

sheep. Go after them; imitate their example. Do as they do. They are in fellowship with Jesus. If you follow in their footsteps you will come into fellowship with him too.

When in Central Africa the first pygmy came to believe in Jesus, another pygmy, Kiwebulaya, who could not understand what his friend was talking about, decided to follow him to find out the secret of his changed life. One day he saw him leave the village. He went after him, unobserved, into the jungle. He watched his friend kneel in the grass, fold his hands, and speak with his new invisible friend Jesus.

Now Kiwebulaya knew what he had to do. After his friend had finished praying and departed, he went to the same place, knelt in the depressions in the grass left by his friend, folded his hands as he had done and said, "Jesus, you who made my friend happy, make me happy too."

A voice replied: "Come unto me, you pygmy who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Kiwebulaya said, "I would come to you, Jesus, but I don't know how." He received a reply again: "I will be with you always." When he rose from his praying, Kiwebulaya's

face shone with happiness just as his friend's face shone. He had come to where Jesus was by following in the footsteps of one of his sheep.

But be very careful that those whom you follow are really Jesus' sheep. To use another animal analogy, hunters sometimes have useless dogs. They run after the real hunting dogs, and if they were persistent they would arrive at the kill with the others. But instead they stop at every bush and every curiosity. The hunting dogs we should follow are the real ones, which go through fire and water.

The Bible says, "Walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous" (PRO 2:20). Paul says, "Be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" 1CO 11:1). He also says, "Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit

the promises" (HEB 6:12). The best way of advancing in the life of faith is to take as our examples the most worthy believers of the Church's history, not those who have the latest fanciful doctrines. In art galleries one can see many young painters copying the masterpieces of painters of the past. Young believers must copy the outstanding saints of the past.

When the Communists took over Angola, they began to threaten and persecute the Christians. Those who were true believers remained unafraid. One Sunday morning the Communist soldiers entered the Evangelical Church in the town of Chiasso. They drove cattle into the church, slaughtered them and mounted the animals' heads on the pulpit and the communion table. A sign on the pulpit announced, "These are the gods you now worship."

The believers were given a choice: either to die, or to deny their faith. The pastor, Aurelio Chicanha, and 150 church members remained steadfast and were murdered there and then. The mission compound was turned into a military base. Similar killings and appropriations of churches have happened in Chissamba, Dondi, Bungue and Elemde.

These believers were real sheep, whose example we can follow. Not all of us are called to die a martyr's death, but all of us are called to have the same spirit of self-sacrifice and love to the very end as these martyrs had.

My former fellow-prisoner Ion Stanescu, a Rumanian Orthodox deacon, died from tortures suffered in prison. He once told me the following story.

Colonel Albon, the director of the slave labour camp where Stanescu was imprisoned, was informed that someone had dared to preach in Stanescu's cell. He entered carrying a cane and demanded to know the culprit. When nobody answered, he said, "Well then, everybody will be flogged. Unbutton!"

He started at one end of the cell, and there was the usual yelling and tears. When he came to Stanescu, he

said, "Not ready yet? Strip this minute!" Stanescu replied, "Neither I nor the others will be beaten any more. There is a God in heaven, and he will judge you."

With that the fate of Stanescu appeared to be sealed. Surely he would be beaten to death! But just at that moment, a guard entered the cell and said, "Colonel, you are wanted urgently in the office. Some generals have come from the Ministry." Albon left, saying to Stanescu, "We will see each other again soon."

However, the generals arrested the colonel (Communists hate and jail one another for no apparent reason) and, after an hour, Albon was back in the cell, this time as a prisoner. Many of the inmates jumped to lynch him. But Stanescu defended his defeated enemy with his own body, taking many blows himself as he protected the torturer from the beaten prisoners.

Stanescu was a real priest. We have to follow in the footsteps of men like this, loving our enemies but also resisting their evil deeds.

It is easy to walk "by the footsteps of the flock" because sheep follow only beaten tracks, and will never take even one step to the right or to the left away from it. But again, let us be careful to walk only by the path of Jesus' sheep. Not all sheep have virtues to be imitated. Some can be very cruel. Any farmer will tell you about sheep who, by withholding milk, let their lambs die of starvation. Sometimes they even smash the lambs' heads against a wall. Also, certain sheep of different breeds hate one another; those of the Hampshire breed cannot tolerate those of the Suffolk breed. Avoid Christian sheep of this kind.

Where to feed our kids

The Bridegroom tells the bride, "Feed your kids beside the

shepherds' tents." The meaning of these words is clarified by this Jewish proverb: "If you wish to smell pleasant, stand near those who sell perfumes." The nearer a faithful soul is to his pastor, the more he will make his valuable teachings his own and the clearer he will see the face of Jesus.

Saint Basil the Great said, "When you are sick, you don't go to any physician but the best. Neither should you listen to sermons at random. Seek the pastor who prepares conscientiously the best food for your souls." The leaders of the Church must take care that only men of spiritual maturity and great abilities preach. These words of the Bridegroom are also a challenge to pastors. The believer will have to feed his kids beside the shepherds' tents. Can somebody feed the kids near you? Are you like Jesus, a good man on the bosom of whom others are able to rest?

We can take as an example Gheorge Calciu, the Rumanian Underground priest. He is Orthodox, but had warm brotherly relations with the persecuted Protestants. He was at one time a fellow-prisoner of mine. Arrested at the age of twenty-one, he spent twenty-two years in jail for belonging to a patriotic organization. In jail he suffered the worst torture. He was one of those forced to eat his own excrement and to drink his own urine. One could escape these atrocities by claiming to have been re-educated in the Communist spirit and proving it by torturing one's friends. Calciu cracked for a while under the pressure, but he received grace from God and he was converted. Freed, he became an Orthodox priest and a heroic one. All fear to which he had yielded for a while was gone. From great depths of sin he rebounded to the heights of holiness. Seminary students and other young people flocked to hear him preach. When the Communists locked the door of the seminary to prevent students from going to hear him, the students jumped in through the windows. The Communists locked the

church; Calciu preached on its steps. He protested about the tearing-down of Orthodox churches in Bucharest and in the provincial towns, though he was warned that in Communist countries priests must be on the side of the atheists who are in power.

He continued his stand despite threats of detention in a lunatic asylum. Later he was sentenced to ten years in prison. Calciu valued courage, the rare gift of God, like a precious stone. From his story we can see that a man who has sinned can become a good pastor, near whose tents brides of Christ can feed their kids.

Pharaoh's chariots

The Bridegroom says to the bride, "I have compared you, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots." With these words he rebukes the numerous believers who ignore the advice that they should follow in the footsteps of the flock. On first reading the comparison is hard to understand. How could he compare his beloved, "the most beautiful among women," to horses?

Solomon's Song is an ancient book, written in a time when people thought about animals differently to us today. Julius Caesar erected a marble effigy of his horse in a temple. The Emperor Nero nominated his horse to be a senator. The Emperor Caligula made his horse a consul and invited the animal to dinner and waited upon him.

In the Bible we find these words "The Lord of Hosts has visited his flock, the house of Judah, and has made them as his goodly horse in the battle" (ZEC 10:3). The patriarch Jacob pays his son a compliment by saying, "Issachar is a strong ass" (GEN 49:14). Jesus calls his believers "sheep."

There is nothing insulting in comparing a human being

to an animal. Ancient Egypt was famous for its horses, which were the finest in the world, so the Bridegroom compared his beloved girl to a horse. But these words also contain a rebuke. Huge possibilities of spiritual victories lie ahead. He wishes to lead us in ~his~ chariot of trials. Seated there, we can conquer all fears, temptations and sins. But instead of accepting his invitation, we allow ourselves to be harnessed to the chariot of Pharaoh. We do not sit with him in the chariot. We have to pull it, and in it Pharaoh sits alone.

Why should we sweat in his service? Why should we draw his cart? Why should we be harnessed to the chariot of sin? Why be yoked in an uncomfortable yoke with

unbelievers? Why does a believing soul need to stoop to dirty politics - even dirty ecclesiastical politics? You might only be a horse pulling the chariot of some unbelieving president or prime minister who cares nothing for you. What good are dishonest transactions and ugly amusements to you? Don't let yourself be harnessed to Pharaoh's chariot. Ride with the noblemen in Jesus' chariot of triumph.

Being harnessed to Pharaoh's chariot is not pleasant. Drawings from ancient bas-reliefs in the Nile region show that the ancient Egyptians did not understand the anatomy of the horse, nor the correct way to harness it. They attached the reins to the horse's throat, almost suffocating it. Instead of allowing its neck to be extended in the normal way, they held the head in line with its chest, sometimes pulled even back further. Just as the ancient Egyptians did not know the horse's anatomy, neither do Pharaohs know the intimate structure of a believer's soul. They harness these souls in a way that torments them.

It is sad that the Bridegroom must so rebuke his bride. There are Christians who support the terrorist Palestine Liberation Organization [PLO]. There are Jewish Christians in Israel supporting the anti-Arab measures of their

government. There are Christians who support the Communist guerrilla movements in the Third World. Other Christians defend the Soviet persecutors of the Church or other dictatorships. Many believers are involved in unjust transactions, and extramarital relationships and in the world of amusement are in places where they should not be. It is sad that brides of Christ should be harnessed to Pharaoh's chariots!

How to rebuke

But even as he rebukes, the Bridegroom uses words of gentleness. He says, "I compare you, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots." She who causes him sadness is addressed, "O my love." Let us also learn to sweeten our reproofs with good words. Praise must go hand in hand with rebuke.

In his Epistles St. Paul sometimes rebukes believers with

great harshness, but his rebukes were accepted because they never arrived unaccompanied. They came with gentle words, expressing appreciation of the good qualities in the believers. Before rebuking them, he writes to the Romans, "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (ROM 1:8); to the Philippians, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you" (PHP 1:3); to the Thessalonians, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers" (1TH 1:2). This is how one removes the bitterness of rebuke.

Antonina was the abbess of the women's convent in the town of Kizliar in the Soviet Caucasus. In the early days of the Revolution, when the plundering of monasteries was a common occurrence, a mob of Bolshevik bandits

broke into the convent. They looted and destroyed, and shot dead several nuns who resisted them. The abbess Antonina fled to the convent of Vladikavkas; but posters were displayed locally offering a reward of 3,000 rubles to anybody reporting the whereabouts of the former abbess of Kizliar. The Communists could not trace her, though they suspected that she was concealed in another convent.

Time passed. Then a young girl arrived at the convent. With many tears she begged the abbess of Vladikavkas to take her in, saying that her father and mother had been killed and their estate burgled. She played the part so well that she succeeded in winning the confidence of the abbess who, out of sympathy, not only took the girl in and was kind to her but soon even confided to her the secret that Antonina was in hiding there.

Soon after this the girl disappeared. She had been an agent of the secret police, looking for Antonina. That night the militia surrounded the convent. Nobody could escape. They broke in to search, demanding that the abbess should be given up. When the two cell attendants went upstairs to tell Antonina what was happening, she said, "Well, what can I do? If it pleases the Lord that they find me, let it be so. But if it is not his will, he will close people's eyes; they, seeing me, will not see me. Come, we will go out in front of them."

The nuns put a sheepskin coat on her, and the three women went down the stairs and simply walked out of the convent gate, before the very eyes of all the Red Army

soldiers. They had not gone far when they heard the commander shouting. "Who just went out of the gate? Who was let out?"

"We saw nobody," answered the soldiers.

"What do you mean?" retorted the angry commander. "Someone just left in a white sheepskin coat, accompanied by two nuns."

Before her martyr death several years later, Antonina

met the girl who had informed on her. She did not start with words of rebuke, but said to her, "I valued very much the tears you shed when asking to be received as a nun in the convent. It is very difficult to fake tears. They must have come from a heart in whose depths there is a spark of genuine love for Christ. You have been misused. You were young, you did not know what you were doing. But God did not only see you denounce me. He heard those prayers which you said, in which not all was falsehood. There may have been an occasional note of sincerity. God will pity your soul; only repent." There was so much friendliness, spiritual beauty and complete lack of resentment in the words of Abbess Antonina that the girl's heart was pierced. She became a real believer in Christ. Let us also learn to rebuke like this.

Holy nonsense

The Bridegroom says, "Your cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, your neck with chains of gold" (SOS 1:10). The words "of jewels" and "of gold" have been added by the translators to make sense of the Hebrew text. They are not in the original. The authors of the ~Septuagint~, who were the first to translate the Old Testament into Greek, also tried to make sense of the text and wrote, "How beautiful are your cheeks as the turtledove's." But doves have no cheeks! The ~Targum~ - the Aramaic translation - renders it, "Your cheeks are comely with bridles." What does all this mean?

We are prejudiced. We think that everything in the Bible must make sense. If we don't find a meaning we invent one. But not all the Bible consists of logical, reasonable, purposeful thoughts. Much of it is the expression of a wide gamut of feelings, of reactions to

events, or of impulse. Not all the Bible makes sense, and life and the human mind have their nonsensical features also. Nobody who fails to give nonsense a place can mirror the whole of reality in his religious writings. Depths of emotion cause lovers to talk a great deal of nonsense. How much of it there is in the conversation of Romeo and Juliet!

The simplest explanation is that Solomon wished to compliment his bride; saying, "Your cheeks are comely." They were so comely that instead of comparing them to something he just kissed them. But then he wanted to convey something more. He used the word ~batorim~, which can mean "turtledoves" or possibly "bridles." And then, instead of explaining himself further, he bestowed further kisses.

Then he said, "Your neck is chains." What would he have added? "Of gold"? Or did he, perhaps, imagine his bride with iron chains on her neck, bound to the poles or stakes on which she was to be sacrificed by her captors? Or did he see her chained like those unfortunate women who were driven from Africa to America in slavery, with iron chains round their necks? In any event, he did not continue. Her neck was too comely for him to think of it being so abused. He preferred to kiss it.

No life is complete without its nonsensical side. Let us sanctify it.

God's jewels

The Bridegroom promises the bride, "We will make you borders of gold with studs of silver" (SOS 1:11). God is a lover of beauty. He made his heavenly city of pure gold; its gates of pearls; its foundations of costly stones. The places where believers gathered for worship were to be beautiful

also, the religious services solemn. The individual believer's soul must also have beauty, and this we can obtain through faith. The human soul cannot ornament herself. God is the one who ornaments and perfects her. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit

work at this; therefore the plural is used here: "~We~ will make ..."

God's jewels are unusual. Golden objects are normally given studs of costly stones or platinum, which increase their value. God gives them studs of silver, which decrease it. He gives us spiritual truth - which is gold - in the shape of simple human words, because otherwise we could not wear it. He made the Eternal Word, his Son, to have the body of an obedient servant, so that he could live among us. He puts studs of the silver of humility in the golden chains of the truth.

It is not always the most celebrated Christians - those who have studs of diamonds in their chains of gold - who are the best Christians. One of the best-known American evangelists published a "Ten-point plan for happiness." He started with "Love and be loved," forgetting that Jesus said, "You shall be hated for My name's sake." The evangelist went on: "Guard your health." How can you do that when you belong to the 60% of the world that is undernourished? He said: "Keep a sense of humour." How can those who are being tortured for their faith keep their sense of humour? Again: "Appreciate nature." This advice is given when many Christians are in underground jails where they never see the sun.

But there are other, humble Christians whose chains of gold have modest studs, perhaps of even less value than silver ones. Their names are not well known in the world, but they have proved to be heroes in times of great tribulation.

It is reported from China that a Christian in Manchuria protested at the Communists' indiscriminate killings. He was dragged into a people's court and

accused of crimes against the people. Then the judge ordered those watching to march past him, beating him with clubs until he died. But the people refused, declaring, "He is a good man."

Changing tactics, the judge promised the man freedom if he would renounce Jesus. "Which do you choose," he demanded, "Jesus Christ - or Communism?"

"Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!" the Christian shouted back.

Then they took him to the riverbank for execution, and on the way he sang "Jesus loves me" and the twenty-third Psalm [PSA 23] set to Chinese music. He was shot in the back, but instead of falling forward on his face to grovel in the dust as victims usually do, he fell backwards, as if falling

into the arms of Jesus. Reportedly the entire community was stirred by his testimony. [Jay and Emma Hefley, ~By Their Blood~, Mott Media Publishing House]

The name of this martyr is unknown in the Free World. He had lived in humility, and that is how he died. God so ordered it that the beauty of his soul should not become the object of human praise; but he is highly valued by God.

"My spikenard"

The bride says, "While the king sits at his table, my spikenard sends forth the smell thereof" (SOS 1:12). When the King enters the soul, the bride, like Mary of old, anoints the feet of the Bridegroom with a pure nard of gratefulness and adoration, and the world is filled with the perfume of the nard.

Nard or spikenard is made from a very small and despised plant. The fragrance from this plant comes from its root being trodden on or otherwise bruised. So, in the Church, the spiritual nard spreads its perfume only when it is bruised under the burden of the Cross.

The bride's spikenard sends forth its aroma only as long as the King sits at his table. As soon as Jesus ceases to be in your soul, the nard's fragrance disappears and the believer can no longer bring the good aroma of God to the world.

A Russian Orthodox priest named Dudko had been in jail for eleven years because he had preached what is in the Bible. His enemies nearly succeeded in killing him in a faked car accident. He continued without fear.

A Russian Christian named Orlov was imprisoned for his faith. He was fed on salted herrings and so would become very thirsty. But his captors would allow him a drink only eight hours later. Also he was not allowed to go to the lavatory when he needed it. I myself have spent fourteen years in Communist prisons, so I know what terrible torture this is. Treat yourself as he was treated, for a few hours. Then you will know what your brothers and sisters suffer.

The Russian Orthodox priest, Dudko, was re-arrested,

after a period of liberty. This time he cracked and denied his convictions publicly on television. Orlov remained steadfast. Yet not only Orlov, but Dudko also served Christ! His sermons, and the books he wrote before he broke, have remained; and they continue to spread the perfume of Christ.

"A bundle of myrrh"

The bride says, "A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts" (SOS 1:13). Every word in this verse is full of significance. The Saviour is called, "my well-beloved." It has sometimes been asked whether Christianity is compatible with one political doctrine or another. Christianity is compatible

with nothing! For Juliet, nothing else counted except Romeo. She never talked about anything else. He was the Beloved, the only one. So, too, Jesus should be our only Beloved.

It is remarkable that the bride says, "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved ~unto me~." No matter what Jesus might be for others, the bride says what he is for her. The apostle Thomas calls him "~My~ Lord and ~my~ God." No matter what he might be for others, for me he is Lord and God.

On one occasion the disciples told Jesus what men were saying about him - that he was John the Baptist, Elias, Jeremias or one of the prophets. But then Simon Peter added what Jesus was for him: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (MTT 16:14-16).

The bride calls Jesus "a bundle of myrrh" - a bundle rather than a single stalk, because she found in him a multitude of qualities. There is no word in Hebrew for the English "face" in the singular. You can only say ~panim~, which means "faces." When the Bible says "Seek the face of God," it does so only in our translations. How easily believers of different Christian confessions would come to peace with one another if they would only realize that each believer has seen just one of the many faces of God, and that his brother has seen a different face! That is how they arrived at different convictions. The convictions do not exclude one another. Jesus is a bundle of myrrh; and it may be that the different confessions have each seen a

different stalk.

In Communist countries Christians of many confessions suffer persecution. In Rumania the Orthodox priest, Calciu, Pitaru, a Christian from the Brethren assembly, Traian Dorz, from the Army of the Lord, the Pentecostal, Shamu, the Seventh-Day Adventist, Dragomir and the Catholic priest Godo all suffered in prisons and psychiatric asylums. They did not quarrel with one another there. They knew that Jesus is for them a bundle of myrrh.

page 68 The Sweetest Song

The bundle which the bride keeps between her breasts is of myrrh, a plant with a bitter taste. Even if he brings her through fears and difficulties, she makes a place for him between her breasts. In the Orient women used to carry little bags of perfume there. The bride has replaced this bag with the sufferings he allows her to experience. They are dear to her. Theirs is the fragrance she likes best.

Between her breasts

She considers that the best place for the bundle of myrrh is between her breasts. Well-educated men do not usually speak or write easily about women's breasts. Some people have been offended because this book uses erotic imagery. Because of its erotic vocabulary the Song of Songs has been greatly misused. Rabbi Akiba, who died around 135 AD, cursed those who sang this song in taverns. It must have been a common happening, or he would not have needed to pronounce the curse. The Syrian theologian, Theodore of Mopsuestia in Cilicia (350-428), considered the Song of Solomon a worldly, obscene poem without dignity, allegedly written by King Solomon to defend his marriage to an Egyptian. But the Fifth Ecumenical Synod of 553 condemned Theodore and all his writings. Later the humanist theologian, Sebastian Castellio (1515-1563), was forced to leave Geneva because he had called Solomon's Song a worldly work. However, the Church has always insisted that it is a holy book, and has explained it allegorically.

We should not be offended at the mention of women's breasts. I can see no reason why the Creator of the breasts

of women should not inspire a biblical author to write about them! The breasts are the prominent part of a

woman's body. Jesus finds his rest between a believer's most prominent virtues. He expects all his disciples to be prominent in some way. He asks them, "What do you do more than others?" (MTT 5:47). Millions said of the works of Jesus, "Never have such things been seen." "Never man spoke like this man" (JHN 7:46). It should be possible to say the same of us. We must be prominent through fearless self-sacrifice, offering our own lives for the salvation even of our worst enemies. We must risk our lives even for the wicked, we must put them at stake in order to do any good at all.

We will see at the end of the Song the concern expressed by the believers over the fact that they have a little sister who has no breasts. They ask themselves, "What shall we do for our sister?" (SOS 8:8). Pastors of churches must be preoccupied about souls that do not become prominent through a gift. God speaks with satisfaction of the virgin of Israel, saying of her, "Your breasts are fashioned" (EZE 16:7). This means, in spiritual language, "You have become remarkable through exceptional deeds." Exceptional deeds are a pleasant resting place for God in a human soul.

The words "all night" in verse 13 [SOS 1:13] in the Authorized Version do not exist in the Hebrew. The correct text is, "He shall lie between my breasts" - period. Read it again - it could not say "all night." Where he is, there is no night.

"A cluster of camphire"

The bride says, "My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi" (SOS 1:14). Camphire is a kind of perfume reminiscent of the perfume of the grapes of En-gedi. It is interesting that the name of the

plant, ~kopher~, is also the Hebrew word for "atonement." The Jews used to give the name "cluster" to men who possessed all the virtues and all the excellences.

The Jewish teachers in ancient times divided the first

word in the expression, ~Eshkol kopher~, "a cluster of camphire," so arriving at ~Ish kol koper~, "a man who covers all," or "atones for all" - a fitting name for the Messiah. The most costly perfume which Jesus spreads about him is the fragrance of atonement for all sins through his sacrifice.

The author of the Song of Songs, contemplating the Saviour, remembers the vineyards of the En-gedi region. In Hebrew En-gedi means "the source of the goats." The region was so called because many wild goats lived in it. It was the region to which Solomon's father, King David, took flight when fleeing from his rival Saul, who pursued him to En-gedi but fell into the hands of David. It would have been easy for the latter to have taken revenge, but he forgave his adversary. When Solomon, David's talented son, reached maturity, a sentiment of piety led him to visit various historic scenes of his father's miraculous rise from the position of a shepherd to that of a glorious king of Israel.

A serpentine route descends with difficulty from the Judean deserts to this land through rocks and stones, eventually arriving at a little river which makes its way to the Dead Sea amidst rich vegetation and beautiful vineyards. David the fugitive would have refreshed himself with these grapes. Recalling his visit there, Solomon puts in the mouth of the bride a comparison between the Saviour and a grape of En-gedi. He also refreshes and gladdens the heart, and gives new life to the oppressed and persecuted of this world.

Jesus warned his disciples, "They will persecute you" (JHN 16:20). In this respect we all share King David's fate and we all need the comfort of the Saviour. Fifteen Roman emperors strove to eradicate the Christian faith

from the world, using torture to intimidate the believers. Tender maidens and children received atrocious treatment.

Saint Agnes and Saint Priscilla, both thirteen years old, were torn by metal hooks, roasted on grills and crowned with red-hot helmets. In the persecution by Diocletian, 17,000 Christians were slain in a single month. In Egypt alone 144,000 of them were put to death and another 700,000 sent into exile. The total death toll reached 11,000,000, which means 30,000 a day.

But the extent of the slaughter did not bring panic to those Christians who survived, because they had the

comfort of the vineyards of En-gedi, just as persecuted David had. Amidst the torment they retained their joy and their calm, so that Augustine wrote, "Every one of them seemed to be two people - one, somebody who suffers greatly, and also somebody who speaks words of gladness, of wisdom and of praising the Lord." This is why the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church; it caused the Church to grow.

In the sixteenth century hundreds of Christians in Japan died for their faith. Some were roasted over slow fires or cut to pieces. Others had their flesh torn with pincers. The necks of some were sawed through, little by little, over a period of a week, until they finally died. Others were buried alive or were frozen to death. But all these, too, enjoyed the grapes of the mystical vineyards of En-gedi.

While she was being buried alive, the Japanese Christian Tecla, held a three-year-old girl in her arms and encouraged her to meet death with the hope of paradise. A boy of nine opened his collar himself to offer his neck to the guillotine. A boy of five, woken from sleep by the executioner's henchmen, proudly dressed in his finest clothes and was carried in the executioner's arms to the place of death; he also offered his head to the beheading block.

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No Christian is alone during his tribulation; no one is left without comfort. Just before Betty and John Stam were captured to face martyrdom at the hands of Communist soldiers in the Anwhei Province of Red China, John Stam wrote to his father: "We're now in dangerous territory, but we're not afraid. The enclosed poem exactly expresses our feelings." The poem was by E.U.G. Hamilton, written at the time of the martyrdom in China of the missionary Vinson:

~Afraid? Of what?
To feel the spirit's glad release?
To pass from strain to perfect peace,
The strife and strain of life to cease?
Afraid - of that?

Afraid? Of what?
Afraid to see the Saviour's face,
To hear His welcome, and to trace,
The glory beam from wounds of grace?

Afraid – of that?

Afraid? Of what?
A flash - a crash - a pierced heart;
Darkness – light – Oh, Heaven's art!
A wound of His a counterpart!
Afraid – of that?~

The Bridegroom says, "Behold, you are fair, my love, you are fair; you have doves' eyes" (SOS 1:15). How strange is our relationship with our Bridegroom. Usually brides think of themselves as beautiful. Not the bride of Jesus. She says

about herself, "I am black, I did not keep the vineyards of my beauty." In our union, it is the Bridegroom who convinces us that we are beautiful. He tells us, "Behold, you are fair, my love; behold, you are fair."

If he considers my soul to be beautiful, why should I worry about him ever rejecting me? We are beloved by him for our beauty. Holiness is always beautiful. Because of it we are beloved, even when we are greatly tempted, even if for a time we fall. Even if all men forsake us, we will be loved by him to the very end. He says, "Behold, you are fair." The bride is inclined to brood upon her blackness. He wishes us to know ourselves as he sees us – as beautiful. Humility is good only if it is a balanced humility. To overcome any doubt in us, he repeats himself: "You are fair ... you are fair."

The attributes in us which especially attract Jesus are our doves' eyes. He said, "~If~... your eye is clear, your whole body shall be full of light" (MTT 6:22). Whoever has clean eyes will be beloved by Jesus. The eyes should not even look towards evil; they should not be attracted by sin. They should betray no lust; they should not see the straw in someone else's eyes. They should be open to the glory of God and to the heavenly beauties. The bride has doves' eyes. Doves are chaste and faithful to their mates.

Oleg Miliutin, a Russian Orthodox, was six times committed to psychiatric institutions for openly declaring his Christian faith. He was gagged and beaten and put in a straightjacket. He did not yield.

Khrapov, of the underground Soviet Baptist Church, resumed his evangelistic work after twenty years' confinement. A second eight-year term of imprisonment followed and then another. He died in jail, as an unbroken child of God, having spent a total of thirty-four years suffering for Christ. For a time he had led the underground Baptist Church while in hiding. Then he wrote a book which has the amazing title, ~The Happiness of a Sacrificed Life.~

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He had doves' eyes. He had no bitter words for torturers or traitors. He looked on life with good eyes. There are so many beautiful things to think about, and his book speaks about them. Christ loves such souls great]y.

Not only the eyes but also the whole nature of the faithful soul is that of a dove. A dove will not sit on the green branch, will not drink fresh water, will not seek shade and will avoid the company of other birds until it finds its companion. So also is the bride of Christ, so long as she is separated from her Bridegroom.

On the green bed or in the house

The bride says, "Behold, you are fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green." The Bridegroom replies, "The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir" (SOS 1:16-17). The bride, inebriated with happiness because of the loving words which have been spoken to her, says, "You are fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant." He is fair and pleasant. Many males are handsome but not pleasant; many are pleasant but not handsome. Jesus has both qualities.

Then she invites him, saying, "Our bed is green." In the midst of nature, among the blooming of lilies and the chirping of birds, upon the green grass which is a witness to the care of God towards his creatures, there the faithful soul wishes to give Jesus her love. She calls the bed, "our bed," and he will call the house, "our house." Between the bride and Jesus there is a community of goods - everything which is hers is his; everything which is his is hers.

The people of Israel knew Solomon's Song, but when Jesus once commanded them to sit on the grass, they did

not remember the Scripture. They ate on the grass; their

hunger was satisfied; but they did not give him their love. At picnics today on the green grass there's plenty to eat and drink and we too fail to give him our love.

The Bridegroom puts forward an alternative to the green bed. The house of cedar wood is durable and does not rot. The rafters there are of fir, a fine wood used in palaces. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus invites those who belong to him to enter into the closet (MTT 6:6). There, in quiet, we shall enjoy the love of God.

Christians can enjoy communion with him not only in nice homes, but also in prison cells. A Soviet prisoner wrote:

> When I entered jail, in mockery I was given gigantic shoes and clothes twice my size. The sleeves reached my knees. I looked like a clown or scarecrow. When I entered the barracks, the criminals, incited by the camp commander, greeted me with laughter and ridicule.
>
> A prisoner bowed, in fake piety. "I greet you, holy Father; you are the ambassador of Christ Himself. Do you represent the interests of heaven?"
>
> The mocking words gave me courage. Forgetting how I looked, I told them I indeed represented heaven, for which the atheists imprisoned me. While preaching to those despising sinners, the sermon affected me too. I wanted to embrace them for having reminded me of my high calling.
>
> Many fear suffering. In the past I, too, feared. But the presence of the Lord in jail has given me so many happy experiences that I would not have changed them for years of easy living in freedom.

This man has known the discreet embraces of Jesus not in a house of cedar wood, but in a Communist prison cell.

÷ Chapter 2 ÷

Before going on to the second chapter, there are a few general considerations to be made concerning Solomon's Song. Origen, who died around 253 AD, really began the Christian allegorical interpretation of this book. Later a

Mariological interpretation was devised by Ambrose (339-397), in which the bride of the Song was considered to be prophetic of Mary. From then on, commentaries either chose between these two possibilities or combined them.

As I have already said, the Church took very harsh action against those who considered the Song of Songs to be an ordinary worldly book. The Song contains not only religious teaching but also a very simple human message. Any young man who cannot love a girl wholeheartedly, and any girl who cannot love a man passionately, is not yet ready to be a marriage partner. And with such an attitude they will not be able to properly love their friends, their parents or their children.

The Song teaches a healthy attitude towards sex. Whoever is ashamed to think about sex ought also to be ashamed of the woman who gave him or her birth or of the child whom he fathers or the babe to whom she gives birth. Most of all, such people ought to be ashamed of their own sexuality. There is nothing wrong in sexual life, just as there is nothing wrong in any bodily function. Jesus had a body with all the organs and instincts we have, only he was never dominated by sin. God has ordained sexual life; he wills that there should be love between the sexes. The ~Zohar~ says: "Sexual pleasure with

your wife is a religious pleasure, and one which gives joy to God, too. Performed with gladness, the religious duty of conjugal intercourse, in the presence of God's glory [the ~Shekinah~], gladdens your wife for the sake of the honour of the heavenly partner."

We should not be offended that there is so much carnal love in the Song of Solomon. The body as well as the soul is created after the image of God. Our creed says that the body will be resurrected as well as the soul. Orthodox mystics speak about "the holy flesh," because the flesh will have a part in resurrection. Jesus loved not only the souls of men, but their flesh too. Why should he not speak of the bodily charms of his bride? Justin the Martyr wrote, "If the flesh were to be useless, why did Christ heal it? Why did He resurrect the dead? When He resurrected Lazarus and the young man in Nain and the young girl, He resurrected them soul and body."

Solomon wrote 1,005 songs (1KI 5:12). Only one has remained; it is probably the most beautiful. Film actors often perform before the cameras for six or seven

hours a day to produce only two or three minutes of film. Very little of what we produce in life is of high value and will endure, but it is worthwhile to write a thousand songs in order that one might be a masterpiece. We witness to many about Christ; we do many works for his kingdom. Very few of these activities have any lasting result. But those few are worth all the effort.

A carpenter witnessed to me about Christ. He died knowing that he had brought only my wife and me to faith. But we brought others to Christ; those, again, brought others; those again, others. The result is that there are now Hebrew Christian churches in Haifa, Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem which have as their true founder that carpenter. He witnessed to many without result, but he brought one to Christ who brought others, and those others brought others. Some of them became interested in helping the persecuted Christians in Communist countries. That is

how a Christian mission to the Communist world began.

A little-known preacher, Mordecai Ham, brought to Christ a young boy whose name was Billy Graham. Billy Graham in his turn brought thousands upon thousands to Christ. Mordecai Ham may have witnessed to many people. He may not have had big results. But one of those won by him was exceptional. He was Ham's Song of Songs. I would encourage you to write many songs. One of them will be your Song of Songs.

Finally, we should note that in the Song, the Bridegroom is sometimes called a king, and the bride a queen. Sometimes he is a shepherd; sometimes they are workers in the vineyard. Sometimes they are in a palace; sometimes in the field. This teaches that people of all social classes are called to participate in spiritual life at the highest level.

"I am the rose of Sharon" (SOS 2:1)

Jewish commentators agree that the subject of these words is God's chosen people. Christian commentators are divided; some attribute them to the Saviour, others to the Church. What good does the debate achieve?

Only one reality exists: Godhead, which for the sake of expediency we divide into a "He" and an "I." Pronouns

have no place in real religious life. They are only for everyday usage. Jeremiah writes, "This is his name whereby ~he~ shall be called, ~The Lord~ Our Righteousness" (JER 23:6). But he also writes, "And this is the name wherewith ~she~ shall be called, The ~Lord~ Our Righteousness" (JER 33:16). Who is "Jehovah our Righteousness?" Is it God? Is it his Church? Foolish questions. When we sit with the Father and the Son on His throne as it is promised to us (REV 3:21), who will

be able to make a distinction then?

Nothing in the Hebrew corresponds to the "am" in the words "I am." The verb "to be" is little used in Hebrew. To understand what that means, one has to try to read the Song of Songs omitting words such as "have," "has," "am," "is," and "are."

Nothing "is"; everything changes. Heraclitus said, "Nobody can bathe twice in the same river." Neither can anybody say of Jesus what he is. "He has no form" (ISA 53:2). The rose of Sharon evokes him - but so do a lamb, a shepherd, the lion of Judah, a piece of bread in Communion. He is king, judge, high priest, victim, bridegroom, vine, brother.

The removal of the word "is" from one's religious vocabulary saves one from the sin of judging. Nobody is ~only~ a bad man or a criminal, just as nobody is ~only~ a dentist. The dentist is also a father or mother; a Briton or Indian; a twentieth-century person; a Christian or Buddhist; a Socialist or Conservative; a virtuous or bad man, and so on. The word "is" fixes a person to a single attribute. Life is not like that. No crook is ~only~ a crook. He can also be a man full of remorse, an incipient saint. No apostle is ~only~ an apostle; he can also be a lover of money, a trait which will transform him into a Judas. Hebrew, the language of Solomon's Song teaches us to think without the verb "to be."

The flowers

"I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys" (SOS 2:1) Jesus compares himself to flowers. He also compares his bride to a lily (SOS 2:2). He says that he is like a rose. The rose is distinguished from all other flowers by the fact that it blooms in different climates and different soils. So

Jesus

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is present in many countries, in many climates, in liberty and in persecution, in poverty and in abundance, in sickness and in health.

Roses exist in a great many colours - white, pink, purple, violet, black. The souls who reflect Jesus are also very different, and belong to different religious denominations. Only blue roses, having the colour of heaven, do not exist. So we do not have to be excessively sad about the fact that we are not yet fully heavenly! There has never yet been a blue rose. Let us strive onward, without despairing because of our weakness.

To the Greeks, the rose was a plant of love, consecrated to the goddess Venus. Comparing himself to just such a rose, Jesus is telling us that he is a lover.

The Hebrew word translated "lily" is ~havatzelet~. This is a particular flower called by botanists ~colchicum autumnale~ or ~filius ante patrem~ ("the son before the father") because it has the distinctive characteristic of blossoming before its leaves appear. The ~havatzelet~ is a symbol of men whose character is the opposite of those Jesus meant when he cursed the fig tree which had rich foliage but no fruit. Those men are hypocrites, having much self-advertisement and an appearance of religion, but without its love and joy. Jesus is ~filius ante patrem~. With him, and with those who belong to him, the fruits come first and the leaves afterwards.

~Havatzelet~ is a flower which you find in Israel at every step; a flower without much outward beauty; a fitting symbol for the one who came into this world having divested himself of his divinity, living as a humble servant. The saints of God are also humble like Jesus, without added ornamentation. They are also like ~havatzelet~.

The Christian Mission to the Communist World operates in Red China. Its co-workers there accept only used clothing and minimal salaries. They explain: "Otherwise, we might become attached to things." One of them spent many years in jail working ten hours a day barefoot in an iron mine, because she had written music

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for the Gospel of Luke. I heard a tape of her first song after she was released from jail. It was like hearing an angel's song. Now she gathers 300 ladies together every Sunday. The leader of the Underground Church in that region

sometimes covers 800 miles by bicycle to visit all the groups. But these Christians do not wish their names to be made known, and they refuse every small amenity of life. They accept only the simplest things.

~Shir-Hashirim-Rabba~, an old Jewish commentary on the Song of Songs, explains Jesus' comparison of himself with a lily of the valleys thus: "As the lily withers when it is burned by the sun, but flourishes when it is wetted by the dew, the same Israel withers, as long as it lives in the shadow of Esau; but in the future world when the shadow of Esau will have disappeared, it will be full of sap." Hosea writes, "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily" (HOS 14:5).

Pliny says of the lily, "It has a weak body which is not adequate to bear the weight of the head." In the same way, the Church is slender and weak. Christ is too big for her. He has to bend like the head of the lily because of this.

Jesus tells us he is "the lily ~of the valleys~." I myself have had a beautiful encounter with him in the deep valleys of suffering. When I was in solitary confinement in a Communist prison, without a Bible, I prayed that the Lord might speak to me directly. Then I heard his voice asking me, "What is your name?" I had always known that my name was Richard. But I could not say this to Jesus, because I knew about another man who had borne this name.

Saint Richard was a Christian who lived in times of persecution. He was sentenced to death for his faith. When he was on the gallows, the hangman had some difficulty fixing the noose of the rope. Richard bowed. "I am a farmer, and skilled in these matters," he said gently. "Please allow me to help you." The hangman responded courteously and allowed Richard to attend to it.

After fixing the noose he thanked the executioner for his kindness, assured him that he bore him no grudge, and so died.

I did not have the courage to tell Jesus I bore the name of such a saint, because I was so unlike him.

We all bear beautiful names, names as Mary, Paul or John, of which we are not worthy because we are not immaculate, zealous or loving like those who bore those names before us. So I bowed before Jesus and said, "I have no name. I long to bear yours." To renounce the self and allow Christ to be your personality is the secret of a victorious life.

Jesus does not put such questions to you, nor does he stir you up to see their seriousness, except in deep valleys; and it is only in deep valleys that he unites himself with you to take your place, so that you in your turn might become a lily, even as he is.

Thorns and daughters

The Bridegroom says, "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters" (SOS 2:2). God and his people pay each other the most beautiful compliments. Israel tells his Creator: "Who is like unto you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (EXO 15:11). Here God tells Israel that in his eyes she is a beautiful flower. He does not compare her to the rose which has thorns, but only to the lily which has none. Most souls are like thorns, without value or use. They prick, like the thorns in Jesus' crown. In the end, they will be burned. But not all souls persist in evil; amid the thorns there are roses.

The Bridegroom has among the girls one who is his own beloved; and, just as when he was crucified on Golgotha

near a garden, the flowers remained faithful to him, sending their perfume to the cross to refresh him, so now the lily-shaped soul of his bride is his comfort and his source of strength.

Beautiful as lilies

Jesus teaches us to look closely at spiritual believers, and learn from them. He said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (MTT 6:28-29). Those who have the happiness of finding teachers whom God sends, grow beautifully; the teachers' own secret consists of "feeding the kids beside the shepherds' tents" (SOS 1:8). The Scripture says that Jesus has

given some to be our bishops; others, pastors; others, evangelists; others, teachers who will help us to grow in all respects. They give us to be "in Jesus" . In Him, the whole building of the Church grows to become a holy temple of God.

Christians who suffer in Communist prisons for the Holy Faith are examples of how we ought to live and are good teachers for us. A Christian named V. Petkus, was tried in a Communist court in Soviet Lithuania. No friend was allowed to attend. Petkus refused to take any part in the trial. Guards had to drag him forcibly into the courtroom. He would not accept an attorney and would not speak a single word in his own defence (neither would I, when I stood trial). The charge which was manufactured against him was a base one. Like Joseph in the Old Testament who was, though innocent, sent to jail under the accusation of attempted rape, so Petkus was charged with homosexuality because he gathered young men together in his home to teach them the faith.

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We have not become like the lilies yet; therefore we protest loudly whenever the slightest harsh word is said against us. On the other hand, Petkus was happy because Jesus loved him, Jesus knew him, Jesus appreciated him. He did not say one single word to prove that what was said about him by evil men was untrue.

It is a habit of the Communists to invent numerous charges against believers. Sister Arbutenko was charged with ritual murder; Solzhenitsyn, with incest; the Bulgarian Pentecostal pastors Ladin and Haralan Popov, with counter-revolutionary spying activities and the arrest of Communists under the old regime. The Hungarian Cardinal Mindszenty had allegedly speculated in foreign currency - I, too, was accused of similar crimes. A group of Baptists in Russia received jail sentences because it was claimed that they had plotted to spread disease among the population by baptizing people in the same river, giving Communion with the same cup and giving each other the holy kiss.

Although fools may have believed such accusations spread by evil men, the lily-shaped saints did not defend themselves. Their purity spoke for itself. Those who knew Brother Petkus said as much before the court: "We know him to be a good Christian and an honest man. We have nothing else to declare. We believe like him, and have done the same things. If they are considered wrong, we too should be prisoners like him." They answered no

questions. Outside, many young people sang for hours in the street. Petkus was sentenced to ten years of prison, plus five years of deprivation.

Under his shadow

The bride says, "As the apple tree among the trees of the

wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste" (SOS 2:3). We desire to sit down under his shadow. When it is very hot, one finds great comfort in sitting in the shadow of a tree. The angel told the virgin, "the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee" (LUK 1:35). She, too must have sat in this shadow with great delight. At the time of the apostles, it was a great privilege for men that the shadow of Peter should pass over them because they were healed by it. Similarly it is happiness for us to sit in the shadow of Jesus, especially in the shadow of Golgotha, where he obtained for us the forgiveness of our sins by dying for us.

It is said of St. Jerome that he always studied and wrote in the shadow of a large cross. Once he was asked why he did so. He replied, "This tree of life gives me a shadow which shades me from all evil; it gives me fruit to strengthen me in everything which is good. I desire to spend my whole life in its shadow, and I long that its fruit should always nourish my soul."

The important thing is that one should not push oneself to the fore. The Virgin, when overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, remained in the shadows. Most martyrs for Christ remain in the shadows. They are anonymous. Their names will never be known on earth.

~Frankfurter Allgemeine~, the West German newspaper, announced on 17 October 1978 that in Ethiopia, Communists sew up the eyes of Christian prisoners or gouge them out. It might well be expected that in such extremities of terror, every Christian activity would cease. In the Free World, the slightest setback is sometimes enough to discourage us from church activity. How much more then, in situations of fear, where the flesh recoils before the prospect of appalling pain or death under torture, might one expect the Christians to give up.

However, in Ethiopia just the reverse happened. Christians whose names are unknown to anybody in the

Free World - who remain in the shadows so that Jesus might shine - are busy with Bible distribution as never before. They spread the Scriptures, knowing that they might be dipped in burning oil as a result of doing so.

Let us, also, sit down in the shadow of the apple tree. There we will see that its fruit which represents the Word of God, is sweet to our taste. As PSA 119:103 says, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

The banqueting house

The bride says, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love" (SOS 2:4). The Church is a banqueting house. God brings us into this happy place, into which we would not otherwise have come. The soul which was satisfied to sit quietly in his shadow is now brought to greater joys. In his banqueting house we will know what it means to become inebriated with his love. He has prepared for us not merely meals but banquets, with meat, milk and wines available without payment.

The great mystics and saints can be our guides towards this banqueting house. Their examples teach us that, when the Holy Spirit enters into a heart and there for the first time ignites the fire of love, that fire gives birth to an insatiable thirst. Then the believer says, "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after thee, O God" (PSA 42:1). As the hart's thirst is even greater when pursued, so is the believer's thirst for God under temptation. The thirsty hart plunges his whole body into the water and drinks his fill; we must eat and drink our fill in God's banqueting house.

St. John of the Cross wrote, "May we forget about ourselves. When we are intoxicated by his presence, we

will feel that we can do miracles, that we can pass through fire and water, and that we can remain unafraid when thousands of swords are drawn against us. By his grace, we

won't fear anymore - neither life nor death, joy nor sorrow. We will be drunk with faith.

This is called "jubilation." Sometimes you smile, sometimes you weep, and sometimes you sing. Those rational people who have no idea what the Holy Spirit does with those who belong to him ask, "How can you be so mad?" Our reply is, "God has permitted us to drink in his banqueting house!" But they cannot understand such a thing. The soul who has been in God's banqueting house knows unspeakable joy. He rejoices even for the pain he must endure. Whatever is done to him, however well or ill he fares, he is always peaceful and joyous. Rivers of living water flow from his heart." Saint John of the Cross sang:

I drank from my well-beloved
and when I walked out,
I knew nothing more
of this whole field;
and I had lost the flock
which I had followed before.

My soul has put itself,
with all its resources,
into His service.
Now I have no flock anymore;
I have no duties anymore
Because my whole duty consists in loving.

The banner of love

As conquerors hoist their flag over conquered cities, Jesus

hoists his flag over the souls he has conquered. It is a unique flag, a flag of love. "His banner over us is love." It is a persistent, unvarying love. He longs to see this love expressed in the way we behave towards one another.

The famous Egyptian hermit, St. Macarius, once asked God what degree of holiness he had attained after several years of fasting, prayer, solitude and sacrifice. He fell asleep, and an angel appeared to him and told him that he was still far from having reached the degree of holiness which had been attained by a certain pair of women, and

that he should learn from them a better way.

Macarius went into town and found the women. They were not nuns; just ordinary housewives. "What is the secret of your holiness?" he asked them. They wondered at the question. They were very busy caring for their husbands and their several children. They had little time to pray. Because of the amount of work they had to do, they often missed church. They were illiterate and so could not read Holy Scripture. They were simple-minded and could not meditate much. They were as they described themselves: "poor wives amidst constant worldly cares."

Macarius continued to make enquiries about them and discovered that they were married to two brothers. They lived together under the same roof, not once quarrelling, or permitting harsh words to pass between them. From this St. Macarius learned that living together in love, passing through all frictions without ever saying a harsh word or throwing a harsh look, can be more graceworthy in the eyes of God than a great deal of fasting and prayer. The banner over us is love.

In the Jilava prison in Rumania, several prisoners were put naked into a cell without beds, without blankets and without a barrel to serve as a lavatory. They were never allowed to leave their cell to fulfill their bodily needs. Imagine passing the night, completely naked, in such a stinking cell.

One of the prisoners was sick with pulmonary

tuberculosis. Late one night, he could not bear to stand on his feet any longer. He fell, and would have frozen to death on the cold concrete, had not the Christian Mircea Vulcanescu, used all his powers of persuasion to convince the sick man that he, Vulcanescu, was perfectly healthy. Therefore he would stretch himself out on the concrete and the sick man would then be able to seat himself on his body and have the protection of his bodily warmth.

Vulcanescu's insistence was so great that the sick man could not resist indefinitely, and he accepted. Vulcanescu remained stretched out naked on the concrete while the sick man slept for a few hours. He too fell asleep. When they awoke, Vulcanescu was almost frozen. The other prisoners had spent the entire night moving around without sitting on the concrete. Vulcanescu contracted pulmonary tuberculosis himself. Soon after this he died, but he demonstrated that the Saviour's banner over us is love.

In Florence, in Italy, the Red Brigade leader Furbelone planned a bank robbery - what the Brigade terms an "expropriation." Two revolutionaries disguised as policemen stood at the entrance to the building, while two others entered to force the teller to give up the money. A car with a false licence number waited in front of the bank to ensure the escape. Furbelone himself, disguised as a beggar, sat on the steps of the Santa Maria Church opposite the bank, from which post he was to give the signals controlling the operation.

Just as he was about to signal the start of the robbery, a little girl at her mother's side, on her way to school, ascended the steps for a short prayer. Seeing the beggar, she took her lunch out of her bag, broke off a part for herself, and gave him the remainder.

Irritated by this interruption in his plans, Furbelone intended to push the girl aside. But all at once he was struck by the thought: This is a human being who looks upon me with love, who considers me honest and worthy

of esteem. Instead of giving the signal to start the robbery, the notorious terrorist took the sandwich from the smiling girl and entered the church with her. His criminal life was over.

A man does not lack possessions if he gives to the poor. This little girl obtained the double blessing of bringing a soul to Christ and of stopping a serious crime.

"Comfort me"

The bride says, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love" (SOS 2:5). The bride must be strengthened to bear the embraces of the Bridegroom. The archangel Gabriel said to the Holy Virgin, "The power of the Highest shall overshadow you" (LUK 1:35), in order that she might bear the descent of the Holy Spirit upon her. It is written of John the Baptist that he would walk before the Saviour in the Spirit and in the power of Elijah. So we can see that we must be empowered to bear spiritual love. Showers of blessing are not easily borne.

Ezekiel says, "The Spirit entered into me and set me upon my feet" (EZE 3:24). Saint Ephrem knew such jubilation

that he cried, "God, take your hand away from me for a little, because my heart is too weak to bear such a joy." Saint Peter, when he saw Jesus work a miracle, fell at his feet saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (LUK 5:8). A sinful man has not the power to witness the beautiful magnificence of the Lord. We who know his embraces need power. Those who pass through great suffering for his sake need power too.

In Maputo in Mozambique many Christians were jailed. Some were natives, others were from Zimbabwe, South Africa, Portugal and America. The torturer Karonga used to torment the prisoners in the following

way: He ordered his soldiers to tie the hands of the prisoner tightly behind his back with string. His arms were wrenched up to the height of his chest, and then tied in such a way that if he moved at all the string would cut cruelly into his flesh. For a few minutes the prisoner sat in agony, and then the soldiers poured water into his gaping wounds and rubbed salt into them. The prisoner would roll about on the ground in absolute torment. The other prisoners were forced to sit nearby and watch. No one was allowed to go to the victim's aid.

Prisoners were almost eaten alive by mosquitoes, lice and bedbugs. They had to work as slaves in labour camps with only three or four hours for proper sleep. Girls were raped. Sometimes prisoners were unable to wash for a month. When they insisted on being allowed to wash they were taken to a river that was full of crocodiles. There the Communists forced some of the men into the water.

In the prisons of Mozambique, we have brothers and sisters who are spread-eagled on the ground and beaten, or hung from trees by their feet. Many die from exhaustion, tetanus and snake bites. Without strength from God, they could not bear these tortures for his sake. Without strength from on high, they could not bear his embraces either.

The bride is sick of love. Her love is passionate. In the Orient, the sickness of love is much more widespread than in Europe or America. It is written of David's son, Amnon, that "he fell sick for his sister Tamar" (2SM 13:2). Men can die from this sickness. The bride asks to be stayed with flagons, a kind of pie made of the grapes which have had the juice pressed out of them. These flagons were usually brought as offerings to Ishtar, the Babylonian

goddess of love. The bride also asks to be strengthened with apples. But she will soon discover that the sickness of love cannot be cured with pressed grapes or apples. It can only be cured by the presence of the Most Beloved. Our

thirst for Jesus is not quenched but merely soothed by his gifts which are a foretaste of the happiness we will possess in his presence in heaven.

Don't envy the bride

We become jealous when we hear of somebody having such love as the bride's, which is so passionate that it even makes her ill. But not everyone has to have such a richness of feeling, with which also comes great responsibilities. Men are of different types. With some, the power of reasoning predominates; with others, the imaginative faculty. One will have little judgement but rich imaginative powers; another, the gift of penetrating intellect but cold emotions. It is wrong to envy what another possesses. We must consecrate to God the gifts that we possess. The Lord accepts various attitudes.

Pastor Son was imprisoned in Korea during the Japanese occupation. A guard wanted to help him, and told the prosecutor, who was questioning the pastor, "He performs the rites at the Shinto shrines faithfully." (The Japanese had imposed on the Korean people the obligation to bow before the image of the emperor at these shrines; they considered him to be the god of all the earth.)

If Pastor Son had only kept silent, he would have been freed. But he contradicted the guard. "That is not so," he said. "I have never taken part in shrine worship."

The prosecutor was perplexed. "It has been nearly three years since you've seen your family. Don't you want to see them? Will you not give up your obstinate ideas?"

Pastor Son replied, "I can't give up my faith."

"Haven't three years of suffering made any difference to you at all?"

"A Christian faith grows stronger through suffering,"

replied the pastor. "So it has done me good to be in prison. I do not mind what happens. If I return home, Christ will be with me; and if I stay in prison, he will still be with me." Pastor Son's was one possible attitude in the circumstances - the attitude of a perfect lover of Jesus. On the other hand, other Christians used their reasoning powers and by giving clever answers tried to escape suffering if possible.

During World War II, Protestant Christians were greatly persecuted in Rumania, which was under Nazi domination. A preacher was brought before the police inspector. "Do you preach love?" he asked.

The Christian replied, "I do."

"Do you also preach that one should love one's enemies?"

"Indeed I do. That is the teaching of Jesus."

And now came the big question. "Then do you also love the soldiers of the Soviet army?"

The preacher knew that if he answered "Yes," when the Soviet army was fighting against Rumania, it would mean certain imprisonment. So he answered: "How can you ask me whether I love the Soviet army? Our country is at war with them."

The police inspector was very pleased. He said, "You are a real patriot."

During the War the services of Baptists, Adventists, Pentecostals and other denominations were forbidden in Rumania. A Christian was asked by a police inspector, "Do you still gather for worship?" He replied, "Christian gatherings are forbidden now."

The inspector shook him by the hand, saying "I am happy that you are a law-abiding citizen."

Such Christians had not stood up clearly for the truth; neither had they told a lie. They simply used a trick, and they succeeded. Some used stratagems determined by reason, whereas the attitudes of some were dictated only by passionate love. In no circumstances would the latter compromise.

Passionate love is not the only possible attitude towards

Christ. He receives also those who are attached to him instead by their reasoning powers.

His embrace

The bride says, "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand does embrace me" (SOS 2:6).

In Solomon's Song, the loving bride is also wise. She knows that, according to biblical symbolism, the left side is the side of God's rigour, while the right side is the side of compassion. Therefore she lies down to the left of her Beloved, among the sinners. Putting her head upon his left arm, she immobilizes this side, she incapacitates his severity, and he has only his right hand free - the caressing hand of love.

There is great variety in the experiences of believers. The Carmelite nun, Anne of St. Bartholemew (1549-1626), companion of Teresa of Avila, wrote in her biography:

> Christ the Lord appeared to me in the shape in which He walked on this earth. He was exceedingly handsome, though He seemed very sad. Approaching me, He put His right hand on my left shoulder with an unspeakable weight, which I could never explain to anybody. Thus He caused His pain and suffering to enter into my heart, and He said to me, "Behold the souls I lose." He challenged me to work for the salvation of souls, and showed me all France so impressively and so clearly that it was as though I were present in every place; and I saw how many millions of souls are lost. This happened in a single moment, and if it had lasted any longer I feel my life would have ended.

Christ put his hand on her to make her share his pain. It was different with the bride in the Song. He used his right hand only to embrace her.

Being thus reassured, the bride can fall asleep with his left hand under her head. Her soul is in sweet communion with Jesus; angels watch around them.

An army of roes

Her last words before falling asleep are, "I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please" (SOS 2:7). The oath is made by the roes and the hinds

of the field because they are symbolic of the Beloved, and because they are timid creatures which must not be troubled when their time of love comes.

The Hebrew word for "roes" is ~sabaot~. One of God's names is ~Jehovah Sabaot~, which means "The Lord of Hosts." So ~Sabaot~ means both "roes" and "hosts," which is very strange. It shows that God's army is an army apart. Roes are shy, timid creatures which attack nobody. They have conquered the hearts of many nature lovers, poets and painters by their beauty. God's army is like an army of roes.

But what of the many military exploits of the Jewish army under Moses, Joshua and David? Consider the Salvation Army of today. It speaks in military language. Its magazine is called ~The War Cry~. The Army is composed of corps instead of churches. Instead of preachers it has officers. In its beginning, its vocabulary was entirely military. It boasted that it had "assaulted" places of sin, that it had "taken prisoners," and so on. The Salvation Army fights in order to bring people to peace with God.

The army of Israel is also meant to be an army of peace,

but this is a phenomenon so unique that there are no words to describe its battles. It has to speak of its works of peace in the language of men of war, in much the same way that modern microphysics continually uses the language of classical physics, even though the scientists know that that language does not describe the facts of microphysics. The physicists have not yet had time to develop a new vocabulary.

So when we read in the Bible of "the sword of the Lord," of armed and bloodthirsty angels, of a carnage prepared by God himself, we must understand that the exploits of God's roes – unarmed, shy, loving creatures, who would rather die than attack anybody – are spoken of in military terms only because humans have no other appropriate language.

The sleep of faith

Taken literally, we have here a demand to the friends of the bride that they must not disturb the nuptial joy of the young pair during the seven days of the wedding feast. It is an unkind act to wake somebody from sleep for no good important reason. It is even worse to trouble a believing soul

sleeping the quiet sleep of faith, in the protecting arms of Jesus. That soul is in communion with the Lord, and whoever prods him will get his punishment, whoever he might be.

What a wonderful sleep this is! Scripture teaches us that for the soul who sleeps trustfully, believing in the One who considers the sinner to be just, his faith; his quiet sleep is accounted as righteousness. God delights in this quiet loving sleep of faith. There is no activity which he prefers to it. Nobody is allowed to disturb the ecstasy of love. The soul must not be stirred up or awakened.

To stir up and to awake are two different things. The one who awakes only calls the sleeper, who then has to conquer sleep himself. The one who stirs him up makes a

better job of it; he forces him to come out of sleep. Both are forbidden when somebody sleeps in the arms of Jesus.

Many things trouble the quiet sleep of Christian faith. In Communist countries it is troubled by the stooges of the Communists among the clergy. Bingh, the Catholic bishop of Saigon (now Ho Chi Minhville) and a Communist stooge, published the following statement in the Communist newspaper ~Humanit,~: "Previously, Catholics have had strong prejudices against revolutionaries. The propaganda of the former regime presented the Communists as the destroyers of all religions. Now we have seen the reality. Our church is the victim of no persecution." But he surely knew about the mass graves filled with the bodies of thousands of people killed by the Viet Cong in Hue and Quang Tri. He knew that his parishioners were forced to denounce one another, or else face imprisonment. He knew about the parents who had killed their children to keep them from falling into the hands of godless Communists.

Bishop Bingh knew what had happened to his own Catholics. The convents in Thu Duc were closed. Clergymen were arrested; all the monks in Mossard and the Trappists in Phuoc-Son and Phuoc-ly were jailed. They all fell asleep quietly in their prison cells, trusting in Jesus, and keeping their faith in him. It was wrong of the bishop to trouble their quiet sleep.

The Jesuit priest, H. Stephenson, after visiting China, described the Communist Chinese as "exemplary anonymous Christians whose examples should be emulated by Western Christians. They value people above things." It did not disturb this Jesuit that the murderers whom he calls "anonymous Christians" have jailed or killed

absolutely all the Jesuits of Red China, and many other innocent Catholics and Evangelicals besides. The bishop Kung Pin and the Protestant pastor Wan-Min-Dao have been in jail for twenty-five years.

Similar betrayals happen amongst Protestants. Pastor

V. Rumatshik, of the Soviet Baptist Underground Church, wrote:

> Unfortunately, we also have some believers who work together with the Communist authorities. This gives them the possibility of travelling abroad in order to lead foreign Christians astray in the matter of religious liberty. These preachers render the atheists a great service by hiding from the public the real situation. They make the world believe that we have much freedom without chains and oppressions. These men behave so, because they love this world; and they receive their reward on earth.

The prisoners spend their years in the quiet embrace of Jesus, sleeping faithfully on his bosom. They ought not to be troubled by such lies uttered by men of the clergy.

Do not awake love

The demand addressed to the daughters of Jerusalem also has another meaning. We must not awaken artificially the love that is in us. We must wait until it is given to us by God. God's heart must encounter our hearts. Even the false faith of another person should not be corrected by force before the time is right. That would do them more harm than leaving them temporarily in their erroneous beliefs. Allow time to do its work.

A Moslem in a Russian jail asked a Christian pastor, "If Christianity is so great, will we have this faith after we die? Where will Muhammad, our prophet, be then?"

The pastor replied, "Muhammad, like everyone else, will receive there according to his deeds. I do not believe God will reject him. God loves everyone."

"Our religious leaders say that only Moslems will be saved, and that Christians and Jews will go to the devil."

"Are you married?" asked the pastor.

"Yes, and I have children."

The pastor continued: "If you had three children, and two were blind, would you think of all of them as yours?"

"Of course," answered the Moslem. "And I would love the blind ones more than the other."

"Similarly," concluded the pastor, "God loves men of all faiths. Compared to his love, ours is like a piece of ice compared to the sun. God sends nobody to hell because he belongs to another religion." Soon the Moslem was baptized, and received appropriate instruction in the Christian faith.

Stirring up love, using brutal means to bring somebody to the true faith and exercising coercion, produce great catastrophes. There are enough evils in this world. We do not need another - artificial, unnatural, faked love.

It is terrible to awaken needs that don't exist. Why don't we wait until the needs come? Why do we stir up feelings by artificial techniques? How often this great crime is committed by religious leaders. All manner of means are employed to attract the masses!

So it comes about that men fill the churches, not because they love the Saviour, but because they are under some kind of physical or psychological compulsion. When persecution comes, it becomes obvious that these souls did not have a real love for God. Our love towards Christ must be authentic, bridal love.

Bridal love

The secret police had come to search the house of Antonii, the Orthodox bishop of Arkhangelsk. Finding the vessel

used for Holy Communion, they threw it on the floor and trampled on it. The bishop threw himself across it, trying to protect it with his body. He lost consciousness. When he awoke he was in jail.

They asked his opinion about the future of the Russian Church, and wanted to know if he desired the overthrow of the Soviets. He answered that the Church would be glorified through the suffering of its martyrs, as it was in

the first centuries, and that he prayed daily that the Soviet government would not shed blood and would be forgiven for its sins.

First he was threatened with death, then was promised freedom if he would become an informer for the police. The bishop was not frightened, and could not be bought. He was put in a small cell together with five others. They endured bitter cold, and received only two glasses of water a day and nothing else. They could not wash or change their clothes, and lived in their own stench. They lost their teeth. The bishop became so weak that he could not clean the invading bugs and lice out of his beard. When he felt death near he chanted his own funeral service. He died with prayers on his lips. He was an authentic bride of Christ.

Leaping upon the mountains

The bride says, "The voice of my beloved! behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart; behold, he stands behind our wall, he looks forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice" (SOS 2:8-9). He comes leaping upon the mountains. Difficulties mean nothing to him. He does not know discouragement. He bears for us the curse, the burden, of death on the cross; he fights the

powers of darkness. He leaps over our bad deeds as well; he leaps over them as if they had never existed.

Some people doubt that our salvation can be very near, because not all the biblical prophecies about the last times have yet been fulfilled. But when Jesus returns, he will not worry about our calculations. He leaps upon the mountains.

"He stands behind our wall"

Only a wall separates us from him. This knowledge was a great comfort to prisoners in a Communist camp who were compelled to stand facing a wall for weeks.

~Midrash Rabba~, a rabbinical commentary on the Song, says that what is meant here is the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, a wall from which the glory of God never departs. But we recall Job's words: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" (JOB 19:25). Our flesh, our body, is the wall which separates the bride from the Bridegroom. He is behind this wall. After death we will be face to face with him.

For the time being he looks through the windows; sometimes one, sometimes another. He examines one side of our character, then another side, to know what stage of spiritual maturity we have reached. We, too, must be attentive to what is going on in our souls. Knowing this, St Blandine, a slave girl from Lyon, went to her death before the wild animals "radiant with joy as if she had been invited to a wedding feast." Saint Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, wrote, "Let me be the fodder of the beasts, by which I might find God. Let me imitate the example of my God." Also Origen, another celebrated teacher of the Church, said in a sermon, "I do not doubt that in this

assembly there are men known to God alone, who are already martyrs for him by the testimony of their conscience; because they are ready even now, if asked, to shed their blood for the name of Jesus Christ."

The winter is past

Here the most beautiful part of Solomon's Song begins. What follows are words appropriate for those convicted of sin; and they are a great source of comfort for the saints when they have passed through a period of depression. They are also fitting words for the time of a believer's death: "My beloved answered and said unto me, 'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock,

in the secret places of the stairs, let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is comely'" (SOS 2:10-14). The bride hears the voice of her much-beloved. She does not see him, but she recognizes his voice, and is overcome by an unspoken joy.

The bride says, "My beloved answered and said unto me" (this is the precise translation of the Hebrew). We often find this expression used elsewhere about the Lord; he is said to have answered when nobody has asked him anything. He responds to the unspoken anxieties of the heart. We should practise not only vocal but also mental prayer. Let our unspoken thoughts and affections rise up to him!

page 103 The Sweetest Song

The word ~anah~ used here means "to answer" and "to sing," or, rather, "to chant," as they do in synagogues, Orthodox churches and mosques. Solomon's Song, like the whole Hebrew Bible, contains not only text but also musical notation, indicating how it should be chanted. The ~Zohar~ says, "the tonal accents were also delivered to Moses on Sinai." This applies to the Law of Moses and also to the other books of the Old Testament. Anybody who does not know the tonal accents does not know the entire revelation of God. The same words sung in different keys stir up different feelings. This book has in truth been given to us as a song. In fact, Solomon has been described as the first composer of opera.

"In the clefts of the rock"

Believers are strong and unyielding towards sin. That is why it is written, "Judah is like a lion's cub." But in their relationship with God, they are like innocent and inoffensive doves, loving quiet and serenity. Like doves, they are faithful to their mate, the Bridegroom.

This dove is in its right place - in the clefts of the rock which is Christ. If she is with him, a cleft of a rock is as good as the King's chamber, a prison cell as good as a comfortable house. Jesus encourages her to have communion with Him: "Let me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is comely." How sweet is the voice of the believer in Jesus! A Jewish

commentator asks why the wives of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were barren. It was because God loved their prayers, their words and their voices. God allowed them to be barren so that they would need to pray for healing from barrenness. Why do believers undergo troubles? Because to God, their voices are sweet. He

desires that they should lift their voices in prayer and in song to him.

Some believers have been known to produce tremendous effects with their voices. A Christian, released not long before from a Lithuanian prison, wrote:

> My outward appearance is not attractive. In the slave labour camp, I worked underground. There was an accident which left me a hunchback. Once a boy stopped me on the street and asked, "Uncle, what do you have on your back?" I was sure that mockery would follow, but I still replied, "A hump."
>
> "No!" said the child. "God is love, He gives deformities to nobody. You do not have a hump, but a box below your shoulders. Inside, angel's wings are hidden. One day the box will open; and with those wings you will fly to heaven."
>
> I began to cry with joy; I am crying now, even as I write.

Such was the achievement of one Christian child's voice. Because his voice was rightly modulated, he could make a hunchback happy. Therefore the Bridegroom says, "Let me hear your voice, for sweet is your voice."

Cederholm, a Finnish prisoner in the USSR who eventually got free because he was a foreigner, says that in Leningrad he was put in a cell reserved for men under sentence of death. There he found, among many other inscriptions written by those who had been awaiting execution, the following words: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Archimandrite Anthony, of Alexandro-Nevsky monastery, is to be shot tonight for refusing to burden his conscience with a grievous sin. Forgive them, Lord, for they know not what they do. Good people, tell my brethren I leave this world with peace in my soul." The inscriptions on the walls alternated with inscribed crosses,

under which were names and dates. In the corner of the cell was an image of St. Seraphim of Sarov, drawn in indelible pencil. The image was poignantly drawn by an untrained hand, but all the details were carefully done, and it was signed thus: "Ecaterina, the servant of God, drew this image, thinking of her little children who are praying to the just God for their Mama." How beautiful are the voices of those who speak like this!

"Sweet is your voice"

Saint Augustine wrote, "Whoever praises God in song praises Him twice – in the words, and in the music." Much depends on the spirit in which we sing. In the Soviet Union, there were Christians who have not owned a hymnal for decades. In Red China the same is true. With what exuberant joy they sing when hymnals are smuggled to China for them! We should sing with the same joy.

In Communist prisons, naked Christians were thrown crosswise over narrow tables. Their legs dangled from one side; from the others, the head and arms. The legs were tied to the arms with straps. One either side, Communists stood with whips and beat the prisoners until they bled. Before being beaten, they were told to sing. They could have refused, and paid for their refusal with a more savage beating. But why should they not sing, when hymns like ~O Sacred Head now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down~ were demanded from them?

One of those who underwent this ordeal was a Hebrew Christian. He knew the story of Rabbi Akiba, who sang while being combed with red-hot iron combs and died a martyr's death under the ordeal. Akiba's disciples asked him, "How can you sing when you are suffering so greatly?"

He replied, "All my life I have desired to love God with all my heart and all my soul, but I was always distracted by worldly things. Now for the first time I can praise God with all my heart."

It was a rare privilege for that Hebrew Christian to sing such a song just before being flogged until he bled.

Let the reader imagine himself in such a situation. Let

him visualize the scene, and try to sing those words himself:

~O Sacred Head now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, Thine only crown.
O Sacred Head, what glory, what bliss till now was Thine
Yet though despised and gory, I joy to call Thee mine.~

Sometimes Christians were ordered to sing "A mighty fortress is our God," in the certain knowledge that after a few minutes they would be tortured. Nevertheless they sang that God is a trusty shield and weapon, that "He helps us free from every need that has us now overtaken." The Communists mocked them. "Do you really believe that God will help you free from this need?" they said. Catholics sang the song, ~Hail, Mary, full of grace.~

I personally went through the extremes of temptation and doubt when I passed through similar situations. I was forced to sing Psalm 121 [PSA 121], "...My help comes from the Lord. He will not suffer your foot to be moved ... He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper." We asked ourselves then "What is the value of such words when they don't correspond in any way to the reality in which we are living?" And in that situation I had a revelation, which forever pacified my mind, however terrible the circumstances.

I thought, "To whom are such promises made?" There was only one possible answer: "To me, and to the "me" of every believer." But who is this "me"? A "me" only has existence as an abstraction, just as pure gold or uranium

are abstractions. In nature we only find ores. These have to be melted down in a furnace in order to extract one little bit of uranium or gold from huge quantities. The case is similar with the "me" in every believer. In a soul there are so many elements which do not belong to the "me." They are the influences of heredity, of a poor education and of all kinds of demonic evil. Only very little of us forms the "me," what St. Teresa of Avila called "the inner castle."

My real personality - my uniqueness - is an image of God; it is my sanctified being, united with Christ; it is what St. Peter calls "the hidden man of the heart" (1PE 3:4). The promises that nothing will hurt us, that we will be protected from all harm, do not apply to the whole ore. In order that the real me should live in perfect cleanliness and holiness, the ore has to pass through cleansing fire. I

know that the inner castle will not be harmed, that the God of Israel watches over it. The only part of me that matters can be at peace. No enemy will ever reach it.

Let us sing in this spirit; and then we too will hear the Bridegroom say, "Let us hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is comely." The word used in the Hebrew is actually a plural word – "countenances." The relaxed, serene face of a Christian at ease; the joyful face of one having a good time; the distorted face of one in pain; the marred face of one who is enduring torture; the radiant face of one in ecstasy – they are all comely in his sight.

"The little forces"

The Bridegroom tells the bride, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes" (SOS 2:15). He does not say, "take me," but "take us." Both Bridegroom and bride desire to enjoy the fruit of the

vine. It is their common interest to eradicate the foxes which spoil it. All who wish to help in this task, and are capable of it, are included in this calling.

What is meant by these foxes? Firstly, they are our corruptions. Those things in us which hinder the flourishing of godly life must be set aside. Foxes are animals which often turn their heads and look back. They are usually portrayed in that attitude. It is a characteristic in us also, and one which must be reformed. Whosoever has put his hand to the plough of the Kingdom and looks back, is not worthy of Jesus. The fox is also a byword for cunning. A believer should not be devious.

Our battle is not only against major sins but also against minor ones. It is possible for the sun in all its greatness to be reflected in a mirror, even though the sun is so much larger than the earth; yet the tiniest object that interposes itself between the mirror and the sun obscures it. So our little hearts can mirror the great God; but the slightest thing can hide our hearts from him. Thomas More wrote:

> Alas, how light a cause may move
> Dissension between hearts that love.
> Hearts that the world in vain has tried

In sorrow, but more closely tied
Which stood the storm when waves were rough
Yet in a sunny hour fell off
Like ships that have gone down at sea
When heaven was all tranquillity.

We should never underestimate the harm a small sin can do. Think what damage a tiny microbe or an invisible virus can do; they can bring about your death. So it is with sin. Little flies and ants destroy animal carcasses with astonishing speed. A swarm of ants can devour a horse's corpse as quickly as can a lion. Our vineyards are not yet in fruit; because even if they have reached great excellence, our earthly virtues are only blossoms. The fruit

will not be seen until the life to come. For the time being, the vineyard is in bloom. And we must beware of foxes – even little foxes.

Let us remember that just as the soul can be devastated not only by gross sins but also by a multitude of neglected minor sins, so the life of holiness in its turn is not only composed of great heroic deeds, but also of a multitude of small actions and brief words. It is not only the miracles and the martyr deaths which have significance, but also the small deeds. It is not only the lightning which counts, but also the sunbeam; not only the powerful torrents and roaring waterfalls, but also the quiet pools of Siloam.

It matters that we should avoid small evils, refrain from little sins and minor inconsistencies and weaknesses. We should avoid foolishness and not fall into some small indiscretion or imprudence. It matters that we should resist making concessions to our self, to our earthly nature. We need to beware those fleeting moments of laziness and indecision and those small acts of cowardice. An important element of the holy life is the rejection of these things.

When the United States first launched its space shuttle, it was announced that the failure of a tiny piece of plastic, worth mere cents, had resulted in a million-dollar delay in America's space programme. A brief quarrel with a marriage partner over a trifling matter can destroy a Christian marriage, wreck the children's personalities and bring the gospel into disrepute in the neighbourhood.

Two women went to a monastery to worship. One had her conscience burdened with a great sin. The other did not regard herself as a sinner, because she had been guilty only of small things. The abbot listened to their

confessions, and then sent them both to a field. He ordered the great sinner to bring the largest stone she could find. The one with only small sins was told to bring only little stones. This they did. After they had brought the stones to the abbot he said, "Now put them back, each in the exact place you found it."

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The woman who had brought the small stones hesitated. The abbot asked her why. She answered, "It is difficult, because there are so many, and I can't remember where they all came from."

Then the abbot told her, "Remember, your companion has committed just one, big, evil deed. But she remembers it, regrets it, and washes it with her tears. She knows the place from which the stone was taken. But you, with your small and unimportant sins, just like the little foxes in Solomon's Song, which spoil the vines, can't remember how or when or to whom you did wrong. And because your sins are small and numerous you may not even be able to repair them. They remain a burden on your soul, just as these little stones remain in your apron."

Hearing these words, the woman bowed her head and acknowledged that she was no purer than her sister. She understood that she, who had committed only small sins, also needed to repent of them and be forgiven in order to purify her soul. Let us take heed of small sins.

Once two men built a wall. When one of them was placing a brick, he noticed that it was thicker in one place than another. "Throw it away," said his friend, "and get another. Otherwise the results will be unsatisfactory."

"Leave me alone," the first man retorted. "How can such a little thing, which nobody is going to notice, do any harm? You take things too seriously." He continued putting one brick upon another until evening, when they finished their work and went home.

What did they see when they came to work the next day? Because of that one uneven brick, the wall had not been vertical. Because of the way it had been built, it had leaned further and further over. As a consequence it had collapsed during the night, and the work had to be done all over again. So it is with every small sin or little untruth in our hearts. A very small lie will grow and grow in us, until it brings us shame and reproach. Don't regard little sins as unimportant.

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Our universe is made up of things so tiny that they cannot be seen even through the most powerful of microscopes. The diameter of the dome of St. Peter's basilica in Rome is about the same measurement as the height of a fourteen-storey house. Imagine a dust particle in it. As the size of the dust particle is to that of the basilica, so (approximately) is the size of an electron compared to that of an atom. And if everything were to be increased in size so that a baseball became the size of the planet earth, then the atoms of the baseball would become the size of grapes. When the electrons and protons function normally, they sustain our lives. When they are tampered with, a town like Nagasaki disappears. It is of the greatest importance that the smallest of things should function correctly. Beware of little foxes!

Children's sins

Often we are not serious in drawing the attention of children to their sins, because they are so small. But small sins can poison a child's life. On the other hand, children who have repented of their small sins and have been purified by the blood of Christ are capable of great things for him.

In a small village school in Communist Hungary there were children who had fought their small sins and now had great faith. A new teacher arrived - a militant atheist whose objective was to root out religion from the hearts of the children.

One day she summoned little Angela - a very pious girl - and asked her, "What do you do if your parents call you?"

"I come immediately."

"What happens if your parents call somebody else?"

"They come, too."

"Well," said the teacher, "they all come, and you come, because you really exist. But suppose your parents called your grandparents, who have been dead a long time. Would they come?"

"Surely not!"

"And if they were to call Red Riding Hood or Snow

White - would they come?"

"Surely not, because they are just imaginary."

"You see, children," said the teacher triumphantly, "only living beings, which actually exist, can respond to a call. If somebody doesn't come when called, he is not alive. Is that clear?"

"Yes," replied the whole class.

The teacher sent Angela out of the classroom and told her to stand by the door. Then she said to the other children, "Call her!" The children shouted, "Angela! Angela!" Angela immediately entered the room.

"Now, everything is clear," declared the teacher. "You have all been brought up to believe in Jesus. You believe that he exists, that he is alive, and that he hears you when you speak to him. Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Now, we will try an experiment. Angela entered the classroom when we called her. So, everybody, on the count of three shout as loudly as you can, "Come, Lord Jesus; come, Lord Jesus!" One, two, three - begin to call!"

Nobody dared to shout. The teacher laughed. "There you have the proof. You don't even dare to call him, because you know he would not come. He could not come, because he is just as imaginary as Red Riding Hood or Snow White."

Then something unexpected happened. Angela turned to the children and said, "We will call Jesus! All together - Come, Lord Jesus!"

With hands folded and a deep yearning in their hearts,

with total confidence, the children began to chant, "Come, Lord Jesus! Come, Lord Jesus!" Angela prompted them again and again: "Come, Lord Jesus!" They shouted so loudly that it seemed as if the walls would crumble.

What happened next, according to the children's later account, was that they saw the door opening; then a great light shone through; and then standing bathed in that light was a beautiful child, smiling at them. At the same time they heard their teacher's despairing cry. "He has come! He has come!"

She rushed from the room, slamming the door behind her. She had to be put into an asylum; she had gone mad.

The children were rigorously cross-examined by pastors. Their accounts of what had happened did not contradict one another. This is an authentic story.

Little children can do great things for the Lord, if they

forsake their little sins!

"I am not"

The bride says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his" (SOS 2:16). Baalshem-Tov, the founder of the Hassidic sect within Judaism, fainted whenever he read these words. For a believer, they are too much to contemplate.

But there is something even better than this peak of beauty. Male love is often selfish and ambitious to possess for itself, but our love for Jesus is of the female type - free of selfishness, persisting only in the ambition to give itself completely.

The believing soul is continually growing. Its first word is an exclamation of triumph. The soul possesses the beloved, and exclaims, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." When she has grown, she does not put herself first anymore, but modestly says, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine"

(SOS 6:3). The order of the words is changed. When she has grown even more, she is satisfied in giving herself without asking for anything in return: "I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me" (SOS 7:10).

The Hebrew word for "his" is ~lo~, but the same word also means "not" in spoken Hebrew (there is a difference in the way the word is written, but the oral form came first and is more significant here). The verse, when only spoken, could quite accurately be translated, "My beloved is mine, and I am not." He is everything in the believer's life. No place remains for a "me."

Those rare souls who have really attained to the truth, that the Beloved is theirs and they "are not" anymore, have unique experiences.

By those who "are not" I mean those who have come to the height of heights, those who in prison have known not only heavenly raptures but raptures to the heaven of heavens (1KI 8:27); those who - eluding all enquiry, withdrawn from all knowing - have come to that place from which one looks down to heaven. It is that part of the temple above of which God says, "Behold, there is a place by me" (EXO 33:21).

Almost all these believers died in prison or shortly after

their release, like Bishop Hirtsa and Mgr Ghicay. I have had the privilege of sharing a prison cell with such a man. He did not say much. From the little he did say, I gathered that he saw what St. John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila tried to describe.

He discovered that you can know things better by looking to the God in whom they have their being, life and movement than by looking at those things themselves. All things are dark. Even physical light is dark. Only he throws a light on them. Therefore the Psalmist said, "In your light we see light" (PSA 36:9). Others come to know God by looking at the things he has created. The mystics know the reality of creation by looking at the Creator.

Such prisoners did not see him face to face. God is

veiled, and anybody who sees God without a veil has not seen the whole reality of Godhead. The veils are part of it. If you see a man without his skin you do not see him properly, because the skin is part of who he is. It veils his inner parts, which should be veiled.

Ten doctorates and a lifetime lasting thousands of years would not teach a man what those believers saw in a single moment of such rapture.

What I have written above is an educated guess as to what they would have said, if what they knew could have been expressed in words. When they came back from this rapture, they returned as people who had seen men, events and things as God sees them. They did not say a great deal, and what they did say they said to very few. But their faces and their eyes spoke for them.

I was reminded of these, my former fellow-inmates, when I read of the manner of the conversion of Rosario Rivera, the Peruvian terrorist. She chanced to attend an evangelistic meeting led by the well-known Latin American preacher Luis Palau. Afterwards, she wrote:

> He [Luis Palau] put Rosario Rivera, who had come as an eminent member of the Peruvian Communist Party, before her own eyes in all her crude inner reality. Not even Che Guevara [her chief, and model of terrorism] could see what I was like inside, though I had been at his side for four months. But this man described my life, and brought to light the things that were deep inside me. I bit my tongue; I did not know what to do. He told me the things I had done, how I had robbed, killed, perverted young people, abused my home, trafficked in drugs, and

much more besides. I saw myself stripped naked.

Luis Palau had seen her with God's eyes. But he saw her also as very beloved by God and brought her to salvation. Such is the privilege of those who "are not."

Mary, the mother of the Lord, is an example of how far

a human being can rise if one effaces oneself before God. Jacob of Saroug, a Syrian bishop in the fifth century who composed Christian hymns, wrote in a hymn to her:

> She is highly blessed because the limits of her body have contained the Unlimited, who fills the heavens without their being able to circumscribe Him. She is most blessed, because she gave breast to the One who rules over the waves of the sea. She is most blessed, because she carried the powerful giant who carries the world. She has embraced Him and covered Him with kisses. She is most blessed, because her lips touched the One whose burning love causes angels of fire to withdraw. She is most blessed because she has nourished with her milk the One who gives life to all the world.

"My beloved is mine and I am not." What has happened to me, when I am no more and only he remains? The aim of my life has then been fulfilled. Basil of Caesarea wrote, "Every spiritual being is, by his nature, a temple of God created to receive in himself the glory of God." When my Beloved is mine, and I "am not," what is visible of me continues. But each of us has two natures: the visible and the invisible. If I have submitted to divine will, the invisible part of me has united with God.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa said that man is simultaneously a micro-cosmos and a micro-God. In the life of the bride, the micro-cosmos decreases in importance, and God, in the literal sense of the word, is magnified. Pascal wrote, "Man is infinitely more than man." In his own life he was able to make a reality of Jesus' words, "You are gods" (JHN 10:34). When God makes his dwelling in us, we have more than mere biological, sociological and psychological possibilities within us. The sun and the moon are called "light" in the Bible. In the same way we are called "the light of the world." Our possibilities are immense. Saint Gregory wrote, "When you turn to watch

him, you become what he is." We have the aptitude for it; let us not waste it. It is for this that we were created in God's image. Let us follow the bride's passionate decision to be his. God can do everything, except compel somebody to love him. That decision must come from us.

But take care! There are beautiful compliments addressed to the people of Israel in the Bible, who were God's beloved. But, after a time, the people turned to sin, and God's opinion of them changed. We cannot simply rely on beautiful loving words addressed to us by God in the past. We must take care to abide in his love.

Feeding among lilies

The bride says, "He feeds among the lilies" (SOS 2:6). He has said that his brides are his lilies. We, his flock, feed with him among the lilies, who already are the saints of the past and present. The example of their lives nourishes us.

A Rumanian Christian, Lydia Arsenescou, had been sentenced to death for her faith. She was a young girl of eighteen or nineteen, and she was very beautiful. Her last evening had come. The execution always took place promptly at midnight, and for this reason the Christians called the firing squad "the midnight bride."

Wardens had brought some gruel in pottery vessels into the cell. It was the evening meal. All the prisoners were hungry but none cared to eat. All the other women pitied the young and beautiful girl who had to die that night.

But suddenly her face began to shine. She lifted the pottery dish and said, "I have a boyfriend. I love him greatly, and he loves me. He hoped that one day this my body would be in his embrace. But it will not be so; tonight I will be shot. And after a few years, what was my body will have become clay, just like the clay from which this pot was

made. And, after a few more years, some other potter will make a vessel out of what was once my body. Who knows what is in this vessel? Perhaps what was once the beaming eye of a lover! My body will decay, but I will not die.

"Jesus said, 'Whosoever lives and believes in me will never die.' And I believe these words of Jesus more than the rifles which will be pointed at me tonight. I believe

them more than the bullets that will pierce my chest tonight. I believe them more than the open grave which is already waiting for me.

"I am not my body. I am an eternal spirit. Tonight I shall not die. Jesus is a gentleman; he will keep his word. Tonight, by his grace, I will enter through gates of pearl into the golden city. I will see and hear angels playing on their harps. I will be with the saints and the finest men of all the centuries, and above all, I will rest on Jesus' bosom, and there I will wait for my boyfriend to come too."

They came for her a few minutes before midnight. As she passed through the vaulted corridors of the underground prison, her voice could still be heard, reflected from wall to wall. She recited the Creed – the same Creed we all recite in church – but in her mouth, it had an entirely new significance. When she said, "I believe in one God, maker of heaven and earth," she really meant it. She knew; there really is a heaven. The proof was that she forsook earth for it. When she said, "I believe in the one Lord, Jesus Christ," the words rang true. Jesus really was her Lord. She was ready to give up her youth for him. And then they heard her last words: "I believe in the resurrection of the body, and in life everlasting." After this a few shots were heard. The poor Communists believed that they had killed her. They did not know that they had sent her to the embraces of the most beautiful Bridegroom of all.

On such examples, Jesus feeds us. He feeds his flock among the lilies. He has other saints as well, whose mentality is completely different to that of Christians of this century. The Church considers as saints believers such

as Simon the Stylite, who remained on top of a column in the Egyptian desert for thirty years. When he was too weak to remain there, he had a post erected and chained himself to that. Many others followed his example, and stood in the burning heat of the day and the cold of the night. By doing so, they were trying to annihilate the part of them that lusted after sin.

Saint Etheldreda also believed that the flesh is evil and dirty. She refused to cleanse it, and walked about unwashed. So did the man whom Church history records as St. Anthony the Great, who is remembered for his stand with St. Athanasius in the great fight against the Arian heresy.

We would not enjoy being in the company of such people. But when a reed is bent, the only way to straighten

it is to bend it in the opposite direction. In a world in which so many die from hunger and others spend their money on useless creams and costly perfumes, it is good that here and there individuals exist who demonstrate, by extreme attitudes, the vanity of our way of life. They too are lilies, among whom Jesus feeds his flock.

Christians were prevented from washing for weeks, months and sometimes years in Communist prisons, and they became full of lice, loathsome to themselves and others. It was a very great help to them, and a reinforcement of their faith, to remember that there were once saints who adopted this burden voluntarily.

Jesus feeds his sheep among lilies. No other shepherd can do that.

The sending away of the Beloved

The bride says, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart

upon the mountains of Bether" (SOS 2:17). I know of a Christian who was in solitary confinement for years, in much hunger and pain. Sometimes he was aware of Jesus asking him, "Is it too difficult for you? Shall I ease your lot?" Again and again he replied, "Please, Jesus, see to others. I can bear it; I'm all right."

This is the mentality of the bride. She tells Jesus to follow his calling as a king. She can carry the cross allotted to her in the hope that, when the evening comes, he will return to her. She is reluctant to make continual demands upon him.

When the apostle Peter realized who Jesus was, he said to him, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man" (LUK 5:8). Peter was very grateful that Jesus had increased his catch to an exceptionally great multitude of fish. But he also knew that a being like Jesus could do greater things than merely provide a fisherman with a miraculous haul. Like the bride in the Song, he wanted him to go away and do his more marvelous work. Peter was prepared to be content with a normal-sized catch.

The bride sends the Bridegroom away to the mountains of Bether (SOS 2:17). The word ~bether~ means "separation." She believes it is possible to exist without him, to be separate

from him. This thought brings us to the third chapter of the Song of Songs, a book so important that Origen, one of the distinguished teachers of the Church in the third century, wrote twelve volumes about it. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux delivered eighty-six sermons on the first two chapters alone. The great German writer, Goethe, called it "the most divine of all love songs." Herder said of it, "The song is written as though from paradise." It is a book which repays thorough study.

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÷ Chapter 3 ÷

Seeking the Bridegroom

The bride says: "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loves: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loves: I sought him, but I found him not" (SOS 3:1-2). Theologians will tell you, "It is difficult to find God; wherewith will you find him?" Dionysius the Areopagite wrote:

> If it should happen that somebody should see God and understand what he sees, then he has not seen God Himself... for He surpasses any intelligence and any essence. He exists only to the degree to which He is totally unknown ...
>
> Thus we say that the Universal Cause situated beyond the whole universe is neither matter nor body.
>
> It has no face. It has no shape, no form, no quality, no mass. It is in no place, it cannot be apprehended by our senses ... Ascending higher, we say now that this Cause has no soul and no intelligence ... It cannot be expressed, nor conceived.
>
> It has no number, no order, no grandeur, no smallness, no equality, no similitude, no dissimilitude. It does not rest unmoved; neither does it move. It is neither power nor light. It does not live and is not life.
>
> It is not essence, nor perpetuity, nor time. It has no knowledge, no truth, no wisdom. It is not one, nor

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> unity, nor divinity, nor good; neither spirit nor affiliation nor paternity, in the sense we use this word.

But the bride mistrusts philosophy - even religious philosophy. She seeks him diligently, night after night (the Hebrew word in verse 1 [SOS 3:1] means "nights"). She has been promised that, provided she does not seek the living among the dead, she will not seek in vain: "Whoever seeks, shall find" (LUK 11:10). She deceived herself when she imagined she could live separated from him; now she seeks him.

You cannot find him from a bed of ease, lying quietly in comfort. You have to strive. The bride realizes that her sighing, and demanding and others' intervention do not bring her the Beloved. The soul must become active; it must practise spiritual exercises.

Exposing herself to all the risks which any girl runs who walks alone at night-time, the bride walks on darkened streets, seeking her Beloved. She travels all kinds of roads. There is no place where she does not seek him. She looks in the face of every passer-by, to see if she can can glean information from anybody about the one she loves.

But the Beloved is not a man of public places. Righteous men usually shun such places, because there one can expect to find mostly evil. Jesus too lived, for the most part, a private life. When He was twelve years old, his parents lost him. They looked for him in the wrong place; in the caravan, where he never is. So he asked them, when they found him, "How is it that you sought me?" He told them where he always is, where he can readily be found by anybody: at "My Father's business" (LUK 2:49). That is the only place where he may legitimately be sought.

Jesus said these words not only to Mary, but also to his adoptive father, Joseph. What we must understand from this is that the child had already made up his mind. His supreme ambition was not to be an assistant in Joseph's workshop. He had another Father, a heavenly Father; and he was going to be in his service.

The watchmen of the city

The bride says, "The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, "Saw you him whom my soul loves?" It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loves: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me" (SOS 3:3-4). The watchmen of the city are the bishops,

priests, pastors, preachers, rabbis and mullahs of different religions. Some brides fall in love with them and with their ornate services and beautiful sermons, and because of these they forget to go on seeking the Bridegroom himself, whom you can find only when you go on from them. You find Jesus only when you have left every creature behind.

In practice it is difficult to distinguish the ambitions of such as Horeb, Datan and Abiram (who in the Old Testament rebelled against Moses, the God-appointed authority over the people) from those of the brides who, because of their unlimited love for Jesus, leave the watchmen behind without despising them. But it is not for us to judge others. We trust that everyone does the best of which he is capable.

In the end, the bride finds the Beloved outside the city, at night. And what energy she shows then! She takes hold of him, and says to him - as Jacob once said to an angel - "I will not leave you until you bless me." [GEN 32:26] She took hold of him and would not let him go. Simply to find Jesus, is not enough. You must also know how to keep him.

The bride brings him into the house of her mother, the Church. Saint Cyprian said, "Whosoever has God as his Father, has the Church as his mother." The worth of a church service consists only in the fact that the worshippers, the brides, have come to the service bringing Jesus with them.

There are some very bad church leaders. Many

Protestant and Catholic church leaders have remained silent about the closure of tens of thousands of churches in Russia, China, North Korea, and Albania. Even worse than that, some Catholic and Protestant church leaders praise the persecutors, describing them as nice people. Other church leaders, while probably being worthy individuals, are not truly ready to die for what they believe.

In the Rumanian prison of Piteshti, prisoners were forced to actively deny their faith by gross blasphemy of the Eucharist. They were made to scream sacred melodies, in which filthy words replaced those of the hymns. They were made to gesture degradingly with their genitals. They were made to eat excrement. This obscene parody of the Eucharist was intended to transform the worship into a demonic drama of evil and hatred.

The result was minds in chaos. The brainwashers thereby achieved mastery of the prisoners, who identified

with their new masters and so felt loyalty to them. Then the prisoners were expected to prove that loyalty by inflicting torment on another group of inmates. Should one of these "re-educated" prisoners be observed to be lenient in his beating of others or careless in depriving them of sleep, such mercy was interpreted as a breach of his new loyalty. He would then be put through the agony again himself.

Sometimes Christians who, after unspeakable tortures, had turned Communist in prison were asked to conceal their new loyalty. They invented a so-called fake Christian organization and enlisted teenage prisoners. Those teenagers believed that they had found "watchmen" who could tell them about the Bridegroom. Imagine the shock in the hearts of those young people when the very teachers who had brought them to Christ at a pre-arranged signal produced cudgels and beat them viciously. They were assaulted until they denied Christ, whose adoration their persecutors had previously taught.
[A. Ratziu, ~Stolen Church~]

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In Guyana, "Reverend" Jim Jones, leader of the People's Temple, ordered the suicide of all his followers and the slaughter of their children. In all 920 people died. Jones was a "watchman" who had mixed Marxism with Christianity, a mixture in which the latter always perishes, leaving only murders and Marxism.

Horrors such as this and the atrocities at Piteshti were happening at a time when Communism was well spoken of by some church leaders in the East and the West. Obviously, a bride has to leave such "watchmen" behind, if she is to find Christ himself.

But there are also some very trustworthy church leaders. The late Rumanian Bishop Hossu, who spent twenty-two years in prison, said, "You cannot know how painful the suffering of a bishop is, over the sad destiny of his church and his nation. It can only be compared to the torment of Jesus in Gethsemane and on the cross, when He foresaw all the persecutions that would be unleashed through the centuries, by the enemies of the church." Another trustworthy leader was the Russian Adventist Shtshelkov, who died in prison aged eighty-four, after twenty-four years in jail, standing firm for what he believed. Sadly, such leaders are few and far between.

But the bride does not need to stop at pastors. We are not limited to hearing the Word only from them. The

bride in Solomon's Song finds Jesus when she leaves the watchmen behind. She finds sweetness even in barbed wire thorns. In Siberian snows, among ferocious prison guards, brides of Christ detect the fragrance of the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys in the smells, sights and sounds of the concentration camps.

In Golgothaean Christianity, personal meetings with Jesus are frequently described. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux wrote:

> I never knew the precise moment of the coming of the Word. I felt His presence. I remember He was with me.

> I sometimes had a presentiment that He would come, but I sensed neither His coming nor His going. I do not know where He went after leaving me, nor by what means He came and went.
>
> You will ask me how I know that He was present, if His coming was incomprehensible. I will reply that He is alive and full of energy. Immediately upon entering me, He awoke my sleeping soul. He aroused and softened and taught my heart, which had been as hard as stone. He began uprooting and pulling down, planting and building, watering the dry places and lightening the dark ones.

There have been some visions of angels and of Christ in the prisons, but these are not the norm. More often one can tell that the bride has seized hold of Christ by the profound change in the attitude of the Christian prisoners.

The beautiful daughter of the Lutheran pastor, Traube, worked in the office of a Soviet Collective. The local Communist Party secretary offered her the choice of becoming his lover or seeing her father arrested and his church closed. After a long resistance she yielded. She became pregnant, hanged herself, and left a letter in her pocket explaining why she had done so.

A comrade found the letter and brought it to the guilty Communist, who destroyed it and forged another in her handwriting. It claimed that her father had raped her and that she could not bear the shame. As a result the father was sentenced and the church was closed.

Sex offenders in jail are attacked by other prisoners. Though falsely accused, Pastor Traube suffered a great deal at the hands of his fellow-inmates. He tried to pray, in vain. He could not say the words, "Forgive them Father,

for they know not what they do." He could not forgive the wicked wrong done to him by the Communists. He became ill.

One day, a new prisoner was put in the cell. It was the

man responsible for his daughter's death, the closure of his church and all the torment he had undergone. The Communist had been jailed for embezzlement.

When Traube realized the misery that this criminal was experiencing – overburdened by guilt, jailed by his own comrades, lacking any knowledge of the Saviour – he drowned his own sufferings in the much deeper ones of the Communist. On his deathbed, the pastor finally said the Lord's Prayer right through. He forgave. He died with a look of radiance on his face. He had the soul of a bride who has sought the Beloved, and at the end had seized hold of him. He had had a personal meeting with Jesus.

Christ, known in personal experiences in exceptional circumstances such as these, can be brought to the mother's house, the Church. The Church will be greatly blessed by our encounters with Christ.

The bride ascends from the desert

The bride says, "Who is this that comes out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant? Behold his [palanquin], which is Solomon's" (SOS 3:6-7). The bride has passed out of the city into the desert, and she has learned a great deal there. The desert is not in fact as arid as people believe. Thousands of different plants thrive there. What characterizes them all is great adaptability. Without it, in a region with little rain and a summer temperature above 120 degrees, they would be lost. The bride could not survive either, were she not adaptable to different social structures and political regimes.

The saguaro is a cactus of the Arizona desert. Its roots, seeking out every drop of moisture, can spread as far as a

hundred feet. During rainfall it takes in reserves of water like a camel, in preparation for dry periods which can last for years. It literally grows fat with water. Its girth can

increase by half, or even more. One saguaro was found to contain more than thirty tons of liquid, "an engineering feat which probably has no parallel in any artificial structure in existence." Similarly, in the spiritual desert the bride learns to be deeply rooted in the Kingdom and to provide herself abundantly with the water of life.

When she was seven, my daughter Amely was not much of an eater. She only wanted to eat desserts. Once I chided her about this. She said to me, "I eat as it says in the Bible! It says there that God wants us to live on desserts only." She showed me the verse: "God led his people forty years through the desert." She was not wholly wrong. Life in the desert is a delicacy, a dessert reserved for God's beloved.

What a marvelous sight it must have been when the people of Israel came from the desert to the country of Canaan, or when they returned to their own country from the Babylonian captivity. It is the same when a soul returns to God from the desert of this world and cleaves to Jesus. Thereby it enters into a state of grace, and the bride is brought to the Bridegroom.

Should we be frugal in anointing Jesus with myrrh? It was Judas Iscariot who criticized the woman who anointed Jesus before his arrest.

The valiant men

The bride says, "Threescore valiant men are about [Solomon's bed], of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man has his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night" (SOS 3:7-8). The Church has never lacked valiant men. On 15 August 1714,

the Rumanian king Constantin Brincoveanu died a martyr death. For the twenty-five years of his reign he had been a valiant defender of the Christian world against Islam. On Good Friday 1714 he and his whole household were arrested by the Turkish sultan's men and taken to Constantinople, where they were put in the notorious Yedikuleh prison. On his sixtieth birthday, Brincoveanu was sentenced to death together with his four sons.

Before the executioner raised his axe, the sultan said, "I will pardon you, if you tell me where the wealth of your country is, and if you will deny the Christian faith and convert to Islam."

Brincoveanu replied, "I will never abandon the Christian

faith. I was born in it, have lived in it and will die in it. I have filled my country with churches, monasteries and hospitals. I will not worship in your mosques, neither I nor my children." Then he turned to his sons. "My beloved, be strong in faith. We have lost all things. Let us not lose our souls as well."

The sultan ordered that the sons should die first. Young Constantin prayed and quietly put his head on the block. As he was beheaded, his father sighed. "God, your will be done." The next two sons followed. Then Matthew, who was only sixteen, wavered at the sight of the blood and hid himself near his mother. "Follow your brothers," urged Brincoveanu. "Do not deny Christ." The youngster put his head on the block and said to the executioner, "Strike."

The king followed them. Kneeling, he prayed with many tears. "God, accept our sacrifice. For the blood of our martyrdom, I desire that the Rumanian principates should remain Christian. Amen."

In the seventeenth century, in what is now Massachusetts, a law was passed declaring that all Quakers entering the British colony should be whipped, imprisoned and put to forced labour. Every exiled Quaker who returned was to be hanged. The "crime" of the Quakers was their belief in an inner illumination, a direct

communion with God without the intermediary of clergy or ritual.

Mary Dyer, though she had been whipped and threatened with death, came again and again to the colony from Rhode Island to visit her brethren in jail. Finally Mary and two others were sentenced to hang. She attended the execution of the other two, then her hands were tied and a black sack was put over her head. But at the last moment she was reprieved and deported.

She returned again. She was risking public flagellation, and having her tongue pierced with a red hot iron. At her trial she declared, "If you do not revoke your unjust laws, the Lord will send other witnesses of the truth after my death. Compared with liberty and truth, my life does not matter." For this she died, valiant Christian. There is a statue honouring her in Boston.

Nowadays, Christians who would behave towards imprisoned believers in Communist prisons as she did towards the suffering brethren of that time are rare. God has valiant men and women, but they are few.

William Booth, a Hebrew Christian, founded the

Salvation Army. His followers called him "General," which made him a laughing stock. His motto was, "Go for souls and go for the worst." Today he would have said, "Go for Communist torturers and murderers."

He went about with men he called "godly daredevils," a mob of uneducated but converted men chosen from saloons, brothels and gambling houses. The owners of such places counterattacked. Salvation Army preachers were drenched with the contents of chamberpots. Booth did not care. He ordered his Army to charge into saloons and drag drunkards out for conversion.

Today the Army is active in 92 countries. It preaches in 111 languages and operates 900 schools in non-Christian lands. In many countries it has influenced social legislation. Booth was another valiant man around Solomon's bed. Even today we have such valiant men.

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Some of the special tortures devised by Communists for Christians are described by the Rumanian Communist writer Paul Goma [in ~Gherla~, Gallimard, France]. One prisoner was "baptized" daily by having his head stuck in the barrel which served as a communal lavatory, while other prisoners were made to sing the baptismal service.

During festivals, and especially Lent, blasphemous masses were organized. One prisoner was dressed in an excrement-smeared robe. Round his neck, in place of the cross, was hung a phallus made of a mixture of bread, soap and DDT. All the prisoners were forced to kiss it and pronounce the sacred Orthodox formula, "Christ is resurrected."

What do these indignities have to do with Socialism and the interests of the proletariat? They are nothing more than satanic orgies. Some valiant Christians refused to participate, and as a consequence they died under torture.

When Christians have to bear crosses they make roses blossom in them. The life and death of the Lutheran pastor Joseph Jurash of Czechoslovakia will illustrate what I mean. He had been invited to become a collaborator, but had refused. So the Communists sentenced him to thirteen years of imprisonment. They inserted sharp objects under his fingernails and toenails and pierced his body with needles. Soon after his release from prison he died. A fellow prisoner wrote of him, "His personality glowed in a special way." [~Lutheran Witness~, October 1972]

In the Soviet Union, over a hundred people gathered in

a single room at the house of Brother Kozorezov when he returned from prison. He preached to them from MTT 5:10: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Flowers were presented to him. A nun named Sister Alia spoke of her recent arrest, and the surprise of the Secret Police officer when she told him she had to pray first before answering his questions. She knelt in his presence and did the same when the interrogation was over. A major

watching was impressed and helped her to rise from her knees. (All our discussions would be more peaceful if we practised the same habit in our daily lives. In Korea I have seen brethren praying first when they entered one another's houses, and only then conversing.)

A tape of this meeting in the USSR was sent to us. On it, police can be heard shouting, "Finish! Disperse! To hell with you!"

Kozorezov can be heard answering, "We preach the love of Christ."

A police officer: "What do I care? It's forbidden here. Disperse while we're still speaking politely to you."

Kozorezov replies. "We are servants of love. Whence comes the evil?"

The police officer retorts, "I know nothing of that. I want no sermons. You are not allowed to gather here."

As the tape finishes, the choir begins to sing.

Such as these are today's valiant men around the Bridegroom's bed. In the Hebrew it says of them, "They are held by the sword." It will not let them go. They are the slaves of the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Solomon" s palanquin

The bride says, "King Solomon made himself a chariot [= palanquin] of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem" (SOS 3:9-10). There are still many things that are wrong in the bride's heart, but she is in Solomon's palanquin the pillars of which are of silver. In the Bible the Word of God is described as silver cleansed in the furnace. So the palanquin is based on God's Word. The covering is of purple, which means that

the bride is covered by the blood of Jesus, shed for her.

The interior of the palanquin is paved with love shown by the daughters of Zion. Love is belittled in our world, as mere sentimentalism or time-wasting. In reality it works very efficiently. Mary Magdalene, when sitting at Jesus' feet, seemed to be doing nothing. In fact, she was doing the most important thing of all - she was loving. While she appeared to be quietly sitting, her love was weaving beautiful ornaments for Solomon's bed, in which she herself would later rest. It is not our service that Jesus seeks, but our love. Only a faith that engenders love has value in his eyes.

There is a love that forgives all things. In his book, ~It Was Not the Black Cat~, the former Rumanian Zionist prisoner T. Lavi describes how prisoners were mockingly called "parrots," and were forced to spend hours shouting brief sentences deriding their creed. They could either repeat, "Jesus is not the Son of God" or utter obscenities about the Virgin. Jewish prisoners likewise were forced to say ugly things about their religion. Before having to declaim their blasphemous sentences, they had to run for whole nights around their cells, being whipped if they ran too slowly. The Hungarian Cardinal Mindszenty was one who endured such treatment. The alternative to uttering blasphemy was to face being beaten to a pulp.

Many were weak. Nobody should be taken in by the notion that all who are in prison for their faith are men of heroism, full of virtues and endurance. It is not so. Many Christians who suffered there were frail. Many gave in and said words that no Christian ought to pronounce. And then followed the self-justifications: "After all, I am only a man!" ... "What does it matter if I say these things? God does not worry about it" ... "Surely God would rather I live, than die for refusing to say a few words - anyway, the words are nonsense."

Some went to the other extreme. In their consciences

they heard not voices of self-justification, but accusations which drove them to despair. In Red China, many who had denied Christ, or betrayed secrets of the Underground Church under torture, hanged themselves or threw themselves out of windows.

The true bride of Christ does not need to go to either extreme. The Word of God gives her comfort and teaches

her about forgiveness. Even when her fall has been a heavy one, she knows she can rest in the palanquin of Solomon. We who are free, and have sinned greatly, can do so as well.

The mother's merit

The bride says, "Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart" (SOS 3:11). In this passage Solomon, the wise and rich king - the builder of the Temple of God - is a type of the Saviour Jesus, for whom the name of Solomon is also fitting. In Hebrew it means "peace." The mother of Solomon is a type of Jesus' mother. There is still a custom in the Oriental Orthodox Church that the bridegroom's mother puts a crown on his head.

Christ has possessed glorious crowns from all eternity - the crown of the eternal Sonship of God, the crown of love, of goodness, and of wisdom - but he owes one crown to his mother. She gave him something that he had never had before: a human nature. She made him man as well as God. It was her gift to him, at the wedding of the godly and the human that was his conception. God had always known the life of all men, but from the outside, so to speak; from the perspective of Godhead. Now he knew it from the inside.

Under the Communist regimes, many former judges and prosecutors in the old capitalist system were jailed. Having now experienced prison for themselves they regretted the harsh sentences they had passed earlier. A few years of prison may not sound very much in the mouth of the judge, they realized, but those same few years of jail meant great suffering to the sentenced prisoner. "Every minute spent in prison is a bitter pill like no other," one judge said. "Had I known this, I would have been less harsh in my judgements."

Because of the obedience of Mary, by whom he became man, God was able to experience human life and know it from the inside. He was tempted in all things, just like us. He experienced the inner struggles we experience, and because of this, we have in him a merciful and faithful

High Priest (HEB 2:17). That is why all nations call Mary "blessed."

Onute Vitkauskaite, a Lithuanian Christian prisoner, wrote this letter to her mother on Mother's Day:

> There is so much to think about and remember. But let's leave all that in the care of our beloved mother Mary. She taught our mothers love, sacrifice and kindness. May the humiliation and scorn that we suffer be as a prayer of thanksgiving for that! But I would also like it to be a form of atonement for those so-called mothers, who, without the least twinge of conscience, murder not only the bodies but also the souls of infants. Having scorned the Mother of Love, they have lost the source from which they could draw love, kindness and strength on the road of maternal sacrifice. In the labour camp I have come to discover how terrible is man's life without God, without eternal love.

Another Lithuanian prisoner, Julius Sasnaukas, wrote to his family on the same Mother's Day:

> My best wishes to Mother and Grandmother. It is

> difficult to find the right words for this occasion. Here by my bunk I have a tiny Leonardo Madonna on a postage stamp and it seems that life, love and eternal spring seep into this dismal abode.

It can help us all to think frequently of the beautiful example of the virgin Mary.

÷ Chapter 4 ÷

The bride with no veil

The Bridegroom says:

> Behold, you are fair, my love; you are fair; you have doves' eyes within your locks: your hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from Mount Gilead.
>
> Your teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bears twins, and none is barren among them.
>
> Your lips are like a thread of scarlet, and your speech

is comely; your temples are like a piece of pomegranate within your locks.
Your neck is like the tower of David built for an armoury, whereon hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.
Your two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.
(SOS 4:1-5)

In those days (and even today in some Moslem countries), girls in the Orient walked with their faces veiled. The bridegroom sees the bride unveiled for the first time only after the wedding ceremony. Then he sees the beauties which were hidden from him until that moment. When our Bridegroom comes, we will be like him, and he will discover in us unspeakable splendours; and we will give them to him, to give him pleasure.

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The greatest beauties, in the case of this bride, are her "doves' eyes." Like those of God, they are so clean that they cannot even see evil, and cannot look upon unrighteousness. The two rows of her teeth represent her faith and meditation, by which the soul feeds upon Jesus. They are white as shorn sheep when they come up from the washing. Her faith is white and pure, not faked.

Her teeth are strong; strength is a characteristic of this bride. The teeth are covered by lips - usually they are not seen. So, the bride has a hidden faith in her clean conscience, not a self-advertising faith which shouts in the marketplaces. And, just as the teeth chew the food for the whole body, not for themselves, the souls of brides spend themselves in the service of others, keeping back nothing for themselves. Each sheep bears twins. Christians, like twins, share identical attitudes, because they are of one heart and of one soul.

Her lips are like a thread of scarlet. That shows that she is healthy. Her temples are like half a pomegranate, a fruit with red seeds which are easily seen when it is cut. This reminds us of a pure girl, blushing in humility at the remembrance of her sin and unworthiness. This modesty makes the bride attractive in the Bridegroom's eyes.

The neck is what joins the body to the head. The Church is the body; Jesus its head. What unites them is faith. The faith of the bride is strong, therefore, the Bridegroom tells her, "Your neck is like the tower of David built for an armoury." In antiquity, towers were adorned with shields

or bucklers. So the tower of David - representing the faith of the bride - has a thousand shields hanging on it, all shields of mighty men. They are reminders of the battles of the saints of old, who have defeated the devil, the world and sinful nature.

The way the name "David" is written here is unusual. When it first appears in the Bible, "David" is written ~DVD~. When David commits great sins, as when he took the wife of one of his soldiers, it is written like that. But David had

beautiful moments in his life as well. At such times a ~Y~, the first letter of God's name, is added, and it is written ~DVYD~. That is how his name is written at the end of his life's story. He had his wanderings, but he finished the course well. And now, in the Hebrew text of the Song, David's name is not only written ~DVYD~, to emphasize the godly side of his character, but above it is inscribed a circle, showing that because his son has written a song such as this, David has reached the highest point of union with God.

The breasts of the bride look like a meadow full of lilies on which two young roes graze. Souls who have wept for Jerusalem will drink the milk of its comforts.

The mountain of myrrh

The bride, having heard so many words of comfort from the Bridegroom, makes him this promise:
"Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense" (SOS 4:6). There she will stay until the miseries of this life pass away,.

The mountain of myrrh recalls Mount Moriah, on which the Temple was built, and in which so much incense mixed with spices was burnt daily to the glory of God that (so says the ~Talmud~) the daughters of Jerusalem did not need to perfume themselves. There the bride will retire for prayer.

We can be sure that our Lord, as he sees the brides who suffer for him today in Communist and Islamic prisons, has the same words of admiration and wonder for them as he has for the bride of Solomon's Song.

The Lithuanian Christian prisoner, Mrs. Ona Pranskunaite,

describes in a letter how she was transported from

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prison to labour camp in a railway wagon divided into tiny cells. From a nearby cell, the Christian Lapienis comforted her with words from Scripture, and from Thomas … Kempis' ~The Imitation of Christ~: He said, "Onute, let us try to fulfill our assignment from God, so as to serve his glory in the honour of our nation." Ona wrote:

> I will march with strength, eyes toward heaven, wherever the torments of life lead me. Everyone has a treasure worthy of being protected. Trusting in the grace of the Lord and in your prayers, I am sure to find the strength to bear all difficulties. I fear only one thing - that I might do evil.
>
> Do not worry about me. I find comfort and joy in prayer, in sacrifice, and in trying to help my comrades in suffering. Here we work fourteen to fifteen hours a day.
>
> Brethren and sisters in Christ, do not fear the tempests of our times. God permits suffering but also gives us strength to bear it. The believers who sold their consciences for a plate of lentils, and became our persecutors, need penitence. So do we.

Cardinal Mindszenty of Hungary wrote from his insect-ridden cell, "We are small; but we can grow. The saints always reached heights when they descended into the most profound depths of human suffering. Lord, grant me only a morsel of the strength of saints." During the civil war following their revolution, Russian Communists tortured the Orthodox priest George Snesarev of Voronesh. Nails were driven under his fingernails and toenails. He was wounded sixty-three times. Seven nuns of the Protection Convent were boiled in a cauldron of tar. Their crime? They had been praying for anti-Communists. The monk, Nektary Ivanov, was made to drink "communion wine" made with molten pewter.
[From: ~Orthodox Life~, No. 78]

In all such atrocities many Christians remained faithful to their Bridegroom. Their deeds and their beauty are outstanding, like the breasts of the bride.

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All fair

The Bridegroom says, "You are all fair, my love; there is no spot in you. Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards" (SOS 4:7-8). The decision of the bride to give herself to prayer makes her even more attractive in the Bridegroom's eyes. He calls her "all fair ... without a spot." (This is, incidentally, a good example of how husbands should regard their wives. The apostle Paul says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (EPH 5:25). He, loving his Church, saw her to be all fair and without a spot. We must have doves' eyes like him.)

He calls her "bride" for the first time. How did she come to bear the proud title of the bride of God's Son? It is because she gave herself for him in persecution, just as he gave himself for her.

A Rumanian Christian named Babutz had much to tell when he arrived in America. He told how prisoners were systematically beaten on the kidneys, after sandbags had been placed on their bodies to prevent marks.

Together with thousands of others he had been sent to a slave labour camp. His job was to clean the weeds from the River Danube, by hand. Many prisoners, standing waist-deep in the icy water in winter, died. Coming and going, the prisoners had to look at the swollen corpses of their friends exhibited at the entrance to the camp. They were told, "That will be your fate as well, if you do not meet your quota."

In winter, their thick clothing was taken from them. They were told, "The cold will make you work harder." Prisoners went hungry when the rats ate what little they received. One hid a slice of bread in his shirt, saving it for the next day. In the night mice chewed through his shirt and ate the bread.

Another, forced to work in the fields, stole 20 onions to

share with his friends. He was caught. He was made to choose between eating them all at once or getting twenty-five lashes on the soles of his feet. To avoid the excruciating pain of the flogging he began to eat the onions. Soon he collapsed, his eyes swollen from their sockets, like a frog's eyes.

Yet another caught a serpent and tried to roast it on the guards' fire. When caught he was made to eat the serpent raw. Once an almost blind prisoner came to Babutz joyously, wanting to share with him some crumbs of maize cake he had found. Babutz told him, "It is not maize cake.

It is mouse droppings." The other exclaimed, "Get away with your dirty jokes!" and ate the droppings. For months they were given no salt with their food. Then suddenly it was saturated with salt. Many fell sick.

Babutz's daughter was told that she could only be accepted for college if she denounced her father for "compelling her to be a believer," a charge which would mean he would be sentenced again.

But if you want to see happy people, you should look at men like Babutz, and the others who have suffered in Rumanian jails. They have taken a course in happiness; they drown their sorrows in the deep ocean of Jesus' tears for the sins of the world and the sufferings of his flock. Their own pain counts little beside his.

Let us try to do the same. We may be degraded. We may be frustrated. But we surely never ate mouse droppings. Let us take up our crosses joyfully. Then we too will hear the words of the Bridegroom, "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse; come from the lions' dens."

Come from Lebanon

Lebanon is a range of mountains separating Syria, a

heathen country, from the Holy Land. We have left heathendom; but we have not yet arrived in the Promised Land. We are still in the Lebanese mountains, "the mountains of leopards," full of savage beasts. But from the mountains of Lebanon one can see Israel, the heavenly fatherland, where we will be with the Most Beloved. Even the mountains over which we must pass are full of beauty.

"Look from the top of Amana" says the Bridegroom. It is from here that the rivers Amana and Parpar flow - rivers of which Naaman the Syrian spoke when he said, "Their waters are better than all the waters of Israel." On top of Mount Amana, we are not yet in the Promised Land, but here we experience joys, some of which we shall not even know in heaven. It is a joy to win souls for the heavenly kingdom. That joy we can only know on earth - and how intense a joy it is!

Only here can we know the joy of faith. In heaven there will be no faith, only sight. There are other joys awaiting us, but we will be deprived of the joy of faith. We who for the present know only these joys, value them. And we also

are tempted to say that the rivers which flow from Amana are better than all the waters of Israel.

"Look ... from the top of Shenir." The ~Targum of Jerusalem~, an ancient Aramaic translation of the Bible, says that on this mountain so much fruit grows that it cannot all be harvested, and much of it rots. Here the bride learns to bring her fullness of harvest to the Bridegroom.

It is interesting to observe that the "lions' dens," the dens of those lions which desire to consume believers, are situated on the heights of Amana. Amana shares the same root as the Hebrew word for "faith," Emunah. Nowhere is one exposed to the devil's attacks so much as on these peaks. Where you bring most fruit, you attract his worst fury.

Those who have not themselves passed through the lions' dens, who have always lived in comfortable places

and never on the mountains of leopards, who do not ascend the peaks of faith and prayer, are often apathetic towards the sufferings of their brothers and sisters in Christ.

In the Soviet Union the Orthodox priest Yakunin sheltered Christians of every denomination for fifteen years. When he was arrested, I received a smuggled letter from another Orthodox in Russia, describing these past activities of Yakunin the priest. He said they were convinced that the authorities would never touch him; Yakunin was well-known, and so they would be afraid of the uproar his imprisonment would arouse in the West. However, the letter continued:

> No vociferous complaints, no mass demonstrations followed his arrest. No voice which could have awakened the western public was raised in time.
>
> It seems that even the Soviet authorities were surprised that the arrest of a well-known priest and defender of religious freedom should arouse such a minimal reaction in the West. Because they now knew there would be no protest, very soon afterwards the Communists arrested the renowned Hebrew Christian historian, Regelson; and then came the Soviet attack upon Afghanistan.
>
> Afterwards another witness for Christ, the priest Dudko, ascended the Golgotha prepared for him a long time ago. [Dudko and Regelson later recanted under duress.] The Adventist leader, Shtshelkov, who suffered

> greatly for his Christian faith, died at the age of eighty-four in Yakutia prison camp.
>
> So it will continue if we remain silent and forget the sufferers. We must appeal to men of good will throughout the entire world. I have no words to express my despair and my feelings of powerlessness.

One is reminded of this passage in Isaiah:

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"None calls for justice, nor any pleads for truth ... [The Lord] saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor" [ISA 59:4] [ISA 59:16].

But those who have been in the lions' den provide examples of spiritual beauty. A prisoner in Cuba wrote to his wife, "The Holy Spirit brings your love and prayers to me daily. Even if I don't receive your letters, angels keep us a united, happy and contented family which rests in the arms of the King, Jesus." This should be a lesson to those who have their marriage partners close to them and yet have not learned happiness.

In Communist countries there is not only a dreadful oppression, but also a Christian resistance to it. When you read of it, your spirit rejoices. There are heroes in our time. When one lives in tragic circumstances miracles become everyday events. "He who has not suffered has not seen God. We will not see Him from satellites, but in the lives of those who are not afraid of suffering." So wrote Dudko before his arrest and downfall. Others who suffered even more under the Communists did not crack.

The Soviet professor, Tatiana Shtshipkova, wrote,

> I refused even to talk to the officials of the secret police. To talk to them is the first step towards collaboration. I was driven from my job as teacher of Roman history at the university, because I spoke of my faith. I showed the Bible to students who had never seen one before. My son and his girlfriend were expelled from the Institute also.
>
> My daughter Liuba, a non-believer, was expelled from the Communist youth organization because she had not denounced me as a Christian. After this, Liuba became a believer.
>
> A group of policemen behaved in an unseemly way towards us. I slapped one of them. I expect a one-year sentence for this.

Ogorodnikov is sentenced for one year. He has turned from Marxism to a deep Christian faith.

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Ermolaev, nineteen years old, is imprisoned because in the subway he expressed his opinion about the Communist Party.

We have no aggressive intentions. We cause no upheavals, we print no leaflets, we do not preach insurrection. We wish to live as Christ taught, which means, we want to live and pray together, help each other, witness to our faith and speak of Christ to those who want to listen. Are we dangerous? Surely so; the proof lies with the persecutors.

The well-deserved slap which Shtshipkova gave the policeman for his obscene gesture reminds us of Archbishop Luke of Tashkent. He shook the ladders on which the Communist workmen were climbing in order to tear down the crosses from the cupola of his cathedral. Then, because he was also a doctor, he took care of their bruises.

Many Christians have given their lives for Christ. Six Soviet Baptists who were sent to Afghanistan as soldiers were executed there, because they refused to shoot Afghan freedom fighters. They rightly judged that the Soviet Army had no business to be in a peaceful neighbouring country. It is right to defend a free fatherland, but it is wrong to fight in the name of a God-hating, murderous regime. They came from Lebanon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of leopards, and are now in the embrace of Jesus.

They knew the biblical way of happiness: "You have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even your God, has anointed you with gladness above your fellows" (HEB 1:9). They loved the righteous commandment, "Do not kill." They hated the iniquity of Soviet rule and died for their convictions. Now they know the unsurpassed happiness of heaven. In addition, they experienced hours of jubilation before their execution, just as Jesus went singing toward Gethsemane (MTT 26:30).

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The value of our looking

The Bridegroom says:

> You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, you have ravished my heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck.
>
> How fair is your love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is your love than wine! and the smell of your ointments than all spices!
>
> Your lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under your tongue; and the smell of your garments is as the smell of Lebanon.
>
> [SOS 4:9-11]

Jesus calls the believing soul "sister" and "spouse" - concepts which are normally mutually exclusive, because it is an abomination to have your sister as your spouse. But the unique relationship between Jesus and a believing soul is typified in the Old Testament by the fact that Abraham took as his wife a girl who was also his half-sister.

The relationship between Jesus and the Christian can take many forms. Sometimes it is that of an older brother advising a younger sister; at other times it is the passionate love of a bridegroom towards a bride. One analogy on its own would be inadequate to express the variety of the relationship.

Even in the Old Testament, God speaking to Israel sometimes calls himself a father, sometimes a comforting mother and at other times a bridegroom, a husband or a friend. One and the same God - and so many analogies!

Jesus tells the bride, "You have ravished my heart." There is really no satisfactory translation of the Hebrew expression in the European languages. The nearest we could come would be to say something like, "My love for you drove me out of my mind." The Hebrew word for

"love" used here is a plural form - "loves." The bride loves him with intellectual love, with rational love and with passionate love.

The Son of God acknowledges that through love, he has become our prisoner. How does this happen? Then, as sometimes now, oriental girls veiled their faces. To be flirtatious they would lower their veil just a fraction, showing one eye, if they were near somebody in whom they had an interest. So the believing soul ravishes the heart of the Saviour with one of her eyes, with one of her

glances.

It is written in the Old Testament that the Jews, bitten by serpents in the wilderness, had only to look at the brazen serpent erected by Moses in order to be healed. One look at Jesus is sufficient to bring a soul to salvation and to make him an heir of the eternal life.

How can a mere look have such huge results? It is because we ravish his heart. We take from his mind everything but ourselves. Through a single look, we inflame him with love. So great is the power of a loving look! God can thereby become ours.

Happy is the soul that loves. It takes God prisoner, and God listens to it in all things. You cannot obtain from God by mighty deeds what you can obtain from him by a single loving look.

A farmer was seen to spend many hours in church before the altar, but he never seemed to pray. When he was asked what he was doing, he said, "I just kneel and look at God." So it is that one single quality of the bride – one single loving look – secures God's whole heart. Let us likewise love men for a single quality we perceive in them, and close our eyes to all the rest which might be inadequate.

In the Old Testament the caresses of the truly faithful soul were more pleasant to God than all the incense which was offered to him in the Temple of Jerusalem.

The Bridegroom also tells the bride, "honey and milk

are under your tongue." The Jews endured forty years of hardship, to finally see the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. After conquering Canaan, they fought hard to keep it. But all those years they already had the joyous realms of "honey and milk" – right under their tongues. We all have the Promised Land the moment we stop looking for it in the far distance. It is there, in the power of our tongue. Our own bitter words bring us to hell. But confessing with the mouth that Jesus Christ is our Lord, brings us salvation.

A garden enclosed

The Bridegroom says:

> A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.
>
> Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire with spikenard,
>
> Spikenard and saffron; calumus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices;
>
> A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.
>
> [SOS 4:12-15]

Jeremiah predicted a time when the souls of Israel would be well-watered gardens. For the bride this is already accomplished; she is a well-defended and enclosed garden. Using these images, Jesus praises her chastity. Nobody can enter a closed garden or draw water from a sealed fountain except the owner. When he does not come to visit her, the garden of the bride is locked. She knows that, just as a perfume bottle does not lose its fragrance if it is kept

closed, neither does the soul which tends only to God lose the warmth of love and the power of virtue.

It is said of the resurrection Lord that he came to his disciples when the doors of their rooms were kept shut for fear of the Jews (JHN 20:19). If they kept their doors shut against those who could only kill them in this world, how much more should we be like locked doors for fear of the demons who can destroy our eternal life! To keep the doors locked - to be an enclosed garden - to be separated from the world - that is the proper state of your heart, if you wish Jesus to show himself to you.

We have to be wary and lock our doors against influences which are harmful to our souls. Spiritual enemies can quench the Spirit in us. They take God from us and spoil our intimacy with him, the divine solace and eternal life. Why should you be an open fountain, at everybody's disposal, so that men can spit in it or throw their garbage in? Is there anything that pleases you more than the presence of the Holy Spirit?

Our inner castle, where God's kingdom thrives, must be kept locked against the images of the outside world. We must ensure that the world remains outside, that it finds no foothold in us, so that we shall not be destroyed. Our imagination and our fantasies must be as beautiful as a locked garden. Certain things may be allowed to enter and others must be forbidden. God and the devil come with

their gifts to the gate of this garden. God's gifts must be accepted, the devil's rejected.

God said to Cain, "If you do not well, sin lies at the door. And unto you shall be his desire" (GEN 4: 7). In REV 3:20 Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

The faithful soul desires that only the Lord shall enter. But the devil, knowing this, disguises himself as an angel of light. How can we distinguish between them? What must we do? We must keep our doors locked. We need to

be an enclosed garden. The fact that our doors are locked is no hindrance to Jesus. He knows how to pass through locked doors.

Nobody has to be more righteous, more loving, than the bride in the Song of Solomon. She is alert when she lies on her bed: she hears the voice of the Beloved: "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled" (SOS 5:2). But she also knows that the devil can imitate the voice of Jesus. The many compliments make her especially suspicious.

Then she - who is sick of love for him, who has sought him for many nights, walking the lonely streets and marketplaces seeking the Beloved - now, when she hears the voice at the door, refuses to open it: "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" (SOS 5:3).

Jesus is pleased with her wise refusal, and exclaims in admiration, "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed" (SOS 4:12). The Jesus she refused is the true Jesus, because he does not become angry. He knows us. He sees us. He searches our hearts, and knows we are with him. He knows for what good motives we refuse him.

He also knows why we cannot be gardens forever closed. He knows our commitment brings us into contact with many sins, many cultures, many false religions and denials of God to which we would not be exposed if we remained permanently enclosed gardens. We cannot share our faith with others without also hearing their stories of wickedness in their lives and their arguments for other beliefs. It is unavoidable that some of this should seem alluring. There have been cases of missionaries falling into sin with those they were to bring to holiness.

The best thing is to avoid extremes. We must avoid being so enclosed that others will die because, like black

holes, we emit no light. And we must avoid being so outgoing that we forget that without times of withdrawing into a quiet garden we cannot have a love-life with Jesus.

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He praises the enclosed garden. The flowers and fruits mentioned are mostly exotic in Israel, and as such are types of the rare pleasures that the bride offers to the Bridegroom. She is a garden full of them. Originally the word for garden was ~pardes~, a Persian word from which we derive "paradise." For him to come near the bride was the same happiness that we shall receive when we enter paradise, because the Church produces the most exquisite fruits for him. Where aloes grow, all the air is perfumed. The Church fills the air with the choice perfume of Jesus.

The bride is called "a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." The rivers flowing out of Lebanon are very fast-flowing and crystal clear. So is the source of wisdom, which continually flows from the mouth of the bride. So are the rivers of living water, coming from her heart, which has become a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Only keep your heart as an enclosed garden, and Jesus will enter it with his burning love.

The privilege of enclosed gardens

Every 8th October the Russian Orthodox Church celebrates the birth of the seventeenth century saint, Tryphon of Viatsk. His enemies stripped him of his clothes, bound him and threw him in the snow. When they later went to retrieve the frozen corpse, they found instead a living body which was unusually warm. The snow around him had melted. In Rumanian prisons it was said that the same thing happened when they threw the Christian, Budu, naked into the snow. I myself have known many who were put into refrigerated cells at freezing temperatures and survived. Jesus entered through the locked doors of the cells, and the Christians filled them with songs of praise.

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Freezing circumstances in your own life will not freeze you, if you are close to the burning fire of Godhead.

I once attended an evensong celebrated by Seraphim, the archbishop of the underground True Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union. He has led his church for thirty years, yet the Communists never discovered his whereabouts.

At that evensong, after he had chanted the first words - "In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" - the whole congregation was already in tears. I had heard and said those words thousands of times. But as Seraphim said them I realized as never before the dramatic truth that all we have of God is his name to call upon. During the fourteen years of my imprisonment, "Father" was only a name to my son. He was deprived of the reality of a father-son relationship. We are in the same position with the heavenly Father, but we have the comfort of knowing that he is a loving Father. His Son died for us; his Holy Spirit guides us. The whole message was revealed to me in the way Seraphim chanted the words. Several people in the congregation asserted that they could see a luminous being conducting the service with him, although he was alone. I believe that anyone who commits his soul to the act of imparting the gospel (1TH 2:8) has angels at his side at the altar.

This is the privilege of men who live in enclosed gardens; who allow none to enter their intimacy; who shun all influence. The right influence, the Bridegroom himself, can leap over hindrances.

Awake, winds

The bride says:

> "Awake, O north wind; and come, south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my

> beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." The Bridegroom replies: "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved"
> (SOS 4:16-5:1).

Though she is so appreciated by him the bride whispers into his ear that she still needs to make preparations before

presenting herself to him. The girls who had to enter the presence of the earthly king Ahasuerus first had to beautify themselves for twelve months: six months with oil of myrrh and six with sweet odours (EST 1:12). How much more so should girls who must present themselves before the heavenly king beautify themselves. Therefore the bride calls the winds.

The north wind represents the punishments of God. The south wind, opening the pores of the leaves to allow them to exhale their sweet fragrance, represents the comforts of God. Both are signs of his love, and both are needed so that the garden of the bride may spread her perfume.

The Church has a rich share of punishments and comforts. Above all, it has the privilege of being blown upon by the wind of the Holy Spirit, which descended upon the disciples at Pentecost. That was a fulfillment of the bride's prayer.

The north wind blows with unprecedented fierceness upon the Christians in Communist countries, whose rulers have a long record of crime. In Addis Ababa, the capital of Communist Ethiopia, the prisons are filled with Christians and Moslems. The torturers use Cuban-made manacles which can be rapidly tightened until the bones break. A prisoner in the Andijane jail in Uzbekistan, USSR, reported: "The inmates are beaten to death or put in straightjackets. The chief torturer is Umayukulov. Those who suffer for their convictions are put in cells together with bandits, who sodomize them."

In Czechoslovakia 3,000 nuns were prisoners in their

convents, which had been made into slave labour camps. The number of priests and monks who have had to endure the same fate is not known. Since books with a religious content cannot be printed legally in Czechoslovakia, secret printing presses have been set up at enormous risk. Such presses are also run in Russia, China and other Communist countries. When they are discovered the printers go to prison.

Tito, the late president of Yugoslavia, was the murderer of one in seven of the country's priests, and of countless residents of convents. Also on his conscience is the death of Cardinal Stepinac, who personally protected 7,000 children and defended Jews and Serbians during World War II.

At the end of that war the Soviet army occupying East

Germany killed the priests Sonsalla, Demczak and Goerlich. Innumerable girls were raped. Some of them were nuns. Brutes of the same quality still control the Communist countries.

All these crimes have been surpassed by the holocaust in Cambodia. Around two million people were killed by the Communists. Men with university degrees were eradicated. The wearing of spectacles was made a crime punishable by death, because it indicated the ability to read. Of 500 physicians, only 57 are still alive. The children of undesirables were chained together and buried alive. Scarcely any children below the age of five remained. In the beginning, no local men had the strength to unload the relief parcels from abroad.

Yakunin, the Russian Orthodox priest, was imprisoned for protesting against church leaders who compromised with Communism, that is, brides of Christ who are in bed with his enemies. He wrote: "Authority in the church belongs to Christ alone who obtained it by shedding His precious blood. The church is His holy spouse, His living body. Whoever permits power-seekers to interfere with the eternal life of the church, abandons Christ's bride to corruption."

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Men like this would be able to agree with these words of Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission:

> I was envied by some, despised by many, hated perhaps by others, often blamed for things I had nothing to do with; an innovator of what have become established rules of missionary practice, working in many respects without precedence and with few experienced helpers; often sick in body as well as perplexed in mind, and embarrassed by circumstance.
>
> Had not the Lord been especially gracious to me, had not my mind been sustained by the conviction that the work is His and He is with me, I must have fainted and broken down. But the battle is the Lord's - and He will conquer.

In Gardenas, in Byelorussia, USSR, Communists have destroyed a fourteenth-century Gothic church. The same thing happened with the splendid temple of Vidzial. In Varanavas, women tried to prevent demolition of the church by throwing themselves in front of the bulldozers. Such devotion to the very end is the highest pleasure that you can give to Jesus. The bride of Christ under

persecution gives him that pleasure in the worst possible circumstances. She has only one purpose: To make Jesus joyous.

Holy fantasy

She calls upon the Bridegroom to enter into her soul: "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." When she called upon the Lord, he replied, "Here I am." His response was immediate. He came in to her and she spent a splendid bridal night with him. He found his

delight in her, and remembers her caresses now with joy; "I have come into my garden, my sister, my spouse, I have gathered my myrrh and my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk." These are all different descriptions of the pleasure she has given him. Jesus, having known his bride, soars on peaks of joy, because those delights were so richly varied and full of beauty.

Normally, people do not eat the comb with the honey; neither do they drink a mixture of wine and milk. But the delights which Christ finds in the Church are unique delights. She does "more than others" (MTT 5:47).

And the bridegroom calls his friends: "Eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." These men are not like the bride. They do not know the joys of intimate fellowship with Jesus, but only participate, through his benevolence, in others' privileges.

When you are invited to a meal, those who invite you do not always wish you well. There may be small-talk at their meals, and backbiting afterwards. But the invitation which Jesus extends is sincere and comes whole-heartedly. Jesus calls us all to his banquet, to the joy of seeing sinners converted, and he calls us to attend the wedding feast of the Bridegroom and the bride. Blessed are those invited to this banquet! God commands the guests to eat and drink abundantly. Only one greater happiness exists, and that is to be part of the Body of the bride herself.

Atheists reject the wedding feast as fantasy. A courier who smuggled Bibles into a Communist country was told, "We don't accept books like these; they are fairy tales." The courier replied, "Don't you have fairy tale books

in your country?" To this, the customs officer had no reply.

The courier then said to him, "There is nothing wrong in works of fantasy, if the fantasy is sanctified and is only employed in the embellishment of true facts."

The union between Christ and the believer is such a true

fact. We can embellish it. Fantasy is a beautiful gift of God. In the first Greek translation of Zechariah, it is written "The Lord made fantasy" (ZEC 10:1). It is a product of imaginative creation.

Christian hymns are the product of saintly fantasy. For example, consider "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins." The blood of Jesus coagulated in his hands and feet when he was crucified. Otherwise he would have bled to death within minutes. Only trickles of blood oozed from his wounds. But fantasy enriches reality. The sinner sees before him a deep fountain of cleansing blood into which he can plunge. There is more spiritual reality in the fantasy than in the strict historic event.

Without fantasies, there would be no achievement in life. Technology, medicine and art would all wither away. Science fiction anticipated science fact. Flights of fantasy preceded flights into space. Each step forward begins as a step of fantasy which later becomes a reality.

The pleasures of the union between bride and Bridegroom, and the final wedding feast, are surely the product of fantasy; but when the reality takes place, they will be seen as a fantastic description of a real event. Christians believe in this invitation to the wedding feast of the Lamb. They believe in the inebriating joys of drinking abundantly at his feast. Therefore they gladly bear their crosses.

In the village of Martuk in the Aktiubinskaia region of the Soviet republic of Kazakh, the school director - a man called Goroh - threatened a fourteen-year-old Christian girl, Arganessa Tissen. He said that if she continued to win souls to Christ, he would authorize children to put a rope round her neck and hang her on the spot. He compelled Christian children to crawl on all fours, in a travesty of kneeling at prayer. He called them "Fascists."

The Baptist Anatoli Y. Khailo was imprisoned on a false charge of raping and beating a girl, even though somebody else has already confessed to this crime. The girl's mother

has also admitted that the prosecutor instructed her to give false evidence against Khailo. Just like Joseph in the Old Testament, who was imprisoned on a charge of attempted rape even though he was holy and refused to sin, Khailo must suffer.

This ugly side of life can distress us. But we know about the wedding feast to which we are all invited. We do not look merely on the rain, but on their iridescent rainbow.

The Baptist Church in Belgorod, after enumerating many facts about the persecution, writes: "We thank God that He found us worthy of such an honour. We pray that He will give us all the strength not to be shaken, because the hour of the Lord's coming is near. May the Lord bless us, and teach us to understand the shrewd methods of His enemies."

The Christians of Belgorod are looking forward to the coming wedding feast. Though the banquet is a product of holy fantasy, it is a picture of future reality.

In Solomon's Song even erotic fantasy is sanctified. By that means he describes the coming drunkenness of love which the bride will experience in the embrace of the heavenly Bridegroom. This holy fantasy has helped many Christians to win through in Communist prisons.

Many people are attracted to so much that is ugly, to things worse than reality. We who are Christians are attracted to the beautiful, to the righteous, to the real, expressed in the most gorgeous images.

÷ Chapter 5 ÷

A sad chapter in the life of the bride

The bride says:

> I sleep, but my heart wakes: it is the voice of my beloved that knocks, saying, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with drops of the night."
>
> I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?
>
> My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.

> I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.
> I open to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spoke: I sought him but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.
> (SOS 5:2-6)

She sleeps; but he who is in her heart never sleeps nor slumbers. Just when the bride has fallen asleep, the word was fulfilled: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." She hears the Beloved's voice.

Those who are awake must seek Jesus; but he comes himself to the one who is asleep. There is not the slightest rebuke in his words, no anger at finding her asleep. He says

only, "Open to me, my sister, my dove, my undefiled." The ~Talmud~ says, "Open to God a door as big as the point of a needle, and He will enter with a cart full of blessings." How can one not let in someone who begs you, "Open to me, sleeper with beautiful eyelids"? How can one refuse entry to somebody who says not one angry word, though such words would be justified, but only says that he, the ruler of heaven and earth, has nowhere to lay his head? Where will he rest, if his bride does not call him? His hair is filled with dew because he has spent the night in the fields, without a roof over his head.

However, the bride prevaricates. She will not open to him at once: "I have put off my coat ... I have washed my feet," she says. But if she has put her coat off, she can either receive Jesus naked, or she can make haste to clothe herself again. If she has put off the garment of sin, she should never put it on again; but as for other garments, she can put them on in no time. And what sort of reply is this, that she has washed her feet and fears to defile them again? She knows that Jesus washed his disciples' feet. He will do it for her also. She is merely prevaricating.

And then he puts his hand by the hole of the door. When we offer excuses, the grace of God tries to force the entrance. But even he cannot open the door of the heart. That door can only be opened from the inside.

It was only then that pity moved her. If you can't manage any other sentiment for Jesus, at least have pity for one who has been hurt so much.

When she rose to open to the Beloved, her hands dripped

with myrrh, which was on the handles of the lock. Oriental keyholes are usually very large, and he must have poured perfume on the handles from outside, out of a bottle he had brought for her. When she put her fingers on the handle, this perfume dripped from them.

She opens to the Beloved; but he has gone. He has withdrawn himself. She did not open at the first knock, and now he cannot be found. How many reasons for sadness we

give ourselves, when we neglect opportunities that God offers!

She remembers now how sweet his voice was. Her soul had failed when he spoke. The Vulgate, the first Latin translation of the Bible, says here, "My soul melted when he spoke." That is how one can tell that it is the Lord who is speaking. Disciples of Jesus who talked with him after the Resurrection said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us along the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (LUK 24:32). It is always a thrilling event when the Lord speaks to his souls.

But human beings are strange. The bride fainted when she heard him; but she did not open the door. Afterwards she seeks him and does not find him. She calls for him, but he does not answer. It would all have been unnecessary, had she opened the door at once. There are times in the life of a man or woman when answers from Jesus cannot be obtained anymore. Why did they delay in answering the door? Was it because they had put off their clothes? The clothes of righteousness should never be put off.

A young man was married to a girl by a priest of the outlawed Uniate Catholic Church of the Ukraine. The Communists arrested her, and told her husband that his new wife would be raped by scores of soldiers if he did not denounce the priest. At that moment he should have opened his heart to Jesus, the Saviour who was ready to suffer for God's glory. Opening his heart at that moment of tragic dilemma, the young Christian would have known the simple truth that a Christian is never a denunciator, no matter what the circumstances. But he did not. He gave in. He denounced the priest who was in hiding. When his wife heard of this she tried to commit suicide. His mother died of a broken heart, and the priest went to prison. The husband later confessed his guilt, and died after valiantly protecting an innocent thirteen-year-old girl from the Communists.

Others who have allowed Jesus to enter their hearts have

acquired his courage. In Vietnam, everyone must have a permit to leave his quarters. Permits are not available to pastors. But they do leave their quarters, to answer calls from sick parishioners or simply to preach the gospel elsewhere. When caught, some were punished by being made to kneel in front of their doors for a whole week. So they knelt, and kneeling, they made plans about how they would propagate the gospel when they were allowed to rise to their feet. If they were caught again they risked new punishments, perhaps prison or even death. The pastors Nguyen van Thang and Nguyen van Nam died in Vietnamese jails.

All church property has been confiscated: schools, seminaries, universities and orphanages. However, God's children continue their work.

The Communists demanded that nuns working in hospitals should perform abortions. They refused, and so had to leave their work.

Since May 1975, 247 Catholic priests have been killed, and hundreds more have been sent to re-education camps, from which not all returned. The Evangelical clergy met the same fate.

In Uganda under the dictator Idi Amin, Christians, as well as political opponents of the regime and common criminals, were imprisoned in the concentration camps Mabira and Namamve. These prisoners were not fed at all. They lived by the law of the jungle; the strong ate the weak. Obviously, the Christians were among those eaten. It is an old African custom that such victims are not killed before being eaten; one piece after another is stripped from the living body. This information is taken from the records of an International Commission of Jurists at the United Nations.

Christians bore this with faithfulness. In their suffering, many must have cried to him and had the same experience as the bride In Solomon's Song: "I called to him but he gave no answer." Great faith is tested by long periods of waiting. But in the end, there is no such thing as an unanswered

prayer. The answer will surely come. It might not be the answer that we desired, but it will surely be the best answer for us.

Bad pastors

The bride complains: "The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me" (SOS 5:7). The watchmen of the city represent the pastors of the Church. Instead of helping the bride to find her Beloved, they beat her and wound her and take away her veil. Jesus foresaw that some of his pastors would begin to persecute his servants. They would care only about eating and drinking and enjoying themselves. In olden times many great persecutions against believers were unleashed by priests who, under the pretext of defending the Church, mistreated the children of God who were meek and spiritual.

The priest Eli rebuked holy Anna for drunkenness [1SM 1:14-15], but he had not one word of reproach for his wicked sons. Many pastors have grieved the hearts of the righteous. Even good pastors commit this sin. So the bride walks about, saddened by her own conscience and now by her pastors.

Prisoners in Communist prisons do not only suffer from the persecutor; they suffer also from betrayal by the leadership of their denominations. At the exact time that Pentecostalists in Rumania were being beaten by the police, the official leaders of the Pentecostal Union of Rumania, who are received as brethren at conferences in the Free World, congratulated the Rumanian government in the columns of the Communist press for the "full liberty" it bestows. They sent a letter to all the churches, obliging them to refrain from preaching about God's judgement, because the Communists do not like to hear this subject spoken about.

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In Red China during the Cultural Revolution, opponents of the regime (and all Christians were automatically defined as such) had to kneel for ten minutes of self-examination in front of a portrait of Mao, and slap themselves on the face ten times each morning before entering their workplace, and again in the evening before they left. They were singled out to clean the lavatories. With heads shaved, they were tied up and dragged away for physical punishment.

At that time some Christian leaders in the West were praising the Maoist regime as a fulfillment of God's kingdom. Later, the Chinese Communists themselves discovered the crimes committed under Mao. However,

some pastors had covered them up.

Sick of love

The bride says, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him, that I am sick of love" (SOS 5:8). Beaten by the watchmen on the walls, the bride is unable to continue her search. She demands of others that they should pray for her. She uses third parties as intercessors on her behalf. The lover uses all means possible to make contact with the Beloved.

"If you find my beloved" - she does not name him. A powerful love always supposes that everybody else loves the Beloved as well. She gives them a command: "Tell him that I am sick of love." You can tell when someone is sick from love, when that person cannot be dissuaded further from doing and suffering all things for the Beloved. It is written, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (DEU 6:5). Have you known what it is like to be love-sick?

You may well know what sea-sickness is. There is also such a thing as love-sickness. Do you know it? Do you know what it is to love to madness, to love to a paroxysm of love? This is love which, instead of drawing on its own large resources, demands even more love. It is better to have this dissatisfied love for Jesus, than a satisfied love for the world. This is the message that her messengers are to bring to him: that though she has been neglected, she still loves.

She does not ask him to come. She only tells him her pain. Here we are taught that prayers should only mention one's needs without making explicit demands; then he, knowing our needs, will do what he thinks best. There are many such prayers in the Bible. For example, Martha's prayer: "Behold, he whom you love is sick" (JHN 11:3). This prayer only speaks of the need. The mother of our Lord at the wedding in Cana says only this much: "They have no wine" (JHN 2:3).

Prayers which only express the need have a unique beauty. He is the Master. You tell him only the situation. He knows better than we do what needs to be done in such circumstances. He feels more pity when he sees the beloved

soul suffering with resignation, selflessly. Only speak your sorrow, without demanding what you think is necessary. The bride sends messages to tell him only, "I am sick of love."

We have many examples of this sort of love in the persecuted Church in the Communist world today. Valya was a twelve-year-old Russian girl. One day the director of her school decided that she should become a member of the Communist children's movement known as the Pioneers. She refused. Her refusal was invalid, because the director had legal rights over her such as only parents have in the Free World.

Enrolment day arrived. The chosen candidates stood before a table on which lay three-pointed Pioneer scarves. One by one the girls stepped forward to don the scarf and take the oath.

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"Valya Vastchenko," called the director. "Valya, step forward. Take the oath."

Valya's mouth stayed tightly shut.

"Say the oath, Valya! ... Very well. I will read it in your name." The director pointed to two other girls. "Place the scarf around her neck as I read."

He began. "I, Valya, pioneer of the USSR, promise before my comrade-patriots who decide the question of my admission to the organization, that I will stand firmly for the cause of Lenin and the victory of Communism. I promise ..."

His next words were drowned as Valya burst out in prayer to God and began to sing a hymn: "~We will stand firmly for the Faith, for Christ, following His example.~"

That child knew from the experience of many others that she had destroyed her future career for the rest of her life. She knew she might be put into an atheistic boarding school. She knew that her parents might be put into prison and might even die there, but she did not rationalize. She loved Jesus to a paroxysm, so she could not do other than what she did.

Thomas Aquinas was discussing the Song of Solomon when he died. On his death, the song that he wrote entitled, ~I adore You~, expressing his love and desire for Jesus, became especially relevant:

> Jesus, whom for the present, veiled I see,
> What I so long for, Oh! vouchsafe to me;
> That I may see Your beauteous face unfolding
> And may be blessed, Your glory in beholding.

The bride is sick of love, which means that she suffers. We have to defend our faith against the heresy of a Christianity without suffering, without a cross. Let me quote from typical sermons as preached frequently on American television.

"If a man can stand totally in the presence of Almighty

God, he will never be sick." Thousands are sick of tuberculosis contracted through hunger in Communist prisons. Others were maimed by torture. Others went mad.

"The grace of God brings about his blessings in the spiritual and the material realm." Prisoners in the Communist camps shiver in the cold, their families are fired from their jobs and have no money to buy bread for their children. Their goods are confiscated. Where is the material blessing?

"As his children, it is not our place to be in the maelstrom of the storm that swirls around us. We do not have to be buffetted around by all the torments that afflict the world. Even when trouble comes, the sunlight of God is shining and there is peace upon us." This celebrated preacher doesn't seem to have heard about the dark night of the soul through which well-known saints have passed. I dispute the claim that Christians are at peace in all circumstances.

The bride in Solomon's Song knows deep peace, but she also knows grave torments and sickness.

What does our beloved have more than others?

The bride is asked: "What is your beloved more than another beloved, O fairest among women? what is your beloved more than another beloved, that you so charge us?" She replies:

> My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.
> His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.
> His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.
> His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his

lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.
His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.
His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.
His palate is sweetness and all desires: yes, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.
(SOS 5:9-16)

The world does not know the beauty of the Bridegroom, but I can see the beauty of the bride, of the Church. She really is the "fairest among women." The world wonders about her love for Jesus,and asks her, "What does your Beloved have more than others?" Rabbi Solomon Iarchi, a celebrated commentator, writes: "Thus the nations ask the Israelites: What is your God more than all gods, that you are burned up with hunger for him like this?"

She answers with a model sermon. It is a sermon preached by a soul that loves to a paroxysm. It is not a boring exposition of bible verses; it is a description of what the beloved is. Isaiah preached in the same way [ISA 53:3-11]:

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.
He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened

not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.
He was taken from prison and from judgement: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of

> the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.
>
> And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth.
>
> Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief; when he shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.
>
> He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.
>
> (ISA 53:3-11)

So also did the apostle John preach:

> And so in the midst of the seven candlesticks [I saw] one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.
>
> His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;
>
> And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.
>
> And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shines in his strength.
>
> (REV 1:13-16)

With Isaiah we find Jesus' state of humility described; with John the Evangelist, a description of His glory. The bride describes his beauty. She has had his body lying near her, she has caressed it, she knows it.

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Yet the description of the Bridegroom is very far from reality. The body is too shiny. The beauty of the young man seems more that of a gilded statue than that of a human being. It is probable that she is comparing him to a work of Egyptian art. Ancient Egyptian sculpture was colorfully painted, and the flesh of males was painted red. Therefore she calls him "ruddy." (In SOS 7:2 we find concerning the bride the words, "Your belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies"; this image is explained by the fact that female sculptures were always painted yellow, the colour of wheat.)

The Egyptians also made bronze figures inlaid with gold, silver and copper. Surely we are reminded of this when the legs are described as columns of alabaster and the feet as

gold. It was a common device in Egyptian statues. To the bride, these features represent stability and grandeur.

Here the young man's legs are described in their entirety; in SOS 7:1, only the feet of the girl are mentioned. In old Egyptian art, the legs of males were unclothed, whereas the legs of females were never revealed except in the cases of children, dancers or dolls.

What is said here about the Messiah has a deeper spiritual significance. He is white because he is God and, though a man, without sin. He is red from the many whippings and sufferings he has endured. He is white, to show sinners that their sins too, can become white. But the red also warns them of the coming vengeance of God against sinners.

"His eyes are as the eyes of doves." In jail I had the opportunity to observe the lives of doves. They nested in the prison walls. I never saw fierceness nor fury in their eyes. They were always loving. This verse reminds me of them.

Of the Bridegroom's hands, the bride says (according to the Authorized Version), "they are as golden rings set with the beryl" - a precious stone. The Hebrew says, "set in Tarshish." This is a strange word, for in the Bible it can mean either a personal name, a kind of ship or a country. Nobody knows for sure where the place called Tarshish was.

Here the use of this word teaches us to see God's loving hand in what is achieved by human hands, in material objects and in great events involving whole nations.

Modest brides do not describe their beloved's belly to their girlfriends. The bride sets aside the normal conventions of decency and does so. She wants to suggest to every soul that Jesus can be known in the most intimate embraces. What needs to be concealed? His naked body was displayed in public on the Cross.

She ends her description by saying, "He is altogether lovely" or, "He is all desires." Every desire of a bride can find fulfillment in him. "This is my beloved, and this is my friend." She is sure he is her beloved, though for a time he left her.

We see how beautiful Jesus is in the eyes of his bride, by the description of him in Christian poetry, and by the works of the great sculptors and painters. We also see his beauty in the heavenly music composed in his honour by renowned composers.

The persecuted Christians know his beauty. The pupil Atkociunaite told her teacher in Soviet Lithuania, "I don't

care what you do to me. On the eve of Easter I will remain the whole night in adoration in the church." If he were not beautiful, nobody would spend a whole night looking at him in adoration!

In a book published secretly by the Orthodox Underground Church, the author writes:

> A man travelled on the shores of the Azov sea. He saw fishermen at work. The thought came to him, "If the sea contained no fish, nobody would be fishing. Nobody goes to a well that has no water. If there were no grace in the church, nobody would go there.
>
> A fool can go into a cellar and proclaim that there is no sun in the universe. Truly, for those in cellars there is none. So, there is no God, for those who are in the darkness of God-denial and evil."

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Living under fierce persecution, this author writes, "God is richness, fullness of life, love. All beauty, all power, all good, is only in God." He writes thus, a member of a church whose people are jailed, tortured and killed.

The Orthodox priest Nicholas Ivassiuk was assassinated in Tchardjow, Turkmenia, on 5 December 1978. Six men in police uniforms entered his house. Next morning Ivassiuk was found dead. His eyes had been gouged out (just as happened with the Baptist Victor Sedletskii), and his body had been burned by cigarettes and red-hot irons. There were also numerous lacerations. He had been finished off with two bullets through the head. Such things belong to the ritual of Satanist sects. The crime was perpetrated on the eve of the Feast of St. Nicholas, whose name the priest bore, as a calculated mockery of the saint. Ivassiuk left five daughters.

And yet from such a place of cruelty and sorrow, the Orthodox Underground Church publishes writings full of joy, jubilation and adoration of the beauty of Jesus! They know what that beauty is. They have seen him.

Michaela, a Rumanian Orthodox nun, like all Orthodox and Catholic Christians, believed that the Communion bread and wine really are the body and blood of our Lord. Every time she looked at the Sacrament, she saw his intoxicating beauty. When the police took over the Vladimireshti convent, she protected the altar with her own body. For this she was thrown into prison and mistreated beyond description. But from her solitary cell she tapped out the gospel in Morse code through the wall to her

fellow-prisoners until she died. She had seen his beauty, and would not give up sharing her love for him.

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÷ Chapter 6 ÷

"Whither is your beloved gone?"

The bride is asked, "Whither is your beloved gone, O fairest among women? Whither is your beloved turned aside? That we may seek him with you." She replies, "My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies" (SOS 6:1-2). Now that the girls have heard from her what makes her Beloved greater than any other, they also seek him. It is enough that one soul should seek Jesus in utter sincerity; then others will join in the search for him. Thus the girls now ask, "Whither is your beloved gone?"

The bride knows that she is going to have to give good directions to those who ask. She is inspired; she gives a remarkable reply: "My beloved is gone down." For anyone who does not know Jesus, these are incomprehensible words. The celebrated Rabbi ben Ezra wrote this commentary on the text: "This - of the One who ascended on high? He is said to gather lilies, because He dwells with the angels who are the righteous ones." In the same way, most believers who have lost Jesus do not find him, because they think that now that they have fallen, he is far above them. But he did not ascend. He went down. He descended far below the level to which they have fallen, so as to be able to meet them in their misery. The bride who fell into sin by refusing to receive him in her home when he knocked on the door, now knows that "He has gone down."

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In the beginning, God created man after his own image. When we lost that image, God came down and took upon himself the image of of man. He became incarnate, in a body like that of sinners. That is the way he always deals with us. If we cannot ascend to him, he descends to us. As ours sins increase, so does his grace. Because we cannot be saints, he puts himself on the same level as the sinners.

That is the only way in which continual fellowship with him is made possible.

Encounters with Communists do not only create heroes of the faith. Many believers fall away. In Rhodesia, Communist terrorists kidnapped Simon Chengeta, a black Member of Parliament and a Christian. They forced his son, Steven, to beat him to death. The son, who bears the name of Christianity's first martyr, could have refused. Probably the result would have been that they would have hacked him to death alongside his father, using somebody else to do the deed. But Steven did not want to die. So he fell away from the faith and became a parricide.

It is a privilege to become a hero by choosing to suffer instead of making the Son of God bleed. Those who make the right choice have the joy of loving and forgiving even their torturers. But not all make the right choice.

In Addis Ababa, the Communists arrested a couple with their older children. The children under six were left behind in their home. Nobody dared to bring them even a crust of bread. That might have been considered a crime punishable by death. Christ teaches us to help, even when the circumstances put our lives at risk. I have known German Christians who helped Jews, and Jewish Christians who later helped Germans, when they were persecuted by the Soviets, even though the punishment for such acts of love was death. In the case of that Ethiopian family, Christians opted to fall away from the law of love and from Christ. The children died of hunger. That falling away was absolute for those who believed that the pure Jesus is far above the fallen or backsliding sinner. But

those who believed that Jesus had come down, found the way back to him.

Once I shared a cell with two Uniate bishops. Under torture they had "confessed" to being spies, black marketeers, and collaborators with the pre-revolutionary police. They "confessed" that they had denounced Communists and had caused their arrest. Their tears never ceased. (It is said of the apostle Peter, that to the end of his days he wept whenever a cock crowed.)

The bishops constantly reproached themselves for their lack of heroism. They did not know how heroic their "confessions" were. It was not the heroism of those who never give in, but heroism it was; a heroism of the fallen who know that though they are brought low, Christ went lower still, down to utter despair. So they found the

courage to acknowledge their sinfulness - something rare among church leaders.

In Rumania, the Communists killed a Baptist pastor. At first a promising teacher, he later became an informer for the Secret Police. One of the pieces of information he passed on to the police concerned a secret meeting I had with a French Christian in Rumania. Everyone was suspicious of him. The brethren shunned him. He had no peace in his heart: he know that what he was doing was wrong.

He was astonished to find himself invited to the Lausanne Conference on Evangelism. After all, he was widely known to be a Communist agent. Once arrived in Switzerland, he criticized the true Christians in Rumania as lawbreakers; but all the time he could not understand why the pastors from the Free World, who had no obligations to the Secret Police, did not contradict him. Why were neither he nor the other Judases blamed?

In an attempt to ease his conscience, he confessed to a Western Christian publisher that he was working for the Communist Secret Police. The publisher smelt a good story and offered him an advance on a book. He was

disappointed; he had hoped that this fellow-Christian would set him back on the right path.

He had to return to Rumania in the end. He was determined to repent. Soon he broke off all relations with the Police. They retaliated by staging a car "accident" in which he was killed.

But he had understood that Jesus has gone down, far below the depths to which he himself had sunk. He died at peace with the Lord, thanks to the prayers, love and forgiveness of the Underground Church.

A faithful Bridegroom

The bride says, "My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feeds among the lilies" (SOS 6:2-3). He who loves gardens and flowers has gone down into his garden to the bed of spices, which typify the various denominations. He picks lilies (spiritual believers) from them all. These keep their trust

in him. They say, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." The bride retained this trust even though for a time he forsook her. God has sworn that he will be faithful. He will not lie to the disciples of David's Son. Our Bridegroom is always faithful.

Ion Cazacu was one of my best friends. During the Nazi occupation of Rumania he risked his life by "stealing" Jewish children from the ghettoes. The Jewish Christians in Iashi were in danger of death. Already, 11,000 Jews had been killed. The rest were not allowed to leave the city. Then a friendly official was persuaded at my request to issue warrants of arrest against all Hebrew Christians. As a result they were able to travel in comfortable train compartments as "prisoners," guarded by Cazacu, who was

armed. Once they arrived safely in Bucharest, the order of arrest was torn up and the prisoners were brought to my house.

Cazacu and his wife were also the only people who succeeded in entering heavily guarded prisons with carloads of food for the hungry Christians in detention there. That is the sort of life lived by men who know that Christ is always faithful.

In Rhodesia, Communist guerrillas killed forty Catholic, Pentecostal and Salvationist missionaries, along with their families. The victims - a three-week-old baby among them - were beaten to death with hammers, bayonets and axes. Mrs. Pickering, the mother of one of the dead, said: "We have prayed that God may forgive our enemies. There is no bitterness in our hearts."

Tremendous things are happening in Poland. Those fed by Jesus among lilies organized, for the first time in world history, a strike of 600,000 workers brandishing such weapons as prayers, Christian hymns, and Holy Communion. They occupied the factories, but there were no violent words or deeds. The leaders were motivated by a Christian spirit. Their chief demands were full religious liberty, the Church's right to time on television and radio and the right to publish. The striking workers made it possible for the anti-Communist Cardinal Wyszinsky to preach on television after thirty years of prohibition.

A new phase of world history was opened by the Christian Lech Walesa, the Polish strike leader. A man powerful because of God's deep peace, he risked his life and his liberty. He did not remain an obscure private

soldier in the Christian struggle. He realized that officers and generals were needed. He developed the necessary spiritual qualities, and God promoted him to a high rank.

Jesus is the only shepherd who feeds his flock in gardens, among lilies. That is something no other shepherd would do! But we expect the unusual from him.

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Beautiful as Tirzah

The Bridegroom says:

> You are beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.
>
> Turn away your eyes from me, for they have overcome me: your hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.
>
> Your teeth are as a flock of sheep that go up from washing, whereof every one bears twins, and there is not one barren among them.
>
> As a piece of pomegranate are your temples within your locks.
>
> (SOS 6:4-7)

The Bridegroom compares his bride with the capitals of the two Jewish kingdoms: Tirzah - which means in Hebrew, "the pleasant" - was the capital of Israel until Omri built Samaria; and Jerusalem was the capital of Judah.

Faithful souls are sometimes sad, and ask themselves, "Do I deserve to become an inhabitant of the heavenly Jerusalem?" What a senseless question! In the eyes of the Bridegroom we are as pleasant and beautiful as Jerusalem itself. Therefore, naturally, that is where we should be.

The beauty of the bride makes her "terrible as an army," with the banners under which it advances to victory. We overcome the world by faith; and with our beauty, we overcome God as once he was overcome by Jacob, who wrestled with him.

The image of the army shows that by his "bride" not one individual is meant but the whole Church. The Church is "terrible for God" through the irresistible power of the attraction it has for him. We advance victoriously towards God. God wishes one thing; we, in prayer, express another

wish, and so we can be conquerors. The Bridegroom pleads with the Church, "Turn away your eyes from me, for they have overcome me." God declares himself defeated. We defeat him, with our doves' eyes.

In Exodus we read that God had decided to destroy Israel after it had sinned by making the golden calf. But Moses defeated that plan of God. He made him change his mind (EXO 32). Every spiritual believer can do the same.

When the bride is with him, and he looks into her great pure, penetrating eyes, he lowers his own. The charm of her eyes is unbearable to him. The Bridegroom says, "Your eyes have overcome me." Rabbi ben Ezra translates this as, "They are stronger than me." The Septuagint renders it, "They have caused me to flee." Such can be our victory in prayer, through one loving look. Christians are called "more than conquerors." They are the conquerors of him who has overcome all.

When the apostles watched Jesus ascend into heaven, two angels came and stood by, and asked them, "You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven?" (ACT 1:10-11). If they had continued looking, perhaps Jesus would have been unable to separate himself from the earth. He could not have ascended. Their eyes would have impressed him so much that they would have persuaded him to fulfill their longing that he should remain with them.

We have God's command: "Look unto me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth" (ISA 45:22). And in Solomon's Song we also have the command to the contrary: "Turn away your eyes from me." The latter verse serves as a warning to prying eyes, seeking out of curiosity to search mysteries which God has reserved only for himself.

The Bridegroom's words, "Your teeth are as a flock of sheep ... as a piece of pomegranate are your temples" are an almost verbatim repetition of the compliment which he pays the bride in chapter 4. Before she refused him access,

he praised her. Now he pays her the same compliment, to show her that he has the same love for her after as before her fall. Even if his people are full of weakness, Jesus loves them. In the eyes of the king, the bride is as beautiful after her fall as she was on the day she was first presented to him. His love knows no alteration.

It is not necessary that the eyes of Christians be physically beautiful, for the bridegroom to be impressed. A Christian who has undergone torture is not a pretty sight.

A former Rumanian prisoner, R. Radina, describes his experiences in jail [in ~Testaments from the Death House~]:

> Religious poems were being recited when, all at once, a man with his head red with blood entered the cell. Maddened with pain, he could not speak, but only howled like an animal. The prison director had beaten his face with a stone.
>
> An imprisoned Christian child, Mihica, was beaten with a stick on his head and on his lame leg. His crime was that he had shared his bread with other sufferers. He had considered a slice of bread too sumptuous a meal to eat all by himself.

In Cambodia, women were tortured with poisonous spiders. In Sarsar Sdam, children were torn to pieces and old women nailed to the doors before their houses were set on fire. Prisoners were hanged on trees after their bellies were ripped open.

Pure souls whose eyes are swollen, ringed with dark circles, bleeding, lift up a loving look to the Bridegroom. He has suffered for us as the Son of God, for whom goodness and love were the norms. These souls, though sinners, have loved him. Having to conquer their own nature in order to be able to love at all, when they look at him in adoration they are unconquerable. The prayers of martyrs are not rejected.

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Radina also tells the story of the Rumanian Uniate priest, Onofrei Pompei. He was abused and hanged in the loft of his house. When the assassins departed the rope broke, and the priest came back to consciousness. God can save a person. even when it seems that all hope is gone. After that experience, Onofrei spent years in Communist prisons. Radina says of him, "His expression radiated a strange light. He seemed a true saint." This is the look which conquers even God.

His harem

The Bridegroom says, "There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled, is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of she that bare her. The daughters saw her and blessed her; yes, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her" (SOS 6:8-9). Towards the end of his life Solomon had some 700 princesses as wives and 300 concubines. When he wrote the Song of Songs, they were fewer.

In the spiritual sense these words show us that all souls of believers are God's, that all the Christian churches are his. But we are not all equally loved. Only one is his dove, his undefiled, "the only one of her mother." There is one holy and apostolic Church, and it is made up of all the children of God. This Church is one, just as Noah's Ark in the period of the flood was one.

That does not mean, however, that those who are not members of it physically are excluded from the kingdom of God, or cannot be Jesus' sheep. There are some sheep which have to be brought into the true fold (JHN 10:16). The heart of Jesus embraces everybody in its love. But it is specially drawn to this choice dove, just as David, who had

many wives, desired only Michal. Jesus longs for souls who belong to the only true Church with all their hearts.

In Communist lands, Jesus has his queens in every denomination. After eight years in prison I had grown accustomed to the routine. But one day a group of recently-arrested Orthodox priests were jailed. It was for them the very first day of the ordeal. It was winter; we sat on the bare concrete. From time to time, drunken guards would bawl "All priests out!" The priests were taken from the cells and were severely beaten. I had known one of them for many years, and I asked him: "Brother, are you grieved?" He answered, "I know only of one grief, that of not being a saint." In such circumstances, the words vividly showed the beauty of that soul, and made a lasting impression upon me.

Seventh-Day Adventists courageously stand up for their faith in Russia. Anatolii Miller, Karpenko Boris, Kovaltchuk and Galetskii are names of some of the Adventists who belong to Jesus and were jailed for their beliefs. The child, Michael Kozak, was kidnapped by the Communists from his parents, because they taught him the Adventist faith. When the child, who was interned in an atheistic boarding school, insisted on going back to his parents, he was put in a psychiatric asylum to be "healed"

of this desire. In spite of such things, the Adventists remain faithful to their Saviour.

In Cernanti in the Soviet Union, the Sedletztzy family received the sealed coffin of their son, who had refused to give up his faith while serving in the army. The officers demanded an immediate burial, but the family opened the coffin. They found the youth's face distorted from beatings, the eyes gouged out, the tongue torn out, the fingers cut off. He was a Baptist, faithful unto death.

In Rumania it seemed that St. Basil the Great was alive again, because his words were on the lips of saints under interrogation. When a pastor was threatened with deportation, his reply was: "Where can you exile me? I will be in my Father's world wherever you send me."

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To the threat of property confiscation, the reply was: "That's all right by me, but you will need a very long ladder. I have gathered my treasures in heaven."

"We will kill you!"

"We Christians do not fear death. It means passing over to a better life."

"You are fools. We will not kill you, but keep you all in a prison cell behind locked doors and iron bars. We will not allow anybody to visit you."

"We have a friend who can pass through locked doors and iron bars. We cannot be separated from the love of Christ."

Christians are those who have promised faithfulness to God unto death. God keeps his promise. He never breaks it. Neither should we.

A Catholic seminarian, Ion Budu, died near me in a Communist prison. His greatest wish had been to be a missionary in India or Japan. His last words to us who were with him were these: "If any of you ever go to Asia, tell the people there that I love them. May I die serving them through my longing for them, so that my death will be a sacrifice on their behalf." I am the only survivor of that prison ward of dying men. When I went to Asia I saw how deeply moved the people were, as I told them how they had been loved for Christ's sake by a prisoner who had died a martyr death.

Jesus has many queens in every denomination, but also he has concubines. Concubines are girls or women who have illegitimate relationships with men. The only consistent attitude towards the Communist authorities is the Underground Church. The official churches, which have

compromised with Communism, are anti-churches. Some of their pastors or bishops are real believers, but they are believers who waver between two masters, - Christ and Communism. They serve Communism, but stealthily slip away from it to say words of love to Christ. When he was on earth, too, Jesus had his secret believers. There are now

secret believers in Christ among the members of the Communist Party, and even among the officers of the Communist Secret Police. However, they do not want to lose their livings and their positions. What they are doing is wrong, but Jesus accepts them as his concubines.

The glory of the Church

> Who is she that looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?
>
> I went down to the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.
>
> Before ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib.
>
> Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon you. What will you see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.
>
> (SOS 6:10-13)

The description of the Church in chapter 6 is very like that in REV 12:1: "A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet." It is written in the Zohar:

> Israel's light will come little by little, until they will become strong. God will illumine them forever. All then will ask, "Who is she that looks forth like the dawn," this being a reference to the first tiny streak of the dawn; then "Fair as the moon," the light of the moon being stronger than that of the dawn, and then "clear as the sun," that is a still stronger light; and finally "terrible as an army with banners," expressive of the light in its full strength.

> For, just as when the dawn emerges from darkness its light at first is faint, but gradually brightens until full daylight is reached, so when God bestirs Himself to shine upon the Community of Israel, He will first shed on them a streak of light like that of the daybreak which is still black, then increase it to make it "fair as the moon," then "clear as the sun," until it will be "tremendous as an army with banners."

She shines so intensely because she has followed Jesus' example. He has gone down (SOS 6:2). The bride too has gone down. Jesus said to Zaccheus, "Make haste and come down." Whoever belongs to Jesus must humble himself.

The bride says, "I went down into the garden of nuts." There she has learned something important! A believing soul is like a nut. It might be dirty and muddy outwardly, but the dirt never reaches the kernel. It is the same with the Christian when he is polluted by living in this world.

Because she has humbled herself and gone down, the Bridegroom takes her up, in the chariot of Ammi-nadib. Some commentators believe Aminadib to have been the name of one of Solomon's celebrated chariot drivers. The speed of his driving would be symbolic of the swift response of the Saviour to the call of love. But the old Jewish interpreters divided the world thus: Ammi-nadib. This means, "the chariots of my willing, or princely, people."

Return, O Shulamite

Seeing her thus glorified, the other girls call out to her. They shout what the average man, for centuries, has shouted to those who sit near to Jesus in his chariot of

of trials: "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return!" The world is very demanding; it wants to draw us back to its own level.

At a jail in a Communist country, young officers would take girls out of the cells and invite them to go to restaurants with them. The girls, who had no fresh air in cells crammed with a hundred other unwashed people, were offered ice-cream and the cozy surroundings of a cinema, where they were shown erotic films. Most

believers refused. One girl accepted. The Communists had been nice to her; she had to be nice too. The voice had been too insidious: "Return, O Shulamite. Love me. You probably do not know the blessedness of the love of a man. I'll reveal it to you. My kisses will warm you." She did not answer "I belong to God," as she should have done. Everything else followed.

When she was freed, she accepted an invitation to speak to her fellow-inmates, attacking the faith. As she spoke against Jehovah, tears rolled down her face. She had returned to the world, while the others, the true brides, had remained steadfast.

Oleg Berdyuk, a Ukrainian writer in jail, has described how he came to accept the faith. He was a child when an artificial famine engineered by the Communists killed six million Ukrainians. He went to visit a relative, but she had starved to death. In an open Bible on her table, he read Magdalene's words, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Turning round, she saw Jesus, who asked her, "Woman, why do you weep?" The one she had considered dead was alive! (JHN 20:13-15).

That impressed him, but the Church disgusted him. Once he heard a priest chanting in the sanctuary, "God, grant a long life to Stalin, God's chosen one, devout Christian and leader." That was how religious stooges referred to the murderer of millions of innocents. This left him open to the call of the world: "Return, O Shulamite." He became an atheist.

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But then he dreamed two dreams. In one, he saw Christ with an incredible weight on his shoulders, blood streaming down his body, his eyes sorrowful yet hopeful. In another dream, Christ, wearing a crown of thorns, showed him raging torrents, high mountains and cliffs, and said, "Follow the path." He asked, "Why?" Christ replied only "Go."

Then one day he seemed to feel the presence of Christ while he was awake. It was not a thought about Christ. It was Christ himself. Oleg knelt and said the only words that hallow God: "I accept all that fate brings." These words are similar to those of the virgin Mary: "Be it unto me according to your word." [LUK 1:38]

And now, for the first time, we discover the name of the bride. It is "Shulamite"; the Shulamite is the same person as the Shunamite. The bride's name is a reference to Abishag the Shunamite, one of David's concubines.

In Hebrew the word ~shulamite~ means "peacemaker." It is a

name like ~Solomon~ which means "peace." The bride is a female Solomon. Jesus is the Prince of Peace (ISA 9:6), and the Church is the princess of peace, the Shulamite. Those who look at her can only think she is beautiful, accompanying angels in their dance.

The persecuted Church in truth "looks forth as the morning" and is "fair as the moon, clear as the sun." The Orthodox monk Michael Ershov was in jail for forty-five years. While in prison he has healed many possessed, lame and blind people. What reason could have have for complaining or grumbling against Christianity? Instead of doing so, he used even his life in prison for doing good.

Kiwanukas, a trustee of the Jesus to the Communist World Mission in Uganda, died in 1977. Together with fourteen other Christians, he was murdered by a hammer-blow to the head. His head was then cut off and taken to president Amin's house. His body was thrown into a lake.

Bishop Luwumba was asked by Amin whether he had any weapons. The Bishop showed him the Bible. Amin

shot him first in the mouth, then in the chest. This murderer of Christians drank his blood and ate a piece of the victim's flesh. His advisers assisted him.

Despite such sufferings, the bride of Christ continues to spread the knowledge of his beauty in dark Uganda. She in truth looks forth as the morning and is fair as the moon, clear as the sun.

What a beautiful soul is the Russian believer Ghenadii Shimanov! Because he was an active believer who sought to win souls for Christ, he was put into a psychiatric asylum. There, Dr. Shafran argued with him: "Why won't you abandon your way of life, and hold on to your life, your freedom, and the happiness of your family? You could also keep the core of your faith intact. All you have to do is to give up propagating it. It only brings you sorrow. The odds are against you. You have the whole State opposed to you. In this sort of situation, every fight becomes an act of suicide. And what does your religion say about suicide? It forbids it. So, you see...

"One of my neighbours is a priest. We live in the same house. He is high in the Moscow patriarchy, an educated, intelligent man. One day he said to me, 'Religion and life are two completely separate things which shouldn't be allowed to mix.' A highly intelligent man! He can help you to reach decisions of which you are not capable on

your own. Or do you prefer the martyr's crown?"
  Shimanov replied briefly to the psychiatrist. "The devil is smart."
  Shafran demanded, "Am I the devil?"
  "Oh, no. What ideas you have! I wasn't speaking about you. I am speaking about the devil. The real one."
  Shimanov refused to abandon his Christian activities. He remained in the asylum. He had to endure gagging and straightjackets. But he looked forth as the morning. He was fair as the moon, clear as the sun.
  The end of verse 13 [SOS 6:13] would be better translated, "two companies of ~mahanaim~," a category of angels which

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specializes in sacred dancing. When God the king entered into his sanctuary, "Singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels" (PSA 68:24-25). So it happens when the Shulamite meets her Bridegroom. In GEN 32:1-2 it is written, "Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, "This is God's host": and he called the name of that place ~Mahanaim~."

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÷ Chapter 7 ÷

The holy dance

The Bridegroom says:

> "How beautiful are your feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of your thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.
> Your navel is like a round goblet, which wants not liquor: your belly is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies.
> Your two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.
> Your neck is as a tower of ivory; your eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Beth-rabbim: your nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looks toward Damascus.
> Your head upon you is like Carmel, and the hair of

your head like purple; the king is held in the galleries."
(SOS 7:1-5)

The bride is here described as a dancer. People have always danced to the glory of their God. After they passed through the Red Sea, the Israelite women "went out after [Miriam the prophetess] with timbrels and with dances" (EXO 15:20). When David returned from his victory over Goliath, "women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul" (1SM 18:6). David danced mightily before God; Ecclesiastes says that there is a time to dance (ECC 3:4). Jephthah's daughter came

to meet him with timbrels and dances (JDG 11:34). Jeremiah prophesied that girls would rejoice with dancing when Jacob was ransomed. And when the prodigal son returned to his father, there was music and dancing.

The Shulamite also dances. She dances gracefully, like a true princess. Again her beauty is described to us, but with different imagery to that used before, because no earthly analogy alone ii adequate to portray all the splendour of a faithful soul.

The description of the bride at this stage of her spiritual growth - after she has fallen into the sin of refusing to receive him - reveals her as more beautiful than she was immediately after the wedding. The sinner who repents is more beautiful in God's eyes than the righteous person; therefore the angels find greater joy in looking upon such a person.

One realizes, reading these verses, that the Bridegroom cannot find enough words to show his love to the bride who returns to him. He borrows images of oriental sensuality, and gives such free rein to his imagination that the translator is tempted to water down the vividness of the original. Solomon uses language which nobody in the West would dare to use, except to describe a woman abandoning herself totally, without reservation. It is the language which Solomon used to speak of the dancers in his harem. The Bridegroom praises even the most intimate charms of his bride. He praises her beauties, and she praises his. He honours us; we honour him.

His first word of praise is, "How beautiful are your feet with shoes." She has shod her feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace (EPH 6:15). Hers are the shoes of messengers bringing good news, telling of peace and salvation.

"The joints of your thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman." Saint Paul says that the Body

of Christ - the Church - gets its nourishment by the joints (COL 2:19). This is an image of those pastors who lead their flocks well and teach them. Such pastors are jewels in the eyes of God.

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The bride dances naked before the king, or wrapped in flimsy veils. Fascinated by her dance and her body, he exclaims, "Your navel is like a round goblet, which wants not liquor; your belly is like a heap of wheat set about with lilies." The belly is the organ from which food is distributed to the whole body. So it is also the secret castle, that which gives the bride a choice wine mixed with spices, which animates all her spiritual life. (The word translated as "liquor" means in Hebrew "mixture," indicating the variety of blessings she receives.)

Her two breasts are like "two young roes that are twins." This means that both Old and New Testaments are a delight to her.

Her neck is like "a tower of ivory." The neck, uniting the head and the body, is a symbol of faith. This means that her faith cannot be strangled.

Her nose is like the tower of Lebanon, one of the towers built by David in the north of Palestine to serve as an observation post against the Syrians.

It is important that believers have a keen sense of smell. They must discern the spirits. As from the tower of Lebanon one could see enemy armies from afar, so the bride scents heresy which is far off.

Our intellect prefers to see the similarities between doctrines rather than the differences between them. Consequently it gives vague information. We need a nose like the bride's, capable of discerning the spirits. Pastors in the Underground Church need such a nose to discover Communist infiltrators.

The tower looks towards Damascus, the capital of Syria, always Israel's enemy. To her enemies she is "terrible as an army with banners."

Her head is "like Carmel," a hill full of rich vegetation. She has a beautiful abundance of red hair. The Nazirites were a kind of monk living at that time. No razor ever passed over their heads. It was believed that the secret of their power lay in their hair. The bride's power of attraction also resides in

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the richness of her hair, those locks that bind the King of Kings.

There are not enough words to describe the beauty of the bride of Christ under persecution today. In Guinea in Africa, under the dictator Sekou Toure, Cardinal Tchidimbo and other Christians were kept for up to eight days without food or water in the tropical heat, in cells full of rats, lice and insects. The cables which bound them cut into their flesh. They were flogged and called "Christian dirt." Three hundred prisoners were locked into a single unventilated room, where they suffocated.

Others were given electric shocks while their hands were tied to iron bars placed so high that only the tips of their toes reached the floor. For days the full weight of their bodies was taken by their tied hands.

Some were forced to kneel on sharp stones. Their skin was flayed and pepper was poured on their open wounds. Hot pepper was introduced into the rectum; this is a torture which produces unspeakable pain. All the time they were told, "If you denounce others, we will give you water."

Some died; they did not become Judases. The Cardinal survived, and, after his release, he wrote in Rome a splendid book demonstrating how suffering has purified him and made him love the Bridegroom more.

In South Africa, the Communist-backed terrorists, supported by the leftist World Council of Churches, hacked pregnant women to death. They slit the throats of babies. They peeled the skin from an old man's face, and left him to die in the blazing sun, impaled on a barbed-wire fence. They cut off lips. They gouged out eyes. But the bride of Christ in South Africa remains unafraid.

One of the strangest verses in the whole book follows the praise of the bride: "The king is held in the galleries." The Hebrew word translated as "held" is ~asar~ which also means "imprisoned with chains and fetters." The word ~rahat~ which the Authorized Version here renders as "gallery" is in GEN 30:38,41 translated as "gutters."

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All Jewish commentators agree that the king spoken of here is the Messiah. The ~Kabbalah~ says that he does not come yet, because God keeps him bound in heaven in golden chains. Others believe that he is bound there with locks of women's hair, which are like eddies of water in water troughs. Hence this image. He ardently wishes to come, but God restrains him in this way.

We cannot accept these fancies. The Messiah has come. Jesus is his name. The explanation of the verse is much simpler than those above. The king has found himself a

bride in the world's gutter. Publicans, crooks, loose women, murderers, those of us with more "respectable" sins - all of us are lost. When we are converted he admires the beauties of our souls, described in detail in the preceding verses. His love for his bride binds him to her as if with fetters.

Jesus admires his bride

The Bridegroom says:

> "How fair and how pleasant are you, O love, for delights!
> This your stature is like to a palm tree, and your breasts to clusters of grapes.
> I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also your breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of your nose like apples.
> And the roof of your mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goes down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak."
> (SOS 7:6-9)

There will never be anything more delightful than love which bears all things, believes all things and hopes and endures all; love which is extended even to enemies and beyond the grave; love which gives its life for the beloved.

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Love is the wisest thing. That is why the Syriac translation calls this book, ~The Wisdom of the Wise~.

Jesus speaks to the bride in the language of admiration. We must not be surprised at this. Faithfulness was a part of Jesus' nature. For him it was natural to be faithful. He came from heaven. But faithfulness is practised also by many downtrodden, wronged men of this earth, who do not understand the reason for their suffering. They still maintain their faithful, pure love for God, and that is something for which God himself has admiration.

I knew a railway worker who was a Christian. His only daughter, whom he loved very much, died when she was fourteen. She was drowned head-downwards in a ditch full of sewage. The man did not torment himself with doubts, but continued in his love for God, and was prepared to suffer imprisonment for his sake. God made our souls pleasant and

beautiful, and he admires us as an artist admires his work.

The stature of the bride is like that of a palm tree - straight, powerful, high and gracious. The palm tree was an emblem of Israel. A medal was struck for the Roman Emperor Titus, who destroyed the Jewish state. It bore the figure of a grieving woman seated beneath a palm tree. The inscription read, ~Judea capta~ - "Judaea is taken." She might be a captive, but Israel was still a palm tree, standing erect, refusing to bow to heathen idolatry.

The Bridegroom says to himself, "I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof." He is expressing his desire to be strongly united with the believing soul. Let us take heed of the words "I will go up." There are believers towards whom Jesus "goes up." He said that there are some who will do greater works than his (JHN 14:12). Towards those disciples, he ascends. He will grasp the boughs of these palm trees. When he does so, it will be seen whether they are strong and resistant or not. A palm tree which he embraces becomes sanctified.

Not only in Solomon's temple, but also in Ezekiel's ideal temple, there were figures of palm trees as well as cherubim.

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The use of the palm tree as a symbol for a bride is emphasized by the Hebrew text in these passages, since the word used for "palm tree" is not the usual ~tamar~, but its female form, ~timmorah~. [1KI 6; 1KI 7; EZE 40; EZE 41]

The bride's breasts "shall be as clusters of the vine." Just as grapes refresh a man, so Jesus is refreshed by our fruitfulness, by our work for him. One of the characteristics of oriental love is that it takes pleasure in anticipating its joys beforehand. So Jesus exults beforehand, in the joy which he will receive from faithful souls.

In the entire Soviet Republic of Moldavia, there were only two Catholic churches. One of them, in Sloboda-Rashkovo, was bulldozed to the ground by the police. They are mindless. They destroyed the physical building, yet the church is now more beautiful than it was before.

The Catholics, weeping, lifted from the mud the church's Communion wafers, which they believed to be the real body of Christ. They ate them with reverence. Walls had been torn down, but the Christians' reverence for God had increased. Jesus "goes up" toward such believers.

In the Soviet Union the police frequently raid meetings of the Baptist Underground Church, confiscating Bibles, hymnbooks, and the private purses of some of the believers. They kick Christians in the belly and in the

chests. The Communists are mad. Usually the believers, while they are being beaten, pray and sing. Such music has a spiritual beauty of its own. To these believers, Jesus says, "How fair and pleasant are you, O love, for delights!" These are the Christians likened by him to palm trees, to whom he goes up.

The Communists do not know the words of Gregory of Palama: "The Christian's life is outside, beyond, and higher than its physical self." "Truth," wrote Luther, "becomes more triumphant when attacked, more glorious when oppressed."

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"Come, my beloved"

The bride says: "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us go up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vines flourish, whether the tender grapes appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there I will give you my loves" (SOS 7:11-12).

We are the object of two desires. God says to Cain," Sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you" (GEN 4:7). In Psalm 45 it is written, "Harken, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father's house; so shall the king greatly desire your beauty" (PSA 45:10-11). Two powers compete for our love.

And now she who has chosen Jesus will demonstrate how greatly she desires him. She says, "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages." Faithful souls hate towns full of sin and noise. It is difficult to serve the Lord if things continually distract you. Isaac went out into the field to meditate quietly (GEN 24:63). Jesus advises us, "When you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father" (MTT 6:6). The bride does not seek amusement in noisy places. She desires solitude. She doesn't want Jesus to judge the Church with the same judgement that will be meted out to the spoilt residents of the town. Jesus will see the reality of her faith in a quiet, rural environment. In company with him, she will go early to the vineyard to see if the vines are flourishing and whether the tender grapes have appeared. They will examine souls, to see whether they have grown in grace and truthfulness.

Wang-Min-Dao, a hero of the faith in China, broke under torture and acknowledged before a large crowd, "I am an anti-revolutionary criminal. I am grateful to the government for pardoning me and saving me from the

depths of my sins." But he repented later. He went to the police station with his wife and said, "I am a Judas. I have betrayed my Lord. Imprison me." He sat in jail for over

twenty years. Now he is free in Red China.

If the Bridegroom and the bride go up to the vineyards of Red China, they will find that the vine has flourished, and the tender grape has appeared.

In Omsk, in Russia, the Baptist Church was celebrating Easter. Its members had gathered at the home of Sister Helen Siusa. Thirty policemen, mostly drunk, rushed in and jumped upon the believers. They ruthlessly beat up everybody, including old people, women and children.

When the police tried to arrest the preachers, men who had already been in prison, the children cried, "We will not give up our fathers!" Their tears were heartrending, but the police did not think so. They kicked them with their boots and shouted: "You are enemies of the people! You should have no work and no food! There is no law to protect you!"

The Christians, however, were unafraid. That same afternoon they held their worship service again in the same house.

A Russian Pentecostal believer, Vashtshenko, had been twice in prison. His four sons carried on his work. One of them, Hariton, became a Pentecostal bishop. His children were asked to deny Christ and to blaspheme in school. They refused to comply. They were taken away from their parents and put into an atheistic boarding school. Their mother was forbidden to visit them. This is what they wrote to their parents: "We weep at night. The boys beat us. But do not worry, Papa and Mama, for God is our protection. We weep because we are not allowed to come home."

Their daughter, Valia, refused to eat without saying grace. She was mocked but with other Christian children, she continued to thank God for her food. She wrote: "The director shouts at us and this is good; the bigger our sorrow, the nearer we are to God. By God's will I shall remain a believer. I do not want to learn anything in this atheistic school."

An Orthodox priest, Talantov, and his son were killed by the Communists. His other son, Boris, continued to witness openly for Christ. For this he also was put into prison, where he died.

The Baptist preacher Peter Vins died in prison for his faith. His wife too was in prison for three years. Their son George, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of the USSR, also went to jail.

The bride can quietly call the heavenly Bridegroom to get up early to go with her to the vineyard. They will see the vine flourish and the tender grapes appear. Christianity in Communist countries bears rich fruit for God.

A pleasant perfume

The bride says, "The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for you, O beloved" (SOS 7:13).

The precise identification of the mandrake is unknown. It could be the cantaloupe. This has a pleasant perfume, which typifies the perfume spread in this world by believers; especially by young believers who have been born into a family of the faithful and have not known the life of sin.

In antiquity the fruit and roots of the mandrake were thought to have aphrodisiac qualities. Leah gave mandrake to Rachel. [GEN 30:14-16] The fragrance we spread in the world stimulates the faculty of love in others.

Unlike the evil workers in the vineyard who have withheld their harvest from the master, the bride has laid up fruits at the gate. He is not greedy; he is not in a hurry to collect them; he allows them to mature.

We know how to keep the fruits which were not picked by the master, just as women know how to preserve fruit. The bride has kept new and old fruit for her master." Every scribe who is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old" (MTT 13:52)

÷ Chapter 8 ÷

"If you were my brother"

The bride says:

"O that you were as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find you without, I would kiss you; yes, I should not be despised.

I would lead you, and bring you into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause you to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.

His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.

I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.

Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?

I raised you up under the apple tree. there your mother brought you forth: there she brought you forth that bore you.

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which has a most vehement flame.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly condemned."

(SOS 8:1-7)

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The most intimate of relationships with Jesus cannot be expressed in public. Before the world, we may only have the relationship between brother and sister, in which kisses are considered respectable.

The Shulamite is modest. She knows how far she is from what a wife should be. She still has to learn. So, she says that if she should find him, she would lead him into her mother's house, the Church.

What daring words she uses! We are accustomed to think he leads us as king, shepherd and teacher. But we can also lead him - by prevailing love and prevailing prayer. In fact a contest is taking place. He wishes to lead us to the mansions he has prepared for us in his Father's house: we insist on first taking him to the house of our mother (we shall speak further of this). There, the bride will learn to give him spiced wine, the juice of her pomegranate. The mother, the Church, has long experience of the kind of adoration which pleases him. We all have to learn from her.

The bride's friends ask, "Who is this that comes up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved?" First it was the Jewish people. Now, it is the Church and every individual

believing soul. Every "coming out" from the wilderness is a "coming up."

The wilderness is exhausting. You cannot come out of it in your own strength, but only by leaning upon the Beloved. The literal translation is, "her arm under his arm-pit" - an expression of great familiarity.

She says, "I raised you up under the apple tree." We believers raise up the Saviour through our prayer. The disciples woke him up repeatedly during a storm: "Awake! why do you sleep? Awake!" This is also the frequent prayer of the Psalmist.

She prays that she might keep his love: "Set me as a jewel upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm." Men in the Orient sometimes wear, on their breast or on their arm, jewels with the portrait or the name of their bride engraved on them. She wants the Beloved to have such a jewel. She

would like to be a seal on his heart, so that nothing else might enter. The soul wants to know for certain that it will remain in God's love.

The bride's prayer has been fulfilled. John's Gospel tells us that Jesus said on the Cross the word which is rendered in Greek as ~tetelestai~ - "It is finished." In the New Testament all Jesus' words are translated, for he spoke in Aramaic. The word he must have actually used is ~kalah~. It has two meanings. One is "It has been accomplished" or "finished." The other is, "bride." It is possible that his very last word before death was a loving sigh for his bride.

Of some souls God has said, "I have engraved you upon my hand." God says to a believer who has reached this spiritual state, as he said to Zerubbabel, "I will take you O Zerubbabel and will make you as a signet; for I have chosen you" (HAG 2:23). But before this is fulfilled, terrible things must happen.

What God says to Zerubbabel is: "I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day ... will I take you ... as a seal (the same word as is translated "signet" in HAG 2:23).

Sometimes we pray foolishly. We are like doctors who would like to destroy tuberculosis but object to the destruction of the microbes that cause it. We want the kingdom of God, the only state in which we will know in

perfection what it is like to be near the Beloved; but as often as something happens that signals the destruction of Satan's kingdom, we make intercession: "Don't let anything be destroyed!" The churches storm heaven with their prayers.

That is what I alluded to when I compared the desire of the Bridegroom, who wants to lead us into his Father's mansions, to that of the bride, who wants to lead him to her mother's house. We will come to be a seal on his heart only

when our prayers quieten down, to "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done" - though know that this will involve the perishing of all those who, despite having had a better light offered to them, oppose it.

Even when you have arrived at this place, vigilance is necessary. The assurance that one is in the favour of God can only be maintained by patience, goodness and righteousness.

Love is like death

Now the bride brings arguments to show why she has such pretensions, and why she makes such demands.

Death and love have many common features. Just as nothing can resist death or avoid it, and in the end everything must come under the law of death, so it is with love. He whom death assails, must die; he whom love assails, must love. The phenomenon of death makes man understand that there are limits to human power.

However, I cannot resist telling a joke in this context. A pastor was once delivering a thundering sermon about sin and hell. "One thing is certain!" he said. "Every man, woman and child in this parish will die one day. There is no escape!"

A boy in the front seat began to laugh.

"Every person in the parish will one day die!" the pastor reiterated.

The boy continued to laugh.

"What are you laughing at?" demanded the pastor angrily.

"I'm not from this parish!" said the boy.

Death happens of necessity. There is no point in dissipating energy in struggling against it. It can be

postponed for a time, but not escaped. So with love. You

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cannot decide with whom you will fall in love. There are two people destined for each other: when they meet, the barriers fall. Because of love, Edward VIII of Britain gave up the throne of an empire, for a divorced woman; King Charles II of Rumania did the same. The elect bride can do no other than love Jesus ardently. He can do no other than love her.

It seems at first glance strange that the bride could not have found more appropriate images of love than death and the grave. The ~Zohar~ asks the question whether God's words when he finishes the creation - "And behold, it was very good" (GEN 1:31) - included in their meaning the Angel of Death. The ~Zohar~ concludes:

> Concerning this mystery, R. Simeon gave us the following explanation: "And behold it was good" refers to the Angel of Life; "very" to the Angel of Death, for he is of greater importance. And why? When the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world, all was prepared for the coming of man, who is the king of this world. Man was fashioned to walk in the straight way, as it is written: "God has made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions" (ECC 7:29). He made man upright, but he gave himself over to corruption and was therefore driven out of the Garden of Eden. This garden was planted by the Holy One, blessed be He, on the earth, and made an exact likeness of its prototype, the Paradise above, and all supernal forms were fashioned and shaped in it, and the cherubs were there - not those carved in gold or any material that could be fashioned by human hands, but of supernal light, fashioned and broidered through the agency of the perfect Name of the Holy One. All the images and forms of all things in this world were there fashioned, all having the similitude of the things in this world. And this place is the abode of holy spirits, both of those that have come into this world, and also of those that have not yet come into this world.

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> Those that are about to come are invested with garments and with faces and bodies like those in this world, and they gaze upon the glory of their Lord until the time comes for them to appear in the world. When they leave

> the Garden for that purpose, these spirits put off their celestial bodies and garments and take on the bodies and garments of this world; they henceforth make their abode in this world in the garments and bodies fashioned from the seed of procreation. So when the time comes for the spirit to leave this world again, it cannot do so until the Angel of Death has taken off the garment of this body. When that has been done, he again puts on that other garment in the Garden of Eden of which he had had to divest himself when he entered this world. And the whole joy of the spirit is in that celestial body. In it he rests and moves, and contemplates continually the supernatural mysteries which, when he was in the earthly body, he could neither grasp nor understand. When the soul clothes herself with the garments of that world, what delights, what joys, she experiences! And who caused the body to be inhabited by the spirit? Why, he who took off the garment of flesh, the Angel of Death!

The bride sees nothing wrong in death, which brings her into his embrace. For her, it is natural to compare love to death.

In the fourth century AD, in Sebaste in Armenia, forty young Christians were sentenced to death by freezing. In winter they were forced to go naked into a river. They were told that if they denied their faith, they would be allowed to come out and warm themselves at a fire that was ready on the shore. The mother of one of them helped her son to enter the vehicle in which they were to be taken to the river. She did not weep, but said, "Go, walk with your brethren. Don't linger. Do not arrive in the Lord's presence after them."

One of them did recant. But then a soldier watching on

the shore saw an angel descend from heaven, with forty crowns in his hand. He placed a crown on every head, but was left with one over; the youth for whom it was intended had fled the Angel of Death, the harbinger of the final triumph.

The soldier immediately stripped off his clothes and plunged into the cold water, shouting, "I am coming, Angel!" He died with the rest. That is how brides feel and act.

Just as death is impressed by nothing, and cannot be bribed or persuaded not to act, so is love. Love for God, just like death, takes away from man the desire for

transitory things. Just as death never releases its prey, neither does love.

Surely, this is what the love of God towards us is like. For his beloved bride, he puts aside his glory, his righteousness, his law, his divinity, his eternity. For her he becomes a slave. He dies on a cross - for her. His love is a love to the end.

His jealousy is cruel as the grave. It is love's legitimate reaction against any insults brought to it by the beloved. He is jealous when we fall into idolatry. We, for our part, have to be jealous and intolerant of the things that belong to our lower nature. Our prayer is, "Lord, be jealous of me; and do not give me into the hand of anything else."

A book without the word "God"

The bride says, "The coals [of jealousy] are coals of fire, which has a most vehement flame." The Authorized Version here translates exactly what is in the Masoretic Hebrew text. However, some Jewish copyists wondered how it was that this biblical book contains no mention of

God. Therefore, in some manuscripts they divided the last word of this verse, shalhebetiah ("vehement flame"), into shalhebet-Jah - "flame of the Lord" (Jah being the older form of Jehovah). The same is found in several English translations.

This is acceptable but superfluous. God resonates in every verse in this book. God is love. Where bride and Bridegroom show burning, loyal feelings towards each other, when you have said "love" you have said "God." In this Song, mutual love and the giving of self to each other, and to the One to whom they less directly belong, is religion itself. There is no need to dress it up with religious phraseology. Solomon's Song does not include the word "God." But it is an eloquent proof of his existence.

The philosopher, Immanuel Kant, said that the moral law demands that men be rewarded in proportion to their virtues. Since in everyday life evil men often fare better than those who are good, it follows that there must be another existence, and there must be a God who gives rewards in eternity. Brides like the one in Solomon's Song

surely do not get their rewards on earth.

Vincent Van Gogh was a preacher in a squalid mining village in Belgium. He became more humble than the humble, and renounced everything: house, clothes and food. He overwhelmed his hearers with his evangelical fervour. During a typhoid epidemic he gave away as bandages even the few rags that he wore. Then he discovered his talent for painting. Now, over ninety years later, his paintings sell for millions. But Van Gogh himself never made any money from his art. He continued to live in the darkest misery, creating master-works.

Chinese Christians have always endured suffering with fortitude. During the Boxer Rebellion, when killers entered the house of sister Ming, she asked them to allow her the favour of changing her dress. She then put on her bridal gown and most beautiful ornaments. For her, death was a wedding feast. And so she died.

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Prisoners brought to the Wronski jail in Poland were asked, "Who among you is a believing Christian?" All stepped forward.

"We have kneeling chairs for you," they were told.

The prisoners were then made to kneel on ordinary stools. "Pray aloud!" they were ordered. "And take your shoes off!" During their prayers, blows fell on their bare feet. The Christians all had difficulty walking next day.

In Wronski, the cells are cold. Many windows are broken. Christmas dinner consisted of plain bread and overcooked potatoes, yet the prisoners had to work at felling trees. Whoever stayed in the toilet more than five minutes received truncheon blows.

"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." God, loving the little Israel, did not forsake it for the cause of some mighty empire. On the contrary, he gave other nations as a ransom for Israel. The love of God for the faithful soul will last forever. This is the summary of this whole book, and its moral. The love magnified in this book is true love, which does not lose heart when faced with great danger. It is a love which inspires courage and sacrifice, preferring voluntary poverty to servile richness; a love which hates with vigour everything which is false and mean; a love which matures into calmness and faithfulness.

Priceless love

"If a man would give the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be condemned." Such love is not for sale. Like wisdom, it cannot be bartered for gold. It cannot be bought with silver.

It is written in the Bible, "Buy truth." (PRO 23:23) Jesus said, "I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the

fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed" (REV 3:18). Interpreting words like these, upon which he had not meditated very profoundly, Simon the sorcerer offered money to the apostles, and said to them, "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost" (ACT 8:19). His fault was that he did not understand spiritual things. God's gifts cannot be bought with money. Isaiah says, "Buy wine and milk without money and without price" (ISA 55:1).

The commandment is strict: it is forbidden to pay for God's gifts with money.

To simply give everything is the responsibility of all Christians. Simon sinned by the fact that he still had money, and he offered it to the disciples in exchange for something. The first Christians gave everything at the time of their conversion.

The gifts of God can be bought, but it is through the renunciation of sin and vanity. Moreover, riches are incompatible with love; the believer must consistently refuse the hope of riches. As Jesus refuses our money and seeks us, so the bride must seek not his gifts, but Jesus himself.

A missionary, captured by the Chinese Communists some years ago, was about to be beheaded. Suddenly she began to laugh. Her captors asked, "What is so funny about being beheaded?"

"I was just thinking," she replied, "how ridiculous my head would look rolling down the hill!" They let her go. With this sister, love was as strong as death.

After the Russian Revolution a civil war raged for many years between the conservative population and their foes, the Communists. At that time an Orthodox priest, walking down the street, saw five soldiers of the conservative White Army tie a Communist soldier to a tree and prepare to execute him. On seeing the priest, the officer who led the firing squad greeted him with the usual Russian

greeting, "Bless us, father."

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"I can't bless a killing," answered the priest.

Moved, the officers freed their prisoner.

A few weeks later a woman called that priest to administer the last rites to her dying son. As he entered the house, the priest heard the son yell to his mother, "Why did you call a priest? All those villains must be killed! I am a Communist. I can't stand priests."

But then, recognizing the priest, he exclaimed, "You are the one who saved me from being shot. You said, "I can't bless a killing." Do you see the big knife on the table? My assignment was to kill you with it. If you had known that, would you still have stopped my execution?"

"Even in that case," replied the priest, "I would not have blessed the killing, because God has forgiving love for us all. God has sent me a second time to save you."

A minute later, the man was dead, but all the hatred had disappeared from his face. The love of that priest was also stronger than death.

In the Soviet Union, there still are brothers and sisters in psychiatric asylums. A letter smuggled out told of Sitchovka, a prisoner in an asylum, who was shown a straitjacket by a Secret Police officer posing as a doctor. He said, "Don't worry - we won't use it on you. We've got something better; the chemical straitjacket."

The prisoner was led into a room where cats, under the influence of an alkaloid drug, were unable to move even when threatened, pinched or when a flame was brought near their whiskers. When an officer tried to push a cat forward, it displayed every sign of stupor. Another cat stood motionless, with its hind legs on a chair and its front legs on the floor. In the room were cats, mice, apes and birds, all drugged by some poison, standing petrified like statues.

The officer laughingly said to the believer, "One of your brethren mentioned the prophecy that when Jesus returns, wolves will dwell with lambs. We don't need Jesus. We do it ourselves! We have our own saviour,

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and we will break you with it. You can't withstand this."

Our Christian brother added in his letter, "The magicians at Pharaoh's court also imitated the miracles

that Moses did. But Moses remained God's man."
The love of such Christians, who know these horrors await them if they remain faithful and who continue to serve the Church, is not only as strong as death but stronger still. It is stronger than the fear of being deprived of your mind for ever.

A little sister

The bride says:

> "We have a little sister, and she has no breasts; what shall we do for our sister in the day when she will be spoken for?
> If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar.
> I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers; then was I in his eyes as one that found favour."
> (SOS 8:8-10)

Here we have a supplement to the Song of Songs. Once she is sure of the unlimited love of God, the bride has her mind at rest and can turn to the problem of her sister. Jesus and the bride, united in full reciprocal love, discuss what is to be done with the younger sister who has no breasts yet, which means that she has no prominent qualities in her body; she has done no exceptional deeds in the service of God.
Jesus assures the bride that the Holy Trinity will do

everything for her. If she be a wall - which means, if she is a person who cannot fall under temptation, if she is strong as iron, if she can resist - then God will do her great honour. But if she is a door, which can easily be opened - if she falls easily in sin, if her virtue is not solid - she will be enclosed with walls of cedar, a strong and durable wood. The weak believer is guarded in a special way, though even believers who are able to resist sin are not left unwatched, because strong castles can also fall.
The bride is assured of what God will do for her small sister, remembering the miracles he did for her who is like a wall and who has breasts like twin roes, typifying

unconquerable virtues. She has found favour with him. The Shulamite, the princess of peace, has found ~shalom~ (peace) with Solomon, the Prince of Peace.

Some Christians are strong. All seductions rebound off them. On such strong walls, Jesus can build castles of silver. I am reminded of Hannington, the Anglican bishop of Uganda, who was eaten by cannibals. He went to his death reciting the Lord's words, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you." On that wall, God built a splendid castle. Hannington's sons became missionaries and baptized their father's murderers. Those converted cannibals told the story.

Some twenty Russian girls were novices in a secret convent. When it was discovered, they were all sent to Siberia. The last advice of the abbess to the girls was to stay together if possible, and to say as soon as they met anybody - be it friend or enemy, policeman or fellow-prisoner - that they belonged to Christ.

They were sent to forced labour, and had to fell trees. One night, a group of other prisoners who were common criminals came to the girls' barracks. The girls were frightened, but the men told them, "You have spoken about your faith. So, explain to us about God. We have not seen a priest for thirty years. We need a word from God." From that night the barracks became a mission centre.

Even the guards sympathized. Many people were converted, and the novices baptized them. The former criminals helped the girls fulfill their work quotas so that they could have time for prayer.

These are the brides of Christ, with great and strong breasts.

Solomon's vineyard

The bride says:

> "Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.
>
> My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: you, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

You who dwell in the gardens, the companions
hearken to your voice: cause me to hear it.
Make haste, my beloved, and be like to a roe or to a
young hart upon the mountains of spices."
(SOS 8:11-14)

In Hebrew ~hamon~ means "a great, noisy crowd." Solomon had a vineyard in Baalhamon. Jesus has his vineyard, his Church, in the midst of a noisy multitude.

The bride discusses with him what fruit their vineyards must produce. She says to him, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me." Before, she did not look after her vineyard. Now she has decided to care for it, so that God will be able to build a palace of silver upon her testimony. She promises Solomon one thousand pieces of silver from the profits of her vineyard, and allows two hundred for the workers who tend it.

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The ~Zohar~ rightly says, "Wherever the name of Solomon is mentioned in Solomon's Song it is holy, except in the words 'A thousand unto you, O Solomon.'" The author has descended from celestial heights down to financial dealing. He could not help revealing that the Word of God has passed through human hands.

Rembrandt painted a splendid picture of the good Samaritan. In front of the inn where the wounded man was brought, he painted a dog relieving itself. This is the most prosaic thing in life. In the middle of his most tragic tirade, Shakespeare's King Lear speaks to the Fool in bawdy language. No work of art or religion is exempted from at least a token acknowledgement of the meanness of human nature.

But there is also an important lesson in this verse. The bulk of a church's finances must go towards the propagation of the gospel. Ministers must be provided for, but not luxuriously. It is a scandal that some ministers in the USA have large salaries, when those in the Third World often live at poverty level. And as for those under Communist persecution, who thinks of them?

Now it is time for the Bridegroom to depart. He goes into the mountains: the bride remains in the gardens below. His last words are, "You who dwell in the gardens, the companions [the angels, the glorified saints] hearken to your voice: cause me to hear it." He asks her to pray. Thus this beautiful book comes to an end.

Towards the close of his life, Solomon was disappointed

in the Shulamite to whom he had dedicated his Song. In the beginning her love was passionate, but it finished with who knows what tragedy. When he was old, the king wrote, "I did not find a woman." Will our soul also disappoint the Prince of Peace? When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?

The bride's love is great, but great love needs to be tended to remain great. If you put a single gram of radium in a vault and leave it untouched, after a certain period it

will only be half a gram of radium and after a further period it will only be one quarter of a gram. Radium disintegrates. Love disintegrates, too. It must be kept warm, and must be made to grow through frequent meditation and contemplation of the Beloved. The love described in the Song of Solomon, where the bride gives the Bridegroom a thousand pieces of silver, is not a hopeless ideal. It really exists.

Igor Ogurtsov, an Orthodox believer, was sentenced to twenty years in prison for his Christian activities. Converted by his grandmother, he was one of the organizers of the Social Christian Union for the Liberation of the Russian People. For a time he had been detained in a psychiatric asylum, for being too religious.

A fellow-prisoner describes him as a man of pathos. All who drew near him felt that Ogurtsov was far ahead of his contemporaries. He declared that his aim was the Christianization of politics, economics and culture. After ten years of prison and torture, he was still strong enough to write:

> There is only one choice before mankind: a free return to God and acceptance of His love, whereupon all the powers and beauty of man will flourish; or departure from God, whereupon we will have a Satanocracy and a twisted conscience, as a result of losing the true aim and purpose of life. Capitalism and its sick child, Communism, can be conquered only by the Christianization of the whole social order.

At forty he had lost all his teeth in jail. He suffered from avitaminosis and hypertonicity. He could hardly stand on his feet, but he still had to do slave labour. Neither the world nor the churches mention him, but he offered a great feast to Christ. He paid to him his full due: a thousand pieces of silver.

Petras Plumpa, a Catholic, is serving a five-year

sentence. He writes from prison:

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> Wherever we live, the most important problem is the salvation of souls. If the King of souls has sown us in the field of sorrows, let us bloom in sorrow; if in solitude, then in solitude let us bloom. The Creator sows the most beautiful flowers in inaccessible places among mountain tracts, and, though no man sees them, they have their own value. The anguish of a soul, though unseen, can be plucked and offered like a flower to the Saviour. This is the most beautiful decoration in the altar of Jesus. Lacking such decoration, even the finest churches have sad faces.

For the sake of souls like this, our Beloved, who is now like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices, will return. The bride who dwells in the garden of faith amidst sorrows waits for him.

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÷ Last Considerations ÷

Arriving at the end of this book, we wonder. Everything written in it, even the most intimate sexual details, is about the love of a faithful soul for a Bridegroom she has never seen. She speaks of kisses, of caresses, of embraces, although she has never touched him, nor even perceived him with her senses.

It is so. But in a similar way, our universe is mostly hydrogen, and no-one has ever seen a hydrogen atom. Millions of them would fit on a pinhead. The hydrogen atom is a speculation in our minds. Yet the whole of our physics and chemistry is based on unseen atoms. We can even construct atomic bombs, using atoms which we cannot see. Space and time are only mental constructs. But that does not stop us from living comfortably in space and in time.

A heavenly Bridegroom does not have to be touchable to be loved or to be such that one finds one's complete delight in him. It is good that he cannot be understood. Instead of trying to understand him we need to draw nearer and nearer to him, in order to know him.

When an electron jumps from the outer shell of an atom to the inner shell, light is emitted. Similarly, whoever does not remain outside the Godhead, but runs to his embraces, becomes an emitter of light. The words of Jesus, "You are the light of the world," [MTT 5:14] become a reality.

There are some things which are completely absent from the Song. For example, the word "truth." Why is this?

When scrutinized, many accepted beliefs are seen to be

inadequate. At best they prove to be partially true - true for the left side of the brain. Our brains are divided in two. Only the left operates logically, and declares what is true and what is not. The right side is as important as the other, but is usually left out in the search for truth. It is irrational, lyrical, prompted by impulse, feeling and emotions. A "truth" examined only by the left side of the brain cannot be entirely true. It ignores half of reality.

What is normally termed "truth" brings things to a halt. Therefore Solomon never uses the word. For him, the only thing that comprehends the whole of reality, that unites the two halves of the brain's experience, is love like that between the heavenly Bridegroom and his bride. Only belief in love to the uttermost can pass every test.

Another curious omission from the Song is any mention of good deeds done by the bride. The reason is that - as Kant said - nothing can be called good without some qualification. We all have access to the state of being a chosen bride. Some of us, because of natural disadvantages or the possession of a niggardly nature, lack the power to do good deeds. But even such people can shine like jewels, if they only have ardent love and good will. Fruitfulness would not add to their value, nor fruitlessness diminish it. "To him that works not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (ROM 4:5). The ~Zohar~ says, "Blessed is he that nourishes good thoughts towards his Lord; for even if he cannot put them into practice, the Holy One takes the will for the deed." It is not good deeds which qualify you to be a bride of Christ.

This Song shows how right St. Augustine was when he said, "Love - and do what you like," or St. Paul, when he taught, "Love is the fulfillment of all the law." [ROM 13:10] When we experience holy, supreme love, the moral law which defers to deeds stands mute in adoration.

One final thing is lacking in Solomon's Song - a

biography of the bride. What is her story? How did she live before becoming a believer? Was she a decent girl or a loose one? What sins had she committed, and how many? Humans have biographies. But she is more than human. She partakes of the divine nature.

Darwin looked in vain for the connecting link between ape and man. But we know the link between the entire creation and the Creator. It is the bride. She is the highest point that creation can reach. She met the One who came down to the lowest level to which Godhead can ever descend, and they united. She is a queen; and she is the servant. She is as tiny as a worm; and she is a god. She is outside the sphere of beings who have biographies.

Most of us are not yet truly human. We are still in an embryonic stage, living in mankind's pre-history. Jesus' teaching, "You are gods," [JHN 10:34] sounds oddly in our ears. So we find the nature of the bride hard to grasp. We would enquire about her past; for Jesus, she is simply the bride.

Jesus never gave us his own biography. The evangelists are silent about his life between the ages of twelve and thirty. She does not ask him his life's story. He rewarded her discretion by not asking questions about hers. Today they are Bridegroom and bride. Like the high priest Melchisedec of old, they appear "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life" (HEB 7:3).

Adam must have been created as a man of a certain age. Like him, the bride does not have a past. She and the Bridegroom know only an eternal "today" of love.

Handel composed his ~Messiah~ while enraptured, in ecstasy. For twenty-three days, he hardly ate. When he completed the second part with the Hallelujah Chorus, his servant found him sitting at his desk with tears running down his cheeks. He said, "I saw paradise truly, and the great God himself." Solomon must have composed the Song in such a state of mind.

Therefore the prayers of the bride are innocent as spring mornings, clear as mountain streams. She does not utter prayers for forgiveness, for they are what sinners need. She has passed beyond this. Christ has finished his work with her. All she can do is sing

hymns. Earth and heaven ring with her hallelujahs.

But she does not isolate herself on the peaks. She prefers not to be called a "saint." Dorothy Day said, "That's how people try to dismiss you. If you're a saint you must be impractical and Utopian and nobody has to pay any attention to you." Brides are in close fellowship with Jesus. But they also seek such fellowship with us.

I must finish with an apology. I could not make words convey what happens between the Bridegroom and the bride, for the same reason that you cannot weigh granite columns in pharmaceutical scales. Solomon could not do it, so I most certainly cannot.

We all retain primitive concepts from our early religious training. When we climb unknown spiritual mountains, to describe the unknown, we use the language of the known. There is nothing else we can do.

It is the same in science. In any chunk of ordinary matter you have 100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 atoms, made up of who knows how many billions of billions of elementary particles. It is unimaginable and inexpressible. Science therefore uses primitive pictures. It uses models of atoms, though it knows well enough that no atom conforms to the model. Reality puts shivers up one's spine. It cannot even be described.

But for believers, there is a way to know the quality of the relationship between the Bridegroom and the bride. Become a bride yourself; and then you will personally experience that relationship.

But when you become a bride, do not become blind in one eye, seeing only the celestial, without concern

for the earthly. Both belong to God. Be a great saint, but be a human saint! Remember that Solomon's Song is only one of many books in the Bible.

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The End of "THE SWEETEST SONG"

The Total Blessing

Richard Wurmbrand
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[ttb.otl]

1 The Total Blessing"

Joseph received a blessing far beyond what his father Jacob imparted to him. We might call it the total blessing: "The Almighty shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above and blessings of the deep that lie beneath" (GEN 49:25). This is the blessing in its fullness reserved for the people of God. "The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things" (GEN 24: 1) - not only in material or spiritual matters, but in ~all~ things.

There is a state of consciousness reserved for the elect of God which will lead only to right actions. This is made possible by becoming a being apart. Samuel said to Saul, "The spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt be ... turned into another man" (1SM 10:6). This "new man" receives a blank cheque from God. "Do as occasion serve thee, for God is with thee" (1SM 10:7). Saul could do what he liked because "God gave him another heart" (1SM 10:9).

In the Hebrew Masoretic text, after the word "man" referring to Saul (1SM 10:22), a large open space is left, because an individual with such privileges from God can hardly be considered simply a man like everyone else. Has he not become something more than human, something approaching a higher, angelic species, in which another ethic and a different sort of relationship with God rule? He is a man blessed in ~ all~ he does. He has not only the blessings of heaven, but also those of the deep.

Through their new birth, a person becomes rooted in the highest Source, which is eternal, and thus raise into heavenly realms everything they touch. With self forgotten, they partake of the divine nature. Passions and evil habits are forsaken, and the way is opened to be blessed in ~everything~.

The following story illustrates what is meant by this total blessing. A man played the lottery and won a million. The man who sold him the ticket asked him, "How did it happen that you chose just the right number?" He replied, "Well, I am Jewish." "What difference did that make?" "It was decisive," replied the winner. "Being Jewish I knew that the number seven must win, because it is the holy number in our books. The seventh day is the Sabbath. There are seven great religious feasts. You find seven all over the Bible. Seven times seven makes 48. So I chose seven hundred and forty eight and became a millionaire."

The salesman in the shop where he had bought the ticket said, "But Sir, seven times seven makes 49, not 48."

The winner answered, "God knows that I am bad at mathematics. He knows what mistakes I would make in multiplication. He willed it that the wrong number I calculated should be just the number I needed to become rich."

God can give a blessing that makes not only all things work together for good, but all things, even the things that you consider the worst imaginable. In the Old Testament, Joseph was sold by his brothers to be a slave. This resulted in him becoming prime minister and the saviour of his family in which he had been despised.

You can have this blessing, and you can give such blessings to others.

But human beings can impart curses, too. If someone steals some wheat, grinds it, bakes it, and then says a benediction over it, they blaspheme. God said to the priests, "If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart to give glory unto my name, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings" {MAL 2:2). There are religious services from which it would be wise to flee before the blessing is given.

As for yourself, be cleansed, blessed in ~all~ you do, blessed with blessings from above and from the deep. Go to church at least for the blessing. Seek the blessings of righteous people. You will thereby receive a precious reality.

Then share your blessings with others.

---End.

2 God Speaking in Dreams"

Brother Lawrence wrote, "The barque of the Spirit goes forward even in sleep." We read in Job 33:15-16: "In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, in slumberings upon the bed: then [God] opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction."

Therefore a Christian never sleeps fully. Solomon's bride said, "I sleep, but my heart wakes." It is while she sleeps that she hears the voice of her beloved saying, "Open to me, my sister" (SOS 5:2). I personally never go to bed without paper and pen near me, which I use to note all my dreams. Occasionally I have dreamt whole sermons and articles, which have often been judged my best. The same was said about Spurgeon.

Why don't more Christians pay attention to their dreams? The practice is very useful, but I must say that in most instances it is not a very pleasant experience.

In Scripture, the second recorded appearance of God in a dream was to Abimelech, king of Gerar (GEN 20:2). God said to him, "Behold, thou art but a dead man" - not a message many would be eager to hear. At the same time God informed Abimelech that Abraham, the man who lied to him and endangered his life, was "a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live" (GEN 20:7). In his dream-speaking to us, God sometimes contravenes our moral and religious standards.

The first recorded appearance of God in a dream was to Abraham: "A deep sleep fell upon Abraham; and lo, an horror of darkness fell upon him" (GEN 15:12). How many of us would be ready to hear God speaking in dreams if the experience were accompanied by feelings of horror? Furthermore, God gave Abraham unpleasant news: "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them: and they shall afflict them four hundred years" (GEN 15:13).

Would you be willing to accept revelations from God about prolonged suffering for your descendants lasting centuries? Yet such nightmares

can be revelations from God.

An angel of the Lord appeared to New Testament Joseph in a dream and told him, "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him" (MTT 2:13). If Joseph had not acted on God's revelations in a dream, the infant Jesus would not have survived. The condition for hearing God's voice in dreams is to be open not only to good news, but to all of God's plans, though some might seem strange and terrible to our human understanding.

We have become accustomed to the notion of having God as a personal Saviour. The expression is not biblical. As a matter of fact, very few people are capable of receiving personal revelations from God. History and biography indicate that God has led his people to victory through dramatic upheavals. And sometimes God's revelations anticipate these dramas. The walk with God involves more than caresses and expressions of love. Anyone who cannot bear the foreknowledge of such dramas should content themselves with the corporate knowledge of the Church.

It is not necessary for everyone to have personal communications. In fact, few can bear them. If we do not have an openness to revelations that may involve great suffering, what we call the guidance of a personal Saviour or of the Holy Spirit may be simple illusion.

Dreams from God can be nightmares, as in the book of Daniel. They can also take the form of erotic imaginings, as in Solomon's Song. Such imagery can be the symbol for capturing something of the inexpressible love relationship existing between the faithful and our God.

If the authors of the Bible had not used such thought-forms, the Song of Solomon would never have become part of the canon of Scripture. Today, those same theologians and scholars who consider the Bible infallibly inspired would doubtless reject any prompting to prepare a sermon clothed in erotic language or undergirded with dire predictions for the families of the faithful. Yet drama and nightmares and eroticism can all be the means by which God communicates with us.

Through the prophet Joel God promised that in the last days "Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions" (JOE 2:28).

---End.

3 What is Truth"

The biblical assertion that Jesus is the truth makes the reason rebel. The classical definition of truth is "conformity between judgements and

reality." Now, Jesus might be a man or the Son of God or both, but he is in no case an abstraction like "truth" used in this sense. He is more than the conformity between things and assertions.

To have truth we must go beyond the strict boundaries of reason. As soon as we leave the sphere of the material objects with which we interact daily, we realize how difficult it is to apprehend truth, firstly because the objects of our inquiry do not show themselves to us as they are. It took us thousands of years of intellectual development to discover that both the universe and our bodies are made up of atoms. The atom still hides its mystery from us. So does every person we encounter, not because of any bad intention on their part, but simply because we are all enigmas to ourselves.

Things and persons are "ex-sistent." In Latin this word means "to be outside themselves." The prodigal son of Jesus' parable who deserted his father, used up his inheritance and ended up herding swine, "came to himself" (LUK 15:17). Up to this point, he was outside his real self, a toy used and discarded by the world he sought to conquer. Whoever had known him up to that point would not have known the real person, because it was not within himself. It was an object in the hands of others who led him into evil. His real being was divorced from his self. To know him, one would have had to meet him outside of what he appeared to be for a time.

Original sin practically assures that one's first encounter with reality is in the area of "non-truth." It is only by virtue of the divine, embodied in Jesus, that we find our rightful place within the sphere of his marvellous creation, rather than as observers of a mirage that presents itself as reality. Jesus enables us to love and appreciate the world as God loved it when he gave his Son for it. This love causes us to apprehend it in truth.

Because individuals can hide their real nature, we may fail to understand them. But like everything in creation, including even hidden objects, they have one common attribute: the very fact of being. They ~are~. There are not only good and bad times, there are simply times. And there exists the simple "there are." We usually pay attention to accidents and neglect this essential.

Jesus comes from God, whose name is "I am what I am" (EXO 3:14). He is the essential Being who exists above transitory accidents. Jesus, his message to mankind, is the truth, above the great non-truth and the small bits of truth on which we live.

When you have Jesus, the truth, you have everything - the whole truth.

Francis of Assisi was once asked, while hoeing his garden, "What would

you do if you knew you would die today?"

He replied, "I would hoe my garden."

He had the truth. He was above the world of change and decay; he was within the sphere of reality, where Jesus reigns.

---End.

4 Self-denial"

Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross" (LUK 9:23). The first thing a Christian has to do is to deny himself. Everything else follows afterwards. If you take up your cross - even if you suffer prison and torture for his name - and have not denied yourself, the sacrifice you bring will only lend to magnify you, make you proud, and destroy your soul.

There is a legend about a dove that, pursued by an eagle, took refuge in Moses' bosom. The eagle demanded the surrender of its prey, arguing that God himself ordained that one creature should live by the sacrifice of another. Moved by its argument but concerned for the dove, Moses gave an equivalent amount of flesh from his own bosom, then freed the dove.

Now, Moses did not tell the story; it is not found in Scripture. Neither are many of his own acts of kindness found in the Pentateuch, which he authored. The self had been denied.

What we perceive as the self is the sum of our performances in life. Some individuals are elated by all the good things they feel they have done; others are depressed by the many sins they have committed; most perceive a mixture of both in their lives.

We have to abolish this image of the self. I am not simply what I perform.

David took Uriah's wife and had Uriah murdered. But he was not what he did. He was "a man after God's own heart" (ACT 13:22).

Saul of Tarsus persecuted Christians viciously. But he was not what he did. He was one of God's elect, chosen to be an apostle. This election had taken place before the foundation of the world. His life-experiences before his conversion were the developmental steps of an embryonic apostle.

Judas Iscariot went about preaching and healing, after having forsaken

all his possessions, as did the other eleven disciples, for Christ's sake. But he too was not what he did. He was the betrayer whose name stands even today for infamy.

A butterfly while in the cocoon looks like a worm. It is not a worm, but a butterfly in process.

The self which has to be denied is the false image we have about our person. There was a Pharisee who really fasted twice a week, gave tithe of all he possessed, and did many other good things. But he was something other than his actions. He was a hypocrite. A publican who extorted from people felt he had good cause not to lift up so much as his eyes to heaven. But God knew him better. He was not what he had done. He was a man justified before God (LUK 18:10-14).

When Jacob and Esau, the children of Rebecca, were not yet born, " neither having done any good or evil" (ROM 9:11), Jacob was loved and Esau hated by God. They were regarded for what they were, not what they had done.

Do not let your mind be elated by good deeds or driven to despair by irreparable sins. It is wrong to consider the self a resume of the deeds one has done while playing in the game of life. We become outstanding only when we deny these self-portraits and allow ourselves to be designed and shaped by God.

God does not call himself "I am what I do." He does different things, some of which might not be considered lovable. He sends plagues over a country and destroys whole cities. Rather, he says, "I am what I am" (EXO 3:14), independently of the outer play of events. Scripture says simply, "God is love." Therefore we love him.

Paul, too, says of himself, "I am what I am" (1CO 15:10). I am what I am, even if sometimes, driven by forces over which I have no control, I do things contrary to what you might expect.

Once you adopt this attitude, no self remains. Paul could say about himself that it was not he who lived, but Christ lived in him (GAL 2:20). The Father will reveal the Son of God in you, too, if you grant him access (GAL 1:16). You will live having him as your self. Then your cross will not crush you, nor will your bearing it make you proud. You will be his disciple indeed.

---End.

5 The Conscious and the Unconscious"

Groping for answers, modern psychology has suddenly discovered what Jesus taught two thousand years ago: the necessity of self-denial. The self is our conscious, a small island in the ocean of our unconscious. This little self is not satisfied to be king but acts as if the great unconscious did not even exist. The latter avenges itself for this indignity by emerging in neuroses. Jung formulates Jesus' teaching in other words: "We must re-centre our personality at a point midway between the conscious and the unconscious" (Two Essays in Analytic Psychology).

The conscious self has a dilemma which is at the root of our perplexities, strains, and stresses. It knows it appeared at a certain point in time and will have to disappear sooner or later. Every birth and death is a reminder of this fact.

The unconscious is simply undisturbed by such matters, because it reflects on nothing. It manifests itself in the involuntary fantasy, which contains elements whose existence one had never before suspected. The unconscious is, according to Jung, the invisible player that pushes the conscious personality about like a figure on a chessboard. The unconscious plays, and the conscious worries about things over which it has no control.

A sane self allows the whole entity to speak out as the Bible teaches: " Love God with ~all~ your heart, with ~all~ your soul, with ~all~ your mind," not only with the rational, conscious part.

The self is not a unity but a contradictory multiplicity of complexes. A good analogy is the Bible itself, in which are found cold historical facts, genealogies, statistics, geographical data, fiction, poetry, puns, myths, fables, parables, dreams, doubts, utter love and confidence in God, questioning of God's ways, and even blasphemous words written by devout believers. Every part of the soul, even the most hidden, the physically erotic, and the most sublimated love, is manifest in the Bible. God revealed himself to all parts of our psyche, in which there is no distaste for saying unseemly things or reserve for the most holy secrets. Man does not live on bread alone, nor do we live on the rational, the decent, and the moral alone.

Consonant with the very varied needs of the complex self, the Bible offers us all kinds of notions of God: from the God of revenge to the God of love; from the God of the Jews to the Lord of the whole universe; a God who fills meadows with fragrant flowers and who sends plagues, fire, and sulphur from heaven; a God who pities all and who will send the majority of mankind into the bottomless pit. Behind all the images is the God who forbids us to make to ourselves any images of him. He says, "I am what I am," not what you fancy me to be.

When you have thus forsaken the narrow self, when the whole of you participates in your religion, when you have brought all your sins and vices to be cleansed and all your righteousness and virtues to be attributed to the Creator, then you can die in peace. You die to your opinions, the right ones and the wrong ones, to your preferences, including the preference for religion, to your tastes and will. You die to the world, to its censure or applause. You die also to the judgement of the Church about you. The Church has not only condemned sins but has also burned saints at the stake. You did to the censure and approval of your friends and brethren. Watchman Nee, China's renowned evangelist who died a martyr's death in a Communist prison, was a man ex-communicated by the Church.

You desire to be approved only by God. The self has been denied. You have the freedom and joy to be able to bear a cross.

Peter, though taught by Jesus to deny himself, had not done so. Thus, he came to the point where, instead, he denied the Lord he loved.

Everyone has only this choice: to deny yourself or to deny your Master. Be sure you make the right choice!

---End.

6 What Truth Is Jesus?"

Aristotle in his ~Metaphysics~ put forth different concepts of truth: aletheuein, which means "nothing forgotten" or "nothing veiled," and homoiosin, which means "concordance."

St John's Gospel uses the first person for Jesus' assertion, "I am the truth." Our thoughts and words will never be more than thoughts and words. These can only conform to a reality that consists of other elements. Jesus is the representation of this reality in human life, in all its fullness, without forgetting or veiling any part of it. A person who lives in darkness cannot see this reality. But Jesus places us in the light, and at once reality becomes open to our awareness and discernment and available to us for exploration. Gradually we can know it more and more.

Baron Muenchausen in the children's story told a lie when he said that he pulled himself out of the mire by his own hair. Likewise, we who are caught in darkness cannot save ourselves from it. Jesus saves us by bringing light, which is the realm of truth.

John lay on the breast of Jesus. Mary Magdalene abandoned herself in expressions of love when she kissed his feet and on at least one

occasion sat quietly to listen to him. For the Christian, then, truth is not an intellectual construction, but the abandonment in love to a Person who withholds nothing good from us. Lie quietly in the sun and it will tan you. Lie quietly on Jesus' bosom and truth will envelop and warm you.

All our partial perceptions and fragmented knowledge are non-truth because they do not apprehend the essence of things. With our senses we perceive only the surface of objects. Telescopes and microscopes put us in touch with the surface of normally invisible things, but again only superficially. Partial truth shows us a thing that is. Jesus, the essence of truth, shows us the "is" of a thing.

The word "is," one of the most common and unremarkable words of our language, comes from the Sanskrit ~asm~ - "to breathe." Through it the world becomes animated. The word is so sacred that the Hebrews did not use it, as they did not use the name of God. Jesus says, "I am" (JHN 19: 5, 6), and all the soldiers fall to the ground before him. Jesus is the "is" which is. Therefore he is the truth.

Without Jesus, error is not mere accident, an occasional falling into the mire, but a permanent state. With Jesus you live in the essence of things. Without him you live perforce in the counter-essence. You don' t have to tell lies. "All men are liars" (Psalm 116:11). Without Jesus, you seek to discover true politics, or true science, or true philosophy, without knowing what truth is. How would you recognize it if you met it? It's like seeking a treasure without a map, compass, tools, instructions, or even a description.

When you have Jesus, the Son of the omnipotent God, you do not have to adjust your mind to reality. Reality will conform itself to your mind. Truth for you will become ~aletheia~ - unveiled.

You are Jesus' beloved. He will lift the veil from your eyes so that you will see truth in all its fullness in his loving eyes and will know it intimately in his tender embrace.

---End.

7 Prayers"

When we invoke the sacred name of Jesus, there should be neither the self alone nor Jesus alone, but their union through invocation. All limitations of thought should be transcended.

A person who prays so that prayer becomes the only reality, and the worshipper and the worshipped are no more separate entities, becomes a

being who transcends life and death. Every prayer should unite the one who prays and the One to whom he or she prays, so that prayer alone remains. Prayer without this aim is a weak substitute.

Cultures are different. An Oriental Chinese mind is not like a European mind, nor a Gentile like a Jewish mind. For some people, emotions and sentiments make logical reasoning almost impossible, whereas others stoically repudiate emotionalism. But the summit towards which all believers strive is this union in prayer.

Don't allow your sins to be a handicap in your prayers. Jesus did all the good deeds you were intended to do. God sees them as if they were yours. Don't let yourself be troubled if biblical verses seem to indicate, or even an angel of God were to assure you, that you are not among those to whom divine favour is given. Even if you were the most wicked person in the world, call upon the holy name of Jesus and you will be saved. If you call upon him only once after a lifetime full of sin, heaven will be yours.

I know that there are many teachings in the Bible and in the dogmas of the Church that do not make things so easy, but remember that sick people in the early stages can eat almost everything, whereas when they are dying they can hardly sip a few drops of water. The virtues of the first Christians, in the flush of their first love, are no longer the norm for the whole Church. We live in the time of the end when the love of many has waxed cold. God knows the difference and asks only the invocation of the holy name: "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (ACT 2:21).

In the hundreds of denominations that exist today, dogmas are many and varied. There is scarcely a layperson who can distinguish the right ones. No one today knows all the commandments and injunctions, nor do we have the power to fulfill them. Call upon the name of the One who said, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am" (JHN 17:24). Invoke the holy name of Jesus, relying on the fact that the Father will fulfill his wish.

The Christ who vowed never to cast out a sinner who comes to him, however bad they might be, has guaranteed eternal life to all who call upon him. But do so with the earnestness of one crying, "SOS! Lord, save me!" Yet don't despair if your prayer has not been so earnest. You have called upon his name. The Bible puts no condition that this call must be wholehearted.

While doing your best to ensure that the worshipper, the prayer, and the worshipped become one, believe nevertheless that the simple calling on his name has saving power.

---End.

8 The Simplicity of Moral Problems"

Moral problems are really not complicated. The first Christians knew the answers. Pliny, a Roman governor in the second century, reported their standards to the emperor: "They blind themselves by an oath ... that they should never commit theft, robbery, or adultery, that they would never break their word, and that they would never deny a trust when called to give it up."

But it is not enough to do good. The good must also be well done. Therese of Lisieux is beloved among Christians not only for any great deed but [also] for the fact that she did ordinary things in a grand manner.

To do a good thing well, imitate the sun, that simply shines without waiting to be asked to impart light and warmth. You too should do good as opportunity presents itself, without depending on another to challenge or command you. The good that confronts you is God's thought. It is the reason for your existence. Why do you delay?

What is the good you should do? Whatever flows naturally from the new heart you received at conversion. You cannot find the rule for your attitudes in generalities. It is not located in anything that can be set next to the self and viewed objectively.

Jesus said, "I am the truth." The truth, while ultimate, is not a generality. It cannot be anything but an "I." It is your "I" if you are Christlike.

It is well to have confidence in the new creature within, for then your life will consist in doing in the best manner the good works for which you have been predestined by the Father. Therefore, without any delay, be yourself.

A burglar was caught rifling a safe while the alarm was clanging. His captors asked him why he had not fled. He replied that he was hard of hearing.

Life is short. Don't allow yourself to become deaf or blind to the needs around you. While you must be moral, general rules of morality are not always helpful because you are a unique creation intended to fulfill unique purposes. There is a specific role just for you even at this very moment. Listen to the inner voice and follow its leading.

Jeremiah predicted that God would make a new covenant with his people.

It specified that his law would be written in their minds and hearts (JER 31:33).

Tamerlane, savage fourteenth-century conqueror, said, "Do you think I am only a man? I am the wrath of God." This is how he viewed himself and this is how he acted. We know we are children of God, whose name is Love. Therefore, act accordingly.

There are ultrasonic generators that are supposed to chase rats from a house through their unpleasant "sounds." Likewise the conscience of a child of God rids us of the evil that presses around us.

A problem recognized and defined is a problem half solved. Learn from your mistakes by analyzing where you go wrong. Stop for just a few seconds before you act. The pause is part of the music of life, which is a constant flow of good deeds. Six seconds can make an incredible difference. Remember that you are called to be like Christ, who could say, "I am the truth."

Be the truth, since you have been created for truth. Lie detectors and truth serum can detect the deep-seated indicators which reveal the fact that one is lying. Such apparatus reveals that adherence to truth and revulsion at lying are deeply rooted in human nature. In modern times we have proved with our technology that truth is part of our creation by God and lying is from the devil, "the father of lies" (JHN 8:44).

To be truly moral, withdraw yourself from evil influences. Herod was a king in Christ's day whom God had entrusted with a kingdom. Yet he was ready to give away half of it for a dancer. Instead, he killed a prophet because he allowed his wife to influence the dancer, her daughter, who thus became an accomplice in the murder of John the Baptist. How right was Jesus when he said, "He who loves father or mother ... son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (MTT 10:37).

To be a hero for Christ, you need not go to a mission field. Your family, factory, school, or office can be your mission field. You can be grand in small things.

We know there exist sins of excess. Therefore the Bible says, "Be not righteous overmuch" (ECC 7:14). There are also sins of omission. Many will go to perdition for neglecting to help the poor and visit prisoners.

The musical sign for atonement, for forgiveness, is the "natural" sign. A note that has been raised with a "sharp" sign or lowered with a "flat" returns to this original pitch by virtue of the natural, which cancels everything else. Likewise, when atonement intervenes, your sins of excess or default are cancelled, as if they had never been committed.

To obtain atonement for your sins from an infinite God and thus receive the promise of eternal life is the supreme sign of morality.

---End.

9 The Sin of Consistency"

An individual need not be consistent with what he or she has said, written or done in times past, otherwise no growth would be possible, nor could a person adjust to the demands of changing circumstances. The only consistency required is the proper attitude towards what one considers true, righteous and loving today.

The apostle Paul gives us examples of holy inconsistency. One is the circumcision of his disciple Timothy. Travelling around with an uncircumcised Gentile convert would have hampered the work of evangelization. The Jews who opposed him would have had one more reason to denounce him as a traitor to the religion of his fathers. So foresight and caution were necessary. Paul was dealing with people ready to murder him, as he learned when they wrongly suggested he had taken a Greek into the temple (ACT 21:29; ACT 22:22).

But the same apostle adamantly refused to circumcise Titus (GAL 2:3) when the danger of theological confusion existed. He was concerned lest others conclude that man is justified before God by rituals of the Jewish law and not by faith alone.

Even the Jewish Christians considered Peter's eating with an uncircumcised man (ACT 11:3) as a serious violation of religious duty. Jesus himself said that he had come only "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (MTT 15:24), and yet all at once the door was opened wide to the uncircumcised, without asking of them even this token of holy alliance.

The Jewish Christians had become Christians believing that faith in Jesus was the holiest form of Judaism and nothing more. They realized that if circumcision were abolished, the Christian religion would become universal and in time its Jewishness would be absorbed.

Paul was given by God the task to make the Church universal and therefore would not yield to pressure to have Titus circumcised.

In the case of Timothy, Paul accommodated himself prudently to circumstances without endangering the establishment of a universal Church in which Jews and Gentiles were alike. In the case of Titus, a principle was at stake. To concede that Titus must be circumcised would have been an acknowledgement that the sacrifice of Christ alone profits

nothing unless the Gentiles fulfilled Jewish ceremonies.

Paul had to assert the principle that in the Christian Church "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but that Christ is all in all" (COL 3:11).

If Paul had not been stubborn in certain circumstances, neither slavery nor the caste system would ever have been abolished.

The same desire that made Paul stiff-necked in the case of Titus made him pliable in the case of Timothy. The apostle who wrote: "I testify to every man that is circumcised ... Christ is become of no effect to you" (GAL 5:3,4) nevertheless circumcised a disciple.

Paul was not guilty of the grave sin of consistency with his own beliefs at all times and in all circumstances.

Therefore, be careful of consistency at the expense of adaptability, stubborness at the expense of flexibility. Be consistent only in your desire for truth at all times, but practising it with the least possible harm to others.

---End.

10 The Commandment To Be One"

The structure of the English language makes an exact translation of Genesis 1:9 (GEN 1:9) impossible. A verbatim approximation would be as follows: "Let gather together [these three English words are one word in Hebrew] the waters under the heaven." Even before saying what is involved, the commandment is, "Let them be gathered together."

Our twentieth-century thinking is quite different. We begin first by listing the things to be united. But the simple act of naming them discourages us from gathering them, and so we abandon our intention altogether.

God's command is, "Let gather together." Once all the diverse elements are gathered, it is much simpler to deal with them.

The waters under the heavens were gathered with a certain purpose: to form one sea. (Incidentally, how did Moses, who recorded this information, know that all the waters formed one single sea? We learned this only when Magellan made his discoveries.) Everything was gathered to serve this purpose.

Today there are many stratagems and endeavors to unify Christendom. We

fail to succeed because it has not yet been established for what purpose we want to be one.

Jesus long ago designated the overriding reason for unity: "May they be one that the world may believe" (JHN 17:21). Too many of us live very comfortably even though the world is made up of unbelievers. Their salvation is not our passion. Therefore our plans for unity fail.

Once a little girl got lost in a huge wheat field, where the wheat was taller than her. Her parents called all the neighbors to help in the search, but in vain, though they shouted and used torches. For two days and nights they hunted. Finally, on the third day the father said to the townspeople, "Let's all join hands and go through the field in a line." In no time the child was found. Behind the operation was an anxious father and a common purpose: the child had to be found.

Do we love the world with all our hearts? Would we be very unhappy if all but a few were lost? Of what denomination were the people this father gathered to seek his child? It would be foolish even to ask the question. He gathered all who shared his burden and were willing to help. This is what Jesus meant by being one.

An Israeli army unit risked its life to save the Jews hijacked in a plane that was forced down in Entebbe (Uganda). When the rescue plane was on its way home, soldiers and passengers alike sang together in Hebrew Psalm 13:3 (PSA 13:3): "Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." What were the religious convictions of the rescuers? Who knows? They belonged to a nation that had experienced the loss of very many innocent victims and were united in their determination to prevent the killing of more Jews. They had a single purpose. Therefore unity was established.

Untold millions - billions - have gone to the grave without salvation because of our divisiveness. This should no longer happen. Think in these terms and your unity with all those who desire to see souls saved will be established.

Several men sitting in a boat observed one of their number boring a hole beneath his seat. "Why are you doing that?" one of his companions inquired. "It's none of your business," he replied. "I'm boring the hole under my seat."

He was wrong, of course. The water entering through "his" hole would swamp the whole boat with all its passengers.

Unity would be greatly served if Christians realized what obsolete and often petty questions divided them. In 1845, 293 Baptists from the Southern states of the USA severed ties with the Northern Baptists in

protest over the Yankees' refusal to allow a slaveholder to become a missionary. Slavery has long since been abolished. But today there are 13 million Sothern Baptists who continue to be divided from their brethren. As a result of migration, there are now Southern Baptist churches in Alaska near the North Pole, but they are separated from their Northern brethren. Does this make sense?

There is no place for freelancers and "my-taste" churches in Christendom. Those who love God and mankind need to become one in heart today. The only condition is that unity must be according to God's holy Word, or there can be no peace. God's Word should never be abandoned for unity's sake. But if we are one in Christ, this unity will be revealed in our relationship with others.

---End.

11 About Being Narrow-minded and Broad-minded"

Narrow-mindedness is the object of much scorn. When this takes the form of a joke, it may be acceptable. It is said there was a sign in front of a motel in one of the southern states of America that read, "Rooms cost $50 a day. For Baptists there is a reduction: they pay only $25." A traveller, indignant, protested: "In times past there was racial discrimination; now there is denominational discrimination. Why should Baptists pay only half?" The manager of the motel answered, "You know, in the South the Baptists are so narrow, they sleep two in one bed."

When we pass from jokes to reality, narrow-mindedness becomes a virtue. In fact, the Bible endorses it. Paul was so convinced that the gospel he preached was sacrosanct that he wrote: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel to you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (GAL 1:8). He would not have joined ecumenical councils with those who thought differently in theological matters. He would consider them "accursed." Today, believers are far removed from this narrow thinking. Most consider broad-mindedness a virtue to be praised.

John the Evangelist knew he had ~the~ doctrine, besides which there was no other. Therefore he wrote, "If there come any unto you and bring not ~this doctrine~ [of Christ], receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (2JN 10). He even adds [2JN 11], "He that bids him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." He left little room for an ecumenical council. It is told that Cerinthus, a heretic, once entered the house where John was bathing, and the latter left his bath naked and fled, not wishing to be under one roof with a man of another doctrine.

Luther warned, "The peacock has the garb of an angel and the song of a

devil. He is the true picture of a heretic. All heretics can look pious, even angelic." He was so narrow-minded that he refused to shake hands with Zwingli, with whom he differed about the real presence of Christ in holy communion.

God is all-embracing, but his messengers have always been one-sided. Rarely have they been capable of teamwork. It could scarcely be otherwise, because they have stood alone. Steel columns need no wooden props. God's messengers are pillars in his Church, supporting but unsupported. They can afford to be narrow-minded because they need no one's approval.

Narrow-mindedness does have its negative side, however. Christians are taught to be hospitable. We should be hospitable toward ideas, too, not only toward people, because truth can never be the possession of a single individual. The Church embraces all kinds of individuals, with all sorts of experiences, in many diverse cultures, throughout the centuries. It is obvious they cannot all think alike in every detail.

But we proceed at our peril if we avoid narrow-mindedness when we seek to pass through a strait gate and walk on a narrow way. On the other hand, narrow-mindedness can also hurt the truth.

It is wrong to be narrow-minded and also wrong to be broad-minded. The "I" that asserts itself should not be. I have to deny myself, denying also the "I" that denies. As a person embraced by their beloved is no longer conscious of an "I" and a "you," so the being embraced by God is neither narrow- nor broad-minded. We lose our "mindedness" in the holy embrace in which the Eternal and the believer have become one. Here all distinctions between broad- and narrow-mindedness lose their significance, along with the distinction between selfishness and unselfishness.

Why should we not be selfish when our self is God? Why should we not be unselfish when nothing remains of our former self, so that we have nothing to lose?

The one true doctrine, the one true gospel on which Paul and John insisted was this doctrine of oneness with God. Away with the speculations of righteous men about a God outside themselves! These speculations, of narrow-minded bigot or broad-minded liberal, will be false if there is no union with God, in whom problems and divergences disappear.

Therefore don't be narrow-minded, and don't be broad-minded either. Don't be! Blessed is the person whose epitaph is like that of a saint of old: "Hic jacet nemo." (Here lies no one.) Christ is all.

---End.

12 The Little We Know About God"

The French say, "Un dieu defini est un dieu fini." (A God whom you have defined is a God with whom you have finished.) God cannot be defined or reduced to finite descriptions. To say he is creator is to ignore the fact that he is also sustainer and destroyer. He gives life, but he also kills (1SM 2:6). God is love, but he is also a righteous judge and the God who avenges himself (REV 19:2).

It is impossible to describe the fullness of God, because human beings have no frame of reference within which to compare God as he really is with the God we encompass in words. We need to be aware of this difference, even when we say something as simple as "God is love." Love is a sentiment common to humans and even some animals. Does any believer consider God a sentiment? To rely on mere words for an understanding of God is like clutching a piece of carbon and calling it a diamond, or scratching a shoe when the foot itches.

Speculations about God can be very hazardous. He is called the Father. His Hebrew name ~El~ is masculine. But the feminine form ~Elah~ also occurs in Scripture (1SM 17:9)[?]. God compares himself with a woman in ISA 49:15: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee."

Jesus said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" {JHN 14:9). Was the Father seen in all the circumstances of Jesus' life? How about his unprovoked outbursts of anger? On one occasion, a Pharisee who had invited Jesus to dinner wondered why he was not washing his hands before eating. But he marvelled without saying anything critical. Jesus, knowing his thoughts, used the occasion to condemn all Pharisees, calling them "hypocrites." A lawyer tried to appease him, and he turned on lawyers, accusing them, with the Pharisees, of "the blood of all the prophets ... from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah" (LUK 11: 37-52). Surely they were innocent; in fact, there were no lawyers and Pharisees when Abel was killed.

Now, such behavior on the part of Jesus is questionable at best. But a little thought will indicate that it makes sense. He came to this earth to die for humankind. He wanted to be crucified, because the cross was the only way to achieve their salvation from sin. In order to be crucified, he had to be hated. He apparently worked consciously at this. Otherwise why did he heal chronic diseases on the Sabbath when any day of the week would have sufficed? Why cure a man paralyzed for thirty-eight years on the day that would incur the wrath of the priests and

Pharisees? [JHN 5:5-10, not cited in the book; added by Dido]

Why were his rebukes so unsparing, so harsh, even if justified? Would not mild rebukes have been more effective? Or did he constantly have in mind a cruel death that presupposed bitter hatred among those who killed him?

To return to the original question, did Jesus represent the Father by hardening the hearts of men against himself? Scripture often records that God hardened the hearts of sinners. Does he actually want to be hated by some? Was his being despised and rejected a continual sacrifice, ultimately beneficial to mankind?

Does God want us to emulate Jesus' attitudes on all occasions? Meister Eckhart wrote, "God can no more do without us than we can do without him. " Would God's children be more useful to him if they were despised and abhorred rather than successful and admired? There are many questions to ponder.

We have to confess we know little about God, but knowing he exists frees us. We can resign as general managers of the universe.

He has created us and our universe, and even if we don't always feel his presence, we can enjoy what he has given us: air, earth, sky, his creatures. Every ray of sunshine, every wind, every drop of dew, every leaf and flower all speak of him. And so also do love and sorrow, discoveries and failures, agonies and ecstacies, knowledge and the hope to understand later what is obscure for us today.

---End.

13 We and Our Enemies"

It is almost impossible for consistent Christians not to have enemies. Because they love the sheep, they shout against the wolves that would destroy them. Sometimes in their zeal to protect the sheep they prefer shooting to shouting, destroying to denouncing. This is how they gain enemies.

We should not avoid having enemies at any cost, but we should not make them unnecessarily. It is foolish to make adversaries of those who could be friends. Some unwisely enter into controversy even with their partners in faith. Even saints know only in part (1CO 13:12), which means that each might see a different part. Therefore divergences arise.
It is important not to cultivate a talent for controversy in matters in which both parties might be right. At such times it is more useful to mend than to meddle.

There are a few psychological observations that need to be considered. First, that creative artists do not readily accept one another. They are lonely peaks. The same is true of great religious personalities. Luther would not shake hands with Zwingli, and he despised Erasmus of Rotterdam. Wesley could not go along with Whitefield. But not to go along with someone else does not oblige one to be at loggerheads with them.

The impressionist painters, Monet, Renoir, and Cezanne were called mad, loathsome. The public spat at their pictures. They did not appreciate the fact that these new artists painted washerwomen instead of royalty, haystacks instead of palaces. The artists rarely sold a painting. Today their canvasses fetch millions. What catastrophe it would have been if they had spent their time answering their critics! Instead, they painted. There was no weather rough enough to keep Monet from painting outside. He painted on the ice of the Seine, warming his fingers with water from a bottle.

Last century's greatest preacher, Charles Spurgeon, was criticized by the leaders of the Baptist Union of Britain because he was big and they were dwarfs. But he quietly gathered scores of thousands for Christ. We are makers of saints, not wrestlers. A worker for Christ should accept such conflicts without elaborating on them or entering into useless disputes.

On the other hand, if you have to contend with wolves that seek to ravage the flock, then do battle confidently. If you are on God's side, your triumph is sure. You can be wounded by the foe, you cannot be destroyed. Your triumph is sure if you counter the depths of weakness with the wings of faith.

Your triumph is sure if you value the slander against you that resembles truth as your shadow resembles you. At least the contours are real. Slander can serve a good purpose by warning you against the real sins to which you may be exposed.

Your triumph is sure if you don't stoop to using the strategies of your adversaries. Never be hateful like them. Find excuses for them in an attempt to understand the "why" of their positions. Never exploit their personal sins in order to demean their stand on matters of principle. Remember that you have your own failings before God. If salvation depended on merit, who would escape the pit?

It is said that Conan Doyle sent the following cable to twenty people in public life: "Everything known; disappear." All disappeared. Would you have escaped? Then don't uphold sins against others; uphold others, even your adversaries, against their sins.

Armed with such thoughts, you are free to fight for the word of God and for the sheep of his pasture. You will conquer.

---End.

14 The Matter of Compromise"

Shall we compromise? This is an everyday problem for individual Christians and churches.

Matteo Ricci went to China, mastered classical Chinese, dressed in the garb of a mandarin, and presented Christianity as the fulfillment of Confucianism, whose traditions he allowed to continue. The Jesuits went so far as to use the character ~tsi~, the Chinese description of the ceremonies of ancestor-worship, to translate the word "mass" in their catechism. The formidable power of the non-Christian religions renders any other approach difficult and almost impossible.

William Lucas, Anglican Bishop of Masasi (Tanzania) from 1926 to 1944, rejected the old view that the religious systems of "savages" were the work of the devil and regarded them rather as a preparation for their eventual fulfillment in Christ. The majority of evangelical missionaries, however, have been at the opposite pole. They proclaimed essentially that "to walk with Christ means to behave like a white man."

There is something to be said for compromise. Galileo declared on his knees before his inquisitors that he was wrong in claiming the earth moved around the sun. The sun[?] continued to do so in spite of his recantation, and he was able to continue his scientific work for years. Giodanbo Bruno, on the other hand, remained firm and died for his scientific convictions, which he had no time to work out. Who was right?

If you can conquer through compromise, by all means do so. Don't allow the enemy to turn you easily into a martyr.

Joseph could not have been prime minister of Egypt or Daniel of Babylon without some sort of compromise. Both accepted rule of a country in which there existed idolatry and injustice under absolute monarchs. The lions' den into which Daniel was thrown was surely used for others, who may have been innocent victims like himself. He must have had to acquiesce to, or at least overlook, many practices abhorrent to his belief in God and his knowledge of God's requirements for his earthly kingdom.

Much good can get lost in search of unrealizable, ideal solutions. Daniel could not bring about God's kingdom on earth, whereas by standing

in high places near the ruling tyrant he could save from death at least a few innocents. More than that, he was able to speak about God to the mighty Nebuchadnezzar, architect of the famous hanging gardens of Babylon (DAN 4).

Jesus was told about a cruel act of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, who had killed innocent Galileans who had come to worship in the Temple. To condemn Pilate's crime publicly would not have restored the victims to life and would have put a premature end to the Saviour's ministry. So he chose to respond with a general teaching that all men are sinners and will perish if they don't repent.

No human being or institution can escape the need for occasional compromise, but let us also be aware of its dangers. In 1933, German Christians had a national convention in the presence of Goehring, Hitler's aide. The purpose of the gathering was to purify the Church of Jewish elements and the Old Testament of "immoral Jewish stories."

To its shame, the Church compromised with Nazism. In every such situation there arises in the minds of believers the question whether such deviations from the truth have not happened in past centuries as well. A Church that takes a firm, clear-cut stand is surely more reliable.

As individuals and as churches we are faced with having to choose, at turning-points in our lives, the right course to follow. Abraham, while blessed of God, was not always obliged to make the heroic choice, nor on the other hand the devious way of accommodation. He was free to choose as occasion demanded. Occasionally his choices were wrong, as when he compromised Sarah in Egypt. But his underlying choice was always for God.

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide, in the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side," wrote the poet James Russell Lowell. When the alternatives present themselves, the choice has to be made. Let us made it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and choose the side of good, of God.

---End.

15 The Search for Truth"

We begin the search for truth without the slightest proof that such an entity has ever existed or still exists. We might imagine that if there was a truth it must have been killed long ago. Jesus asserted, "I am the truth," and he was crucified.

I once dreamt that some men were quarrelling for a white horse that represented the truth. One man cut it in pieces, which meant it ceased to exist. Then they quarrelled for the pieces of the dead horse. I received the head and was proud until I realized it was the head of a corpse. At that point I awoke.

Nothing is easier than to deceive searchers for truth. At the University of California, an actor was once engaged to deliver a lecture on medicine, a subject about which he knew nothing. The bogus professor was highly appreciated when he spoke eloquently about "zen-sum" areas and the usefulness of the opera ~Tosca~ for the study of medicine. Even after the audience was told about the hoax people continued to believe they had learned a lot. We can be seduced by the music of what we hear even if the content is sheer nonsense.

The best and most scholarly sermon may fail to convict if the preacher has an unpleasant voice, is unkempt, or has a stain on his cassock, all of which can distract his hearers' attention.

Who can tell the whole truth? One can never expect exactness from lovers describing the beloved nor an accurate description of truth from one whom it critizes. You cannot objectively describe someone who hit you in the face when you're seeing stars before your eyes and your ears tingle. The great events of life, whether pleasant or unpleasant, cannot be the object of protocol. The differences in the Gospels simply show how overwhelmed the Evangelists were by their encounter with Jesus.

Often, individuals err because they are not attentive to the difference between truth and fact.

The title of Psalm 52 says it was written by David when a certain Doeg told Saul that David, a fugitive from the king, had been received by the high priest Ahimelech*, who provided him with food. Doeg had denounced a man who was unrighteously persecuted, and his denunciation led to the killing of many innocents by an enraged Saul. In verse 3 [PSA 52:3] the psalmist says to Doeg, "Thou lovest lying rather than to speak righteousness." We would have said that Doeg had told King Saul "the truth," since he recounted what had actually taken place, but a truth that is harmful to God's elect is a lie, according to the Bible.

The wise man compares truth with "apples of gold" (PRO 25:11). Better than seeking the truth is seeking reality about which the truth speaks. A golden apple can be only an ornament. If you are hungry you must sell it in order to have something to eat. We must sell words, even truthful words, in order to have the reality they express.

If we do so, we will recognize that we cannot depend on our good pleasure to know truth. Truth is not the object that we as subject must

seek. There exists an eternal truth whose object we ourselves are. We were created by Christ, who is the truth. Before the foundation of the world he chose who would be possessors of truth. He, the truth, has come to seek those lost to the truth. We should not be subjects of the searching, but objects, awaiting the divine seeking.

In the beginning was the Word, not any word, but the one true, reliable Word, and this Word was with God, and this Word was God. This Word became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, who communicates with us of his own free will. He is love, and love infuses truth in us. It becomes ours by faith and not by intellectual search and investigation.

After that, other advances await us. At primary school children are taught to print letters. But if they continue to write like that as teenagers, they would be considered backward.

In the beginning, you have to establish who is the subject and who [is] the object in the search for truth. You will come to know what an enemy the intellect is, that discriminates subject from object. It is a distinction that the conscious mind makes, but the conscious is only a part of our spiritual being. We have to explore the unconscious as well to achieve completeness. In the unconscious, subject and object are one, and only this oneness can possess the truth.

---End.

Notes: * The book reads "Abimelech" with a "b"; the KJV says "Ahimelech" - with an "h".

The article below is from http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/YesLord/marklsn3.htm
Start--->
Again, FYI, and lest you panic. Yes, the passage in I Samuel says the priest's name was Ahimelech and Jesus called the priest, ABIATHAR. What s going on? , you ask. Why this difference? Well, A.T. Robertson explains this for us on page 273 of Word Pictures in the New Testament - Volume I - Mark . He says, as he explains this passage in I Samuel:

When Abiathar was high priest (epi Abiathar archierreos). ...There was a confusion in the Massoretic text and in the LXX about the difference between Ahimelech (Abimelech) and Abiathar (2SM 8:17), Ahimelech s son and successor (1SM 21:2; 22:20). Apparently Ahimelech, not Abiathar was high priest at this time. It is possible that both father and son bore both names (1SM 22:20; 2SM 8:17; 1CH 18:16), Abiathar mentioned though both involved. Epi may so mean in the passage about Abiathar. Or we may leave it unexplained. They had the most elaborate rules for the preparation of the shewbread ..., the loaves of presentation, the loaves of the face or presence of God. It was renewed on the commencement of

the Sabbath and the old bread deposited on the golden table in the porch of the Sanctuary. This old bread was eaten by the priests as they came and went. This is what David ate.
Therefore, regardless of the name of the High Priest, it is the point that Jesus is trying to get across which is important.
<---End.

16 About Suffering"
http://www.egroups.com/docvault/wurmbrand/TTB-16.TXT

Don't despair when the stars set. It is a sign that the sun will soon rise. Don't despair when devastating winds blow. Storms pass over the garden of Christ only to spread its perfume. Dante wrote about "the good suffering that remarries us to God." When Shakespeare lost love, friendship and health, he wrote "The Tempest." Humankind would have been poorer without it.

In times of suffering, it is best just to keep quiet. When Jephthah told his daughter that he had promised to sacrifice her to God, her answer was, "If thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which has proceeded out of thy mouth" (JDG 11:36).

When your heavenly Father decides to sacrifice you, your joy, your health, your liberty, your position, for some mysterious purpose of his, be like Jephthah's daughter even if you do not understand his purposes. Remember that from the burning ovens of Auschwitz, where Jews suffered, and from Communist and Muslim jails, in which Christians still suffer for their faith, beacons of warning and hope shine.

Remain quiet during the time of deepest suffering, when a loved one dies. Jesus said to his disciples on the occasion of the Last Supper, " It is expedient for you that I go away" (JHN 16:7). These words might be said about everyone who dies.

God loves you. Why would he allow you to lose someone precious if it were not for your good and theirs? Those who live in the invisible world of the spirit view the death of a friend as a release, not as a separation. Those who die pass from shadows and images to truth. Even those in hell finally know the truth.

When John Chrysostom arrived after a three-month journey at Comana, the place to which he had been deported, Basilicus, who had been martyred there, appeared to him in vision saying, "Courage, brother, tomorrow we will be together." He died the next day saying as his last words, " Glory to God, Amen." In psychological depths inaccessible to our consciousness, the dead whom we mourn might have had a similar vision.

Face everything quietly. When the stars set, the sun rises.

---End.

17 The Angels of Suffering"

"The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people" (NUM 21:6). What does this Bible verse mean? Fiery serpents as such do not exist. In fact, the Hebrew original has no such expression. Instead, we read, ~Nahashim seraphim~. Nahashim means "serpents," and seraphim is the word for a special class of angels. So the serpents that bit the Jews were in reality embodiments of angels of God. John in Revelation describes four beasts, one like a lion, the second like a calf, the third like an eagle, and the fourth like a man (REV 4:6-8). So angels can have the forms of animals. Why not the shape of a serpent? The psalmist says, "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear him" (PSA 34:7). Only if he has the shape of a serpent can he do this.

The serpents that hurt the Jews were either angels of God or beings directed by them. From this we learn to see our friends the angels behind even serious troubles.

God writes straight on crooked lines. The most adverse happenings in the lives of his children work together for good. Not every Christian is ready to break his bottle of perfume to anoint Jesus, as did Mary Magdalene. If angels did not break our bottles by giving us suffering, the fragrance would not be released.

Therefore, don't murmur and complain when a cross is given to you. Atrocious suffering defies explanation. Rather, ask what is the purpose of the cross. Is it not to make us angel-like? A cross can be a splendid opportunity. When Jesus was crucified, he hung between two thieves. One asked to be taken down from the cross, the other to be taken up. Suffering provides us with the same choice.

Those who wish to be taken up do not denounce those who have done mischief to them; they don't even wonder about the hardships of life. They know we are a sentenced race. God said to Adam, "In sorrow you shall eat of the ground all the days of your life" (GEN 3:17). We should be thankful for the few days without hardship.

The person who "goes up" when suffering asks, "Do I deserve better? Have I fulfilled the commandments that are connected to blessings?" They say what the repentant thief said to the unrepentant who cursed: " Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man [

Jesus] has done nothing amiss" (LUK 23:41).

The Christian is free from the curse of sin through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The evils we encounter are unfinished good. Whenever we weep a tear, a gem is added to our crown.

The suffering saints are the jewels of the Church. In a dream I once saw myself in a chapel. All those at the altar and in the front rows wore plain clothes. Only the sick and the poor in the rear wore priestly ornaments. The suffering saints are the teachers, those at ease the learners.

Don't be afraid to suffer.

---End.

18 Sharing His Divinity"

Jesus should not be an unknown person remote from us. To bring him nearer, we should love everyone, whatever their defects, as if they were Jesus; listen to every word, even if it is sinful and blasphemous, as if it were prayer, in consideration of the suffering and ignorance from which it springs, and behave in every place as if it were heaven.

Remember first of all that Jesus lived the life of a man from an oppressed class in an oppressed nation, that he therefore has close ties with all the oppressed and sees in those who hunger, thirst, are naked, imprisoned, and injured his little brothers and sisters. This will familiarize you with Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is compared in Scripture to rivers of living water. We can swim ~in~ them as in the ocean, because these rivers are accessible to everyone. But if we have the wrong attitude, we can swim ~through~ them like submarines in the sea, sealed off from their healing influence and encased in our own atmosphere.

The Roman philosopher of antiquity Cato said long ago, "The soul of a lover lives in another's body." Jesus is the supreme lover. You don't have to seek him far. He lives within you, as you live in him, if you are his.

The oneness with him gives a person the sense of utter freedom from another's judgments. What do the opinions of others count if Jesus' contemporaries called him a devil, a madman, a being with an unclean spirit?

Belief in him also unites you in fellowship with other believers

throughout the whole world, even if they differ from you. They might not witness openly for the faith as you do, but this does not make them inferior. Jesus had his hidden disciples who, while hiding their faith, were still considered his. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were among them. The apostle John could not have trumpeted his faith in Jerusalem or he would never have been in such good standing with the high priest Caiaphas that he was allowed to enter the heavily guarded temple with his friend Peter during Jesus' trial. Such a privilege was granted only to those considered reliable by the high priest. Under the circumstances, a known disciple of Jesus would not have been admitted.

You will have the friendship not only of those who say they are Christians, but also of those who do not make this public confession. You will have the fellowship of people of other persuasions who also love Jesus. A blind man healed by the Saviour was asked, "What do you say of him that has opened your eyes?" His only answer was, "He is a prophet" (JHN 9:17). Reformed Jews, Unitarians, and Muslims could subscribe to this statement. The healed blind man did not believe in Jesus according to the Athanasian creed, but neither did anyone else in the first centuries of the Christian Church. Yet they were disciples and were received by God as such. Those who may not understand the development of Christology in the Church will be your friends, too.

The blind man's intuition about who Jesus was might have been deficient, but he had the right spirit. He expressed only thankfulness to God for having been healed, without reproaching his Creator for his previous blindness.

What reproaches can a lover bring against the beloved? Desdemona did not rebuke Othello even for killing her, but continued to love him. This is the logic of romance, and no romance could ever equal that between the believing soul and the Man of Calvary.

All are called to become his brides. He excludes no one but those who exclude themselves. Our sinfulness is no hindrance, since our guilt has been transferred to the Son of God. To make us clean, He declared himself guilty for what we have done. There is no barrier between us.

An identification between Christ and the individual takes place. God said to Abraham, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (GEN 12:3). The Messiah, Abraham's descendant, is here intended, but the Bible makes no distinction between him and his ancestor. When you are blessed in Jesus, you are blessed in Abraham and vice versa. The first Christians had a proverb: "Whoever sees a brother sees God."

Jesus is ever willing to share his divinity with humanity. In fact, he often speaks about himself in the third person. When we do so, we are using his own language, though it is best to think about him as our "I."

In loving him, we love the best that is in us. Incredibly, the weaker our love and the greater the danger that we might lose it altogether, the more saving grace is granted, until we become one with him, as he and the Father are one.

---End.

19 Attitude Towards Law"

There are two kinds of law: those made by people, and those for which people are made. The latter come from God and must take precedence.

Such commandments are, however, individualized. The Lord said to John, "Write the things which thou hast seen" (REV 1:19). Paul, on the other hand, heard in heaven "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2CO 12:4). We can only hint at the main characteristics of such forbidden words: they always have a dual character.

One and the same biblical word expressed the plus and the minus, the positive and the negative. For instance, the Greek word ~afes~, used in the Lord's Prayer for "forgive us our trespasses," means also "to leave." Thus we have two sides within us: one desires to keep sins because they are sweet; another wants to get rid of them. When you recite the " Our Father" in the original Greek, both sides of your personality have had their say: "Leave us our trespasses" and "Forgive us ..." Such words are difficult for the nonspiritual to comprehend.

God's laws have a dual character. On one side is the law of love. Since we live in a doomed world, mutual understanding is in the supreme interest of the whole of mankind. We must unite and love each other even where union seems illogical. Two enemies on a sinking ship should at least unite their efforts so that they can survive to continue their quarrel.

Whoever stands for love between races, nations, religions, parties, classes, generations or individuals, and suffers for this cause resembles Christ, regardless of their convictions in matters of faith.

Love is in our best interest even if it brings suffering, first of all because love is more beautiful than hatred. It is good to give to the poor, not only for the sake of the poor but because wealth destroys character and often denies one entrance into heaven.

If several individuals plot to slander you, go along with them. No one believes the self-accusations of a person who claims to be evil. Jesus said, "Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with

him" (MTT 5:25).

Love your enemies, too. If you cannot forgive them for Christ's sake, then do so for the sake of your gallbladder and stomach. Kindness is never wasted. At the very least it profits the giver. Anyone who does not forgive burns the bridge over which they will have to pass. None of us can enter heaven except as forgiven sinners.

Know yourself and acknowledge that if it is difficult for you to forgive an enemy's mistake, the reason could be that your enemy has witnessed your own.

Love is the law for which we were made.

This is one aspect of what you hear in heaven. There exists another side to the matter.

Only fools are honest with the dishonest. A policeman who made it a principle to deal honestly with terrorists, spies, and drug-smugglers would never catch a criminal. There cannot exist one general rule of behavior towards all men. With some we have to use cunning.

The Lord teaches us to be as wise as serpents (MTT 10:16). The New Testament employs here the same word used in the Septuagint for the devil in Genesis 3:1 [GEN 3:1]. He meant that we should at least equal the devils in wisdom, though of another quality.

Wisdom will sometimes make us add to the common law. God told Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (GEN 2:17). Apparently Adam then instructed weaker Eve, "You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it" (GEN 3:1). This is how we have to instruct those who are young in the faith. We raise a fence around the commandments and add other restrictions.

Wisdom occasionally obliges us to enlarge the possibilities of action. One need not feel guilty for telling an untruth in favor of the persecuted. Undue sympathy for criminals can become a crime in itself by encouraging their behavior. There can be no peace in a state without putting down rebellion.

"The Lord raised unto the children of Israel a deliverer, Ehud" (JDG 3: 15). This man, a left-handed Benjaminite, used deceit to kill their oppressor. To judge his deed, we have to remember that he was raised up as a deliverer by God. Origen says the very name of Ehud means "glory," and Ehud is the male form of Jehudah, the name of God's land.

Ehud killed the tyrant Eglon with his left hand. He had hidden his dagger upon his right thigh, where it would have passed unobserved. In

the biblical Greek the word for "left" is ~aristeros~, which means "the noblest" side. The infirmity of Ehud became an instrument of God. To obtain a private audience with the king, he said, "I have a message from God unto thee" (JDG 33:20). Eglon arose from his seat to show respect when he heard the name "God," and in that moment he was killed.

Origen, one of the famous teachers of the Church, praises the prevarications of Ehud. St. Basil the Great also considers Ehud's lie justified. The law of God has a dual character. A state of war frees one from the obligation of trutfulness. This rule stands as well for the war in which the Church is engaged in countries with religious persecution.

Mahatma Gandhi said he would not tell a lie even if by so doing they could save the souls of the whole world. This is wrong. Love is better than truth. The law of love is two-sided.

---End.

20 Not Acting"

The predominant question in the minds of many believers is simply: What is the right course of action to follow? The right course may very well be not to act.

Jesus might have asked the Father this question when he received the reply, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (PSA 110:1). This did not mean sitting quietly for a short period but for thousands of years while the enemies continued to poison humankind with lying doctrines, destroy millions of believers, and bring unspeakable suffering upon the whole creation.

What should one do when confronted with a drama of such proportions? Before expecting an answer to such a question, ask yourself if it is legitimate, if it is proper, to do anything. God is not always impressed with our doings. His advice is "Sit."

This is a teaching, not a law. The Hebrew word ~Torah~, the name for the five books of Moses, means "teaching." It has been falsely translated as "law" in the Greek version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. Generally, the Bible does not impose commandments; rather, it gives counsel about the best way to follow God's desires. It even provides several options.

Patience must not mean passiveness. If the psalmist says "Sit," it does not mean you should do nothing. Many good works can be done with a relaxed spirit and relaxed muscles, just as one sits.

Do what you need to do, but do so remaining comfortable, at ease, not worrying if others will approve your actions. To reach an objective you might have to apply methods some people will not appreciate. The main test is whether you bring home your trophy.

Before asking yourself what you should do, decide whether you can do it with peace of mind. God kept the Sabbath. A person who believes that he can do anything useful without keeping the Sabbath fools himself. When God created the world and organized it, he knew that Adam and Eve were in great danger, because the serpent was in Eden. Notwithstanding, he rested. You can do the same.

You may say you are in great shape and need no rest. But what if the Sabbath needs you? The Talmud says that the days of the week once put their case to God. Sunday had Monday as a friend, Tuesday had Wednesday, Thursday was on good terms with Friday. Only Saturday was alone. So God gave his holy people to be the Sabbath's friend. You might not need rest, but rest needs you. Rest not for your own sake, but in order that rest, repose, and quietness might not feel rejected and abandoned. The Sabbath will reward your love and will make the smallest deeds fruitful.

Because we do not rest properly, we improvise. Abraham was in a hurry to fulfill God's promise and so procreated a son by Hagar instead of waiting for God's timing - and the world even today is paying the price. But God keeps his promises and can provide an heir in old age. Right actions can wait. We can take our time.

It is better not to attempt too many different enterprises, but rather to do one good thing over and over until we can do it really well. John Wesley as a boy was not good at mathematics. Once he asked his mother the same question twenty times. His father got angry at her: "Stop repeating the same thing. You have already given the answer nineteen times." His mother replied, "Isn't it better to say it twenty times, instead of allowing the nineteen efforts to be lost?"

Don't look into any textbook or code to inspire you to right actions. Saul was the king, so Doeg was loyal to him. He told the king the truth about David and his companions and added that they had been fed at the house of Abimelech [should be "Ahimelech"? 1SM 22:9; PSA 52:1 - Dido], the high priest. But the inspired writer calls him a liar and a lover of evil. In God's eyes it is a lie to make a truthful denunciation to the legitimate king if he is a tyrant rejected by God.

God promises you a new heart. If you don't feel entitled to one, then take it from him by force. The Lord says, "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (MTT 11:12). Once the kingdom of heaven is within, you will need no textbooks to guide you.

Know that even in the Bible some commandments are given in irony, such as "Fill up the measure of your fathers" (MTT 23:32). Go after your new character, not after verses.

A word of caution is in order. Be aware of the fact that as often as you do something amiss, Jesus is asked, "Why do thy disciples transgress? " (MTT 15:2). This question is posed even now in heaven. Don't put him in an embarrassing situation.

Don't spend a lot of time trying to decide what to do. Jesus says, " Take the fish that first comes up" (MTT 17:27). You might find it difficult just to sit still. But if you can, it will be your first opportunity to do quietly something that is the right action for you.

---End.

21 Right Actions"

If you have good intentions, it is advisable not to try and implement them immediately with good deeds. These may be premature.

A tin soldier once wanted to change the world so that everyone would be happy, but he forgot he was made of cheap metal. As soon as he entered the fire of battle, he melted. Changing yourself is more difficult than changing the world. To do so you must be made of very resistant material.

First, you must be a new person who has repented of your sins. The author of the rabbinical book ~Levitic Rabba~ writes,

> Whence is it derived that if one repents
> it is imputed to him as if he had gone up
> to Jerusalem, built the Temple, erected
> an altar, and offered upon it all the
> sacrifices enumerated in the Law? From the
> text, "The sacrifices of God are a broken
> spirit" (PSA 51:17).

Then, begin by offering to God the sacrifices of a broken spirit.

The German philosopher Karl Jaspers said, "Crucial for man is his attitude toward failure, because the way in which man approaches his failure determines what he will become."

Before starting to perform any good deed, acknowledge that past actions have been wrong. Repent of them and believe what Jesus' sacrifice has erased them and all their evil consequences. Then you are ready to

proceed. But always remember that even the new creature is only human, limited not only by the flow of external circumstances, but also by an inner stream with a predetermined bed, the only channel in which it can flow.

The French have an expression "violon d'Ingres." Ingres was a gifted painter, whose few creations are in the Louvre. They are few because he believed himself to be a violinist. The tragedy iss that when he played the instrument, all the neighbors had to plug their ears, so unbearable was his musicianship. Ingres was a man who did not know his talent.

It is important that you know what is possible for you and what is not.

Eisenhower told Khruschchev, "In our country we are all equal. Anyone can become president." The dictator pointed to a man who was just sweeping the garden in front of the White House and asked, "Can you really assert that such a person can become president?" Eisenhower replied, "Not this man; he sweeps against the wind."

Every human being has certain possibilities, certain doors to which he has the key. Other doors are completely closed to him. Jesus says again and again, "Go ~your~ way!" Your way is the only one in which you can be successful.

Don't try to change your behavior. Actions are the shadow cast by a personality. Spend all such endeavors in changing your personality.

Work at this quietly. There is no hurry. There is no great distance to traverse. Even if you have committed atrocious crimes you are not far from God. Jesus tells us about a son who forsook his father "and took his journey into a far country" (LUK 15:13). Such a journey is possible on earth, but which country or state of soul is far from the heavenly Father?

We are called to enter a place we never left. The return is easy. When the prodigal son "came to himself" (LUK 15:17), very soon he also found himself in his father's arms. What you really need to know is that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (MTT 3:2).

Once this realization is clear, you don't have to worry yourself interminably about which actions are right. Whether working in a factory or in a kitchen, you can do the will of Christ by giving a cup of water to a thirsty soul. No exceptional deeds are required.

To offer some cool water to a child is a very good Christian action. Why do we ask ourselves complicated questions about what deeds are acceptable?

You cannot keep life alive without letting it live. Let things happen. Don't try to control the universe. Serve the little world around you. A child happens to enter your home. Caress the little one before discussing your business with his parents. You might be a waitress in a restaurant. Serve the customers well. Smile at them. No more right actions are needed.

In whatever you do, keep the great hope. We are not what we are but what we are becoming. We are preparing in menial tasks for a greater calling, to "serve him day and night in his temple" (REV 7:15).

Prepare yourself decidedly for this. In Christ there exists only an " either/or," never an "as well as."

We live in a doomed world. We travel in a sinking ship. Don't analyze the chemical constituents of the water pouring in. Remain quietly on board, fulfilling faithfully your sailor's duty, and prepare for the last swim to the other shore.

Love all those around you, who are so terribly endangered. No one is accepted unless the worst in them is accepted. Love all people just as they are and don't worry about what good deeds to perform. St. Augustine wrote, "Love and go what you like."

It requires great discipline to be simple. The simplest action is the right one."

---End.

22 Having Jesus at His Best"

The Evangelists record that Jesus healed a man possessed by demons. They say not one word about how he had come to be possessed by unclean spirits. For them, only his encounter with Jesus is important. He is presented as a man without biography. We know nothing about his past or his family, nor are we informed about what he did after his brief hour with Jesus.

Perhaps in heaven only the minutes we have spent in intimate contact with Jesus will count.

Come to Jesus, and you will discover that you have fulfilled the aim of your life. Come, accepting all he did and does, all he said and says, all he promised, threatened, commanded, and attested by his life.

The manner in which you come will show your intent. Men came to the Garden of Gethsemane with lanterns and torches (JHN 18:3), which were

needed to prevent a false arrest. Today, some approach him with the lights of reason and science, which are indispensable in preventing in errors in judgment. But lovers prefer darkness. They come to him without torches, which reveal only the outer man. A lover seeks the real person. Only lovers can know him as he really is.

And what if in the darkness of night they embrace another by mistake? It matters not, because they were destined from the beginning to love not only him but all beings.

The Lord forbade people on several occasions to spread the news that he was the Messiah, because he knew his time had not come. But at a deeper level, he wanted to teach his disciples that men and women can be with him not only when they know they have Jesus with them. They could be with him [also] when in the company of any poor, oppressed, or holy being.

Angelus Silesius wrote, "Man, if you love something, you love nothing. God is not this and that; therefore, leave the 'something'." St. John of the Cross also worried: "If you stop at something, you are no more committed to the whole."

Only lovers can explain the enigma. Is Jesus in truth the same yesterday, today, and forever? In the past, he could not bear to see men who might faint because they had nothing to eat, and so he fed them miraculously. Today millions starve. It is not that they faint; they die. Why does he not come to their aid?

Jesus always has the same answer to social problems. The disciples asked him, "Where can we find bread here in the wilderness for thousands of people?" His reply was, "How many loaves do you have?" (MRK 8:4,5). If the disciples had had more than the minimum required for life, the hunger of others would have been their fault. They had less than the minimum: seven loaves and a few small fish for thirteen men, including Jesus. But they practiced self-renunciation, asceticism. Satisfied with their poverty, Jesus performed the miracle of multiplying the food, with much to spare.

Let today's Christians deny themselves and become poor. Then they will see that Jesus has remained the same.

During Jesus' earthly life, there were places where he could not perform mighty works (MRK 6:37). Can it be that through our greed we have created such places in our day?

Come to Jesus, forsaking all. Then you can have him at his best.

---End.

23 Influence God"

Like every well-organized brain, that of God also has a mechanism for forgetting and remembering. He says, "Behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you" (JER 23:39). "I will also forget thy children" (HOS 4:6). "I will not remember thy sins" (ISA 43:25).

On the other hand, the groaning of the children of Israel caused him to remember his covenant (EXO 6:5). The sense of prayer is to bring to God's remembrance things he has known from time immemorial.

Like every unselfish being, the one he forgets most is himself. Therefore our prayers should begin with the words, "Hallowed by thy name." Usually they start with the request "Do something for me," which is not right. He needs most to be reminded of himself and of his Kingdom.

There are privileged people who obtain from God everything they desire. It is written, "The Lord did according to the word of Moses" (EXO 8:13). More than others, such individuals should say to God, "Not my will, but Thy will be done." In the embrace of love we should forget ourselves, as he forgets himself. We need not worry, there will be others to remind him of our existence.

Luther prayed:
O Lord and good Father, I don't wish to be or not to be,
to live or to die, to know or not to know, to have or to lack.
Your will be done; I don't wish what is Yours. I wish Yourself.
You are not more beloved by me what I have it well, and not less
when I have it evil.

God's glory should be our supreme desire in prayer.

The Jews had fled from Egypt in a hurry. They must have left behind many possessions, but not their timbrels. With these they were able to praise God (EXO 15:20). We may be assured that we can also bring before him our diverse petitions. We can even be very insistent in them. When the children of Israel were in great danger, Moses said soothing words to them, while to God he cried (EXO 14:13-15). Jesus, too, "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears" (HEB 5:7).

We are all what we are as a result of influences that impinge upon us. When God requires us to pray, he is essentially asking us to influence him. In this respect he is like us. Let us with determination influence him in favor of the cause to which he calls us.

If prayer moves him, it also influences those for whom we pray. When

we kneel in prayer for someone else, we kneel not only before God but also before those for whom we are praying, entreating them thus to follow the right way.

Our prayers influence both God and others.

---End.

24 God Who Evolves"

Pascal wrote, "Nature has some perfect ions to show that she is the image of God and some defects to show she is only an image."

~Mona Lisa~ could not exist without a model, about whom we know nothing. Leonardo da Vinci's painting proves that real women who sometimes smile wonderfully must exist. Without them we would never have had this admirable image.

Nature is only an image. Therefore an original must exist.

I believe that the ontological argument for the existence of God brought by Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) still stands: We have an idea of a perfect being. Existence is an attribute of perfection; therefore a perfect being must exist. This is God.

If everyone's "I" is incommunicable, how much more is his! Jesus said, "No one knows the Father except the Son" (MTT 11:27). When we write about God, therefore, we write about an unknown Being. "If any man thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know" (1CO 8:2). We know only a few, a very few, words of God. He is brief, and our knowledge is scanty. Our sermons and books about him must be brief too.

God is known from the Bible under different names. Thomas Aquinas raised the question whether the names predicated about God are synonymous. In his book ~Sentences~, he uses for the first time in church history the expression "attributes of God." He teaches that the names attributed to God all signify one and the same thing but under many distinctions of reason. We call him by different names only because we apprehend him in manifold ways, but he is one.

This one God has revealed about himself in Scripture not only his almightiness, but also some of his limitations; he is love and cannot love less than to the uttermost. He is immortal. He is invisible. He cannot lie. He cannot get wrathful except with our consent. He said to Moses, "Let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against the Jewish people" (EXO 22:24). Because Moses did not let him alone, he did not

exterminate the people as he might have otherwise.

There is one attribute of God that makes every quarrel with him appear as senseless as the quarrels with men. God is what he is (EXO 3:14). He is not what we or he himself would like him to be. he decides all things. He never decided to be the only one to decide all things. He is God. He did not choose to be God, as you did not choose to be a human being, of a certain sex and race, with a certain heredity, born in certain circumstances that will shape your destiny for life. He simply exists.

To him the same words apply that Paul used for himself, "I am what I am" (1CO 15:10). God is what he is by nature. Paul was what he was by God's grace. God is the perfect example of a being self-existent, without inner conflict, accepting all his characteristic features, not quarreling with himself, not desiring the impossible for himself.

For him, too, being means evolving, becoming. The literal translation of the words spoken to Moses "Ani ehyeh asher ehyeh" is "I become what I become," not "what I am." He knows what he will become. With the qualities he possesses, he could not become less than all in all.

He is basically the same always, but he evolves. A Jewish child of five passing near a church with his father once said, "Papa, let us enter to see what is new with God." This is why we should go to church - to receive good news. A pastor who tells only what God was two thousand years ago is not very helpful, since God "becomes what he becomes." There is no absolutely changeless object of knowledge and no unchangeable knower, and there is therefore no unchangeable knowledge.

An unknown, an invisible God, a God who evolves - I cannot comprehend this. When you cannot catch a butterfly with empty hands, you have understood its nature. Knowledge is always only partial and therefore hinders intimacy. "The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness" (1KI 8:12). It is only in darkness that he can be embraced.

If you do not wish a God like this, it would be better to avoid him. Be happy he does not walk with you, because he consumes stiff-necked people in the way (EXO 33:3).

But if you accept him as he is, then love him with all your heart and with all your soul. This is the first commandment. Everything else comes afterwards.

---End.

25 Are You Ready to Die?"

Jesus said, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven" (MTT 10:32).

When the Communists took over Cambodia, they entered a church during the Sunday service. Taking the Bible from the pulpit, an officer put it on the threshold. As his men stood by with rifles ready, he ordered the people to leave the building one by one and spit on the Bible. "Whoever does so will be free to go home," he said. "Whoever does not will be shot on the spot."

Imagine for a moment that you were a member of the congregation. What would you have done under the circumstances?

As one who has passed through similar situations, I know the thoughts that flash through the mind when put to such a test: "I have a bride. Her heart would break if I were to die. My time has not yet come ... I have old parents who are invalids. They depend on me for support. They are doomed if I die. Love obliges me to spit ... So what if I spit? Jesus knows that I have done so under duress. He forgave Peter, who denied him without being in such danger as this. He understands human weakness. In any case, I will spit only a little bit."

These were people who had come to church to worship God and study his word, but they had never decided to die for Christ. One by one, Christians, who ten minutes before had praised Christ in song, left the church and spat on the Bible. Then came a girl of sixteen. When challenged at gunpoint to spit, she began to weep and said, "I cannot do it. I love God. The Bible is his letter to us. No child spits on his father's letter." She knelt down and wiped away the spittle from the cover of the Bible - and fell dead over the holy book, shot in the head.

What would you have done? Many of us have answered a call forward to the altar. The altar in Jerusalem was a place where creatures died. Lambs, rams, doves, whatever came upon the altar died. Did you understand your response to the altar call in these terms?

We are not all put in the same situation. Not everyone is forced to lay their life on the line. However, every Christian chose death at his conversion, if it was genuine.

Rabbinical commentaries have said that the key to the Bible lies in the words, "This is the law, when a man dies ..." (NUM 19:14). If a person does not die for the law, they have never really considered it to be the law of God. This is how Christians think, too. A Christian is someone, "dead to sin" and "dead with Christ" (ROM 6:2,8). To respond to an altar call means to die to the world. If you have understood this rightly and lived in this spirit, you will make the right choice in

times of crisis.

Few of us may be asked to spit on the Bible literally, but to spit or not to spit is a choice we make daily when we are tempted. It means spitting on the Bible, indeed, on Christ, if we willfully and consciously prefer a sin to his commandments.

Let us choose rather to wipe away the spittle with which others have soiled his holy word and to be faithful at all times.

---End.

26 One Trinitarian God"

To Jews and Muslims, the greatest stone of offence in the Christian religion is the belief that the one God is a trinity. Jesus is the first to give a Trinitarian formula to the Godhead. He says, "Baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (MTT 28:19).

The Church teaches us to worship the unity in the Trinity and the Trinity in the unity. We are not commanded to understand it. In fact, we do many things without understanding them. How many of us comprehend the technicalities of electricity, of cars, of jets, of our household gadgets, of the medicines we use?

Curiously, the early church never said there were three persons in the Godhead. "Person" is a word used for a whole being. The church fathers who fixed the dogma spoke about three ~hypostases~ in the Godhead. Etymologically, ~hypostasis~ means "inferior" (hypo) and "stand" (stasis). Only the three together, Father, Son and Holy Ghost constitutes a whole being. There exists no wholeness outside the totality of the Godhead.

Two main accusations are brought against the Trinitarian teaching of the Bible.
1. It contradicts mathematics, which is a discipline that never permits two different series of computation. One plus one plus one can yield only three. Another solution, that one plus one plus one should equal one, is out of the question.
Three persons can surely not be one person, but it does not contradict mathematics to say that three ~hypostases~, whatever this word means, or that a divine Father, a divine Son, and a divine Spirit should be one Godhead. Three different entities like body, soul and spirit form one person. Many trees form one forest.
2. It contradicts the biblical teaching that God is one.
Deep biblical truth demands vigorous mental effort and much knowledge.

Those who cannot discipline themselves to attain such knowledge are like the fox in Aesop's fable. Unable to breach the fence guarding the vineyard, he said, "I would never eat such grapes anyway. They are sour. "

Those who have studied know that the Old Testament never speaks about God being absolutely one. The Hebrews have two expressions for the notion "one" - ~echad~ and ~yachid~. Yachid stands for perfect unity. " I have one only son" would be in Hebrew ~yesh li ben yachid~. Echad stands for composed unity, as in the expression, ~Vaihi erev vaihi boker yom echad~ (It was evening and it was morning, one day) (GEN 1:5).

God says that man and wife "shall be one (echad) flesh" (GEN 2:24). This shows that the word "one" is not taken in the Bible in the absolute sense.

~Elohim~, one of the most frequent appelations for God in the Old Testament, is a plural. It could be translated "Gods," but in GEN 35:7 and other places, the verb after the subject ~Elohim~ is in the singular.

After hearing the two distinct dreams of Pharaoh, Joseph says, "The dream of Pharaoh is one (echad)" (GEN 41:25). He does not even say, " The two dreams are one." The two dreams are simply one dream. Many two' s can be one. May God grant that we may understand it.

Many Jewish theologians have seen they cannot defend the absolute unity of the Godhead.

The renowned eleventh-century rabbi Gabriol distinguishes between God, his will and his activity in the world, which is something other than his real being, about which we can know nothing. He makes the same distinction that Christian theology makes between ~Deus absconditus~ (the hidden God) and ~Deus revelatus~ (God revealed), the same distinction which Hindus made thousands of years before Christ between Brahman Nirguna (God without attributes, that is, without qualities attributed to him by men, which therefore cannot express ultimate reality) and Brahman Saguna (God with attributes).

God can be philosophized about as "one" in the precise sense of the word only so long as he remains an object of speculation. Those who have a personal experience with God conceive of him as Creator, as Saviour from their sins, and as sone who sanctifies them and makes them God-like. The Trinity was experienced in the spiritual life before being fixed as dogma.

Let us adore the whole God, not only one aspect of him. In Hebrew the word for "face" (panim) does not exist in the singular. The Hebrew Bible speaks about the "faces" of God. We adore not only the majestic face of the serene Father Almighty, but also the face marred by sorrow

of the God who suffered for us on Golgotha. We also adore what the Kabbalah calls "the little face" - the dovelike face that awakens our desire for innocence and goodness.

If we do not understand much, it does not matter. St. Augustine, walking along the seashore, reflected on a book about the Trinity that he wanted to write. Hearing a child's cry and fearing something may have happened, he investigated, only to be told, "I weep because I want to put the ocean in my bucket and can't succeed." Augustine learned not to expect too much from the reflections of his little mind about the great God.

Through deep thought we can know something of the fringes of the problem. May this suffice and may we be his adorers both in spirit and in truth.

---End.

27 A Few Thoughts about the Devil"

The Bible calls the devil "the king of terrors" (JOB 18:14) and "the firstborn of death" (JOB 18:13), among many other names. The demons who serve him are usually not given individual names. When asked, one of them said to the Lord, "My name is Legion" (MRK 5:9).

We know only two possible exceptions. One devil is called Apollyon, the angel of the bottomless pit (REV 9:11). The apocryphal book Tobit speaks about a demon whose name was Asmodee. It seems probable that one result of serving the devil is an obliteration of personality.

Demons perform many works on earth. The most insidious is probably that of sowing doubt. It was the devil's first ploy with Eve. Not content with deceiving the race, the devil dared to approach Jesus himself. The Father had said at his baptism, "~This is~ my beloved Son" (MTT 3:17). Every believer receives just such an assurance. After a few weeks, Satan tempted Jesus with the words, "~If thou be~ the Son of God" (MTT 4:3). He uses the same tactic with us.

But he uses even more insidious methods. The Spirit of the Father speaks in a believer (MTT 10:20), but not always. Satan can also influence a believer to such an extent that he is even able to speak through him. The Lord responded to certain of Peter's words by saying, " Get thee behind me, Satan" (MTT 16:23). Jesus discerned that the false thoughts expressed by Peter did not come from his own heart.

Knowing the devil's power, many believers seek some accommodation with him. Montaigne wrote, "I would burn one candle for God and one for the

devil." This attitude is wrong. My prayer is, "God, help me every day to be an annoyance to the devil." We don't have to fear him, in spite of his seeming might. The Empire State Building is gigantic only when viewed from street level. Christians are seated in heavenly places (EPH 2:6). Seen from above, the devils are little creatures.

In MTT 12:25 and 26 Jesus suggests that the best tactic to use in dealing with demons: try to turn one against the other. Split them. The devil of self-satisfaction over one's religiosity can be turned against the devil of whoredom, the devil of thrift against that of gambling; the devil of fear (of being discovered and apprehended) against that of lying and theft.

In times of great demonic oppression and temptation, a simple change of your place of habitation is also effective. Devils are patriots (as were, to an unhealthy extreme, great Satanic personalities like Hitler and Stalin). If you move to another location, they do not always move together with you. A devil besought Jesus not to be sent out of the country (MRK 5:10).

On some occasions, the devil might give you a hard time if you fight him. When forced to leave an individual, he might throw him or her to the ground (MRK 9:20). But devils can be chased away. Subtlety can also be used successfuly to outwit them.

Just be aware that the devil (collectively) will plague you until the end of your earthly life. He attacked the innocent couple, the crown of creation, in paradise. He promised them a religious boon: to be like God. He also knew how to keep silent when the threat was too great. He did not contradict God when he was cursed but simply continued his work. He incited Cain and Abel to quarrel about religious matters to make a mockery of religion. He induces men to run after women only because they are beautiful, causing them to forget decency and virtue.

He often uses renowned personalities as tools. Lenin and Hitler both wrote books that shaped the political destinies of the twentieth century. Christianity has not produced many books with such an impact. While Hitler built gas chambers and ovens to kill millions of Jews, the Church failed to organize a missionary work to bring millions of Jews to conversion.

Hosea well said, "The revolters are profound to make slaughter" (HOS 5: 2). We are not profound. Therefore many Christians have been led astray, even to the point of helping Hitler and Lenin. Christians sometimes sacrifice to devils while believing they sacrifice to God.

When Jesus said, "Beware of men" (MTT 10:17), he meant to be taken seriously. He warns us that there are some people sown in this world by

the devil (MTT 13:24, 25, 37, 38). These are not simply notorious figures like Hitler or Stalin, but ordinary people you might encounter in everyday life.

But don't panic. Remember, the devil will try hardest to make you disbelieve that you are a child of God. My answer to him is, "Then if I am a child of the devil, I will be an Absalom, a treacherous son to him. I will love God even if I am not his."

He will also try to make you believe that right is wrong and wrong is right. He will appear as an angel of light to deceive (2CO 11:14). Again, my reply is, "Though now I see through a glass darkly, I know whom I have believed and trust him to keep me from falling and to keep all I have committed to him even though my senses deceive me. I will love him even if I cannot see him" (2CO 13:12; 2TM 1:12).

Scorn the devil. He is a defeated foe, as he knows full well. Jesus conquered him and all his minions on Calvary, for all of us sinners. From the light of Golgotha you can look down on him. I repeat, he is a little creature.

---End.

28 Problems of Faith in God"

Darwin's most radical claim was that evidence is aimless and without inherent direction. His theory was a biological counterfeit of Adam Smith's ~laissez-faire~ economics. Smith had argued that a well-regulated, stable and harmonious economy would be the natural result of untrammelled interest actively pursued by all.

We live some two hundred years after the death of Adam Smith. There is no harmonious economic life. Nor could the order in nature result from uncontrolled struggle of all against all.

Why should and how could random evolution produce unselfishness and self-sacrifice - even in the animal world? In many flocks of birds, for example, the first bird that spots a predator utters a warning cry. The flock scatters. The bird has saved its mates by calling attention to itself, sacrificing its life for the good of the flock.

Nature cannot be explained without a Creator. To acknowledge him does not solve all the intellectual problems. There remains the great question mark: If the world was created by a rational Being, why the terrible suffering?

The question "Why?" addressed to God is as false as the question "What

two even numbers added together yield seventeen?" The book of Lamentations ends with a question: "Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long time?" (LAM 5:20). We do not know the reasons for God's doings. We know that he does things that seem strange to us. But he is a God in whom we can trust without understanding him. If we can trust completely in surgeons without understanding what they do, should we not trust in God, the Creator of the surgeon?

I don't claim to understand God, but I know he can do wonders. He made it possible for Jesus to be born miraculously to a virgin. Yet every day he still performs the miracle of making a sperm recognize the ovum. What mechanism prevents the sperm from fusing with any other kind of cell it may encounter? Only the miracle of human conception as orchestrated by God. May this God of miracles do what seems good to him, not what seems efficient or right to me.

While I say this, I also know I have the liberty to pray to God to change his decree. He allows me to pray in the Spirit. The Son prayed in Gethsemane that a decree of the Father be altered. We can do so too.

In either case, we can trust God.

I trust God because he does not boast. He says that he created a heaven and an earth. Now, all earthly rulers praise themselves for the good things they do. But our God tells us about hell too. He could have kept it from us in order that we might love and trust him more. Instead, he tells the truth as it is. We can trust him.

He freed the Jews from the Egyptian bondage, proving he could deliver his people. He did not free the Jews from the Nazi holocaust. It was not that he lacked the power. He must have good reasons to proceed differently in each circumstance. In any case, he takes full responsibility for everything that happens.

All kinds of theological arguments can be given to explain the existence of so much evil in the world of a good God. These valuable explanations are like a finger pointing to the moon. But to see the moon you have to look beyond the finger. Then you become silent. Questions are no longer relevant. You realize that there are answers that only time will reveal and that the purpose of God will one day become obvious.

The unrighteous opium war waged by the British against China opened up the country to the inrush of missionaries. Access to inland China for evangelization was the result of the Arrow War in 1856. God nullified good counsel and allowed wrong decisions to be made (2SM 17:14) in order that David, his anointed, might return to his kingdom. Thus we learn not to accept all God's guidance. He gives the wicked guidance that

will destroy them. Rather, we should do what the Bible teaches about how to be pleasing in his sight.

I admit that it is not easy to walk with this God. Sometimes he says very unpleasant things. He tells Adam that certain things are forbidden, Abraham that his descendants will be slaves in Egypt for four hundred years.

You will wonder about his words. Aristotle said, "Wonder is the starting point of philosophy." It is the starting point of religion too. From wonder we advance to an acknowledgement of our utter dependence upon God. We - humankind - cannot escape his will.

Nor should we try to escape his will. What we focus on determines our character. The more exalted the object about which we think, the more Godlike we become. It is good for humankind to think primarily about God.

Every concept is an image of an object. When the Father forms a notion, he thinks perfectly about his own divine nature. Thus this idea, the Word, expresses his nature completely. We know him as the Son. The two love each other perfectly. The Holy Spirit is this love. St Bernard of Clairvaux called the Holy Spirit the kiss between the Father and the Son.

Let us therefore bow before the Holy Trinity. Then let us add to their love our own. In love we will find the answer to our restless questionings.

---End.

29 In the Name of Jesus"

Whatever is said about Jesus in the Bible concerns every believer because Jesus identifies himself organically with believers. "Christ is the head of the body" (COL 1:18), and we are the members (1CO 12:12).

The Romans had a saying, "Actiones et passiones sunt suppositorum." (Actions and passions belong to the person.) It is not the hand that steals but the thief; not the hand that gives alms but the philanthropist; not the heart that loves or hates but the whole person. Likewise, every action and passion of Jesus is also mine, and vice versa.

Divine charity is not his alone; I possess it too, because the spirit that animates him belongs to me. There is no problem, no burden of mine that is not also his. My sins do not belong only to me; they are automatically his too and crucify him afresh (HEB 6:6).

We have everything in common. We are both twice born, but in reverse order. He was born first as the Son of God and then became man: I was born first as a human being and then as a child of God. This is the difference. Otherwise we are one body.

Human life has been given to me as a boat to cross the sea from nonexistence to heaven. This is the spiritual sense of the many episodes in the Gospels of the disciples' travelling by ship across the sea of Galilee. Jesus is the good navigator, who also stills contrary winds. To resist being totally and consciously a member of his body is like committing suicide.

We often begin or end personal prayers and public services with the words "In the name of Jesus," which means with a readiness for sacrifice after his example, or rather, together with him.

When we pray "Hallowed be thy name" to God, we are saying in effect, " Give me the grace of self-sacrifice that others, seeing its beauty and knowing that it arises out of love for you, might be drawn to adore you." The sacrifice is meant to be complete. Jesus said, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down is life for his friends" (JHN 15: 13). This is the ultimate sacrifice for a man. Jesus went further: he died for sinners, for his enemies. Since God's children belong to a different order of being, their love has the same ultimacy as that of Jesus: self-sacrifice in the service of their foes.

Jesus would not elaborate on this teaching. He had taught people to love their enemies. They asked him how a man could be released from the heavy duty of loving his own wife. How far love must go belongs to the many things Jesus left unsaid because his disciples were not yet able to bear them.

He is so far beyond us that it is only natural for communication to be difficult. Doubts arise too in many things connected with him. There is nothing wrong in doubting. The wrong lies in sharing the doubts with anyone other than Jesus himself. Speak with him about them as the followers of John the Baptist did: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (MTT 11:3).

He will teach you how to love to the uttermost and reveal to you the mystery of his doings. If you love like Jesus and become one with him, people will be offended by your deeds as they were offended by his commanding a Jew to carry a load on the Sabbath. In the case of that man, a natural law had been broken. He had been healed in a moment after thirty-eight years of paralysis and was able to carry a mat on his shoulders. The natural laws come from the same God who ordered us to keep the Sabbath. If the first were broken, why not the latter?

With Jesus, we are in a sphere that humans cannot judge; the realm of the supernatural. Christ's ministry engendered in Herod the reaction that he was John the Baptist come back from the dead, in the Pharisees that he was in a pact with the devil, in his relatives that he was beside himself (MRK 3:21), in Peter that he was "the Son of God." The qualities that called forth so many reactions must have been beyond the ordinary. We believe the only explanation is that he was - and is - God incarnate.

Spinoza wrote, "That God would assume human nature, I must confess seems to me as absurd as that a circle assumed the shape of a square." To which I would respond with the words of Tertullian: "I believe it because it is absurd." A child can take a piece of string and shape it like a circle, then reshape it like a square. We have to accept on faith the fact that God can do things that surpass the imagination or reason of the greatest genius.

The most intimate disciples of Christ do not understand everything yet. St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, before his martyrdom said, "I am burdened with chains, but I am only a beginner in the Church of Christ."

Faith tells us that Jesus is God. He is love to the uttermost, and he calls us to such love, even towards our enemies. He is one head and we are his body. We are one.

---End.

30 Reason and Sentiment"

Only one half of the human brain directs logical thinking. It is the left hemisphere where the treasury of words is located. The right hemisphere is the seat of pictures and dreams. Strangely, it is this half that more quickly provides a solution to the serious problems of life.

Reason is not reliable. The Romanian word for "mind" is "liar." A fox that once lost its tail in a trap tried to persuade the other animals that it was much better not to have a tail. We also tend to propose as objective truth ideas that would serve to justify our past biographies.

A multitude of depraved sentiments exert a detrimental influence on our reasoning. We all agree that two and two are four, that it is warm when the sun shines, and that the USA has a president - but only because these truths don't interfere with our own interests and passions.

Hobbes said, "Even the axioms of geometry would be disputed if men's passions were concerned in them." Lenin also wrote, "Men would

contradict that two and two are four if it conflicted with their interests."

Truth can be very unpleasant when memory tells me, "You have sinned," and pride says, "It is not so." Pride almost always succeeds in convincing memory. Reason is at hand to offer powerful alibis. Francis Bacon said it in ~Novum Organum~: "The human understanding is no dry light, but receives an infusion from the will and affections, where proceed sciences which may be called 'sciences as one would.'"

People even become martyrs of a religion they embraced only because it happened to be the religion of their sweetheart. One of the top leaders of a terrorist gang in West Germany killed and went to prison because the boy she loved was a revolutionist. This was her only motive for embracing the most radical ideas.

Christ refuses faith in him engendered by such motives. He counsels those who plan to build a tower to sit down first and count the cost, and advises kings who intend to make war to consult first whether they are able to win (LUK 14:28-31). He endorses the wisdom of people who, in building a house, dig deep and lay the foundation on rock (LUK 6:48). In effect, he is saying they must make sure they have the right motives and serve the highest causes.

He urges us to follow him only if we have full proof that faith in him is right. He exempts those who don't have the evidence from the duty to hold this faith. "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin," Jesus said (JHN 15:24). You are without excuse only if a clear revelation has been given you.

However, let us always remember that one part of our mind can apprehend the truth quickly without relying on the processes of reason. It is the same part that induces Romeo to consider Juliet the only girl worth living and dying for and makes Don Quixote forsake all for Dulcinea. God must be loved with all the heart. Therefore, this part of the mind has to convince the other half of its validity, while admitting the possibility of distortion due to emotional complexes of sympathy and antipathy, which block truth.

Reason can adduce proof that adultery is love, that theft is wise provision, that unbelief is intellectual honesty. "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but God weighs the heart" (PRO 21:2). Because we don't have a strong grip on truth, with hearts committed to the desire for truth alone, many churces are able to resort to the ways of the world with considerable success.

Before apprehending truth, your reason must become truthful. Without cleansing the mind of passion, you render the grasp of religious truth

virtually impossible.

---End.

31 Why Evil in the World of a Good Father?"

Anyone who reads the Bible is invariably struck by the sheer volume of evil and suffering it recounts, in particular the suffering of the innocent. To many people this poses a grave problem.

The simplest answer to the question, "Why is there so much evil in a world created by a good God?" is, "We do not know."

Hayyim ibn Mussa (1390-1460), a Spanish rabbi, tells how he heard a renowned preacher attempting to explain why God acted as he did and speculating about his deeds. "Thereupon," the rabbi said, "misfortune came upon me in a great pogrom in Seville. I was beaten and wounded until my persecutors desisted because they thought I was dead. And here you are speculating about God and his decrees. I have greater faith in the sufferings which God imposes upon us than in your theories about them."

Is it not enough to endure pain and persecution and natural catastrophes? Must we endure philosophical explanations too?

Job, upon receiving news that he had lost all his property and that all his children had died, exclaimed, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (JOB 1:21). When God gives, he gives in mercy; when he takes, he takes in mercy. About mercies we need to jubilate and not to speculate.

An evil can often be a blessing in disguise. Edison, thought to have an addled brain, was driven out of school. A train conductor who beat him made him deaf. This affliction closed him to external influences. He could draw from inner wells. As a result, we owe to him the electric light bulb. More than that, he earned a patent every fortnight.

Lincoln was grieve because of two bankruptcies. Through these God showed him that he was made for something better than commerce. He became one of the great presidents of America.

There have been many artists of unsound mind. Over seventy analytical papers have been written about the folly of Van Gogh alone. Yet would his art have been possible without this touch of madness? Neither the Romanian poet Eminescu nor the Hungarian Ady Endre could have created their masterpieces without the incipient folly in them.

Some artists have been aware of their weaknesses and loved their perilous handicaps. Edward Munch said, "I want to keep my weaknesses. They are a part of myself. I wouldn't want to miss suffering. I have to give much thanks to this suffering in my art."

I once saw a performance of an old classical Japanese dance. Its subject was a young king of such beauty that wherever he appeared all activity stopped. No one could do anything but hold their breath while gazing at the king's splendor. His appearance negated the possibility of a normal existence for anyone else. His subjects could no longer love one another because they compared their neighbors unfavorably with the beautiful king. For the good of his citizens, then, the young king had to wear an ugly mask.

Do you understand the significance of this story? Could human relations and falling in love and the world itself exist if we were able to see our God in all his majesty? He too had to wear an ugly mask by taking the form of sin-sick humanity. In the person of Jesus, God appeared among us with "no form nor comeliness." He had no beauty that we should desire him ... We esteemed him not" (ISA 53:2,3). Thus he made it possible for us to esteem one another's beauty and desire after the love of our fellows.

Think about this story. It might help you somewhat to make peace with the existence of evil in a world created by a good God.

---End.

32 God's Characteristics"

Men dress God in the garments of their age. He was described as a despot when the world was ruled by despots. He has been successively portrayed as a slaveholder and an English country-gentleman. Scientists conceived of him as a great geometrist, a great mechanic. Today some say he is a great revolutionist. In a male-dominated society, he surely must be male. Modern-day feminists call him "she."

These extrapolations are very much out of touch with God as described in the Bible. The last impression one retains after a lifetime of study is that God is an unfathomable mystery.

We have the assertion "God is love" (1JN 4:8), but it must be a love entirely apart, because he takes the responsibility for actions not normally performed by a loving being. God says, "I will corrupt your seed" - think only of the tragedy of having bad children - "and spread dung upon your faces" (MAL 2:3). For the sins of certain priests, whether a few or many, he puts the whole priesthood under a curse in the

same chapter.

When village childre hear the song "There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea," they think only of the breadth of the millpond. But navigators accustomed to travelling the seven seas would understand better. Astronauts would doubtless think something wider than the universe, and that is the spiritual realm, in which God is not limited to our human concept of goodness.

We see God neither as he is nor as he would like to be. One of our impressions is that the God who created our universe is a sad God. Lucifer had just rebelled, drawing with him a third part of the "stars" of heaven (REV 12:4). The fall of man followed. We deal with a sad God who repents of having created our species and is grieved (GEN 6:6). Our God is also wearied. "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words" (MAL 2: 17). Jesus, "the express image of God" (HEB 1:3), was also "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (ISA 53:3), and knew weariness while on earth. John's Gospel records that once he sat on a well in Samaria, " being wearied with his journey" (JHN 4:6). He had left Jerusalem upon hearing news about dissensions over his and John's baptism and was now among strangers. Bone-tired, hungry and thirsty, he was indeed a man of sorrows. If we don't realize this, his words will sometimes appear strange and incomprehensible.

But look! A woman comes to draw water, alone, in the heat of the day. She is despondent and weary of life. She has had six husbands, including one stolen from another's marriage. None of them could give her joy. But immediately the weary Son of God forgets his own sadness and becomes a comforter to her (JHN 4:4-42).

Let us not create images of God according to the mores of our society or our own status. Meeting the tired God, the one crucified every day afresh by his followers (HEB 6:6), let us forget our own deep sorrows and be a comfort to him.

May I add that the present meditation needs to be taken with a grain of salt. I too am a weary man who has known much sadness, and I show God as I see him. I paint him with somber hues, knowing that "now we see through a glass, darkly, but then" - praise God! - "face to face" (1CO 13:12). And I know that one day a happy God "will wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more ... sorrow, nor crying" (REV 21:4).

---End.

End of the book, "The Total Blessing."

Tortured For Christ

by Richard Wurmbrand
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Richard Wurmbrand is an evangelical minister who spent fourteen years in Communist imprisonment and torture in his homeland of Rumania. He is one of Rumania' s most widely-known Christian leaders, authors and educators. Few names are better known in his homeland.

In 1945, when the Communists seized Rumania and attempted to control the churches for their purposes, Richard Wurmbrand immediately began an effective, vigorous "underground" ministry to his enslaved people and the invading Russian soldiers. He was eventually arrested in 1948, along with his wife Sabina. His wife was a slave-laborer for three years. Richard Wurmbrand spent three years in solitary confinement - seeing no one but his Communist torturers. After three years he was transferred to a mass cell for five years, where the torture continued.

Due to his international stature as a Christian leader, diplomats of foreign embassies asked the Communist government about his safety. They were told he had fled Rumania. Secret police, posing as released fellow-prisoners, told his wife of attending his burial in the prison cemetery. His family in Rumania and his friends abroad were told to forget him since he was now dead.

After eight years he was released and promptly resumed his work with the Underground Church. Two years later, in 1959, he was re-arrested and sentenced to twenty-five years in prison.

Mr. Wurmbrand was released in a general amnesty in 1964, and again continued his underground ministry. Realizing the great danger of a third imprisonment, Christians in Norway negotiated with the Communist authorities for his release from Rumania. The Communist government had begun "selling" their political prisoners. The "going price" for a prisoner

was $1,900. Their price for Wurmbrand was $10,000.
    In May 1966 he testified in Washington before the Senate's Internal Security Subcommittee and stripped to the waist to show eighteen deep torture wounds covering his body. His story was carried across the world in newspapers in the U.S., Europe and Asia. Wurmbrand was warned in September 1966 that a decision had been made by the Communist regime of Rumania to assassinate him. Yet he was not silent in the face of these death threats. He has been called "the voice of the Underground Church." Christian leaders have called him "a living martyr" and "the Iron Curtain Paul."

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INTRODUCTION

The history of the underground church that you will read reflects the continuing struggle in many parts of the world today where Christians meet in caves, basements, and prisons.
    Pastor Wurmbrand is the author of several books, translated into 68 languages throughout the world. Founder of the Christian mission - ~The Voice of the Martyrs~, he tries to smuggle relief to the families of imprisoned Christians in Arab nations, Communist Vietnam, China and other countries where Christians are persecuted for their faith. His message is, "Hate the evil systems, but love your persecutors. Love their souls, and try to win them for Christ."

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CHAPTER 1 - THE RUSSIANS' AVID THIRST FOR CHRIST

An Atheist Finds Christ

I WAS brought up in a family in which no religion was recognized. In my childhood, I received no religious education. At the age of fourteen I was already a convinced, hardened atheist. This was the result of a bitter childhood. I had been an orphan from the first years of life, I had known poverty in the difficult years of the First World War. At fourteen, I was as convinced an atheist as the Communists are today. I had read atheist books and it was not that I did not believe in God or Christ ... I hated these notions, considering them harmful for the human mind. So I grew up in bitterness toward religion.

But as I understood afterward, I had the grace to be one of the chosen of God for reasons which I don't understand. These were reasons which did not belong to anything in my character, because my character was very bad.

Although I was an atheist, something which was unreasonable always attracted me to churches. I found it hard to pass a church and not enter it. However, I never understood what was happening in these churches. I listened to the sermons, but they didn't appeal to my heart. I was very sure that there was no God. I hated the notion of God as a master whom I should have to obey. I hated the wrong notion of God which I had in my mind. But I would have liked very much to

know that a loving heart existed somewhere in the center of this universe. I had known few of the joys of childhood and youth. I longed that there should be somewhere a loving heart beating for me too.

I knew there was no God, but I was sad that such a God of love did not exist. Once, in my inner spiritual conflict, I entered a Catholic church; I saw people kneeling and saying something. I thought, I will kneel near them, I will catch what they say and I will repeat the prayers to see if something happens. They said a prayer to the holy virgin; "Hail Mary, full of grace." I repeated the words after them again and again, I looked at the statue of the Virgin Mary, but nothing

happened. I was very sad about it.

One day, being a very convinced atheist, I prayed to God. My prayer was something like this: "God, I know surely that You do not exist. But if perchance You exist, which I contest, it is not my duty to believe in You; it is Your duty to reveal Yourself to me." I was an atheist, but atheism did not give peace to my heart.

At this time of inner turmoil – as I discovered afterward – in a village high up in the mountains of Rumania, an old carpenter prayed like this: "My God, I have served you on earth and I wish to have my reward on earth as well as in Heaven. And my reward should be that I should not die before I bring a Jew to Christ, because Jesus was from the Jewish people. But I am poor, old and sick. I cannot go around and seek a Jew. In my village there are none. Bring Thou a Jew into my village and I will do my best to bring him to Christ."

Something irresistible drew me to that village. I had nothing to do there. Rumania has twelve thousand villages. But I went to that village. Seeing I was a Jew, the carpenter courted me as never a beautiful girl had been courted. He saw in me the answer to his prayer and gave me the Bible to read. I had read the Bible

out of cultural interest many times before. But the Bible he gave me was another kind of Bible. As he told me afterward, he prayed for ~hours~ together with his wife for my conversion and that of my wife. The Bible he gave me was written not so much in words, but in flames of love fired by his prayers. I could scarcely read it. I could only weep over it, comparing my bad life with the life of Jesus; my impurity; my hatred with His love; and He accepted me to be one of His own.

Soon after me, my wife was converted. She brought other souls to Christ. Those other souls brought still more souls to Christ and so a new Lutheran congregation arose in Rumania.

Then came the Nazi times. We had much to suffer. In Rumania, Nazism took the form of a dictatorship of extreme orthodox elements which persecuted Protestant groups as well as the Jews.

Even before my formal ordination and before I was prepared for the ministry, I was in reality the leader of this church, being the founder of it. I had the responsibility for it. My wife and I were arrested several

times, beaten, and hauled before Nazi judges. The Nazi terror was great, but only a taste of that to come under the Communists. My son Mihai had to give a non-Jewish name to prevent his death.

But these Nazi times had one great advantage. They taught us that physical beatings could be endured, that the human spirit with God's help can survive horrible tortures. They taught us the technique of secret Christian work which was a preparation for a far worse ordeal to come-an ordeal which was just before us.

My Ministry to the Russians

Out of remorse for having been an atheist, I longed from the first day of my conversion to be able to

witness to the Russians. The Russians are a people raised from childhood in atheism. My desire to reach Russians has been fulfilled. Its fulfillment began in Nazi times, because we had in Rumania many thousands of Russian war prisoners and we could do Christian work among them.

It was a dramatic, moving work. I will never forget my first encounter with a Russian prisoner. He told me he was an engineer. I asked him if he believed in God. If he had said "no," I would not have minded it much. It is the right of every man to believe or disbelieve. But when I asked him if he believed in God, he lifted his eyes toward me without understanding and said: "I have no such military order to believe. If I have an order I will believe."

Tears ran down my cheeks. I felt my heart rent in pieces. Here stood before me a man whose mind was dead, a man who had lost the greatest gift God has given to mankind - to be an individual. He was a brainwashed tool in the hands of the Communists, ready to believe or not on an order. He could not think any more on his own. This was a typical Russian after all these years of Communist domination! After the shock of seeing what communism had done to human beings, I promised God I would dedicate my life to these men, to give them back their personalities and to give them faith in God and Christ.

I did not have to go to Russia to reach the Russians.

Beginning August 23, 1944, one million Russian troops entered Rumania and, very soon after this, the Communists came to power in our country. Then began a nightmare which made suffering under Nazi times seem easy.

At that time in Rumania, which now has a population of nineteen million, the Communist party had only ten thousand members. But Vishinsky, the Foreign Secretary of the Soviet Union, stormed into the

office of our much beloved King Michael I, pounded his fists on the table and said, "you must appoint Communists to the government." Our army and police were disarmed and so, by violence and hated by almost all, the Communists came to power. It was not without the cooperation of the American and British rulers of that time.

Men are responsible before God not only for their personal sins, but also for their national sins. The tragedy of all the captive nations is a responsibility on the hearts of American and British Christians. Americans must know that they have at times unwittingly assisted the Russians in imposing upon us a regime of murder and terror. Americans must atone for this by helping the captive peoples come to the light of Christ.

The Language of Love and the Language of Seduction Are the Same

Once the Communists came to power, they skillfully used the means of seduction toward the Church. The language of love and the language of seduction are the same. The one who wishes a girl for a wife and the one who wishes her for a night in order to throw her away afterward, both say,"I love you."Jesus has told us to distinguish the language of seduction from the language of love, and to know the wolves clad in sheepskin from the real sheep.

When the Communists came to power thousands of priests, pastors, and ministers did not know how to distinguish the two voices.

The Communists convened a congress of all Christian bodies in our parliament building. There were four thousand priests, pastors, and ministers of all denominations. These four thousand priests and pastors

chose Joseph Stalin as honorary president of this congress. At the same time he was president of the World

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Movement of the Godless and a mass murderer of Christians. One after another, bishops and pastors arose in our parliament building and declared that Communism and Christianity are fundamentally the same and could coexist. One minister after another said words of praise toward communism and assured the new government of the loyalty of the Church.

My wife and I were present at this congress. My wife sat near me and told me: "Richard, stand up and wash away this shame from the face of Christ! They are spitting in His face." I said to my wife, "If I do so, you lose your husband." She said, "I don't wish to have a coward as a husband."

Then I arose and spoke to this congress, praising not the murderers of Christians, but Christ and God and said that our loyalty is due first to Him. The speeches at this congress were broadcast and the whole country could hear proclaimed from the rostrum of the Communist Parliament the message of Christ! Afterward I had to pay for this, but it had been worthwhile.

Orthodox and Protestant church leaders competed with each other in yielding to communism. An Orthodox bishop put the hammer and sickle on his robes and asked his priests not to call him any more "Your Grace," but "Comrade Bishop." I attended the Congress of the Baptists in the town of Resita - a congress under the Red flag, where the anthem of the Soviet Union had been sung with everybody standing. The president of the Baptists proclaimed that Stalin did nothing but fulfill the commandments of God. He praised Stalin as a great teacher of the Bible! Priests like Patrascoiu and Rosianu were more direct. They became officers of the secret police. Rapp, deputy bishop of the Lutheran church in Rumania, began to teach in the theological seminary that God had given three revelations: one through Moses, one through

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Jesus and the third through Stalin, the last superseding the one before.

It must be understood that the true Baptists, whom I love very much, did not agree and were very faithful

to Christ, suffering much. However, the Communists "elected" their leaders and the Baptists had no choice but to accept them. The same condition is true today of the very top religious "leadership."

Those who became servants of communism instead of Christ began to denounce the brethren who did not join them.

As the Russian Christians created an Underground Church after the Russian revolution, the coming to power of communism and the betrayal by many official church leaders compelled us to create in Rumania, too, an Underground Church: one faithful to evangelize, preach the Gospel, and reach children for Christ. The Communists forbade all this and the official church agreed.

Together with others, I began an underground work. I had outwardly a very respectable social position which had nothing to do with my real underground work and served as a cover. I was pastor of the Norwegian Lutheran Mission and at the same time I represented the World Council of Churches in Rumania. (In Rumania we had not the slightest idea that this organization would ever cooperate with the Communists. At that time in our country it did nothing but relief work.) These two titles gave me a very good standing before the authorities, who did not know of my underground work.

This had two branches.

The first was our secret ministry among the one million Russian soldiers.

The second branch was our underground ministry to the enslaved peoples of Rumania.

Russians - A People with Such "Thirsty" Souls

For me, to preach the Gospel to the Russians is heaven on earth. I have preached the Gospel to men of many nations, but I have never seen a people drink in the Gospel like the Russians. They have such thirsty souls.

An Orthodox priest, a friend of mine, telephoned me and told me that a Russian officer had come to him to confess. My friend did not know Russian. Knowing however that I speak Russian, he had given him my address. The next day this man came to me. He loved God, he longed after God, but he had never seen a

Bible. He never attended religious services (churches in Russia are very scarce). He had no religious education. He loved God without the slightest knowledge of Him.

I read to him the Sermon on the Mount and the parables of Jesus. After hearing them, he danced around the room in rapturous joy proclaiming, "What a wonderful beauty! How could I live without knowing this Christ!" It was the first time that I saw someone so rapturously joyful in Christ.

Then I made a mistake. I read to him the passion and crucifixion of Christ, without having prepared him for this. He had not expected it and, when he heard how Christ was beaten, how He was crucified and that in the end He died, he fell in an armchair and began to weep bitterly. He had believed in a Savior and now his Savior was dead!

I looked at him and was ashamed that I had called myself a Christian and a pastor, a teacher of others. I had never shared the sufferings of Christ as this Russian officer now shared them. Looking at him, it was for me as seeing again Mary Magdalene weeping at

the foot of the cross; faithfully weeping when Jesus was a corpse in the tomb.

Then I read to him the story of the resurrection. He had not known his Savior arose from the tomb. When he heard this wonderful news, he beat his knees and swore a very dirty, but, I think, a very "holy" swear. This was his crude manner of speech. Again he rejoiced. He shouted for joy: ~"He is alive! He is alive!"~ Again he danced around the room, overwhelmed with happiness!

I said to him, "Let us pray!" He did not know prayers. He did not know our holy phrases. He fell on his knees together with me and his words of prayer were: "O God, what a fine chap you are! If I were You and You were me, I would ~never~ have forgiven You your sins. But You are really a very nice chap! I love You from all my heart."

I think that all the angels in heaven stopped what they were doing to listen to this sublime prayer from a Russian officer. The man had been won for Christ!

In a shop, I met a Russian captain with a lady officer. They were buying all kinds of things and had difficulty speaking to the salesman, who did not

understand Russian. I offered to translate for them and we became acquainted. I invited them to lunch at our house. Before beginning to eat, I told them: "You are in a Christian house and we have the habit of praying." I said the prayer in Russian. They put down forks and knives and were not interested in food any more. They asked question after question about God, Christ, and the Bible. They knew ~nothing~.

It was not easy to talk to them. I told them the parable of the man who had a hundred sheep and lost one. They did not understand. They asked: "How is it that he has a hundred sheep? Has not the Communist collective farm taken them away?" Then I said that Jesus is a king. They answered: "All the kings have been bad

men who tyrannized the people and Jesus must also be a tyrant." When I told them the parables of the workers in the vineyard, they said, "Well, these did very well to rebel against the owner of the vineyard. The vineyard has to belong to the collective." Everything was new for them. When I told them about the birth of Jesus, they asked what in the mouth of a Westerner would seem a blasphemy: "Was Mary the wife of God?" In talking with them and many others I learned that to preach the Gospel to the Russians, after so many years of communism, we must use an entirely new language.

The missionaries who went to Central Africa had difficulty translating the word of Isaiah: "If your sins are red as scarlet they will become white as snow." Nobody in Central Africa has ever seen snow. They have no word for snow. They had to translate: "Your sins will become white as the kernel of the coconut."

So we had to translate the Gospel into the Marxist language and render it understandable to them. It was something we could not do by ourselves - but the Holy Spirit did his work through us.

The captain and the lady officer were converted that same day. Afterward, they helped us very much in our underground ministry to the Russians.

We printed secretly and distributed among Russians many thousands of Gospels and other Christian literature. Through the converted Russian soldiers, we could smuggle many Bibles and Bible portions into Russia.

We used another technique to get copies of God's Word into the hands of the Russians. The Russian

soldiers had been fighting for many years and many of them had children back home whom they had not seen for all this time. (The Russians have a great fondness for children.) My son, Mihai, and other children under ten years of age would go to the Russian soldiers on the streets and in the parks, carrying many Bibles,

Gospels and other literature in their pockets. The Russian soldiers would pat them on the head, talk to them lovingly, thinking of their own children they had not seen for many years. The soldiers would give them chocolate or candy and the children, in turn, would give the soldiers something – Bibles and Gospels which they eagerly accepted. Often what was too dangerous for us to do openly our children did in complete safety. They were "young missionaries" to the Russians. The results were excellent. Many Russian soldiers received the Gospel this way when there was no other way to give it to them.

Preaching in Russian Army Barracks

We worked among the Russians not only by individual witnessing. We were able to work in small group meetings as well.

The Russians were very fond of watches. They stole watches from everybody. They stopped you on the street and everybody had to hand them over. You could see Russians with several watches on every arm. You could see Russian women officers with alarm clocks hanging around their necks. They had never had watches before and could never get enough of them. Rumanians who wished to have a watch had to go to the barracks of the Soviet army to buy a stolen one, often buying back their own watch. So it was common for Rumanians to enter the Russian barracks. We of the Underground Church had a good pretext – that of buying watches – to go into them, too.

I chose for my first attempt to preach in a Russian barrack an Orthodox feast, the day of St. Paul and St. Peter. I went onto the military base pretending to buy a watch. I pretended that one was too expensive; another was too small; and another too big. Several soldiers crowded around me, everyone offering me

something to buy. Jokingly I asked them: "Is any of you named Paul or Peter?" Some were. Then I said, "Do you know that today is the day when your Orthodox church honors St. Paul and St. Peter?" (Some of the older Russians knew it.) So I said, "Do you know who Paul and Peter were?" Nobody knew. I began to tell them about Paul and Peter. One of the older Russian soldiers interrupted me and said, "You have not come to buy watches. You have come to tell us about the faith. Sit down here with us and speak to us! But be very careful! We know about whom to beware. These around me are all good men. When I put my hand on your knee, you must talk only about watches. When I remove my hand, you may begin your message again."

Quite a great crowd of men was around me and I told them about Paul and Peter, about the Christ for whom Paul and Peter died. From time to time, somebody would come near in whom they had no confidence. The soldier would put his hand on my knee and I would talk about watches. When that man went away, I resumed preaching about Christ. This visit was repeated many, many times with the help of Russian Christian soldiers. Many of their comrades found Christ. Thousands of Gospels were given out secretly.

Many of our brothers and sisters of the Underground were caught and heavily beaten for this, but they didn't betray our organization.

During this work we had the joy of meeting brethren from the Underground Church in Russia and hearing about their experiences. First of all, we saw in them the makings of great saints. They had passed through so many years of Communist indoctrination. Some of them had been through Communist universities, but just as a fish lives in the salty waters and keeps its meat sweet, they passed through the Communist schools but had kept their souls clean and pure in Christ.

These Russian Christians had such beautiful souls! They said, "We know that the star with the hammer and sickle which we wear on our caps is the star of the anti-Christ." They said this with great sorrow. They helped us very much to spread the Gospel among other Russian soldiers.

I can say that they had all the Christian virtues, except the virtue of joy. This they had only at conversion. Then it disappeared. I wondered very much about it. Once I asked a Baptist: "How is it that you know no joy?" He answered, "How can I be joyful when I have to hide from the pastor of my church that I am an earnest Christian, that I lead a life of prayer, that I try to win souls? The pastor of the church is an informer of the secret police. We are spied on one after another and the shepherds are those who betray the flock. There exists ~very deep~ in our heart the joy of salvation, but this external gladness which you have - we cannot have it any more.

Christianity has become dramatic with us. When you, free Christians, win a soul for Christ, you win a member of a quietly living Church. But when we win a man, we know that he may well have to go to prison, that his children may become orphans. The joy of having brought somebody to Christ is always mixed with this feeling that there is a price that must be paid."

We had met an entirely new type of Christian - the Christian of the Underground Church.

Here we had many surprises.

As there are many who believe they are Christians and in reality are not, we found that among the Russians there are many who believe they are atheists, but in reality they are not.

I had before me a Russian couple, both sculptors. When I spoke to them about God, they answered, "No, God does not exist. We are 'Bezboshniki'- godless. But

we will tell you something interesting which happened to us.

"Once we worked on a statue of Stalin. During the work my wife asked me, 'Husband, how about the thumb? If we could not oppose the thumb to the other fingers - if the fingers of the hands were like toes - we could not hold a hammer, a mallet, any tool, a book, a piece of bread. Human life would be impossible with out this little thumb. Now, who made the thumb? We both learned Marxism in school and know that heaven and earth exist by themselves. They are not created by God. So I have learned and so I believe. But if God did not create heaven and earth, if He created only the thumb, He would be praiseworthy for this little thing.

"We praise Edison and Bell and Stephenson who

have invented the electric bulb, the telephone and railway and other things. But why should we not praise the one who has invented the thumb? If Edison had not had a thumb he would have invented nothing. It is only right to worship God who made the thumb.'"

The husband became very angry, as husbands very often do when their wives tell them wise things. "Don't speak stupidities! You have learned that there is no God. And you can never know if the house is not bugged and if we will not fall in trouble. Get into your mind ~once and for all~ that there is no God. In heaven there is ~nobody~!"

She replied, "This is an even greater wonder. If in heaven there were the Almighty God in whom in stupidity our forefathers believed, it would be only natural that we should have thumbs. An Almighty God can do everything, so He can make a thumb, too. But if in heaven there is nobody, I, from my side, am decided to worship from all my heart the 'Nobody' who has made the thumb."

So they became worshippers of the "Nobody"! Their faith in this "Nobody" increased with time, believing

Him to be creator not only of the thumb, but also of the stars, flowers, children, of everything beautiful in life.

It was just as in Athens in earlier times, when St. Paul met worshippers of the "unknown God."

This couple was unspeakably happy to hear from me that they had believed rightly, that in heaven there is really a "No - body," God who is Spirit: a spirit of love, wisdom, truth and power, who so loved them that He sent His only begotten Son to sacrifice Himself for them on the cross.

They had been believers in God not knowing that they were so. I had the great privilege of taking them one step further - to the experience of salvation and redemption.

Once I saw a Russian lady officer on the street. I approached her and apologized, "I know that it is impolite to accost an unknown lady on the street, but I am a pastor and my intentions are earnest. I wish to speak to you about Christ."

She asked me, "Do you love Christ?" I said, "Yes! From all my heart." She fell into my arms and kissed me again and again. It was a very embarrassing

situation for a pastor, so I kissed her back, hoping people would think we were relatives. She exclaimed to me, "I love Christ, too!" I took her to our home. I discovered to my amazement that she knew nothing about Christ - absolutely nothing - except the name. And yet she loved Him. She did not know that He is the Saviour, nor what salvation means. She did not know where and how He lived and died. She did not know His teachings, His life or ministry. She was for me a psychological curiosity. How can you love somebody if you know only his name?

When I inquired, she explained, "As a child, I was taught to read by pictures. For an 'a' there was an apple, for a 'b' there was a bell, for a 'c' a cat and so on.

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When I went to high school, I was taught my holy duty to defend the Communist fatherland. I was taught about Communist morals. But I did not know what a 'holy duty' or a 'moral' looked like. I needed a picture for these. Now I knew that our forefathers had a picture for everything beautiful, praiseworthy and truthful in life. My grandmother always bowed before this picture, saying that it was the picture of one called 'Cristos' (Christ). And I loved this name by itself. This name became so real to me! Just to say this name gave one such joy."

Listening to her, I remembered what is written in Philippians that at His name every knee should bow. Perhaps, the anti-Christ will be able for a time to erase from the world the knowledge of God. But there is power in the simple Name of Christ and this will lead to the light.

She joyously found Christ in my home and now the One whose name she loved lived in her heart in person.

Every scene I lived with Russians was full of poetry and deep meaning.

A sister who spread the Gospel in railway stations gave an interested officer my address.

One evening he entered my house - a tall, handsome Russian lieutenant.

I asked him, "How can I serve you?"

He answered, "I have come for light."

I began to read him the most essential parts of Scripture. He put his hand upon mine and said, "I ask you from all my heart, don't lead me astray. I belong to

a people kept in the dark. Tell me, please is this the ~sure~ word of God?" I assured him it was. He listened for hours - and accepted Christ.

Russians are never superficial or shallow in religious matters. If they fought against religion or if they were for it and sought Christ, they put their ~whole soul~ into

it. That is why in Russia every Christian is a soul-winning missionary. That is why no country on earth is so ripe and fruitful for Gospel work. Russians are one of the most naturally religious peoples on the earth. The course of the world can be changed if we will aggressively give them the Gospel.

It is such a tragedy that this land of Russia and its peoples are the most hungry for the Word of God, yet it seems that almost all have written them off.

On a train, a Russian officer sat in front of me. I had spoken to him about Christ for only a few minutes, when he broke out with a wave of atheistic arguments. Marx, Stalin, Voltaire, Darwin, and other quotations against the Bible just flew from his mouth. He gave me no opportunity to contradict him. He spoke for nearly an hour to convince me that there is no God. When he had finished, I asked him: "If there is no God, why do you pray when you are in trouble?" Like a thief surprised while stealing, he replied, "How do you know that I pray?" I did not allow him to escape. "I asked my question first. I asked why you pray. Please answer!" He bowed his head and acknowledged, "On the front, when we were encircled by the Germans, we all prayed! We did not know how to do it. So we said, 'God and spirit of mother'" - which is surely a very good prayer in the sight of the One who looks to the heart.

Our ministry to the Russians has given much fruit.

I remember Piotr (Peter). No one knows in what Russian prison he died. He was so young! Perhaps twenty. He had come to Rumania with the Russian army. He was converted in an underground meeting and asked me to baptize him.

After baptism, I asked him to tell us what verse of the Bible had impressed him most and had influenced to come to Christ.

He said that he had listened attentively when, at one

of our secret meetings, I had read Luke 24, the story of Jesus meeting the two disciples who went toward Emmaus. When they drew nigh unto the village, "He made as though He would have gone further." Piotr said: "I wondered why Jesus said this. He surely wanted to stay with His disciples. Why then did He say that He wished to go further?" My explanation was that Jesus is polite. He wished to be very sure that He was desired. When He saw that He was welcomed, He gladly entered the house with them. The Communists are impolite. They enter by violence into our hearts and minds. They oblige us from morning to late in the night to listen to them. They do it through their schools, radio, newspapers, posters, movie pictures, atheistic meetings and everywhere you turn. You have to listen continuously to their godless propaganda, whether you like it or dislike it. Jesus respects our freedom. He gently knocks at the door. "Jesus has won me by His politeness," said Piotr. This stark contrast between communism and Christ had convinced him.

He was not the only Russian to have been impressed by this feature in Jesus' character. (I, as a pastor, had never thought about it this way.)

After his conversion. Piotr risked his liberty and life again and again to smuggle Christian literature and help for the Underground Church in Rumania to Russia. In the end he was caught. I know that in 1959 he was still in prison. Has he died? Is he already in heaven or is he continuing the good fight on earth? I don't know. Only God knows where he is today.

Like them, many others were not only converted. We should never stop at having won a soul for Christ. By this, you have done only ~half~ the work. Every soul won for Christ must be made to be a soul-winner. The Russians were not only converted, but also became "missionaries" in the Underground Church. They were

reckless and daring for Christ, always saying it was so little they could do for Christ who died for them.

Our Underground Ministry to an Enslaved Nation

The second branch of our work was our underground missionary work among Rumanians

themselves.

Very soon the Communists dropped their masks. In the beginning, they used seduction to win Church leaders to their side, but then the terror began. Thousands were arrested. To win a soul for Christ began to be a dramatic thing for us, too, as it had long been for the Russians.

I myself was later in prison together with souls whom God had helped me to win for Christ. I was in the same cell with one who had left behind six children and who was now in prison for his Christian faith. His wife and children were starving. He might never see them again. I asked him, "Have you any resentment against me that I brought you to Christ and because of this your family is in such misery?" He said, "I have no words to express my thankfulness that you have brought me to the wonderful Savior. I would never have it another way."

The preaching of Christ in the new conditions was not easy. We succeeded in printing several Christian pamphlets, passing them through the severe censorship of the Communists. We presented to the Communist censor a booklet which had on its front page the picture of Karl Marx, the founder of Communism. The books were called ~Religion is the Opium of the People~ or other similar titles. He considered them to be Communist books and put the seal on them. In these books, after a few pages full of quotations from Marx, Lenin,

and Stalin, which pleased the censor, we gave our message about Christ.

The Underground Church is only partially underground. Like an iceberg, a small part of its work is in the open. We went to the Communist demonstrations and distributed these "Communist" booklets. The Communists, seeing the picture of Marx, competed with each other to buy the book. By the time they reached page ten and found that it was all about God and Jesus, we were very far away.

Preaching in these new conditions was not easy. Our people were very oppressed. The Communists took away everything from everybody. From the farmer they took fields and sheep. From a barber or a tailor, they took his little shop. Not only the capitalists were expropriated. Very poor men also suffered much. Nearly every family had somebody in prison and the

poverty was great. Men asked, "How is it that a God of love permits the triumph of evil?"

Neither would it have been very easy for the first apostles to preach Christ on Good Friday, when Jesus died on the cross pronouncing the words: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

But the fact that the work was done proves that it was from God and not from us. The Christian faith has an answer to such questions.

Jesus told us about poor Lazarus, oppressed at that time as we were oppressed - dying, hungry, his wounds being licked by dogs - but in the end, angels took him to Abraham's bosom.

How the Underground Church Worked Partly in the Open

The Underground Church met in private houses, in woods, in basements - wherever it could. There, in secret, it often prepared its "open" work. Under the

Communists, we devised a plan of having street preaching which in time became very risky, but by this means we reached many souls we could not reach otherwise. My wife was very active in this. Some Christians would quietly gather on a street corner and start to sing. People crowded around them to hear the beautiful singing and my wife would' deliver her message. We left the spot before the secret police arrived.

One afternoon, while I was active elsewhere, my wife delivered a message before thousands of workers, at the entrance of the great MALAXA factory, in the city of Bucharest. She spoke to the workers about God and about salvation. The next day, many workers in this factory were shot after rebelling against the injustices of the Communists. They had heard the message just in time!

We were an Underground Church but, like John the Baptist, we spoke openly to men and rulers about Christ.

Once, on the steps of one of our government buildings, two Christian brethren pushed their way to our prime minister Gheorghiu Dej. In the few moments they had, they witnessed to him about Christ, urging him to turn from his sins and persecution. He had them thrown into prison for their daring witness. Years

later, when the same prime minister, Gheorghiu Dej, was very sick, the seed of the Gospel which they had planted years ago and for which they had suffered greatly, bore fruit. In his hour of need, the prime minister remembered the words which had been spoken to him. Those words were as the Bible says, "quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword." They cut through the hardness of his heart and he surrendered his life to Christ. He confessed his sins, accepted the Saviour and began to serve Him in his sickness. Not long afterward he died, but went to his new-found Saviour all because two Christians were

willing to pay the price. And they are typical of the courageous Christians in the Communist lands today.

Thus, the Underground Church worked not only in the secret meetings and clandestine activities, but in bold, open proclaiming of the Gospel on the Communist streets and to Communist leaders. There was a price. We were prepared to pay it. And the Underground Church is still prepared to pay it today.

The secret police persecuted the Underground Church very much, because they recognized in it the only effective resistance left. And just the kind of resistance, the spiritual resistance, which, if left unhindered, would undermine their atheistic power. They recognized, as only the devil can, an immediate threat to them. ~They knew if a man believed in Christ he would never be a mindless, willing subject. They knew they could imprison men, but they couldn't imprison faith in God.~ And so they fought very hard.

But the Underground Church also had also its sympathizers or members even in the Communist governments and in the secret police.

We instructed Christians to join the secret police and put on the most hated and despised uniform in our country, so they could report the activities of the secret police to the Underground Church. Several brethren of the Underground Church did this, keeping their faith hidden. It is not easy to be despised by your own family and friends for wearing the Communist uniform and not to tell them your true mission. Yet they did. So great was their love for Christ.

When I was kidnapped from the street and was kept for years in strictest secrecy, a Christian doctor

actually became a member of the secret police to find out my whereabouts! As a secret police doctor, he had access to the cells of all prisoners and hoped to find me. All his friends shunned him, thinking he had become a

Communist. To go around dressed in the uniform of the torturers is a much greater sacrifice for Christ than to wear the uniform of a prisoner.

The doctor found me in a deep, dark cell and sent out word that I was alive. He was the first friend during my first eight and a half years in prison to discover me! Due to him, word was spread that I was alive and, when prisoners were released during the Eisenhower-Khrushchev "thaw" in 1956, Christians clamored for my release too and I was freed for a short time.

If it had not been for this Christian doctor, who joined the secret police specifically to find me, I would never have been released. I would still be in prison (or in a grave) today.

Using their position in the secret police, these members of the Underground Church warned us many times and were of very great help. The Underground Church has men in the secret police today who protect and warn the Christians of impending danger. Some are high up in Communist circles, keeping their faith in Christ secret and helping us greatly. One day in heaven they can publicly proclaim Christ whom they secretly serve now.

Nevertheless, many members of the Underground Church were discovered and imprisoned. We had our "Judases" too, who told and reported to the secret police. By beating, drugging, threats and blackmail, the Communists tried to find ministers and laymen who would report on their brethren.

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CHAPTER 2 - "GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN..."

I worked in both an official and underground manner until February 29, 1948. It was a Sunday - a beautiful Sunday. On that Sunday, on my way to church, I was kidnapped from the street by the secret police.

Many times I had wondered what "manstealing"

mentioned several times in the Bible, meant. Communism has taught us.

Many at that time were kidnapped like this. A van of the secret police stopped in front of me, four men jumped out and pushed me into the van. I was taken away for many years. For over eight years, no one knew if I was alive or dead. My wife was visited by the secret police who posed as released fellow-prisoners. They told her they had attended my burial. She was heart-broken.

Thousands from churches of all denominations went to prison at that time. Not only were clergymen put in jail, but also simple peasants, young boys and girls who witnessed for their faith. The prisons were full and in Rumania, as in all Communist countries, to be in prison means to be tortured.

Tortures were sometimes horrible. I prefer not to speak too much about those through which I have passed. When I do, I cannot sleep at night. It is too painful.

In another book, "In God's Underground," I recount with many details all our experiences with God in jail.

Unspeakable Tortures

A pastor by the name of Florescu was tortured with red-hot iron pokers and with knives. He was beaten very badly. Then starving rats were driven into his cell through a large pipe. He could not sleep, but had to defend himself all the time. If he rested a moment, the rats would attack him.

He was forced to stand for two weeks, day and night. The Communists wished to compel him to betray his brethren, but he resisted steadfastly. In the end, they brought his fourteen-year-old son and began to whip the boy in front of his father, saying that they would continue to beat him until the pastor said what they wished him to say. The poor man was half mad. He bore it as long as he could. When he could not stand it any more, he cried to his son: "Alexander, I must say what they want! I can't bear your beating any more!" The son answered, "Father, don't do me the injustice to have a traitor as a parent. Withstand! If they kill me, I will die with the words, 'Jesus and my fatherland.'" The Communists, enraged, fell upon the child

and beat him to death, with blood spattered over the walls of the cell. He died praising God. Our dear brother Florescu was never the same after seeing this.

Handcuffs which had sharp nails on the insides were put on our wrists. If we were totally still, they didn't cut us. But in bitterly cold cells, when we shook with cold, our wrists would be torn by the nails.

Christians were hung upside down on ropes and beaten so severely that their bodies swung back and forth under the blows. Christians were put in ice box "refrigerator cells" which were so cold, frost and ice covered the inside. I was thrown into one with very little clothing on. Prison doctors would watch through an opening until they saw symptoms of freezing to death, then they would give a warning and guards

would rush in to take us out and make us warm. When we were finally warmed, we would immediately be put back in the ice-box cells to freeze - over and over again! Thawing out, then freezing to within just one minute or two of death, then being thawed out again. It continued endlessly. Even today sometimes I can't bear to open a refrigerator.

We Christians were put in wooden boxes only slightly larger than we were. This left no room to move. Dozens of sharp nails were driven into every side of the box, with their razor-sharp points sticking into the box. While we stood perfectly still, it was all right. We were forced to stand in these boxes for endless hours. But when we became fatigued and swayed with tiredness, the nails would go into our bodies. If we moved or twitched a muscle - there were the horrible nails.

What the Communists have done to Christians surpasses any possibility of human understanding.

I have seen Communists torturing Christians and the faces of the torturers shone with rapturous joy. They cried out while torturing the Christians, "We are the devil."

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers of evil. We saw that communism is not from men but from the devil. It is a spiritual force - a force of evil - and can only be countered by a greater spiritual force, the Spirit of God.

I often asked the torturers, "Don't you have pity in your hearts?" They usually answered with a quotation

from Lenin that "you cannot make omelets without breaking the shells of eggs" and that "you cannot cut wood without making chips fly." I said again, "I know this quotation from Lenin. But there is a difference. When you cut a piece of wood it feels nothing. But here you are dealing with human beings. Every beating produces pain and there are mothers who weep." It

was in vain. They are materialists. For them nothing besides matter exists and to them a man is like wood, like an egg-shell. With this belief they sink to unbelievable depths of cruelty.

The cruelty of atheism is hard to believe. When a man has no faith in the reward of good or the punishment of evil, there is no reason to be human. There is no restraint from the depths of evil which is in man. The Communist torturers often said, "There is no God, no hereafter, no punishment for evil. We can do what we wish." I heard one torturer say, "I thank God, in whom I don't believe, that I have lived to this hour when I can express all the evil in my heart." He expressed it in unbelievable brutality and torture inflicted on prisoners.

I am very sorry if a crocodile eats a man, but I can't reproach the crocodile. He is not a moral being. So no reproaches can be made to the Communists. Communism has destroyed any moral sense in them. They boasted they had no pity in their hearts.

I learned from them. As they allowed no place for Jesus in their hearts, I decided I would leave not the smallest place for Satan in mine.

I have testified before the Internal Security Subcommittee of the U.S. Senate. There I described awful things, such as Christians tied to crosses for four days and nights. The crosses were put on the door and hundreds of prisoners had to fulfill their bodily necessities over the faces and bodies of the crucified ones. Then the crosses were erected again and the Communists jeered and mocked: "~Look at your Christ! How beautiful he is!~ What fragrance he brings from Heaven!" I described how, after being driven nearly insane with tortures, a priest was forced to consecrate human excrement and urine and give Holy Communion to Christians in this form. This happened in the Rumanian prison of Piteshti. I asked the priest afterwards why he

did not prefer to die rather than participate in this mockery. He answered, "Don't judge me please! I have suffered more than Christ!" All the Biblical descriptions of hell and the pains of Dante's Inferno are nothing in comparison with the tortures in Communist prisons.

This is only a very small part of what happened on one Sunday and on many other Sundays in the prison of Piteshti. Other things simply cannot be told. My heart would fail if I should tell them again and again. They are too terrible and obscene to put in writing. That is what your brothers in Christ went through and go through ~now~!

One of the really great heroes of the faith was pastor Milan Haimovici.

The prisons were overcrowded and the guards did not know us by name. They called out for those who had been sentenced to get twenty-five lashes with a whip for having broken some prison rule. Innumerable times, Pastor Milan Haimovici went to get the beating in the place of somebody else. By this he won the respect of other prisoners not only for himself, but also for Christ whom he represented.

If I were to continue to tell all the horrors of Communists and all the self-sacrifices of Christians, I would never finish. Not only the tortures were known. The heroic deeds were known, too. The heroic examples of those in prison greatly inspired the brethren who were still free.

One of our workers was a young girl of the Underground Church. The Communist police discovered that she secretly spread Gospels and taught children about Christ. They decided to arrest her. But to make the arrest more agonizing and as painful as they could, they decided to delay her arrest a few weeks, until the day she was to be married. On her wedding day the girl was dressed as a bride. The most wonderful, joyous

day in a girl's life! Suddenly, the door was pushed open and the secret police rushed in.

When the bride saw the secret police, she held out her arms toward them to be handcuffed. They roughly put the manacles on her wrists. She looked toward her beloved, then kissed the chains and said, "~I thank my heavenly Bridegroom for the jewel He has presented

to me on my marriage day. I thank Him that I am worthy to suffer for Him." She was dragged off, with weeping Christians and a weeping bridegroom left behind. They knew what happens to young Christian girls in the hands of Communist guards. After five years she was released - a destroyed, broken woman, looking thirty years older. Her bridegroom had waited for her. She said it was the least she could do for her Christ. Such beautiful Christians are in the Underground Church.

What Brainwashing I Like

Westerners have probably heard about the brainwashing in the Korean war and now in Vietnam. I have passed through brainwashing myself. It is the most horrible torture.

For years we had to sit for seventeen hours a day hearing:

~Communism is good!~
~Communism is good!~
~Communism is good!~
~Communism is good!~
~Christianity is stupid!~
~Christianity is stupid!~
~Christianity is stupid!~
~Give up!~
~Give up!~
~Give up!~
~Give up!~

For seventeen hours a day - for days, weeks and months.

Several Christians have asked me how we could resist brainwashing. There is only one method of resistance to brainwashing. This is "heartwashing." If the heart is cleansed by the love of Jesus Christ, and if the heart loves Him, you can resist all tortures. What would a loving bride not do for a loving bridegroom? What would a loving mother not do for her child? If you love Christ as Mary did, who had Christ as a baby in her arms, if you love Jesus as a bride loves her bridegroom, then you can resist such tortures.

God will judge us not according to how much we endured, but how much we could love. I am a witness

for the Christians in Communist prisons that they could love. They could love God and men.

The tortures and brutality continued without interruption. When I lost consciousness or became too dazed to give the torturers any further hopes of confessions, I would be returned to my cell. There I would lie, untended and half dead, to regain a little strength so they could work on me again. Many died at this stage, but somehow my strength always managed to come back. In the ensuing years, in several different prisons, they broke four vertebrae in my back, and many other bones. They carved me in a dozen places. They burned and cut eighteen holes in my body.

Doctors in Oslo, seeing all this and the scars of the lung tuberculosis which I also had, declared that my being alive today is a pure miracle! According to their medical books, I should have been dead for years. I know myself it is a miracle. God is a God of miracles.

I believe God performed this wonder so that you could hear my voice crying out on behalf of the Underground Church behind the Iron Curtain. He allowed one to come out alive and cry aloud the message from your suffering, faithful brethren.

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Brief Freedom - then Re-Arrest

The year 1956 arrived. I had been in prison eight and a half years. I had lost much weight, gained ugly scars, had been brutally beaten and kicked, derided, starved, pressured, questioned ad nauseam, threatened and neglected. None of this had produced the results my captors were after. So, in discouragement, they turned me loose. Besides, they were still getting protests over my imprisonment.

I was allowed to return to my old position for just one week. I preached two sermons. Then they called me in and told me I could not preach any more, nor engage in any further religious activity. What had I said? I had counseled my parishioners to have "patience, patience and more patience." - "This means you are telling them to just be patient and the Americans will come and deliver them," the police shouted at me. I had also said that the wheel turns and times change. "You are telling them the Communists will not continue to rule! These are counter-revolutionary lies!" they screamed. So that was the end of my public

ministry.
  Probably the authorities believed that I would be afraid to defy them and go back into the underground witnessing. That was where they were wrong. Secretly, I returned to the work I had been doing before. My family backed me up.
  Again I witnessed to hidden groups of the faithful, coming and going like a ghost under the aegis of those who could be trusted. This time I had scars to back up my message about the evil of the atheist viewpoint and to encourage faltering souls to trust God and be brave. I directed a secret network of evangelists, who helped each other spread the Gospel under providentially blinded Communist eyes. After all, if a man can be so

blind as not to see the hand of God at work, perhaps he will not see that of an evangelist either.
  Finally, the ceaseless interest of the police in my activities and whereabouts paid off for them. Again I was discovered, again imprisoned. For some reason they did not imprison my family this time, perhaps because of all the publicity I had received. I had had eight and a half years of prison and then three years of relative freedom. Now I was to be imprisoned for five and a half years more.
  My second imprisonment, was in many ways, worse than the first. I knew well what to expect. My physical condition became very bad almost immediately. But we continued the ~underground~ work of the ~Underground~ church in ~underground~ Communist prisons.

We Made a Deal - We Preached and They Beat

  It was strictly forbidden to preach to other prisoners. It was understood that whoever was caught doing this received a severe beating. A number of us decided to pay the price for the privilege of preaching, so we accepted their terms. It was a deal: we preached and they beat us. We were happy preaching. They were happy beating us, so everyone was happy.
  The following scene happened more times than I can remember: A brother was preaching to the other prisoners when the guards suddenly burst in, surprising him half way through a phrase. They hauled him down the corridor to their "beating room." After what

seemed an endless beating, they brought him back and threw him - bloody and bruised - on the prison floor. Slowly, he picked his battered body up, painfully straightened his clothing and said, "Now, brethren, where did I leave off when I was interrupted?" He continued his Gospel message!

I have seen beautiful things!

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Sometimes the preachers were laymen. Simple men inspired by the Holy Spirit often preached beautifully. All their hearts were in their words, for to preach under such punitive circumstances was no trifling matter. Then the guards would come and take the preacher out and beat him half to death.

In the prison of Gherla, a Christian named Grecu was sentenced to be beaten to death. The process lasted a few weeks. He was beaten very slowly. He would be hit once at the bottom of the feet with a rubber club, and then left. After some minutes again a hit, after another few minutes again. He was beaten on the testicles. Then a doctor gave him an injection. He recovered and was given very good food to restore his strength, and then he was beaten again until he died under this slow, repeated beating. One who led this torture was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, whose name was Reck.

Now, at a certain moment, Reck would say something which the Communists often said to Christians, "You know, ~I~ am God. I have power of life and death over you. The one who is in heaven cannot decide to keep you in life. Everything depends upon ~me~. If I wish, you live. If I wish, you are killed. ~I am God!~" So he mocked the Christian.

Brother Grecu, in this horrible situation, gave Reck a very interesting answer which I heard afterward from Reck himself. He said, "You don't know what a deep thing you have said. You are really a god. Every caterpillar is in reality a butterfly, if it develops rightly. You have not been created to be a torturer, a man who kills. You have been created to become a godlike being. Jesus said to the Jews of His time, 'Ye are gods.' The life of Godhead is in your heart. Many who have been like you, many persecutors, as the apostle Paul, have discovered at a certain moment that it is shameful for a man to commit atrocities, that they can do

much better things. So they have become partakers of the divine nature. Believe me, Mr. Reck, your real calling is to be a god, godlike; not a torturer."

At that moment Reck did not pay much attention to the words of his victim, as Saul of Tarsus did not pay attention to the beautiful witness of Stephen being killed in his presence. But those words worked in his heart. And Reck later understood that ~this~ was his real calling.

One great lesson arose from all the beatings, tortures and butchery of the Communists: ~that the spirit is master of the body.~ Often, when tortured, we felt the tortures, but it seemed as something distant and far removed from the spirit which was lost in the glory of Christ and His presence with us.

When we were given one slice of bread a week and dirty soup every day, we decided we would faithfully "tithe" even then. Every tenth week we took the slice of bread and gave it to weaker brethren as our "tithe" to the Master.

A Christian was sentenced to death. Before being executed, he was allowed to see his wife. His last words to his wife were, ~"You must know that I die loving those who kill me. They don t know what they do and my last request of you is to love them, too. Don't have bitterness in your heart because they kill your beloved one. We will meet in heaven."~ These words impressed the officer of the secret police who attended the discussion between the two. Afterward he told me the story in prison, where he had been put for becoming a Christian.

In the prison of Tirgul-Ocna there was a very young prisoner called Matchevici. He had been put in prison at the age of eighteen. Because of the tortures, he was now very sick with tuberculosis. The family found out somehow that he was in this grave state of health and sent him one hundred bottles of streptomycin, which

could make the difference between life and death. The political officer of the prison called him and showed him the parcel and said, "Here is the medicine which can save your life. But you are not allowed to receive parcels from your family. Personally, I would like to help you. You are young. I would not like you to die in

prison. Help me to be able to help you! Give me information against your fellow prisoners and this will enable me to justify before my superiors why I gave you the parcel." Matchevici answered, "I don't wish to remain alive and be ashamed to look in a mirror because I will see the face of a traitor. I cannot accept such a condition. ~I prefer to die.~" The officer of the secret police shook his hand and said, "I congratulate you. I didn't expect any other answer from you. But I would like to make another proposal. Some of the prisoners have become our informers. They claim to be Communists and they are denouncing ~you~. They play a double role. We have no confidence in them. We would like to know in what measure they are sincere. Toward you they are traitors. They are doing you so much harm, informing us about your words and deeds. I understand that you don't want to betray your comrades. But give us information about those who oppose you so you will save your life!" Matchevici answered, as promptly as the first time, "I am a disciple of Christ and He has taught us to love even our enemies. The men who betray us do us very much harm but I cannot reward evil with evil. I cannot give information even against them. I pity them. I pray for them. I don't wish to have any connection with the Communists." Matchevici came back from the discussion with the political officer and died in the same cell I was in. I saw him die - ~he was praising God~. Love conquered even the natural thirst for life.

If a poor man is a great lover of music, he gives his last dollar to listen to a concert. He is then without

money, but he does not feel frustrated. He has heard beautiful things.

I don't feel frustrated to have lost many years in prison. I have seen beautiful things. I myself have been among the weak and insignificant ones in prison, but have had the privilege to be in the same jail with great saints, heroes of faith who equalled the Christians of the first centuries. They went gladly to die for Christ. The spiritual beauty of such saints and heroes of faith can never be described.

The things which I say here are not exceptional. The supernatural things have become natural to Christians in the Underground Church.

The Underground Church is the church which has

come back to the first love.
Before entering prison, I loved Christ very much. Now, after having seen the "Bride of Christ" - His spiritual Body - in prison, I would say that I love the Underground Church as much as I love Christ himself. I have seen her beauty, her spirit of sacrifice.

What Happened to My Wife and Son

I was taken away from my wife. I did not know what had happened to her. Only after many years I heard that she had been put in prison, too. Christian women suffer much more than men in prison. Girls have been raped by brutal guards. The mockery, the obscenity is horrible. The women were compelled to work at hard labor at a canal which had to be built, and they had to fulfill the same work load as men. They shoveled earth in winter. Prostitutes were made overseers and competed in torturing the faithful. My wife has eaten grass like cattle to stay alive. Rats and snakes were eaten at his canal by the hungry prisoners. One of the joys of the guards on Sundays was to throw women into the Danube and then fish them

out, to laugh about them, to mock them when they saw their wet bodies, to throw them back and fish them out again. My wife was thrown in the Danube in this manner.
My son was left to wander on the street when his mother and father were taken away. Mihai had been from childhood very religious and very interested in matters of faith. At the age of nine, when his father and mother were taken away from him, he passed through a crisis in his Christian life. He had become bitter and questioned all his religion. He had problems which children usually don't have at this age. He had to think about earning his living.
It was a crime to help families of Christian martyrs. Two ladies who helped him were arrested and beaten so badly that they are crippled even now - after fifteen years. A lady who risked her life and took Mihai into her house was sentenced to eight years in prison for the crime of having helped families of prisoners. All her teeth were kicked out. Her bones were broken. She will never be able to work again. She, too, will be a

cripple for life.

"Mihai, Believe in Jesus!"

At the age of eleven, Mihai began to earn his living as a regular worker. Suffering had produced a wavering in his faith. But after two years of my wife's imprisonment, he was allowed to see her. He went to the Communist prison and saw his mother behind iron bars. She was dirty, thin, with calloused hands, wearing the shabby uniform of a prisoner. He scarcely recognized her. Her first words were, ~"Mihai, believe in Jesus!"~ The guards, in a savage rage, pulled her away from Mihai and took her out. Mihai wept seeing his mother dragged away. This minute was the minute of his conversion. He knew that if Christ can be loved

under such circumstances, He surely is the true Saviour. He said afterward: "If Christianity had no other arguments in its favor than the fact that my mother believes in it, ~this is enough for me.~ That was the day he fully accepted Christ.

In school, he had a continuous battle for existence. He was a good pupil and as a reward he was given a red necktie - a sign of membership in the Young Communist Pioneers. My son said, "I will never wear the necktie of those who put my father and mother in prison." He was expelled from school for this. After having lost a year, he entered school again, hiding the fact he was the son of a Christian prisoner.

Later, he had to write a thesis against the Bible. In this thesis he wrote: "The arguments against the Bible are weak and the quotations against the Bible are untrue. Surely the professor has not read the Bible. The Bible is in harmony with science." ~Again he was expelled.~ This time he had to lose two school years.

In the end he was allowed to study in the Seminary. Here he was taught "Marxist theology." Everything was explained according to the pattern of Karl Marx. Mihai protested publicly in class. Other students joined him. The result was that he was expelled and could not finish his theological studies.

Once in school when a professor delivered an atheist speech, my son rose and contradicted the professor him what responsibility he took upon himself

by leading so many young men astray. The entire class took his side. It was necessary that one should have the courage to speak out first. Then all the others were on his side. To get an education he constantly tried to hide the fact that he was the son of Wurmbrand, the Christian prisoner. But often it was discovered and again there was the familiar scene of being called to the school director's office and being expelled.

Mihai also suffered much from hunger. The families

of jailed Christians in Communist countries almost always nearly starve to death. It is a great crime to help them.

I will tell you just one case of suffering of a family that I know personally. A brother entered prison on account of his work in the Underground Church. He left behind a wife with six children. His older daughters of seventeen and nineteen could get no job. The only one that gives jobs in a Communist country is the state and it gives no jobs to children of "criminal" Christians. Please, don't judge this story according to moral standards! Just receive the facts! The two daughters of a Christian martyr - Christians themselves - became prostitutes to support their smaller brothers and sick mother. Their younger brother of fourteen became mad when he saw it and had to be put in an asylum. When, after years, the imprisoned father returned, his only prayer was, "God, take me again to prison. I cannot bear to see this." His prayer has been fulfilled and he is now in jail again for the crime of having witnessed for Christ to children. His daughters are no longer prostitutes. They have received jobs by complying with the demands of the secret police. They have become informers. As daughters of a Christian martyr, they are received with honor in every house. They listen and then they report everything they hear to the secret police. Don't just say that it is ugly and immoral - of course it is - ~but ask yourself if it is not also your sin that such tragedies occur~, that such Christian families are left alone, unhelped by you who are free.

CHAPTER 3 - RANSOM AND RELEASE FOR WORK IN THE WEST

A TOTAL of fourteen years in prison passed for me. During all this time I never saw a Bible or any other book. I had forgotten how to write. Because of the great hunger, doping and tortures, I had forgotten the Holy Scriptures. But on the day that I fulfilled fourteen years, out of oblivion came into my mind the verse: "Jacob worked for Rachel fourteen years and it seemed to him a ~little time~ because he loved her."

Very soon after this I was released through a general amnesty given in our country, very much under the influence of American public opinion.

I saw my wife again. She had waited faithfully for me for fourteen years.

We began a new life in extreme poverty, because if somebody is arrested ~everything~ is taken from him.

The priests and pastors who were released could get small churches. A church in the town of Orsova was given to me. The Communist Department of Cults told me it had thirty-five members in it and warned that it must never have thirty-six! I was also told I must be their agent and report to the secret police on every member and keep all youth away. This is how the Communists use churches as their "tool" of control.

I knew, if I preached, many would come to hear. So I never tried even to begin in the official church. I worked again in the Underground Church, sharing all the beauties and the dangers of this work.

During the years I was imprisoned God had moved

wonderfully. The Underground Church was no longer abandoned and forgotten. Americans and other Christians had begun to help us and pray for us.

One afternoon I rested for a little bit in the house of a brother in a provincial town. He awoke me and said "Brethren from abroad have come." In the West there were Christians who had not forgotten or abandoned us.

Rank-and-file Christians had organized a secret work of relief for families of Christian martyrs and smuggling in of Christian literature and help.

In the other room I found six brethren who had come to do this work. They spoke much with me. After a long time they told me that they had heard that at this address there was somebody who had spent fourteen years in prison and they would like to see him. So I told them that I was the man. They said, "We

expected to see somebody melancholic. You cannot be this person because you are full of joy." I assured them I was the imprisoned one and my joy was in knowing they had come and we were no longer forgotten. Steady, regular help began to come to the Underground Church. By secret channels we got many Bibles and other Christian literature and relief for families of Christian martyrs. Now, being helped by them, we of the Underground church could work much better.

It was not only that they gave us the Word of God, but we saw that we were beloved. They brought us a word of comfort.

During the years of brainwashing we had heard, "Nobody loves you any more, nobody loves you any more, nobody loves you any more." Now we saw American and English Christians who risked their lives to show us that they loved us. Taking advice from us, they developed a technique of secret work. They crept into houses surrounded by the secret police. The police did not know that they had entered.

The value of the Bibles smuggled in by these means cannot be understood by an American or an English Christian who "swims" in Bibles.

My family and I would not have survived without the material help I got from praying Christians abroad. The same with many other underground pastors and martyrs in Communist countries. I can testify out of my own experience about the material and even greater moral help which has been given to us by special missions formed for this purpose in the free world. For us, their men were like angels sent by God!

Because of the renewed work of the Underground Church, I was in very great danger of still another arrest. At this time, two Christian organizations - the Norwegian Mission to the Jews and the Hebrew Christian Alliance - paid a ransom of $10,000 for me. I could now leave Rumania.

Why I Left Communist Rumania

I would not have left - in spite of the dangers - if the leaders of the Underground Church had not commanded me to use this opportunity to leave the country, to be the "voice" of the Underground Church to

the Free World. They wished me to speak to you of the Western world in their name, about their sufferings and their needs. I came to the West, but my heart remained with them. If I had not understood the great necessity for you to hear of the sufferings and the courageous work of the Underground Church, I would never have left Rumania. This is my mission.

Before leaving Rumania, I was called twice to the secret police. They told me that the money had been received for me. (Rumania sells its citizens for money, because of the difficult economic crisis to which communism has brought our country.) They told me, "Go to the West and preach Christ as much as you like, but

don't touch us! Don't speak a word against us! We tell you frankly what we plan for you if you do tell what happened. First of all, for $1,000 we can find a gangster to liquidate you, or we can kidnap you. (I have been in the same cell with the Orthodox bishop, Vasile Leul, who had been kidnapped in Austria and brought to Rumania. All his fingernails were torn out. I have been with others from Berlin. Recently Rumanians have been kidnapped from Italy and Paris.) They told me further, "We can also destroy you morally by spreading a story about you with a girl, theft or some sin of your youth. The Westerners - especially Americans - are very easily deceived and duped."

Having threatened me they allowed me to come to the West. They had great confidence in the brainwashing through which I passed. In the West, there are now many who have passed through the same things as I, but who are silent. Some of them even praise communism after having been tortured by the Communists. The Communists were very sure that I, too, would be silent.

So in December 1965 my family and I could leave Rumania.

My last deed before leaving was to go to the grave of the colonel who had given the order for my arrest and who had ordered my years of torture. I put a flower on his grave. By doing this I dedicated myself to bringing the joys of Christ that I have to the Communists who are so empty spiritually.

I hate the Communist system but I love the men. I hate the sin but I love the sinner. I love the Communists with all my heart. Communists can kill

Christians but they cannot kill their love toward even those who killed them. I have not the slightest bitterness or resentment against the Communists or my torturers.

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CHAPTER 4 - DEFEATING COMMUNISM WITH THE LOVE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

THE JEWS have a legend that, when their forefathers were saved from Egypt and the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea, the angels joined the songs of triumph sung by the Israelites. And God said to the angels, "The Jews are men and can rejoice about their escape. But from you I expect more understanding. Are the Egyptians not also my creatures? Do I not love them, too? How do you fail to feel my sorrow about their tragic fate?"

"When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand; and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" (JOS 5:13)

If the one met by Joshua had been only a man, the answer could have been "I am for you," or "I am for your adversaries" or, eventually, "I am neutral." These are the only possible human response to such a question. But the Being Whom Joshua met was from another sphere and, therefore, asked if he was for Israel or against it, gave an answer which is the most unexpected and difficult to understand: "Nay." What does this "Nay" mean?

He came from a sphere where beings are not for or against, but where everybody and everything is understood, looked upon with pity and compassion and loved with fire.

There is a human level. On this level, communism

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must be utterly fought against. On this level we have to fight against Communists, too, they being the supporters of this cruel, savage ideal.

But Christians are more than mere men; they are children of God, partakers of the Divine nature.

Therefore, tortures endured in Communist prisons have not made me hate Communists. They are God's creatures. How can I hate them? Neither can I be their friend. Friendship means one soul in two breasts. I am

not one soul with the Communists. They hate the notion of God. I love God.

If I were asked, "Are you for the Communists or against them?" my answer would be a complex one. Communism is the greatest menace to mankind. I am utterly opposed to it and wish to fight it until it is overthrown. But, in the spirit, I am seated in heavenly places with Jesus. I am seated in the sphere of the "Nay," in which, notwithstanding all their crimes, the Communists are understood and loved, a sphere in which there are angelic beings trying to help everyone attain the goal of human life, which is to become Christlike. Therefore my aim is to spread the Gospel to the Communists, to give them the good news about Christ, who is my Lord, loves the Communists. He has said himself that He loves every man and that He would rather leave ninety-nine righteous sheep than allow the one who went astray to remain lost. His apostles and all the great teachers of Christianity have taught this universal love in His name. St. Macary said, "If a man loves all men passionately, but says only about one man that him he cannot love, the man who says this is no more a Christian, because his love is not all-embracing." St. Augustine teaches, "If all mankind had been righteous and only one man a sinner, Christ would have come to endure the same cross for this one man, he so loves every individual." The Christian

teaching is clear. Communists are men and Christ loves them. So does every man who has the mind of Christ. We love the sinner even though we hate the sin.

We know about the love of Christ toward the Communists by our own love toward them.

I have seen Christians in Communist prisons with 50 pounds of chains on their feet, tortured with red-hot iron pokers, in whose throats spoonfuls of salt had been forced, being kept afterward without water, starving, whipped, suffering from cold, and praying with fervor for the Communists. This is humanly inexplicable! It is the love of Christ, which was shed into our hearts.

Afterward, the Communists who had tortured us came to prison, too. Under communism, Communists, and even Communist rulers, are put in prison almost as often as their adversaries. Now the tortured and the

torturer were in the same cell. And while the non-Christians showed hatred toward their former inquisitors and beat them, Christians took their defense, even at the risk of being beaten themselves and accused of being accomplices with communism. I have seen Christians giving away their last slice of bread (we had at that time one slice a week) and the medicine which could save their lives to a sick Communist torturer, who was now a fellow-prisoner.

The last words of Iuliu Maniu the Christian former prime minister of Rumania who died in prison, were, "If the Communists are overthrown in our country, it will be the most holy duty of every Christian to go into the streets and at the risk of his own life defend the Communists from the righteous fury of the multitudes whom they have tyrannized."

In the first days after my conversion, I felt that I would not be able to live any longer. Walking on the

street, I felt a physical pain for every man and woman who passed by. It was like a knife in the heart, so burning was the question of whether or not he or she were saved. If a member of the congregation sinned, I would weep for hours. The longing for the salvation of all souls has remained in my heart and the Communists are not excluded from it.

In solitary confinement, we could not pray any more as before. We were unimaginably hungry; we had been doped until we became as idiots. We were as weak as skeletons. The Lord's Prayer was much too long for us. We could not concentrate enough to say it. My only prayer repeated again and again, was "Jesus, I love Thee."

And then, one glorious day I got the answer from Jesus: "You love me? Now I will show you how I love you." At once, I felt a flame in my heart which burned like the coronal steamers of the sun. The disciples on the way from Emmaus said that their hearts burned when Jesus spoke with them. So it was with me. I knew the love of the One Who gave His life on the cross for us all. Such love cannot exclude the Communists, however grave their sins.

Communists have committed and still commit horrors but "many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. Love is strong as death. Jealousy is as cruel as the grave." As the grave insists on having

all - rich and poor, young and old, men of all races, nations and political convictions, saints and criminals - so love is all embracing. Christ, the Incarnate Love, will never cease until He wins the Communists too.

A minister was thrown into my cell. He was half dead. Blood streamed from his face and body. He had been horribly beaten. We washed him. Some prisoners cursed the Communists. Groaning, he said, "Please, don't curse them! Keep silent! I wish to pray for them."

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How We Could Be Joyful - Even in Prison

When I look back on the fourteen years of prison, it was sometimes a very happy time. Other prisoners and even the guards very often wondered at how happy Christians could be under most terrible circumstances. We could not be prevented from singing, although we were beaten for this. I imagine that nightingales too would sing, even if they knew that after finishing they would be killed for it. Christians in prison danced for joy. How could they be so happy under such tragic conditions?

I meditated often in prison about Jesus' words to His disciples, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see." The disciples had just come back from a tour through Palestine where they had seen horrors. Palestine was an oppressed country. Everywhere there was the terrible misery of a tyrannized people. The disciples met sickness, plagues, hunger, sorrow. They entered houses from which patriots had been taken to prison, leaving behind weeping parents or wives. It was not a beautiful world to look upon.

Still Jesus said, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see." That was because they had not seen only the suffering. They had also seen the Saviour of all, the Achiever of the last good, the Goal which mankind will attain. For the first time a few ugly worms, caterpillars which creep on leaves, understood that, after this miserable existence, there comes life as a beautiful, multicolored butterfly, able to fly from flower to flower. This happiness was ours, too.

Around me were Jobs, some much more afflicted than Job had been. But I knew the end of Job's story; how he received twice as much as he had had before. I had around me men like poor Lazarus, hungry and full of uncared-for boiLs. But I knew that angels would

take them all to the bosom of Abraham. I saw them as

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they will be in the future. I saw in the shabby and dirty and weak martyr near me the splendidly crowned saint of tomorrow.

But looking at men like this - not as they are, but as they will be - I could discover also in persecutors like Saul of Tarsus future St. Pauls. And some have already become so. Officers of the secret police to whom we witnessed became Christians themselves and were happy to suffer afterward in prison for having found our Christ. In the jailors who whipped us we saw the possibilities of the jailor of Philippi who first whipped St. Paul and then became a convert. We dreamed that soon they would ask, "What shall I do to be saved?" In those who watched mocking when Christians, smeared with excrement, were tied to crosses, we saw the crowd of Golgotha who were soon to beat their breasts in fear of having sinned.

It was in prison that we found hope for the Communists, that they will be saved. It was there that we developed a sense of responsibility toward them. It was in being tortured by them that we learned to love them.

A great part of my family has been murdered. It was in my house that their murderer was converted. It was also the most suitable place. So in Communist prisons the idea of a Christian mission to the Communists was born.

God sees things otherwise than we see them, as we see otherwise than an ant. From the human point of view, to be tied to crosses besmeared with excrements is a horrible thing. Notwithstanding, the Bible calls the sufferings of martyrs "light afflictions." To pass fourteen years in prison was a long period for us. The Bible calls it "but a moment, which works for us a weight of glory." This gives us the right to suppose that the fierce crimes of the Communists, which are inexcusable for us, men, and against which we righteously have

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to fight to the utmost, are lighter in the eyes of God than they are in our eyes. Their tyranny, which has lasted already half a century, may be before God, for whom a thousand years are like one day, only a

moment of erring astray. They still have the possibility of being saved.

Heavenly Jerusalem is a mother and loves like a mother.

The gates of heaven are not closed for the Communists. Neither is the light quenched for them. They can repent like everybody else. And we must call them to repentance.

Only love can change the Communists (a love which must be clearly distinguished from compliance with communism, practised by many church leaders). Hatred blinds. Hitler was an anti-Communist, but one who hated. therefore, instead of conquering them, he helped them win one third of the world.

With love we planned in prison a missionary work among the Communists.

And thereby we thought, first of all about the Communist rulers.

Some mission directors seem to have studied little church history. How was Norway won for Christ? By winning King Olaf. Russia first had the Gospel when its king, Vladimir; was won. Hungary was won by winning St. Stephen, its king. The same with Poland. In Africa, where the chief of the tribe has been won, the tribe follows. We set up missions to rank-and-file men who may become very fine Christians, but who have little influence and cannot change the state of things.

We must win rulers; political, economic, scientific, artistic personalities. They are the engineers of souls. They mold the souls of men. Winning them, you win the people they lead and influence.

From the missionary point of view, communism has

an advantage which other social systems have not. It is more centralized.

If the President of the U.S.A. were converted to Mormonism, America would not become Mormon because of it. But if Mao Tse-tung is converted to Christianity - or Brezhnev or Ceaushescu - their whole country may be reached. So great is the impact of leaders.

But can a Communist leader be converted? Surely, because he is unhappy and insecure just like his victim. Nearly all the Communist rulers of Russia ended in prison or were shot by their own comrades. The same in China. Even the ministers of the interior like Iagoda, Yezhov, Beria, who seemed to have all power

in hand, ended just like the last counter-revolutionary: a bullet in the neck and it was finished with them. Recently Shelepin, the Minister of the Interior of the Soviet Union, and Rankovic, the Minister of the Interior of Yugoslavia, have been thrown out like dirty rags.

How We Can Attack Communism Spiritually

The Communist regime makes nobody happy, not even its profiteers. Even they tremble that any night the van of the secret police may take them away because the party line has changed.

I have known many Communist leaders personally. They are heavily-laden men. Only Jesus can give them rest.

To win the Communist rulers for Christ may mean to save the world from nuclear destruction, to save mankind from hunger due to the fact that now so much of its revenues have to go to costly armaments. To win the Communist rulers may mean the end of international tension. To win the Communist rulers will mean to fill Christ and the angels with joy. It can mean the triumph of the Church. All the areas in which missionaries labor so hard, such as New Guinea or Madagascar, will follow

simply if the Communist rulers are won, because this will give Christianity an entirely new impetus.

I have personally known converted Communists. I myself was a militant atheist in my youth. Converted atheists and Communists love Christ much, because they have sinned very much.

Strategic thought is needed in missionary work. From the point of view of salvation all souls are equal; from the point of view of missionary strategy they are not equal. It is more important to win a man of great influence, who can afterward win thousands, than to speak to a savage in the jungle assuring salvation only for him. Therefore Jesus chose to end His ministry not in some small village, but in Jerusalem, the spiritual headquarters of the world. For this same reason Paul strove so much to arrive in Rome.

The Bible says: "The seed of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent." We tickle the serpent on the belly, making him laugh. The head of the serpent is somewhere between Moscow and Peking, not in Tunis

or Madagascar. The Communist world must be the chief concern of Church leaders and mission directors as well as of every thoughtful Christian.

We must give up routine work. "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully," it is written. A frontal, spiritual attack on communism by the Church is necessary.

Wars are won only by offensive, never by defensive strategy. Toward communism, the Church has been until now always on the defensive, losing one country after another in favor of communism.

This must change immediately in the Church as a whole. A Psalm says that God cuts the bars of iron asunder. The Iron Curtain is a little thing for Him.

The first Church worked secretly and illegally, and it triumphed. We must learn again to work in the same manner.

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Until the Communist time, I never understood why so many persons of the New Testament are called by nicknames: Simeon who was called Niger, John called Mark and so on. We use secret names in our work now in the Communist countries.

I never understood before why Jesus, wishing to have the last supper arranged, did not give an address but said, "Go into the town and look for a man who bears a pitcher." Now I understand. We also give such secret signs of recognition in the work of the Underground Church.

If we agree to work like this - to come back to the methods of early Christianity - we can work effectively for Christ in Communist countries.

But when I met some Church leaders of the West, instead of love toward the Communists, which would have led long since to the organization of a missionary work in the Communist countries, I found their policy on the side of the Communists. I did not find the compassion of the Good Samaritan toward the lost souls of the house of Karl Marx.

A man really believes not what he recites in his creed, but only the things he is ready to die for.

The Christians of the Underground Church have proved that they are ready to die for their faith. I continue now with a work which can mean for me a re-imprisonment in a Communist country, new tortures and death, because I lead a secret mission behind the Iron

Curtain, taking upon myself all the risks. I believe the things I write.

I have the right to ask: Would the Church leaders of America who make friends with communism be ready to die for this their belief? Who prevents them from giving up their high positions in the West to become official pastors in the East, cooperating there - on the spot - with Communists? The proof of such a faith has not been given yet by any Western Church leader.

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Human words grow out of the need of men to understand each other in common hunting, fishing, and afterward in common production of the things necessary to life and to express their feelings toward one another. There are no human words to express in an adequate manner the mysteries of God and of the heights of spiritual life.

Likewise, there are no human words which can describe the depths of devilish cruelty. Can you express in words what a man felt who was about to be thrown into a furnace by the Nazis, or who saw his child thrown into this furnace?

So it is useless to try to describe what Christians have suffered and still suffer under the Communists.

I was in prison with Lucretiu Patrascanu, the man who brought communism to power in Rumania. His comrades rewarded him by putting him in jail. Though he was sane, they put him in a mental hospital with madmen, until he became mad too. They did the same to Ana Pauker, their former Secretary of State. Christians are often given this type of treatment too. They receive electric shocks. They are put in strait-jackets.

The world is horrified about what is happening on the Chinese streets. In view of everybody, the Red Guard exercises its terror. Now try to imagine what happens to some Christians in a Chinese jail, where nobody sees!

The last news was that, when a renowned Chinese Evangelical writer and other Christians refused to deny their faith, their captors cut off their ears, tongues and legs.

But the worst thing Communists do is not that they torture and kill the bodies of men. They hopelessly falsify the thoughts of men and poison the youth and the children. They have put their men into positions of leadership in the churches to lead the Christians and

to destroy the churches. They teach youth not to believe in God and Christ, but to ~hate~ these names.

In what words can we express the tragedy of Christian martyrs, who, coming home after years in prison, are received with scorn by their children, who in the meantime have become militant atheists?

~This book is written not so much with ink, as with the blood of bleeding hearts.~

Except that, as in Daniel's time the three young men who were put in the furnace, after having been delivered from it, did not smell like fire; so the Christians who have been in Communist prisons don't smell like bitterness against the Communists.

A flower, if you bruise it under your feet, rewards you by giving you its perfume. Likewise Christians, tortured by the Communists, rewarded their torturers by love. We brought many of our jailors to Christ. And we are dominated by one desire: to give Communists who have made us suffer the best we have, the salvation which comes from our Lord Jesus Christ.

I had not the privilege, which many of my brethren in the faith had: to die a martyr's death in prison. I was released and could even come out of Rumania to the West.

In the West I found in many Church leaders just the contrary sentiment of that which is predominant in the Underground Church behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains. Many Christians in the West have no love for the Communists. Proof of it is that they do nothing for the salvation of those in the Communist countries. They have missions to the Jews, missions to the Moslems, missions to the Buddhists. They have missions to persuade Christians of one denomination to change to another. But ~they have no mission to the Communists!~ They don't love them. Otherwise they would long since have created such a mission, just as Carey loving

the Indians and Hudson Taylor the Chinese have created their respective missions.

But it is not enough that they do not love the Communists and do nothing to win them for Christ. By their complacency, by their neglect, and sometimes by acting as actual accomplices, some Western Church

leaders strengthen the Communists in their infidelity. They help the Communist to intrude in western churches and to win leadership in the churches of the world. They make Christians unaware of the danger of communism.

Not loving the Communists and doing nothing to win them for Christ (under the pretext that they are not allowed to do so, as if the first Christians asked permission from Nero to spread the Gospel) they do not love their own flocks either. Because if we do not win the Communists for Christ, they will conquer the West and will uproot Christianity here too.

The Lessons of History Are Ignored

In the first centuries, there was a flourishing Christianity in North Africa. From there came St. Augustine and St. Cyprian and St. Athanasius and Tertullian. The Christians of North Africa neglected just one duty: to win the Mohammedans for Christ. The result was that the Mohammedans invaded North Africa and uprooted Christianity for centuries. North Africa belongs to the Moslems even now, and they are called by the Christian mission "the bloc of unconvertibles.

Let us learn something from history!

At the time of the Reformation, the religious interests of Huss, Luther and Calvin coincided with the interests of the European peoples to get rid of the yoke of the Papacy, which was then an oppressive political and economic power. Likewise today, the interests of the Underground Church in spreading the Gospel to

both Communists and their victims coincide with the vital interest of all free peoples in continuing to live in freedom.

There is no political power that can overthrow communism. Communists have nuclear power. To attack them militarily would start a new world war with hundreds of millions of victims. Many western rulers are brainwashed and do not even wish to overthrow the Communist rulers. They have said so frequently. They wish that drug addiction, gangsterism, cancer and tuberculosis would disappear, but not communism, which has claimed far more victims than all these together.

Ilya Ehrenburg, the Soviet writer, says that if Stalin had done nothing else all his life than to write the names of his innocent victims, his life would not have been long enough to finish the job. Khrushchev said at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party, "Stalin liquidated thousands of honest and guiltless Communists ... Of a hundred and thirty-nine members and candidates of the Central Committee who were chosen at the seventeenth Congress, ninety-eight, that is seventy per cent, were later arrested and shot."

Now imagine what he did to the Christians!

Khrushchev disowned Stalin, but continued to do the same thing. Since 1959 half of the churches of Soviet Russia which were still open have been closed.

In China there is a new wave of barbarism worse than that of the Stalinist period. Open church life has ceased completely. In Russia and Rumania there are new arrests. (We have just now received word of mass arrests of Christians in Russia.)

With terror and deceit, in countries with one billion inhabitants, the whole generation of youth is brought up in hatred toward everything Western and especially toward Christianity.

It is not an unusual sight in Russia to see local

officials stand in front of churches watching for children. Those who go to church are slapped and thrown out. The future destroyers of Western Christianity are carefully and systematically brought up!

There is only one force which can overthrow Communism. It is the same force which made Christian states take the place of the heathen Roman Empire, the force which made Christians of savage Teutons and Vikings, the force which overthrew the bloody Inquisition. This force is the power of the Gospel, represented by the Underground Church which works in all Communist countries.

To sustain this Church and to help her is not only a question of unity with suffering brethren. It means life or death for your country and for your churches. To sustain this Church is not only in the interests of free Christians, but should also be the policy of free governments.

The Underground Church has already won Communist rulers to Christ. Gheorghiu Dej, Rumania's prime minister, died a converted man after confessing his sin

and changing his sinful life. In Communist countries there are Communist members of the government who are hidden Christians. This can spread. Then we will be able to expect a real change in the policy of some Communist governments - not changes like those of Tito and Gomulka, after which the same dictatorship of a cruel atheistic party continued - but a turn towards Christianity and freedom.

Exceptional opportunities exist now for this.

The Communists, who very often are as sincere in their beliefs as Christians are in theirs, are passing through a great crisis.

They had really believed that communism would create a brotherhood among nations. Now they see that Communist countries quarrel with each other like dogs.

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They had really believed that communism would create an earthly paradise, opposed to what they call the illusory paradise in heaven. And now their peoples are hungry. Wheat has to be imported from capitalist countries.

The Communists had believed in their leaders. Now they have read in their own newspapers that Stalin was a mass murderer and Khrushchev an idiot. The same with their national heroes like Rakosi, Gero, Ana Pauker, Rankovici and so on. The Communists no longer believe in the infallibility of their leaders. They are like Catholics without a Pope.

There is a void in the hearts of Communists. This void can be filled by Christ alone. The human heart by nature seeks after God. There is a spiritual vacuum in every man until it is filled by Christ. This is true also for the Communists. In the Gospel there is a power of love which can appeal to them, too. I have seen it happen. I know it can be done.

Christians - mocked and tortured by the Communists - have forgotten and forgiven what has been done to them personally and to their families. They do their best to help the Communists pass through the crisis and find the way to Christ. For this work they need our help.

And not only for this. Christian love is always universal. With Christians, there is no partiality.

Jesus said that the sun of God rises over the good and the evil. The same is true about Christian love.

Those Christian leaders in the West who show friendship to the Communists justify it by the teaching of Jesus that we must love even our enemies. But never did Jesus teach that we must love only our enemies, forgetting our brethren.

They show their love by wining and dining those whose hands are full of blood of Christians, not by

giving them the good news of Christ. But those oppressed by the Communists are forgotten. They are not loved.

The Evangelical and Catholic churches of West Germany have in the last seven years given 125 million dollars for the hungry. American Christians give even more.

There are many hungry people, but I cannot imagine anybody hungrier than Christian martyrs or more entitled to help from free Christians. If German churches and the British and American and Scandinavian ones raise so much money for relief, it should go for everybody in need, ~but first for the Christian martyrs and their families.....~

Does it happen so now?

I was ransomed by Christian organizations, which proves that Christians can be ransomed. Notwithstanding, I am the only case of somebody ransomed from our country by Christians. And the fact of my ransom will accuse Christian organizations of the West of neglecting to fulfill their duty in other cases.

The first Christians asked themselves whether the new Church was only for the Jews, or for the Gentiles too. The question received the right answer. In another form, the problem has reappeared in the twentieth century. Christianity is not only for the West. Christ does not belong only to America, England and other democratic countries. When He was crucified, one of His hands was stretched out toward the west, the other toward the east. He wishes to be the King not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles; the King of the Communists too, not only of the Western world. Jesus said: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

He gave His blood for all and all should hear and believe the Gospel.

What encourages us to preach the Gospel in Communist countries is that there those who become

Christians are full of love and zeal. I never met one single luke-warm Russian Christian. Former young Communists can become exceptional disciples of Christ.

Christ loves the Communists and wishes to free them from communism, as He loves all sinners and desires to free them from sin. Some Western church leaders put instead of this only right attitude another one: complacency toward communism. They favor the sinful, they help communism to triumph and hinder the salvation of Communists, as well as of their victims.

What I Found When I Was Released

When, released from prison, I was again with my wife, she asked me what my plans were for the future. I answered, "the ideal which I have before me is the life of a spiritual recluse." My wife answered that she had had the same thought.

I had been a very dynamic type in my youth. But prison, and especially the years of solitary confinement, had transformed me into a meditative, contemplative man. All the storms in the heart had been stilled. I did not mind Communism. I did not even notice it. I was in the embraces of the heavenly Bridegroom. I prayed for those who tormented us and could love them with all my heart.

I had had very little hope of ever being released, but when from time to time it occurred to me to wonder what I would do in case I were released, I always considered that I would retire somewhere and continue the life of sweet union in the desert with the heavenly Bridegroom.

God is "the Truth." The Bible is the "truth about the Truth." Theology is the "truth about the truth about the Truth." Fundamentalism is the "truth about the truth about the truth about the Truth." Christian people live in these many truths about the Truth, and,

because of them, have not "the Truth." Hungry, beaten and doped, we had forgotten theology and the Bible. We had forgotten the "truths about the Truth," therefore we lived in "the Truth." It is written, "The Son of man will come in the hour when you do not

think and on a day you do not know." We could not think any more. In our darkest hours of torture the Son of man came to us, making the prison walls shine like diamonds and filling the cells with light. Somewhere, far away, were the torturers below us in the sphere of the body. But the spirit rejoiced in the Lord. We would not have given up this joy for that of kingly palaces.

To fight against somebody or something? Nothing was further from my mind than this. I did not wish to fight any wars, even just wars. I wished rather to build living temples to Christ. It was with the hope of quiet years of contemplation ahead that I left prison.

But, from the very day after my release, I was faced with aspects of communism more ugly than all the tortures of prison times had been. One after the other I met great preachers and pastors of the different churches, and even bishops, who simply confessed with great sorrow that they were informers for the secret police against their own flocks. I asked them if they were prepared to give up being informers, even at the risk of being imprisoned themselves. All answered "no," and explained that it was not fear for their own persons which restrained them. They told me of new developments in the churches, things which did not exist before my arrest – that to refuse to be an informer could mean the closing of a church.

In every town there is the representative of the government for control of "cults," a man of the secret Communist police. He has the right to call any priest or pastor whenever he likes and to ask him who has been in church, who takes frequent Communion, who is

zealous in religion, who is a soul-winner, what people confess and so on. If you do not answer, you are dismissed and another "minister" is put in your stead who will say more than you do. Where the government representative has no such man (which nearly never happens), he simply closes the church.

Most ministers gave information to the secret police, with the difference that some did it reluctantly, trying to hide certain things, whereas others had got the habit and their consciences were hardened. Still others had acquired a passion for it and said more than was demanded of them.

I heard confessions from children of Christian

martyrs who had been obliged to give information about the families in which they had been received with kindness. Otherwise they were threatened with not being able to continue their studies.

I went to the Baptist Congress, a congress under the token of the Red Flag; here the Communists had decided who should be the "elected leaders."

I knew that at the head of all the official churches were men nominated by the Communist party. Then I realized that I was seeing the abomination of desolation in the most Holy Place, about which Jesus speaks.

Always there have been good and bad pastors and preachers. But now, for the first time in Church history, the Central Committee of an avowed atheistic party, which has as its declared purpose the uprooting of religion, decides who leads the Church. To lead it for what purpose? Surely, to help in the uprooting of religion.

Lenin wrote: "Every religious idea, every idea of God, even flirting with the idea of God, is unutterable vileness of the most dangerous kind, contagion of the most abominable kind. Millions of sins, filthy deeds, acts of violence and physical contagion are far less dangerous than the subtle, spiritual idea of a God."

The Communist parties of all the Soviet area are Leninist. To them religion is worse than cancer, tuberculosis or syphilis. They decide who should be the religious leaders. The leaders of the official church cooperate, compromising more or less with them.

I have seen the poisoning of children and youth with atheism, the official churches having not the slightest possibility of counteracting it. In no church in our capital of Bucharest can you find a youth meeting or a Sunday school for children. The children of Christians are brought up in the school of hatred.

And then - seeing all this - I hated communism as I had not hated it under their tortures.

I hated not because of what it had done to me, but because of the wrong it does to the glory of God, to the name of Christ and to the souls of one billion men under its dominion.

Peasants from all over the country came to see me and told me how the collectivization was being conducted. They were now hungry slaves on their own former fields and vineyards. They had no bread. Their

children had no milk, no fruit - and this in a country with natural riches which equal those of Canaan of old.

Brethren confessed to me that the Communist regime had made thieves and liars of them all. Out of hunger they had to steal from what was originally their own field, but now belonged to the collective. Then they had to lie to cover their theft.

Workers spoke to me about the terror in the factories and about an exploitation of work-power such as the capitalists never dreamed of. The workers had no right to strike.

Intellectuals had to teach that there is no God, against their inner convictions.

The whole life and thought of one-third of the world has been destroyed or falsified.

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Young girls come to complain that they had been called to the Communist Youth Organization and reproved and threatened because they kissed a boy who was a Christian; and the name of another was given to them whom they might kiss!

Everything was desperately false and ugly.

Then I met the fighters of the Underground Church - my comrades of long ago - some of whom have remained uncaught and others who have taken up the fight again after having been released from prison. They called on me to take up the fight with them. I attended their secret meetings at which they sang from hymnbooks written by hand.

I remembered St. Anthony the Great. He had been thirty years in the desert. He had left the world altogether, passing his whole life in fasting and prayer. But when he heard about the fight between St. Athanasius and Arius about the divinity of Christ, he left the contemplative life and came to Alexandria to help the truth to triumph. I remembered St. Bernard de Clairvaux. He was also a monk high up in the mountains. But he heard about the foolishness of the Crusades, about Christians killing Arabs and Jews and their brethren in faith of another confession, to win an empty tomb. He left his monastery and stepped down from his heights to preach against the Crusades.

I decided to do what all Christians have to do: to follow the examples of Christ, the apostle Paul and the great saints, to give up the thought of retiring and to

take up the fight.
  What kind of fight would it be?
  Christians in prison have always prayed for their enemies and have given a beautiful witness to them. The desire of our heart was that they should be saved, and we rejoiced as often as it happened.
  But I hated the evil Communist system and I wished to strengthen the Underground Church, ~the only force

which can overthrow this awful tyranny, by the power of the Gospel.~
  I did not think only about Rumania, but also about the entire Communist world.
  But I have met much unconcern in the West.
  Writers around the world protested when two Communist writers - Siniavski and Daniel - were sentenced by their own comrades to prison terms. But not even churches protest when Christians are put in prison for their faith.
  Who cares about Brother Kuzyck sentenced because he committed the crime of distributing "poisonous" Christian publications such as the devotional booklets of Torrey, and Bible portions? Who knows about Brother Prokofiev, sentenced for having distributed printed sermons? Who knows about the Hebrew Christian, Grunvald, sentenced for similar offenses in Russia and from whom the Communists took his little son for life? I know what I felt when I was taken away from my Mihai. And I suffer with Brother Grunvald, Ivanenko, Granny Shevehuk, Taisya Tkachenko, Ekaterina Vekazina, Georgi Vekazin, the couple Pilat in Latvia, and on and on - names of saints and heros of faith in the twentieth century! I bow to kiss their chains, as the first Christians kissed the chains of their fellow Christians when they were led to be thrown before the wild beasts.
  Some Western Church leaders don't care about them. The names of the martyrs are not on their prayer lists. While they were being tortured and sentenced, the Russian Baptist and Orthodox official leaders who had denounced and betrayed them were received with great honor at New Delhi, at Geneva, at other conferences. There they assured everybody that in Russia there is full religious liberty.
  A leader of the World Council of Churches kissed the bolshevik archbishop Nikodim when he gave this

assurance. Then they banqueted together in the imposing name of the World Council of Churches, while the saints in prison ate cabbage with unwashed intestines, just as I had eaten in the name of Jesus Christ.

Things could not remain like this. The Underground Church decided that I should leave the country if the possibility were given, and inform you Christians about what is happening.

I have decided to denounce "communism," though I love the "Communists." I don't find it to be right to preach the Gospel without denouncing communism.

Some tell me "Preach the pure Gospel!" This reminds me that the Communist secret police also told me to preach Christ, but not to mention communism. Is it really so, that those who are for what is called "a pure Gospel" are inspired by the same spirit as those of the Communist secret police?

I don't know what this so-called pure Gospel is. Was the preaching of St. John the Baptist pure? He did not say only "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near." He said also "You, Herod are bad." He was beheaded because he didn't confine himself to abstract teaching. Jesus did not preach only the "pure" Sermon on the Mount, but also what some actual church leaders would have called a negative sermon: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ... generation of vipers!" It is for such "unpure" preaching that He was crucified. The Pharisees would not have bothered about the Sermon on the Mount.

Sin must be called by its name. Communism is the most dangerous sin in the world today. Every Gospel which does not denounce it is not the pure Gospel. The Underground Church denounces it, risking liberty and life. The less have we to be silent in the West.

I have decided to denounce communism, not in the sense in which those who are usually called "anti-Communists" do it. Hitler was an anti-Communist and

was notwithstanding a tyrant. We hate the sin and love the sinner.

Why I Suffer in the West

I suffer in the West more than I did in Communist lands.

My suffering consists first of all in the longing after the unspeakable beauties of the Underground Church, the church which fulfills the old Latin saying ~ Nudisnudum Christi sequi~ (naked, follow the naked Christ).

In the Communist camp, the Son of Man and those who are His have nowhere to lay their heads. Christians there don't build houses for themselves. To what good? They will be confiscated at their first arrest. Just the fact that you have a new house can be a greater motive for you to be imprisoned, the Communists wishing to have this house. There you don't bury your father, neither do you say farewell to your family before following Christ. Who is your mother, your brother, your sister? You are, in this respect, like Jesus. Mother and brother are for you only those who fulfill the will of God. As for the natural ties, can they count any more when it is a frequent occurrence that the bride denounces the bridegroom, children their parents, wives their husbands? It is more and more only the spiritual connection which remains.

The Underground Church is a poor and suffering church, but it has no lukewarm members.

A religious service in the Underground Church is like one nineteen hundred years ago in the Early Church. The preacher knows no elaborate theology. He knows no homiletic, as Peter did not know it. Every professor of theology would have given Peter a bad mark for his sermon on the day of Pentecost. The Bible verses are not well known in Communist countries, because Bibles are rare. Besides, the preacher has

most likely been in prison for years, without a Bible.

When they express their faith in a Father it means much because there is a drama behind this assertion. In prison they have daily asked this almighty Father for bread and have received instead cabbage with unmentionable filth. Nevertheless they believe God to be the loving Father. They are like Job who said that he would believe in God even if He would slay him. They are like Jesus who called God, "Father," even when He was seemingly forsaken on the cross.

Whoever has known the spiritual beauty of the Underground Church cannot be satisfied any more with

the emptiness of some Western churches.

I suffer in the West more than I suffered in a Communist jail because now I see with my own eyes the western civilization dying.

Oswald Spengler wrote in ~Decline of the West~:

"You are dying. I see in You all the characteristic stigma of decay. I can prove that your great wealth and your great poverty, your capitalism and your socialism, your wars and your revolutions, your atheism and your pessimism and your cynicism, your immorality, your broken-down marriages, your birth-control, that is bleeding you from the bottom and killing you off at the top in your brains - can prove to you that there are characteristic marks of the dying ages of ancient states - Alexandria and Greece and neurotic Rome."

This was written in 1926. Since then, democracy and civilization have died already in half of Europe and even as far as Cuba. The rest of the West sleeps.

But there is one force which does not sleep: that of the Communists. Whereas in the East Communists are disappointed and have lost their illusions, in the West communism has remained virulent. The western Communists simply do not believe all the bad reports about the cruelties and the misery and the persecution in the

Communist countries. They spread their faith with tireless zeal everywhere, in the lounges of the upper classes, in the clubs of intellectuals, in colleges, in the slums and in the churches. We, Christians, are often half-heartedly on the side of the whole truth. They are whole-heartedly on the side of the lie.

Theologians of the West discuss trifles in the meantime.

It reminds me that, while the troops of Mahomet II surrounded Constantinople in 1493 and it had to be decided if the Balkans would be under Christian or Mohammedan dominion for centuries, a local church council in the besieged city discussed the following problems: What color had the eyes of the holy virgin? What sex have the angels? What happens if a fly falls in sanctified water? Is the fly sanctified or the water polluted? It may be only a legend, as concerns those times. But peruse Church periodicals of today and you will find that just questions like this are discussed. The menace of communism and the sufferings of the

Underground Church are scarcely ever mentioned.

There are endless discussions about theological matters, about rituals, about nonessentials.

There was a party in a lounge. One asked: "If you were on a ship which sank and you could escape to an isolated island, having the chance to take with you only one book from the ship's library, which one would you choose?" One answered "the Bible," the other "Shakespeare." But a writer said the right thing: "I would choose a book which could teach me how to make a boat and to arrive on the shore. There I would be free to read whatever I liked."

To keep liberty for all denominations and all theologies and to regain it where it has been lost, because of the Communists persecution, is more important than to insist upon one certain theological opinion.

"The truth sets free," said Jesus. But, the same,

"freedom, only freedom can give the truth." And, instead of quarreling about nonessentials, we should unite in this fight for freedom against the tyranny of communism.

I suffer also, sharing the increasing suffering of the Church behind the Iron Curtain. Having passed through these sufferings I can visualize them.

In June 1966 the Soviet newspaper ~Izvestia~ and ~Dervenskais Jizn~ accused the Russian Baptists of teaching their members to kill children to atone for sins. It is the old accusation of ritual murder such as used to be raised against the Jews.

But I know what this means. I was in the prison of Cluj in Rumania in 1959 with the prisoner Lazarovici, accused of having killed a girl. He was only thirty years old, but his hair had turned white overnight under the tortures. He looked like an old man. He had no fingernails. They had been torn out to make him confess the crime which he had not committed. After a year of torture, his innocence was established and he was released, but freedom meant nothing to him any longer. He was a broken man forever.

Others read a newspaper article and can laugh about the stupid accusations in the Soviet Press against the Baptists. I know what they mean for the accused.

It is horrible to be in the West and to have such images constantly before your eyes.

Where now are the archbishop Yermogen of Kaluga

(USSR) and the other seven bishops who protested against the extremes of cooperation with the Soviet regime as practiced by the patriarch Alexei and the archbishop Nikodim, who are tools in the hands of the Communists? If I had not seen the bishops who protested in Rumania dying near me in prison, I would not be so concerned about these godly bishops.

The ministers Nikolai Eshliman and Gleb Yakunin were disciplined by the patriarch because they

asked religious freedom for the church. The West knows this much. But I was in prison with Father Ioan of Vladimireshti, Rumania, to whom the same thing happened. On the surface there was only an ecclesiastical "disciplining." But our official church leaders, like all official church leaders of the Communist countries, work hand in hand with the secret police. Those put under discipline by them are also put under the more efficient"discipline" - tortures, beatings, drugging - of prison.

I tremble because of the sufferings of those persecuted in the Communist camp. I tremble thinking about the eternal destiny of their torturers. ~I tremble for Western Christians who don't help their persecuted brethren.~

In the depth of my heart, I would like to keep the beauty of my own vineyard and not be involved in such a huge fight. I would like so much to be somewhere in quietness and rest. But it is not possible. Communism is on the threshold. When the Communists invaded Tibet they put an end to those who were interested only in completely spiritual matters. In our country they put an end to all who removed themselves from reality. Churches and monasteries were dissolved, keeping only as much as was necessary to dupe foreigners. This quietness and rest for which I long would be an escape from reality and dangerous for my soul, too.

I must lead this fight although it is very dangerous for me personally. If I disappear you may be sure that it will be the Communists who have kidnapped me. They kidnapped me from the street in 1948 and put me in jail under a false name. Ana Pauker, our Secretary of State at that time, said to the Swedish ambassador, Sir Patrick von Reuterswaerde, "Oh, Wurmbrand is now taking walks on the streets of Copenhagen."

The Swedish minister had in his pocket my letter I had

succeeded in smuggling out of prison, he knew that he had been told a lie. Such a thing can happen again. If I am killed, the killer will have been appointed by the Communists. Nobody else has any motive to kill me. If you hear rumors about my moral depravity, theft, homosexuality, adultery, political unreliableness, lying or anything else, it will be the fulfilling of the threat of the secret police: "We will destroy you morally."

A very well-informed source tells me that the Rumanian Communists have decided to kill me after the testimony I gave to the U.S. Senate. They will try to kill me bodily or to kill my reputation. They will try to blackmail me by terrorizing my friends in Rumania. They have powerful means.

But I cannot remain silent. And your duty is to examine quietly what I say. Even if you think that, after all I have passed through, I suffer from a persecution complex you must ask yourself what this dreadful power of communism is, which makes its citizens suffer from such complexes. What power is it that makes men from East Germany take a child in a bulldozer and pass through barbed wire at the risk of being shot with their whole family?

The West sleeps and has to be awakened!

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Men who suffer seek a scapegoat, somebody on whom to put the guilt. To find such a one eases the burden much. I cannot do it.

I cannot put the guilt on some of the Church leaders of the West who compromise with communism. The evil comes not from them. It is much older. These leaders are themselves the victims of a much older evil. They did not create the mess in the Church. They found it.

Since being in the West, I have visited many

theological seminaries. I heard there lectures about the history of bells and the history of liturgical songs, about canonical laws long since disused or about a church discipline which does not exist any more. I have seen

students of theology learning that in the Bible the story of creation is not true, nor that of Adam, nor the Flood, nor the miracle of Moses; that the prophecies were written after their fulfillment; that the virgin birth is a myth, likewise the resurrection of Jesus; that His bones have remained somewhere in a grave; that the Epistles are not genuine; that Revelation is the book of a madman, but otherwise the Bible is a Holy Book! (This leaves a holy book in which there are allegedly more lies than in a Communist newspaper!)

That is what present Church leaders learned when they were in seminaries. That is the atmosphere in which they live. Why should they be faithful to a Master about Whom such strange things are said? Why should Church leaders be faithful to a Church in which it can be freely taught that God is dead?

They are leaders of the official Church, not of the Bride of Christ. They are leaders in a Church in which many have long since betrayed the Master. When they meet somebody of the underground, martyr, suffering Church, they look at him as at a strange being.

It is not right to judge men only for one part of their attitude. If we did so, we would be like the Pharisees for whom Jesus was bad. because he did not respect their rules about the Sabbath. They closed their eyes entirely to what would have been lovable in Jesus, even in their sight.

The same Church leaders who have a wrong attitude toward Communism may be right in many other things and may be personally sincere.

And even in what they are wrong, they may change.

I was once with an Orthodox metropolitan in Rumania. He was a man of the Communists, denouncing

his own sheep. I took his hand between my hands and told him the parable of the prodigal son. It was on an evening, in his garden. I said, "See with what love God receives a sinner who returns. He receives gladly even a bishop if he repents." I sang him Christian songs. This man was converted.

I was in prison in the same cell with an Orthodox priest who, in the hope of being released, wrote atheistic lectures. I spoke to him and he tore to pieces what he had written, thus risking never to be released.

I can make a scapegoat of nobody and cannot in this manner ease the burden which I have upon my

heart.

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I have another pain. Even very close friends misunderstand me. Some accuse me of bitterness and resentment against the Communists, which I know not to be true.

The Mosaic writer Claude Montefiore said that Jesus' attitude toward Scribes and Pharisees, His public denunciation of them, are contrary to His command to love our enemies and bless those who curse us. And Dr. W. R. Matthews, recently retired Dean of St. Paul's in London, concluded that this is an incoherence and inconsistency in Jesus. He gives the excuse that Jesus was not an intellectual!

Montefiore's impression of Jesus was wrong. Jesus loved the Pharisees, although He denounced them publicly. And I love the Communists, as well as their tools in the Church, although I denounce them.

Constantly I am told: "Forget the Communists! Work only in spiritual things!"

I met with a Christian who had suffered under the Nazis. He told me that he is entirely on my side as long as I witness for Christ, but I should not say one word

against communism. I asked him if Christians who fought against Hitlerism in Germany were wrong and if they should have been confined to speaking only from the Bible, without saying a word against the tyrant. The reply was, "But Hitler killed six million Jews! One had to speak against him." I replied, "Communism has killed thirty million Russians and millions of Chinese and others. And they have killed Jews, too. Must we protest only when Jews are killed, and not when Russians are killed?" The answer was, "This is quite another thing" I received no explanation.

I have been beaten by the police in Hitler's time and in Communist times and I could not see any difference. Both were very painful.

Christianity has to fight against many aspects of sin, not only against communism. We are not obsessed by just this one problem.

But communism is at present the greatest foe of Christianity and the most dangerous. Against it, we have to unite.

May I say it again! The goal of man is to become Christlike. To prevent this is the main aim of Communists. They are primarily anti-religious. They believe that after death man becomes salt and minerals, nothing else. They wish the whole life to be lived on the level of matter.

They know only the masses. Their word is that of the demon in the New Testament when asked what his name was: "We are legion." Personality - the greatest gift of God to mankind - has to be crushed. They have imprisoned a man because they found him with a book by Alfred Adler, ~Individual Psychology~. The officers of the secret police shouted, "Ah, individual - always individual! Why not collective?"

Jesus wishes us to be personalities. Therefore there is no possibility of compromise between us and communism. The Communists know it. ~Nauka i Religia~

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(Science and Religion), their magazine writes, "Religion is incompatible with communism. It is hostile to it ... The content of the programme of the Communist Party is a death blow to religion ... It is a programme for the creation of an atheistic society in which people will be rid forever of the religious bondage."

Can Christianity coexist with Communists? Here the Communists answer this question ... "Communism is a death blow to religion."

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CHAPTER 5 - THE INVINCIBLE, WIDESPREAD, UNDERGROUND CHURCH

I WILL now speak again about the Underground Church.

It works under very difficult conditions. Atheism is the state religion in all the Communist countries. They give more or less liberty to the way old people believe, but children and youth ~must not believe~. Everything in these countries - radio, television, cinema, theatre, press, publishing houses - has the aim of stamping out belief in God.

The Underground Church has very little means of opposing the huge forces of the totalitarian state. The underground ministers in Russia have had no theological training. There are pastors who have never read a whole Bible.

I will tell you how many have been ordained. We met a young Russian who was a secret minister. I asked him who ordained him. He answered, "We had no real bishop to ordain us. The official bishop would ordain nobody who is not approved by the Communist Party. So ten of us young Christians went to the tomb of a bishop who died as a martyr. Two of us put our hands on his gravestone. The others formed a circle around us and we asked the Holy Spirit to ordain us. We are sure that we were ordained by the pierced hands of Jesus."

For me, this young man's ordination is valid before God!

Men with such ordination, and who have never had

any theological training, and who very often know little of the Bible, carry on the work of Christ.

It is like the Church of the first centuries. What seminaries did those who turned the world upside down for Christ have? Did they all know how to read? And from where did they have Bibles? God spoke to them.

We of the Underground Church have no cathedrals. But is any cathedral more beautiful than the sky of heaven to which we looked when we gathered secretly in forests? The chirping of birds took the place of the organ. The fragrance of flowers was our incense. And the shabby suit of a martyr recently freed from prison was much more impressive than priestly robes. We had the moon and stars as candles. The angels were our acolytes who lit them.

~I can neither describe the beauty of this Church!~

Often, after a secret service, Christians are caught and sent to prison. There Christians wear chains with the gladness with which a bride wears a precious jewel received from her beloved. The waters in prison are still. You receive His kiss and His embraces and you would not change places with kings. I have found truly jubilant Christians only in the Bible, in the Underground Church and in prison.

The Underground Church is oppressed, but it also has many friends - even among the secret police; even among members of the government. Sometimes these secret believers protect the Underground Church.

Recently, Russian newspapers complained of the growing numbers of "outward nonbelievers." These, the Russian press explained, are countless men and women who work in the very echelons of Communist

power - in government offices, in propaganda departments and everywhere - who outwardly are Communists, but inwardly are secret believers and members of the Underground Church.

The Communist press told the story of a young

woman who worked in the Communist propaganda department. After work, they said, she would go to her apartment and meet her husband coming from his job. After dinner, she and her husband would gather a group of young people from other apartments in their building and have secret Bible studies and prayer meetings. ~This is happening throughout the Communist world.~ Tens of thousands of such "outward non-believers" exist in every Communist land. They feel it wiser not to attend the show-churches where they will be watched and hear only a watered-down Gospel. Instead, they stay in the positions of authority and responsibility they occupy and from there quietly and effectively witness for Christ.

The faithful Underground Church has thousands of members in such places. They have secret meetings in basements, attics, apartments and homes.

In Russia no one remembers any more the arguments for or against child or adult baptism, for or against papal infallibility. They are not pre- or post-millennialists. They cannot interpret prophecies and don't quarrel about them, but I wonder very often how well they could prove to atheists the existence of God.

Their answers to atheists are simple "If you were invited to a feast with all kinds of good meats, would you believe that there has been nobody to cook them? But nature is a banquet prepared for us! You have tomatoes and peaches and apples and milk and honey. Who has prepared all these things for mankind? Nature is blind. If you believe in no God, how can you explain that blind nature succeeded in preparing just the things which we need in such plenitude and variety?"

They can prove that eternal life exists. I heard one pleading with an atheist: "Suppose that we could speak with an embryo in his mother's womb and that you would tell him that the embryonic life is only a short one after which follows a real long life. What would

the embryo answer? He would say just what you atheists answer to us, when we speak to you about paradise and hell. He would say that the life in the mother's womb is the only one and that everything else is religious foolishness. But if the embryo could think, he would say to himself, 'Here arms grow on me. I do not need them. I cannot even stretch them. Why do they grow? Probably for a future stage of my existence, in which I will have to work with them. Legs grow, but I have to keep them bent toward my breast. Why do they grow? Probably life in a large world follows, where I will have to walk. Eyes grow, although I am surrounded by perfect darkness and don't need them. Why do I get eyes? Probably a world with light and colors will follow.' So, if the embryo would reflect about his own development, he would know about a life outside his mother's womb, without having seen it. It is the same with us. As long as we are young, we have vigor, but no mind to use it aright. When, with the years, we have grown in knowledge and wisdom, the hearse waits to take us to the grave. Why was it necessary to grow in a knowledge and wisdom which we can use no more? Why do arms, legs and eyes grow to an embryo? ~It is for what follows.~ So it is with us here. We grow here in experience, knowledge, wisdom for what follows. We are prepared to serve on a higher level which follows death."

About Jesus, the official Communist doctrine is that He never existed. The workers of the Underground Church answer this easily: "What newspaper have you in your pocket? Is it the ~Pravda~ of today or yesterday? Let me have a look. Aha! January 4, 1964. 1964 counted from when? From the One who did not exist or played no role? You say He never existed, but you count the years from His birth. Time existed before Him. But when He came, it seemed to mankind that everything which had been before had been vain and that the

real time began only now. Your Communist newspaper itself is a proof that Jesus is not a fiction."

Pastors in the West usually assume that those whom they have in church are really convinced about the main truths of Christianity, which they are not. You rarely hear a sermon proving the truth of our faith. But behind the Iron Curtain, men who have never learned to do it give their converts a very serious foundation.

There is no clear partition-wall by which you could say where the Underground Church, which is the main stronghold of Christianity, ends and the official Church begins. They are ~interwoven. Many pastors of the show-churches carry on a secret parallel ministry going far beyond the limitations put on them by the Communists.~

The official Church, the church of collaborators with the Communists, has a long history.

It began immediately after the Russian Socialist Revolution with the "Living Church," headed by a bishop called Sergius.

One of his collaborators declared that "Marxism is the gospel written with atheist letters." What nice theology.

We have had some such Sergius in every country.

In Hungary, among the Catholics, it was Father Balogh. He and some Protestant ministers helped the Communists take complete control of the state.

In Rumania, the Communists came to power with the help of an Orthodox priest called Burducea, a former Fascist, who had to make up to the Reds for his past sins by becoming even more "Red" than his bosses. This priest stood near Vishinski, the Soviet Secretary of State, and smiled in an approving manner when the latter declared at the installation of the new Communist government: "This government will build an earthly paradise and you will no longer need a heavenly one.

As to those like Nikodeme of Russia, it is on record

that they are informers for the government. Major Deriabin, a defector from the Russian Secret Police, testified that Nikolai was their agent.

This is the situation in nearly all denominations. The present leadership of the Rumanian Baptists was imposed by force. It denounces the real Christians. In Russia the leadership of the Baptists does the same. The president of the Rumanian Adventists, Tachici, told me that he had been an informer of the Communist secret police from the very first day of their coming to power.

Rather than close every church - though they have closed many thousands - the Communists shrewdly decided to permit a few "token" official churches to remain open and use them as windows through which to observe, control and eventually destroy Christians and Christianity. They decided it would be better to let the

structure of the Church remain and turn it into a Communist tool for the control of Christians and as a means to deceive visitors coming to their lands. I was offered such a church on the condition that I, as pastor, would report on my members to the secret police. It seems that Westerners, accustomed to all "blacks and whites" - all one way or all another - cannot understand this. But the Underground Church will never accept token, controlled churches as a substitute for meaningful, effective evangelism "to every creature" - including youth.

But in the official churches there is a real spiritual life in spite of many treacherous leaders. (I have the impression that in many churches of the West the situation is similar. The congregations are faithful sometimes not because of, but in spite of their top leaders.)

The Orthodox liturgy has remained unchanged, and it feeds the hearts of the members of this church, even if the sermons flatter the Communists. The Lutherans, Presbyterians and other Protestants sing the same old

hymns. And then, even the sermons of the informers have to contain something of Scripture. People are converted under the influence of men whom they know to be traitors, about whom they know that they will tell the secret police their conversions, who have to hide their faith from the very one who gave them this faith by his corrupted sermon. This is the great miracle of God cited in LEV 11:37 in symbolic language: "If any part of a carcase (which is, according to the Mosaic law, defiled) fall upon any sowing seed which is to be sown, it shall be clean."

Faimess obliges us to say that not all the official Church leaders, not even all the official top leaders are men of the Communists.

Members of the Underground Church are also very prominent in the official churches, except for some who have to keep themselves hidden. And they see to it that Christianity is not wishy-washy, but a fighting faith. When the secret police came to close down the monastery of Vladimireshti in Rumania and others in many places in Russia, they had a hard time. Some Communists have paid with their lives for the crime of trying to forbid religion.

But the official churches are becoming fewer and fewer. I wonder if in the whole of the Soviet Union

there are still five or six thousand churches. (The United States, with the same population, has some three hundred thousand.) And these "churches" are most often only tiny rooms - not a "church" as we picture it. Foreign visitors see a crowded church in Moscow - which is the only Protestant church in the city - and remark what freedom there is. "Even the churches are overflowing!" they joyously report. They do not see the tragedy of one Protestant church for seven million souls! And not even the one-room churches are within traveling distance of eighty per cent of the people of the Soviet Union. These multitudes must either be

forgotten - or reached with underground methods of evangelism. There is no other choice.

The more communism dominates in a country, the more the Church will have to be underground.

In place of closed official churches come the meetings of the anti-religious organizations.

How the Underground Church "Feeds" on Atheist Literature

But the underground Church knows how to use these, too. First of all, it feeds upon the atheist literature, just as Elijah was fed by ravens. The atheists put much skill and zeal into ridiculing and criticizing Bible verses.

They published books called ~The Comical Bible~ and ~The Bible for Believers and Unbelievers~. They tried to show how stupid Bible verses are and, to do so, quoted many Bible verses. How we rejoiced over it! The criticism was so stupid that nobody took it seriously. But the book was printed in millions of copies and it was full of Bible verses which were unspeakably beautiful, even when the Communists ridiculed them. In the past, "heretics" burned by the Inquisition were taken to the stake in a procession, dressed in all kinds of ridiculous clothes with hell-flames and devils painted on them. And what saints were these heretics! So Bible verses remain true, even if the Devil quotes them.

The Communist publishing house was very glad to receive thousands of letters asking for reprints of atheist books, which quoted Bible verses to mock them. They did not know that these letters came from the Underground Church, which had no other opportunity

of getting the Scriptures.

We also knew well how to use the atheistic meetings.

A professor of communism demonstrated at a meeting that Jesus was nothing but a magician. The

professor had before him a pitcher of water. He put a powder in it and it became red. "This is the whole miracle," he explained. "Jesus had hidden in his sleeves a powder like this, and then pretended to have changed water into wine in a wonderful manner. But I can do even better than Jesus: I can change the wine into water again." And he put another powder in the liquid. It became white. Then another powder and it was red again.

A Christian stood up and said, "You have amazed us, comrade professor, by what you are able to do. We would ask only one thing more of you - drink a bottle of your wine!" The professor said, "This I cannot do. The powder was a poison." The Christian replied, "This is the whole difference between you and Jesus. He, with His wine, has given us joy for two thousand years, whereas you poison us with your wine." The Christian went to prison. But news of the incident spread very far and strengthened faith.

We are weak little Davids. But we are stronger than the Goliath of atheism, because God is on our side. The truth belongs to us.

On one occasion a Communist lecturer was giving a lecture in atheism. All workers in the factory were required to attend; among these workers were many Christians. They sat quietly hearing all the arguments against God and about the stupidity of believing in Christ. The lecturer proceeded to prove there is no spiritual world, no God, no Christ, no hereafter, man is only matter with no soul. He said over and over that only matter exists.

A Christian stood up and asked if he could say something. Permission was given. The Christian picked up his folding chair and threw it down. He paused, looking at it. He then walked up and slapped the Communist lecturer in the face. The lecturer was very angry. His face flushed red with indignation. He

shouted obscenities and called for fellow-Communists

to arrest the Christian. He demanded, "How did you dare to slap me? What is the reason?"

The Christian replied, "You have just proved yourself a liar. You said everything is matter ... nothing else. I picked up a chair and threw it down. It is truly matter. The chair did not become angry. It is only matter. When I slapped you, you did not react like the chair. You reacted differently. Matter does not get mad or angry, but you did. Therefore, comrade professor, you are wrong. Man is more than matter. We are spiritual beings!"

In countless such ways ordinary Christians of the Underground Church disproved elaborate atheistic arguments.

In prison, the political officer asked me harshly, "How long will you continue to keep your stupid religion?" I said to him, "I have seen innumerable atheists regretting on their deathbeds that they have been godless; they called on Christ. Can you imagine that a Christian could regret, when death is near, that he has been a Christian and call on Marx or Lenin to rescue him from his faith?" He began to laugh - "A clever answer." I continued, "When an engineer has built a bridge the fact that a cat can pass over the bridge is no proof that the bridge is good. A train must pass over it to prove its strength. The fact that you can be an atheist when everything goes well does not prove the truth of atheism. It does not hold up in moments of great crisis." I used Lenin's books to prove to him that, even after becoming prime minister of the Soviet Union, Lenin himself prayed when things went wrong.

We are quiet and can quietly await the development of events. It is the Communists who are unquiet and launch new anti-religious campaigns. By this they prove what St. Augustine said, "Uneasy is the heart until it rests in Thee."

Why Even Communists Can Be Won

The Underground Church, if helped by you, free Christians, will win the hearts of the Communists and will change the face of the world. It will win them, because it is unnatural to be a Communist. Even a dog wishes to have his own bone. The hearts of Communists rebel against the role they have to play and the absurdities they have to believe.

When individual Communists asserted that matter is everything, that we are a handful of chemicals organized in a certain fashion and that after death we will again be salt and minerals, it was enough to ask them, "How is it that Communists in so many countries have given their lives for their ideal? Does a 'handful of chemicals' have ideals? Can 'minerals' sacrifice themselves for the good of others?" To this they have no answer.

And then the brutality! Men were not created as brutes and cannot bear to be brutes for long. We have seen it in the collapse of Nazi rulers, some of whom committed suicide, while some repented and confessed their crimes.

There is something positive in the enormous amount of drunkenness in Communist countries. There is the longing for a wider life, which communism cannot give. The average Russian is a deep, great-hearted, generous person. Communism is shallow and superficial. He seeks the deep life and, finding it nowhere else, he seeks it in alcohol. He expresses in alcoholism his horror about the brutal and deceiving life he has to live. For a few moments alcohol sets him free, as truth would set him free forever if he could know it.

In Bucharest, during the Russian occupation, I once felt an irresistible impulse to enter a tavern. I called my wife to go with me. When I went inside I saw a Russian captain with a gun in his hand threatening

everybody and asking for more to drink. This had been refused him, because he was already very drunk. People were in panic. I went to the owner - who knew me - and asked him to give liquor to the captain, promising that I would sit with him and see that he kept quiet. One bottle of wine after another was given to us. On the table were three glasses. The captain always politely filled all three ... and drank all three. My wife and I did not drink. Although he was very drunk, his mind worked. He was used to alcohol. I spoke to him about Christ and he listened with unexpected attention.

In the end, he said, "Now you have told me who you are, I will tell you who I am. I am an Orthodox priest who was among the first to deny my faith when the great persecution under Stalin began. I went from village to village to give lectures saying that there is no

God and that as a priest I had been a deceiver. 'I am a deceiver and so are all the other ministers,' I told them. I was very much appreciated for my zeal, so I became an officer of the secret police. My punishment from God was that with this hand I had to kill Christians, after having tortured them. And now I drink and drink to forget what I have done. But it does not work."

Many Communists commit suicide. So did their greatest poets Essenin and Maiakovski. So did their great writer Fadeev. He had just finished his novel called ~Happiness~ in which he had explained that happiness consists in working restlessly for communism. He was so happy about it that he shot himself after having finished the novel. It was too difficult for his soul to bear such a big lie. Joffe, Tomkin - great Communist leaders and fighters for communism in Czarist times - could not bear to see how communism looks in reality. They also ended in suicide.

Communists are unhappy. So are even their great dictators. How unhappy Stalin was! After having

killed nearly all his old comrades, he was constantly in fear of being poisoned or killed himself. He had eight bedrooms which could be locked up like safes in a bank. Nobody ever knew in which of these bedrooms he slept on any given night. He never ate unless the cook tasted the food in his presence. Communism makes nobody happy, not even its dictators. They need Christ.

By overthrowing communism we would free not only the victims of communism, but the Communists themselves.

The Underground Church represents the deepest need of our enslaved peoples. Help her!

***

The distinctive feature of the Underground Church is its earnestness in faith.

A minister who disguises himself under the name of "George" tells in his book about God's Underground the following incident:

A Russian Army captain came to a minister in Hungary and asked to see him alone. The boy was very young and brash, and very conscious of his role as a conqueror. When he had been led to a small

conference room and the door was closed, he nodded toward the cross that hung on the wall.

"You know that thing is a lie," he said to the minister. "It's just a piece of trickery you ministers use to delude the poor people to make it easier for the rich to keep them ignorant. Come now, we are alone! Admit to me that you never really believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God!"

The minister smiled. "But, my poor young man, of course I believe it. It is true."

"I won't have you play these tricks on me!" cried the captain. "This is serious. Don't laugh at me!"

He drew out his revolver and held it close to the body of the minister.

"Unless you admit to me that it is a lie, I'll fire!"

"I cannot admit that, for it is not true. Our Lord is really and truly the Son of God," said the minister.

The captain flung his revolver on the floor and embraced the man of God. Tears sprang to his eyes.

"It is ~true~!" he cried. ~"It is true.~ I believe so too, but I could not be sure men would die for this belief until I found it out for myself. Oh, thank you! You have strengthened my faith. Now I too can die for Christ. You have shown me how."

I have known other such cases. When the Russians occupied Rumania, two armed Russian soldiers entered a church with their guns in their hands. They said, "We don't believe in your faith. Those who do not abandon it immediately will be shot at once! Those who abandon your faith move to the right!" Some moved to the right. These were ordered to leave the church and go home. They fled for their lives. When the Russians were alone with the remaining Christians, they embraced them and told them, "We too are Christians, but we wished to have fellowship only with those who consider the truth worth dying for."

Such men fight for the Gospel in our countries. And they fight not only for the Gospel. They are also the fighters for liberty.

In the homes of many western Christians hours are sometimes spent listening to worldly music. In our houses loud music can also be heard, but it is only to cover the talk about the Gospel and the underground work so that neighbors may not overhear it and inform the secret police.

How they rejoice when rarely they meet a serious Christian from the West!

The one who writes these lines is only an insignificant man. But I am the voice of those who are

voiceless; of those who are muzzled and never represented in the West. In their name I ask great seriousness in faith and in handling the problems of Christianity. In their name I ask your prayers and practical help for the faithful, suffering Underground Church in Communist lands.

***

We ~shall~ win the Communists. First, because God is on our side.

Secondly, because our message corresponds to the deepest needs of the heart.

Communists who had been in prison under the Nazis confessed to me that they prayed in difficult hours. I have even seen Communist officers die with the words "Jesus, Jesus," on their lips.

We shall win because all the cultural inheritance of our people is on our side. The Russians can forbid all the writings of modern Christians. But there are the books of Tolstoy and Dostoievsky, and people find the light of Christ there. So it is with Goethe in Eastern Germany, Sienkiewicz in Poland, and others. The greatest Rumanian writer was Sadoveanu. The Communists have published his book ~The Lives of Saints~, under the title ~The Legend of Saints~. But even under this title the example of the lives of saints inspires.

They cannot exclude reproductions of Raphael, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci from the history of the arts. These pictures speak of Christ.

When I speak with a Communist about Christ the deepest spiritual need in his heart is my ally - my helper. The greatest difficulty for him is not to answer my arguments. His great difficulty is to quiet down the voice of his own conscience, which is on my side.

I have personally known professors of Marxism who, before delivering an atheistic lecture, prayed to God

that He might help them in this! I have known of Communists going to a secret meeting far away. When they were found out, they denied that they had been in an underground meeting. Then they wept, regretting that they had not had the courage to stand for the faith which compelled them to attend. They are men, too.

Once the individual has arrived at faith - even a very primitive faith - this faith develops and grows. We are sure that it will conquer because we of the Underground Church have seen it conquer again and again.

The Communists are loved by Christ. They can and must be won for Christ. They can be won only by the Underground Church behind the Iron Curtain. Whoever wishes to satisfy the longing of the heart of Jesus for the salvation of the souls of all mankind should sustain the Underground Church in her work. Jesus said, "teach all nations." He never said stop at the Iron Curtain. Faithfulness to God and the Great Commission compels us to reach beyond the Iron Curtain - to the one out of every three men enslaved under communism.

We can reach them by working with the Underground Church already there!

Three Groups Make Up the Underground Church:

First - Pastors and Ministers Removed by Communists

Three groups make up the Underground Church in Communist lands. The first group is the thousands upon thousands of former pastors and ministers who have been turned out of their churches and removed from their flocks because they would not compromise the Gospel. Many such former pastors and ministers have been imprisoned for years and tortured for their faith. They have been released ... and have promptly resumed their ministry - secretly and effectively

ministering in the Underground Church. Though the Communists closed their churches or replaced them with more "reliable" ministers, they continue their ministry more effectively than ever by ministering secretly in underground meetings in barns, attics, basements, hay fields at night - or anywhere believers gather secretly. These men are "living martyrs" who will not cease

their ministry and who risk more torture and re-arrest.

Second - the Lay Church

The second part of the Underground Church is the vast army of dedicated laymen and laywomen. It must be understood that there are no nominal, halfhearted, lukewarm Christians in Russia or China. The price Christians pay is far too great. The next point to remember is that persecution has always produced a better Christian - a witnessing Christian, a soul-winning Christian. Communist persecution has backfired and produced serious, dedicated Christians such as are rarely seen in free lands. These people cannot understand how anyone can be a Christian and not want to win every soul they meet.

The Red Star (the Russian Army newspaper) attacked the Russian Christians, saying, "the worshippers of Christ like to get their greedy claws on everyone." But their shining Christian lives win them the love and respect of their fellow villagers and neighbors. In any village or town, the Christians are the most liked, beloved residents. When a mother is too ill to care for her children, it is the Christian mother who comes over and looks after them. When a man is too ill to cut his firewood, it is the Christian man who does it for him. They "live" their Christianity - and when they begin to witness for Christ the people listen and believe - because they have seen Christ in their lives. Since no one but a licensed minister can speak up in

a church, the millions of fervent, dedicated Christians in every corner of the Communist world win souls, witness and minister in market places, at the village water pumps - anywhere they go. Communist newspapers admit that Christian butchers slip Gospel tracts in the wrapping paper of the meat they sell. The Communist press admits that Christians working in places of authority in Communist printing houses slip back in late at night, start their presses up and run off a few thousand pieces of Christian literature - and lock up again before the sun rises. The Communist press also admits that Christian children in Moscow have received Gospels from "some source" and then copy portions

by hand. The children then place the portions in the pockets of their teachers' overcoats which hang in school closets. The vast body of laymen and laywomen are a very powerful, effective, soul-winning missionary force already in every Communist land.

In Communist Cuba, former missionaries have stated that a secret "lay church" is emerging since all true ministers have been arrested or persecuted and replaced with Communist "ministers."

These millions of dedicated, true and fervent Believers in the lay church have been purified by the very fires of persecution which the Communists hoped would destroy them.

Third - Official Pastors and Ministers Who Will Not be Bridled or Silenced

The third vital part of the Underground Church is the large body of faithful pastors in the official, but bridled and silenced "churches." The Underground Church is not something completely separate from the official church. In many Communist lands, such as Yugoslavia, Poland and Hungary, many of the pastors of the official churches secretly work in the Underground

Church. In some countries there is an interweaving between the two. These pastors are not allowed to speak about Christ outside their tiny, one-room churches. They are not allowed to have children's meetings or youth meetings. Non-Christians are afraid to come. The pastors are not allowed to pray for ill church members in their homes. They are fenced in on every side by Communist regulations which make their "churches" all but meaningless. Very often these pastors, faced with controls which make mockery of "freedom of religion," courageously risk their liberty by carrying on a parallel secret ministry which goes far beyond the Communist limitations. These pastors carry on secret ministry to children and youth. They evangelize secretly in Christian homes and basements. They secretly receive and distribute Christian literature to hungry souls. They risk their freedom by secretly ignoring the official limitations and ministering to hungry souls all around them. Seemingly docile and obedient on the surface, they risk their lives to secretly spread

the Word of God. Many such men as these were recently discovered and arrested in Russia. They received several years of imprisonment.
They are the vital parts of the Underground Church.

Former ministers - turned out and persecuted by the Communists; the lay church; official pastors who secretly carry on a much larger and extensive ministry than they are permitted - all these are working in the Underground Church. And the Underground Church will last until communism is defeated. In some lands, one part is more active than another - but all are there, working for Christ at a great risk.

A man who travels frequently in Communist lands and who is very interested in religious questions came back and wrote that he never met any Underground Church.

It is like traveling in Central Africa among

uneducated tribes and coming back saying, "I inquired thoroughly. I asked them all if they speak prose. They all told me that they don't." The truth is that they all speak prose not knowing that what they speak is prose.

The Christians of the first decades did not know they were Christians. If you had asked them about their religion, they would have answered you that they were Jews, Israelites, believers in Jesus as Messiah, brethren, saints, children of God. The name "Christian" was applied to them by others much later, for the first time in Antioch.

None of the followers of Luther knew he was a Lutheran. Luther protested with energy against this name.

"Underground Church" is a name given by the Communists, as well as by Western researchers of the religious situation in the East to a secret organization which formed spontaneously in all Communist lands. The members of the Underground Church don't call their organization by this name. They call themselves Christians, believers, children of God. But they lead an underground work, they meet underground, they spread the Gospel in clandestine meetings, attended sometimes by the very foreigners who claim that they did not see the Underground Church. It is an adequate name given by the adversaries and by those who look lovingly from the outside to this wonderful secret organization.

You can travel years throughout the West never meeting a Soviet spy-net, which does not mean that this spy-net does not exist. It is not so stupid as to show itself to the curious travelers.

In the next chapter I quote some excerpts from the Soviet press proving the existence and growing importance of this courageous Underground Church.

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HOW CHRISTIANITY IS DEFEATING COMMUNISM

I HAVE told of our own experience in spreading Christ's message secretly in the Soviet army as well as in Communist Rumania.

I have appealed to you to help preach Christ to the Communists and to the people oppressed by them.

Is my challenge "visionary" and "unworkable"?

Is it realistic?

Does the Underground Church exist now in Russia and other lands? Is underground work still possible there now?

To these questions we can answer with very good news.

The Communists are celebrating half a century of Communist rule. But their victory is a defeat. Christianity has won - not communism. The Russian press, which our organization researches thoroughly, is full of information on the Underground Church. For the first time, the Underground Church has become so strong that it works even semi-publicly, frightening the Communists. And information which we have from other sources confirms the reports of the Communist press.

Remember, the Underground Church is like an iceberg! It is mostly below the surface, but a small part is often in the open.

In the following pages I give a short compilation of the most important news.

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The Tip of the Iceberg

On November 7, 1966, in Suhumi (Caucasus), the Underground Church held a great meeting under the open skies. Many Believers came from other cities to

attend this meeting. After the altar-call, forty-seven young people accepted Christ and were baptized on the spot in the Black Sea, just as in Biblical times.

There was no period of instruction before. After fifty years of Communist dictatorship, having no Bibles or other Christian books and having no seminaries, the ministers of the Underground Church are not trained theologians. But neither was Philip, the deacon. And when a eunuch, with whom he had spoken perhaps only for an hour, asked him, "See, here is water, what hinders me to be baptized?" Philip said "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." So they immediately went down to the water and the convert was baptized. (ACT 8:36-38)

There is water enough in the Black Sea, and the Underground Church has begun again the practices of the Biblical time.

~Uchitelskaia Gazeta~ (The Teacher's Magazine) of August 23, 1966 gives the news that, in Rostov-on-Don Baptists who refuse to register their congregation according to the laws and to obey their so-called "leaders" appointed by the Communists, organized a demonstration in the streets.

It was on the first of May. As Jesus did his miracles on the Sabbath days to defy his Pharisaic opponents, the Underground Church chooses Communist celebration days for defying the Communist laws.

The first of May is a feast on which the Communists always have their great demonstrations, which everybody is compelled to attend. But this time, the second big force in Russia - the Underground Church - also appeared on the streets that day.

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Fifteen hundred Believers came. What impelled them was the love of God. They knew that they risked their liberty. They knew that in prison starvation and torture awaited them.

Every Believer in Russia knows the "Secret Manifesto" printed by the Evangelical Christians in Barnaul, in which it is described how sister Hmara, of the village of Kulunda, received the news that her husband had died in prison. Now she was a widow with four small children. When she received the corpse of her husband, she could see the prints of manacles on his hands. The hands, fingers, and the bottom of his feet were horribly burned. The lower part of the stomach

had knife marks on it. The right foot was swollen. On both feet were signs of beating. The whole body was full of wounds from a horrible beating.

Every Believer who came to the public demonstration in Rostov-on-Don knew this could be his fate too. Still they came.

But they also knew that this martyr, who had given his life for God only three months after his conversion, was buried before a great crowd of Believers who had placards with the inscription:

"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

"Do not fear those who kill the body, but who cannot kill the soul!"

"I saw under the altar those killed for the Word of God."

The example of this martyr inspired those in Rostov-on-Don. They crowded around a little house. People were everywhere - some on the nearby roofs, others in the trees, like Zaccheus in times of old. Eighty people were converted, mostly young people. Out of this number, twenty-three were former Komsomols (members of the Communist Youth Organization)!

The Believers crossed the entire city walking toward the river Don, where the baptisms took place.

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Automobiles loaded with Communist police arrived and surrounded the Believers on the bank of the river. They wanted to arrest the brethren in charge. (They couldn't arrest all fifteen hundred!) The Believers immediately fell to their knees and, in a fervent prayer, prayed God to defend His people and permit them to have their service for that day. Then the brothers and sisters - standing shoulder to shoulder - surrounded the brethren leading the service, hoping to prevent the police from arresting them. The situation became very tense.

~UchiteLskaia Gazeta~ reports that the "illegal" Baptist organization in Rostov has an underground printing press. (The word "Baptist" in Russia includes Evangelicals and Pentecostals.) Publications are printed in which youth are called to stand for their faith. In one of these underground publications, Christian parents are asked to do what I also think is a very good thing: "to take their children to attend burials in order to learn not to worry about transitory things." Parents are asked also to give a Christian education to their

children as an antidote against the atheism with which they are poisoned in Communist schools.

~Uchitelskaia Gazeta~ finishes the article by asking: "Why do teachers mix so timidly in the life of families in which children are ~idiotized~ (by religion)?"

This "Teachers Magazine" also describes what happened at the trial of the underground workers who had baptized secretly.

"The youthful believers called as witnesses were defiant and contemptuous of the Communist court. They behaved angrily and fanatically. Young women spectators gazed with ~admiration~ at the defendants and with disapproval at the atheistic public."

Members of the Underground Church have risked beatings and imprisonment to appeal for more freedom,

in front of the Communist Party headquarters in Russia.

We possess a secret document by the "illegal" Committee of the Evangelical Baptist Churches of the Soviet Union, as opposed to the Communist-controlled "Baptist Union," led by the traitor Karev, who praises the humanity of the Communist mass-killers of Christians and magnifies the "liberty" reigning there in ~Soviet Life Today~ (No. 6, 1963). The document has been smuggled to the West by secret channels.

In it we are told about another heroic public demonstration, this time in Moscow itself.

I translate from this manifesto:

"~Urgent communication.~

"Beloved Brethren and Sisters, Blessings to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

"We hasten to tell you that the delegates of the churches of Evangelical Baptist Christians, numbering five hundred, who traveled to Moscow on May 16, 1966 for intervention with the central organs of power, went to the building of the Central Committee for the Communist Party of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, with the request to be received and heard.

"We handed a petition addressed to the general secretary, Brezhnev."

In the manifesto it is said further that these five hundred men stood the whole day before the building. It was the first public demonstration in Moscow against communism. And it was made by the delegation of the Underground Church. At the end of the day they

handed a second petition addressed to Brezhnev, in which they complained that a certain "comrade" Stroganov refused to transmit their request to Brezhnev, and threatened them.

The five hundred delegates remained on the streets the whole night. Cars drove by to throw dirt and mud on them and they were insulted. Although it rained

and they were treated like this, they remained until morning in front of the building of the Communist Party!

On the next day it was proposed that the five hundred brethren should enter a building to meet some minor Communist officials, but "knowing that Believers who had visited the authorities were often beaten when they entered a building where there were no witnesses, the delegation refused unanimously and continued to wait to be received by Brezhnev."

Then the inevitable happened.

At 1:45 p.m., twenty-eight buses came and the brutal revenge against the Believers began. "We formed a ring and holding,each other's hand, we sang the hymn, ~The best days of our life are the days when we can bear a cross.~ The men of the secret police began to beat us, the young and old ones. They took men out of the row and beat them on the face, the head, and threw them on the asphalt. They dragged some of the brethren to the buses by the hair of their heads. When some tried to leave, they were beaten until they lost consciousness. After having filled the buses with Believers, they were taken to an unknown place. The songs of our brethren and sisters were heard from the secret police buses. All this happened in the sight of a multitude of men."

And now something more beautiful follows. After the five hundred were arrested and surely tortured, Brother G. Vins and another leading brother, Horev, (the real shepherds of Christ's flock) still had the courage to go to the same Central Committee of the Communist Party - just as after the arrest of St. John the Baptist, Jesus began His public preaching in the same place and with the same words for which John the Baptist suffered: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." (MTT 4:17)

Vins and Horev asked where the arrested delegation

was and demanded their release. These two courageous brethren simply disappeared. Afterward, the news was received that they were put in Leftorovskaia prison.

Were these Christians of the Underground Church afraid? No! Others immediately risked their liberty again, publishing the manifesto which we have before us, telling the story of what happened, saying that to them, "For unto you is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him but also to suffer for his sake." (PHP 1:29) They exhort the brethren "that no man should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto." (1TH 3:3) They also quote HEB 12:2 and call the Believers to look "unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame."

The Underground Church has openly opposed the atheistic poisoning of youth in Rostov, and in Moscow - and all across Russia. They are fighting against the Communist poison and against the treacherous leaders of the official church, about which they write in one of their secret manifestos: "In our day, Satan dictates and 'the church' accepts all the decisions which are contrary to the commandments of God." (Quoted in ~Pravda Ukraini~ of October 4, 1966.)

~Pravda Vostoka~ published the trial against the brethren Alexei Neverov, Boris Garmashov and Axen Zubov, who organized groups to listen to Gospel broadcasts from America. They recorded these messages on tapes, which they circulated afterwards.

They were also accused of having organized secret Gospel meetings under the forms of "excursions" and "artistic circles." Thus the Underground Church works - just as the Early Church worked in the catacombs of Rome.

~Sovietskaia Moldavia~ of September 15, 1966, also complains that the Underground Church mimeographs

booklets. They gather together in public places, although this is forbidden by law, and go from place to place to witness for Christ.

This same newspaper recounts that in the train from Reni to Chisinau, three young boys and four girls sang a Christian hymn "Let us dedicate our youth to

Christ." The reporter professed himself revolted, because these Believers preach "on the streets, in stations, in trains, buses and even in state institutions." Again this is the Underground Church at work in Russia today.

When at the trial of these Christians the sentence was announced for the crime of singing Christian hymns in public, the condemned fell on their knees and said, "We surrender ourselves into the hands of God. We thank thee, Lord, that Thou hast allowed us to suffer for this faith." Then the audience, led by the "fanatic" Madan, sang in the courtroom the hymn for which their brethren had just been sentenced to prison and torture.

On the first of May, the Christians of the villages Copceag and Zaharovka, having no churches, organized a divine service secretly in the forest!

They also organize meetings under the pretense that they are having a birthday party. (Many Christian families with four or five members will have thirty-five "birthdays" a year as a cover for secret meetings.)

No prison and no torture can frighten the Christians of the Underground Church. Just as in the Early Church, persecution only deepens their dedication.

~Pravda Ukraini~ of October 4, 1966, said about Brother Prokofiev – one of the leaders of the Russian Underground Church – that he has already been in prison three times, but as soon as he is released, he begins to organize secret Sunday schools again. Now he is arrested again.

He wrote in a secret manifesto: "Submitting to the

human regulations (he means the Communist laws), the official church has deprived itself of the blessing of God."

And never imagine a prison as in the West when you hear about a sentenced Russian brother. Prison there means starvation, torture and brainwashing.

~Nauka i Religia~ (Science and Religion) No. 9 of 1966 reports that the Christians spread Gospel Literature inside covers of ~Ogoniok~ – a periodical like ~Look~ or ~Time~. They hand out books on the cover of which you see ~Anna Karenina~, a novel by Leo Tolstoy. Inside is a portion of the Bible!

They sing songs. The tune is "The Communist International," but the words praise Christ!

(~Kazakstanskaia Pravda~, June 30, 1966).

In a secret letter published in Kulunda (Siberia), the Christians say that the official leadership of the "Baptists," "has destroyed the church and its true servants in the world, in the same way as the high priests, scribes and Pharisees betrayed Jesus Christ to Pilate." But the faithful Underground Church works on!

The bride of Christ continues to serve Him! The Communists themselves admit that I am right when I assert the Underground Church wins Communists for Christ. They can be won!

~Bakinskii Rabochi~ (The Worker of Baku) of April 27, 1966 reproduced a letter of Tania Ciugunova (a member of the Communist Youth League) who was won to Christ. The letter was seized by the Communist authorities:

"Dear Aunt Nadia, I send you blessings from our beloved Lord. Aunt Nadia, how much He loves me! We are nothing before Him. Aunt Nadia, I believe that you understand these words: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you.'"

Once this letter was seized, Peter Serebrennikov, the brother who brought her and many other young Communists to Christ, had to go to prison. The Communist newspaper quotes from one of his sermons: "We must believe our Saviour as the first Christians did. For us the principal law is the Bible. We recognize nothing else. We must hurry to save men from sin, especially the youth.' - When told that the Soviet law forbids telling youth about Christ, he answered: "For us the only law is the Bible" - a very normal answer where a cruel atheistic dictatorship rules the country.

Then the Communist newspaper describes a "savage" picture: "Young boys and girls sing spiritual hymns. They receive the ritual baptism and keep the evil treacherous teaching of love towards the enemy."

~Bakinskii Rabochi~ says that many young boys and girls, who carry membership in the Communist Youth League are in reality Christians! It concludes the article with the words: "How powerless must be the Communist school, how boresome and deprived of light ... that the pastors are able to snatch away its disciples from under the nose of their indifferent educators."

~Kazakstanskaia Pravda~ of June 30, 1966 is horrified to have discovered that the best pupil with the best grades was a Christian boy!

~Kirgizskaia Pravda~ of January 17, 1966 quotes an underground Christian leaflet to mothers: "Let us join our efforts and prayers to dedicate to God the lives of our children from the time they are in the cradle! ... Let us save our children from the influence of the world."

These efforts have been successful! The Communist newspapers bear witness to it! Christianity advances among the youth!

A newspaper from Celiabinsk, Russia, describes how a Young Communist League girl, Nina, became a

Christian. It was by entering a secret Christian gathering.

~Sovietskaia Justitia~ No. 9 of 1966 describes such an Underground Meeting. "It is held at midnight. Hidden, wary even of their own shadow, men came from different parts. The brethren filled the dark room which has a very low ceiling. They were so many that there was no place to kneel. Because of the lack of air, the light in the primitive gas-lamp went out. Sweat ran from the faces of those present. On the street, one of the servants of the Lord was watching for policemen." But Nina said that in such an assembly she was received with embraces, warmth and care. "They had, as I have now, a great and enlightening faith - a faith in God. He takes us under His protection. Let the Komsomols who know me pass near me without greeting me! Let them look at me with spite and call me, as if slapping me, 'Baptist'! Let them do so! I don't need them."

So many other young Communists, like her, have taken the decision to serve Christ to the end.

~Kazakstanskaia Pravda~ of August 18, 1967 describes the trial of the brethren Klassen, Bondar and Teleghin. We are not told what sentence was given to them, but their crime was proclaimed. They have taught children about Christ.

~Sovietskaia Kirghizia~ of June 15, 1967 complains that the Christians 'provoke the application of administrative measures against themselves.' So the innocent Communist authorities, being continually provoked to arrest Christians by these obstinate Christians

themselves who are not content to remain free, have arrested another group. Their crime was to have an illegal printing press with fifteen hectographs and six bookbinding machines, on which Christian literature was printed.

~Pravda~ of February 21, 1968 reports that thousands

of women and girls were discovered wearing belts and ribbons on which Bible verses and prayers were printed. The authorities researched and found that the person who had launched this new fashion, which I could recommend also to the West, was none other than a Christian member of the Communist police, Brother Stasiuk of Liubertz. The newspaper announces his arrest.

The answers Christians of the Underground Church give, when brought before Communist courts, are divinely inspired. One judge demanded: "Why did you attract people to your forbidden sect?" A Christian sister answered: "Our aim is to win the whole world for Christ."

"Your religion is anti-scientific," the judge taunted at another trial, to which the accused girl - a student - answered: "Do you know more science than Einstein, than Newton? They were Believers. Our universe bears Einstein's name. I have learned in high school that its name is the Einsteinian universe. Einstein writes: 'If we cleanse the Judaism of the prophets and Christianity as Jesus has taught it from what came afterwards, especially from priestcraft, we have a religion which can save the world from all social evils. It is the holy duty of every man to do his utmost to bring this religion to triumph.' And remember our great physiologist Pavlov! Do not our books say that he was a Christian? Even Marx, in his preface to ~Das Kapital~ said that 'Christianity, especially in its Protestant form, is the ideal religion for remaking characters destroyed by sin.' I had a character destroyed by sin. Marx has taught me to become a Christian in order to remake it. How can you, Marxists, judge me for this?"

It is easy to understand why the judge remained speechless.

To the same accusation of having an anti-scientific religion, a Christian answered before the Court: "I am

sure, Mr. Judge, that you are not such a great scientist as Simpson, the discoverer of chloroform and many other medicines. He, when he was asked which he considers to be his greatest discovery, answered: 'It was not chloroform. My greatest discovery has been to know that I am a sinner and that I could be saved by the grace of God.'"

The life, the self-sacrifice, the blood which they are ready to shed for their faith, is the greatest argument for Christianity presented by the Underground Church. It forms what the renowned missionary in Africa, Albert Schweitzer, called "the sacred fellowship of those who have the mark of pain," the fellowship to which Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, belonged. The Underground Church is united by a bond of love towards its Saviour. The same bond unites the members of the church with each other. Nobody in the world can defeat them.

In a letter smuggled out secretly, the Underground Church said: ~"We don't pray to be better Christians, but that we may be the only kind of Christians God means us to be: Christlike Christians, that is, Christians who bear willingly the Cross for God's glory."~

With the wisdom of serpents, according to the teaching of Jesus, the Christians always refuse at questioning and before the court to say who their leaders are.

~Pravda Vostoka~ (The Truth of the East) of January 15, 1966 tells how the defendant, Maria Seveiuk, asked who had brought her to Christ, answered: "God attracted me in His congregation." Another, asked: "Who is your leader?" answered "We have no human leader."

Christian children were asked, "Who has taught you to leave the Pioneers and to take off the red necktie?" They answered, "We have done it out of our free will. Nobody taught us."

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Although in some places the tip of the "iceberg" shows, in other places, Christians practice self-baptism to prevent the arrest of their leaders. In some places, baptisms are made in a river with the baptizer and the baptized both wearing masks, so that nobody can photograph them.

~Uchitelskaia Gazeta~ of January 30, 1964, tells of an

atheistic lecture in the village Voronin, of the district Volnecino-Korskii. As soon as the lecturer finished, "the believers began to publicly attack the atheistic teaching through questions," which the atheistic lecturer could not answer. They asked, "where do you Communists get the moral principles you proclaim, but do not obey - such as 'don't steal, and don't kill'?" The Christians showed the lecturer that every such principle came from the Bible against which the Communists fight. The lecturer was entirely confused and the lecture finished with a victory for the Believers!

Persecution of the Underground Church Grows

The Christians of the Underground Church are suffering today more than ever before. All religions are persecuted in Russia. For Christians it is heartbreaking to know about the oppression of Jews in the Communist countries. But the principal target of persecution is the Underground Church. The Soviet press reports a wave of mass-arrests and trials. In one place, eighty-two Christians were put in an asylum for madmen. Twenty-four died after a few days because of "prolonged prayer!" Since when does lengthy prayer kill? Can you imagine what they went through?

The worst suffering imposed upon them is that, if it is discovered that they teach their children about Christ, their children are taken away from them for life - and no visitation rights.

The Soviet Union signed the United Nations

declaration "against discrimination in the sphere of education," which stipulates: "Parents must have the right to assure the religious and moral education of the children according to their own convictions." Traitor KaIev, leader of the official Baptist Union of the Soviet Union, in the article quoted above, assures that this right is a reality in Russia - and dupes believe him! Now, listen what the Soviet press says.

~Sowjetskaia Russia~ of June 4, 1963 recounts how the Baptist Makrinkowa had six children taken away from her, because she gave them the Christian faith and forbade them to wear the Pioneer necktie.

When she heard the sentence, she said only: "I suffer for the faith." She has to pay for the boarding of

the children taken away from her. They are now being poisoned with atheism. Christian mothers, think of her agony!

~Uchitelskaia Gazeta~ tells us that the same thing happened to Ignatii Mullin and his wife. The judge demanded they leave their faith. The judge said, "Choose between God and your daughter. Do you choose God?" The father answered: "I will not give up my faith."

Paul says, "All things work together for good...." I have seen such children who were raised as Christians taken from their parents and put in Communist schools. Instead of being poisoned by atheism, the faith they had learned at home was spread to the other children!

The Bible says that whoever loves his children more than Jesus is not worthy of Him. These words have meaning behind the Iron Curtain.

Try to live a week without seeing your children! Then you will know the sufferings of our brethren in Russia. Depriving Christians of parental rights continues even today. The most recent facts which we can document from the Soviet press itself concern Mrs.

Sitsh from whom, according to ~Znamia Iunosti~ of March 29, 1967, her son Vsetsheslav was taken away only because she brought him up in the fear of the Lord; and Mrs. Zabavina of Habarovsk, deprived of her orphan granddaughter Tania because she had given her a Christian 'unnatural education' (~Sovietskaia Rossia~ of January 13, 1968).

It would be unfair to speak only about the Protestant Underground Church.

The Orthodox Christians in Russia are completely changed. Millions of them have passed through prisons. There they had no beads, no crucifixes, no holy images, no incense, no candles. The laymen were in prison without an ordained priest. The priests had no robes, no wheat bread, no wine to consecrate, no holy oils, no books with prepared prayers to be read. And they found out that they could get by without all these things, by going to God directly in prayer. They began to pray and God began to pour forth His Spirit upon them. A genuine, spiritual awakening, very similar to fundamental Christianity, is taking place among the Orthodox in Russia.

So it happens that in Russia, as well as in the satellite countries, there exists an Orthodox Underground, which is in reality evangelical, fundamental and very close to God, keeping only, by the power of habit, a very little of the Orthodox ritual. This Orthodox Underground has also given great martyrs. Who could say where the aged archbishop Yermogen of Kaluga is now? He dared to protest against the treacherous collaboration between the Patriarchy and the godless Communist government.

Fifty years of Communist rule! And the Russian press is full of the triumph of the Underground Church. It passes through unspeakable hardships but has remained faithful... and grows!

We in Rumania have sown the seed by our secret

work in the Russian army. So have others in Russia itself and in other countries invaded by the Russians. The seed has given fruit.

The Communist world can be won for Christ. Communists can become Christians. So can those oppressed by them, if only we will help them.

The proof that I am right is that the Underground Church flourishes in the Soviet Union, in China and in almost all Communist lands.

To show the beauty of our fellow-Christians under terrible circumstances I give below a few letters from Russia, the last ones from Russian prisons.

How Varia, a Communist Girl, Finds Christ, Witnesses and Becomes a Slave-Laborer

The first three letters are from Maria, the Christian girl who led Varia to Christ.

First letter

"... I continue to live here. I am very beloved. I am beloved also by a member of the cell of the Komsomol (the Communist Youth League). She told me; 'I cannot understand what a being you are. Here many insult and hurt you and yet you love all.' I answered that God has taught us to love all, not only friends, but also enemies. Before, this girl made me much harm, but I

prayed for her with special concern. When she asked me if I can love her, too, I embraced her and we both began to weep. Now, we pray together.

Please, pray for her. Her name is Varia.

When you listen to those who loudly deny God, it seems that they really mean it. But life shows that many of them, although they curse God with their lips, in their hearts have a great longing. And you hear the

groaning of the heart ... These men seek something and wish to cover their inner emptiness with their godlessness.

Your sister in Christ, Maria"

Second letter

"In my former letter I wrote you about the atheist girl, Varia. Now I hurry to tell you, my beloved ones, about our great joy: Varia has received Christ as her personal Saviour, witnessing openly before everybody about this.

When she believed in Christ and knew the gladness of salvation, she, at the same time, felt very unhappy. She was unhappy, because before she had propagated that there is no God. Now she has decided to atone for her guilt.

We went together with Varia to the assembly of the godless. Although I warned her to be reserved, it was useless. Varia went and I went with her to see what would happen. After the common singing of the Communist hymn (singing in which Varia did not participate), she came forward before the whole assembly. Courageously and with much feeling, she witnessed before those gathered about Christ as her Savior and asked for her former comrades forgiveness that she had had her spiritual eyes closed until then and had not seen that she was herself going to perdition and leading others toward it. She implored all to give up the way of sin and to come to Christ.

All became silent and nobody interrupted her. When she finished speaking, she sang with her splendid voice the whole Christian hymn: 'I am not ashamed to proclaim the Christ who died to defend His commandments and the power of His cross.'

And afterwards ... afterwards they took away our

Varia.

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Today it is the ninth of May. We know nothing about her. But God is powerful to save her. Pray!
Your Maria"

Third letter

"Yesterday, the second of August, I had a talk in prison with our beloved Varia. My heart bleeds when I think about her. In fact she is still a child. She is only nineteen years of age. As a believer in the Lord, she is also a spiritual babe. But she loves the Lord from all her heart and went at once on the difficult way. The poor girl is so hungry. When we knew that she was in prison, we began to send her parcels. But she received only little of what was sent to her.

When I saw her yesterday, she was thin, pale, beaten. Only the eyes shone with the peace of God and with an unearthly joy.

Yes, my dear ones, those who have not experienced the wonderful peace of Christ, cannot understand it ... But how happy are those who have this peace ... For us who are in Christ no sufferings and frustrations should stop us ...

I asked through the iron bars: 'Varia. Don't you regret what you did? 'No,' she answered. 'And if they would free me, I would go again and would tell them about the great love of Christ. Don't think that I suffer. I am very glad that the Lord loves me so much and gives me the joy to endure for His name.'

I beg that you may pray specially from your heart for her. Probably she will be sent to Siberia. They have taken away from her her clothes and all things. She has remained without anything, except what is on her. She has no relatives and we must collect for the most necessary things. I have put apart the last sum which you sent me. If Varia is deported, I will hand it to her. I

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believe that God will strengthen her and will give her power to endure in the future too. May God keep her!
Your Maria"

Fourth letter

"Dear Maria, at last I am able to write you. We arrived well at ... Our camp is ten miles from town. I cannot describe our life. You know it. I wish to write only a little about me. I thank God that He gives me health and that I can work physically. I and sister 'X' were put to work in the workshop. We were there at machines. The work is difficult and sister 'X's' health is bad. I must work for both me and her. I finish first my work and then I help my sister. We work twelve to thirteen hours a day. Our food is just as yours, very scarce. But it is not this that I wished to write to you.

My heart praises and thanks God that He showed to me through you the way to salvation. Now, being on this way, my life has a purpose and I know where to go and for whom I suffer. I feel the desire to tell and to witness to everybody about the great joy of salvation, which I have in my heart. Who can separate us from the love of God in Christ? Nobody and nothing. Neither prison nor suffering. The sufferings which God sends us only strengthen us more and more in the faith in Him. My heart is so full that the grace of God overflows. At work, they curse and punish me and give me extra work because I cannot be silent, but must say to everybody what the Lord has done for me. He has made me a new being, a new creation, of me who was on the way of perdition. Can I be silent after this? No, never! As long as my lips can speak, I will witness to everybody about His great love.

On the way to the camp, we met with many brethren and sisters in Christ. How amazing it is that you feel through the Spirit that they are children of God when you first see the brethren and the sisters. It

is useless to speak. From the first look you feel and know who they are.

While we were on the way to the camp, at one railway station, a woman came, gave us food and said only two words: 'God lives.'

The first evening when we arrived here (it was late), we were taken to underground barracks. We greeted those present with the words 'Peace with you.' To our great joy, from all corners we heard the answer: 'We

receive you with peace.' And from the first evening we felt that we are in a family.

Yes, it was really so. We are here many who believe in Christ as our personal Saviour. More than half of the prisoners are Believers. We have among us great singers and good preachers of the Gospel. In the evening, when we all gather after heavy work, how wonderful it is to pass at least some time together in prayer at the feet of our Saviour. With Christ there is freedom everywhere. I learned here many beautiful hymns and every day God gives to me more and more of His word. At the age of nineteen, I celebrated the Birthday of Christ for the first time. Never will I forget this wonderful day! We had to work the whole day long. But some of our brethren could go notwithstanding to the river nearby. There they broke the ice and prepared the place where, during the night - according to the Word of God - I and seven brethren were baptized. Oh, how happy I am and how I would like that you, Maria, should be with me, too, that I may atone at least a little bit, through my love towards you for the wrong I committed in times past against you. But God puts every one of us in his place and we must stand firm where God has put us.

Give greetings to the whole family of God's children. God will richly bless your common work, as He blessed me, too. Read HEB 12:1-3.

All our brethren greet you and are glad that your

faith in God is so powerful and that you praise Him in your sufferings unceasingly. If you write to others, tell them our greetings.

Yours, Varia"

Fifth letter

"Dear Maria. At last, I have found the opportunity to write you a few lines. I can tell you, my dear one, that, by the grace of God, I and sister 'X' are healthy and feel well. We are now in ... They send us to ... and we remain there.

I thank you for your motherly care for me. We received all you have prepared for us. I thank you for the most valuable thing, for the Bible. Thanks to all, when you write to them, transmit my greetings, and

thanks for what they have done for me.
  Since the Lord revealed to me the deep mystery of His holy love, I consider myself to be the happiest in the world. The persecutions which I have to endure, I consider as a special grace. I am glad that the Lord gave me from the first days of my faith the great happiness to suffer for Him. Pray all for me that I may remain faithful to the Lord to the end.
  May the Lord keep you all and strengthen you for the holy battle!
  I and sister 'X' kiss you all. When we are sent to ... perhaps we will have the opportunity to write to you again. Don't worry about us. We are glad and joyful, because our reward in heaven is great. MTT 5:11-12.
Your Varia"

  This is the last letter from Varia - the young Communist girl who found Christ, witnessed about Him and was sentenced to slave labor. She was never heard of again, but her beautiful love and witness for Christ shows the spiritual beauty of the suffering, faithful Underground Church in the one third of the world under communism.

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HOW WESTERN CHRISTIANS CAN HELP

My Message to you from the Underground Church

  I have been called "the voice of the Underground Church." I do not feel worthy to be the voice of such an honored part of the Body of Christ.
  However, in Communist lands I led for years a part of the Underground Church. By a miracle I survived fourteen years of torture and imprisonment, including two years in a prison "dying room." By an even greater miracle, God somehow saw fit to reach into the prison and take me out, delivering me to the West to speak to the free Church.
  I speak on behalf of my brethren who lie in countless nameless graves. I speak on behalf of my brethren who now meet secretly in forests, basements, attics and other such places.
  It was decided by the Underground Church in Rumania that I should try to leave my country, and bring out a message to the free Christians of the world. By a

miracle, I have now been able to come out, and I fulfill the charge given me by those who remain behind laboring, risking, suffering and dying in Communist lands.

The message I bring out from the Underground Church is:

"Don't abandon us!"

"Don't forget us!"

"Don't write us off!"

"Give us the tools we need! We will pay the price for using them!"

This is the message I have been charged to deliver to you.

I speak for the silenced Church, the Underground Church, the "dumb" Church, which has no voice to speak.

Hear the cries of your brothers and sisters in Communist lands! They do not ask for escape, safety or an easy life. They ask only for the tools to counteract the poisoning of their youth - the next generation - with atheism. They ask for Bibles to use in spreading the Word of God. How can they spread the Word of God if they do not have it?

The Underground Church is like a surgeon who was traveling by train. The train collided with another train and hundreds of people lay in the ground, mangled, injured, dying. The surgeon walked among the dying, crying out: "If only I had my tools! ... If only I had my tools!" With these surgical instruments he could have saved many lives. He had the willingness ... but he did not have the tools. This is where the Underground Church stands. It is so willing to give its all. It is so willing to give its martyrs! It is so willing to risk years in Communist prisons! But all its willingness is of no value if it does not have the tools with which to work. The plea of the faithful, courageous Underground Church to you, who are free, is: "Give us the tools - the Gospels, the Bibles, the literature, the help - and we will do the rest!"

How Free Christians Can Help

Every free Christian can help at once in the following ways:

Atheists are men who do not acknowledge the

invisible sources of their life. They have no sense for what is mystery in the universe and in life. Christians can help

them best by walking themselves not by sight, but by faith, leading themselves a life of fellowship with the invisible God.

They can help us best by leading the lives of consistent Christians, lives of sacrifice. They can help by protesting publicly as often as Christians are persecuted.

Western Christians can help us by praying for the Communists that they may be saved. Such a prayer may seem naive. We prayed for the Communists and they tortured us next day even worse than before the prayer. But the prayer of the Lord of Jerusalem was also naive. They crucified Him after this prayer. But only a few days later, they beat their breasts and five thousand were converted in one day.

For the others, too, the prayer was not lost. Any prayer which is not accepted by the one for whom you intercede returns to you with great blessings and becomes a curse for the one who is the object of your prayer. Fulfilling the word of Christ, I and many other Christians always prayed for Hitler and his men. And I am sure that our prayer helped to defeat him as much as the bullets of the allied soldiers.

We have to love our neighbors as ourselves. The Communists are our neighbors as much as anybody else.

Communists are the result of not fulfilling the words of Christ: "I have come to give life and life more abundant." Christians have not yet made life abundant for everyone. They have left some on the fringe of everything valuable in life. These have rebelled and constituted the Communist party. They are often the victims of social injustice. Now they are bitter and cruel. We have to fight against them. But Christians, even if they fight against an enemy, understand and love him.

We are not guiltless of the fact that some are Communists. We are guilty at least by neglect of duty.

For this we have to atone by loving them (which is

something entirely different from liking them) and praying for them.

I am not so naive as to believe that love alone can

solve the Communist problem. I would not advise the authorities of a state to solve the problem of gangsterism only by love. There must be a police force, judges and prisons for gangsters, not only pastors. If gangsters do not repent, they have to be jailed. I would never use the Christian phrase about "love" to counteract the right political, economic or cultural fight against Communists, seeing that they are nothing else than gangsters on an international scale. Gangsters steal a purse; they steal whole countries.

But the pastor and the individual Christian have to do their best to bring the Communist to Christ - whatever crimes he commits - as well as his innocent victims. We have to pray for them with understanding.

Bibles, Gospels Are Urgently Needed

Secondly, free Christians can help by sending Bibles and Bible portions. Means exist by which they can be safely sent into Communist lands. Since I have come out I have already sent many, which have arrived safely. There definitely are ways to send them if only you free Christians will provide them for your brothers and sisters of the Underground Church. When still in Rumania, I received many Bibles brought in by certain means. There is no question of the ways to send them. Only that they must be provided.

They are desperately needed. Thousands of Christians have not seen Bibles or Gospels for twenty to fifty years in satellite countries and Russia.

Two very dirty villagers came to my home one day. They had come from their village to take the job of shoveling the frozen earth all winter long to earn money in the slight hope they might be able to buy an old, tattered Bible with it and take it back to their

village. Because I had received Bibles from America, I was able to hand them a new Bible, not an old tattered one. They could not believe their eyes! They tried to pay me with money they earned from shoveling frozen earth. I refused their money. They rushed back to their village with the Bible. A few days later I received a letter of unrestrained, ecstatic joy thanking me for the Scriptures. It was signed by thirty villagers! They had carefully cut the Bible into thirty parts and exchanged

the parts with one another!

It is pathetic to hear a Russian begging for one page of the Bible. He feeds his soul on it. They are happy to exchange a cow or a goat for a Bible. One man I know traded his wedding ring to get a battered New Testament. Our children have never seen a Christmas card. If they had one, all the children of the village would gather around it, and some old man might explain to them about the baby Jesus, and the Holy Virgin, and from there the story of Christ and salvation. All this ... from one Christmas card! We send Bibles, Gospels and Literature. This is one way you can do something.

Thirdly, we must print and send special literature to counterattack the atheistic poison being given the youth from kindergarten to college. The Communists have prepared ~The Atheist's Guidebook~. It is the atheist's "Bible." Simple versions are taught to kindergarten children and more advanced versions of the same Guidebook are taught as the children progress. The evil "Bible" follows a child as he grows and advances - poisoning him with atheism all the way. The Christian world has never printed an answer to ~The Atheist's Guidebook~. We can and must print and send in the Christian answer to the poisonous, atheistic teachings. We must do this at once, for the Underground Church has no literature to give to the youth poisoned by this book. The Underground Church has its hands

tied behind its back until it has such literature in the different languages of Communist countries.

Our poisoned youth must have an answer - God's answer - the Christian answer - our answer! This is another thing you can help do, by helping provide such literature as the answer to ~The Atheist Guidebook~ - illustrated youth literature and children's Bibles.

The fourth thing we must do is "join hands" with members of the Underground Church and give them financial means to travel about and move around with the Gospel in person-to-person evangelism. At this moment so many of them are "chained" to their homes for lack of funds to use for travel tickets, bus fares, train fares and for food while traveling. Thus they are stranded, unable to move about while villages twenty to thirty miles away vainly call for them to come for secret meetings. By giving them a few dollars a month ($10-$20) we can "unchain" them to answer those calls

and go out to distant towns and villages with the Word of God.

The former pastors who have been in prison for their faith have a burning Gospel message; they have a burning love for lost souls, but they do not have the means for taking that message to towns and villages. A few dollars a month will give them the means.

Christian laymen and laywomen must have help. Being Christians, they earn barely enough to survive, leaving nothing with which to go from village to village, town to town with the Gospel. This is the "miracle" a few dollars a month will do for them.

Pastors of official churches who conduct a secret, parallel ministry at great risk must have funds secretly provided them for such purposes. Their "salary" set by the Communist government is extremely small. The willingness of these pastors to risk their freedom by ignoring Communist regulations and preaching the Gospel to children, youth and to adults in secret meetings

is not enough. They must have the means to carry out their fruitful secret ministry.

Ten to twenty dollars a month will help such a member of the Underground Church effectively spread the Gospel. This is another way you can help the Underground Church.

Next we must broadcast the Gospel into the Communist lands by radio. Using stations in the free world, we can spiritually feed the Underground Church which itself is in great need of the Bread of Life. Because the Communist governments use short-wave radio to give out their propaganda to their own people, millions of Russians and other enslaved peoples have radios which will receive these broadcasts. Doors are open now to broadcast into Communist lands by radio. This work must be extended. The Underground Church must have the spiritual food these broadcasts provide. This is another way you can help the Underground Church in Communist lands.

The Tragedy of Families of Christian Martyrs

We must provide help for the families of Christian martyrs. Tens of thousands of such families are now suffering in an indescribably tragic way. When a

member of the Underground Church is arrested a terrible drama strikes his family. It is highly illegal for anyone to help them. This is very well planned by the Communists to increase the suffering of the wife and children left behind. When a Christian goes to prison - and often to death and torture - the suffering only begins. His family suffers endlessly. I can tell for a fact, that if rank-and-file Christians in the free world had not sent me and my family help, we would never have survived and lived to be with you and write these words!

Just now a new wave of mass-arrests and terror against Christians has broken out in Russia and

elsewhere. More martyrs are being made all the time. Though they go to their graves and to their reward, their families live in horribly tragic conditions. We can and must help them. Of course we must help starving Indians and Africans. But who deserves the help of Christians more than the families of those who have died for Christ or who are tortured in Communist prisons for their faith?

Since my release, Jesus to the Communist World has already sent much help to the families of Christian martyrs. What has been done is little in comparison with what we could do with your help.

As a member of the Underground Church who has survived and escaped, I have brought you a message, an appeal, a plea from my brethren whom I have left behind.

They have sent me to deliver to you this message from them. Miraculously I have survived to deliver it.

I have told you of the urgency of bringing Christ to the Communist world. I have told you of the urgency of helping the families of Christian martyrs. I have told you of practical ways you can help the Underground Church fulfill its mission of spreading the Gospel.

When I was beaten on the bottom of the feet, my tongue cried. Why did my tongue cry? It was not beaten. It cried because the tongue and feet are both part of the same body. And you free Christians are part of the same Body of Christ that is now beaten in Communist prisons, that now give martyrs for Christ.

Can you not feel our pain?

The Early Church in all its beauty, sacrifice and

dedication has come alive again in the Communist lands.

While our Lord Jesus Christ agonized in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter, James and John were a mere stone's throw away from the greatest

drama of history - but they were deep in sleep. How much of your own Christian concern and giving is directed towards the relief of the martyr church? Ask your pastors and Church leaders what is being done in your name to help your brothers and sisters behind the Iron Curtain.

Behind the walls of the Iron Curtain the drama, bravery and martyrdom of the Early Church are happening all over again - now - and the free Church sleeps.

Our brethren there, alone and without help, are waging the greatest, most courageous battle of the twentieth century, equal to the heroism, bravery and dedication of the Early Church. And the free Church sleeps on, oblivious of their struggle and agony, just as Peter, James and John slept in the moment of their Saviour's agony.

Will you also sleep while the Underground Church, your brethren in Christ, suffer and fight alone for the Gospel?

Will you hear our message: "Remember us, help us!"?

"Don't abandon us!"

Now I have delivered the message from the faithfuL martyred, Underground Church in Communist lands - from your brothers and sisters suffering in the bonds of atheistic communism.

The End of "TORTURED FOR CHRIST"

Victorious Faith

Richard Wurmbrand
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Victorious Faith

("For the first time, I have written a book the only subject of which is Christ.")

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I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to Mrs Ellen Oblander who edited my rough English with sympathetic delicacy. - R.W.

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Note: Portions that are italicized in the book are,
in this computer text file, enclosed by tildes (~).

Mozart, at the age of four, when asked how he composed music, answered, "I just put together little notes that like each other."

This is what I have done, too. Thoughts and stories gathered together according to the own affinities have been put on paper. That is all.

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Once upon a time, there was a prince who received a very rare and beautiful bird. He named it Twee-Twee and placed it in a golden cage. But the poor creature was not impressed by the gold. It pleaded for freedom, but the prince like it too much to part with it. Then Twee-Twee begged him at least to visit her relatives in the forest and tell them that, though captive, she was still alive.

The prince went and told them. At once, Twee-Twee's sister fell to the ground, and the prince realized that she had been killed by the grief of knowing freedom-loving Twee-Twee was in a cage. Sad at heart, he returned and told Twee-Twee the sad news that her sister had died. Immediately Twee-Twee collapsed in the same way at the bottom of the cage. The prince then took the poor bird out of the cage and threw her through the window. What would be the purpose in keeping her when she was dead? In a

flash, Twee-Twee flew away and, from a tree, chirped, "What you thought was bad news was a lesson. By pretending to have died, my sister taught me the way to escape."

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Nobody can exhaust the sense of Jesus' death on Calvary. But the wise have always taught by deeds. Through dying by his own will at the age of 33, young and full of power, He gave us a lesson on how to handle the problems of life. Die to them!

Does sin attract you? Would you commit sin if you were dead? Surely not. Then drop dead! The world wishes to involve you in its race toward destruction. Be dead to it! Religions wish to force your life into the mould or a law. Die to the law! Jesus died to sin, the world, and the law. Because of this, He lives. You, the captive, can become free by following His example. Are problems haunting you? Be impassive to them, as if you were dead.

Learn from the story of the bird which obtained its freedom.

The purpose of this book is to show the way of liberty.

*

My book is not the expression of opinions and sentiments of a man. I hate stuffy - as well as inspired - sermons in which clergymen express ~their~ views and ~their~ standpoints. I also hate political rallies at which good or bad opinions are expressed. I would prefer that nobody open his mouth unless he knows a truth, an objective truth.

In times of old, there were men among the Jews called prophets, who, when they wrote or when they spoke, began with the words, "Thus spake The Lord". -

I write the present book with the full assurance that I am only a voice. Through me, God Himself speaks.

Some will laugh at this assertion at the beginning of a book.

I always like it when people laugh, even at me. Laughter is healthy. Doctors recommend it. There is little reason to

laugh in this world. Why should people not laugh at me? Take it as foolishness if you like, but through this my book, God speaks to you.

How do I know that? Is not God Someone other than me, Someone totally different from me? My means of communi-

cation with Him can sometimes work well, but can also be troubled: I might misunderstand Him.

Jesus on the cross cried, "Eli, Eli" (the Hebrew words for "My God, My God"). Those beneath the cross believed they heard the name of the prophet Elijah. Such misunderstandings are daily occurrences.

How then can I have the assurance that what I, Richard Wurmbrand, write is exactly what God wishes me to convey? How did the prophets know?

*

A great confusion of spheres has taken place. The sphere of grammar and the sphere of religion are different from each other. Every pupil in school, who, when asked to conjugate a verb, replies that God is love and that whosoever believes in Him is born of God, will get a bad mark, even if the teacher is religious. Religion has no place in an examination on grammar.

But neither has grammar any say in religion. In the sphere of practical life we have to conjugate verbs, and for this we need personal pronouns. We have to distinguish between ~my~ house, ~my~ book, ~my~ wife, and that belonging to another. And so we have to use "I", "you", and "he". But please leave pronouns in the realm of grammar, to which they belong: do not introduce them into religion!

When Jesus Christ met Saul of Tarsus, a great persecutor of the Christians, on the road to Damascus, He asked him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ~Me~?" Saul could have answered truthfully, "I never persecuted ~you~. I persecuted your disciples". But Jesus, though omniscient, does not know that He and His disciples are different persons. He feels ~Himself~ persecuted as often as His disciple is hurt; He weeps with every disciple who weeps, He rejoices with every disciple who rejoices.

Jesus says that at the last judgment the wicked will hear the reproach, "~I~ have been hungry, sick, or in prison and you did not visit ~Me~". And He then explains that as often as one of

His little brethren suffered hardships, it was He Himself who passed through suffering.

The Lord Jesus is our leader in religion. But He might not pass an examination in grammar because He uses interchangeably the personal pronouns "he" and "I".

The Christian religion consists in becoming inebriated with love. Inebriated men confuse things and persons. The distinction between "I", "you", and "he" disappears. Therefore, when I speak, if I am inebriated with love for God, God speaks through me.

*

Two thousand years ago Jesus said, "~I~ am the Truth". And for 2,000 years this assertion of His has been falsified and quoted as meaning that Jesus said, "~He~ is the truth". But He never said that ~He~ is the truth. He said, "~I~ am the truth". If you make Him a "he", even with a capital H, you have lost the truth.

What can Jesus, the "he", the God embodied in a carpenter of 2,000 years ago in Palestine, tell you about modern techniques, about socialism, democracy, or military dictatorship, and which of these to prefer, about whether or not we should accept the philosophy of Teilhard de Chardin or the philosophical implications of Einstein's theory, about whether we should be fundamentalists or modernists?

What can Jesus, the man who lived 2,000 years ago in Palestine, tell you about the theory of evolution? Can He tell you to marry George rather than Steve? Can He guide you in any practical matter?

Jesus never wished to be "he". As a condition for His being the truth, He must always remain an "I". ~I~ am the truth, not ~he~ is the truth. If I wish to have the truth and to be the

truth, Jesus must be for me an "I".

It is not true that He must ~become~ an I. He ~is~ an I. Luther says, "The Christian ~is~ Christ". This is the fact, though you may not realize it yet. When my eyes are opened with St. Paul, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me". Then

I become sure of my own thoughts. I write a book, which means that God speaks through my book.

Men of God have always thought like this.

Luther wrote: "I have to distinguish between myself and my calling. I consider myself as the smallest. But my calling is untouchable ... Nobody should have a high opinion of his own person, but everyone should mightily praise his calling to the glory of God. Even more. The man who holds the office has not even to prove what he says, he has to be listened to as God Himself".

*

To become a Christian means to become Christlike. In what sense? Not everybody is a Jew as Jesus was, not everybody a carpenter, not every disciple of His a male. In what sense then can I become like Him?

He lived a human life with the full assurance that He was right. In His time, like today, there existed hundreds of religions. In Galilee alone many nations and many religions met. He never chose any of these religions. He believed that man must choose ~His~. Palestine was divided into many groups: the Zealots, the Herodians, the Essenes, etc. Jesus never chose among them. He spoke about earthly things, but others had to accept what ~He~ said. He never accepted what others said. He knew Himself to be the ugh this my book To be a Christian means to become Christlike, that is, a man without doubts about the message, a man who knows that Christ is not a "he". When this man speaks, Christ speaks.

Putting the realities of spiritual life in human words, I will have to use the personal pronouns, but my words will be transparent. Through them, you must grasp the reality behind them: It is the Lord who tells you "Come unto me". You have to

come to ~him~ by seeing to it that he is no longer a "he" for you.

I have to make it very clear again. I do not call you to come to him. The sacred words are "Come to ~Me~". Do not come to ~him~, which means, do not have in the future

a "he" as an object of worship and do not be content with this.

The whole idea of subject and object is an illusion, which has been strengthened in us by linguistic structures. These will oblige me, too, to "misuse" pronouns. But I do so, conscious that what we call the "I" is only a temporary meeting point of different forces, which continually change their intensity and direction. Learn to think outside the categories of "I", "you", and "he". The thinker, the thought of, and the act of thinking are one.

There is one all-powerful "I". The ten commandments start with the words "I am God". Within this only God, we live and move and have our being (ACT 17:28). We form the inward life of God. We are not exterior to Him.

God continually contradicts the notion of an "I" of ours as opposed to His. Jeremiah does not wish to accept the call to become a prophet. He says to God, "I am a child"; but God answers, "Say not, I am a child ... for I am with thee" (JER 1:6-8). Significant are the words of God, "Say not I ... for I ..." Where His "I" intervenes, the state of our "I" does not count.

Zacharias, when told by the angel that he would have a son, the future John the Baptist, says to the heavenly being, "I a an old man". This objection is cancelled with the words, "I am Gabriel" (LUK 1:18-19). For a man to speak in terms of an "I" when he hears a voice from heaven is senseless. It is again "not 'I', Zacharias, but 'I', the angel".

God calls a man "a fool" (LUK 12:16-20). This was the man who thought only about his earthly riches. It would have been easy to recognize him as a fool. In three verses of the Bible, he uses the words "I" and "my" nine times, not knowing that this "I" was meant to die on that very night and the "my" to pass into the possession of others.

We will come back to this idea later on. To come to God is just another way of saying to come to yourself, to your real being, to the One whose image and likeness you bear, to the only real "I".

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Jesus told St. Catherine of Siena: "I am He who is, you are she who is not".

*

In my church in Bucharest, I had a Russian member who did not know one word of Romanian, the language in which all services were conducted. He was never absent from church. During the sermon, he would read his Russian New Testament.

I felt a responsibility to him. I called him one day and said, "Look, I am your pastor. I would like to know what you understand from this book. Choose a part of it at your convenience and explain it to me!"

He read to me Chapter 1 of the first epistle to the Corinthians and then interpreted, "The apostle writes that Paul had planted the gospel and a certain Apollo had watered, but God gave the increase. From this he draws the conclusion that neither Paul, nor Apollo are anything, but only God. Now, if St. Paul and Apollo are called just nothings, how much is your worth, Brother Wurmbrand? God has called the things which are not. Be happy to be just a nothing".

I embraced and congratulated him for understanding the Bible better than I.

*

Jesus says, "Come unto Me". Accept the call! Do not be one of the ice-cold hearts which very often are as hard and as unfeeling as the stones of the prison floor on which Jesus might have slept, after being arrested in the garden of Gethsemane.

*

Jesus says, "Come unto Me!" and not only to pompous Church services. The great inquisitor in Dostoievsky's ~The

Brothers Karamasov~ said to the Lord, "We have improved upon your work". Jesus in His humility is thankful for improvements. He has promised us that we will do even

greater works than He did. But He wishes you to come to Him, to ~Him~ alone.

Christianity has changed many times during the centuries. Christianity in the time of Jesus was different from that of the first Christian community in Jerusalem, which in turn differed from the first Christian churches in the gentile world. The state church after Constantine the Great was something else again. The church then changed in the Middle Ages, the Reformation, the time of rationalism, and the times of pietism, modernism, state-controlled and underground churches in Communist lands, and the charismatic movement in the free world. Origen considers Christianity as part of a divine movement which prepares for something even higher. Superior forms of Christianity may yet arise. All of them are vehicles of the one Christ, who never changes. He says, "Come to Me!"

*

How should I come to Him? In LUK 24:5, it is written that Jesus parted from his disciples. This parting is a definite and abiding fact, a truth valid for all our earthly life, except that the contrary of truth need not be an error. It can be an opposite truth. Everything in the world has a dual nature: so also the relationship between men and Christ. The fact is that Jesus parted from men; the fact is that Jesus can become an 'I" in men.

Do you seek Jesus? Then the first condition for reaching Him is to fulfil what Jesus told the Roman soldiers: "If therefore ye seek me, let these (My disciples) go their way" (JHN 18:8).

Jesus has parted from them.

When the high priest asked Jesus about His doctrine, Jesus answered him, "Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them" (JHN 18:21).

Luckily enough, the discussion was interrupted by a slap

which Jesus received from an officer who stood nearby. Otherwise, He would have received a terrible blow from the

high priest himself, who could have answered Him, "Whom among those who heard you could I ask about your doctrine? One of them sold you to us, and you will understand that he did it with many bad words about you. Another disciple of yours is just now in the court and says that you are only a man, a man whom he has never known. Your other disciples have fled. Men who have heard you are in the other room waiting to testify, 'This fellow said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days"'- surely not a very attractive point of doctrine. You have spoken to thousands. They understood nothing. They will shout tomorrow, 'Crucify Him!' John, your beloved, is here but is silent. You are the only one who can tell us your doctrine. If you refuse, we will do without it".

The situation has not changed much since.

If you wish to know the doctrine of Jesus, let His disciples go.

The first recommendation I give to you is this: "Let everybody in the world go his way; let churches and those who repudiate them go their way, right or wrong; and you, answering only for your own soul, come to Jesus! Look neither to the right nor to the left, do not look behind, do not care about what others say! ~You~ come to Jesus!"

*

Come so near to Him as to be one with Him!

When the first Christians met in the catacombs, they used in their sermons the following illustration:

A boy loved a girl to folly. One day he could not bear it any more. Late in the night, he knocked at the door of his sweetheart, asking her to allow him to enter. She asked him, "Who is it?" He answered, "It is I". Her reply was "My chamber is narrow. There is room only for one. Go!"

He departed into the world to forget his sorrow. He would not understand her refusal, knowing that she loved him too

very much. After years of erring around, he all at once had an illumination.

Late one night, he knocked again at the door of the girl. When asked, "Who is it?", he replied, "It is you." The door opened. His beloved embraced him and said, "I have waited for you a long time".

What dimensions has God? He speaks with Moses between the two staves of a box, in which the Jews carried the Ten Commandments given to them on Mount Sinai. Heaven is the narrowest place in the universe. It has place only for One. Only those will enter into heaven who have become one with Him.

Shakespeare says in "The Phoenix and the Turtle": "Number in love was slain". Love cannot coexist with multiplicity. Those who love are always one soul and one heart. Husband and wife are one. Christ and the Father are one. So is the faithful soul and Christ. In love, distinctions between a "he" and an "I" are impossible.

King Solomon says in his Song (SOS 6:8-9), "There are three score queens, and four score concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one ..."

*

Before going further, let me repeat the warning: God speaks to you in the present book, setting before you a high responsibility. If you do not receive Jesus, you commit spiritual suicide.

There was a man who all his life had very great troubles. One night he tossed around in his bed, not finding rest. He asked God to show him what unseen enemy destroyed his life, and from behind a curtain this enemy appeared: himself! You are your greatest enemy if you do not receive Christ.

We are like the silkworm which prepares the cocoon in which it will develop. How do you build the house of your future?

In the Romanian town Lugoj, the director of the prison received an order to arrest the sub-director, a lieutenant. The

director called the sub-director and told him, "Today we will have a new political prisoner. See to it that you prepare a cell for him!" The lieutenant took a warden with him and

chose the worst of cells. Now, all prison cells are bad, but some have a little more light, others less; some are damp, others are dry; in some you can take three steps to and fro, in others only two. He chose the worst of cells, the worst of straw mattresses. Then he came back to the director and told him, "I have prepared the cell".

The director said, "I would like to see it myself". He went to the cell with the lieutenant and asked him, "Do you not think that you should give the man better housing than that?" The lieutenant replied, "You are too softhearted, captain! That is the right cell for a bandit".

The director told him, "Well, you are the bandit. Please enter!" And the door was locked behind him.

We, all of us, decide our future habitation by receiving or refusing Christ.

*

Those who refuse Him will have to suffer in hell.

It is a bad place; I know it. In spirit I dwell there often, because hell is not surrounded by the indifference but by the love of Christians. In Luke 16, it is written that some who are in heaven love those in hell so much that they would be ready to pass from heaven to hell only to be able to help. But they cannot.

Hell is a terrible thing. How awful to be there for all eternity with the devils!

St. Catherine of Siena once saw a devil and wrote that rather than look again for an instant on such a monster, she would prefer to walk until the end of her life on a bed of red coals.

And the devils will torment infidels. St. Anselm said, "In hell, souls are so utterly bound that they are not even able

to remove from their eye a worm that gnaws it".

You had better receive Jesus!

Jesus speaks about a last judgment. I will describe it to you.

God will sit on a white throne, behind Him a curtain, before Him in one line those who have to be judged. God will lift

His right hand, and at this sign beings of unspeakable splendour, radiant in all colours, will appear from behind the curtain and will stand before each of those to be judged. Then the wicked will ask God, "Who is this beautiful being before me?" And God will answer, "This is you as you would have become if you had believed in Jesus". Then, in despair over what they have lost, the wicked will flee to hell, unable to endure the picture of what they could have become.

You will never be you, the radiant being, made in God's image, if you do not come to Jesus.

God calls you through me.

There is someone else to call you. This is your real self. In a parable, Jesus tells the story of a prodigal son who prematurely took his inheritance from his father, went to a distant land, and squandered the money in loose living. Then a famine ravaged the land. Having no money left, he took a job tending swine. Starving, he would have liked to eat the husks thrown to the pigs, but "no man gave unto him". At the end of his tether, the prodigal son of the parable - so the Bible says - "came to himself" and decided to return to his father.

"He came to himself" - what an expression! Where had he been until then? Well, we say in English, "he was beside himself". He was outside himself. He had not exercised his own mind, he had not been guided by the best impulses of his own heart. Like an ape, he had followed the selfish ways of others. Like a parrot, he had repeated their stupidities. Most men would rather die than think for themselves. Once the prodigal son "came to himself", to his real self, he implicitly returned to the truth and to his father. In the parable, God is the

father.

It is simply not true that you have lived without Jesus until now. It was only that your real "you", the beautiful being created after God's own image, has not been within. You belong to Jesus. You have not known it until now. The Son

of God has been within you and would have liked to reveal Himself to you, but you were in a distant land (GAL 1:16). Through me your real personality speaks to you. Right now, I am your conscience, your real I. I love your soul more than you love it yourself. You are a hodge-podge of all kinds of prejudices and beliefs gathered from others. The actor plays "Hamlet" one day, and "Othello" the next, but he is neither the prince of Denmark nor the jealous moor. He is himself.

You have acted until now as an atheist, an agnostic, a revolutionary, a drug-user, a sex-abuser, a moneygrabber, a pleaure-seeker, a churchgoer, or any number of things. But all these are only roles you have played. Your real you has been waiting, waiting. It speaks to you now through me.

Luther, a great teacher of Christianity, made a distinction between direct faith and faith which knows itself as such. When someone asserts "I believe" or "I believe not", he expresses his opinion about what happens within him. His opinion about himself may be as wrong in this matter as he can be wrong in judging others. One man may consider himself healthy while cancer ravages his body. Another thinks himself ill, but his malady is in his imagination.

Your infidelity can also be in your imagination. You may not have what theologians call "fides reflecta", a faith conscious of its existence. But you can have "fides directa", a faith which simply exists. A baby exists without knowing that what it has is existence. But its loving mother knows about its existence and needs. Likewise, you do not know what happens within you because your real you is outside waiting. I am your "you". I am your conscience.

As you read these lines you will find how right Plato was when he said that "knowing is recognizing". I will not tell you things which are new to you. You will recognize in my words the light which enlightened you when you came into the world.

Later, like the prodigal son, you drifted far away from yourself. Now you are being called back. When you return, your faith will become conscious. The Son of God will

be able to reveal Himself within you. Your coming to yourself will be identical with your coming to Christ.

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You are reluctant? You say that religion is irrelevant? I fully agree with you. The question is only how relevant relevancy is. How relevant are you and I? How relevant is your or my opinion about what is relevant?

Walls determine the size of a room. Only the empty space between the walls makes the room useful. So does the empty space within the cup. We live on what is empty, not on what is full. For walking, are only the soles relevant? The whole foot walks. But the foot could not walk without those things which seem irrelevant to walking, like the heart, the lungs, the cortex, the spine, the law of gravity, the atomical and chemical structure of the earth, and the way itself.

Yes, religion is irrelevant. You can live without it, but you can also live without art, without books, without literacy, without trousers, without fresh air, without sunshine, without loving and being loved. But such an existence does not deserve the name "life". It is the "irrelevant" things which make life beautiful and rich in meaning.

You ask yourself what Jesus can give you. Why must someone be useful to you in order to be your love? Why this constant search only after what is relevant? Men followed Jesus long ago, when He predicted only His death on the cross and His own resurrection, long before He promised eternal life also to others.

Mary Magdalene loved Him and washed His feet with her tears, having no idea that she could obtain from Him forgiveness of sins and a place in paradise. She loved Him just for love's sake. Do the same!

*

Arise! Do not stop at the beggarly things which are "relevant!"

Life has changed more in the last fifty years than in the

5,000 before. Some are interested in quasars and novas and the expansion of our universe, others in mesons and quarks, others in genes. Do not busy yourself only with trivia, with things which minister only to creature comforts. Seek the ultimate reality. Seek the explanation of the whole. Seek God!

If you do, a thousand questions may arise in your mind, questions a true Christian teacher may ignore. The teacher from God does not teach what the pupil chooses but what the teacher considers good for him to learn. In spiritual things one does not need the answer to innumerable religious problems but rather what Jesus calls "poverty in spirit". The soul must become calm as the sea, which mirrors the beauties above.

The proper teacher does not answer questions. Neither am I prepared to give you complicated replies to your multitudinous queries. The best thing for a teacher of religion to do is to efface himself, to withdraw into the shadows, not to be the embodiment of a word of God, but only a voice through which the Master might say whatever word He wishes, or a silent lute awaiting His desires.

When Alexander the Great asked the philosopher Diogenes, "What can I do for you?" Diogenes answered, "Get out of the sun". This is what souls thirsty for God should say to theologians. The purpose of the present book is not to speak to you about Jesus, but to allow Jesus to appear Himself. He who became incarnate within an unknown stable, who became enshrined in the written Word, now humbles Himself even further. He uses the voice of a sinner to make attentive to the whisper of your own inner voice, which is the voice of your conscience.

*

There are men who tell you, "Fight capitalism", or "Fight Communism", or "Fight Islam". Suppose one of these fights succeeds, what will be the difference? Nazism was fought against victoriously. Has the world become any better since? There are men who tell you, "Do not fight either capitalism,

or Communism, or Islam. Make peace with them". What kind of peace can there be between those who hate each other? Peace is not the absence of war but the presence of love. There are men who tell you, "Do not care about fighting or making peace with capitalism, Communism, or Islam". If I care about none of the great problems of humanity, what have I a mind for? I say, leave them all! Seek God! He is all you need. When you have Him, you have the answer to all problems, because the problems will not be problems for you any more. Jesus says, "I am the life". This applies to you, too. You will simply live your life with Jesus at the controls, and this will be His life.

The eroding doubt will disappear. Jesus once asked one of his disciples, "Why did you doubt?" Peter had walked on the water and had been in danger of drowning. The disciple never answered the Saviour's question, neither did the latter insist. If He had, Peter could have answered, "I doubted that I would be saved from this deadly danger, because you are incalculable. So many of those who believe in God drown. Sometimes they escape in a miraculous manner. But you never know how it will be in your case". Peter would still have been wrong to doubt. This because, once you belong to Jesus, life and death are the same to you. He is eternal. So are you, because the distinction between "he" and "you" does not exist. Grammar has no place in real religion.

*

Our adversaries say that religion is a kind of opium, an illusion. Well, is every illusion wrong? The man who drowns has the illusion of sleeping on soft cushions, the man who freezes, of resting near a heated oven. Some illusions are mechanisms of defence that help us pass over difficult moments. There exist good and bad illusions, as there exist good and bad thoughts. An illusion can be a loving mother who passes her breasts through iron bars and gives her imprisoned and dismayed child to suck. Illusions are a tremendous force. They can give new life and strength to those who are almost lost.

But the comfort of Christ is no illusion. It is reality.

You will ask how I know this. Christians believe that Buddhists and Hindus, and Jews, and Moslems, and atheists, and agnostics are all mistaken. They consider others to be taken in by myths. But what can happen to others can happen to Christians, too. They should check on their own beliefs, lest they be beguiled by myths.

An evangelist once told a Jewish boy of twelve that Jesus was the Son of God and that he would be lost if he did not believe on Him. Very earnestly the boy answered: "Pastor, the contrary also holds true. If Jesus is not the Son of God, and you believe on Him, you are lost". We must know that everyone, whether Hindu, or Jew, or atheist, or Mormon, or Catholic, or Protestant, rests his eternal life on what he believes; and nobody can simply dismiss the question of whether or not Christ is a myth.

Kant rendered mankind a great service. He showed, as nobody had before, to what extent the world is manufactured by the mind. We catch impressions through our senses; the impressions are categorized by our minds according to causality, finality, quality, quantity, modality. Out of this we construct a universe, our inner universe, through intricate operations of the mind. Then we speculate about these notions and make hem more and more abstract. Our notion of Godhead is surely also the manufacture of our mind.

How far does it correspond to reality?

The possibility of deception is enormous. The adherents of all religions believe that the majority of mankind is deceived, because everyone believes that only his religion, or his lack of religion, is the truth. So, if the majority of mankind is deceived, this possibility exists for me, too.

Within the framework of religion, assuming the existence of God is already accepted, there still exists the possibility of deception. The Pharisees of old were sure that through their teachings they opened to men the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven. Then came Jesus proclaiming that their teaching closed the gates of the Kingdom. The Pharisees allowed

themselves to be slaughtered for their faith. Jesus died, asserting ~His~ belief. Which of the two is true?

Dante says in his ~Divina Comedia~: "Midway upon the journey of my life, I found myself in a dark wood, where the right way was lost". This is the experience of all thinking men.

We have one sure truth, and that is the quest for truth in the minds of men. A sure truth is that there exists in mankind an incessant search for the true, that mankind takes enormous pains to sift the true from the false, and this sometimes in a completely disinterested manner.

Why should we trouble ourselves to learn whether the sun goes around the earth or the earth around the sun? A knowledge of the truth about this makes not one penny's worth of difference to any one of us. Notwithstanding, we all pursue such incessant quests, impelled by an instinct which tells us that truth is desirable and should be followed.

In this quest we meet Jesus.

He does not make excessive claims.

He does not teach us to consider the founders of other religions as being His competitors or His enemies. In Solomon's Song (SOS 1:7) the other religious bodies are called flocks of the companions - not the rivals - of Jesus.

He does not speak about Himself as being only the truth. There exists one sentence in the Gospel of John (14:6) in which everything depends on punctuation.

What is the correct punctuation of Jesus' words, "I am the way the truth and the life"? I would say, "I am the way: the truth and the life."

Bottles of medicine are mostly mixtures. Jesus Himself says that in His teaching He gives us a mixture. He had in mind the circumstances of the way which everyone of us has to follow, the answer to the quests of truth, and the necessities of life.

Life based on truth alone would be impossible. How could we live calling every hunchback a hunchback and every ugly

girl ugly? Life is basically unfair, endowing men so differently and burdening the majority of us with undeserved handicaps. We must say the truth without crushing life.

A boy was given two dimes: one for Sunday school, one for candies. He stumbled, and the coins rolled away. One he recovered, the other fell into the gutter. He said, "Well, Lord, there goes your dime".

Truth declares: one coin for candies, one for the Lord. Life always loses the coin reserved for holy purposes. Then truth condescends: "Would you not give at least one penny of the remaining coin or at least a sincere regret that nothing has been left for God?"

Jesus dwelt among us "full of grace and truth" (JHN 1:14). Which is more important, "grace" or truth"? The most important word is "and", the sign that we have a combination. Then the order of the two. Grace comes first. "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (JHN 1:16). As to our receiving truth, the Lord has to wait longer. He is patient. He knows that nobody on earth can walk a straight line, the earth being a sphere.

There is in everyone a quest for truth and also a rebellion against its demands, and a doubting of the truth when it is discovered. Jesus is the only founder of religion who proclaims Himself to be the truth, and even more, the Son of God and at the same time is an embodiment of doubt as to His own calling. He cries on the cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He is the synthesis between truth and doubt of the truth, and therefore He is the truth.

If Jesus had been an invention, the ones who invented Him would never have written in their gospels that they themselves had doubts about Him. They would never have said that they doubted Him, even after His resurrection. The Gospel is the only religious book of the world which expresses the truth

together with doubts about this same truth. Therefore, it is truth.

In Jesus, we meet God, a God who became specific, born in the fifteenth year of the reign of Caesar Augustus. He is not questionable, but He questions Himself and He is questioned even after His resurrection by His apostles. Therefore He is the truth on whom we can rely.

Yea, more. There is no believer to whom blasphemous thoughts do not occasionally occur, thoughts of quarrelling with God. Religious men repress these thoughts, which are part of their being. Thus they incapacitate their mind for the full truth. (Temptations should be brought to the bar of reason.)

The Bible is the only holy book of the world which propagates the loftiest ideas about God, at the same time saying scandalous things about Him; for instance, that He shall put a bridle in the jaws of a people - His creation - and will cause them to err (ISA 30:28), or that He is a slave trader (Joe 3:8).

In EZE 6:12, God describes Himself as sending upon His chosen people famine and pestilences and blood and the sword.

God's prophet Jeremiah says to Him, "O God, thou hast deceived me; will thou be indeed to me as a deceitful brook and as waters that fail?"

The Bible praises God and expresses at the same time the harshest criticism which can be brought by the human mind against Him. By this we know it to be the truth. Then it dissolves these contradictions in a superior harmony.

*

Many say: "I already have a religion. Is not one as good as another? Why must I become a Christian?"

It is because Christianity contains the truth.

All religions are not alike. To put them on the same level would be like saying, "I like music so much that I do not care what kind of music it is, Beethoven or the Beatles". Religious people have to make a difference between the right religion and the wrong.

Christianity is the right religion because it comprehends in its all embracing love, all other religions, and even the irreligious. It is the only religion in whose holy book it is written that we should not believe only "Christianity". The essence of Christianity is love, and ~love believes everything~, not only Christianity (1CO 13:7).

It is the only religion which tells us not to restrict ourselves only to what this religion teaches, but to think on ~whatsoever~ things are honest, ~whatsoever~ things are just, ~whatsoever~ things are pure, ~whatsoever~ things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report (PHP 4:8), from whatever quarter these things come. And because it already embraces what is good and right from all quarters, it does not need to unite with any other religion.

It is ~the~ religion.

*

There are many partial truths. Jesus is ~the~ truth, the whole truth.

During His earthly life throngs of people followed Him. He promised them nothing except a cross. Some followed Him because He cured and gave bread. But reason cannot explain why so many should have followed Him unselfishly at least for a time. People normally follow only demagogues, who promise them heaven on earth but can never deliver. Jesus was beloved because the glory of divine beauty shone upon His face. Sinners followed Him because He was full of grace and truth. He said simply, "Cone unto Me", and they came. He says to you, "Come unto Me". Simply, come!

*

You might say, "But I am a man of science. I cannot believe in all kinds of miracles such as the virgin birth. I know that there are laws of nature and that they cannot be broken". They have not been broken in the case of Jesus. For a being like Him, the natural thing was to be born of a virgin. For a

being like Him, it was natural to do things which no other man could do.

But in any case, the virgin birth and other miraculous incidents of His life which you accept with difficulty are of secondary importance. If somebody unites or equates a higher truth with lesser truth, the more important suffers and ultimately dies because of this misalliance. Nobody has ever called you to come to the virgin birth. You are called to come to Jesus. Come!

But do not dismiss lightly the virgin birth. Boris Pasternak, the Nobel prize-winner brought up under Communism, wrote in ~Doctor Zhivago~, "Christ's miraculous birth teaches us that life should consist of the unusual instead of the commonplace, the festive instead of the workaday".

*

We call you to Jesus not because He is good, but because for you He became sin. In this sense, Jesus is not above you, He is below you. In order to come to Him, you do not have the difficulty of climbing but the ease of descending.

How many sins have you committed in this life? Have you murdered a hundred men? Jesus has taken upon Himself the murder of millions. Have you committed ten robberies? Jesus has taken upon Himself thousands of robberies. How many adulteries have you committed? Jesus has taken upon Himself the sexual impurity of millions of men.

So with lies, and with all other sin.

He meets with a sinner, a Canaanite woman, and addresses her with an admiring "@!" In MTT 8:10, it is written that when Jesus heard the words of a Roman centurion, He marvelled at him and paid him a compliment.

It is a great thing to be an adorer of Jesus. It is an even greater thing to be a man admired by Jesus. Jesus knew this centurion to be a sinner, but how many sins did He have? Jesus took upon Himself, as His own, many more sins than those of the centurion.

In the Song of Solomon, there are the very words that the

heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus, says to His Bride: "I will go ~up to~ the palm tree" (SOS 7:8). His approach to us is an ascension. Our approach to Him is one of condescension to the greatest sinner who has ever existed. There has never been a greater murderer, thief, robber, or liar than Jesus Christ- only not in the sense that He committed these offences Himself, but that, in a more profound way, He took them upon Himself. They are His!

It is easy to come to Jesus.

Are there some features in Jesus' character and teaching, are there some flaws in His life, which you dislike? He also disliked them. He refused categorically the title "good teacher" replying that only one is good, and that is God. He did not please Himself (ROM 15:3), which means that if you had asked Him, "What opinion do you have of yourself?", He would have answered, "A bad one". He appropriated to Himself the sins of all men of all times. He felt them as burdening Himself.

Even if you dislike some things in His earthly life, come to Jesus! He did the things you dislike, because He had taken upon Himself your sinfulness and mine.

I once had a vision.

Surprised, I saw myself descending into a very low valley. I had believed heaven to be above us. A beautiful female angel, who guided me lovingly, explained that because many could not reach heaven, which was originally very high, because not all could bear the cold of the northern peaks, the heavenly had descended below any lowness. However low I might be, it would always be lower. We can be in heaven not only in sublime moments, but also in moments of despair.

*

A poor farm woman brought her daughter to the capital so that she might earn money as a maid. From what she

could send home, they will be able to buy some land and cattle.

The girl was beautiful and clever. She learned quickly that in a big city a girl like her could earn much more by not working than by working. She succeeded in attracting rich lovers. Passing from one to another, she gathered jewels, cars, and furs, and indulged in a life of fun.

In her life of pleasure, she forgot about her old mother altogether. One day she remembered her painfully. Taking the train to her village, she arrived late at night. Approaching the gate of her mother's house, she discovered that it was wide open. She was surprised, because she knew it had always been locked with great care.

She passed through the yard and saw that the room in which her mother slept had the light on. When she was on the threshold, the mother called from inside, "Jean, is it you?"

"Yes, mother. But how is it that the gate is wide open so late at night?"

"My daughter, for ten years, ever since you left, the gate has never been locked."

"And how is it that there is light in your room so late?"

"My daughter, for ten years the light has never been off. The loving heart of a mother waited for you."

The heavenly Jerusalem is our mother. She waits for us.

*

You are uneasy, "If I accept Jesus, I have to accept the Bible, too. And it has been proven to be full of many errors".

People who have never read the Bible in the original languages in which it was written maintain that it cannot contain errors. I can assure you that it is full of "errors". Grammatical errors abound in it. They are in almost every sentence. Luther knew it, and his answer was that God does not speak words of grammar, but true realities. Sun, moon, heaven earth, you, and I - we are words of God, His poem, verses and rhymes of His creation. Nature, reality appear in our mind.

as incoherent. The Bible is errorless just because it reflects this incoherence.

A very frequent grammatical error in the Hebrew Bible is, for instance, the fact that the substantive is in the singular and the verb is in the plural. The question is only, whose is the error? I believe that the grammar is at fault and not the Bible. In English it would be like writing "He do a thing" instead of "He does". Grammatically it is wrong because grammar is false. Grammar begins with the supposition that there can exist a unitary "he" who does. But every "he" is very complex, with many contradictory impulses. Every "he" is a multiplicity. Therefore, the verb applied to him has to be in the plural form. So it happens that the Bible is full of "errors" and is always right. The standards of right and wrong wherewith we measure the Bible may be wrong. The Bible contains "errors" only because our notion of what is an error is erroneous.

*

"But to receive Jesus means to pass your time uselessly praising God. By the way, what does He need our praises for? Why is He so jealous for His prestige?"

He does not need your praises. You have need to praise Him. He is the supreme good. If you do not praise Him, you will praise yourself or other inferior beings, and will thus bar the way of your advancement.

Pasteur should not have been humble. Men like him do well to assert themselves. The life of thousands is at stake in their being recognized. How much more, then, is God justified when He asks for praise.

*

I call you to Jesus, because He can make you a saint and the world needs saints. It has had plenty of politicians whose decisions have cost the lives of untold millions in foolish world wars and revolutions. It has had plenty of men of science, who provided the rulers of nations with the accoutrements of war and now with ultimate weapons. It has had a multitude of missionaries of many religions, who have created the religious

confusion reigning in the world. It does not have saints enough. One more is needed. You should be this one. Come to Jesus!

Your relationship with Him will be complex. Some know Him only as their Saviour. That is like knowing someone only as one's dentist. Jesus is more than Saviour. He will be your Lord. He will be your child, as much as He was the virgin Mary's child. Jesus says these strange words, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is ... my mother" (MTT 12:50). He will be your brother. He will be your bridegroom. (In Hebrew and in Greek, the languages of the Bible, the words for soul, "neshama" and "psyche", are female substantives.) Jesus is the son of Mary, the Son of man, the Son of David, the Son of God. Jesus never called His mother "mummy", but only "woman", because the word "mother" would have circumscribed His relationship toward her in too narrow a sphere. He was not only her Son, but also her Saviour.

So He will be very diverse in His relationship to you. But more, He will be yours in what He is in Himself, beyond all possible relationships which you can have toward a human being. You will have not only someone to save you, to instruct you, but you will have JESUS.

*

You may have attended church during a holy communion service. If not, do it out of curiosity. You will hear a priest or a pastor pronouncing over a piece of bread the words, "Take and eat this; this is my body broken for you". He means the body of Jesus Christ. Then he imparts a cup of wine, saying, "This is my blood shed for you for the remission of sins".

And the believers eat and drink, expressing by this act how intimately they appropriate to themselves the personality of Christ.

Jesus says that He takes all the sins of the world - that is,

your sins too, all of them - upon Himself, that He bears their punishment and dies for them on the cross.

If you come to Jesus and become a Christian, you will have the right to partake of holy communion. The words of the pastor, "This is my blood given for you", will bring you the good news which remains always fresh, that every injustice done by you is undone, that all your wrong is set right and what has been crooked is straightened. You will be able to say, "I am justified", which means, "I am ~just as if I had~ never sinned". You are free from the past forever. You have no more consciousness of sin. Your wicked deeds have not been repaired, but erased; your wicked thoughts have been blotted out; your bad words have been cancelled.

The salvation of Christ is full and complete. He saves to the uttermost.

You have the choice of accepting this sacrifice which Christ made on your behalf or of bearing the responsibilities of your sins yourself. Do not take it lightly. God does not pay at the end of every week, but in the end He pays.

Think it over well. How will you answer for all your sins? Why not rather receive His salvation? You have only to believe in Him in order to be saved. You need not even ask Him for forgiveness for your sins.

*

An interesting part of the gospel is what is not written. For instance, you will never find mention that anybody asked forgiveness from Jesus for anything. People looked in His face and saw forgiveness written there. Peter once said such wrong things that Jesus had to call him "Satan". On another occasion, the disciples quarrelled about who should have the highest place in the kingdom. When Jesus was most in need of comfort, His disciples slept; they forsook Him and fled. Peter denied Him with oaths. Yet it never seemed to occur to any of them to say to Jesus, "I am sorry for what has happened". Neither will you have to use such words. Come to Jesus, even if you have a heart too proud to

acknowledge that you have been mistaken. To forgive is His profession.

He saved Mary, His mother. Nothing was more natural. She was His flesh. But it is written about all Christians that they are "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (EPH 5:30). If I am a Christian and He does not take me to heaven, He will be there with some bone and muscles missing in His body. Who can imagine that He will not rather save us?

Your sinfulness is not a hindrance to your salvation. On the contrary, it is just what impels Him to save you. He understands all. Therefore He forgives all. If you can, pray to Jesus as Mary Magdalene does in ~Doctor Zhivago~, "Unbind my debt as I unbind my hair". If you cannot pray, just leave it and come to Jesus without prayer. He forgives. He knows what will be the result.

*

In times of old, there were two brothers: the older, a pious and good man, the younger a rascal. The older often entreated his younger brother to change his ways. He prayed for him But all was in vain. The teenager slid into worse and worse sins until one night he rushed into the room of his brother with blood-stained clothes and cried, "Save me! The police pursue me. I have committed a crime". The other one understood the situation. There was not much time for thinking. He told the criminal, "Let us change clothes". They scarcely had done this when the police appeared and, obviously, arrested the older brother because he was wearing the bloodstained clothes. He did not defend himself in court but on the contrary said "I bear the full responsibility for the crime".

The judges had no doubt about his guilt, as he had been dogged from the very spot of the crime and had been with traces of blood on his garments. He was sentenced to death. When asked about his last desire, he answered, "It is only one: that my brother should receive at the very moment of my execution this letter which I have written to him".

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Next day, the youngster received the letter and read: "At his moment I die for your sin, in your bloodstained clothes. I am happy to perform this sacrifice for you. And I am sure that henceforth, in the white garment which I left you, you will lead a pure and holy life".

The youngster was overtaken with remorse. He tried to stop the execution. It was too late. But as often as his former comrades in revelry tried to call him to new wicked deeds, he replied, "In the pure garment left to me by my brother, who died on my behalf, I can no longer commit the evil deeds of earlier times".

Jesus knows that this will be the result of His sacrifice in our heart, too. He will save you, however sinful you might be.

If Judas had come to Jesus instead of trying to settle his ugly past with his ugly accomplices, we might know him today as St. Judas.

As a rubber erases a mistake, so does Jesus erase sins.

*

The angels were not disgusted by the sores on the corpse of the beggar called Lazarus. They carried him to Paradise. Jesus, who during His earthly life had not a place to lay His head, is not choosy. He gladly accepts your home and your heart as a place of rest. It is surely better than nothing.

You have sins and they are red like scarlet. If a source of light recedes from the observer, the spectral ray corresponding to this radiation will be red. Sins are called red in Scripture because they put a huge and ever-growing distance between you and God. But the white of purity is at your disposal. White is the plenitude of light. Jesus is the Light of the world. You can have Him.

Only thus can you become righteous. Everything else is cant.

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We consider ourselves as righteous without this light only because we do not know the law of God.

A Brahman once boasted of the fact that he had never destroyed any living being in his life. Then a missionary showed him a drop of water under a microscope. The Brahman was afraid when he saw that he had swallowed innumerable beings as often as he had drunk water. But he quickly found a solution to

ease his conscience. He destroyed the microscope. For the same reason, we set aside the Christian religion because it would show us our real state, that we are sinners.

When we realize that we are sinners, we abhor ourselves. We are disgusted at the state of our soul. Not so with God! The greatest pleasure for God is to exercise pity. Count von Zinzendorf wrote: "Nobody will have part of the mercy of God who has something of his own left, and something to show. Jesus is more thankful to men who give Him the opportunity to do something good for them, than when they attempt to do something good for Him. He prefers to see around Him men who need Him, instead of men who wish to do Him good. What should Jesus do for a righteous man? He seeks somebody in great need, and nobody is in bigger need than a sinner".

*

A prince once saw a tigress starving. Three cubs tried to suck her breast, but there was no milk. Now this prince was holy, and he pitied the beast. He knew self-sacrifice to be the highest virtue. He lay down near the tigress and cut his arm so that the sight of blood might arouse her natural appetite. He was devoured by her. But the tigress survived, and so did her little ones.

It is an insult to tigers to compare them with men. Tigers do not eat their own. Men kill their kin, even when they are not cannibals. Hitler killed millions of men. And he was a vegetarian.

Men had killed, had practised all the refinements of cruelty

and sin. Now they were starving. Mankind lived on sin, and all sins had been committed already, save one: deicide. Men had betrayed one another, but they had never sold out a Son of God.

So Jesus lay down near the tigress. He came to mankind. He aroused their cruelty and hatred. In order to continue to live, they had to eat His body - as He Himself foretold - and drink His blood. The tigress devoured Jesus.

And behold, beastly mankind can live again! This led

Michelangelos and Leonardos to enshrine the crime of the race in painting and sculpture; it led Beethoven and Bach to memorialize it in music; and mankind translated and printed this story of its deicide into 1,000 languages. Christian civilization has been built on this crime. Tigers live because of this crime - the Borgias, the Torquemadas, the non-excommunicated Catholic Hitlers of all centuries. This crime has allowed tigers to gather huge treasuries on which fat clergy live. But this crime was for some tigers the last. Horrified at what they had done, some tigers became tame. They became saviours of life instead of destroyers.

Perhaps you can understand from this what Jesus has done for us.

*

In COL 1:14, it is written that in Christ we have Redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

If you are a citizen of, for instance, the United States, you have the privilege of living in a free country and of sharing in the benefits of its social welfare. In like manner, whosoever is in Christ and who belongs to Him has certain privileges, among which are redemption and forgiveness of all sins. We need this redemption, because we are sinners.

Dostoievsky wrote, "Every one of us is guilty of everything before everyone".

In 2CH 15:17, Asa, king of Judah, is reproached because places of idolatrous worship were not taken away out of another country, Israel.

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Worthwhile social or religious institutions in your country can, by their example, have a good influence on like institutions in another country. Similarly, too, you are responsible for what is happening elsewhere. You need salvation, and you can have it through Jesus.

*

Jesus can save because He gave His life to make you righteous.

The Japanese philosopher Ekken writes, "If a man will not live his life for righteousness, he does not know the relative value of righteousness and life".

*

Jesus can save because He is the God-Man. Just as some chemical elements can combine only with certain other elements, not with all of them, so man is the only being who is compatible with God. God could not become animal or devil or vegetable or mineral.

Only a God-Man was possible, because we are of the same order; that is, we both have personality. Therefore, between man and God there is no possibility of distinguishing between the "I" and the "he". It is possible to distinguish God and man from animals or things. You can graft a fruit only on a fruit tree. You could never graft vegetables on a fruit tree. You could couple different breeds of sheep and get a hybrid. You cannot couple a rhinoceros and an insect. The fact that God could become man reflects the uniqueness of man. An unknown Greek poet quoted in the Bible (ACT 17:28) said rightly that we are God's offspring.

God could become only man. Men's sin attracted Him. He took it upon Himself. He gave His blood for our sins, and so He saved us.

*

You are a sinner. You are not guilty of this.

I may be born ugly or misshapen or with a low I.Q. This

can be a terrible burden on me, which I have to face and deal with, though I have no guilt in my estate.

I was born a sinner. My parents and all my forefathers were sinners. It was not my choice. The Hebrew word for "sin" means "to miss the mark". We all fall short of the glory which would be ours without the innate sinfulness. It is there without my personal guilt.

The Old Testament tells the story of how Joseph, a Jew who had become ruler of Egypt, arraigned his brother Benjamin because in his sack had been found Joseph's silver cup. This cup had really been found in Benjamin's sack. But it is also true that Joseph had ordered his slaves to hide it there without the knowledge of Benjamin or of his many brothers. The purpose of Joseph in so doing was to develop a sentiment of solidarity in his brothers, who had shown themselves in times past to be very selfish men, even going so far as to sell their brother as a slave. Joseph wished to see if they would abandon Benjamin to his fate of suffering innocently as a thief or if they would stand behind him in his extremity. Fortunately, they stood the test of loyalty, and they were able to return to their father with great honour and an abundance of gifts.

Sin is a fact of life. It is due to some ancient happenings in which you had no personal part. It is a tragedy in which we all are involved and which is too deep to delve into. It is a tragedy somehow similar to being deformed or liable to so many painful and deadly sicknesses. We do not shrug the shoulder about being in the hospital, saying, "I have not created the virus". We fight it. A sickness may have its spiritual significance and value for us. Our sinfulness has its meaning in the universe. It makes us one with all other sinners. All mutual judgment disappears.

Dostoievsky tells the story of an angel who had no peace in heaven because of the torments through which the inhabitants of hell passed. Again and again he would descend asking them to remember at least some good deed which he then would bring before God as a plea to obtain their

release. But these had done no good deeds. In the end, a lady remembered, "I gave an onion to a beggar. Is this not a good deed?" "It surely is," replied the angel. He flew to the archives of heaven and found in her file a note about the onion. He then took an onion to hell and told her, "Hold it with your hand. I also will hold it at the other end, and we will fly upwards. Thus you will arrive in heaven". They did so. The onion held well. The weight of the woman's body did not break it. She flew upward. When the others in hell saw this, they took hold of her garments, arms, feet. Others took hold of the feet of those who clung to the woman. Multitudes clustered beneath her, and the onion resisted. They all began to fly

toward heaven. But the woman, looking down, saw them all and was afraid that the skin would be torn and she would fall. So she pushed the others away with her elbows, telling them, "Remain in hell, you sinners, who have never done anything good". In that moment, the onion broke. A sinner herself, she had judged others. This was the end of all her hopes. Because we are all sinners, we should love one another and not judge.

Do not seek the cause of your innate sinfulness! It is told in the story of Adam and Eve. Accept the fact that you are a sinner. There is a purpose in your sinfulness. And there is the possibility of being saved from sin. Jesus offers salvation. Get rid of the most deadly sickness of the world: sin!

President Coolidge of the United States was a man of few words. When he returned from church one Sunday, his wife asked him, "What did the pastor preach about?" He answered, "About sin." She asked again, "And what did he say?" Coolidge replied, "He's against it."

*

Jesus loves His whole creation. I learn this from his disciples. St. Isaac prayed every day for the whole creation. So do I. Jesus must be at least as good as I am. Nobody is excluded from His love.

Now, in this creation, there is the human race, to which a

great catastrophe has happened. The race has fallen into sin. The life of every one of us has been marred by it. No one has quite escaped the stain of sin upon his name.

The remembrance of past sins makes us torment ourselves and others. There are today countless trouble-makers in the world. Nobody is a trouble-maker unless he is troubled himself. What troubles him are deeply rooted complexes, which very often are the result of past sins.

Now, how can sin be dealt with?

In times past, people would put their hands upon an animal so that atonement might be made for their sins. With

some people, the ritual sacrifice was not an animal but another man, usually a slave. Such ritual murders exist even today among primitive peoples.

The Bible tells us in HEB 10:6 that God has no pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices. Our past sins should not be allowed to torment anybody in the world. They should not torment our fellowmen. Neither should we torment ourselves with endless remorses. Past sins must not be a motive for you to fill the pockets of clergy in order to receive absolution. Sin must not be a motive for squandering energy. Quietly accept the fact that we are sinners!

We have not become sinners by sinning. You sinned because you were a sinner. You will not become a thief by stealing. You steal because you are a thief. Sinfulness is your very nature, as it is the nature of every man. Except for Jesus, nobody who has ever lived on earth in human form has been anything other than a sinner. You must accept the fact that you have a nose, and hair, and lungs. These are part of being human. Accept also the fact that you are a sinner! Sin is part of being human.

Even saints sin. The apostles were sinners. Jesus told them in MRK 13:3 that Jerusalem and the Jewish state would be so utterly destroyed that stone would not remain upon stone. They did not pray for its preservation. They were not moved by the impending tragedy. They wished just to satisfy their curiosity when this would happen, although the happening

had to mean death and slavery to millions of innocent people. They reacted to the words of Jesus like sinners.

As long as we dwell on earth, we will always have sins, as we will always have noses. They belong to human nature. But we can come to the point of having "no more conscience of sin" (HEB 10:2).

The lives of many of us are like a car which has lights only in the back, so that the driver can see through the rearview mirror how many chickens or dogs he has killed in his driving. The lights should be in the front to prevent one from killing people! There is the possibility of leading a life which is not burdened by yesterday's sins. We should be careful not to

neglect today's duties or make wrong plans for the future.

The past is erased by the fact that Jesus gave for our salvation His blood, about which Justin the Martyr writes that "it was not of human seed, but from divine power". Christ's blood was different from ours in that it could cleanse from sin.

Jesus purposely used the psychological mechanism of transfer, one of the powerful drives of the human soul.

It is part of sinful human nature to seek a scapegoat for everything that goes wrong. If you have mislaid something in your house and cannot find it, you feel better if you can blame your wife or your child. You still miss the object, but you feel relieved by the presumption that somebody else is the culprit.

A child hurts himself on a stool or table. If the mother beats the bad stool which has hurt the child, the child does not feel any more pain and begins to laugh.

Unscrupulous politicians often use this mechanism of transfer, putting the whole blame for everything wrong in the world on the Jews, the Blacks, the Whites, the Communists, the bourgeoisie, the king, the opposition party. "American imperialists" are the scapegoats for the poverty of the world. But American imperialism is only sixty years old! There was poverty long before its rise, there was poverty before the very discovery of America, there was poverty before the first capitalist made his appearance, there was poverty

under feudalism, under slavery and under primitive Communism. There is poverty under socialism, but we all need scapegoats!

Now, Jesus has also used this mechanism of transfer, which is so often misused, but in a good sense. Men seek a scapegoat, but there is something in man which makes him realize at least in part that his own convictions about the guilt of his scapegoats is illogical. Anti-Semitism existed before Hitler, tyranny before the Bolsheviks. One person or one institution cannot be blamed for social problems as old as humanity. But men need a scapegoat.

Therefore, God the Creator became man, and He tells us,

"I take the full responsibility for everything that happens in My creation. I knew when I created man that man would fall into sin, but notwithstanding I created him. So I take upon Myself the responsibility for your sins, too. Instead of seeking other scapegoats, put all your sins upon me! I will gladly expiate them. I will bear the punishment of your sins". This satisfies the human mind. Now we have found the real Lamb, on which the sins of the whole world can be placed. He dies for our sins, and we no longer bear a guilty conscience.

We have in heaven a powerful intercessor with the Father who has been tempted in all things like us.

I happened to be a prisoner for a long period of time in a Communist country. I had as fellow prisoners a multitude of former judges and prosecutors, sentenced because they had, at one time, tried Communists. When these judges and prosecutors who had formerly administered the law were themselves forced to endure the hardships of prison life, they all said that if they were ever judges again, they would never hand down the harsh sentences they had given before. They had never realized before that five years of prison written as a sentence on a sheet of paper is not the same as five years spent behind bars. Nobody spends five years in prison. You make every day of prison separately, and each minute of each day is a pain apart. The experience of suffering changes a man's outlook on the question of punishment.

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The incarnation of Jesus Christ and His death on the cross not only offered salvation to all who should believe on Him, but also enriched the Godhead! Therefore, it is written in Solomon's Song, SOS 3:11, "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion and behold king Solomon with the crown, wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals". Solomon is here a type of Jesus Christ.

From eternity Jesus Christ has had many crowns, but the most beautiful was given to Him by his blessed mother, Mary, when He, as God, espoused human nature. God had always judged men righteously, but He had judged them from the divine perspective. But when God became man, He saw human life from a human perspective. He knew by experience what it meant to be a poor child belonging to a despised race, to be hungry, to have nowhere to lay His head, to be tempted by woman, to be scourged, to be

unjustly sentenced. God has been enriched through the experience of Jesus Christ. Not only does He save, but - as it is written in the Greek of COL 2:1 - "he graces our offences". God adds to our offences the grace of His own experience of human life. He has full understanding of our offences and forgives them whole-heartedly.

*

When you visit Jerusalem, you find something which puzzles the average tourist, but which the spiritual man would expect. There are two places considered to be the garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was arrested, there are several places of crucifixion, two tombs where He lay, and several places from which He is supposed to have ascended. This corresponds entirely to the fact that one gospel puts His crucifixion at the third hour, while another puts it at the sixth. According to one gospel, Judas the traitor participated in holy communion; according to another he was absent.

Historically, the sacrifice on Golgotha and the events connected with it happened just once. But this was the expression

of a liturgical, cosmic drama happening continually at different hours in different places under different circumstances, as the walls of Jericho, the cursed city, fell - archaeologists say - at various times during its history. Those belonging to the body of Christ have passed always and continue to pass through Gethsemanes, crucifixions and ascensions. Jesus suffered that you might be saved. This was a unique event. Christians suffer in persecutions that you might know about salvation, because it is the blood of the martyrs which is the seed of the church.

*

Behind Jesus and His suffering church is the Father who sacrifices His only Son for our salvation.

Is it right to sacrifice an innocent being for the salvation of sinners? According to our human standards - no! We would not consider a man righteous who, with power to prevent it, would nevertheless give his son to be scourged, spat upon, and

crucified in order to save criminals from well-deserved punishment. God is righteous, but He has a righteousness apart, which we attribute to Him by faith. Only by doing so, only by considering righteous a God who, according to our standards, would not be so, can we apprehend that God considers as righteous sinners who, according to divine standards, would deserve only condemnation.

We cannot understand God's ways, but we know from His Word that He is prompted by love. Love frees us from sin. Love always frees. The word "free" comes from the old Etruscan word "freo", the Gothic "frion", which means "to love".

In Macedo-Romanian, they do not have the word "to love". They use in its stead "to will". God not only loves you. He "wills" you with His all-powerful will. He wills to have you. All your resistance is in vain.

He loves you in the supreme sense of the word "love", which is to want somebody even if having him means death.

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Therefore His love could not be expressed by any other means than a painful death, by way of Golgotha.

*

On Golgotha, your debt toward God was paid. Your sins were expiated.

The greatest penitent does not desire to have his sins forgiven so much as God desires to forgive them. Proof of this is that none of us is so eager to give an hour for prayer or money for a Christian cause as God was eager to give His Son for our salvation.

*

You are not like Jesus. You will continue to sin. But you will say about every sin of yours, "It is not mine; it belongs to Jesus, who will deal with it".

But will not the remembrance of past sins continue to trouble you?

I once told a mass-murderer the story of the two brothers, quoted above, in which the older gave his life for the younger, asking from him only one thing: to live henceforth, in the white garment which he had left him, an unspotted life. The murderer became a Christian. I asked him some time later if he was joyous at having been freed of his past through the sacrifice of Christ, our older Brother. His answer was, "I will be joyous only when an occasion arises in which I am able to play toward another sinner the role of the older brother and suffer for him". The occasion presented itself, and he became a happy man.

You can be happy even without such special occasions. Every man who becomes a Christian becomes an innocent sufferer because he bears punishment he no longer deserves. Immanuel Kant wrote, "The criminal has a right to punishment". A former murderer, liar, adulterer, drunkard, or sinner of whatever kind will continue to suffer the results of his past life even after his conversion. Through repentance he has become an entirely new creature who normally would not

have to suffer. The sorrows and pains which the new man suffers for the old man are a continuation of the sufferings of Christ. Do not worry: you will have your part of suffering and also the joy of being able to suffer. But you will have been saved from all your sins.

Is a man who has been cleansed from all his sins still a man? The question is legitimate. He will not be a mere man any more but a child of God, a partaker of the divine nature.

Up to a certain stage, the embryo of a man cannot be distinguished from the embryo of an ape, which does not mean that the difference does not exist. The proof of its existence is that one embryo becomes a man, while the other becomes an animal. So those around you will not be able to distinguish easily between you, a child of God, and some good moral man. But there will be a tremendous difference. There might still be many sinful things in your life, but you are saved.

*

Good moral men who do not believe in Christ are also sinners, and their fate is to suffer the pangs of hell and eternal separation from God.

In English, the word "love" means very different things in the propositions "I love apple pie", "I love Mummy", and "I love God". So "eternal" may not mean the same thing when applied to heaven and to hell. But in any case, those without Christ will be lost and will have to suffer, whereas for you, a child of God, "dying" will mean entrance into a new, beautiful world. Death wears for us a mild face.

Do not worry about whether hell is eternal in the absolute sense of the word or whether it might end after a very long period of torment! It is an idle question.

If Jesus had said this much, that the punishment for sin will be to have boiling water poured just once over your whole naked body, would you commit the sin? One thing is sure

from the revelation given by Jesus: it is that the punishment for sin will be worse than this.

*

We are saved by the grace of Christ. With our sins we pierced His heart, and from this pierced heart came blood which cleanses us from these sins.

The Bible records for use the seven words spoken by Jesus on the cross:

(1) A prayer: "Father, forgive them because they do not know what they do".

(2) A word to a thief crucified near Him: "Amen, amen I say unto you, Today you will be with me in paradise".

(3) A cry of despair: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

(4) A word to John about Mary: "Behold, your mother" and a word to her: "Behold, your son".

(5) An expression of need: "I thirst".

(6) A word of assurance: "It is fulfilled".

(7) A word of prayer again: "Father, into thy hands I surrender my spirit".

Through Christ's suffering on the cross we are saved.

But tradition records an eighth saying of the crucified Lord. Jesus, it is said, told the soldier who would soon pierce Him, "Friend, there is a shorter road to my heart than that".

*

Jesus saves not only from sin, but also from the solitude which oppresses so many. You will enter into close communion with Mary, the mother of the Lord, the saints of all ages, the angels, and more: you will walk continually in the companionship of the Lord Himself. You will also find loving brethren and sisters in the faith.

*

Jesus saves from the tyranny of the circumstances of life. The beautiful lotus flower grows out of mud and filth. It

thrives in unattractive places. It blossoms where oppressive poverty reigns. It furnishes breathless purity in stinking yards. So will be your new life: full of glory even if it is poverty- and sorrow-ridden. You will live far above your environment. Out of misery, poverty and dirt, holiness will come.

You have been a slave of your surroundings. Now you will be free.

At an auction in Lexington in the United States, a beautiful slave, Elsa, was for sale. The young Methodist minister Fairbank competed with a Frenchman. When the Frenchman hesitated to raise the bid, the auctioneer pulled Elsa's dress back, showing her breasts: "Who is going to lose a chance like this?" Later, he lifted her skirts to bare her body: 'Who is going to be the winner of this prize?" Fairbank got her and said, "I bought her to free her".

All kinds of political and religious movements wish to have you for their own pleasure and profit. Jesus desires nothing from you for His own good. He paid the biggest price - His own life - just out of love, to free you, for your good.

All honour to Pastor Fairbank. He served seventeen years in prison for anti-slavery activities. But who can put in words the honour due to Jesus, who died on the cross to set us free from the slavery of sin, death, and circumstances?

*

There is no limit to our future growth. It is not only until death that you will grow in knowledge of God and virtues and inner beauty. In a parable, Jesus teaches us to allow the children of His kingdom and the children of the wicked one to grow not until death, but until the end of the world (MTT 13:40). Christian will grow after death, too.

We have a very high aim. We wish to become like Christ.

What we are has been fixed by circumstances without our consent. Our real "I" is what we would like to be, if ordering of things were in our hands. In our hours of religious meditation and contemplation, we dream about being a

Jesus in miniature. Fortunately, we have more than our short earthly life to reach this goal.

Jesus saves from anxiety. You know that God is love, and you do not have to worry.

With God on his side, one of the heroes of the Old Testament, Joshua, slew giants like Og and Sihon. You also will defeat huge forces gathered against you. Your quietness will give you the victory.

When my son Mihai was small, he once asked me, "Father, what should I do? I am bored". I replied, "Think about God!" He said, "Why should I with my little head think about the great God? Let Him, with his big head, think about me, the little child".

Christ is the head of the church. As long as there are

no wrinkles on his brow, there is no reason for you to have wrinkles on yours.

If Jesus is the head, let Him think! The leg does not have to think, nor does the head have to walk. Therefore Jesus said, "~Take no thought~ how or what you shall speak" (MTT 10:19), and, "~In such an hour as ye think not~, the Son of man cometh" (MTT 24:44).

For a Christian it is false even to think rightly. His mind is passive in order to receive impulses from Christ. It is never active on its own.

Luther sometimes went to the window in the evening and asked, "God, is it my world or yours? Is it my Church or yours? If it is your world and your church, take care of them! I go to bed. Good night, my God!"

You do not have to carry the whole burden of your life. God carries it.

*

Freedom from anxiety in the Christian life goes very deep. You do not have to worry even about your mistakes. In every mistake you make in life lies the seed of an equivalent benefit.

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The Old Testament tells us about a lad, Joseph, who made the mistake of telling his brothers his dreams, which were offensive to them. This mistake resulted in Joseph's becoming ruler of Egypt. A Christian can have confidence even in his mistakes.

*

Just as you are not to worry about this life, so you are not to worry about the next.

Once when Baalshem, founder of the Hassidie movement in Judaism, passed through a period of despondency and feared that he had lost eternal life, he comforted himself with the words, "If I love God, why do I need eternal life?" What is eternal life if it is not the knowledge of God and His Son Jesus Christ?

Therefore, all worry for tomorrow ceases. Your food will be manna, and manna has to be collected daily. You cannot treasure it up for the next day.

Jesus saves from the fever of ambition. Jesus Himself was never worried because He was known by so few. He lived so as to make Himself worthy to be known.

Jesus will teach you not to cherish inordinate ambitions that goad you on, nor to stretch yourself beyond your reach. As a Christian, you will accept yourself with your assets and liabilities. You will never attempt the impossible, but you will measure the height of the tower for which you have material.

*

Jesus saves from complications in life. In EXO 20:25, God commands, "Thou shalt make an altar of unhewn stone", that is, a very simple one. The enemy of simplicity is our sense organs with their separate and limited functions. Chuang Tsu said, "The eye is a menace to clear sight, the ear a menace to subtle hearing, the mind is a menace to wisdom, every organ of the senses is a menace to its own capacity. Sad it is indeed that men should look upon these seats of menace as their greatest treasure". Man's real treasure is the inward

vision, an over-all perception that can come into play only when the distinction between inside and outside, between self and things, between this and that has been entirely obliterated. This is the chaos, the ~tohu-vabohu~ as the earth was when God first created it. Every system of our mind is a falsification of the creation, which is not systematic. In science, Heisenberg finished with systematics, introducing the indeterminism factor. Things do not happen according to our systems.

Most men suffer from lopsidedness. Concentration on one segment of life prevents one from appreciating the whole gamut of human experience.

When you become a Christian, you become all-embracing.

Nietzsche wrote: "The wishing not to see what one sees and as one sees, is almost the first condition for all who are party in any sense. Every partyman becomes a liar. The eye

sees according to points of view. Convictions are prisons. To be able to see, free of all convictions, is part of strength". Jesus is the truth beyond your convictions about what is true. He sets you free.

*

Men who do not belong to Jesus look at things from their own viewpoint. They do not know that every viewpoint is a point of blindness, because it incapacitates them for the understanding of every viewpoint which differs from theirs. From a certain viewpoint, a room has no entrance door. From another no window or no ceiling. You can know the room only by an intuition of the whole or by changing viewpoints.

Jesus saves you from viewpoints. Reality is not only material. It contains also spirit. So it knows itself. Jesus is the Logos, the self-knowledge of material and spiritual reality.

Jesus saves us from a limited horizon. Just as there exist sound waves beyond human perception, so there are light waves which we cannot see. We see only wave lengths between 3800 and 7600 Angstr”ms. Below 3800 are the ultraviolet, the X- and Gamma-waves; above 7600 are the micro- and radio-waves. Through instruments, we see many times as much

reality as with the unaided eye. But there exist in addition farsightedness (the church elders are called in the Greek Bible "presbyters", far-seers), insight clear vision, the mystic vision, and above all, the beatific vision, the seeing of God face to face. Whoever does not have these is still more or less blind. We consider the eye the organ of sight, when in fact it prevents us from seeing the ultimate realities. Jesus saves us from the illusions of our senses.

The sun and the moon quarrelled once. The sun said, "The leaves on the trees are green", whereas the moon said, "They are silver". The moon said, "Men usually sleep", whereas the sun said, "They are usually in motion". "Why then is there such a silence on the earth?" the moon asked. "Who told you this?" the sun wondered. "There is much noise on earth."

So they debated. And then the wind appeared. He heard

the talk and laughed. "What is this whole quarrel about? I blow when both the sun and the moon are in the firmament. During the day, when the sun shines, it is as the sun says. There is noise on earth, all men move, and the leaves are green. But during the night, when the moon shines, everything changes. Men sleep, silence reigns, and the leaves get a silver colour. When clouds cover the moon, the leaves even become black. Neither you, sun, nor you, moon, know the whole truth."

Jesus is master of sun, moon, wind, clouds. He sees reality as a whole. It is His understanding of the full truth which He imparts to His disciples.

He is the full truth because He is the only one in whom truth has never been distorted by sin. Every sinner is emotionally attached to something wrong, and this throws a shadow on the truth. Christ was sinless and knew Himself to be so. He was never hesitant or uncertain in dealing with others. He never questioned the wisdom of having been too severe. He never asked Himself if He should not have been gentler. His life was woven in one piece as was His garment. He came to each new duty untrammelled by accusing memories. Thus He was able to speak with authority. He was able to proclaim Himself as truth.

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The church to which you will belong if you receive Christ is the continuation of His incarnation. You will walk through life with the same assurance He had.

*

Without the full truth, your whole life will be a failure and, if you are a very gifted person, a catastrophe for others. The greatest mischief to mankind has been imposed by its geniuses, if they propagated with art and skill or enforced by dictatorial measures their limited viewpoints. How useful they could have been if they had renounced their own viewpoints for the truth as it is in Jesus.

*

Jesus frees you from reason in matters of faith. Luther says, "Whosoever wants to be a Christian should tear the eyes out of his reason and not know anything of it, and even kill it as one who will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven". Christians sacrifice their intellect and so get rid of its unavoidable

errors, when it interferes in a sphere where it cannot be effective.

*

Seekers after truth must take heed to two warnings. One given by Tertullian: "Christ did not call Himself the custom but the truth". The multitude worship custom. The Christian will find himself with the minority or even alone. The second warning was given by Emerson, and it derives from the first: "God offers to every man the choice between truth and repose. You cannot have them both".

*

Jesus saves from hatred.

It is remarkable that the Evangelists tell the story of Jesus' sufferings without one single bad word or epithet for those who inflicted the sufferings on Him. The only exception is Judas, who is called a traitor.

p055 VICTORIOUS FAITH

The apostles had no resentments, no grudges. Therefore there is restraint in the style of their writings.

You will be saved from hatred, too.

Why should you hate a man? If he does wrong things, it is because he does not know what he does. You who know the law of God will treat him with benevolence and justice.

*

Jesus is a very complex being. He has many aspects.

The Hebrew language does not have a word for "face" in the singular. It has only the plural "panim" - "faces". Every Hebrew word which ends in "-im" is plural. There is a deep meaning to this fact. The Hebrew language, in which the revelation of God has been given, does not acknowledge that a man has only one face. We all have many faces. Therefore, the labels "murderer", "thief", "crook", "saint", "Protestant", "Catholic", "reactionary", "revolutionist", are all false. Men cannot bear one label because they have many dimensions, and every one of us is an alloy.

Iron exists only as a concept in our mind. In nature, you will never find iron alone. You find it always allied with something else. The same is true of men. To approach or receive a man puts you already in a relationship with a very complex being. You might be very much attracted to his physical appearance, while his character might be repulsive. Highly intelligent people can be very wicked. One's relationship toward a man must be based on the different aspects of his mental, physical, and spiritual qualities.

This is all the more true in our relationship with Jesus.

To come to Jesus means to come to the saving Jesus, to the suffering Jesus, to the fighting Jesus, to the crowned Jesus, to the whole Jesus, and through Him to God.

*

It is really not easy to find God. We are before God as the judge before a defendant who refuses to testify. We must find God by means of presumptions.

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It is very difficult to find a being defined by St. Augustine as a circle, which has its centre everywhere and its boundaries nowhere.

Modern technical knowledge and the miracle of television allow men to be everywhere, the centre of a circle with a very wide boundary. To a small degree this helps us understand a Being with no boundaries at all and a centre everywhere.

If God has His centre everywhere, I reckon myself to be the centre. I find Him then within myself.

I begin by trying to see God in what He has created. In PRO 20:12, it is written that Jehovah God is the one who made the hearing ear. It is enough to think about your ears, to come to a belief in God. The curves, hills and gullies of the ears allow us to determine from which direction sound is coming and the approximate distance of its source. Every convolution and crinkle helps in the perception of sounds and echoes. When you hear a sound above you, the tiny echo added by your ears' crinkles will differ from that added to a sound coming from below

or behind, and so you will be able to discriminate. When you hear a sound coming from your right, then your right ear hears it just before your left ear does, and vice versa. Thus sounds are perceived.

If there were no God, how could you explain a flying machine or parachute as subtle and perfect as a dandelion?

The scientists in aerodynamics have calculated that it is impossible for the bumblebee to fly. But the bumblebee ~does~ fly, oblivious to the computations of aerodynamic specialists. Can you explain this, without a God?

If you do not see God, it does not mean that God does not exist. It might mean that you are blind. Now, blindness is not a positive attribute. It is just the absence of sight. Likewise, theism is the absence of knowledge of the truth. You grope if you do not know God.

*

What is God like?

A man who had been blind from birth once asked someone

to give him a glass of milk and queried, "What does milk look like?" The other man answered, "Milk is a white liquid". The blind man asked, "But what do you mean by white?" The other man answered, "White is the colour of a swan". The blind man asked, "What is a swan?" The other replied, "A swan is a bird with a bent neck". The blind man asked again, "What does bent mean?" The other man said, "I will bend my elbow and you will touch it, and then you will know what bent means".

The blind man touched the bent elbow of the other man and said, "Now I know what milk looks like!"

In a book, even in the Bible, only words can be used to tell about God. These might seem ridiculous to you, as it seems ridiculous for a blind man to know the appearance of milk from a bent elbow. But we are all very limited and by nature blind to the all-comprehensive, omniscient, omnipotent God. We come to know Him by approximations. Read the words, forget about them, look at the ear, the dandelion, the bumblebee, and simply believe

that God is!

*

The English word "God", as well as the corresponding German and Scandinavian words, comes from the Sanskrit "Hathu", which means, "The one to whom sacrifice is brought". Who is worthier of sacrifice than God? In the form "Huta", the word means, "The one invoked". Whom else should we invoke than the Creator?

The word "Deity" comes from the Sanskrit "Deia", to shine. He shines as the sun and causes you to shine. Throw yourself trustingly in His arms!

Some beg for alms. Some bestow them. In the great game of life He, the Incomprehensible, encompasses all. He enjoys everything twice, because He is the Giver and the Receiver of every gift. By uniting with God through Christ, you will also know unspeakable joys.

*

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A man came to a Christian and complained about a great sorrow. The Christian recited the creed: "I believe in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible". The man in pain answered, "It is enough. Now I am comforted".

Do not surmise that I speak to you about my God. I tell you about yours. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Richard. He is your God, too. He can be your loving Father, and as such He causes all things, visible and invisible, to work together for your good.

What is He? The French have a saying, "Un Dieu defini est un Dieu fini". (A defined God is one with whom you have finished.) We do not know the structure of an atom and yet wish to explain a holy trinity!

Tolstoi, when asked, "What do you think about God?" replied, "What can an infusory think about man?"

We do not have to speculate about Him, but simply

acknowledge Him in all our ways. A. Compton, Nobel Prize winner in physics, wrote, "The hypothesis that there exists an intelligent God gives a more plausible explanation for the universe than any other hypothesis". And Einstein, whose name the universe bears, wrote, "My religion consists in the deeply felt conviction about the existence of a higher Being, who reveals Himself in the world which we can comprehend".

If Einstein could believe in God, you can too. You are meant only to believe in Him, not to dissect Him.

A man can surely live without God, too. We all use inventions of scientists. We do not know the scientists personally. We Christians are men who have the passionate desire to know the inventions but also the Inventor of the universe.

*

When the shepherds came to see the little babe Jesus, they saw Him with Mary. Those who stood on Golgotha saw Jesus with Mary. Those who assembled in the first church assembled with Mary. Mary cannot be separated from her Son. We cannot adore Him without venerating her.

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In human conflicts, people usually take opposite viewpoints. This is what happened during the Reformation. Some had exaggerated the role of Mary so much that others simply left her out of the plan of salvation.

It is said that a Protestant and a Catholic died at the same minute, and both went to heaven. The Catholic immediately bowed before Mary and kissed the hem of her garment. She caressed him on his head and said, "You have served me faithfully. May I introduce you now to my Son?" And then, for the first time, he made the acquaintance of Jesus Christ.

The Protestant, on arriving in heaven, immediately knelt down before Jesus and showed Him his respect. Then Jesus said to him, "May I introduce you to my mother? You seem not to have known her during your earthly life".

Jesus is a Person of the Godhead. He belongs to the triune God, to the Creator. Mary is only a creature, but she

has her role in the economy of God.

In PSA 22:9, the Messiah speaking through the prophet says, "Thou art he [the Lord] that took me out of the womb". It is the only part of Scripture where a man is referred to as having been taken out of the womb of a woman. Otherwise, both in the Old and the New Testaments, the expression is that he comes from the loins of his father.

Jesus is the One born of ~the~ woman ("Haishah" in Hebrew, prophesied in GEN 3:15, the one woman with a special role in history, whose seed shall bruise the head of the serpent).

Jesus never called her mother. It would have been too common a name. He always called her "woman," hinting at the fact that she is this one woman foretold in Scripture, whose radiance cannot be put in words.

The Bible puts a question: "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"

Finding the answer is not difficult.

She whose bridegroom became her babe is the beautiful one.

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Every century she becomes more beautiful, yet sadder because of so many sufferings and betrayals.

*

The Christian is Christ, His body, His flesh, His bone. If she is the mother of Christ, she is our mother, too. Jesus is the head, we are the body. The mother of the head is also the mother of the body. Luke calls Jesus her firstborn, because we are also her children.

When Mary sees you, she sees Jesus. No child is ever too dirty for a mother to wash, too bruised by any fall for her not to kiss away the hurt, too headstrong and selfish for her not to love.

God honoured Mary. Why should I not? She is near to every cross and to every altar, as she was near to Jesus on Calvary.

I wonder only that our Orthodox and Catholic friends do not take heed to the words of the Psalmist (PSA 71:16): "I will make mention to thy righteousness, even of thine ~only~". Mary does not like it when attention is diverted from God to her, a humble servant.

I am also not at ease when she is called "mother of God". The council of Chalcedon had all the reason in the world to give her this title as against the Nestorians, who did not acknowledge the unity of the two natures of Jesus, the human and the divine, in one single person. But in everyday use, this title degrades God. If God has Mary as mother, He has St. Joseph as adoptive father. In the end, we have a God with a multitude of aunts and uncles and cousins.

So there are mistakes on both sides in the attitude taken toward Mary.

*

There are some Christians who have as little pity for the suffering Jesus as those who tore His divine flesh with scourges. But there are others whose supreme joy it is to share his sufferings.

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In ZEC 11:1 it is written: "Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars". Quite a demand! When you see a fire approaching, open your doors that it may burn down your possessions!

Knowing that our Lord has suffered for us, we Christians open the door to sufferings, even very severe ones. We open with gladness and receive sufferings as friends.

In 2PE 1:14, the apostle speaks about his impending crucifixion and says, I know "that shortly ~I must put off~ this tabernacle" (he means the tabernacle of his body).

Now, he did not put off his body; he did not commit suicide. He was crucified head-down by Roman soldiers. But

St. Peter had so readily opened the door and agreed to his crucifixion, as foretold by Christ, that he considered it an act of his own. This is the Christian attitude toward suffering. We will it.

*

As Christians we are unruffled when bad words are spoken against us. We know that a wicked man who reproaches a Christian is like one who spits at heaven: the spittle does not soil heaven but comes back and defiles his own person. The slanderer flings dust upon another only to have the wind return it to himself. The virtuous man cannot be hurt by slander, and the misery another would inflict on him returns to the sender.

It makes no difference to the Christian whether he is praised or insulted.

A man asked St. Macarius, "What does it mean to die to the world?" The saint answered, "Go to the cemetery, stop before every grave, and say to the dead bad, insulting words". The man wondered at this command but did as he was told. Macarius sent him again, this time to stop before every grave and say flattering words to the dead. This he also did.

Macarius then asked, "Were the dead angry when you insulted them?" "No", was the answer. "Were they pleased when you complimented them?" The answer was again "No".

Macarius pointed out the intended lesson: "This then is what it means to die to the world".

We accept suffering under any false accusation. My wife, Sabina, adds at this point: "Suffering inflicted upon us by the will of God does not contradict love. It is one of its methods. Therefore Jesus calls God, who willed His crucifixion, ~Father~".

St. Joan d'Arc was burnt as a witch, St. Thomas Moore was executed for treason. Likewise Bonnhoeffer. In Russia, some Christians are falsely accused of ritual murder, collaboration with the Nazis, theft, etc., and are given severe sentences.

*

Whoever becomes a Christian says with St. Peter, in LUK 22:33, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death".

Every Christian goes to a sort of prison. It is written in the Song of Solomon that the Christian is a sealed fountain, a closed garden. It is as difficult to visit him as it is to see a prisoner. In the ark which saved him, Noah was shut up. The wise virgins were locked in the bridal room with their bridegroom. You cannot be His except behind a locked door.

Every Christian goes with Jesus to death. He dies to sin, he dies to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

*

I have seen suffering Christians dance for joy. Can you understand why?

There was once a fiddler who played so beautifully that everybody danced. A deaf man who could not hear the music considered them all mad. Those who are with Jesus in suffering hear this music to which other men are deaf. They dance and do not care if they are considered insane.

Other men could not understand the joy of the suffering Christians, just as a frog in a well could not understand the mighty ocean.

The Christian can rejoice even in the most unbelievable

circumstances. One of the possible translations of the Hebrew title of Psalm 4 is "Song of the one who rejoices when He is vanquished".

But there are many tears mingled with the joys of Christians.

The friends of Jesus suffered over the fact that He rode towards Jerusalem at the pace of the slowest animal, a donkey. He chose the pace Himself.

They tried at least to make His riding more pleasant. They put their coats on the donkey. Others put their coats on the road, in the path of the animal, so that the garments were torn and tangled in the feet of the donkey. The pace of Jesus was slowed down even more.

We suffer because peoples chose constantly to release Barabbas, a murderer, rather than the Messiah who came to save them. They do it even today.

*

Those who do not seek God in suffering men will not find Him. Meister Eckhart says: "You seek something through God, and you are like somebody who would make out of God a candle to use for its light. Once you have found what you sought, you throw away the candle. Some people would love God as they love their cattle. The cattle you love for their milk, and for the cheese, and for your own need". But those who love God for Himself, not only for His gifts, love Him also in suffering men.

How sorry we are for those who have adored Christ in the spirit, who have looked up to His divinity, who have bowed before the altar in His sanctuaries, and who do not recognize Him when He appears to them in the form of a sufferer.

When St. Joan d'Arc was in prison, no hand was lifted to help her. Charles VII, king of France (whom she had fought for), did not make the slightest attempt to free her. She was abandoned by all men. She never received from anybody even one token of sympathy. She was like Christ, utterly forsaken. At the same time, the king and others who could have helped

her adored Christ in their sanctuaries. This has been true also in modern times, under the Nazis and the Communists.

*

Christians should weep with those who weep, but above all they should console Christ with their tears of sympathy.

St. Th,rŠse of Lisieux said: "It is for ~us~ to console our Lord, and not for Him to console us. His heart is so tender that if you cry, He will dry your tears. But thereafter he will

go away sad, since you did not suffer Him to repose with tranquillity within you. Our Lord loves the glad of heart, the children that greet Him with a smile. When will you learn to hide your troubles from Him or to tell Him gaily that you are glad to suffer for Him?" When St. Therese got up in the morning, she would put the crucifix on her pillow while she dressed and say, "My Jesus, you have toiled and wept enough in your three and thirty years on this miserable earth. Rest you, today! It is my turn to suffer and fight". "Let us give our Lord pleasure. Let us by self-sacrifice give Him souls!"

St. Th,rŠse of Lisieux once reproached a nun for complaining so much about her troubles to her sisters. The nun answered, "You are right. Such was my own thought. Henceforth my tears will be for God alone. I shall confide my worries to One, who will understand and console me". To which St. Th,rŠse replied, "Tears for God! That must not be! Far less to Him than to His creatures ought you to show a mournful face".

*

At the Last Judgment, nobody will be asked how much he suffered but only how much he loved.

St. Maria Goretti, who was stabbed by a murderer, said while dying, "I wish to have him near me in paradise". This murderer, who had become a Christian in prison, attended the ceremony of beatification for the same Maria.

Christians, while suffering at the hand of enemies, love them.

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They can do so because they have before their eyes the great innocent Sufferer - Jesus.

A Christian also becomes a ruthless fighter. Look only at Martin Luther in his great struggle.

And a Christian is no quitter. He will fight to the end all the enemies of love and truth.

A Christian never submits to his enemies. I knew a Christian in a solitary cell where there was room for only three steps to and fro. He never made three steps but only two. He -

not his jailors - decided what he had to do.

*

We have an example of a fighting spirit in Jesus. He knew that the priests and rulers would send the multitude to arrest Him in Gethsemane. He who recommended that others flee in times of danger Himself stood by.

Not only this. Sometimes He was very aggressive, as for instance when He drove out the merchants from the temple. Then, too, His disciples were armed. They were armed because He willed it so.

The state motto of Virginia (U.S.A.) consists of the words of Brutus as he drove his knife into Caesar: "Sic semper tyrannis" (so alway to tyrants). This was the spirit in which Jesus had lived from childhood and which He passed on to His disciples. The only holy book which He left them was the Old Testament, a book of epic and hard fights.

But the truth is always dual in nature. On the other hand, you see in Jesus a great leniency toward the wicked. He recommends, for example, that they not be uprooted but to grow together with the good until the time of the Last Judgment.

This does not mean that Jesus ever abandons the fight. But a marksman levels his gun at a point higher than the target.

The wicked man is driven by a force over which he has no control, the power of sin. Sometimes you have to fight hostile

men as such. You have to fight men who keep you from fulfilling your duty. The Satan about whom Paul complains in 1TH 2:18 for putting obstacles in the way of his preaching might very well have had a human name. But the Christian fight is not so much a fight against men as a fight against Satan and against sin, which is not primarily a stain on the soul but a betrayal of a friend, Jesus. Our fight is against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

*

We have to fight against pride.

After washing the feet of His disciples, Jesus dried them. Wet feet show that the feet were dirty and needed to be washed. Dry feet show simply that they are clean. Jesus does not wish us to be washed sinners, but clean men!

We too are called to wash away the sins of others in all humility. St. John of the Cross said, "Where there is no love, place love, and you will find love".

*

Jesus served even more than was needed. His simple death would have been enough to atone for our sins. But He took upon Himself sufferings which were not prophesied - as, for instance, the crown of thorns - so that even if you have committed the most surprising sins and crimes, crimes yet unequalled and known by nobody, you might be very sure that the sacrifice of Jesus is enough to save you from those crimes.

Since He humbled Himself to the uttermost, you must fight your pride to the uttermost.

We should do more for Him than we are asked. The servant who does only the things demanded of him is called by Jesus unprofitable. When He wished to enter into Jerusalem, He humbly asked for a donkey to sit on. Today Christians fly with jets and drive with cars to proclaim Him. Do not restrict your vision! Magnify Him, which means, make Him

bigger! Do not make Him always sit on an ass, do not make of Him the God of a small confession, of one race, of one nation, or of one religious point of view!

God had ordered that His temple be a tent. David gave more than God demanded. He decided that God must have a palace for a temple.

Christ also did not only everything God commanded Him to do for our salvation - He did more.

*

While fighting, the Christian yet serves with gentleness. What Jesus praised most in MTT 26:10-13 was a woman's act, a poetic gesture, that served no useful purpose. In the end, what is the use of the sufferings of martyrs? If they had been clever, they could have prevaricated and survived. But there is beauty in sacrifice, not utility. Beauty is appreciated by Jesus. Lead your fights beautifully!

*

Fight without fear, knowing that the ship of Christ navigates contrary to the law of hydrodynamics. It can float even when it is full of water (LUK 8:23). At that point the calming of the tempest by Jesus did not make any difference. Ships full of water drown even when the sea is quiet. The advance of the church is a continuous miracle.

*

We have to fight to win souls. Jesus said that we should be fishers of men. Now let us begin by trying to catch the greatest Fish. The symbol of Jesus in the first centuries was the fish, called in Greek Ichtys, a word composed of the initials of the words "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour" in Greek. Let us catch this great Fish, and then we will have other fishes, too.

p068 VICTORIOUS FAITH

After having suffered for us, Jesus was resurrected and ascended to heaven, where he was crowned. He had emptied Himself to become a man. Now He is again on the throne of God.

God identifies Himself with us. In Hebrew and in Greek, it is not written "the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob" but simply "the God Abraham, Isaac and Jacob". He is a God who has identified Himself with us. If He is crowned, we are crowned. "Isaac" means in Hebrew "he will laugh". He is a God who has victory in His pocket. He is the God Isaac. He will laugh.

He takes our names, even if they are sometimes ridiculous, like the name of Jacob, which means "holding by the heel".

No one has so stained himself with sin that God would not be ready to identify with him. You can be crowned together with Jesus! And then you will lead the life of a crowned being, a life of happiness.

There exists a God whose name is "God Abraham, God Isaac". One of His names is "God Richard". The church fathers said that God has all names. God through His church wishes to identify with men.

When I first read the New Testament thoroughly, it seemed to me a ridiculous book. St. Paul writes about having been crucified and buried with Jesus and about being seated in heavenly places, assertions which could not possibly be true.

Paul had not been crucified with Jesus. Jesus died between two thieves, and that was all. Paul could not have been buried. Whoever has been laid in a tomb dead does not write epistles about this experience. When he wrote that he was seated in heavenly places, he was seated in a prison cell. How can a book considered holy by millions of good minds contain such fantasies or outright lies?

The answer to my puzzle I found in St. Thomas Aquinas. He says, "Actiones et passiones sunt suppositorum". (Actions and passions belong to the person.) It is not my stomach that is hungry, but ~I~. ~I~ walk, not my legs. ~I~ think, not my brain. Every member of mine is me. ~I~ am healthy, sick, rich, poor.

~I~ die. The whole person is involved in every action and passion.

Now, Christians belong to one great body, Jesus Christ. Just as I am hurt if you kick my shins, so Christ is hurt or caressed in the things which are done to us, His members. Do not believe that I speak about Christians constituting the body of Christ in some mystical sense. St. Paul writes, "We are members of his body". This could be interpreted in a spiritual sense. He adds "[members] of his flesh". This perhaps could also be spiritualized. (What can an exegete not spiritualize?) So, to be very sure, he emphasizes his meaning, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, ~and of his bones~" (EPH 5:30).

I am a member of His body. I am involved in everything which has happened and now happens to Him. I have been crucified and buried with Him. I am seated with Him in heavenly places. I will return with Him in glory. He is with me in my daily life. Luther says rightly, "The Christian is Christ". I identify myself with Him, He with me. Our religion is one without pronouns.

*

Knowing that they are crowned together with Jesus, Christians need fear no one, because fear, the soul's greatest enemy apart from sin itself, will have disappeared.

We can be calm in all things. As you grow old, you do not have to ask yourself what you will do in your old age, but what God will do with your old age. If you come to great age, He will make your age be great.

*

Crowned with Jesus, you can fulfil the words of St. Bernard of Clairvaux: "Let your ears fast from rumours, praise, slander, gossip, controversy, and your tongue fast from detraction, murmuring, faultfinding".

*

p070 VICTORIOUS FAITH

The serenity of the crowned believer resists in the most difficult circumstances.

In a Siberian prison, Catholic nuns refused to lay down their garbs and take up the prison uniform, which they considered to be the sign of the Antichrist. So they were taken to the bathroom, and while they were in the bath, their garments were changed. When they emerged and still refused to put on the prison uniform, they were forced to sit out in the cold, where the temperature was forty below zero. Undaunted, they began to say their prayers. The woman doctor of the prison, a Jewish Trotskyite, told them, "You are committing suicide". They did not answer but continued their prayers. Even when the male warders entered, the sixty nuns did not move. The director of the prison feared to bring in Communist youth to dress them by force because he was afraid they would be contaminated by the

courage of these nuns.

By this time the shivering women were blue with the cold. Naked, they were driven over the snow to their cells. A major, director of the prison, said: "It was easier to fight with the Nazis than these nuns".

Each nun passing the major bowed to him, saying, "May God forgive you". Some of them could no longer walk and were supported by others.

So they ran over the snow, singing the "Our Father" in the old Gregorian melody. Not one of them fell sick. In their cells, they dressed themselves with some rags from other prisoners. They had been six hours in the cold.

A second woman doctor asked the Jewess, Doctor Bravermann, "How do you explain the fact from a medical point of view that not one of them fell sick?" The atheist Jewish doctor answered, "They have explained it themselves by singing the words, 'Our Father who art in heaven'."

*

Crowned with Jesus, you are free from the worry of calculating results. You quietly follow your impulses, knowing that the law of God is written in your new heart.

p071 VICTORIOUS FAITH

You know that God is as much your Father as He was the Father of Jesus Christ, and that He cares for every detail of your life.

In DEU 16:6-7, God commands that at Passover the Jews, His chosen people, eat a lamb. A lamb can be prepared in many ways: it can be grilled, fried, broiled, cooked. But surely roasted lamb is the best kind, and you see that in verse seven God cares even about such a detail and recommends how the lamb should be prepared in order to appeal to the taste. He acts as if He were chief waiter in a big restaurant who wishes to recommend what to eat. So He says, "Thou shalt roast the lamb".

*

When you know that you are sustained by such a God,

everything around you becomes beautiful.

Only the Bible comes from God - not the titles in the Bibles. You sense this immediately. Jesus tells a parable about a man who sowed good wheat in his field, only to have an enemy come and sow tares. In the end, the tares were burned and the good wheat was taken into the barn. Angels made the determination. The title in the Bible is "The parable of the tares". Why it is not "of the wheat and the tares"?

Jesus tells a parable about ninety-nine sheep that remained faithful and one that was lost. This is called by men "The parable of the lost sheep".

Jesus tells another parable about a good father and his two sons, one of whom remained with the father, while the other left with his inheritance, squandered it, and then returned home. This is called "The parable of the prodigal son". Why not "The parable of the good father" or "The parable of the repenting son"?

The titles have not been well chosen.

The children of God should look for what is beautiful and true, because their souls and minds have been purified through

the hygiene of worship. They should avoid such misleading titles.

Being crowned with Jesus, you can lead a life full of love. You risk nothing in loving without being loved. That is how Christ loved us. Though despised and forsaken, He yet became Lord of all.

If you have reached this point in life, stay with it!

A certain son was a very great lover of nature. With much difficulty, he succeeded in convincing his comfort-loving father to climb on a hill during a walk. From the top of the hill the son, much moved, exclaimed, "Look, father, how beautiful it is down below!" To which the father angrily replied, "You drove me to this height in order to make me see how beautiful it is down below?"

Do not look back! Do not look into the valley from which you have come.

Crowned with Jesus, you have arrived at the very peak. Stay there and look up.

*

If you believe in the crowned Jesus, you can accept what every day brings you, since your days are preordained by a loving God.

In JHN 18:31-32, we read that the Jews did not wish to execute Jesus according to their own laws, which prescribed punishment by stoning. They decided rather that He should be crucified and not stoned. They believed that they did this of their own free will, not realizing their decision had actually been foreordained. They shouted "Crucify him!" so that the words of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke, signifying what death He should die.

So all things are foreordained in our lives. We are like people viewing a movie. Once I surprised myself in a theatre by praying for someone on the screen, an innocent man in deadly danger, but the outcome had long since been

decided. It was "foreordained" on the reel in the operator's booth.

*

We live favoured lives. Christians not only do not have free will. By virtue of their being Christians they agree beforehand with everything that is in God's plan for them. Like angels, they simply fulfil God's decisions.

As fire changes into fire everything thrown into it, so God changes into Godhead everyone who approaches Him. The will of God and the will of the individual become one in purpose, while remaining two wills.

*

Christians welcome brother Death.

My body has had many shapes: that of a foetus, that of a babe, of a child, of an adult, of an old man. It has sometimes been healthy, sometimes sick. Why should I worry about the fact that the body will take the shape of a corpse? I am not my body; I will remain. I am indestructible.

In AMO 8:2, the Lord says to the prophet: "The end is come upon my people of Israel". But here, even the almightyness of God has a limit. Not even He could destroy the people of Israel. This people is safe.

*

To die does not mean to disappear. It means to leave through one door and enter another.

Believing in the crowned Jesus, our hearts become quiet. God can shut the many doors surrounding us but never the one above us.

*

Believing in the crowned Jesus, you have a right to holy communion. One such communion is worth all the troubles of a lifetime.

p074 VICTORIOUS FAITH

Christians are members of the body of Christ, flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones. He is the high priest. The whole high priest, head and body, stands before God. Christ, who sacrificed His earthly body on Calvary two thousand years ago, now sacrifices His mystical body in the cross-burdened lives of the believers. Christ is represented on the communion table. The Christian is Christ. We are also in the bread and in the chalice. So are all our brethren from all ages and places, even the frailest ones.

From the sacrifice of her Chief, commemorated in holy communion, the church learns to sacrifice herself and all her possessions.

At holy communion, the one who officiates and the communicants must also say of themselves, "This is my body, ... this is my blood, shed for the remission of sins".

St. Cyprian wrote, "The sacrifice of our Saviour is not celebrated with the required sanctity if our offering of ourselves does not correspond to his passion".

St. Augustine taught, "God knows nothing better, all-powerful though He be, God can do nothing more precious than the most holy eucharist" (the ancient name for holy communion).

Catholics and Orthodox on one side and Protestants on the other have debated for centuries the question of tran-substantiation, that is whether the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus Christ. It would be much more important to believe that we are trans-substantiated, that our bodies are really His and that His blood circulates through our veins. Then our lives would be godly, strengthened by the reminder of holy communion.

*

You have the saving, the suffering, the serving, the fighting, the crowned Jesus.

Therefore you can cry defiantly to your passions that though they conquer you a million times, they will never vanquish you, that you will crush them in the end however long the

struggle may be. The essence of the Christian religion is not winning, but daring. Jesus is the way, not only the prize.

*

What should you do to lead a victorious life?

Generally speaking, the question "What should I do?" has no place in the Christian religion. There is no answer to it, because the question is wrong. No matter how much you do, you can never repay the gifts of God. With how much would you pay for having eyes? The Christian simply says, "I have received countless gifts, and I have confidence that the One who has been so generous toward me till now will continue to give. He will give victory, too".

The Christian also avoids wishing for what God does not

give. Temporary riches are gained by requiring, spiritual gifts by renouncing.

Simple trust in God and renunciation of what He does not give will assure one of victory.

The Christian has no goals of his own to attain. He is passively at the disposal of God. Therefore, he is sanctified without being strained. Strain exists only when one is goaded on by ambition. But your sanctification is not your ambition. It is God's ambition for you. You will attain it by being relaxed.

*

When you become a Christian you begin a new chapter in your life. Musicians tune their instruments before playing. Do the same! You will have to play a different kind of music.

*

Young David, a shepherd boy, was brought to the court of King Saul and soon became everybody's favourite. Once, when the court was assembled, he asked the king's permission to play a harp which the king had near his throne. The king replied, "No use! I have been deceived by the one who made it for me. Nobody could ever play on it. It produces only discord".

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David insisted. When he touched the cords of the harp with his fingers, lo, the instrument began to rejoice and weep and rejoice again at his comr brethren from he played was so glorious that when he finished, everyone was in tears.

The king asked him, "How is it that all the others could not play on this harp and you could?" David answered, "All the others tried to play their own songs on the harp, and the harp refused to obey. I have played to the harp its own song. I reminded her of the beautiful times when she was a young tree in the forest, when birds chirped in her branches and her leaves were bathed in sun - and you heard the joy of the harp. Then I told her of my sympathy for the suffering through which she passed on the terrible day when men cut down the tree. But its death had not been in vain. For out of its wood a harp was

made, on which God's praises could be played. And the harp rejoiced when she understood her calling".

When the Messiah comes, many will try to play their own songs on His harp. The result will be a Christianity of terrible ugliness. But there will always be the chosen ones who will play His songs, the song of His eternal glory, the song of His humiliation in becoming a babe in a manger, the song of His life of sorrow, the song of Calvary, the song of His resurrection and ascension.

Tune your instrument for playing His songs!

*

In "The parable of the tares" Jesus teaches that the devil can imitate God well. He can sow tares so similar to the good wheat that even the elect cannot be trusted to distinguish rightly between them.

Never trust your own judgment in matters of faith. Christ has instituted the church as a fellowship which should establish the rules of Christian behaviour according to the Word of God. It is not right to do what you consider right. You can be honestly deceived.

By believing in Jesus, you enter into the communion of saints. You are in communion with the saints of old, such as

St. Paul and Silvanus, who continue to give thanks in heaven for your faith (1TH 2). You are in communion with the saints of all ages as well as those who are your contemporaries.

I have told you to leave the disciples in order to come to Jesus. Once you are His, seek the disciples.

*

The church has a code of rules, but it is not fixed in all matters. It has changed many times throughout history. Except for the main tenets of behaviour, the church leaves the decision for your Christian life to your own conscience enlightened by the Word of God. Spiritual guides who claim to know all the answers to every individual case prove by this that

they are false teachers. The true teacher says about many things, "I do not know".

*

You will have to make your own decisions even in very big matters. There is such a thing as a moral relativism.

Even the commandment "Do not kill" is not absolute. Not every killing is wrong. How mankind would have been benefited if a plot against Hitler at an early stage had succeeded.

But the church knows about such extraordinary circumstances, too. As a member of the church, you drive on well established rails. The great lines of behaviour, including the possibility of exceptions, are fixed. The church has wise pastors. Take your own decisions, but consult them. One of the best decisions you could make is to obey your pastor.

*

The church has had and still has many true saints.

I will tell a few episodes from the lives of these saints. Some of them will seem extravagant. But exceptional men cannot be judged by ordinary standards. They are different from anyone else.

*

p078 VICTORIOUS FAITH

The governor asked St. Justin the Martyr, "Listen, you so- called man of the Word, believed to possess true wisdom; if you were scourged and executed now, do you believe you would enter into heaven?" Justin answered, "I trust firmly that I will live there if I endure all this. I am full of this certitude". The governor threatened him again, only to be told again, "Our ardent desire is to suffer for our Lord Jesus Christ and then to be saved".

*

The man now known as St. Anthony the Great once heard in church the familiar verse, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow me".

(MTT 19:21). Anthony, as if alone in the church, knew the words were addressed to him. Jesus had uttered them and the evangelist had recorded them for him. Anthony straightway went out and got rid of his 120 acres of land and 300 sheep. Everything went to the poor. He induced his sister to follow suit. She became a nun, he a monk.

Bread, salt and water were his diet once a day; sometimes once a week. He lived in a ruined castle on the top of a mountain. Every six months, bread was brought. There he stayed some twenty years.

Every night was passed in prayer. Once he admonished the rising sun, "Why do you turn me from contemplating the splendour of the true Light?"

After twenty years of meditation, he re-entered active life. During the persecution of Maximin, he journeyed to Alexandria to comfort the imprisoned faithful. (In our day not one single church leader has thought to do such a thing.) He visited the convicts condemned to work the mines in the Sudan.

He hid St. Athanasius from his persecutors.

Once in a vision the saint had seen the earth covered with so many devilish snares that it seemed impossible for anyone

to escape falling into them. He asked God how they could be avoided. He was answered by one word - ~humility~.

*

A man who was a widower decided to enter the monastery. He had an only daughter who insisted that she go with him, disguised as a man, so that she might care for him. She was received among the monks. She enchanted all the brethren through her voice and her skill in cooking and washing. Believed to be a man, she won the confidence of the abbot. He sent her together with two other monks into town for the purpose of shopping. Now the innkeeper at whose establishment they were accustomed to stay had a daughter. She became pregnant after an affair with a soldier, who did not wish to marry her. In despair, she asked, "What will I do? Father will kill me! " He replied, "Tell him that this young nice monk raped you". This is what she did.

When Theodora (this was the name of the monk) returned from town, the abbot, who by now had received a complaint from the father, was ready to beat him. "How could you bring such shame upon our monastery?" he thundered. Theodora was afraid that one of the other monks might have committed the sin. She knew that, if found guilty, he would be expelled from the monastery and might fall into even worse sins. So she fell on her knees before the abbot and said, "Forgive me, all my gross sins". The abbot drove her out. She lived as a beggar at the gate of the monastery, bowing to every monk who passed by with the words, "Forgive me, a miserable sinner".

After many years, the abbot pardoned her. She could re-enter the monastery but was put to the most menial tasks and was despised by all. When she died, her body had to be washed. Then it was discovered that she had been a girl and that she had covered somebody else's sins. Since that time, she has been honoured as St. Theodora.

*

p080 VICTORIOUS FAITH

St. Paphnutius sold himself as a slave to a comedian with the sole aim of converting him. The conversion took twenty years, whereupon the comedian set him free. So he sold himself in order to relieve the hardships of a poor widow.

When released the second time, he was given a cloak, a tunic, and a gospel as presents. The cloak went to the first beggar, the tunic to the second. It was easy to do this. But how could he keep a gospel when there were so many poor people? He sold it and gave away this money, too.

Nothing but dry bread and water ever entered his mouth, and little besides Scripture ever came out of it.

*

St. Cyprian wrote to the imprisoned Christians of his time, "You have no ganents on your body and only a little bread as food, but you are clothed with Christ in glory. Man does not live on bread alone".

*

The motto of St. John Chrysostom was, "Glory to God for all things". He finished his letters from exile with these words. After being dragged by soldiers through the winter snow, he died in a little wayside church. His last words while lying on the cold stone floor were, "Glory to God for all things".

*

Thais had been a courtesan in Egypt. St. Serapion, a monk, converted her. He had put on normal clothes and had waited in line as if to receive her favours. She was so impressed with his words that she forthwith burned her furniture, dresses, and the accoutrements of other luxury. Serapion took her to a convent, where he kept her three years in a cell with a sealed door. Her diet was bread and water. The whole time she said just one prayer: "You who have made me, save me".

At the end of the three years, the monk had a vision, in which he saw a splendid mansion prepared in heaven. He was sure that it was for St. Anthony, but a voice told him, "This

place is for Thais". Serapion unsealed her door. After fifteen days, she passed away.

In 1899, excavations uncovered her cell and that of Serapion, with inscriptions which made their identification possible.

*

Old Zosimus saw in the wilderness a naked being. She cried from afar, "I am a woman. Throw me your mantle to cover myself". She confessed to him that she had led a shameful life all during her youth. At one time she went to a big Christian festival in Jerusalem to engage in her profession. While there, she came to her senses and asked Christ to obtain for her the grace of repentance. Since then, she said, she had spent 47 years in the desert, eating berries and herbs. Her clothes had fallen to pieces.

She asked Zosimus to return the next year with holy communion. She took communion, sang, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace ...," and begged the priest to return in

Lent. But this time he found her dead.

You will have recognized the story of St. Mary the Egyptian.

*

Robbers broke into the cell of St. Macarius and then spoiled the monastery, too. He assisted them, carrying out divers things which they had overlooked.

On another occasion, he caught thieves stealing into the cell of a fellow monk. He warned them to move or before they got caught.

*

St. Polycarp, when faced with the alternative of being devoured by wild beasts or of denying Christ, said, "Fourscore and six years have I been His servant and He has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme the Lord who saved me?" He died a martyr's death.

*

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When St. Perpetua was thrown into the circus under the Roman emperors to be devoured by wild beasts, she fell and her thighs were seen. She covered them, mindful of modesty rather than of pain.

St. Francis of Assisi during a sleepless night was persuaded that the song of a nightingale was an act of worship. So the whole night long he chanted the praises of God alternately with the bird.

*

St. Thomas Moore was in prison because he refused to acknowledge that King Henry VIII, who was at that time seeking sanction for divorce and remarriage, was head of the church. The wife of Thomas reproached him, "Why should you stay in gaol full of lice and attacked by rats when all the bishops have acknowledged the king's claim to lead the church? Your house is waiting for you". He replied, "Is my house nearer to heaven than

this cell? Will not the same death take me from my house, too?" He remained steadfast in his refusal and was beheaded.

*

In the beginning of the past century, the bloody queen Ranavalona reigned over Madagascar. She hated Christians because they opposed the slave trade. She ordered all missionaries out of the country and commanded that all Bibles be burned. Any avowed Christian had all his property confiscated and was sold as a slave or killed.

Christians gathered in the woods. They formed underground churches. But the queen could not take away from them the Spirit of God. And they were encouraged by examples of heroism of martyrs like Rasalama, a woman who went to death singing, and others who were burnt alive rather than

deny their faith. Some who were thrown from cliffs remain faithful to the end. This persecution lasted for fifteen years.

*

William Wilberforce dedicated his whole public career to the cause of the slaves. And he succeeded. First he stopped ocean traffic in slaves by British ships. Then he obtained the emancipation of the slaves in the British Empire. At midnight on July 31, 1834, 800,000 slaves became free. It was Wilberforce's deed.

His whole fight was animated by the love of Christ. He said, "God Almighty has set before me the objective of suppressing slavery".

He left us this teaching: "No inner feelings ought to be taken as a demonstration of the Spirit being in any man, but only the change of disposition and conduct".

*

From pastor Kaj Munk, killed for his faith by the Nazi in Denmark, we have the words, "There are men who believe that you can somehow salt the truth. They suppose that you can hold it hidden in a barrel well salted and use a part of it when the need

arises. But we, too, have men with a living faith that truth exists in order to be said - and that it exist only when it is said. These good men are of the same stuff as John the Baptist. Like him, they sense fear for their own fate and fear even more the damages and sufferings which the naked truth can bring upon their people. But one day they realize that cowardice must not bind their tongue anymore, that the sufferings which come to people because of hypocrisy, silence and lies are a thousand times more dangerous. We have also in our country a Herod, who commits incest with strange gods. I have named the spirit of compromise which does not shrink back from undignified actions for the sake of comfort".

*

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Pastor Bonnhoeffer, a German martyred under Hitler, wrote from prison: "I have become perfectly sure of my faith. It has resisted unshattered under heavy burdens. There has never been a moment of hesitation or despair ... However strange it may sound: I have learnt in prison to rejoice".

When called out of his cell to be executed, he uttered these words: "This is the end: the beginning of life".

*

An American pastor preaching in 1954 in India was asked to participate in a service of prayer for the sick. One young woman with a wild look in her eyes refused to come into the service but kept apart, surrounded by people who said that she was demon-possessed. When the pastor endeavoured to kneel beside her, she became frantic and rolled over on her mat unconscious. He prayed in the name of Christ for her health. At the end of the prayer, she opened her eyes and they were normal and full of light. A beautiful smile came over her face as she stretched out her hands for him to lift her to her feet. She was marvellously delivered through the name of Jesus.

There are pastors who are real saints to whom God has given such power.

*

David Brainerd died in the early part of the eighteenth

century at the age of 29, after having borne great hardships while preaching the gospel to the American Indians.

In his diary he recorded his struggles: "I lodge on a bundle of straw, my labour is hard and extremely difficult, and I have little appearance of success to comfort me ... The Dutch hate me because I preach to the Indians". Insinuations were brought against him as though he were training them to cut people's throats.

One August 20 he wrote: "Having lain in a cold sweat all night, I coughed much bloody matter this morning. On August 22: "Continued my course up the river ... at night

lodged in the open wood". August 24: "Visited some of the Delaware Indians and discoursed with them about Christianity".

He has left behind a few precious thoughts:

"It is worth the while to follow after God through a thousand snares, deserts and death itself".

"God has made me willing to do anything that I can do, consistent with truth, for the sake of peace, and that I might not be a stumbling block to others. For this reason I can cheerfully forego and give up what I verily believe, after the most mature and impartial search, is my right, in some instances. God has given me that disposition that, if this were the case that a man has done me a hundred injuries and I (though ever so much provoked by it) have done him one, I feel disposed and heartily willing humbly to confess my fault to him, and on my knees to ask forgiveness of him; though at the same time he should justify himself in all the injuries he has done me and should make use of my humble confession to blacken my character the more and represent me as the only person guilty".

"Oh, it is an emblem of heaven itself to love all the world with a love of kindness, forgiveness and benevolence; to feel our souls sedate, mild and meek; to be void of all evil surmisings and suspicions and scarce able to think evil of any man upon any occasion; to find our hearts simple, open and free to those that look upon us with a different eye".

*

In the Soviet Union, a pastor was led to prison, together with a teenager whom he had brought to conversion. The mother of the lad threw stones at the pastor, who turned to her and said, "I admire your motherly love".

*

God is beautiful in His saints.

*

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You do not have to try to lead a heroic Christian life. It is as futile to try to be a hero as it is futile to try to be an elephant. Very few have the stuff of which great saints and martyrs are made.

It is good for Christians to know that in the Roman, medieval, Nazi, and Communist persecution, the majority of Christians were not ready to suffer and die for their faith. Only a minority faced torture and death with courage. But the others were also Christians. God saw how sorry they were for their weakness and how eagerly they returned to faith when the immediate danger had passed.

It is a miracle that Jesus can make at least some sheep lie down in green pastures (PSA 23:2). Normally, a sheep does not lie down. It will graze for hours, even if it is not hungry. How can you lie down with so much green grass around? How can you renounce the world when it offers you so many pleasures?

But among the saints are reckoned not only a St. Anthonie or a St. Paphnutius, or others who have been canonized, or those who have died in prison for their faith. An average Christian life is also a Christian life. An everyday Christian is also a saint.

*

A small dog once stood near a big Doberman. The Doberman scorned him and asked: "Do you also claim to be a dog?" The little creature did not dare to contradict the Doberman. He answered politely: "Sir, I am surely not as big a dog as you. But neither can you assert that I am a cat". Small dogs are also

dogs! And small Christians are also Christians.

When my son Mihai was five years old, he worried when I read to him from the Bible that the saints will walk with Jesus clothed in white. He asked if Jesus had clothes small for children. I had to assure him that Jesus has white garments for all Christians, large or small in size, and large or small in faith.

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Not all of us can perform the deeds of heroes of the faith. But we can admire, love and rejoice in them. We can battle unceasingly against the guile of oblivion which threatens the life of the hero. Mirrored in the love of the admirer, the deed of the hero will appear even more beautiful than they were in reality. The admirer makes of the hero, who was also only human, a legend.

You must not worry that you cannot be like him. A snail and a hare can walk the same path and arrive at the same goal. It may take you more time, but you will have over the hero the advantage of longer perseverance. Every Christian is called a saint. If you cannot do better, be a saint snail!

If you cannot be the best, be second best.

In a sense an embryo is already a man. You are a great artist only if you have the gift before you have drawn a line. A Christian has Christ within, as well when he makes his first unsure steps as when he is mature in the faith.

*

Do not fear the great demands of the Bible. They might overwhelm you, as for instance the words of Jesus: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect". These express a desire. What professor of music does not desire that all his pupils be future Wagners and Beethovens? But life does not work out this way. Nobody becomes a genius by willing, nor an exceptional saint.

Spurgeon used to tell a story: A man was renowned for his orchard in which grew the best apples of the world. His friend, however, was unconvinced because several times He had passed by the orchard, had picked up out of curiosity a few

apples that had fallen from the trees, and had found them to be sour and tasteless. Therefore he repeatedly refused the invitations of the owner to have a look at his orchard. Finally, the owner insisted on knowing the reason, and his friend told him his experience. The owner laughed: "Knowing that I have the best apple in my orchard, I was faced with the problem of how to protect them from thieves and children.

So I planted around the fence two or three rows of worthless apple trees. These discourage theft. As for my guests, they are taken to the inner orchard where they can taste apples of unparalleled quality and aroma".

Jesus has done likewise. He has for His guests the best of gifts, a quiet reliance on His sacrifice, which is effective without human deeds and virtues. But to prevent hypocrites from taking advantage of this, He has surrounded His property with a few trees which yield very sour apples.

It is a sour apple for those who are not among God's elect to hear that they have to be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect, that they have to take up their cross daily, that they have to mortify their flesh.

The children of God do not enter into Jesus' garden this way. They enter by the royal gate and are happy to be saved without any effort on their part, but just by what Christ has done for them.

*

We have the precious gift of being beloved without any merit of our own, just as little children are beloved by their parents.

It does not matter how much in the Christian life we are able to accomplish. God looks only at the will. Kierkegaard said that purity of heart is to will one thing, and Christians surely will this one thing. Every Christian is a model of the good and the true: he is so in his intentions.

His ideals are high. He wills always to be at the peak. It is said about the sculptor Phideas that he worked with very

great care on the back of a statue of the goddess Dianna, which was to stand in a niche. He was asked: "But who will see in there?" He answered: "The gods". We try to do all things well, that God might have pleasure. We also know that we have a God who understands our weakness. The beginning of godliness in us makes us pleasant to God.

We have time to achieve our ideals. Christians are never in a hurry. In MTT 27:52 it is written that when Jesus

died the graves were opened and many bodies of the saints which slept arose. But even in these circumstances, they were in no hurry at all. They came out of their graves only after His resurrection, which means the third day. You recognize those who are eternal by the fact that they take their time.

*

A rabbi asked a Jew: "What would you do if you found a wallet on the street containing much money, along with the owner's card?" The Jew answered: "To tell you the truth, rabbi, I have many children and am poor. I would consider it a gift from God". The rabbi told him: "You are a thief". The rabbi put the same question to a second Jew. His reply was: "I would restore the money immediately". The rabbi told him: "You are an idiot". He asked a third Jew, who said: "I know what my duty would be. I know my weakness. I could not say what I would do in such circumstances. Everything depends upon the grace of God". The rabbi praised him: "This is the right answer".

We know it is our Christian duty to be perfect. We know our inability to be so. We are in every moment of our lives what grace makes us.

*

Svetlana Alliluyeva, the daughter of Stalin, writes that in the Soviet Union everybody has to learn to lie from early childhood in order to survive. Otherwise one is crushed by the tyranny.

Happily, it is not so in the free world. But life would not be possible anywhere if you were always to tell everyone the naked truth. Neither can you go around decrying the falsity of

all attitudes you consider erroneous. Rather, you must be with Paul be a Jew to the Jews and a Greek to the Greeks in order to achieve something for the Lord Jesus and to bring men to Him.

Leave the absolutes to those specially equipped by God to deal with them!

*

Absolutes cannot be applied always and by all in time of war. The church is at war. In a war, you must not be idealistic with regard to the means you use, but effective.

It is said that Sir Stafford Cripps, on hearing one of the radio broadcasts of the British psychological warfare branch, remarked: "If we have to resort to this sort of thing to win the war, I had rather we lost it". Let people who think like this not enter the war! Whoever wishes to clean a dirty place must be ready to get himself dirty.

Fortunately, Great Britain had not only a Sir Stafford Cripps, but also a Churchill and many others who thought like him.

While General Montgomery was putting the final touches to the D-day plans in London, a double of Montgomery was sent from Gibraltar to Algiers to deceive the German spies. Hitler was disarmed: Montgomery is not even in England, so probably an invasion of France is not imminent.

The German battleship Graf Spee was in for repairs only 48 hours in Montevideo. It was not allowed to stay longer in a neutral harbour. But lying in wait were only two small British ships, which it could easily defeat. The nearest British warships were too far away to arrive in time. Then the admiralty resorted to deception. They sent to their small British ship a signal that a big battleship and aircraft were joining them. They knew that the German admiralty and German captain would break the code. In fact, they purposely used a code that could be broken. As a result, the German captain Langdorff sank his ship and committed suicide. We see the same thing in JDG 20:29: "Israel set liers in wait round about Gibeah" in order to ambush the children of Benjamin. Then when the Benjamites went out against the people of Israel, they were drawn

away from the city and made to believe that their enemies were smitten down before

them. The children of Israel pretended to flee, so as to draw them further away from the city into the highways, and then at a certain moment the liers in wait of Israel came forth out of their hiding places. So Benjamin was smitten.

It takes cunning to win a war. It takes cunning to win the Christian war, too.

*

Nobody is asked to lead a Christian life without compromise. But a Christian is very conscious of the fact that these compromises, though necessary sometimes in life and in a fight, are also very dangerous. There is no lie without injury to someone's faith in what another says. Necessarily, society is injured by every instance of lying.

A man asked a traveller through the desert to allow him to ride on the back of his camel. The request was granted. Once mounted, the man threw the owner of the camel into the sand and fled. The owner cried after him: "I am not troubled that you took my camel. I have others. But you have destroyed faith between men. In future, camel owners will not help lonely travellers. Nobody will be allowed any more on the back of the camel".

A Christian takes such facts into account. He never says an untruth because he wills it, but because the necessities of a holy fight impose this burden upon him. Nuns hid Jewesses, sought by the Nazis in order to be burned, and lied when asked saying they did not know where they were.

*

The question of compromise in Christian life does not refer only to saying the truth but to a whole range of problems. Let us not forget that the disciples of Jesus were armed. Peter had a sword on him. Jesus did not rebuke him for this but only for using it at the wrong time, though he surely knew the danger of being armed. Homer says: "The sword itself often provokes a man to fight".

So we will have compromises in different spheres of life.

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But if we do not recognize other absolutes, neither do we recognize an absolute necessity of compromising. Withal, there must be a steadfast clinging to principles.

If every bad man can master his good desires, why should we not be able to master our bad passions?

*

Not too much will be demanded of you. It would have been nice if the shepherds who went to see the baby Jesus had brought a little bit of butter, cheese and milk for the hungry family. You will be taught to do such little practical things.

Every letter you write can become an ambassador of love.

*

One of the rules of the Bible in moral matters is continued in ECC 7:16: "Be not righteous over much".

Exaggerated honesty can be exaggerated stupidity. I know about a Christian who had in his office desk two pencils, one his own and one belonging to the company. All personal notes he made with his personal pencil, and those of the company with the company's. He stole the company's time to choose between these two pencils.

The man who will not act or speak except in total righteousness achieves nothing. He does not enter the path of progress, and he is not true because he is not real.

Christianity will make you wise in everyday living. You will know how to give the devil an opportunity to flee. If you cut away from him the possibility of withdrawal, you force him to resistance.

*

A teacher once asked his class: "What is religion?" A child gave this answer: "It is the set of things which are

forbidden". Flee such a religion as you would flee from a rattlesnake!

Life is not possible without a certain amount of accommodation. We sometimes have to do things which normally would be forbidden. Blaise Pascal wrote: "Whosoever wishes to play

the angel becomes a devil". Even as a Christian, remain a man! Be a saint, but - for the sake of those around you - be a human saint. Christians have been made kings. Every king who ruled according to inflexible principles would ruin his country.

*

Christians have great promises from God, some of which go so far as to say that fire will not burn nor water drown us. These promises are fulfilled daily by the fact that God gives us the wisdom to keep away from fire and deep waters.

*

You have to coat bitter medicine with sugar to make it acceptable to children. You are surrounded by children, in mind if not in body. When Count von Zinzendorf came to the United States, he found that people had a tremendous respect for the clergy. They would not learn religion from a man who was not ordained. So he introduced himself with the title "pastor", which no man had given him. (Neither had any man given to Paul the title of apostle. He had it from God.) Beethoven would never have been accepted into higher social circles because he did not belong to the nobility, so he put before his name the word "van". "Van Beethoven" sounded like the title of a Dutch nobleman. Thus he succeeded. Perhaps his symphonies would not have come to us without this trick.

When King Pedro of Brazil wished to erect the first public hospital in his country, he appealed in vain for funds. Then he made it known that whoever gave one million pesos would get the title of a duke, whoever gave half a million would be a count, whoever [gave] 100,000 would be a baron. In no time, he had all the money needed. The hospital was built. All the notables were gathered when the commemorative plate was to be unveiled. It bore the inscription: "This hospital has been given

to human suffering by human stupidity and pride".

If you wish to achieve things for Christ, pay your tribute,

with a smile of understanding, to human childishness. You are a child of God through Jesus. Others are not. You do not communicate with others on the same level of maturity.

If you are a child of God, be aware, without being proud about it, that you have only men to speak down to.

*

At the same time, recognize that you too are a sinful man. With authority Peter reproaches the Jews: "Ye denied the holy one". He also had denied Him. This is the paradox o Christian life. We reprove others for sins we commit ourselves.

Do not be surprised at anybody else's sin, not even at great sins in those whom you admire as stars in the spiritual sky.

Luther and Calvin were very far from being models of Christian love. There were stains on their characters as big those of the popes and bishops against whom they fought. There were dark sides in the lives of Wesley and Livingstone. These have been bitterly denounced by their adversaries. The Baptist Union of Britain did not find it easy to cope with their greatest preacher, Charles Spurgeon.

If you do not accept these facts of life, you will wear yourself out in useless conflict with the unchangeable laws of existence.

Do not struggle to amend the unalterable tendencies of your own nature. Just yield to Jesus. Do not compose your life. Let Jesus compose it. Believe only that He has taken over control and give play to your feelings. He will take care to allow you as much sin as you need to be kept humble; He will give you as much righteousness as you need to shine before men.

The ordinary man has to choose which things to do and which not to do. About Abraham it is written that "God was with

him in ~all~ that he did" (GEN 21:22). This is your privilege if you are a child of Abraham by faith.

Some men have to choose where to go and where not to go. Joshua hears the words: "The Lord thy God is with the ~whithersoever~ thou goest".

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I have mentioned above the inconsistencies of great preachers. Soon I will pass away. It is probable that I will be completely forgotten. If not, some future author will give my sins as an example in his book to encourage those who have fallen, to show them that even a man who suffered much and preached in many countries, as a certain Richard Wurmbrand did, had great blots upon his character.

I have been accused by adversaries of the Gospel, but also by some Christian leaders, of very great sins and also of grave errors in doctrine. Miriam and Aaron, sister and brother of Moses spoke against him. Aaron was the high priest ordained by God. Their accusations could not be discarded lightly. They knew Moses well. I, too, had men very near to me pointing their finger at me.

Some future biographer may sort these things out and find that the one or the other accusation has been factual, or he may find that my sins are in quite another sphere. To a few really bad features in my life, some will be added by adversaries. With a little ingenuity, you can make any criminal look like a saint, and vice versa. Even in the best of lives, there is much that can be read amiss deliberately. But there is residual evil which is always present in the life of every man.

When you read about evil in me and are certain of it, do not wonder. Accept sin as a fact in Wurmbrand's life, too, and praise God who had pity on such a sinner. Remember that the most beautiful book of the Bible is a song written by one of the sorriest characters of the Bible, King Solomon. Some even doubt his salvation.

*

Great preachers failed. A man of much lesser importance, Wurmbrand, has failed too. Jesus, before departing from among us, left his cause without fear or misgiving to Peter who had

failed.

Archbishop Cranmer failed in his years of compromising with a tyrant. When arrested, he first recanted. He went to the stake for Christ only after wavering.

St. Joan of Arc also recanted at first.

Bismarck, at the end of his life, confessed that he had failed, that all he had done had brought happiness to not one human being.

We all live and will be saved only by grace.

*

You will never have peace until you accept the first postulate of dialectics, that there is nothing that does not contain contradictions. There exists no mathematics without plus and minus, no events without actions and reactions, no electricity without a positive and a negative pole, no war without offence and defence, no saint without sins and no sinner without virtues.

Accept yourself with your contradictions. Luther said that every Christian is "simul justus et peccator, comprehensor et viator" - "simultaneously righteous and sinful, a man who has reached the goal and one who reaches out towards it".

Contradiction is universal and absolute.

*

Never abandon a fearless fight! Think only about Pharaoh: how many plagues he resisted! And you, child of God, fear that you will not resist temptations?

You will surely overcome evil, but sometimes you have to take it slowly.

St. Francis of Assisi knew that some robbers surrounded his monastery and robbed from people who came to worship. The other monks wished to call the police to arrest them. St. Francis told them not to do so. He proposed that they go to the

robbers with some food and wine and obtain from them a promise not to kill, but only to steal. After a time he got them to promise never to steal on Sundays or feast days. And so, slowly, slowly, he brought them to conversion.

You, too, as time goes on, will progress in the ways of righteousness. Be happy about those who can break bad habits

at once. But if you cannot, and you find yourself slipping back into the old habit patterns, do not despair!

For the rest of your life, you must realize that you depend more on Christ's repairing your wrongs than on your not committing them in the first place. We are all men and seem to learn only from the errors which we commit.

*

Be careful not to fall into the sin of pride! It is easy to become proud when you are crowned together with Jesus. St Augustine writes: "Every other kind of evil is wrought by the doing of bad things. But it is the peculiar feature of pride, that it ruins even good deeds".

God will take infinite pains to keep your soul humble. Thank Him for this!

Having put aside pride, the Christian is not critical of other men. Shakespeare wrote: "I will chide no breather in the world than myself against whom I know most faults".

Try to be good avoiding that kind of conventional goodness which is negative, censorious, narrow and altogether despicable.

*

It is sometimes the duty of a Christian to oppose other men. But he should weigh their faults without putting his thumb on the scales.

Sometimes a Christian even has to take part in armed fights, as for instance when his fatherland calls him. But he does not do it with a haughty spirit. Executioners in the Middle

Ages did not execute someone without first begging his pardon. They knew themselves to be sinners punishing fellow-sinners. The murderer of Mahatma Gandhi first bowed to him, showing him his respect. It is only in this spirit that a Christian is allowed to criticize and to fight.

He always casts his nets on the right side, which the

Bible symbolizes the side of clemency. You catch more fish with meekness than with harshness.

*

A Christian has humility as his boat and flexibility as his chariot. To use Shakespeare's words in "As You Like It", a Christian "translates the stubbornness of fortune in a quiet and sweet style". He recognizes in what the world calls "justified indignation", the shine of satanic wisdom.

Against what are you righteously indignant? Against the sins of men? Sins of what gravity and of what number? Are they more and heavier than yours? There exists a God who must reserve for you eternal punishment if you do not forgive. What would you choose if you had to decide this very moment between forgiving and going into hell? Decide, with this in view! You will decide for meekness.

*

I will share with you three thoughts which may help you to keep humble.

First, the thought about the unimportance of mankind.

A professor at the University of Moscow said to a Western Christian colleague: "I find it difficult to accept your faith in God's concern for human beings. Why did we have to wait so long if God really cared so much for the individual? Why were there all those thousands and millions of years before human life began? Why did God create man only on the sixth day? He seems not to have been in a hurry! "

The answer is simple. Before there were men, God loved the sun and the flowers and the animals. God did not plant cork trees to provide stoppers for our wine bottles, but because God

loves the cork tree. He saw all that he had done, and behold, it was good. God walked through the garden of Eden planted by Him before there was an Adam and Eve. He could enjoy the fragrance of the lilies and the beauty of the roses.

The second thought is about your own unimportance.

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Before going to prison, I had considered myself an important person. I was pastor of a growing church, author of books. I worked for the World Council of Churches, I was involved in charitable actions, and so on and so on. I could not imagine how all the church work in Romania would manage without me. When I came out after fourteen years of prison, I saw that the church had progressed very well without me, that others had written better books than mine. I had not been as necessary as I had considered myself to be.

This might be true in your case, too.

The third thought is about the importance of your brother.

Clement of Alexandria wrote, "He who sees his brother, sees God". This view puts you at once far below every fellow Christian with whom you might disagree. See the Godhead in him and bow with respect, even if he should be the frailest Christian. He is the master, you are the slave. Some theologians believe that Lucifer's fall lay in his refusal to be a ministering angel for men. He had replied haughtily: "Non serviam" (I do not serve).

*

The Christian speaks little. Nature has given us one tongue and two ears. Let the Christian eliminate his idle words and use his tongue to praise the Creator of his two ears.

*

I know that much of what is written above is only common sense. But common sense is not very common. And every ounce of religion requires ten pounds of common sense to apply it.

*

But do not be so meek as to give up the fulfilling of your aim. We see in the parable of the pounds (Luke 19) t the Lord Jesus does not make the attaining of His goals dependent on the consent of men. He likens Himself to a nobleman who receives his kingdom from the ruler of a far country, not from

the votes of his fellow citizens. These latter hated him. Some of his servants were slothful. He slays his enemies that refused his reign. He must reign because he is the supreme good. To the measure that you identify yourself with him, you will be firm, that your faith may prevail at all costs (GAL 1:8-9).

*

Your life should be Christ. Jesus had nowhere to lay His head. You may have a house, but only as a necessity, not as an indication of your desire to possess.

Birds from Alaska caged in the San Diego Zoo always look northward. So we look heavenward, to our true home.

*

A Christian has one great guiding principle: it is love. We have to love our neighbour, to love him even when he steals our time, when he borrows and does not return, when he says bad words behind our back.

A Christian loves thus, without asking for love in exchange. George Bernard Shaw distinguishes between Christianity and Crosstianity, by which he means forcing on others a sadistic moralism. The whole Christian ethic is a code of rules only or us. Pliny the Younger wrote about the first Christians "how much they love each other".

*

Wherever possible, prefer a competition in love to a quarrel with hatred.

Do not spend the few days of your short earthly life as a busybody meddling in the affairs of others, unless a common good is involved. Do not allow your attention to be distracted from

Christ.

Accept the simple fact that some do not sympathize with you. This is normal. That you do not act according to their will can be a source of joy for you.

Avoid personal enmities as much as possible. "Make to yourselves friends," says Jesus (LUK 16:9). Never break a

friendship even for a sincere reason. No motive for breaking it is more important than a friendship.

*

The queen of Saba came to visit king Solomon and told him: "Your wisdom is world renowned. Allow me to see how you judge the people". So the next day two thrones were set up in the palace yard and the parties which had quarrelled were summoned to appear.

The first were two Jews, each with his hand in the other's beard, kicking and shouting the worse insults at each other. After the servants had parted them, the king asked what the fight was all about.

One said: "O King, I sold to this rascal two acres of land and he paid me the money for it. With this the question was settled. But on the next day he digged deep in the newly bought earth and found there an enormous treasure in gold and jewels. It was surely his, because I had sold to him the earth with everything it contained. It was my fault that I had not found the treasure before selling the land. But just imagine, this crook coming to me and saying: 'Dear brother, you were mistaken to sell me that field for nothing at all. Restore to me the money I gave you. The treasure is yours and take back your land also.' He would like me to cancel the bargain and afterward be punished by God for injustice, because I have no title-deed at all for either the land or the treasure. It had been a definitive sale".

And the man shouted to the other Jew: "You deceiver! The treasure is yours".

The king asked the other party to speak out. He begged:

"Lord, have pity on my soul. I have bought only a piece of land, nothing more. I did not buy a treasure. I cannot keep a treasure worth millions for a few silver mines, which I paid as the price of the land. It would be unfair and I wish to be able to look in the eyes of God as an honest man. Tell this man that the treasure is his and only his!"

The queen of Saba could not believe her ears.

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The king asked the first Jew, "Do you have any children?" He replied, "An eighteen-year-old daughter". He asked the other, "And you?" "I have a boy of twenty". The king gave the sentence: "The boy will marry the girl, and the treasure will be their dowry". The two parties embraced each other. The court case was finished.

The queen said: "I have never seen such a dispute in which each party says the other is right. How is it that such things happen with you?" The king answered: "But don't you know that we are the chosen people of God? We are a holy nation, which means that we have big quarrels, but all because the one esteems the other higher than himself, and every Jew would like his neighbour to be right in all differences. Is it not so with you? What would have happened if such a case had arisen in your country?"

The queen answered: "Everyone would have shouted, 'Mine is the treasure!'" Solomon asked: "And how would you have settled the dispute?" The queen was prompt in her reply: "I would have cut off the heads of both and taken the treasure for myself". The king asked again: "Do you have dogs and cats in your country?" The queen said: "Surely! Why do you ask?" Solomon finished the discussion with these words: "It is only for your pets that the sun still shines in your empire. God does not send the sun upon men who shout that they are right".

*

We have it from St. Anthony the Great that the only way to know God is through goodness.

Popular legend says that the wise men who came to worship the baby Jesus were three: Melchior, Balthasar and Gaspar. But

the story is told that there were four. The name of the fourth was Artaban. Seeing the star which announced the birth of the Saviour, he had sold everything and had bought three very precious stones, a ruby, a sapphire and an emerald, to bring as gifts.

But while hurrying to the place where he was to meet the

three others for the journey to Palestine, he saw on the highway a man who had been robbed and beaten almost to death. He took him to an inn and gave the innkeeper the sapphire to cover expenses. The man he saved was a Jew, knowledgeable in the Scriptures. On learning of the purpose of his journey he gave him his blessings and told him that the Messiah whom he went to greet was to be born in Bethlehem.

Artaban arrived at the meeting place too late. The other wise men had already left. So he travelled alone and came to Bethlehem. Here he was told that in truth a mysterious babe had been born in a stable not long before, that angels had sung at his birth, but that his parents had fled with him to an unknown destination.

Artaban rested from his journey at the home of a poor widow, mother of an only child. Suddenly at midnight, a neighbour rushed into the house and in tears said that the soldiers of Herod had killed her son and were slaughtering all the children in town. Artaban instructed the widow not to move. He went out of the house, locking the door behind him. When he saw an officer with drawn sword approaching, he met him with the ruby and said, "You can have this if you leave the house undisturbed. I live in it and I have no child". The officer, greedy, took the precious stone and went on his way.

The wise man comforted himself with the thought that he had at least one jewel left to offer to the newborn king of the Jews.

Over thirty years passed and Artaban could not find the One he sought. Finally he heard that He was living in Palestine, a prophet and doer of good deeds. Since Artaban had sought Him everywhere else, he turned eagerly toward Jerusalem. To his dismay, he was told when he arrived that the one in Bethlehem was being led to Golgotha to be crucified, because he had called

Himself the Son of God.

Artaban hurried to Calvary, knowing Him to be truly the Son of God because he had seen His star. The ageing wise man

had one jewel left. Perhaps he could ransom Him by giving the precious stone to the executioners.

But on his way he passed through a slave market. A young girl begged those passing by, "Free me! I believe in Jesus. My religion teaches purity and I am to be sold to a life of shame and sin". Artaban sighed and said, "Forgive me, Son of God, but I have to give away even the last jewel that I have reserved for you". He ransomed this girl.

At once, darkness covered the earth. There was a great earthquake. The house where Artaban took shelter fell and buried him under its ruins. Dying, he begged the Son of God to forgive him for having given away everything to men and not to him. At the last moment, he heard a voice telling him "Whatsoever you have done to these little brethren and sisters of mine, you have done unto me. Come and inherit the Kingdom which the Father has prepared for you from the beginning of the world". And so Artaban died.

*

One thing is sure: Lenin loved mankind. He loved it so much that he would have been able to kill all men for the good of mankind, because mankind was for him an abstraction.

Jesus teaches a personal love for one's neighbour.

When missionaries wanted to translate the New Testament into the Mireba language of New Guinea, they found no word for love. So they used "Nanumangund", which means, "I give you my inner parts". Let our love be such.

And let us always remember that the soul of love is love for souls.

*

Love is the distinctive feature of all Christians. From

pastor, especially, burning love is expected.

The story is told that St. John Chrysostom once went to a remote part of his diocese that suffered much from the absence of priests. There he instructed a peasant as best as he could and ordained him. After returning to his see in Constantinople,

he could not be quiet. "Have I not committed a mistake to install as priest somebody so unprepared for the ministry?" So he travelled back to that place and planned to arrive at the church a few minutes after the service had started. He hid himself behind a column to see how this peasant priest fulfilled his duty. Tears streamed from his eyes. He had never before seen a priest praying with so much devotion and such a glowing face, putting so much fervour in his short allocution and so gripping the hearts of all those present as he lifted them to heaven. When the liturgy was finished, St. Chrysostom entered the vicinity of the altar, knelt down before the priest, and asked for his blessing. The priest was shocked to see the bishop and said, "It is for you to bless me". The bishop insisted: "You bless me, because I have never before seen a priest serving God with so much fire and love in his heart". The ignorant priest, wondering, asked, "But, brother bishop, is it possible to serve God otherwise?"

*

God expects no better than to be vanquished by the loving look in your eyes. But men will resent your power. Spirit-filled Christians are hated. Great trees give more shade but also suffer stronger winds. But the arrows of hate aimed at you will never hit you, because you bear the shield of faith and you belong to another world which these arrows cannot reach.

Men will be able to inflict upon you only outward suffering. And even this you will recognize as coming ultimately by the will of your strange God, from whom you have decided to accept everything. Even an Auschwitz or a Buchenwald, burning ovens or gas chambers, will never succeed in making a Christian abandon his belief in God or his love for Him.

Nobody, not even God, has a club great enough drive me away from Him. I will love Him though He slay me.

Believe in Christ and love. This is enough. Do not accept any extras - dogmas, rituals, rules, conditions attached by different organizations - as of primary importance.

Just love. Love even if you are not loved in return.

Jesus taught that when you are slapped you should turn the other cheek. The probable result will be a second and a third slap. I had the experience myself. A meek attitude is interpreted as weakness by the adversary. Christians in concentration camps would seek to fulfil the commandment of the Lord when compelled to walk one mile with some heavy loads on their shoulders, they would walk two. The result was that the norm was increased next day and the exhausted prisoners had to fulfil tasks which crushed their bodies. Jesus told us to walk the extra mile. He never promised that this would give us success in our enterprises, but only that we would become perfect in love. This is enough.

*

This rule of simply fulfilling commandments without expecting any benefit beyond the perfection of Christian character applies also to other spheres of Christian life.

We have to bring the good news about Christ to other people. What reception we will get is not our business.

The story is told of a ship that sounded an SOS out on the stormy waters. The rescue crew immediately began to make preparations to take to sea.

One of the young lads spoke up: "Captain, don't you think these waters are too rough and the winds too fierce for us to go?"

The captain said, "No, the orders have come to go. There is a ship in distress. We must go".

The lad objected: "But, captain, we may not come back".

The captain replied, "Young fellow, we have not been commanded to come back, we have been commanded to go".

*

Accept injustice with satisfaction and joy.

The Jews have a joke. A man cried in a railway station, "Rubinstein! Rubinstein!" A Jew put his head out of the window. The man who had shouted gave him a slap, saying,

"Here you have what you deserve, you miserable Rubinstein". All in the compartment began to laugh. The slapped Jew also laughed, wholeheartedly. The other passengers asked him "Why do you laugh?" He answered, "Well, I deceived him. I am not Rubinstein".

Gladly accept the kicks and slaps deserved by others and rejoice that somebody has been mistaken in hurting you instead of another. Jesus gave Himself to be beaten and killed in our place, for our sins.

During the socialist persecution of religion in Mexico in the Thirties, high prices were put on the heads of fugitive Catholic priests.

A Judas explained to a priest that he had always been poor. "By selling you," he said, "I could get some money and would have something to live on with my family." The priest left the forest where they had met and went with him to town that Judas might sell him and give a piece of bread to his children. The priest was shot.

*

Thieves stole from a church during the religious service. Observing them, the abbot said to the monks: "Look how well they do their work. Let us do ours as well: let us pray for their salvation". And he continued the liturgy. The robber left with their spoil.

*

Though love ends with defeat for the lover, it is still the best of ways. But sometimes it can be victorious.

An English sergeant once stationed in Egypt tells this

incident about himself: "There was a civilian in the same company who was converted. We gave that fellow an awful time. One very wet night, he came in tired. Before getting into bed, he went down on his knees to pray. My boots were heavy with wet mud, and I let him have one on each side of his head. He just went on with his prayers. Next morning, I found those boots beautifully polished and standing by the side of my bed.

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That was his reply to me, and it broke my heart. I was saved that day".

*

Stick to the Bible. Do not give a penny to any criticism of it, however scholarly it may be. Do not criticize the Bible, but let yourself be criticized by it.

In an exhibit of modern art, there was an empty canvas instead of a painting. Below it was the title, "A cow grazing". A visitor asked the artist, "What does this title mean? I see no grass. Where is the cow grazing?" The artist answered, "Well, the cow has eaten up all the grass". The visitor persisted: "But where is the cow?" The painter replied, "Why should the cow have remained if there was no grass left?"

*

Bible critics are like this artist. They leave in the Holy Scriptures only empty pages. No God, no miracles, no true history, no reliable teachings, no devil, no hell, and no paradise. Do not pay any attention to such artists!

St. John Chrysostom said: "We bid you believe the Scriptures. If any one agrees with the Scriptures, he is the Christian".

*

If you study it attentively, you will surely find contradictions in the Bible. I mistrust stories which hold together in every detail. They are artificially construed. Believe in the Bible ~because~ the stories do not match.

*

Do not be concerned about the scepticism of some scientists regarding the Bible. How much do scientists know? In one of Balzac's novels, a scientist, unmoved by his wife's weeping says: "What are tears? I have analysed them. There is some phosphate of lime, chloride of soda, some mucus and some water". The one who looks at the Bible with such a distorted

mind is doomed not to understand it. You believe every letter of the Bible.

*

Beware of bigotry! Do not force others to have the same belief as yours. Rabindranath Tagore said rightly: "Bigotry tries to keep truth safe in the hand with a grip that kills it".

ant once stationtian is tolerant with everybody, even with the intolerant.

*

An atheist lecturer proved that the Bible is not reliable. He opened to ECC 1:9, where it is written, "There is no new thing under the sun". Mockingly, he said, "This is an obvious lie. There are so many new things under the sun - X-rays, radio, cable, railways! So many inventions about which mankind had no idea centuries ago".

A Christian replied unperturbed. "The Bible is right, every iota of it. There is nothing new under the sun". Now the infidel got angry. "How can you be so stubborn and give such a stupid answer?" And he began to enumerate again the X- rays, the radio, railways, and so on.

The Christian's reply was: "Since the beginning, believers have said to unbelievers: 'You cannot deceive God with outward religion. God looks at the heart'. The unbelievers were sure of themselves: God cannot see the heart because it is covered with flesh and bones and skin. It is well hidden. So God asked Rontgen to make X-rays, with the help of which even we, men, can see inward parts. But they are not something new. They are modern illustrations of a truth we believers have known for thousands of years".

The unbeliever had not expected this. He asked, "And what about radio?" "Old," was the immediate reply, "old as mankind itself. From the beginning, the faithful have said to those who lived in sin, 'Be careful in your speaking! God hears every word'. But the infidels have only replied in scorn, 'Heaven is

so far away. I cannot hear a debate going on in the next room. How can God in His distant heaven hear my words, especially the bad ones I pronounce in whisper?' So God ordered Marconi to construct a radio, which makes it possible for the people of London to hear even the cough of a speaker in Moscow. It all helps to awaken our souls to eternal truth. You do not see the one who lectures over the radio. He is far away. So God in heaven can hear every word of yours."

The infidel was at his wits' end. "Can you also show me that railways are not new?" "Surely! We have always warned, 'Repent today! Tomorrow it might be too late'. People delayed their repentance. So God arranged to have Stevenson create the railway. In order to avoid collisions, every train has to leave on the minute. If you arrive one minute too late, the train will have disappeared before your eyes - a good example of the old truth that the time for repentance is always now. You can have a heart attack the next minute."

Thus the Atheist lecturer said that there is no joking with this book.

The Bible is true, every letter is true. It is true even in its contradictions.

*

Stick to prayer. Heaven and earth can be in as direct communication as London and Berlin. Only make your prayer a radical decision between you and God.

*

Never pray as to a God who is unwilling to give. Seneca wrote: "The gods are not like men. They give and give to others until they leave themselves bare".

* Unanswered prayer does not exist. During the last war, Christians in both Germany and Britain prayed for victory. The unanswered prayers of the Germans were an answer to the prayers of the British. We live in a world divided into nations,

races, classes, parties, religions and conflicting individual interests. Why must your interest always prevail with God? If after having prayed for a victory you are defeated, be happy! It means that your adversaries' prayers have been accepted by God. He is still a God who hears prayer.

*

Let your life be one of service.

Do not say that you have no spiritual power or qualifications. A boy gave to Jesus five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus multiplied them. But what if the boy had had nothing? Such a possibility does not exist. In the Bible, the word "zero" or its mathematical symbol "0" never occurs. The Bible is constructed mathematically. Every letter of the Hebrew and Greek alphabet corresponds with a figure. Every word has a numerical value. My son has written his thesis for the B.D. degree at the Lutheran University of Paris on the subject of mathematics in the Bible. But the Bible contains neither the word "zero" nor the sign for it "0", which is especially significant when you realize that the Chaldean ancestors of the Jews already had the zero written as a circle. The very word "zero" comes from the Chaldean "zer".

Nobody is a zero before God. Nobody is without some gift. Your gift is perhaps the humility to believe that you have none.

*

On May 21, 1972, I had a vision in St. Stephen's Church in Southport, Great Britain. I meditated kneeling before the altar. I remembered that Elijah had asked a widow for a piece of bread. The woman answered that she had very little flour and oil left, just enough for one last meal for her son and herself (1KI 17:11-12).

At once, I had before my eyes a hungry man, begging from the Virgin Mary. She answered: "I have none. I am a mother of sorrows and my Son was hanged on a cross. He cried that He was forsaken even by God. Bread I have not,

but I can give you the comfort of knowing that it is worthwhile to endure all things for God".

This hungry man became a zealous preacher and made thousands nourish Jesus with adoration.

*

Never complain about your cross.

A Christian once complained to God about it. So God took him to His storehouse and told him, "You are free to choose whatever cross you like". One was beautiful, golden, but very heavy; another light but rugged and apt to wound one's shoulder. In the end he found in the corner a cross which he thought would suit him. God said to him, "Have a better look at it". It was the cross which he had first received from God.

Suffering is sacred. Never squander as much as the smallest crumb of it!

*

Know God, but know also the devil.

"The Pastor Hermas," an ancient Christian book, says that every man has a personal devil haunting him, as he has a personal guardian angel. Try to know well the angel, who is your bodyguard. Try to know well your devil, too.

*

There exists a dangerous fashion among some youngsters today. The moment they are converted, they drop their jobs and studies in order to become preachers. This antagonizes their families. Running after others, whom they most probably will never win to Christ, they lose the possibility of bringing salvation to their relatives. Remain in your place and in your own family for Christ, if you can.

To be a missionary is a rare and exceptional vocation.

The truer a Christian is to Christ, the greater is the likelihood that he will live in intellectual and spiritual isolation.

This does not mean that he will not be a missionary. He

will be one of a special kind. You do not have to force water down the mountainside into the valley. It flows by itself. Missionary work is not done strenuously. Exist on a high level and the word of God will pour down upon those below you. I appreciate missionary work. There is something wrong in missionary effort.

*

In the Louvres is the painting "The Miracle of San Diego" by Murillo. Two noblemen and a priest enter a kitchen. They are amazed that all kitchenmaids are angels. One handles pot, another a joint of meat, still another a basket of vegetables and one tends the fire. But they all do angelic work.

No labour is common unless we make it so. Jesus Himself the One with the greatest mission, worked in a woodshop. Please, unless you have a very clear, exceptional call, do not become a missionary in the professional sense of the word. Rather, be a missionary in your kitchen or factory. You will be more useful there.

*

But never lose the broader prospective. Care for the evangelizing of the world. Care also for social justice.

The Lord Jesus told a parable about a prodigal son who wasted his father's substance with riotous living. After many adventures, he returned to his father, who received him with love, fed him with the fatted calf, gave him good garments and even placed on his finger a golden ring.

This prodigal son now enjoyed himself, and that was all.

The Lord warned us not to seek the truth in His parables. The parables are for those who cannot take in the truth.

Normally, a youngster who had done such things would have to think about restitution to his father and about trying to win for God his former comrades in revelry and wickedness. He also could have eaten a little bit less of the fatted calf and cared about the inhabitants of a hungry country in which he had lived for a while.

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A Christian thinks about all these things, which means that he gets involved in evangelistic and social problems. But he has no illusions about perfecting society before the return of the Lord Jesus. Do your duty to witness for Christ and to improve society, but be temperate in all things. Do not overdo. Overwork is a drug for the disappointed, and revolutions are the worst opium for the people.

Keep the right balance between a small life of self-interest and an exaggerated desire to bring about the immediate conversion of mankind or the establishing of justice, which take generations to accomplish.

*

For centuries there has been a war against poverty. But there is more poverty in the world today than ever before. For centuries men have talked of disarmament or the abolition of war, yet in Vietnam alone more bombs have been dropped than were used against Germany in the whole World War II. We try to fill the gap between generations. In the museum of antiquity in Constantinople, there is the oldest piece of writing known to men. It bears the following inscription: "Alas times are not what they used to be! Children no longer obey their parents, and everybody is writing a book about it".

It is a utopian dream to force a caterpillar to be a chrysalis, or a chrysalis to be a butterfly. It is a utopian dream to plan a good social state for unrighteous men.

It is a hard thing for a Christian to see demons triumph over nations. But the best remedy is to enter into quietness and say to yourself: "We have no solution for the social problems of mankind, just as we have no solution for the squaring of the

circle".

*

At the root of all social and racial unrest is the trespassing against the tenth commandment: "Thou shalt not covet". Why do you need more than you have?

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I wonder if there are many who have experienced as much hunger and destitution as I have. For a long time, my ration of food was one slice of bread a week and daily a soup of dirty potato peels. I had neither shoes nor trousers. I trembled for cold. You can be happy even under such conditions. You can be happy even while knowing that your wife, too, suffers the same hardship and your child is deprived of all the joys of life. This is what your mysterious, heavenly Father has allotted you, and that is it.

I know that voluntary poverty is one thing: a poverty imposed upon you by exploiters is something else. You have to oppose the latter. But in order to oppose it successfully, you must have power.

You are never so influential as when you are really quiet. You do not seem mighty, but that not-seeming is part of the quality. Live in eternity, not in daily incidents and the succession of events. Eternity cannot be disturbed even by the cry of a million hungry children. If you are seated serenely in heavenly places, what you do for these hungry children will bring fruit. Otherwise your whole fight will be just vanity. It will be like Sysiphus rolling a huge stone uphill: each time it falls back he has to roll it up again. The whole of human history has been like this. That which stands has been accomplished by the quiet spirits, by those who are above the intermittent bubbles called centuries with their transitory sufferings and joys.

The world is not just a garden, a wonderful creation, as some religious hymns say. There is an ugly side to it. It will be overcome by the fierce fight of the quiet. The still small voice prevails.

*

Even the ungodly accomplish very good things through

social fights, reform, revolutions and war. Only that these will not last.

There were once two boy silkworms who raced for love of a girl silkworm and ended up in a tie.

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This is also the end of all social struggles. The fighters on both sides become clay.

*

The Tibetan ascetic Milarepa had kept for himself only pot from which to drink water. One day it broke. Then Milarepa said:

> My earthly pot now is and now is not.
> My sole possession –
> By breaking, it has become a lama.
> For it has preached an admirable discourse
> On the impermanence of things.

Dedicate yourself to your soul. Others will come to salvation by the contagious force of a faithful character. As for human society, leave it to the One who bears the responsibility for it. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman walk but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows". (PSA 127:1-2.)

Three times – "in vain".

Surely, many things have to be done in society. But from Livingstone, the great fighter against slavery and the great missionary and explorer, we have the word, "Whosoever has faith is not in haste".

*

We are not in haste because we believe in our immortality. Many things which are not achieved now will be achieved later. Moses pleaded with God to enter the Holy Land. God refused him. He had to die outside of it. Some two thousand years pass. The Lord Jesus speaks on Mount Tabor with Moses.

Tabor is in Palestine, which means that the desire of Moses has been fulfilled notwithstanding, though a little bit later. What are two thousand years to one who lives eternally?

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"Always be true to your immortality," wrote Solzhenitsyn. Then people will be able to say about you what Goethe said about Lavater: "In his vicinity, you become virginal".

*

Why do some people riot? There are many motivations. Among others is the fact that rebellion is one of the greatest of human pleasures. Many consider it a higher pIeasure than sex, alcohol, music or drugs.

During the disorders in Belfast, the number of suicides decreased by fifty per cent. The number of persons treated by physicians for depression also decreased. Aggressiveness against one's neighbour diminishes that against oneself. For those who do not have worthwhile tasks to engage their energies, social peace or peace between nations and races is boresome.

There is also in every rebellion an element of exasperation. Wild crowds do not care much if things are better, provided they will be different. They exchange flies for bumble bees and bees for hornets. Revolutions change the social order, but they rarely improve it.

Sun-Yat-Sen, who started the Chinese revolution that has continued for sixty years, wrote towards the end of his life: "If we analyze our first promptings to carry out the Chinese revolution, we shall see that we had in view the salvation of the Chinese people and the country, whereas the result has been quite the opposite, and the Chinese people are becoming more and more oppressed, the country more and more unhappy".

*

For these and many other reasons, real Christians have always opposed rioters, guerrillas and the like.

When the peasant troubles started in Germany during the Reformation, Luther first wrote "Advice for Peace". But when the events became violent, he wrote a pamphlet "Against the Murderous

Rioting Bands of Peasants". He condemned them in the strongest possible terms as rebels against God and their

rightful lords. He called for their suppression. When the rebellion had been suppressed, he interpreted the event as a righteous judgment of God.

*

Know all this! Do not enter easily into battle. But if you are forced to do battle, be prepared to win.

You will regret bitterly every weakness in your fight. When Danton attacked the Tuileries, Louis XVI did not permit his troops to defend the palace, that blood might not be shed. He took refuge in the National Assembly. The result was that more blood was shed than if he had defended his authority. Danton's rebels killed everybody in the palace, starting with the marshal and finishing with the cook. The corpses were maimed. Then followed the reign of terror, to which even Danton fell victim.

*

Shakespeare wrote in "As You Like It" that "Love is to be made of sighs and tears, of faith and service, fantasy, all made for passion and all made of wishes; all adoration, duty and observance, all humbleness, all patience and impatience, all purity, all trial, all obeisance". There is more to love than this. Love for the French people should have obliged Louis Ludovic XVI to fight to the uttermost against the rebels.

Let us be sure that our fierce fighting proceeds from love.

*

Church Fathers living in the desert discussed, after decades of prayer and fasting, which is the highest Christian virtue. The one said "love", the other "righteousness", the third "austerity", the fourth "humility", and so on. St. Anthony the Great ended the debate with the words: "The highest virtue is to have in all things the right measure". All agreed.

*

After coming to Jesus, you will love His church, too. You will see His church with new eyes. There are many ugly and

repulsive things in the church, but like a seed it also contains much potential. The seed has within it the possibility of coming a beautiful flower. So has even the most decadent church.

You cannot bear the sermons of the pastor? You consider them very bad?

As if to accustom us to poor and very wrong sermons, Jesus delivered a sermon which superficial Christians would consider bad. You find it in MTT 15:23. He calls a woman a dog, only because she belongs to another nation. The sermon seems to be full of spirit of caste by saying that Jews are the children and that the food reserved for them should be given to dogs. But this sermon, which we would consider bad, is the black background on which is painted the beautiful deed of healing the sick daughter of that woman and of teaching her humility.

Could it be that the bad sermons of pastors are meant to teach you humility and to remind you how often your own words are bad? In any case, unbearable sermons are the output of an institution that for two thousand years has kept before mankind the remembrance of the one who deserves our whole love, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Learn from weak and bad sermons. Balaam set an example of humility. He was ready to listen even to an ass when it told him in very plain language a truth from God.

You complain about the preacher. There might be something wrong with the listener, too.

*

Learn to distinguish between the true church and institutions which only bear the name. The one who gave a definitive status to the church state from which most of the major denominations derive, the emperor Theodosius, slaughtered the whole male population of Thessaloniki. The biography of Constantine the Great is horrible.

Clovis, king of the Francs, became a Christian because he loved the Christian princess Clotilde. He promised during a

battle that he would take her God as his God, if he conquered the Allemans. His victory was hardly sufficient reason to accept the Christian faith, according to which Francs should not fight against Allemans, but live in peace with them. The people accepted Christianity because the king ordered it.

Duke Vladimir of Kiev became a Christian in order to marry the Byzantine princes Anne. He forced the whole of Russia to become Christian.

When Finland was defeated by the Swedes under St. Eric, the people were compelled to embrace Christianity.

There have been some very bad popes and many bad bishops as well as many good ones. But often offerings heaped upon the altar of the apostles went straight into the pockets of the clergy.

Pope Julius who built St. Peter's dome in Rome was a man of war.

Pope Leo X, who excommunicated Luther, is reported to have said: "What profit has not the fable of Christ brought us!"

*

When Protestantism separated from Catholicism, peace was settled after many wars on the principle "Cuius regio, eius religio", which means that people everywhere had to follow the religion of their prince.

A church created and perpetuated in such a manner could only be unfaithful to Christ. We tell about the authority of this church what Samuel said to king Saul: "Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord and the Lord has rejected thee" (1SM 15:26).

Luther and Melanchthon regretted that they had reformed too much. Melanchthon wrote in 1530: "Oh, if I could re-establish not the worldly, but the spiritual administration of

the church through bishops, because I see what a church we will have after the dissolution of church order and discipline". Luther wrote to Melanchthon: "I think we have gone too far in the good". I, on the contrary, regret that the reformers did not go far enough.

The Reformed churches have been intolerant toward the

preaching of the true gospel just as the Catholic church had been before them. The Church of England had no place for either Bunyan or Wesley when they were alive. Today, there are commemorative plates for them in Westminster Abbey, centuries after their death.

The Reformed churches as well as the Catholic and the Orthodox (except under atheist or non-Christian regimes) are identical with the world. Everybody is baptized as an infant and everybody is a Christian. The world cannot accept the whole Christ. Neither can such a church.

She can only misuse money entrusted to her, as the world does. We read in II Kings 12, that bricklayers were more trusted in money matters than priests. Things have not changed since.

Wycliffe wrote: "If the priesthood misuses church treasures, they must be taken from it. Otherwise, you neglect your duty". And Bonnhoffer: "The church is a church only when she exists for others. To begin with, she must give away all her property to the needy. Pastors must live only on the free will offerings of believers. If necessary, they must exercise a secular profession".

Thinking about the nominal church, Paul Tillich wrote: "The first word to be spoken by religion to the people of our time must be a word spoken against religion".

He expresses in other words what we find already in ~The Sum of Theology~, written by Thomas Aquinas: "When there is an imminent danger for faith, prelates can be accused even publicly by their subordinates".

*

In this false church, the word "Christian" can strike terror to the heart. Christians have done to Christians as much harm, in as cruel a manner, as Nazis or Communists or other pagans have done. Not every man you consider a Christian is a Christian.

*

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But the word "church" also has another sense. By becoming a Christian, you will enter into a real fellowship of brethren and sisters in the faith.

Nobody counterfeits what is not valuable. The many counterfeits of Christianity prove its value. There are pretenders only to pure life, none to a bad one.

Leave the pretenders to Christianity and attach yourself to the true church. In it are some big saints, real poems of God. This is the Greek word which the Bible uses to describe them - "poema" (EPH 2:10).

I agree with Pope Pelagius II that God cannot be on the side of a man who is not in peace and unity with the church, provided that we understand by "church" this sacred fellowship of cross-bearing real believers.

But be prepared to have disappointments here, too. God's true church consists of people who only strive towards godliness, without having reached it yet. Remember that you are also a disappointment to others.

Real Christians are also capable of treachery and cruelty.

Wicked men have virtues, saints have sins. The world is not divided into white and black. It will sometimes be difficult for you to distinguish between the true and the false.

St. Thomas Aquinas said: "Gratia non tollit naturam" (Grace does not destroy nature).

Beware especially when you receive many gifts from God. Graces and gifts can serve as enemies. They seldom provoke admiration. In most cases they provoke envy.

In spite of the weaknesses of its members, the church is real if it is a fellowship of believers and in it you are taught the Word of God.

*

But again: Do not have too great expectations!

In the Bible we have the word of God, but what an imprecise word. In MTT 21:7, we read that the disciples brought to Jesus an ass and a colt, ... and they set Him thereon, which gives the impression that they set Him on two

animals. The word of God is written in part by uneducated man in an unpolished language.

When God became man, he became a despised man, counted among robbers. When he gave his written word, he gave it with many imprecise and obscure parts. When he gave us priests and pastors he knew we would be taught sermons and books containing much human ignorance and distortion.

At poor religious services, remember Jesus in His humility. The humble church is the extension of the humble incarnation

*

After having made this distinction between denomination as such and the real church, children of God must maintain unity. It is a shame that on Sundays we scatter to hundreds of confessions and often leave Him alone (JHN 16:32). The Greek word for "scatter" is "scorpithete" which is akin to "scorpions".

Apply to all brethren this principle: "In necessary things unity, in dubious things liberty, in all charity".

Very important is this unity. The last words of Melanchthon were: "Let them be one!" He had them from Jesus: "... that they all may be one".

Strive towards unity, but again without illusions. You will not achieve much. Confusion and discord shall spread more

and more even among the children of God, like clouds of darkness. Even among believers it will be a problem to find a congregation and a pastor to satisfy the needs of your soul. Guard what you have already received and keep the faith in Christ, even if you have to hold unto the root of the tree by your fingernails to stop yourself from being swept away, and thus remain until the day of your death. A better world awaits you where clarity reigns.

*

I spoke about faithfulness toward the church, but it must also be clear that we cannot be in communion with God

through the church and have at the same time a direct relationship with God. The church makes the relationship indirect. Liberty of conscience vis-a-vis God is greater than the authority of the church. The church has always found it difficult to identify the saints. She has sentenced and condemned many godly persons as heretics.

You must be aware that you run in vain if you do not run with the true church. But at the same time, you have to keep certain distance even from the truest church.

*

Never allow yourself to be discouraged by things which you see in the church. The story is told of a Jew who was converted after having seen the Vatican during the time of Borgia. He said: "A church which exists in spite of such leaders must be with God".

I love the church mostly for its ugly sides. When you enter a hospital, you feel revulsion at the stench, pus, blood, groanings. This is the beauty of a hospital, that it receives sick men and that doctors and nurses are prepared to spend their days amid such unpleasant conditions in order to help. The beauty of the church consists in the fact that it receives sinners and criminals. After being received by the church, these sinners commit new wicked deeds, this time under the cloak of Christianity. And the church, a loving mother, continues to keep them at her loving bosom.

I find this beautiful.

And then there is also another side to the church. It contains not only wicked men.

It has men like Pope Gregory the Great who, while putting on liturgical garments, was told that a man had died for hunger. Immediately, he put aside the robes, saying, "If one man dies for hunger in Rome, the Pope is not worthy to say the mass".

The church has given and still gives a whole constellation of men who love God and their fellowmen wholeheartedly and put themselves at their service.

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The church has a rich experience with God and with men. Its treasury is at your disposal.

Whatever happens in the church, good or evil, there remains one crucial fact: the resurrection of Jesus. It is surely true.

Suppose, as our adversaries say, that this whole story is forged. Why would forgers invent the episodes in which Mary Magdalene does not recognize the resurrected Lord? According to LUK 24:16 and JHN 21:4, His closest disciples did not recognize Him to be Jesus. Imagine, if you will, that several persons plot to accuse a man falsely for a crime he did not commit and then, when they appear in the witness stand, each one says that he does not recognize the accused as having been the criminal. Obviously, their whole cause would collapse. Now, forgers are usually very intelligent men. If the apostles were forgers, why would they have repeated the stupidity, unforgivable for a forger, of saying that they did not recognize the person before them as the resurrected Jesus. The explanation is simple: because they were lovers of truth and things had happened just as they tell them. Jesus later gave signs enough to dispel every doubt in their heart. They knew that he was alive. So do we.

He is alive not only in heaven: He lives in our hearts. If your spiritual eyes are open and you look at a believer, you see Jesus enthroned in his heart, or, to change the figure, the believer himself lying at His bosom, safely wrapped in both arms of Jesus.

Cling always to the one sure fact: Jesus rose from the dead. He is alive. He has been dead, now what had happened to His corpse? Had His disciples stolen it? Then they would have known that He had not fulfilled His promise to rise again. They would assuredly have lost their faith. Almost all of them later died a martyr's death. No one goes to death under torture for what he himself knows to be a lie. So the corpse of Jesus was not in the hands of the disciples.

If it had been in the hands of His adversaries, Christianity would never have arisen. When the apostles preached the resurrection of Jesus, the chief priests who had sentenced Him

to death would only have had to open the tomb and show the body of Jesus. The three thousand who were converted in one day in Jerusalem - a heavy blow indeed for the Pharisees - would never have accepted the claims of the resurrection had they seen the body of Jesus still lying in the tomb. Peter would easily have been humiliated and discredited if his claims about his resurrected Lord had been disproved.

Neither the friends nor the enemies of Jesus possessed His corpse because on the third day Jesus was no more a corpse, but alive. He is alive today and will be throughout eternity.

You might have tribulations in the world and within the church, but the living Jesus will give you joy amidst tribulation.

*

In fellowship with Jesus, how easy it will be for you to know the right Christian attitude toward the problems of your life.

In Dostoievski's ~Brothers Karamazov~, the Great Inquisitor, on learning that a certain Jesus Christ was walking through the streets of Madrid and by his unwanted presence endangering the Christian religion which he had happened to found, summoned Jesus before him and lectured him on how foolish he had been. As an idealist and a utopian, Jesus could only have been crucified. It was men like the Great Inquisitor who have made Christianity persist by putting it in a fixed frame and

burning those with the mind of Jesus.

To all the insolence and cruelty of the Great Inquisitor, Jesus never answered a word. He listened attentively to the end. Was it not a creature of God, a man for whom he had died, that spoke? When the Great Inquisitor had finished, Jesus kissed him. That was all.

Let a kiss be your final answer to any insolence and cruelty. Even Judas Iscariot desired the kiss of Christ.

*

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You have to deal with men, to listen to them, to give them your replies. But leave them as quickly as you can. "One thing is needful," and Mary Magdalene chose "that good part": she sat quietly at Jesus' feet and heard His word. She needed only Jesus, even when He was crucified, yes, even when He was a corpse. She loved Him and only Him. And He loved her so much that He took great risks in accepting her kisses and loving gestures. In that time no rabbi would have allowed a woman even to touch him. For Jesus also only one thing is needful: to show love to Magdalene's.

The eye by which she saw Jesus was the same as the eye by which Jesus saw her. There are many bodily eyes. The spiritual eye is one. It is common to God, the angels, and believers.

*

A shepherd said to a nightingale, "Sing!" The nightingale replied, "The frogs make too much noise. It takes away the pleasure of singing. Don't you hear them?" The shepherd said, "I surely do, but only your silence makes me hear them".

Walk through the world singing the song of Jesus. It is to your shame if so many words of hatred and unbelief are heard.

*

If you are faithful to Christ and to His church, when you finish your earthly life paradise will be honoured to receive you. But you have a higher calling than paradise and the

heavenly Jerusalem. You are called to sit with Jesus on His throne, from which universes are created and ruled, just as Jesus has overcome and sits on the throne with His Father (REV 3:21). Paradise will be for you just a time of relaxation. Divine tasks await you, because you will have become Christ-like, a partaker of the divine nature.

*

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I have told you the word of God. It will help you if you listen to it.

I do not know if you will. But the present book has helped me.

Since I came to the West nine years ago, I have written tirelessly about the Communist persecution of Christians. It is now a long time since I came out of Communist prisons. But till now, Communist prisons had not come out of me.

A young patient of a psychotherapist painted dozens of women's faces cracked like broken vases, faded like worn flowers, and with hard, unyielding eyes. Only when he had painted a whole and healthy face did he know that he could be cured and that he was a painter.

For the first time, I have written a book the only subject of which is Christ. Through it I have been healed of having my mind burdened continually with Communism and its prisons.

*

For further information on other books written by the Wurmbrand family, please write:

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Are you confronted by the terrible fact of suffering? This book will give you light.

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The end of "Victorious Faith."

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"This is a most astonishing, perhaps the most astonishing book that I have read," says Dr. J. B. Phillips.

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page 7 Preface

Out of fourteen years in jail under the Communists in Rumania, I spent three years alone in a cell thirty feet below ground, never seeing sun, moon or stars, flowers or snow, never seeing another man except for the guards and interrogators who beat and tortured me.

I seldom heard a noise in that prison. The guards had felt-soled shoes and I did not hear their approach.

I had no Bible, nor any other book. I had no paper on which to write my thoughts. The only things we were expected to write were statements accusing ourselves and others.

During that time I rarely slept at night. I slept in the daytime. Every night I passed the hours in spiritual exercises and prayer. Every night I composed a sermon and delivered it.

I had a faint hope that one day I might be released. And so I tried to memorize the sermons. In order to do this, I used a device of putting the main ideas into short rhymes. There are precedents for this. Omar Khayyam, Nostradamus, Heinrich Seuse and Angelus Silesius all condensed into extremely short verses a wealth of philosophy, religion and prophecy. So I composed my rhymes. These I learned by heart and kept in my memory through continual repetition. When my mind broke down under the influence of heavy doping, I forgot them. But as the effects of the drugs passed, they came vividly back to me.

Here are just a few of the sermons. My unusually good memory retains some three hundred and fifty.

These sermons are not to be judged for their dogmatic content. I did not live on dogma then. Nobody can. The soul feeds on Christ, not on teachings about him.

From the dogmatic point of view, David and Job were wrong

to argue with God. From the dogmatic point of view, the author of the book of Esther was wrong not to write one word of praise for the God who had just wrought such a great deliverance for his people. From the dogmatic point of view, St. John the Baptist was wrong when in prison he questioned the fact that Jesus was the Messiah. Dogmatists could even find fault with Jesus Himself. He ought not to have trembled in Gethsemane. But life, even religious life, is not concerned with dogmas. It pursues its own course, and that course seems foolish to reason.

I have lived in exceptional circumstances and passed through exceptional states of spirit. I must share these with my fellowmen. They need to be known, because even now tens of thousands of Christians are in prison in Communist countries, tortured and drugged and kept in solitary cells and put in strait-jackets as I have been. Many of them must have similar reactions to mine. Jesus, in his compassion for the multitudes, became one of them, a carpenter in a poor country among an oppressed people. You cannot have compassion (the word means suffering together) unless you know the state of heart of those who are suffering.

To be in a solitary cell under the Communists or the Nazis is to reach the peak of suffering. The reactions of Christians who pass through such trials are something apart from everything else.

The purpose of this book is to make these thoughts and feelings known to those who are on the side of the innocent victims. With many of the thoughts expressed in these sermons I no longer agree myself any more, now that I am living under normal conditions. But I record my thoughts as they occurred to me then.

Reader, instead of judging, enter into fellowship with your Christian brothers who are in prison in situations where, to use the words of Bede, "there is no voice but of weeping, no face but of the tormentors." Put yourself in their situation; "remember them that are in bonds as bound with them." [1] Use your imagination to feel what it is like to be in solitary confinement

and tortured. Only then will you be able to understand this book. It contains the sermons of a pastor whose pillars of reason rocked under strain, as I recognize now. There were times when I was near to apostasy. Happily, just on those worst days I was not tortured. Probably I would have cracked then. The tortures happened only after I had overcome despair.

It has been easy for me to reconstruct the whole sermon out of a short poem, because while I left the solitary cell the solitary cell has never left me. Not one day passes without my living in it, whether I am in a large rally in the United States, in a church or a committee meeting in Britain, or just sitting in a train. My real being has remained for ever in solitary

confinement. I don't so much live my present life, as relive continually those prison years. This is not because they are an essential part of my personal history but because I am not the real me. The real me is those who are in lonely, dreary, damp cells today, in Red China, in Albania, in Rumania, in North Korea and other Communist countries. They are the little brothers of Jesus. They are the most precious part of the mystical body of Christ on earth. I am living their life when I relive my years of solitary confinement. It is a strange experience. It may lead to madness. There may already be madness in these sermons of mine.

But if Erasmus was right when he wrote In ~Praise of Folly~, why should not folly be allowed to speak for itself? Communism has driven mad many pastors and other Christians, whose mental health broke down under prolonged torture. Why should only wise men say what they think about Communism? Why not let the mad speak out of their madness? It is the maddened thoughts of those who are kept in conditions of hardship beyond description that I here put down on paper. I have had moments of knowing the victory of faith in prison. I have also had moments of despair. I thank God for both. The latter had some good in them, in that they showed me my limitations and taught me not to rely on my own victories, nor on my faith, but on the atoning blood of Jesus Christ.

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New causes always produce new effects. Solitary confinement under the Communists is something new in church history. It cannot be compared with the Roman or even the Nazi persecutions. Consider the difference made by the fact of intensive doping or scientific brainwashing, and don't be surprised at our thoughts and reactions.

I am conscious that some of the speculations in these sermons are bold, with a boldness that can come only from a long term of silence. Do they represent the truth, or are they heresy? Truth is the correspondence between thought and reality. But does anyone know the whole reality? We lived in a reality apart, and our thoughts may have mirrored it correctly, although it seems strange to those who live a quiet, normal life. In any case, that is how I thought then. The minds of thousands of Christians who are tortured in Communist prisons today are battered by just such tempests. This is what I have to put on paper, for the benefit of those Christians who do not wish to lead selfish lives but to have fellowship with those who are passing through not only physical tortures but also extreme spiritual tension.

And now let me tell you the words of the psalmist: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine thine ear. Forget also thine own people (whether you are Catholic or Protestant, fundamentalist or radical), and thy father's house" [PSA 45:10] and, blindfolded as we prisoners were, go down with me into the subterranean prison. Hear the cell door shut behind you. You are alone. All noise has ceased. Your only air supply comes to you through a pipe. If you feel the impulse to scream at the thought of being confined in such a place, just scream. The guards will soon put you in a straitjacket. But "the King shall greatly desire thy beauty" [PSA 45:11], if you stay here as long as he has ordained for you. Accept your thoughts of despair and of faith, your doubts and their solution, your moments of madness and their passing away. Allow it all to happen to you. You imagine that you are thinking. In fact, you are being thought. You may be an experiment for angels. You may be the object of a bet between God and Satan,

like Job. Be determined only to cling to God, even if he slays you, even if he slays your faith. If you lose your faith, then remain faithlessly his. If all the fruits of the spirit disappear, and you remain a barren tree with only leaves, remember that leaves also have a purpose. Under their shadow, the fruitful ones may rest in the embraces of their Divine Lover. Leaves are used by the bride to make a garland for her beloved. Leaves are changed into healing medicines. And even when the leaves become yellow and fall withered to the ground, they can form a beautiful carpet on which he will walk towards those who, unlike you, have remained faithful to the end.

Go down into solitary confinement. I have brought you to the door of your cell. It is here that I disappear. You remain alone with him. It may be your bridal chamber. It may be a chamber of spiritual torture. I have to leave you. My place is in my own cell. You look at me and think you see madness in my face? I don't mind. Very soon, you will look like me. And perhaps you will be able to say to Jesus: "I am black, but comely." [SOS 1:5]

We have gone down into the darkness. Here you will experience the pressure, but also the rapture, of the great depths. At a great depth, things do not have the same colour as on the surface. Your sense of direction disappears. Your mind changes, supposing that you are able to keep your mind. You will probably wander off the right way.

May God help you! May God have mercy on all miserable sinners who pass through the rapture of the final depths.

R. W.

Note: In the following pages there are several references to the fact that prisoners communicated by code through the cell walls. In my book ~In God's Underground~ I explain how nearly all the prisoners came to learn this code. The Nazi prison I mention was a Rumanian prison, under the right-wing dictatorship of General Antonescu, imposed on our country by the Nazis.

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GOD

For years I have been preaching to men. I had almost forgotten that there is an invisible audience in church, too; that the angels are listening as we expound your word.

Now that I am alone with you, and with your invisible servants, I can begin a new series of sermons. In church I had to be careful not to hurt the feelings or prejudices of my listeners. With you I can be absolutely frank. You have no inquisition. You will not try me for heresy. In front of other people I had to praise you. Here I am free to question you, and to reproach you, as David and Job and others have done.

I will tell you openly everything that is in my heart.

You have said: "It is not good that man should be alone." [GEN 2:18] And yet you are keeping me in solitary confinement. You created Eve to be with Adam. Yet you have taken away from me my wife. You are doing to me the very thing that you yourself have acknowledged to be wrong. How will you justify yourself when we meet? You will ask me why I have done things condemned by your word. It is surely far worse for a God not to fulfill his own word than for a man not to obey God commandments. The judgment will be reciprocal. I can now understand the words of Isaiah: "Come now and let us reason ~together~, saith the Lord."

[ISA 1:18]

Jesus said: "The Father makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good." [MTT 5:45] Our torturers are now at the beaches enjoying the sun. I have not seen it for months, being in a cell thirty feet under the earth. Jesus will ask me many things at the last judgment. That is his right. But I will ask him why the Father

kept me without the sun. I am curious to know how he will answer me.

Ever since my conversion I have been intrigued by your word in Ezekiel: "I have them also statutes that were not good and judgments whereby they should not live." [EZE 20:25] I have never heard a preacher explain this verse. The commentators also avoid it. Now I am beginning to understand something of this mystery.

No law can be righteous, even if it is divine, because every law fixes equal standards for men of unequal abilities, who are put in unequal situations.

This is true even of the ten commandments. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" is a law given equally to the man brought up in a strict puritan religion and the man with a long Catholic heritage. This law is not just, because the two men cannot fulfill it with the same ease. I once spoke to a Catholic about the second commandment, and he replied candidly: "Why are you Protestants so blind? The law says, 'Thou shalt not make ~unto thee~ any graven image.' This does not mean that Michelangelo or even a modest sculptor is not allowed to make one for you. It is only forbidden to individuals to make holy images, everyone according to his fancy. But the church is not forbidden to provide Christians with these means of inspiration."

I stared in amazement at this Catholic brother, who was not at all bothered by what worried me so much. He continued: "When God became incarnate in Jesus Christ, he took all the qualities of a man, including that of being a potential model for an object of art." And so on. I had never thought of it like that.

"Honour thy father and thy mother" is said to those whose fathers are saints and good men. But I have known people who reacted violently against this commandment. All they could

remember was that their father was a drunkard and beat them unjustly, or that their mother had abandoned them. In my congregation I had a girl who had been raped by her father. Your law is not just. It commands us to honour every father,

every mother, even the one who has bequeathed to me a criminal heredity. I have to honour my superiors in the church. Some of them have chosen martyrdom. Others have become stooges of the Communists. And I have to honour both categories. It is your law, but an unjust one.

"Thou shalt not kill" is said to a Swede or a Swiss whose nation has known no war for centuries. We, Rumanians, have the same commandment, although our country has been invaded by foreigners in every generation, and we have to defend ourselves.

"Thou shalt not steal" is said to a billionaire, who has more than he will ever need and has no reason to steal. I am terribly hungry, and would steal bread if only I could find it. But in doing this I would be breaking one of your unjust laws.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery" is said to a man who has a loving and beautiful wife who is a good sexual partner. But the law is also valid for the person who has an unbearable wife or husband, or none at all. How much John, one of our congregation, has suffered! He had a wife who had been sick for years and could not give him satisfaction. One unjust law after another.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness" is a law for the man who has no reason to lie, or perhaps is not even able to do so, not having the slightest imagination; it is also for me, who have to answer the Communist interrogator. If I tell him the truth, as he asks me, appealing to my Christian obligation, many other arrests will follow.

Rahab, after having hid the two Israelite spies, lied, saying that she did not know where they came from or where they had gone. Did she do wrong?

I remember that Spurgeon preached on this subject, and said that he had often tried to put himself in Rahab's place. Supposing he had hidden some persecuted Protestants and was asked by the authorities if they were in his house. What would his answer have been? It is known that he was very strict against lying. We had to lie in the Nazi times, too. So I was

interested to read what he said; "I have tried to imagine what

I would say, and have never yet been able to make up my mind ... I have more light than Rahab, and certainly I have had more leisure to consider the case, and yet I do not see my way. I am not sure whether Rahab's lie was not more honest and outspoken than many an evasion which has suggested itself to very clever people."

I have often quoted his words to brethren who were worried about having to lie to oppressing authorities. Spurgeon could not make up his mind. I have made up mine. I lie to the Communist examining officers, and I must say I do it with delight.

"Let not your heart be troubled" [JHN 14:1] is said equally to the chronic worrier and to the phlegmatic character who by his nature is never anxious about anything. It is said to a well-to-do American who has never known real trouble, and to my prison-mate who has just tapped to me by morse code through the wall that he is sentenced to death.

A law cannot help but be unjust. Even you, God, could not avoid injustice once you started to make laws.

So your injustice is not only that you keep me alone in a place without sun. The problem is a bigger one. You have committed an injustice by placing men under laws in the first place.

I will leave my personal problem with you. One way of being free of something which worries you is to drown your individual sorrow, which is only a drop, in the infinite ocean of universal sorrow. But I put the general problem. Why did you commit injustice towards mankind by giving us statutes which you yourself acknowledge to be unjust?

You need Jesus, just as I need him. He is the Intercessor and Mediator. I hear him every night interceding and mediating for you, to make me understand and love you, just as he intercedes with you on my behalf.

You needed his incarnation as much as I need it, though for an altogether different reason. You have always known man as he looks from the perspective of Godhead. But this does not give

you the whole truth. From the cell on the other side of me

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a former judge tapped through the wall how he regrets all the prison sentences he has ever given. He passed sentence without knowing what it was to spend years in prison. You judged men without having lived as man and suffered and been tempted; You needed the experience of manhood. You were enriched by the experience of your Son becoming man. "Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals." [SOS 3:11] From eternity Christ has had all kinds of beautiful crowns. The most beautiful was given to him by his holy mother: the crown of being the God-man. He was poor, mocked, beaten, tempted. He died. Enriched by this experience, he returned to you. Now you can understand us much better.

You are a living God. To be alive means to evolve, to grow, to increase. A thing which always stays the same is not alive. The constant appeal in churches to "magnify the Lord" teaches us that you can be magnified - that is, made greater. Jesus made you greater.

From the experience of human life actually lived, Jesus Christ made the mystery of human life, as known from within, manifest in heaven.

On the other hand, he explains to us on earth, every night, the mystery of a God who gives laws which he himself acknowledges to be wrong.

There has been a pause in my speaking to you. It was not a rhetorical pause. In speaking with you such artifices are not necessary.

I paused because I was listening, just as in heaven the song of the seraphim is interrupted by moments of silence, when the smoke of the incense which comes with the prayers of the saints ascends up before you. [REV 8:1-4]

I heard Christ explaining to me - how clearly his sheep distinguish his voice - that you gave us the law in the hope that we would not stop there but go beyond it, and so arrive at what you really intended.

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One thing I am sure about now: your commandment is one thing, and your wish another.

You say, for example, that "vengeance is mine." You express that will to show your wrath, but you believe that our faith will be big enough to stay your hand when you desire to avenge yourself. Yes, we will prevent you, even if you command us to the contrary. A good sheepdog does not easily stop barking at a stranger even if the shepherd orders it.

I once spoke harshly to my son, reproving him for some wrongdoing. He did not look me in the face and I asked him why. He answered: "I am not looking at your mouth which is speaking the bitter words but at your loving heart from which they flow." So we are not meant to look at the strict words of your commandments but at the loving intentions with which they were given.

David knew all your laws about animal sacrifices, but he said: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire." [PSA 40:6] The Jews had got from the Egyptians the wrong ideas about gods who always expect us to give them something. Jehovah, to warn them against bringing human sacrifices as other people did, ordered them to stop at a lamb or a pigeon. But David guessed that new life begins when a man understands that it is you who sacrificed the one whom you most love. You don't expect us to take life in order to become pleasant in your eyes.

One of your most unrighteous laws is about the cities of refuge. [Num 35]

If someone killed unintentionally and the kinsmen of the victim wanted vengeance you ordered the murderer to flee to a city of refuge. Suppose that several men are guilty of such a murder, but one cannot run as fast as the others. Not everyone can run uphill at the same speed. The one who runs well reaches the city of refuge and is safe, although he is as guilty as his comrade, whereas the slower man is killed by the avenger.

Can righteousness depend on the speed at which a man can move his legs?

This unrighteousness is perpetuated in the New Testament, where it is said that those who overcome will receive their

reward. And what of those who are defeated by sin, although they

longed for holiness?

Love will always lose the prize, according to the law, because love is always beaten in the race. Only evil and vice can make the records. Love is always late.

Jesus teaches us this in the parable of the good Samaritan.

Did the three men make a wager as to who would travel fastest from Jerusalem to Jericho? They were a Jewish priest, a Levite and a Samaritan.

All three started at the same time. The priest and the Levite were ambitious, and hurried on because they wanted to win the wager and gain fame. They heard groans from someone wounded and in pain; somebody cried for help. Because they were good men, they felt compassion for him; as they ran, they said a prayer for the wounded man, but they did not stop because there was a prize and fame to be had at the end of the race. Besides, the place was dangerous. There were rumours of bandits around.

The Samaritan was quite a different sort of man. One wonders why he entered into the wager. For him, the most important thing was not the money, nor the fame, but love for every living thing. When he heard the groans, he stooped down, anointed the wounded man and took him to an inn, which lay in the direction from which he had come. So he lost the race, as love always does.

"I am sick of love," says the bride. [SOS 5:8] The sick cannot win races; they cannot overcome. Jesus said that the Kingdom of Heaven is taken by violence. [MTT 11:12] But love has no strength to commit violence. It is easy for a great sinner to force the gate of heaven. Saints and loving characters have to rely on grace more than the others in order to be saved, because they can do the least for themselves.

It is unjust for the law to demand the same swiftness and victories from everyone.

I understand now why I have to wait so long in prison for my Bridegroom to come. I am sure he has left his place to come to help us, but he stops at every wounded person along his

way. Jairus implored him for his daughter who was dying, but

Jesus found a sick woman on the way, and so he allowed Jairus' daughter to die in the meantime. [MRK 5]

Who knows if Jesus, coming to our rescue, has not met on his way a flower whose petals were burdened with drops of dew, and stopped to straighten them out?

I am sick of love, and so I cannot do your works. You are love itself, and therefore sickness itself. You cannot come in time to give me back to my family, although you know that "it is not good for man to be alone." You are sick of love, and cannot make the sun rise for me, too. Who knows what sheep fallen into a ditch you had to help, Father, when Jesus was on Golgotha. So he had to remain without a ray of light and without a drop of water.

I cannot fulfill your law. Through Jesus you have released me from this obligation.

You have all the handicaps of love and cannot fulfill your many promises to be my helper. But I also release you from all obligations towards me taken by covenant, as you release me from all your statutes. They are not good. They are simply generalities. For you I am unique, as you are for me.

And we will pass together the years of solitary confinement, satisfied with loving and being loved. I will not reproach you for your evil statutes and unjust laws. You will not reproach me for having broken them.

How glad I am that for the first time I have been able to speak so openly with you. So, in the end, I realize that you have not left me alone. I am with you. Neither have you left me without the sun. I see the sun of righteousness rising in my dark cell.

Thanks and praise. ~Amen~.

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

I cannot see you, but I will preach to you from a distance.

I have several times experienced what is called extra-sensory perception. Here is one example.

A Russian lady officer was converted in our home. Then she went away with her regiment towards Hungary and Austria, and I did not hear from her again. Meanwhile, we moved into another house. One morning, just at the busiest time, I felt an irresistible impulse to return to my former apartment, although I had nothing to do there. When I approached the house I saw coming towards it from the other direction that Russian sister. She was passing through Bucharest on her way home to Stalingrad. Between trains she had some hours to spare, and she had prayed with all her heart that I would be at home so that she might get some further instruction in Christianity. Had I not been there just at that moment the unique opportunity would have been lost.

I could quote many other such instances.

You also may be capable of such perception at a distance. The prophets of old spoke to men far away. "Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir ... O thou inhabitant of Lachish ... I will bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah... thou, Bethlehem Ephratah," said Micah in one and the same speech, (MIC 1:11-15; 5:2] being sure that the angels would bring his words to distant cities.

So I am sure that my words, uttered in a solitary cell, will reach at least some of you, those who have the rare virtue of being silent and listening.

I will share with you some of the spiritual experiences

through which we pass in our underground prison. Although everyone is alone in a cell we communicate with each other by tapping messages in code through the wall. So I happen to know the following events.

It was ten o'clock at night. We always know exactly when it is ten o'clock. With chronometric exactitude at this hour the great tortures begin. In the mornings you can get a heavy beating. But the tortures are reserved for this dark hour. You can hear the screams. The acoustics in the arched corridors are such that the wailings bounce off one wall and on to another with

ever-increasing volume. At the first cry, the signal is given through the wall from one cell to the other, three knocks reminding us that we must begin our spiritual exercises; first, the examination of conscience, judging all our attitudes, thoughts and actions of the past day. A Jesuit priest taught us all to do this.

The Christian about whom I speak to you today did not have a very high regard for such self-examination. He considered that conscience is not so much the voice of God in us as the voice of our social environment. An action which would produce great remorse in one Christian is considered morally justified by another who comes from a different background. Conscience judges us according to its own law. But laws are generalizations, and do not take into account individual abilities and circumstances. You may be the staunchest Protestant and believe in salvation by faith alone. The conscience is always Catholic and tortures you with the remembrance of your actions, as if our relationship with God depended on these.

Conscience knows nothing about causality. It does not accept determinism. It believes in the fallacy of free will. It does not acknowledge the obvious fact that my action was the unavoidable result of my character, shaped by my whole past life, and the only response which I, as a unique personality, could give to external stimulants. Conscience attributes to me alone the guilt of an action which was the end result of the influence of thousands of other people: ancestors who transmitted to me a certain heredity; teachers and parents who gave me a faulty

education; authors, actors, friends and enemies who moulded my soul; the pressure of my social environment; and so on.

Conscience knows nothing about God's plans in which my sinful act may have played a necessary role - "Against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." [ACT 4:27-28]

Conscience is biased. When you examine yourself about everything you have done during the day, it will remind you only of the bad things. The good it forgets. And it only distinguishes between black and white. It does not know about the grey - the necessity, imposed sometimes by the circumstances of life, to choose not between good and evil but between two

evils.

Conscience does not accept the words of St. Philip Neri that we must not expect to become saints in four days. The best it can do, after much doubt and torment, is to accept the remission of sins, that is, pardon for guilt. The highest doctrine of the Bible, the one about justification, according to which we appear before God absolutely free from guilt, is completely unacceptable to conscience. It is totally unable to grasp the truth that not only the sinner but also the sin can become as white as snow. [ISA 1:18; PSA 51:7]

I would not like to abolish conscience, as Hitler did, calling it a Jewish invention. The results of that were horrible. Conscience has an enormous social value. A tender conscience gives you a right attitude to your fellow-men. But God does not love you more after a good deed or less after a bad one.

Self-examination always leaves you sad. You compare what you have done with what Jesus would have done in similar circumstances, and bitterly reproach yourself. But to ask what Jesus would have done in similar circumstances is as reasonable as to ask how far a snail would have gone during a day if it had been a hare. It is a snail and not a hare. And I am I. I am not Jesus. To act like Jesus I would have to be God incarnate, born of a holy virgin. I would have to have his education. I

would have to have angels at my disposal. I would have to possess his miraculous power. I would have to be a prophet, and a carpenter of two thousand years ago in Palestine.

Luther warned men of the great sin of sadness. He said that it is better for a Christian to be drunk than to be sad. The Communists have tortured us enough. Why should we torture ourselves? Luther said again that remorse before Calvary is of God; remorse after God have been to Calvary is of the devil. Repent of your sin, yes; but do not make your sin a subject for long and melancholy meditation. Why should I cheat God by spending my time and energy on remorse? I am greater than my sins. Conscience would try to identify me with them.

Our brother did not care for these torturings of the soul. The Talmud says: "The sun has set and the day is clear." When the signal was given each night our brother would prepare to dance to the glory of God.

Before the signal was given he lay on his bed. Like the ticking of a watch, in every pulse beat of his heart there was a thought about Jesus. His longing after the Bridegroom was a burning fire. He whispered "Jesus" at every breath. And now the signal came. It was time to begin his holy - or perhaps his crazy - dance.

While he was dancing he heard an angel say: "Hail, Gheorghe, full of grace. God is with thee. Blessed art thou." The brother had been brought up in respect for the traditions of the early desert fathers. He knew what to do in such cases. He asked the angel: "To whom are you sent?" The angel answered: "To you, Gheorghe." The Christian answered: "There are many others with the name of Gheorghe around me in other cells. You have come to the wrong one. I am not worthy to hear the voice of angels." His circling round became even crazier to drive away the temptation. The dance was a sacrifice on the altar of God.

But the angel - it was Gabriel - remained. How insistent angels are! Then something was conceived in this Christian, as in Mary in times past (or perhaps he only then discovered what had long been there). There quickened in this Christian

the germ of a new life which would give him in the future the power to overcome where he had been defeated in times past. He knew now that he would be able to bear things more painful than death, even the worst of mockeries.

Since that experience, that Christian lives no more. Christ lives in him. He lives only to nurture this new life, to raise up in all good the author of all virtue. What a responsibility! As with Mary, it is his task to bring to maturity the very king of heaven.

This Christian feels it is his special task to make Jesus a man of the twentieth century - or rather of the twenty-first century; to make him a modern intellectual - or rather, the one who will show the modern intellectuals the path ahead. His task is to make him a man who will weep in our generation as he wept in Jerusalem two thousand years ago; to make him today's man of sorrows.

Jesus is for ever weeping.

There is an ancient legend which says that, when Jesus

was a child, Joseph loved him so much that he would never come home from the market without bringing him some toy or candy. The little Jesus was so used to this that, whenever Joseph went to town, the child would wait by the window to see when he returned. Then he would run to meet him and ask him: "Father, what have you brought me?" Once, Joseph had no money and came home empty-handed. When Jesus ran to meet him and put the usual question, Joseph replied, discouraged: "Nothing." Then the child began to weep bitterly. And, seeing this, Joseph began to weep too.

The holy virgin came out of the house and saw both of them in tears. She asked what was wrong. When Joseph explained, she said, amazed: "I can understand why he is weeping. He is only a child. But why are you in tears?" Joseph answered: "The weeping of Jesus has a deep meaning. This child will always sit at the windows of heaven waiting for his beloved ones to return. He will run to meet each one, asking him 'What have you brought me?' And if the answer is, like mine 'Nothing,' he will weep in heaven as you see him weeping now."

The Christian of whom I am speaking feels it to be his task to

actualize these tears. As in times past Jesus wept over Jerusalem, so he will weep now over Moscow, which kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. He will weep over Berlin, capital of a great nation which cannot be unified. He will weep over Oslo and Stockholm, towns with empty churches. He will weep over London and Washington, which have sacrificed one-third of the world into the hands of the Communist torturers who have just beaten a woman. I can hear her heart-rending cries.

Jesus is now living in the heart of this Christian. Those who do not have Jesus, or who have only a ghost (that is, the Jesus of two thousand years ago), will mock this man who is a present-day Mary. They say the rosary endlessly - "Hail, Mary, full of grace," meaning always the Mary of old, and remaining blind to a Mary of today.

But this Christian has met Gabriel. He has lived in the reality of the mystical union. Christ has been conceived in him. ~Amen~.

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

We live on very little. A rich child with many toys is bored with them. A child in the slums has a box, and pushes it around. He calls it a car, a wagon, an engine. He has a stick and rides on it, and calls it a horse.

So we live on little things, but enrich them by our imagination.

Our telegraph through the wall functions perfectly. In the fourth cell to my right is a girl, from the Underground church, who has been severely tortured but does not betray. She is only eighteen. Her name is Mary.

This communication started in me a series of thoughts which I wish to share with you.

Mary - what a holy name!

Primitive peoples have always had their goddesses as well as their gods. They have, in a distorted form, a basically sound intuition, or perhaps something of the primary revelation has remained with them. There is a female principle in Godhead. Scholars who are privileged to study the Holy Scriptures in the original languages, know that "~ruah~," the Hebrew word for "spirit" is a feminine noun. In Genesis I, if you translate literally you must read: "And the Spirit of God moved in a feminine manner (~merahefet~) upon the face of the waters." In Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus, the word for spirit is also feminine - "~ruha~."

The angel who appeared to Joseph in a dream told him that his bride, Mary, "shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name 'Jesus'" (in Hebrew "Jeshuah," again a feminine word). It is as though we were to call a boy Helen or Katherine.

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A man with a female name. It was this mystery which was expressed in the outward appearance of an orthodox priest: he had

to have a beard, but wear a woman's robe.

Whenever I feel God near me in this solitary cell I always have the impression that there is also a female presence. St. John the Evangelist, in conditions similar to mine, alone, exiled on Patmos, saw God sitting on the throne. "And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone." [REV 4:2-3] But there also appeared to him in heaven what was to him a great wonder, as it was to me: "a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." [REV 12:1] Commentators make all kinds of guesses as to who this woman might be. We have the explanation in the very beginning of the Bible: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them." [GEN 1:27] This is the image of God: male and female. So there is a female principle in Godhead. The Kabbala calls it "the Matrona." God has all the perfections; he cannot be limited to the male ones.

When I was arrested under the Nazis, I saw prisoners being taken out to exercise in the prison yard. Each one was handcuffed behind his back, and they were chained one to another, so that they had to walk in a circle. A Catholic priest, noticing this, exclaimed: "A human rosary!" And, as he had no beads, he said his "Hail, Marys," seeing every man chained to him as a knot in the rosary.

An incident like this can move the heart of a Protestant, too.

I would never consent to call Mary "Queen of heaven," "Leader of the angelic hosts," "Queen of the Church," "Queen of mankind" and so on, because I would not like to leave God unemployed. But my love and reverence for her was certainly increased with my experiences in prisons.

And now, when I hear about the tortured Mary near me, my thoughts go to the mother of the Lord.

The genealogy of Jesus, as recounted by Matthew, gives forty-two generations from Abraham to Christ. But count them and you will find that only forty-one are enumerated,

including Christ. St. Matthew was a publican. So we may presume that he knew how to count. Why did he list forty-one and say that there are forty-two? If this was a simple error,

how is it that it has been perpetrated for twenty centuries? You can see that St. Matthew wished to hide a mystery by the fact that he really pretends to give forty-two names by a cunning device. He has three sets of fourteen names each. He repeats the name of Jechonias, the last in the second series, as the first in the third, so that the inattentive reader may never observe that one of the alleged forty-two is missing. Who is this missing forty-second link?

Another biblical curiosity: nearly all the women of the Gospels are named Mary. We have Mary, the holy virgin; Mary Magdalene; Mary of Bethany; Mary the mother of James and Joseph; Mary the wife of Cleopas; and one simply called "the other Mary." This makes six. If we had one Mary more, we would have the holy number seven. Is one Mary missing?

By the cross there stood only Marys, four of them. The relevant Bible verse sounds very strange: "There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother and his mother's sister, Mary." [JHN 19:25] But the mother's name was Mary. Two sisters don't have the same name.

What if Mary (in Hebrew Miriam, "the star of the sea," the star which shows the way to those who sail on the ocean of spirituality) is not used in the Bible as a name only? It seems that it was also a title given to a certain type of Christian woman in the early church, as the Communists call each other "comrade," and as there are titles in the army and in masonry.

So anybody can become a Mary, just as anybody can become a comrade, or a major in the army.

A third mystery: Jesus said, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and my sister, and mother." 6 He is the first-born among many brethren. It is easy to understand what it means to hold him in the relationship of a brother. But how can one become his mother? He says that this is possible, too.

It is a great privilege to be God's child, but how much greater

a privilege to have God as one's child! Jesus tells us that this is possible for us. Nestorius fought against calling Mary "Theotokos" (the one who gives birth to God), but a general council of the church defeated him. Christ is God. And Mary

held God as a baby in her arms. She washed him, she cared for him, she fed him, she brought him up. Her God was dependent upon her. She is unique as the first and the greatest mother of God. But this experience is not entirely reserved for her. Jesus says that the one who fulfils his will can be his mother, can be with him in the relationship which a mother has towards her child.

What does all this mean?

The highest form of love is that of a mother for her child. The child's love towards its mother contains a grain of interest; it turns to its mother for every need. The child's love towards its father is similar: Father gives the pocket money. In every human love some kind of interest is mixed. Only a mother's love is totally self-sacrificing. She gives everything for her children, expecting nothing in return.

Mary, the mother of God, gave everything for Jesus and never received anything from him, not even good words. After the resurrection, when he showed himself to so many, comforting their sad hearts, he did not show himself to his mother. There was a purpose in this. He offered her, by this, the highest opportunity: to give to God without claiming ever to receive anything in return.

Those who have attained this spiritual position bear the title of a "Mary." I think that this should be the sense of the Catholic word "marianite." Then Protestants could not object.

And now we come back to the one missing link in the genealogy of Jesus. This genealogy is not history. Even a superficial comparison with the genealogy of the Jewish kings in the Old Testament, and with the one in St. Luke, is sufficient to show that they do not agree. The genealogy of Jesus according to St. Matthew is not a historical succession, but a ladder of initiation.

You begin by identifying yourself with Abraham, the father

of all the faithful; you pass through the experience of Isaac sacrificed by his father, as Christians in our country have to deprive their children of a happy childhood in order to remain faithful to Christ. You then become Jacob, who saw the angels ascending and descending, to teach him that in the spiritual life

you cannot stop at any point. If you do not advance, you slide back. God is at the top of the ladder. Sweet communion with him in the highest sense of the word is possible only there. You continue the initiation, reliving the lives of Judah and all the others until you arrive at the stage of Mary, of being towards God as a mother is towards her child. The Mary of two thousand years ago gave birth to Jesus Christ, the historical person of whom the Gospels speak.

But you too can have your meeting with the archangel Gabriel. Christ can be conceived in your heart, as a result of the forty preceding experiences of communion with saints, common men and sinners of all the ages. You can be a Mary with self-sacrificing love, which wishes only to give, not asking anything in exchange. The Christ in you, the hope of glory, will be the forty-second person in the chain. Your aim will have been accomplished.

You will concentrate on one thing, to serve God who is your child. You will not depart from this, not even when the Communists tempt you with their promises of release if you betray; not even when you are tortured.

Hail, Mary, my beloved sister in the fourth cell; hail, Mary, full of grace. God is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your heart. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should sit near me in a royal prison cell? For lo, as soon as the tapping through the wall of the cell gave me knowledge of your presence and of your faithfulness, my babe leapt in my heart for joy.

God help us all to arrive at the final, missing link in St. Matthew's genealogy. ~Amen~.

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

St. Paul could write letters when he was in prison. He had ink and parchment. St. John, too, could write to the churches from his exile on Patmos.

We have no paper and no ink. But there is one way of writing which they cannot forbid us: to write with the Spirit on the hearts of men, even if they are far from us.

I may as well teach you the technique of this kind of writing, so that you may be able to use it too.

A technique in matters of the Spirit? Usually, Christians are very vague in thinking and speaking about spiritual matters. But there are laws of the Spirit just as there are laws of the material world. It is possible to orientate yourself in the spiritual world, just as you do in the material world. The seers of old knew not only that they had met an angel, but what legion he belonged to, and what his name was - Michael or Gabriel. When you know the laws of the Spirit, you can use a certain technique, just as a technique in material things becomes possible when you know the natural laws.

The basic principles of writing with the Spirit in the hearts of men far away are these:

1. Don't think about the man on whom you wish to concentrate in order to convey to him a message from God, except in the hour of that concentration. Don't speak about him. He should be out of your mind. Then all your potential of interest and love for him, which would otherwise be dissipated, will be available in the hour of concentration. I tell myself jokes and play chess with myself and hum all kinds of melodies before I concentrate on speaking to you.

2. Meditation must precede the delivery of the message. I must think the message through, and refine it to contain, in the most condensed form, what I consider to be essential for you to know. I must meditate about how the knowledge of this message from God might beautify your soul; what loss it could be for you not to know exactly the state of heart of your brothers and sisters in jail, you being one soul with them, their sufferings and doubts and victories being yours.

3. From meditation I must pass to contemplation. I must see you with my spiritual eyes as I used to see you in church. I must recognize every face. You must be as real to me as if I were actually seeing your picture. More than this, I must see you laughing or weeping according to what I tell you. Meditation calls for burning love; contemplation requires an exercise of the imagination. We can all evoke a loved one in our

daydreams. Exercise this faculty, and you will be able to write in the Spirit.

4. Actually write with letters your message on the hearts of those whom you now have before you in the spirit. At first, it is best to make the gestures with your hand, as if you were actually inscribing the words.

5. Never allow the mental pictures of those to whom you are writing to disappear from your view until you can see on their faces that they have understood your message. There should be a nod, a smile or a shake of the head. But there should be a reaction.

All prisoners, and pastors and Christians of the Underground church should learn this forgotten art, as the possibilities of normal communication become less and less.

In the end, prayer is also something like writing with the Spirit on the heart of God. And the technique of real prayer is something like that I have just described, the face which the Christian has before him being that of Jesus Christ.

But it was not really about this that I wished to speak to you today. I have something else to tell you.

I have observed that Jesus and the angels, listening to my sermons delivered in the solitary cell, enjoy particularly the

stories which illustrate them. Just as my son Mihai used to beg me: "Tell me that story again," I have the feeling that they too would like to ask me to repeat a story.

So I will tell you a story:

A young king was quarrelsome and gave no peace to the wise old king of a neighboring country. The old king entreated for friendly relations, but in vain. The young king started a war. The old king, remembering how many foolish things he himself had done in his youth, and that there is an age from which we cannot expect wisdom, gave orders to his officers to capture his young enemy alive.

So it was done. He was brought in chains before the victor. The old man pitied the youngster, but pretended to be very angry with him and sentenced him to death. The young king

begged for his life. So the old man told him: "I will give you a chance. Tomorrow you will be given a jug of water, full to the brim. You must carry it from one end of the main street of the city to the other, without spilling a drop. If you do not succeed, your life is lost."

The next day the procession started - the prisoner with the jug of water; around him soldiers to guard him; behind him the executioner with his axe, a terrifying reminder that he would be beheaded on the spot if he failed. The old king had given orders that on one side of the street there should be a mob to boo the prisoner, on the other side a crowd to cheer him.

The prisoner succeeded. He did not spill a drop. The old king asked him: "When so many people were mocking you, did you answer them back?" The young man answered: "I had no time for that. I had to be careful about my jug." "But did you thank the ones who cheered you?" "What business had I with them? Their acclamation could not help me. I was concerned with my jug of water."

The old king set him free with this advice: "You have been entrusted with a soul. You have to bring it back to the Lord whole and clean. That is the only thing that counts. If you do not succeed, you perish. Don't seek the applause of men

by cheap victories. Don't worry if they mock you. Watch over your soul."

The tick-tock of the pendulum in the prison corridor makes me conscious that time passes here, as it passes for those who are free. Soon I will have to give an account of every second of my life. Today is my fortieth birthday. I have to account for 1,261,440,000 seconds. While I was making this calculation, other seconds have passed. I have a duty to fulfill every second. The fact that I am in solitary confinement does not release me from this duty.

As a rule, prisoners pass their time in trifles. I know this from my time in the Nazi prison. If they are not compelled to do slave labour, they tell each other stories and jokes. Sometimes they quarrel. They waste their time, just as some millionaires do.

Millionaires use a lot, prisoners very little, of nature's wealth, without always feeling it their duty to give

something to the world.

In prison there is a feeling of being released from duty, especially when you are in solitary confinement. Who has the right to ask anything from you when you are in such terrible circumstances?

But the imperative of life knows no excuses. Duty is a categorical demand, whether you are in happiness or unhappiness. Mocked, hungry, jailed, sick, falsely charged, tortured, alone, you have to serve the Highest.

I know my duty. It does not consist so much in doing things. Prison conditions hinder me from accomplishing deeds. Duty consists mostly in becoming something. "I am what I am" is the usual translation of what God said to Moses. A more literal rendering of the Hebrew "~Ehjeh asher ehjeh~" is "I will become what I will become." He himself is constantly becoming something. This is my duty too. My duty is to become more and more myself. When God formed me in the hidden place, he made me to be myself, to be in my own way the herald of his glory, to be unique, as God himself is unique.

To be yourself is much more than being truthful, or loving,

or religious, because your self contains all these and much more. Jesus was not content to be the truth alone. Truth was too little a thing for him. Hitler said: "Truth is an oft-repeated lie." That is nonsense. But if we take the classical definition of the word, "truth is correspondence between reality and our thoughts," what about the realities which are incomprehensible to us, which we don't even know? Jesus did not wish to be truth alone. He is truth and way and life. He did not wish to be love alone. He knows how to hate, too. He said to the church at Ephesus: "This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." [REV 2:16]

The Hebrew word for truth is "~emeth~." It is written with the first, the middle and the last letters of the alphabet. But reality has no beginning and no end. Reality is greater than truth. The Greek word for truth is ~alethia~, which means, etymologically, "nothing forgotten." But there is something more than ~alethia~; there is the forgetting, too.

Truth belongs to the conscious part of our being, a

little island in the ocean of the unconscious. Love is one among many human feelings. Jesus is more than truth and love. Myths belong to him as much as the truth. So they have a powerful meaning for me.

I have to become myself, a self not imprisoned in a set pattern, as my body is imprisoned in this cell.

I must become the greatest being that I can become here on earth; "I will become what I will become," taking as my final goal Jesus, who did so.

Then I will be able to fulfill an outward duty even here.

And what if I am tortured? Christ saved a robber while he was on the cross. My brethren to my right and left have sometimes brought their torturers to Christ. A Communist officer, beating a Christian prisoner with a rubber truncheon, put his stick aside and asked: "What is it about you? How is it that your face is shining? You have something like a halo round your head. How can you look at me so lovingly? I would never love a man who jailed and beat me. How is it that you can obey the foolish commandment of your Christ to love your

enemy?" The Christian answered: "I am not obeying a commandment. It is not that I love you only because Jesus orders me to. Jesus has given me a new heart and a new character. If I wanted to hate you, I would no longer be able to do so. A nightingale cannot sound like a crow, because it is a nightingale and not a crow. So a Christian can only love." That rubber truncheon has remained put aside for ever.

We are in hell. Sometimes, during nights of horror, I look at the cup of water which is in my cell. Only this assures me that it is not the eternal hell. There the damned have no water. But even in hell you are not released from duty. How often I have said the words of the creed: "He descended into hell." He descended to enrich the tormented souls with the gifts of God.

That is what we are doing. We bring souls to Christ by tapping the gospel through the wall.

The important thing is always to have one aim, and to pursue it in stormy and fair weather. Jesus wants our eyes to be

single. [MTT 6:22] The Hebrew language did not have the word "intention." Jesus, using these words, meant that our intention should be single: to be the highest we can be, and then not to worry any more. Man always does what he is; he reacts to outward circumstances according to his character.

The Romans had a proverb: "~Quod agis, agi~" (do what you do), do just one thing. Most of us, when we are praying, think of the pancake on the fire which might burn. While making pancakes, we think how nice it would be to pass our time in prayer. While speaking with one man, we think how useful it would be to pass our time with another. We never do anything well. Only one thing can be done well at a time. Those who participate in too many sports never become champions.

Our earthly life is short. Let us not be like the ass in the story who, having two heaps of hay before him, died of hunger, not knowing which to choose. But let us concentrate upon our single aim: to develop a heavenly character, which by contagion will fill God's heaven with men. ~Amen~.

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

I used to consider those of my fellow-prisoners who are in prison for their belief as martyrs. But communicating with them through the wall (and the telegraph is functioning through many cells to my right and my left), I discovered that none of them were conscious of being martyrs. They felt that God was punishing them for their sins. Even St. Paul, who suffered so much for his faith, called himself "the chief of sinners." [1TM 1:15]

And I think they are right. We must distinguish between the appearance and the substance, between what people call "facts" or "truth" and their spiritual significance.

Who can work as a conspirator in the Underground church and always speak what is generally called "truth"? When I introduced myself, I did it under a cover-name. The one with whom I was speaking might be an informer. If asked by someone where I was yesterday, a factually correct answer might bring many people into great trouble. Today again the interrogator

told me: "You are a Christian and a pastor. Your religion obliges you to tell us the whole truth." I had my own thoughts about this. If I had complied with his demands, other brethren would have been arrested.

Nobody can be a leader in the Underground church without re-evaluating the notion of truth.

So, to come back to the problem of martyrs. To outward appearance, anyone who has been killed or imprisoned for his convictions is a martyr. But the substance may be otherwise. God may use the Communists to punish you for a sin. He can lead them to put you in a solitary cell because he wishes to deal better with your soul.

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How offended the Jews must have been by Jesus when they told him about some Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. [LUK 13:1] Now these were surely martyrs of the Mosaic faith and for the national cause. The Jews had a deep respect for men like these who had died "~al kidush hashem~," for the glory of the Name. But Jesus called the slaughtered Galileans simply "sinners."

He looked at the substance. Sinners - that is what even martyrs are before God. Luther makes a distinction between "sinners of the left" and "sinners of the right," between scoundrels and law-abiding men who observe the religious commandments, even that of self-sacrifice, in order to earn paradise. Both types of men are sinners.

I am nothing else than a sinner. I have never known a man worse than me. The One who can free me prefers to keep me in prison as a punishment for my transgression. Samson was in prison because he had sinned, although the Philistines had jailed him because of his noble fight for the Mosaic cause. I am a sinner, but I know that if I accept my punishment with wholehearted humility, my strength will grow.

Like all the other prisoners, I had my hair cut short until today. Now they announce that I am to be allowed to let it grow, a sure sign that I shall soon be brought before the court. They make you look a little bit more human before presenting you to the judges. The hair will grow very slowly in this subterranean cell, in which never a ray of sun enters. But still it will grow. This made me think about Samson. His strength grew simultaneously with his hair.

I will become an embodiment of power, and will be able to slay more Philistines at my death than I slew in my whole Christian life. I will kill them, even if I die with them.

Once this power has come back, I will no longer wish for my release. This age has produced powers unknown in the past. But I will draw from God the still unknown powers of the ages to come, the hidden spiritual powers. Though they remain behind prison walls, those who possess this power can demolish temples and build them again. They can remain in a dark cell,

and yet make the sun shine in many hearts. They can be sad and depressed, yet fill many souls with gladness.

How I would like to become what Samson became in prison!

True worship is not that on Mount Gerizim, the place of the Samaritan temple, nor that in Jerusalem. True worship is to grow in power to destroy everything which opposes the One crucified for me.

Sin is every second of my life spent on something other than the destruction of what opposes the triumph of love.

There are not certain deeds which are sinful under all circumstances, and other deeds which are always good. The mud with which we are all smeared contains in its mixture many compassionate actions.

Charity given to a drunkard, who after having drunk liquor with your money, beats his wife, is sin. Judith, on the other hand, killed. So did Jael. [JDG 4:21] But they freed the world from tyrants. Around me, in the other cells, are many patriots who have killed. It was for the sake of freedom. It is foolish to consider that knitting a pullover for some lazy man is a good deed, while the attempt of German generals to stop the slaughter of millions of innocent victims by killing Hitler is to be despised as murder.

For me, the only criterion of a deed is: does it prepare the way for the final triumph of love or not?

We have to choose between good as the means, and good as the end. If I am always good towards all men, even those who by deceit and terror hinder the victory of love, good will never

triumph. The wicked will profit by my meekness, and consolidate the position of evil. If I choose good as my goal, I have to commit many actions which are condemned as evil in the moral catalogue of the world.

The Bible writes about God sending enticing spirits. [2CH 18:19-20] So I have no scruples about using untruth to lead astray my interrogators. My only scruple is in having scruples about such an attitude.

God praised those who killed Sisera, Agag, Holofernes. The same words are used in the Bible about Jael, who killed Sisera,

as are used by the archangel to the holy virgin: "Blessed above women shall Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent." [JDG 5:24] This, because she smote an enemy of God. In one of the cells on this corridor is Nina, a Rumanian girl, who did something similar. If it was right to kill a foreign oppressor several thousands of years ago, it must be right now also. The New Testament praises such heroes of the Old Testament. The Jewish people had to be defended. The Rumanian people have the same right.

The same Spirit of God who inspired I Corinthians 13, [1Cor 13] the poem of love, inspired the book of Esther, in which the enemies of God are ruthlessly destroyed. The Holy Spirit has arranged for both to be part of the same holy book. What is more, the first Christians had as their only holy Scriptures the scrolls of the Old Testament. The New Testament was written decades later, and completed towards the end of the first century.

God has brought together poems of love and books which teach determination to uproot the enemy, in order to perfect us and give us only one aim: to cause love to triumph at last. Bloody fighting against tyrants must work together with acts of tender charity towards the attaining of this aim.

We must set ourselves in our life the highest aim, to be his servants and the servants of all. Then "good" or "evil" deeds will have the same result, to bring love to triumph.

The question is a very real one for me. Christians around me have participated in the patriotic fight against the Communist oppressor and have had to kill. They tap their

confessions through the wall. But was their action sin? Would I take part in such a fight?

In Dostoievsky's ~The Brothers Karamazov~, Ivan says, in effect: "It is not God that I don't accept, understand this, it is the world that he has created, the divine world which I do not accept, and cannot agree to accept ... I am as convinced as a child that ... at last, in the world finale, at the moment of eternal harmony, something so precious will happen and appear that it will be enough ... to expiate all people's crimes ... but I don't accept it, and I don't want to ... I would rather remain

with unavenged suffering ... And besides, they make the harmony too expensive, we cannot afford to pay quite so much to enter. That is why I am hurrying to return my entrance ticket. If I am an honest man, I am obliged to return it as far in advance as possible. That is what I am doing. It is not God I don't accept, Alyosha, I am only returning the ticket to him in the most respectful manner."

Ivan goes on to say to Alyosha: "Tell me frankly yourself, I am asking you, so answer: Imagine that you yourself are erecting the edifice of human destiny with the purpose of making people happy in the finale and giving them, at last, peace and quiet, but that to do so it is necessary and inevitable to torture just one tiny creature, that same little child who beats his chest with his little fist, and base this edifice on his unavenged little tears, would you consent to be the architect on these conditions? Tell me and don't lie."

"No, I wouldn't," Alyosha said softly.

My answer is: "I would." This was Abraham's answer. He was ready to sacrifice his own child for this. His followers know that the five octillions of atoms which constitute the body of the child are the shrine of a spirit, perhaps the prison cell of a spirit, and that the spirit will be happy to have got rid of it. They believe what the ~Bhagavad Gita says, that the killer may be no more than the fulfiller of God's predestination for a man. It is right, when necessary, to kill for the sake of freedom, of fatherland, of God. If it is sacred history when the Jews fought against tyrants, why should the fight of Rumanians to get rid of Communist slavery not be sacred also?

No, you have not sinned, patriotic fighters.

St. Augustine said: "Love God, and do what you will."

It is written: "Sing unto the Lord a new song." [PSA 96] This is a warrior's song. Nobody is so courageous a warrior as the Lord himself. He never slumbers nor sleeps. Christianity teaches us not so much to be good as to be warriors for the good. You cannot be a warrior for the good without fighting, and so striking not only abstract evil and evil institutions but also evil men.

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God is the beginning and the end. The middle of the day is ours. We do not know what the future holds for us. And I do not want his Kingdom in the future only. Fight today for his Kingdom of righteousness, peace and love. ~Amen~.

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MY SOUL

I can no longer speak to the One who created me. I can no longer cry out to him with my voice. I can no longer speak across the distance to my brothers and sisters.

Today, for the first time, I burst out into yelling cries, for no obvious reason. I have often heard such cries, interrupting for a few moments the deep silence of our prison. We all knew then that one of us had become mad. The cries very soon ceased. I did not know how the guards quietened those whose nerves had cracked. Now I know.

They have put me in a straitjacket, very tightly bound. They have put a gag in my mouth.

The only one to whom I can speak is you, my soul. David often spoke to his own soul, asking it to praise the Lord, or questioning why it was troubled. But David, too, knew madness. The Bible recounts how he pretended to be a lunatic while living with the Philistines. Psychiatrists tell us that nobody simulates madness unless he has a tendency towards it. I will do what David did. I will now deliver, in utter silence, a sermon to you, my soul.

I ask you, first of all, to take knowledge of yourself and to declare, like God, "I am."

The body needs few things in order to be fully satisfied: simple food, warmth, exercise, rest and a partner of the opposite sex. My body had all these things, but, notwithstanding, I was not happy; I sighed for something more. Who was this "I," dissatisfied when the body had plenty of all that it needed? It was you, my soul.

It was you who wished to know, out of purely scientific

interest, about galaxies far away, and about facts of prehistory, which have absolutely no influence on my bodily state. It was you who took delight in art and philosophy, but also in exaggerations and refinements of bodily needs, even when these did harm to the body.

Don't you see, my soul, how right Jesus was in saying that "man shall not live by bread alone"? [MTT 4:4] I get one slice of bread every Tuesday. And what bread! But I don't just vegetate. I live. I sometimes laugh heartily at jokes which I tell myself, being alone in my cell. I think about politics, about how nations which I have never seen should be ruled; I remember works of art; I lead a life of worship. All this is you. Say, my soul, "I am."

A few days ago a Christian prisoner, unable to bear the tortures any more, and fearing that he would finally betray the brethren, jumped from the window of the third floor during an interrogation. He was healthy. He was not satisfying a need of the body by destroying himself. You know my secret. You know the place where I have hidden some thirty sleeping pills which, taken at once, will ensure that I do not become a Judas. These suicides are acts of love and honour. They protect the Underground church. Love, decency, honour, belong to you, my soul, and not to the body. I am gagged and cannot speak. But because of this, you must speak even more loudly, and assert yourself: "I am."

You saw me dancing when I was in unspeakable pain. You saw me dancing with heavy chains around my ankles. Who was the one who exuberantly rejoiced? It was not my body. My body had no reason to dance. There was no music to incite it to do so. It was you, my soul.

Take knowledge of yourself, my soul, and take knowledge of your incomparable value. The body will die. Around me, prisoners are dying, because of the great hunger, the cold and the tortures. But who has ever seen a soul die? I have lost everything I had in the world, but if you are saved, I shall have kept the pearl of greatest price.

The enemies of Jesus took away everything he had. Naked,

he hung on a cross. His foes stood around it, rejoicing. But at the last minute he spoiled their joy by saying: "Father, into thy hands I surrender my spirit." He had one thing which they could not take from him. And by this he lives and rules for ever more. There is no one who can destroy you, my soul.

You must only repent, in the biblical sense of the word. The Greek word "~metanoia~" has nothing to do with remorse about sin, with which we confuse repentance in our modern languages. Etymologically, ~metanoia~ means "a change of mind" or "to go beyond reason." Parallel biblical expressions are "to receive a new heart," "to become a new creature," "to deny oneself," "to be born again," "to become a child," "to be clean every whit."

I will tell you what is wrong with you, my soul; why you need a radical transformation.

Some believe that when we repent we have to change the content of our soul. They fill their souls with heavenly thoughts and feelings instead of earthly ones. But can a damaged car be repaired by changing the passengers who travel in it? The experience of men who deceive themselves about being Christians shows that a broken car does not move, no matter who are the passengers. You may have all your thoughts and feelings directed towards God, and still not be in friendship with him, because the intimate structure of the soul, its psychological mechanism, its fundamental defect, has not been corrected. Repentance must affect not only your thoughts and feelings and wills but the very being of the soul, its complicated organism out of which thoughts, emotions and actions flow.

My soul, I reproach you for one great defect: the lack of a sense of proportion.

Jesus tried to convey this sense in the words "Fools and blind ... whether is ~greater~...? Ye have omitted the weightier matters of the law ..." [MTT 23:17,23] St. Paul asks: "Are we stronger than the Lord?" [1CO 10:22]

We have to distinguish what is smaller, less important, weaker, from what is greater, weightier, stronger.

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You, my soul, have made yourself the pivot round which everything else has to revolve. The animals cannot speak, as I cannot because of being gagged. They have interesting things to say. The story of Balaam's ass shows this. How much our dog could have told us! He knew beforehand that I was going to be arrested. He was miserable for two weeks, and barked the whole time. But animals cannot speak. You never used to be worried about the dumbness of animals. You are only worried now that I am gagged. But the whole Communist camp is gagged. Nobody is allowed to say everything he thinks. I am in a straitjacket. But some angels are in everlasting chains. How much worse it must be for winged beings, accustomed to fly from planet to planet! I am obsessed only with the suffering of one little insignificant being - me. Why can't you have a right sense of proportion? Why don't you worry about yourself in proportion to the share of your suffering in the universal pain, and in proportion to what you, an unimportant man, mean in this infinite and eternal universe?

You judge things, events and men according to their usefulness or harm for ~you~, as if the universe existed for you, and not the reverse.

True repentance is a reversal of proportions. God is at the centre. I am an extremely valuable being, but one of innumerable billions of beings, of whom every one has to bear the fate assigned to him by the Creator.

The soul which has repented does not become lost in details. The whole world, and not only the world of men, is passing through a huge and long-lasting catastrophe, and I am worrying about what is happening to me. During the war, a quarrel broke out in a family, in my presence, because the husband reproached the wife for not dusting a cupboard. At the same moment, tens of thousands of young lives were being wiped out in Stalingrad, London, France and our own country.

If this defect, this lack of a sense of proportion, is not repaired in a soul, the fact that a man has changed from

being an atheist to being religious does not help him. The soul will continue to be busy with trifles, with this difference, that now

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they will be religious trifles. The object at which you look with short-sighted eyes will be a different object, but your eyes will remain short-sighted.

Consider yourself, my soul, as a small detail in a huge mechanism, as one cell in a vast organism. White blood corpuscles are sacrificed in order that the whole body may live and be healthy. You have to suffer for some hidden purpose of God, about which you know as little as the white corpuscle knows why it has to die.

Let it be enough for you that you are suffering for the Kingdom of God. All suffering serves this final cause.

Jesus looked on his suffering like this. He accepted it willingly and, even on the cross, thought not about himself but about the thief near him, about his mother and about you. Drown your small suffering in the vast ocean of pain. Believe that there is meaning in it, and you will be comforted.

Listen to me, my soul, and praise the Lord in all his doings. ~Amen~.

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

In Hebrew, "~davar~" is a homonym which means both "word" and "thing"; the real thing. In the language of the chosen people, words are not only symbols and echoes of a reality but they are themselves reality. When St. John thought out in Hebrew the prologue of his Gospel, he meant it to mean: "In the beginning was the reality. And the reality was with God. And the reality was God."

I almost never sleep at night. There is a blessing in

night vigils. "Behold, now bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which ~by night~ stand in the house of the Lord." (PSA 134:1] During the night men meet to practise evil. Burglaries, murders and rapes occur at night. Stalin did not sleep during the night. That is when he received people and planned his mass murders. Saints must use the weapon of night vigils to counteract the power of darkness. Those who have to work during the day cannot do this. But I have the privilege of being an isolated prisoner. I can sleep during the day. I can keep vigil during the night.

I pass my nights in spiritual exercises, in prayer, in travelling in spirit round the world and remembering every country before God, in preparing and delivering sermons.

Every night I also compose a poem. I compose it in my mind, not having any paper to write it down.

Poor poems of an ungifted spirit! What are they compared to the works of the great artists? But even so, in my concern with metre and rhyme, I can feel the difficulty which poets must have in putting love and wisdom and life into poetry.

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The words, confined in verses, feel as I felt when I was put in a strait-jacket.

The Word became flesh two thousand years ago. The Word would like to be flesh today, too, and not merely a piece of poetry. The Word desires to be incarnate once more in a man who can perform deeds of love, and can also speak harshly for righteousness' sake and rebuke wrongdoing, as Jesus did - a man who leaves all, loves all and offers himself as a sacrifice for all, even for those who betray him and scourge him; even for those whom he himself has had to strike with a whip for the sake of justice.

The word of God and the spirit of love are always longing for incarnation. Christ was incarnate not only in the carpenter Jesus; he also lived in St. Paul. We throw only words into the agitated sea of this world, and the multitude of words takes the place of reality.

God has brought me into the sphere of silence. The silence around me is absolute. You cannot hear the guards approach. God wishes me to unlearn words. It is becoming more and more difficult for me to formulate long, clear sentences.

Perhaps they are putting some drug in the food to destroy my mind.

I live in profound silence, a silence like that inhabited by the fish in the depths of the sea. The secret sign of the first Christians was a fish.

I am beginning to love this silence. I sometimes make up verses to pass the time, but what I would really like would be to make men, each one of whom would be a fine piece of poetry. In the original Greek of Ephesians, it is written that Christians are the poem (~poiema~) of God. [EPH 2:10] So God is a poet, too. His poems are serene, flexible, rich in meaning. He has embodied his poems in flesh. Each one has a different subject. One is the embodiment of heroism, another of sanctity, another of wisdom, yet another of practical common sense. Christians are not only different, but also sometimes divergent and even contradictory characters. But every one is pleasing to the Lord.

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According to Ephesians [EPH 3:11-12] the role of the pastor is not to make sermons but to make saints.

I would also like such a task. First of all, I would like to make myself into a temple of embodied love, so that those who follow the wise men and shepherds of old may see in me Christ in miniature, and worship the Saviour in me.

Instead of a world in which bookshops sell volumes of sermons and poetry, I would like a world in which each man and woman is a poem of high thought, filled with melody and colour.

If I am a hindrance to the coming of such a world, may God kill me here in prison! But this is how the world should be.

I will do my part towards the coming of such a kingdom by following the example of Laban. His name in Hebrew means "white." He had two daughters, Rachel and Leah. A young man, Jacob, loved the beautiful Rachel. But Laban did not allow him to have her, unless he took the ugly Leah too. Laban was a just man, and did not allow preferential love. Christian love must embrace both the good and the bad.

Goethe called colour the suffering of light, because colour is the result of the tearing asunder of light beams while passing through a prism. Full, undivided light is white, "~laban~." White embraces everybody and everything you see, and

even more. So the man who cultivates the white in his soul walks with devotion, as in a liturgy, through the world of the unloved and unlovely Leahs, whose constantly weeping eyes are unpleasant to look upon. It is a world full of girls whose hearts are broken because nobody loves them. Not being loved, they become uglier and uglier, and even a saint like Jacob does not want them. He desires only to pass his life with the beautiful Rachel. For her he works zealously for fourteen years, and it seems to him but a few days. He would not have worked one day for Leah.

Within the ~ecclesia~, the church, there is an ~ecclesiola~, a little church, which accepts the good and the bad, which embraces both the beautiful and the ugly. If God has united in the same church a criminal like a Borgia and a saint like Francis of

Assisi, and brought into the same institution the priests who betrayed us and the martyrs who suffer with me, then I, too, must love them all.

Jesus showed his love first for the ugly Leahs by sitting at table with publicans and sinners to bring them to repentance. There are beautiful Rachels near me in prison who do not feel his presence. They will receive their part, only much later.

Love all men, my dear brothers, but bestow the greatest part of your love on the ugliest souls. They need your love more than anyone else. You, my fellow-prisoners, must show your greatest love to the Communist torturers and those who betrayed us. The beautiful souls can endure without tokens of your love. Spend your energy where it is most needed!

I lay especially on your hearts love towards the pastors and priests who collaborate with the Communist persecutors and denounce their brethren. I am afraid at the thought that things may develop in our country towards the situation that exists in the Soviet Union, where in many instances these traitors have been lynched or stabbed by Christians of the Underground church. The church of the catacombs has to be protected from traitors, and if there is no other way, they resort to such means. The church of the first centuries did it, too, though those who teach church history don't say very much about it.

But this is the extreme solution. In the Nazi times,

we won for Christ men who had betrayed us and put us in prison. We should do our utmost to achieve this now, too. Let the word become flesh in us, flesh of a man who accepts the kiss of Judas and calls him friend, even when he comes at the head of an armed gang to arrest you. ~Amen~.

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MOST BELOVED CHILDREN

Today the Communists beat me heavily. In the end I fainted. They revived me by pouring water on me, and then began to beat me again.

And then the worst happened. The door burst open, and into the room where I was being interrogated rushed our brothers and sisters - Brother Davidescu, the one with the long beard, and Brother Marinov, and old Auntie Ionescu, and Suzanne, and all the others whom I love so much. I wondered how they had got into the prison. Then they began to beat me, they to whom I have never done any wrong. Then the door opened again. This time it was Binzea, my wife, and Mihai, my son. They also spat on me, and mocked me, telling me that they were ashamed to have me for a husband and father. And Mihai put out his fist to strike me. It was too much. I fainted again. When I awoke I was alone with the interrogators. The whole scene had been a hallucination.

I knew then that I had gone mad, as so many have done before me, whose yelling cries I can hear resounding in the arched corridor.

And now you have come, my dear children, to fill my lonely cell. You really are here. I don't know if it is what those who are sane call the real "here," or if it is my "here," the here of a lunatic. But you are here. And it is not only you, children, who fill my Sunday-school class. This time I can see your guardian angels, too, hoping that I will tell you the right thing, thirsty to listen themselves to some beautiful story about Jesus.

And look, there he is himself, the holy child. In the old days,

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he appeared in the shape of a child to St.Jerome, the monk who first translated the Bible into Latin.

Jerome was working on his translation in Bethlehem, the birthplace of our Lord. As he prayed, Jesus appeared to him in the shape of a child. This filled the heart of the saint with such overwhelming sweetness that he said: "Beloved Jesus, I would like with all my heart to give you a present. Tell me, what would please you most?" The child smiled, and answered: "Heaven and earth and all that is in them are mine. What can you give me?" The saint said again: "But I love you, and wish to make you a gift. Will you accept all the little money which I, a monk, possess?" The child replied again, still smiling: "Give your money to the poor. I have no use for it." St. Jerome insisted: "I cannot let you go away empty-handed. What shall I give you?" Then the child became very grave and said. "If you wish to bring me an offering which will fill my heart with joy, give me all your sins and all your lusts. I will die because of them on the cross. There is no other gift which would fill my heart with such gladness as this."

Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord!
Here, among us, is the child Jesus. Let us bring him this gift - our untruthfulness, our selfishness, our anger, our bitterness. And so he will have passed his time with us in joy.

St. Anthony of Padua, when he was still a child, also met Jesus. There was a knock at the gate of his home, and Anthony ran to see who was there. Opening the gate, he saw a beggar in rags, shivering in the frost of a winter day. Taking pity on him, Anthony said: "I will ask my father to give you some warm clothes." The beggar answered: "It is very cold in your world, but I am not begging for clothes." The child then said: "You must be hungry. Come in, and my mother will give you some food." The beggar replied: "I am hungry, but I do not beg for bread." Astonished, Anthony asked: "Why then did you knock at our gate?" The beggar said: "I have come to ask you to give me your heart." The child stepped backward: "But if I give you my heart, I will die." Then the beggar opened a bag which he carried on his shoulder, and took out

from it some hearts, saying: "This is the heart of St. Paul, and this of Mary Magdalene, and this of St. Ignatius. All those who have given their hearts to me, far from dying, are alive eternally." Then Anthony understood that the one who stood

before him was Jesus himself, and he became his follower. Let us also give him our hearts.

And now I will tell him, and you, and your guardian angels, a story about him.

Jesus's earthly father, Joseph, was poor. He could not afford to give him a proper education. When the child reached the age of twelve, he told him: "Now you must make an end of playing and dreaming. I will make you into a carpenter, like me."

The next day he went with the child into the forest to cut trees. But this time he could not touch the trees with his axe. Again and again he was stopped by the child, who said: "Father, you know that the Scriptures forbid killing. This tree is young and has not yet lived its life. Let it continue to enjoy the sun. See how, seeking the light, it has lifted itself towards the heights. There will be men enough ready to kill it when it has lived one year longer ... And do not cut that one. See how many ants there are at its foot. How busily they gather herbs and little pieces of straw! I am afraid that, if you cut down the tree, many of them will be killed ... And save that one. It has a nest of birds in its branches. Their chirping is heard in heaven. The baby birds will die, and you will be accused in the country beyond the stars of their murder ... And leave this one, because the sound of the saw, as its teeth enter the wood, will go up to heaven, to the Father who has commanded us to have mercy on men and trees, on animals and birds, on flowers and plants. Holy eyes are weeping at the sorrow of them all."

Jesus pleaded so fervently, and so many tears ran down his cheeks, that Joseph sat down in the shade to comfort him. It was the second Sabbath that week. A leaf whispered to another: "It is the Saviour." Ants played around their feet. The birds sang: "Our longing is fulfilled." There was no cloud in the sky.

The child laid his head in Joseph's lap. Joseph played with the child's curls. The son was the teacher, the father the disciple. The angels watched them both.

The child asked: "Tell me, Father, why do you have an axe? You know that iron tools were invented by a descendant of the wicked Cain. When the Romans asked you to make a cross on which to crucify a man, you also shortened the life of a tree. I

have seen men carrying their crosses to the place of execution. I have seen them falling under the burden. You have told me that this will be my end, too. Will a tree lose its life for me, before I lose mine for mankind? I cry when I see men cutting rods, because rods are used for beating children. You cut something which has life, in order to use it to commit brutalities."

As the oil runs down the beard of a priest when he is anointed, so the tears ran down Joseph's beard, a sign that the words had touched his heart.

But he tried to make excuses: "If a carpenter takes pity on the trees, he will starve." He spoke too soon. The idea of death as a result of doing right fell on fertile soil.

The child said: "If by not killing trees for carpentry, we die of hunger, we will go to the country where there is no more death, and where we will love each other all day long. There, Mother will weep no more. You know that here men mock her. She will sit at my right hand, you at my left, and I, in the middle, will love you. I shall not become a carpenter, but I will be the one who dies that the trees may have life abundantly, and that there may be one more sun in the sky. I will not destroy the life of the trees."

On that day the trees remained alive. The child was their saviour. For the dark forest, he foreshadowed a cloudless day.

But Joseph the poor carpenter had great burdens. There was a whole family to be cared for. He was not a child who could afford to lead a life of dreams.

The next day he took Jesus into the carpenter's shop. He taught him to measure a board with a yard-stick, to draw a

straight line on it, to use a plane and the different tools. In this life you have to work. Otherwise you die.

But Mary his mother noticed that every day the child became more pale and serious. He was silent, and kept hidden from everybody the reason for his pallor. It was because, as often as the hammer hit the wood, he felt the blows in his own body. He wept every time the saw bit into the wood. He fell prostrate to the floor, his tears running down on to the sawdust

which was sacrificed to provide beds and chairs on which men could rest; in the same way he himself would one day be sacrificed that others might have eternal rest. He wept because he had made his decision. He would atone for the sins committed by men against the trees. On a tree which had been the victim of injustice, he would be the sacrifice.

And now every little branch can wait patiently in silence. Jesus died on the tree to give assurance that you, broken branches, will be grafted again into the olive tree. Jesus fought your battle on the wood of the tree, to prepare for you a wonderful future.

So the child Jesus fulfilled his apprenticeship. He learned to be a carpenter, a carpenter who practised his art weeping, the carpenter who made the gates to heaven.

You, the one who created me - I do not address you by the name men usually call you. I remember that St. Paphnutius, when he had brought to Christ the renowned courtesan Thais, told her: "Your lips are not worthy to pronounce the holy name of the Creator. Your prayer should only be, 'You who have made me, have mercy on me.'" She prayed like this for three years, alone in her nun's cell. After three years, a brother had a vision of a beautiful soul on a bed covered with roses waited on by angels. He was sure that this must be the place reserved in heaven for St. Anthony the Great, the founder of monasticism. But Anthony told him that he had seen the place of Thais, the humble sinner who had refrained from pronouncing your name.

You, the one who created me - The children whose presence I enjoyed so much have vanished. So also have their guardian

angels and the holy child. So this was a hallucination, too, like the one I had this morning when they beat me. I really have become mad.

I have visited many mental asylums. Some of the patients are happy. They believe themselves to be emperors or saints. Others suffer from continual nightmares, believing that they are persecuted, in danger and being tortured.

Would it be too much to ask you just one thing? Give me a happy madness. Let me see the children thronging round me, and let me see their beautiful angels. Let me always behold the

child Jesus. It may be that there are some who would not even consider this a hallucination, but as a vision from you. These, perhaps, would be mad like me. But they will appreciate what I tell them, and I will be comforted.

This much, a happy madness, I ask from you. ~Amen~.

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DEAR SOUL OF MINE

I will speak with you again today. Again there have been the yelling cries, which neither I nor the other prisoners can master. I am in a straitjacket and gagged for the second time. With whom else could I speak now but you? I wonder how St. Francis of Assisi would have felt in my place.

I remember his conversation with Brother Leo, who asked him wherein is perfect joy. Does it lie in knowing many things? Francis denied this. Leo asked again if perfect joy lies in being a prophet and knowing the mysteries of God. Francis shook his head silently to show that the brother had missed the point. Leo asked again if the winning of many souls for Christ would not be perfect joy. The answer was still the same: "No." Leo inquired whether great sanctity, enabling one even to perform miracles for the good of men, would not be perfect joy.

Francis answered: "None of these things can give perfect joy. We shall know such joy only if, when we reach St. Mary of the Angels, soaked with rain, hungry and shivering with cold, the doorkeeper drives us out, mocking us with cruel words as beggars and rogues. We shall know perfect joy if we remain hungry outside the walls of the monastery, enduring the rain and the mud, and if we endure this with gladness and patience and thankfulness. The cross is the only tree on which the flower of perfect joy will grow."

I have the cross. So I decided to be joyful, and I danced. I spun round until my mind became completely blank. My whole body was in a sweat when I fell on to my bed with tears

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running down my cheeks, while the guards, who had been looking

through the peep-hole in the door, laughed.

Now I am living my life backwards, from the eternal bliss which waits for all who love the Lord, through the moment when you, my soul, will be released from the prison of the body, to my present state. Then I remember how a few minutes ago I could still move my arms. I remember the beautiful years with my church and my family, and then my whole life backwards until my early childhood. I can somehow remember being a babe in arms. Before that I was an embryo, watched over by a guardian angel. Before that I was in the loins of my forefathers. I know so many of them, having had the privilege of being Jewish. I know that Abraham was my ancestor, and Terah and the others. I was in Adam falling into sin, and before that enjoying fellowship with God. And before that? I was a spirit with God. Before that ... there was no me and he. There was only the One in full serenity from all eternity.

Why, my soul, are you so stupidly concerned with the latest event, the fact that I have been put into a straitjacket and gagged?

Uninitiated souls always judge by the latest impression. A wrong word spoken by somebody today makes us forget the many good deeds we have observed in the same person over many years. One kind gesture makes us trust a man whose past record does not make him trustworthy. Uninitiated men are incapable of taking into account all they know about a man before judging him. For them, only the latest event counts.

The Pharisees judged like this. For them, Jesus was a sinner, because he broke the Sabbath. That was all they could think of. All the good works and teachings of Jesus were forgotten. Can I form a right opinion of a man, having in view only his breaking of the law in one particular instance, and losing sight of his total personality?

There are men who repent outwardly, and now live in the church instead of living in the world as before. But the mechanism of their soul has remained the same. So they now judge

the brethren according to the latest event, instead of judging men of the world in this way. But their thinking has remained false. They even judge God according to this criterion; they praise him when he gives them something good, and begin to doubt when affliction comes.

But you, my soul, must not judge according to the fact that for the last hour I have been in a straitjacket. Keep in view the whole of life and its whole orbit. There is something more than the infinite. There is the transfinite. If, starting from a certain point, I draw an endless line, its value is infinite. But if from the same point I draw two endless lines in opposite directions, that is transfinite. You are more than eternal, my soul, you are from God to God, and you will enter again into him, enriched by human experience. "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." [GEN 1:31] Only when you see everything will you see how good it is. The most beautiful painting is only a formless mixture of colours and senseless lines until it is completed. The most beautiful sculpture is just a hewn stone until it receives its definitive shape.

Wait, my soul, until you are again at large in God. Then you will see the sense of the straitjacket, too.

And then, being gagged again and again, perhaps I shall begin to like the gagging. It takes me out of the sphere of words, in which men are imprisoned. Preachers are specially exposed to the temptation of becoming talkers.

Words, which were first formed for naming surrounding realities, become emptied, with time, of their original meaning. Retarded souls continue to accord them the same value and respect as when they had a rich content. They don't realize that they are now merely outwardly beautiful dolls, stuffed with straw.

The word "bishop" originally meant the chief pastor, the most advanced in faith, the man who gave his life for his sheep in time of persecution. Now he is a man of some academic learning, chosen by men who often are not children of God themselves. Even before my arrest, all our Orthodox bishops,

except one, had subscribed to what the Communist killers of Christians demanded. The Reformed bishop did the same. Now they praise the Communists and denounce their own sheep.

So the words "priest," "pastor," "rabbi," "church," "Christian," "Jew," "believer," "faith," "religion," "art," have entirely changed their meaning.

The fact that I am now gagged gives me freedom to see the reality which corresponds to a word today.

The Communists are torturing us in the beautiful name of a happy future for mankind.

"Let every man be ... slow to speak," [JMS 1:19] which means that he should always consider whether every word has a corresponding reality. My chief interrogator is called Dulgheru, which means Carpenter. But this is only a name. He never held a plane in his hands.

One of the high priests who judged Jesus had the name of Annas, which means "pity."

Bless, my soul, the Communists who, by gagging me, free me from the vanity of words, and give me an insight into reality. There is a meaning in this gagging, too. Thanks be to God. ~Amen~.

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SisTERS

For a few days I could not preach to you as usual. The physical pain was too great. Still, there was some joy in the pain. Up to now, they have beaten and whipped me. Now, for the first time, they have tortured me, so that visible marks will remain on my body until death, or perhaps even after.

I used to wonder how it was that the resurrected body of our Lord bore the marks of wounds. Can a resurrected body look like this? Will we be resurrected with rheumatism, deformities, twisted limbs? Will the resurrected body bear the marks of the experiences through which it has passed? Jesus spoke about some who will enter into life having one eye or one hand. [MRK 9:43-47]

He had to be resurrected with marks on his body, in order that, as often as the sins of men are brought before the Father, he may show his wounds, received in order that the sinner may be saved.

By this sacrifice of his, I am saved, too.

But perhaps my scars also will be helpful. My prayers for my torturers will perhaps be more effective if I can show the Father the wounds I received from them. If I can continue to love them, if I can forgive, why should God exclude them from his love and not forgive them?

And then, perhaps, perhaps there is a slight possibility that I shall one day be out of prison and in the West. Then I shall be able to show the unbelieving Thomases, who do not accept that Communism is crime on a huge scale under the cloak of an ideal, what Jesus showed to his doubting apostle and so convinced him - the marks of the wounds.

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There is a blessing in the tortures through which I have passed. We must thank God for everything. While they tortured me, I could not think. Just one word flashed through my mind once: "We were appointed thereunto" [1TH 3:3] - that is, to afflictions.

The tortures have made some transformations in my soul. They have lessened my desire to go to heaven. What happiness would it be for me to sit in bliss in heaven, knowing that others are being tortured in the meantime on earth? I would be among the few of whom Jesus spoke who are ready to leave Abraham's bosom and be with the tormented souls in order to comfort them. [LUK 16:26] My wish is rather that God's will should be done on earth as it is in heaven. Why not make a heaven out of earth, as Jesus taught us to pray?

I long for an earth filled with righteousness and justice and love; a world where even the animals would live in paradise, lions lying down with lambs and not devouring them.

When I was in prison under the Nazis we noticed how the birds seemed to have a sympathy for humans, and how they always had a presentiment of what would happen to us. There were pigeons in the prison yard. They used to come to our barred windows, and we gave them crumbs of bread. It was not just one man's imagination, all the prisoners agreed that they observed, before days of heavy beatings, that the pigeons would beat their wings and flutter frantically, uttering cries of alarm. The farmers with whom I am imprisoned tell me, in our long conversations in code, that their dogs knew beforehand about their arrests, and could not be stopped from howling all night long, as they had never done before.

In my cell there is only one animal, a spider. I don't know how he happened to enter the underground cell. But one day he was there. He just took advantage of a moment when the guard unlocked the door. He made his web. We became good friends. I fed him. I talked to him. I had observed that he was unusually agitated the day before I was taken out for torture. It may have been a coincidence. I don't know. But I have the feeling that he sympathizes with me. We ought even

more to sympathize with the animal world, and wish for them and for ourselves, not that we should go to the Kingdom of God - the way might be too far for a spider - it would be much simpler if his Kingdom were to come here. Jesus taught us to pray for this. Then criminals and lions and foxes would have a much easier entrance.

On that day the world from which we come will seem like the place where we were caterpillars. In the sufferings of today, we are cocoons. One day we shall be butterflies. We shall be able to fly from star to star, not neglecting our own planet. The angels were ascending and descending between earth and heaven on Jacob's ladder. So there is a ladder uniting earth to God. Sometimes we will ascend. Then we will descend again. There will be no difference, because it will be on earth as it is in heaven. Those who are Christ's will then be like Christ. To be with them will be like being with the Son of God himself.

I am much more concerned now with making earth a paradise than with going to a heavenly paradise. This means a fight in every sphere of life to defeat the red dragon and all the other manifestations of the apocalyptic beast. [REV 12:3]

Dear brothers and sisters, I want you to fight for the triumph of righteousness and love, that is for the triumph of Christ on earth; but remember that it is always easier to fight for a principle than to live up to it. Don't choose the easy way, but the way of the Cross. Don't remain yourselves unrighteous and lacking in sweetness while you are fighting for righteousness. Clothe yourselves with Christ and with all his virtues, and so fight.

It is not only I who sit in prison. You are all in the prisons of your sinful selves, and of your wrong and limited ideas. Let Jesus free you of these! Then you will be able to fight and attain your aim.

I am so happy to have been able to speak with you again tonight, after a short pause.

As I told you, I had some small, flickering joy in those days too, thinking about the value of the torture marks. But don't think that I am a hero, and that I just whistled and laughed

when I was in great pain. It was rather a time of great depression. I could not pray. I could not realize the presence of God, except in very short glimpses, which lasted perhaps only seconds.

The marks are a blessing. The time of depression has been a blessing, too. It showed me how horrible eternity without God would be. Those days without feeling him near were each a thousand years long. I realized how horrible it would be to remain in hell with unrepentant criminals who through eternity would swear, curse and think only evil, as my Communist torturers do. God brought me into a Communist prison, God made me pass through tortures, and through the dark night of the soul, in order that I may learn what hell is and do my utmost to avoid it.

My brothers, strive after heaven, a heaven which will comprehend the earth too.

There is a legend which says that a monk once left his monastery to cut trees in a wood. In the forest a bird from paradise was singing. He listened to her beautiful trills for a while, then he quickly finished his work and returned to the monastery. But the porter was not the usual one. He would not even allow him to enter. He gave his name. It was completely unknown. He asked for the abbot. A man came whom he had never seen before. It was in vain that he protested that he had left monastery only an hour ago. Nobody recognized him. Finally, somebody remembered that the monastery kept a story about a monk who had left the monastery centuries ago to cut wood and had disappeared without leaving any trace. The heavenly song of a bird from paradise, which seemed to have lasted only a few minutes, had lasted for centuries counting after the human manner.

The days during which you have not heard from me have been days of depression, but a depression filled with deep meaning. There have been rare moments of joy, when I realized

the value of the wounds I have received. But I finally came out of my depression because I too heard a song from paradise. I have heard in my lifetime the music of Beethoven

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and Bach, but how poor they are in comparison with the song I have now heard!

Brothers and sisters, fight to fill the earth with this heavenly song! Forsake all the old songs for this one: "~Shiru le-Adonai shir hadash~" - "Sing unto the Lord a new song." This is the commandment given to the angels. Just listen. You will learn it from them. ~Amen~.

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Today the subject of my sermon will be Sabina, my wife, whom you and I love. We call her Binzea.

If Ruth and Esther can be the subjects of whole books of the Bible, why should not the wife of a preacher be the subject of his sermon? Binzea is dear to God, and dear to me as Ruth was to Boaz and Esther to Ahasuerus.

Today I saw myself in a mirror, the first time for two years. They had to make repairs to our latrines, so the guards took us to theirs, and there was a mirror.

A homeric laughter overcame me, looking at myself. I used to be considered a handsome man. Now I am thin, ugly, with black circles under my eyes. So that is what remains of bodily beauty! And one day I shall be even uglier than that. I shall be a skeleton with a skull.

Coming back to my cell, I remembered another time when I had stood in front of a mirror. I had often thought about the words "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him," and I had wondered in what our Godlikeness consists. I could not find a satisfactory answer. One day I

stood before a mirror, asking myself once again the question: Which feature of mine corresponds to a feature of God?" My wife, having an intuition of what was going through my mind, silently came and stood beside me. And then I understood at once. "God created man in his own image ... male and female created he them. [GEN 1:27]

Our Godlikeness consists in the union of the two sexes. Through this we become "pro-creators," or deputy creators.

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We become capable of creating eternal beings, just as God created Adam and Eve.

The unmarried also have a partner of the opposite sex in the spiritual realm, the girls their animus, the men their anima, as Jung calls them - their ideal love, whom they have never met and with whom they could never unite. But life is infinite.

Binzea is the one who, by union with me, made me become more Godlike. Although I was converted before she was, it is to her that I owe my being a Christian today.

I remember the prison days with her in the Nazi time. Then we met every day in the corridor and could take walks together. I remember how, on another occasion when I was arrested, she demanded that she should go to prison with me.

Then the Communists came to power. A high Orthodox prelate, stooge of the Communists but personally friendly to me, had warned me that the decision had been made to arrest me. I had an opportunity to flee. Should I use it or not?

When I consulted my wife, she answered: "If you flee, how will you ever be able to preach again from the text, 'The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth ...'?" [JHN 10:11-12]

I was still tempted to flee. Then one day I was visited by a pastor for whose conversion God had used me. He had been an alcoholic. I found him drunk on the street, refusing to go home. So I accompanied him from bar to bar, and spoke to him. When he awoke from his drunkenness next day, he was a new man. And now he reminded me of this. During our conversation, he repeated again and again: "What struck me most in what you told me then

was the verse: 'Escape for thy life, look not behind thee.'" [GEN 19:17]

When he left, I asked my wife: "Were not his continual repetitions a guidance from God that I must save my life by fleeing?" She answered: "Yes, you must save your life. But whoever saves his life in this world, will lose it. The man who loses his life will save it."

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So I decided to stay. I don't regret it.

I do regret that I was kidnapped from the street by the Communist police. If they had taken me from my home, I would have been able to ask her forgiveness for having often been mean to her.

Now I sometimes surprise myself by saying, instead of "Jesus, help me!," "Binzea, help me!" She is so like Jesus. Those who followed St. Paul followed Jesus. For sick men, it was the same thing to appeal to Jesus himself or to his apostles for help. They were cured just the same. One day Christians will be like Christ. To talk with them will be like talking with the Saviour. It may not even be wrong to say, "Binzea, help me." It would be considered quite normal if she were near me. But now, in my narrow cell, I am free from the limitations of space. There is no near and far. Why should I not appeal to her? All good men of all ages are close to each other and can help one another. It is probably from this experience of Christians in great suffering in the first centuries that the practice of appealing to the saints arose, with all that remained valuable or became harmful in it in later years.

Binzea did not know what it was to avoid danger. She incited me to speak out openly against the Communists at the Congress of Cults convened by them in our Parliament building.

I once quoted to her a Cambodian proverb: "When two elephants are fighting, the ant should step aside." She laughed and said: "I am not a Cambodian, I am a Rumanian. We have a proverb of our own: 'A little log can overturn a large cart.'"

Where is she likely to be now? Probably in a prison cell somewhere near me. I heard a woman shrieking. I could have sworn that it was her voice. I last her in the spirit. She was bleeding, as if she had been heavily tortured. While I wept with longing for her, the thought occurred to me: It is written

that "the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." [1JN 1:7] But where is the blood of Jesus? Where can I find it to make it cleanse my sins? The glorified body of

Jesus had no blood. The Lord used, instead of the standard Jewish expression "flesh and blood" (~basar vedam~), the words "flesh and bones." [LUK 24:39] The blood which he spilled from the scourging, the crown of thorns, the crucifixion, no longer exists, just as the blood of all those who have died has passed, over the centuries, through the thousands of transformations of nature and does not exist anywhere.

Then where is the blood of Christ which can save me from sin? I am afraid the blood of Jesus about which certain priests and pastors preach is more like the artificial blood used in cinema studios in scenes of violence, which consists only of chemicals painted on the actor's face.

The name of Christ can be used in two senses. It can mean both the historical person of two thousand years ago, and the mystical body of which the glorified Jesus is the head and we are all the body. [1CO 12:12] This Christ bleeds continually. There has never been a day in history when at least one member of this mystical body has not bled. Their blood is the blood of Christ. Everything in them belongs to Christ. And they fill up in their flesh that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ. [COL 1:24] They perpetuate the sacrifice, and so it is his blood which continually cleanses.

We apply to events a false notion of time. When we travel in a train we have the impression that the villages and towns are passing us. We say that one station has passed and another follows. The truth is that all towns coexist at the same time. What we see is a delusion of our senses. So our mind, limited in time, sees some events of history as belonging to the past, and others as future. The reality is that there exists only an eternal "now," in which the bleeding of Jesus on Calvary is as actual today as it was two thousand years ago. And the bleeding of martyrs from before the time of Jesus and those of all centuries all belong to the eternal now.

In the vast picture of this eternal now there is also a spot where I will see Binzea again, and you will see your loved ones, in eternal gladness. Good night, Binzea. God give you peace.

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Brothers and sisters, let us love our wives and husbands as Christ loved us and gave himself for us!

"If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" [MTT 5:13] Salt is sodium chloride. The salt molecule can lose one of its atoms. It then ceases to be salt, and loses its savour. It can become salt again so long as it remains open to receive union with another atom. No man is lost as long as he has somebody to give him instruction which will "salt" him. Now, when the best of your teachers sit in jail, and you have so many unreliable ones who have compromised with Communism, the one who can salt you best might be your wife or husband. Profit from this possibility for as long as you are together. ~Amen~.

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So here you are again, the victims of my life. Good evening! I know nothing which cleanses the soul so well as a straight face-to-face discussion with you.

I believe that truth is to be found not only in the Bible. I believe that I can rely on a book of arithmetic in its own sphere as much as on the Bible. I also believe in Shakespeare. As the Scriptures teach you the maximum which a man can know about God, so Shakespeare teaches you the most a man can know about human character. ~Romeo and Juliet~ can even be seen as an allegory of the love between the Saviour and his bride, just as we find an allegory in the ~Song of Solomon~ and the Hindus in the ~Bhagavad Gita~.

There are only two things I wonder about Shakespeare. First, why does he not describe Christian characters? Secondly, I wonder whether the apparition of the ghost of Hamlet's father, and the presence of the murdered Banquo at Macbeth's table, represent fiction or reality. I have always been rather inclined to consider them as a description of reality.

In the Nazi prison I was with a murderer who denied his crime. The prosecutor put him in a solitary cell whose walls

were covered with dozens of pictures of the victim. The killer pounded on the door of his cell, confessing everything and demanding only that the pictures should be removed. What was for us only a picture evoked for him a reality which was with him in the cell.

Now I am passing through the same experience. Night after night, you come. But I don't bang on the door. I do not wish to escape from your reproaches. Do not try to terrify me by

circling round me in this mad dance and pointing at me with your skeleton fingers.

I know how to dance, too. And you know that my dance is more effective than yours, just as the miracles of Moses were greater than those of the Egyptian magicians who opposed him.

You dance? I will dance, too, singing the song which Jesus sang when he danced. Ha, ha, ha. You don't even know that he danced? Listen to the words of incantation while I dance - words which I learned from him:

~"Glory be to thee, Father. Amen.
... Glory be to thee, Grace. Amen.
Glory be to thee, Spirit: Glory be to thee, Holy One:
Glory be to thy glory. Amen ...
I would eat, and I would be eaten. Amen.
I would hear, and I would be heard. Amen ...
Grace danceth. I would pipe; dance ye all. Amen ...
The number Eight singeth praise with us. Amen.
The number Twelve danceth on high. Amen.
The Whole on high hath part in our dancing. Amen.
Whoso danceth not, knoweth not what cometh to pass.
Amen ...
I would flee, and I would stay. Amen ...
A place I have not, and I have places. Amen.
A temple I have not, and I have temples. Amen.
A lamp am I to thee that beholdest me. Amen.
A mirror am I to thee that perceivest me. Amen.
A door am I to thee that knockest at me. Amen.
A way am I to thee a wayfarer. Amen ...
Now answer thou unto my dancing~ (if you can.
Why can't you? Ha, ha, ha, I laugh at you!)
~... If thou hadst known how to suffer,
thou wouldest have been able not to suffer.

Learn thou to suffer, and thou shalt be able not to suffer."~
[~Acts of John~ 94-96. ~The Apocryphal New Testament~ trs. Montague Rhodes James, quoted by permission of the Clarendon Press, Oxford.]

Why do you shrink back into a corner? Come, I have no wish to scare you. I love you all. Come on, let us reason with each other.

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Yes, I killed many of you. Some of you I killed while you were yet unborn. You would have hindered my selfish life. I did not allow you to be born. Now I understand the gynaecologist who asked me to baptize him because he was haunted during the night by the many children he had killed.

You have learned the words from the Bible: "The wages of sin is death," [ROM 6:23] and you threaten me with them. You may know the Bible. The devil knows it, too. But I would not call him theologian. Neither are you. Things are not as simple as that. "Whosoever killeth shall be in danger of the judgment." [MTT 5:21] Have you heard? The killer is not lost. He is only in danger. He will be judged, which does not mean that he will be sentenced. He may be acquitted, too. I may explain to the Judge my bad heredity, or perhaps he will reveal it to me. I may explain to him my wrong education, my bad environment, my madness. He will know how many devils were unchained to fight against me. Weighing all this, I may still be acquitted.

And you, with whom I have committed adultery - are you not as guilty as I? Why do you throw stones at me? Or you, the holy ones who never sinned in this respect because you were impotent, or ugly or never had occasion for it. "Whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery in his heart." MTT 5:28] And you, women, take advantage of the special kindness of Jesus towards the female sex which kept him from speaking against women who look on a man to lust after him. Don't play the righteous with me! And don't quote Bible verse at me.

We are all the same. And the eye which must be plucked out and cast from us is only the right one, the one which judges actions after the standard of righteousness and morality, not knowing that life has its own laws, and that the law of the Spirit of life, that is the simple acknowledgement of life with its intricacies, sets you free from that other law of sin and

death.

I reminded Jesus once that Luther had called Christ The greatest liar, perjurer, thief, adulterer and murderer that mankind has ever known. Not in the sense that he committed these sins, but because he appropriated them to himself. I asked

Jesus: "Do you accept this charge?" and I heard a definite reply: "Yes, everything except the adultery." I was sure then that this was not his voice. I cannot believe that he is less concerned about those who neglect their parents, or cheat their employers, or gossip, or steal, than about those who experience a love story. Portia said in ~The Merchant of Venice~. "The quality of mercy is not strained." It is not difficult for Jesus to appropriate to himself our adulteries, too.

And here you are, the many thousands who have listened to my sermons and read my books. You, who are of many religions and traditions, accuse me of the gravest of sins, heresy. All other sins are trifles in comparison with this, the distortion of the Word of God. Have I been guilty of this? What is truth? I stood for a truth once. Here, I am not sure of it any more. I am battered by many storms. The see of Rome attracts me with its prestige, and I wonder how I could have been anything else than Catholic. Is Adventism the real truth? There are hundreds of texts teaching us to keep the Sabbath, and not one commandment about Sunday. I see the beauty of the Orthodox tradition, quiet and deep like the Pacific Ocean. Which is the right one. Which is heresy? What ought I to have preached? I am I, and nobody else. Perhaps Protestantism, in which everyone establishes for himself his own relationship with God, is the truth. Then I am not a heretic. Each man an Abraham in personal relationship with God - that is the end result of Protestantism. What is wrong with that?

What I knew, I preached. And I don't care about your accusations. "After the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers," said St. Paul [ACT 24:14] when he was charged as you charge me.

Why are you all so angry with me? What have you lost by the fact that I sinned gravely against you? Zacchaeus stole from one man perhaps a hundred dinars, with which in any case he could not have done much. But he repented and gave back to everyone fourfold. Now the man he had cheated has four hundred dinars, enough to open a little shop. Christ is called in the

Hebrew of isaiah 53 "~asham~," which means not

only "an offering for sin," but also "a restitution." To all of you whom I have robbed of this transitory life, he will give life eternal. To all of you whom I have polluted, he will give the whiteness of purity. To all of you whom I have caused to weep, he will give a pearl for every tear. To all those to whom I have taught error, he will give the final truth.

Will no reasoning quieten you? Can nothing stop you from haunting me? I see that reasoning cannot overcome the sense of guilt. Guilt drives a man mad. Arguments cannot help a madman.

Years ago they used to burn Christians at the stake. At least they had it warm. We are shivering from cold in our cells. Nevertheless I am bathed in sweat, watching you and hearing how you yell at me.

And now you are here, too, Moses. I knew you as the first keeper of the threshold of the most holy place. You, too, tell me that I have broken the law, and that therefore I am defiled and cannot enter.

You talked like this to Luther, I guess. Sometimes his hatred exploded against Jews and Catholics; at times he was as unbridled as a mad man. He was one of those he called "martyrs of Providence," a man who loved Jesus wholeheartedly but who had a choleric character which he had never been able to conquer. Luther taught: "If you meet Moses, kill him." In another sense, Zen Buddhism says the same thing: "If you meet Buddha, kill him." I am not afraid of you, Moses. You are not allowed to stand in my way. I will fight you, and I will enter.

Do you oppose me with the tables of the commandments? But did you not smash them to pieces yourself? Paul also smashed them again. Did he not write that the tables of stone are done away?

I remember vaguely that some church council branded as heresy antinomianism, the teaching that no moral law is any longer valid. But at this moment I am not particularly worried about church councils and their decisions.

I want forgiveness. I want justification. I want peace, whatever

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I have done in the past. The past is gone. I live in the present and the future, and the ghosts of the past are not permitted to haunt me. Neither are you permitted to torture me, setting my sin against the commandments. You did not respect them yourself. What right have you to play the moralist with me?

You are circling round me again, and yelling at me?

I can yell, too, and I will do it, even though I know that I shall be put in the straitjacket again. Yes, I yell: "No sin is mine. All sin belongs to Jesus. It is he who has committed them all. Ask him, and he will confirm it. If you cannot forgive me my sins, if you are so wicked as to torture me every night in my helplessness, then forgive my sins to the one who has taken them on himself. Forgive my sins to Jesus. If you do not forgive him, he will not forgive you. And don't forget he has power to throw you into everlasting hell."

And now my last cry: "Yes, I have murdered, I have committed adultery, I lied, I was a heretic, but the blood of Jesus Christ washed me from all my sins and can wash you, too. Then you will become good, and will no more give pain to those whose victims you have been. Out! Out! I am baptized. I am washed in the blood of Jesus."

The guard has already put the key in the lock. Now I shall be gagged again. But the clock is striking one hour after midnight. Is it a coincidence? Is this the hour when you have to disappear? It cannot only be this. The blood of Jesus Christ has overcome you. I do not see you any more.

While they put the straitjacket on, before they gag me, I cry out to you my final word: "You tortured me so much because you must be terribly tortured yourselves. Saints pray for those who have victimized them, instead of throwing mud at them. St. Joan of Arc, when she saw the Catholic bishop who had sentenced her to death approaching, cried: 'Beware that the flames may not endanger your life.' You are not saved. Believe in the blood of Jesus Christ. It will set you free." ~Amen~.

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ANI-HU

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

True knowledge of anything means as deep a union with your subject as that experienced in sexual intercourse. The knower, the known and the act of knowledge become one. You forget that you and your partner exist. You no longer think, but your mind is dissolved in the heat of the embrace.

It is perhaps in this sense that Meister Eckhart, the great German mystic, said that the Christian, in abandoning all things, must also abandon God. As long as you are still conscious of having a God, you have not yet become one with him.

The man who thinks and reasons about truth, shows by this that he does not possess it. Whoever has met King Truth, and has known his ardent kiss, does not seek the truth any longer, does not speak the truth, but is its very embodiment. Christ is no longer the object of your thoughts. You are his manifestation. Instead of being like Christ, you are identified with him. He is the light of the world. You are the light of the world. You are the same light.

St. Gertrude prayed: "I am you. You are I. I am not you, you are not I. I and you, we are a new being: an I-you."

Before I was put in the underground prison where I now am, I once stood at the window of my prison cell and cried: "Lord, where are you?" I had scarcely finished the last word, when I saw entering the prison yard my wife, with Bianca and another sister, who had come to inquire from the governor if I was in that prison. I had called to the Lord. Three sisters had come. Since then I have made it a habit to identify them and all true children of God with the Lord himself, and I know this is not a fancy.

Jesus himself identifies himself with us. "Whoever has fed, or given to drink, or clothed, or visited in prison one of these little brothers of mine, has done it to me." [MTT 25:31-40]

When Jesus met Saul of Tarsus, he asked him: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" [ACT 9:4] Now the truth is that Saul had never persecuted Jesus. He had only persecuted the disciples. But Jesus knows no difference between himself and his

disciples. When he speaks of his disciples, he does not use the third person. He says "me." He knows that I am he. And every Christian ought to know himself to be identical with Christ, a part of his mystical body.

So many people have helped me during my lifetime. I see the arm of the Almighty in all the arms which have been laid lovingly on my shoulder whenever I was depressed. God and the believing, good soul are one. Look at a believing soul, and you see the Lord himself.

Our Bibles translate ISA 48:12 with the words: "I am he. I am the first, I also am the last." The Hebrew words are: "~Ani-hu ani harishon af ani haaharon,~" which means, literally translated: An 'I-he' (a union between me and him) is the first, and an 'I' (which is only I) is the last."

I was once looking for the Presbyterian pastor in a certain town. I went to the church, but the caretaker told me that he lived some distance away. Some boys were playing in the churchyard. Overhearing our conversation, one of them offered to show me the pastor's house. While we were walking along, I asked him if he believed in Christ. The boy, aged fourteen, decidedly answered: "No." I asked him why. He replied in his childish manner: "I believe that if God created this good and meek and loving Jesus of two thousand years ago in Palestine, in whom we are meant to trust, he must have created some little Jesus in every generation in every place, so that in looking at the little Jesus we may believe in the big one. But I have never met a little Jesus. I am a poor child. My father is a drunkard and beats me. My mother is a washer-woman and has no time for me. I have never had a good suit. Nobody has ever bought me chocolate or sweets. I have had no

toys. If God is almighty, why did he only make Jesus once? An almighty God could make many Jesuses. Then it would be easy to believe." I asked him again: "But isn't your pastor a Jesus?" The answer was as decided as the first: "No."

And so we arrived at the pastor's house. The boy left. I was alone with the pastor. I spoke with him about Christ. It was an uninteresting subject for him. Then I told him what the boy had said. The pastor exclaimed: "What an idiot!" wherewith I whole-heartedly agreed. Only I considered somebody else to be the idiot.

To be a Christian means to be an "Ani-hu," an "I-he," an intimate union between a human soul and Christ. Jesus said to Philip: "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." [JHN 14:9] In the same way, a Christian can say to anyone who has known him for a long time: "He that has seen me, has seen Christ."

Humanity, in its religious development, has passed through the so-called animist period. Primitive man believed every object of nature to be possessed of a spirit. We have now left behind this stage of development, just as little girls stop playing with dolls at a certain age. A Christian sees things in a realistic manner and leaves dolls to children.

Dolls are made of plastic. They have no understanding. It is useless to speak to them and dress them up. The brides of the heavenly king do not populate their minds with the objects of their imagination. We look cold reality straight in the face. We prisoners have cried out in our pain for years, without getting any answer. So many of the Lord's vineyards have been destroyed. The Lord has hidden his face from us.

As savages saw spirits behind every tree and in every stone, it is our sick imagination which evokes in our mind the presence of Jesus. Some see him in the bread and wine of Holy Communion and believe that a transubstantiation has occurred, or at least a consubstantiation as the Lutherans put it. We do not wish to acknowledge freely that the Heavenly King is not there. We cry in vain, as he cried in vain: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

He is beyond the wall of partition which we ourselves have created between him and us by our sins. Beyond the wall are the angels. Only cold light comes from the stars, and dark thoughts whiten my hair.

It is so cold in the cell. am nearly frozen. The only living companion I had for a short while, a spider, froze. I live in a cold universe.

The only place where there is still life is deep within me. But is he not there? Is it not true that the one whom I seek in vain in the outward world, breaks the ice of silence in me; that Christ and God are in me, that my voice, my whispers or my yells which provoke the guards to reprisals, are

their whispers and their yells?

Christ has promised that he will come to dwell in those who keep his commandments. I did not keep them fully but, notwithstanding, he came. He is much more generous than his word. Or perhaps with him remorse at not fulfilling the commandments is the same as fulfilling them.

Perhaps there is something else. I think he must have been bored in his empty heaven. I am his real heaven. Heaven is no heaven for him without me and others like me. And so he came. But he came.

I am an ~Ani-hu~. This gives me an enormous power to do good. In me is the living God.

Like St. Peter, I would exclaim: "Lord, it is good for us to be here!" [MTT 17:4] It is much better with you here in prison than when I was in the pulpit. Then I preached so many sermons and wrote so many books about you, that you had come to be a habit with me. I spoke and wrote so easily about Christian things that I had no need to pay attention to you.

And so you took me to the peak of the mountain, that is to this underground cell. Here you, and those who now take pleasure in gagging me even if I don't yell, taught me silence. So the startling thing happened, the mystical union, the realization of ~Ani-hu~.

Seek to attain this, my beloved brothers. Amen.

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SICK OF LOVE

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JESUS

In a luxurious bedroom embellished with flowers, in a kingly palace, a rather theatrical setting for love, the bride of the Song of Songs waited for Solomon to come.

We are sick of love for you in our prison cells.

She was surrounded by girls to wait on her. We are surrounded only by hatred and wickedness. Every day they mock and beat and torture us. It is years since I saw a man who loves

me, or heard one single good word.

Jesus, leap over the mountains which separate us and come to your beloved ones! We perish. The spirit within us was quenched long ago. We don't have your Holy Book. Our eyes weep tears day and night.

Is it right that the One who cried "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?," who knew himself the anguish of loneliness, should forsake us?

Jesus, a broken heart cries out to you. I am weary. Give me rest. You who can change a hell into paradise, who by the one word "I will" made a leper clean, give me quiet. Solomon gave maidens to wait on his bride. Give me angels to surround me, but, I beg you, angels whom I can see, not angels whose presence I always have to imagine.

Until a few weeks ago, I had at least the consolation of bringing souls to Christ by tapping the Gospel in morse code through the wall. The guards have found it out. And now they have emptied the cells on my right and on my left. My self has become entirely useless. I sit and wait for the passing away of this senseless life which consists in eating dirty soup twice a day and enduring boring beatings. Even these no longer have

the thrill of novelty. The torturers have no imagination. The pains they inflict on us are always the same. They are senseless, too, because I have forgotten everything and could not tell them any secrets of the Underground church, even if I wanted to.

What people seek most in religion is to keep their self in eternity. I would like to get rid of my self and to become "you." If I lie sick of love and wait for you to come, it is not in the hope that you will give my self, which I abhor, eternal life but that you will take it from me. There will then be in my place another being, one loke you, one full of grace and truth.

In the past, I would spend hours thinking of what I would do if I were a king, a beggar, a millionaire, a girl; what I would do if I were the Pope, or the ruler of my country.

Now I dream more and more about what I will do when I am like you. Wlll I have to suffer again, even worse than now? You had a heaven and left it because on a speck of dust in your

infinite universe there was a tiny creature, man, and this creature suffered. What if there should be suffering or rebellion again somewhere in what is wrongly called the universe (I would rather call it a pluriverse. It is so big and varied)? I would feel like you, and I would come to suffer for those who had rebelled. I would bear the infirmities of others, and take their sickness upon me. The prophecies of Isaiah would refer to me too. [MTT 8:16-17]

I was once your disciple. Then I became a worker in your harvest. There are three degrees in Christianity as in every profession, as in masonry. From being a disciple and worker, you advance to the higher degree. I have to become, like St. Paul, a "master builder." [1CO 3:10]

Woe to the disciples who never become workers, to the workers who never become masters. They are like perpetual students who never become doctors or engineers. What is the use of a violin player who does not try to become a virtuoso?

So you have brought me to prison to make me a master. But while the disciples dance after a day of labour, and the workers sleep, the master stays up late into the night to plan future work

and to care for everything necessary. Masters have no peace. Will I, too, never have peace?

No, I cannot become like you if I continue to think these things. Was it by thinking that you became a man of sorrows? Or did it come to you in the simplest manner, through accepting what the Father willed for you?

The Catholic church says that you have a high opinion of scholastic theologians, that when St. Thomas Aquinas finished his ~Summa Theologica~ he heard your voice from heaven saying: "You have written well of me, Thomas."

To me they are all unacceptable. They made the truth too clear-cut. Of course, they could not know Heisenberg's theory of the indeterminacy of elementary particles. The standard of measurement changes the object measured. This is not only true in microphysics. A God whom I love is different from one who is unloved. With the pure, He is pure, with the froward, froward. [PSA 18:26] There is no absolute truth. Truth is a direction, not an attainment. The truth about God is different

for every man.

But anyhow, the scholastic theologians made a difference between what they called in Latin ~mens agens~ (the active mind) and ~mens patiens~ (the passive mind). The active mind will pass through valleys, mountains and caves to find the truth. The passive mind lies sick of love and, like a magnetic tape, simply records what it hears.

While other Christians go forth to battle, the masters, those with passive minds, remain quietly in the most holy place of the temple. They know that a God who has to be defended by me, a God whose holy ark can be overthrown by oxen so that I have to keep it in its right place, is not worthy of the name "God." [2SM 6:6]

You need no defenders. You need no men armed with sticks to fight your cause. What you seek is worshippers in the highest sense, that is, lovers - men who love you, serenely and quietly, whatever is happening around and in them.

You seek for souls in whom are rest, quietness, immovability, for only these can mirror the splendours of heaven.

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You were so greatly beloved by God because you mirrored in serenity his glory. You did not fear that you would become a man of sorrows. You did not even think about it. "Ehjeh asher ehjeh," said God to Moses. This may be translated not only as "I am what I am." It can also have the meaning, "I will become what I will become." When you are a son of God you become quietly whatever you become by the will of the Father and by the working of his laws. The source becomes a river, the egg becomes a bird, the bud a flower, the living being a corpse, the still sea becomes tempestuous, the tempestuous sea still. There is nothing to think about. I develop towards becoming you, as a caterpillar develops towards becoming a butterfly. "Ehjeh asher ehjeh." I will become what the laws of the divine nature of which I am a partaker will make me become. The caterpillar becomes what the law of his nature makes him become.

I was always so active. Finding no other means of achieving your aim, you arranged for me to have fifty-pound chains on my legs so that I am obliged to sit quietly at your feet, like Mary of Bethany.

The active mind always returns from its hunting parties

empty-handed, like Esau, while Jacob, the passive mind, remaining at home, can buy Esau's birthright with a mouthful of soup.

Quietness is the antidote to all the sorrows of this life. It is also the antidote to the sorrows of prison life and a shield against the fear of future suffering.

Fighting is for those who are still caught up in the vanity of this world. In my subterranean cell I remain like Moses on the mountain top. I cannot keep my hands stretched upwards. I am too weak for this. I am alone. I have no Aaron or Hur to hold up my arms. But I stretch my heart upwards, and know that thus Israel becomes unconquerable.

I will lie sick of a burning love and make no effort to think what I will do when I become you. There is nothing in my cell to stimulate the active mind. The passive mind simply rethinks in quietness a thought which was thought long since by God.

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We play back what was recorded on our minds long ago by the Holy Spirit.

Thank you, dear Jesus, for putting me in this solitary cell with the purpose of making me a master mind. Thank you for the paralyzing sickness of love. I wish for nothing else than that my self should pass away and that my last breath should take the shape of one more flower in the garland wherewith you are beautified. And if it should be the fate of this flower to wither away on another Golgotha, I have no need to worry about it now.

Now, I only love. Amen.

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THE FULLEST SABBATH

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MY DEAR SOUL

I must be really mad.

While I was free I visited many asylums for the insane. With some of the madmen one could have very pleasant conversations. Some of them were men of exceptional intelligence. Only sometimes, suddenly, they would give way for a time to unreasonable behaviour, which did not last for long.

I am reduced to the self-diagnosis of someone who is not a psychiatrist. No doctor has been to see me to tell me what is happening to me. Sometimes I am afraid of my lucidity. I have the impression not only that I can see and understand things rightly but that I can see right through them. As a matter of fact, I direct the interrogations. I make the interrogator ask me the questions that I like. I always succeed in diverting him from subjects where I am not at ease. I entice him into discussions lasting for hours about the relationship between Marxism and Christianity, until he forgets why he has called me. T feel that I could preach or write books as never before. And then, all at once, my mind becomes confused, darkened, filled with mad thoughts. I begin to yell without any obvious motive. I bang on the door of the cell crying: "Give me back my Mihai. Give me back my son."

Things seem to be getting worse and worse. It is a Sabbath day. This time I am not only in a strait-jacket and gagged but I have heavy chains at my feet which prevent me from walking. A Sabbath day. The fullest Sabbath I have ever enjoyed in my life. I cannot disturb my rest even by a movement of my hands, feet or lips.

At first I felt an impulse to ask God, as St. Theresa asked

him: "Why do you treat us so? I don't wonder that you have not many friends." I wanted to tell God: "You may do everything in your power to destroy my trust and my love towards you, but you will not succeed." But then I decided to give him a rest. Let him also enjoy a full Sabbath, undisturbed by any reproaches of mine.

I will once again speak only to you, my soul, my only treasure. I hope this is not blasphemy, because I believe you to be one with Christ - with Christ who has humbled himself again, to be sin and man full of frailties within me. You are he, and therefore you are the jewel. In any case, I have no bishop, no

theologians, no church elders to censor what I think. So I call you just what I like, my only treasure.

Enter into Sabbath, my soul. Overcome your anxieties and doubts. Your sins are forgiven. Not only the past sins but the future ones, too. If you don't believe me, believe Spurgeon. He also put it exactly like this. Although I wonder why you should believe Spurgeon more than me. Enter into Sabbath, my soul. You are saved from the fear of judgment. You don't even have to judge yourself. You can think about yourself entirely objectively, as if you were somebody else.

It is understood, forgiven, you must not worry about it, but it is simply not right that so much of your worship has been honouring God with my lips only, the heart remaining far from him. I don't reproach you for it. It could not be otherwise. Jesus said: "The hour is coming, and now is..." [JHN 4:23] We are not all of one piece. While for a part of our soul the hour to worship in spirit and in truth is already here, for another part it is still to come. Luther taught that we are "simul justus et peccator, comprehensor et viator" (at the same time righteous and sinners, men who have attained the goal and traveller towards it). I do not ask you, my soul, to judge and condemn yourself but rather to strive to love and worship with all your heart, with all your soul.

But, having in my heart both good and bad inclinations, how can I love God with all my heart? The answer of the Kabbala, the ancient mystic teaching of the Jewish people, is "Serve

God also with your bad impulses, then you will serve Him whole-heartedly." If you understand, you understand. If you don't, no explanation will help.

But your religion must become a full reality. Even if you quarrel with God, as David and Job quarrelled with Him under similar circumstances, it must be a deeply religious, whole-hearted quarrel.

The prodigal son, when he returned home, did not stop at the house of an aunt, or a neighbour. He went through to the Father. Even to stop at Jesus is wrong. Jesus teaches that through him you must arrive at the Father, the Most High, the God of gods, the highest point of Jacob's ladder.

"Religion" comes from a Latin word which means "to tie

again". Do you feel so tied to God, as I am tied in this strait-jacket and chains, that you cannot move unless he unties you?

Don't let words take the place of reality. In Hebrew, "davar" is a homonym which means "word" and "thing". The genius of the Hebrew language demands that words should be things. Don't forget, my soul, that it is your privilege to be a Jewish soul. Here, among the "internationalist" Communists, who had as the founder of their party an anti-semitic Jew, Marx, it means one more beating. But before God it means a great deal, and lays upon you a special responsibility.

Don't stay in the sphere of words and names. The name of one of the high priests who killed Jesus was Annas, which means in Hebrew "pity". And what a ruthless man he was!

Understand me well, my soul. I don't judge you, nor do I reproach you. Self-judgments are always false. Life is very complicated, and we always err in such judgments by applying to life only one criterion. In justice, human actions should be valued according to many criteria.

A word may not be truthful but it may be useful. It is rumoured that at the Teheran conference Churchill said: "Truth is so precious that it has to be surrounded by a numerous bodyguard of lies." A sentence dreadful to read. But I wonder who could win a war with military or diplomatic weapons without using deception. St. Paul used it when, after

calling the high priest a "whitewashed wall" and putting him under a curse, he apologized, saying that he had not known him to be the high priest. He used deception when, in order to divide the Pharisees and Sadducess, he cried: "I am a Pharisee ... with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead I am on trial," which was not at all the issue. [ACT 23:3-6] He used deception, or if you prefer a milder word, diplomacy, in circumcising Timothy, although he had written that whoever practices the Jewish ritual falls from grace. There are other words of ours whose aim is not to impart truth but to lift men into the realm of mystery; others again may embellish life, or make it easier to bear. This is the case with works of art, and with funny stories. Some words may not be true, but they may be a valuable means of self-defence and of defending the innocent. Such are the words with which I lead astray my interrogators. There exist not only truth and lies. There are also intermediate stages between them.

Humility is sometimes right, and wrong at other times. What a catastrophe if Koch, the discoverer of the tubercle bacillus, had been humble enough to give in when all the members of the academies of science contested his discovery! He was self-asserting. So also was St. Athanasius. You cannot detect, in his debate with Arius the heretic, even the slightest sign of humility. In vain will you seek for it in Wycliff or Luther.

You cannot judge human actions according to isolated criteria like truthfulness, love, humility, or religiosity.

And then there is in our psyche an objective law. I cannot always do the things I want to do. There are natural reactions and impulses which I cannot master, as I cannot master the beating of my heart, the working of my kidneys and the movement of stars in the skies. They are not submitted to my will. Ancestral forces are battling within me. I am the descendant of men who for two thousand years have refused Christianity. It is not easy to implant it in a soul fighting against such an inheritance.

I don't judge you, nor condemn you, my soul, but I lay before you this noble task: be whole-heartedly Christian.

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How? I really don't know. You can easily recognize false teachers by the fact that they know the answers to all the questions.

But perhaps my actual state could be an indication for you: enter into full Sabbath. Don't move at all, as I do not move. Lao Tse recommended inaction as the highest type of action.

Simply trust, knowing that Jesus holds in his hands the bridle of the ass.

I will tell you a story.

A preacher went on Palm Sunday to preach to a congregation of cowboys, who were used to taming wild horses. When he had finished telling how Jesus entered into Jerusalem on a foal which nobody had ridden before, and how he was received with shouts of joy and men waving palm-branches, the cowboys surrounded him, exclaiming: "Jesus was one of us! He too was a cowboy!" The preacher did not understand, so the cowboys

explained: "If you rode on a donkey which nobody had ridden before, and thousands of people around you were shouting and waving branches in the donkey's face, you, pastor, would have finished up under the donkey! If Jesus could keep his donkey quiet, believe us, he had the strong hand and the skill of the cowboy."

Just leave the bridle in the hands of Jesus. He has made saints out of murderers and thieves. He can make you a saint, also, provided you leave him alone. It is the Sabbath. Don't hate. Always be like I am, gagged, only speaking out when it is for the honour of the Lord and for the good of His work.

It is the fullest Sabbath imaginable. Don't even be afraid of error. You are a pawn in the hands of a master chess-player. He will not lose the game.

Leave your remorse, the terrible "ifs": "If only I had acted otherwise." You could not have done otherwise. There is no free will. You are what heredity, education, social environment and the influences of good and bad angels have made you. In the last analysis, this means that at every stage of your development you are exactly what God meant you to be at that moment.

Leave your doubts. Life is incalculable. We don't know even

one atom of the five octillions of atoms which make up our body. We don't know our genes. We don't know the complexities of our souls, nor what happens in our subconscious. You can remain in Sabbath only by trusting that your life has been calculated by the one who knows every drop of rain and every hair on my head. Every step of our pilgrim life is counted.

Trust in Him, even if He slays me. This is the only advice I can give you. ~Amen~.

There Is No God

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(A MEDITATION)

Our oppressors say: "There is no God." The Communists ask us, too, to deny God as a condition of our release. I wonder if I should not do it.

Our experiences in Communist prisons have helped us to understand many parts of the Bible in a new way. I do not agree that we should consider all atheists fools because David wrote: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." [PSA 14:1] First of all, even according to the Bible, it is only the man who says it in his heart who is a fool. He deserves the name because he does not say openly what he thinks. We cannot widen the use of the term to describe those who sincerely and openly tell us that their experience of life has made them convinced atheists.

The faith of some Christians around me has been destroyed by the weight of suffering. Job said: "Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea ..." [JOB 6:2-3] Now there are once again prisoners in the adjoining cells. One Christian prisoner has just read me - in Morse code - a short poem entitled "God, I Forgive Thee". He composed it after passing through terrible torture. Others find more ease for their mind in simply denying that God exists, instead of accusing him or forgiving him. I cannot call these men fools.

And then, the facts of science known to us today were not known in David's time. Some modern scientists, analyzing the facts, have come to faith. Others in the same laboratory, having the same facts before them, have become atheists. In justice, we must say that the material reality is open to

interpretation in both ways, just as there are two theories of the nature of light. Is it fair that one set of scientists should call the other a bunch of fools?

I believe. My Communist oppressor does not. That is all. He is an oppressor and I am not. But I have my sins which he has not, and these may be much more heinous than his. St. Paul considered himself the chief of sinners. I believe him when he says this, as I believe him in other things. It was he who was the chief of sinners, not Annas or Caiaphas, not Judas, not the Roman torturers and executioners. St. Paul knew facts about his own life which we do not know. He also knew all the

horrible deeds of those who were responsible for the death of the Son of God. There was no false humility in him. If, after comparing what he knew about himself with what he knew about these others, he said that he was the chief of sinners, I have no reason to disagree with him.

Probably, the brothers who are free look on me as a martyr. They think of sermons which they have heard me preach. They have read some of my books. They have had pleasant talks with me. They don't know me. I know myself. I am no better than my torturers. Only my sins are in a different category.

The opinions of the oppressor are as valid as those of the oppressed. He disbelieves. I believe. He has the same rights as I. I cannot call him a fool.

Deny God? There is a sense in which any Christian can do it.

The great mystic teacher Meister Eckhart taught that a disciple of Jesus, after having left all for love of him, must at the end leave God, too. This seems to me to be self-evident. In the supreme moment of sexual union, those who are united are not conscious of the separate existence of the partner. In supreme moments of mystic union, I, the thinker, God, the object of my thoughts and the act of thinking become one. This is the fulfilment of "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one." It is only the man who has not yet united with God who has a God. In a sense, there is a religious atheism, transcending the stage in which a man has a God.

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What have I asserted when I say that "God is"?

St. John Chrysostom said that the expression "God" is not the name of his being or of his existence, and that it is not possible to find the proper name of that being. St. Augustine says that it is not lawful to call God even "the inexpressible", because even by this you express something about Him.

Maimonides, and many others with him, thought that the best way to know God is the ~via negationis~, the way of negation, that is to deny everything about him which can be put in human words.

When Moffatt went as a missionary to Africa, he wished to

explain a train to the natives who only knew the ox-cart. So he put two pieces of wood on the ground, to symbolize the rails. He put a few carts one behind the other. To the first cart he hitched a pair of oxen, and hung a steam kettle round the neck of one animal. This, he explained, represented a train. If anyone of his hearers had been bold enough to deny the existence of such a thing, he would have been right. and not the missionary.

So it is with God. Those who deny wnat we assert about God may be nearer to the truth than we are.

Human words grew out of the necessity for men to communicate with each other in hunting, cultivation or marriage. Then we projected words on to the spiritual realm, which is totally different. Words are inadequate - the word "God", too.

A monk once agreed with a brother that the one who died first would try to come back to describe what it is like in the other world. The first to die fulfilled his promise. When the living man asked him in Latin, "qualiter?" (how is it?), the answer was "totaliter aliter" (entirely otherwise).

Christians use words for the best attributes of God. About some other attributes - for example his terribleness ("the terror of the Lord" as the Bible calls it) and his revengefulness, they prefer to be silent, because they think that what is ugly in a human character must be unfit for God, too, a thought which I consider stupid. Many things which would be a shame for a child are allowable in a man. God cannot be put into words.

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"The expressed Tao (God) is not the real Tao," says Lao-Tse.

If the Communists see in God only a word, and I myself do not believe in the word either, why not deny him and be free?

Formally, I would be right to do it, and I would do it if I did not fear that, by doing so, I would cause the most harm to my oppressors.

If I say "there is no God", towards what will they develop? What will be the aim of their life? The Bible says that when Christ will appear we shall be like him, and that those who overcome will sit with Christ and God on the same throne. I am developing towards Godhead, as the embryo develops towards

man. If there were no man in the whole world but only one male and one female child, you could not say that mankind did not exist. There would soon be a man. If I develop rightly, there will soon be a Christ, a godly being, sitting on a heavenly throne.

If I deny God I cause my torturer to lose such an opportunity for development. I leave him no aim in life, and cause him to lose his soul, with the huge potentialities hidden within it.

The Hindus call God "No, No," in the sense that he is nothing of what we presume him to be. Even if there is no God, I will think only about him, about how a world with God would be. I will never forsake God as my aim.

I owe it to my Communist torturers to confess to them in words which they can understand the one who is mystery for myself, about whom nobody can tell the "when" and the "how", who is inaccessible, incomprehensible even to religious geniuses, and who can reveal himself only in the etymological sense of the word "re-veal", that is to put another veil upon his face by reducing himself to the ridiculously humble sphere of words.

No, I will not deny him. My mind does not know who he is or where he is. When I was strung up by my arms with my toes barely reaching the floor, and under other similar tortures, I had no evidence that he exists. I was inclined to accuse him as St. Theresa, the great Christian mystic, dared to accuse him

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before me: "O Lord, no wonder you have so few friends when you treat them so hard." But I believe in the incomprehensible and terrible one. I believe that he is love, although at this moment I feel nothing of his love. I have to believe in its expression in a sacrifice two thousand years ago. I will not leave him, nor deny him, even if he leaves me.

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The Unreasonableness of Love

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

I once met a woman who was a missionary in Africa. She was renowned for her extreme zeal in the service of the people. At first, we chatted on the surface of things. Then deep spoke to deep. I was able to ask her: "What is it that prevents you from sitting down quietly to pass hours and days with the Christ whom you love? What drives you to leave him and rush into outward activity?"

I had touched a sore point. She admitted she was overzealous because she was not sure of the rightness of what she was doing. She told me: "Jesus said, 'If ye were blind, ye should have no sin.' [JHN 9:41] I went to a blind people, Muslims who, not knowing about Christ, did not have the sin of unbelief. God could not reproach them for their wrong belief, since they had not heard of a better one. Now I tell them about Christ. With almost no exception, they refuse my message. But they have heard it. So their sin remains. By my missionary activity I am doing them harm rather than good. It is impossible to convert Muslims. Then why burden them with a knowledge which they cannot accept?"

She loved those Muslim people. But she had brought her love and her concern for their salvation to the bar of reason. Once you allow reason, which Luther called "the beast", to judge feelings, feelings are always defeated. From the point of view of reason Romeo was a fool. How can you prove to reason that it is right to die for a Juliet when in Verona there are thousands of Rosalindas who are just as charming?

Reason will tell you about the foolishness of the cross. Jesus was young, handsome, vigorous. He could have made a good

living as a carpenter, or as a doctor of the law. He could have married, and enjoyed life, and still remained religious and a philanthropist. Why die to save people who do not want to be saved? Why start a religion which will not be accepted, or even heard of, by the overwhelming majority of mankind, and which will be practised only by a few isolated saints?

Who would conceive such an unreasonable project? Only St. Paul dared to answer this question. A chill runs down your spine when you hear the answer. This plan of salvation arose from "the foolishness of God" [1CO 1:25] The Bible is the only religious book to contain such an expression, which must surely be considered a blasphemy by all the religions of the world,

including Christianity – "the foolishness of God!"

Love must submit to being condemned by reason. I told my missionary friend: "Just follow the promptings of love. Don't try to justify your actions by arguments."

We in prison use the same unreasonableness. When we hear the cries of someone being beaten, all the others begin to bang on their doors, crying: "Help! Help! Stop beating!" There is nobody to hear us, except those who are beating and who now, instead of beating only one, beat us all up, one after the other. You hear the doors being unlocked. Now it is the fourth prisoner to my right. Follows the third. I have only two left. Then I hear the cries of my nearest neighbour. Only two or three minutes left – how long these minutes are – and then I will be beaten, too. What is the sense of a collective protest here? What is the sense of expressing your solidarity with those who are beaten? It is non-sense, which means that it is pure love. Love does not think about what it will achieve, what it will gain. Love does not think at all. Love does not care about reason. Why should it?

If we are to love our enemies, why should we not love reason, that bitter critic, too? We can succeed in doing this. But we shall never persuade reason to love love. Reason considered Jesus and Paul to be madmen. My reason condemns me as mad, too.

This time I attained a paroxysm of unreasonableness. When

the guards entered to give me my share of the beating I jumped at one of them and kicked him. I am so thin. They are so many. It was foolish. Reason tells me: "Christ taught you to turn the other cheek." I answer: "Shut up! I have to turn the other cheek when I am slapped, not when my brother is tortured and my whole nation is oppressed."

Now I am punished to stay, I don't know for how long, in a cell I have known about for some time. It is full of dozens of rats which, being hungry, jump around, not allowing me to sleep.

I have just passed the first hours here. I am not tired. I watch the rats and am reminded of Heisenberg's law of the undeterminacy of elementary particles. (How foolish to think about physics in such circumstances.) When you boil water, you know that the mass of molecules as a whole enters into

quicker movement. But what each single molecule will do is unpredictable. Some continue to move at the old speed, and some even slow down their movements. I observe the same thing happening with the rats. I had thought about them as a species. But rats are also individuals, and each one has a character of its own. Some are running around looking for food which does not exist. Some are trying to gnaw the rags I have on my feet. I don't even drive them away. Some are gnawing their own tails. Some seem like philosophers, resigned. They sit quietly and wait for their death. They have given up the search.

Dear rats! It is written: "The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God." [PSA 104:21] And God gives them their meat. Sometimes he gives them as meat the bodies of his saints. And why not? If a saint eats the meat of a guiltless lamb in a religious ceremony, why should not his own turn come, and his own guiltless life be eaten up by a lion? Shouldn't you, rats, also seek your meat from God? I used to recite in church every Sunday that God is the maker of all things, visible and invisible. So he is your maker too, although I don't see the slightest reason why rats should exist. But neither do the Communists see any reason why Wurmbrand should exist. God's thoughts are not my thoughts.

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It is said that St. Francis of Assisi made the birds praise God at his command. St. Anthony of Padua is supposed to have called the fish near to the shore to listen to his sermons. What about rats?

Ha, ha, ha! Here you have it, Richard. Your jailers are right to put you in a strait-jacket occasionally. You are definitely mad. Everything you have just said is sheer foolishness. I agree, but I only ask myself if it is not "the foolishness of God".

I don't ask you, reason, if my love and care should extend to rats, too. I too would say that they should be exterminated. They eat the crops needed by us men. They would say: "The farmers eat the crops needed by us rats." But then they are carriers of disease. I wonder how they would defend themselves for that.

My mind is getting more and more confused. Probably I shall yell soon.

My mind jumps about from molecules to rats. Now it has forgotten the rats and thinks about Western Christians. I remember the tragic word in Philippians: "No church communicated with me." [PHP 4:15] Why are we abandoned by the Western Christians?

Their reason, probably, tells them that they could do nothing practical for us. But why do they follow reason, which Luther called "the beast" and not love? Why don't they come to free us, with the risk that they will be defeated and suffer the same fate as us? Their strategists may tell them that the balance of power is not in their favour. But since when has love consulted strategists? Why does not a group of a thousand Western Christians come as tourists, attack our prison, rush into the corridors and tell us: "We have not forgotten you. We love you"? It may be a foolish enterprise. But from our side it was also a foolish thing to bang on a cell door when our brother was beaten.

And then, the Western Christians all have their guardian angels. Each has six wings, which means that they are prepared to fetch messages. Why don't they send their guardian angels to caress our weary heads and to tell us about love? I feel the nearness of such angels, but when I ask them where they come

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from they are nearly always from another prison cell or from a brother in Rumania itself. Can angels from the West be stopped at the Iron Curtain? How big are their wings? Are they the wings of a chicken, which cannot fly, or the wings of an eagle ?

Where is the unreasonableness of love? If these Christians are partakers of the divine nature, why are they not also partakers of the foolishness of God?

Foolish questions, dear brothers and sisters. If I spoke to you tonight it was to teach you one thing: dare to walk in the foolish, completely unreasonable, paths of love! St. Augustine said: "Love God, and do what you will." Love, and your foolish actions will be wiser than the wisdom of men. Amen.

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The Lesson of the Cell with the Rats

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Communication between us was interrupted for a while.

God, in ancient times, sent an angel who shut the lions' mouths so that they did not hurt Daniel. I am sure he did the same for me. The angel was sent. But angels are unpredictable beings. If on their way they see a flower whose petals are weighed down by heavy rain, they will stop to put the flower straight again. They will pause to dry someone's tears, or to help an overburdened donkey to carry its load. If they meet a child, they stop to caress him. My angel did not arrive in time. The mouths of the rats were not shut. Because of them, I could not concentrate.

Happily, I did not stay with them long, only for forty-eight hours. Then I was taken back downstairs to my own cell. Going down to it was like approaching heaven.

It was no mystery to me that heaven was below rather than above.

I once had a vision of being led to heaven. I had thought until then that heaven was above. But a beautiful female angel who lovingly showed me the way explained to me that, because heaven was too high for many to reach, because so many could not bear the cold of the heavenly peaks, heaven descended in the person of Jesus Christ until it was lower than every lowness. However low a man may have fallen, heaven is even lower. A man can be in heaven not only in moments of sublime rapture but also when he commits a gross sin. The publican who said in the temple: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," went down to his house justified. [LUK 18:14] Nowhere are we told that he ceased to be a publican. He never voiced such a desire. But, because he

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prayed rightly, heaven descended below him, to the level of publicans who were worse extortioners than he. He could be in heaven, while still remaining, for a time at least, a publican.

So I found it quite natural that the cell with the rats should be above, and that my own cell, this beautiful place of serenity, should be below.

My quiet cell to which I descend is a higher heaven. But even the cell with the rats is not outside heaven. "In God we live and move." [ACT 17:28] If in God we move, Christians who are moved into torture cells and out of them again never leave God and his heaven.

How can even a cell with rats be heaven? It is about this that I want to speak to you today.

Jesus said on the cross: "My God, my God, why didst thou I forsake me?" [MRK 15:34 RV margin] Notice carefully the tense of the verb. He did not say: "Why dost thou forsake me?" He used the past tense. He was speaking of an episode already in the past, not of what was happening at that moment. But was it not at that moment that God had forsaken him, because he had become the personification of sin? Was not the cross, Golgotha. the place of forsakenness?

Yes, but I experienced the days with the rats not as the present, but as a past to which I looked back. Not only did I believe that we, Christians, are seated in heavenly places. My faith – or, if you prefer it, my imagination, or my madness – showed me many heavenly places of indescribable beauty. I chose a site, and deliberately sat down. It was a "green bed", [SOS 1:16] and beside me was "my beloved, fair and pleasant". This heavenly place, filled with delights, was my present state in the cell of the rats, and will remain my state in all eternity. Then what about the rats? They could only be my past. I looked on their gnawing as on a past suffering which worried me, my real being, my spirit, as little as the spanking which I had received from my mother thirty-five years earlier. It was over and done with.

That is why Jesus, while on the cross he was passing through the worst of sufferings – being forsaken by his God – used the

past tense. He said that he had been forsaken, not that he was forsaken at that moment.

Every man can construct a future for himself, even if it is only "a castle in Spain". But an imaginary castle in Spain is a very real castle. You can sometimes be much happier in it than

the owners of real castles are.

In the same way I can construct for myself an imaginary past (except that I don't consider it as imaginary, but as a spiritual reality), and I can situate the present suffering, the cross or the cell with the rats, in this past. Huss, Cranmer and other saints in heaven no longer feel the pain of being burned at the stake, because this belongs to the past. Jesus no longer feels the pain of being scourged and nailed to the cross. Golgotha is a past episode of his eternal life. And he lived it as a past even when he was on Golgotha.

I would build too much on the fact that the verb ~sabachthani~ is in the past tense, if it were not for my own experience and that of many Christian sufferers. There is a "religious anaesthesia". It was this that enabled Paul and Silas to sing after a heavy beating and with their feet in the stocks.

And then there followed another stage. The rats may have remained so far as my body was concerned, and perhaps the lower faculties of simple aperception of the soul. My knowledge of them disappeared.

At the marriage feast in Cana, Jesus changed water into wine. What sort of wine? It is recorded that he changed it into "good wine". The ruler of the feast said: "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." [JHN 2:10] Only old wine is good wine. So he did not change the water into new wine. He made it to have been wine already for many years. You don't become a saint when you are converted. Jesus changes water into old wine. He makes the harlot Magdalene to have always been a saint. He does not make the torture cease at a certain moment. He makes the torture never to have begun. He does not seat you in holy places the moment you realize it practically. He makes it that you have always been seated there.

Men can change for good or evil the present or the future of

their fellow-men. Jesus is the only one who can change the past. So the cell with the rats no longer existed, even in the past. The spirit had detached itself from outward reality and enjoyed the Bridegroom.

When they unlocked the door to take me out, I awoke. I saw the rats. I was afraid, and thought it would be heaven to

be taken out of there. But it was only for a few minutes that I was out of heaven, while the guards unlocked the door, entered and made me come back to what they call reality and what I consider to be just a nightmare.

Live actual sorrows as though they were past. Believe that Jesus has changed your whole past, wiping out of it everything that is ugly and sad. This is the key to happiness, and I found it in the blessed cell with the rats.

It is this discovery that I wished to share with you. Amen.

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Talk with My Son Mihai

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MIHAI

When the holy virgin entered into Elisabeth's house, her babe leaped for joy. Was this something exceptional? Do babies understand? In Yugoslavia a few years ago a miracle child was born, who spoke and answered questions at six weeks. The Bible says: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." [MTT 21:16]

In any case, your mother and I talked to you about God from the time you were a baby. We believed that you would understand.

Now you are eleven. Now you certainly understand. You know how much I love you. For hours on end I caress my pillow and talk to it, imagining that it is you. Jesus said that a piece of baker's bread was his body, and that wine bought from a pub was his blood. Why can't my pillow be you? Every material object can support a spiritual reality. Jesus is a door and light and a lion and a lamb. Spiritual realities can express themselves through all kinds of things, even contradictory ones.

As I embrace the pillow it becomes warm, and then I have the same feeling as I had when I pressed your body to mine when you were small. I sing and talk to you. The pillow becomes the conductor through which love streams from me to you. No, it is not the conductor. Here again reason is trying to set right my feelings. It is you, you yourself.

Mihai, the end has arrived. I cannot bear it any more. I have saved thirty pills. The torture has become too painful. I am afraid that I will crack. I will take the pills and go to the one whom you once, as a child of five, saw walking through the

room. I will go to that one who said: "I am the resurrection and the life." [JHN 11:25]

He never forbade suicide. He could not. He himself committed a sophisticated form of suicide. He said it himself: "No man taketh my life from me ... I lay down my life for the sheep." He provoked his own death. He asked wolves to become lambs, which is not in their power. The only possible result, which he foresaw, was that the wolves had to devour him. His intention was that, devoured by them, he might produce from within the change which nobody can make of his own free will.

He will understand my suicide. And you will understand it one day, too, even if not for many years. You will have to remain fatherless, as I was left without a father at the age of nine.

I read somewhere that ninety per cent of famous men were orphan children. You complained to me once: "Father, you know the answers to all my questions. You stop me thinking for myself because you are always right." I will no longer stand in the way of your development. My suicide can work for your good.

My last word to you, Mihai, is: "Love the Lord Jesus." You cannot do without him.

We have a telegraph system that functions perfectly from cell to cell. So we learn that the Communists are putting more and more of their own people in prison. These are men who have sinned against Communist ethics, against the rules of the Party. The Communists also have their moral code. It demands full obedience to the Party line. Everyone acknowledges a moral code. Thieves share fairly what they have stolen together. Torturers hold it their duty to be ruthless against the class enemy. And everyone disobeys his moral law. It is a fact that Goering, the killer of millions of Jews, saved the life of one Jewish family. He was not loyal to his anti-semitism. Our guards sometimes do us some little favour, or disobey the

Party line in some other manner, just as Christians accept the Christian standard, but sin in one matter or another. Nobody

can avoid sin. Even if a man's religion were the devil's own, with the firm decision to commit every mortal sin daily, he would sometimes have a moment of weakness and allow one possible victim to escape. So he would sin against his religion.

I don't know what your future religious development will be. Perhaps Mother is in prison, too. Perhaps the Communists will poison you with atheism. Perhaps, being brought up on the streets, you will become a delinquent. Maybe you will become a saint. But I have many saints around me. They are also sinners, and their only righteousness is that they have a part in the forgiveness of sins.

Mihai, you will need the only one who can forgive sins. Even non-Christians know the forgiveness of sins. They grant it to themselves after every deed which their own conscience considers ugly. But when I, a crook, grant myself, the crook, forgiveness for my crookedness, then I, the crook, am clever enough not to believe the absolution given to me, the crook, by me, the crook.

Only the Righteous One can absolve me from sin. You will sin, Mihai, whatever you become, whatever you believe. You will need a saviour, even if you become an atheist, because you will sometimes sin against your atheism. Nobody is a consistent atheist twenty-four hours a day. One atheist lecturer confessed to me how frightened he was when he had to speak against God in a former church building now turned into a club. Sadly, there is no atheist God. This man would have needed forgiveness for the sin of having wavered in his godless belief.

Mihai, you will need a saviour. Life will teach you that, in a greater or less measure, all men are liars. This will make you disbelieve any salvation brought by men. You need God as saviour. It is written that God has purchased the church with his own blood. [ACT 20:28] God became man, had blood, and shed it for our sins. Only this can save you.

He is a God, and therefore beyond our understanding. When you were small you could not understand why I would not let you throw a watch on the floor. It would have made such a

nice noise. I showed you a poem by our greatest poet, Eminescu, and asked you what it was. You answered: "Black letters on white paper." That was all it was for you at that time. You did not know how to read.

So you cannot read the writing of God's providence. You will have to suffer, and you will not understand why. You may be even now picking food from a garbage heap, while in some rich countries the garbage vans carry away wasted food. You may be driven to despair. Perhaps you will one day sit in prison, too.

Because he is a God, his ways must be mysterious, as the doings of the scientist are mysterious to the illiterate. I have no idea why I have had to suffer so much.

But what I do know is that God is determined to make you and me into masterpieces. It took Goethe forty years to perfect ~Faust~. Leonardo da Vinci worked for decades on the "Gioconda". I told you the story of the first, and I showed you the picture. Eminescu rewrote some thirty times his great poem "The Morning Star". God's hammer and chisel will hurt you again and again. The sculptor does not tell the marble what he intends to make out of it. When you have become a masterpiece of grace, admired by angels, you will understand the suffering.

Not understanding, only believing, cling to Jesus, the divine Saviour. The scars on his hands are the proof of his love towards you. The hand which strikes you bears the marks of wounds endured for you. Believe that your suffering is necessary for your own good and for the good of the whole of which you are only a small part.

And, bought by a sacrifice, lead a life of sacrifice. The sacrifice of Christ is not enough. St. Paul said: "I fill up on my part the penury of the afflictions of Christ." [COL 1:24] What an amazing word - the penury of his afflictions. To be rejected by your own people, betrayed by your own disciple, deserted by nearly everyone, to be scourged, crowned with a crown of thorns, crucified and reviled - this is "a penury of afflictions"! What then would a richness of afflictions be? But St. Paul uses the

same Greek word as is used in the Gospels about the widow who

gave out of her penury. Many thousands of others have to sacrifice their liberty and lives to make the cross of the Lord known. Otherwise it is condemned to remain a poor thing unable to save mankind.

Choose, Mihai, the way of sacrifice. I cannot. I am deserting to another world. Do better than me, Mihai. Bear what I could not bear. Love Jesus and endure to the end.

Mihai, make Mother happy. Tell her that I loved her and that I am sorry I have sometimes been unkind to her.

Note: In his book ~In God's Underground~ the author narrates how at the last minute the guards unknowingly took from his cell the mattress in which he had hidden the death-bringing pills.

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Sermon to the Churches in the West

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MY DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN THE WEST

The one who is speaking to you is a Christian isolated in a Communist prison cell.

For two years I have been speaking by spiritual telepathy to my former church congregation, and I believe it works.

Now I have decided to go one step further, and to speak to you who are in distant lands.

In order to succeed, I have kept silent for a long time. I have ceased to deliver sermons to my own people. I have ceased for a longer time even to speak to God. I did not allow any inner voice to disturb the quiet. I kept silence inwardly and outwardly. I remembered that, before the fall of Jericho, Joshua ordered the people: "Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout." [JOS 6:10] When the people shouted after such a prolonged silence, the wall fell down flat. [JOS 6:20] How far you can reach in the spirit depends on how long you have been silent.

The voice of Jesus reached the whole world and is still heard after two thousand years, because he imposed silence on himself until the age of thirty. Silence, although he had so much to sayl

I have been silent for your sake. Now listenl

The man who has a narrow horizon cannot think rightly. A man who knows only what is happening in his own room may be killed the next moment by someone who has already penetrated into the next room with the intention of murdering him. If your horizon is your parish, your denomination or your

country, you are doomed. What if another country has already prepared the weapons to kill you? What if some other religion has valuable insights unknown to you, which may prove that it can assure salvation?

Only the strategist who knows what is happening on the whole front can think correctly. "The world is my parish," said Wesley. The world (not in the sense of the earth, but of the cosmos), with all its inhabitants and its creator, is the horizon of the Christian. He does not stop at less than that.

Don't tell me that such a wide horizon is only for the highest church leaders, and not for rank-and-file Christians. There is no such thing as a rank-and-file Christian, because every Christian is of the highest rank. Every Christian is a partaker of the divine nature. God doesn't put anyone away in a file in the archives. There are no rank-and-file Christians. Christians think in terms of the whole cosmos and its creator, as they think in terms of infinity and eternity.

I, in my solitary cell, in the grip of the tuberculosis which has invaded my whole body, sit with the angels as in a theater and watch everything that is happening, that has happened, and is yet to happen. I continue to be attached to my body only by a very weak fluidic tie. My spirit has escaped from the bedlam in which mankind with its accursed mentality is doomed to live.

Now I see reality as it is: a burden which I have to bear.

If God is in me, the whole responsibility of the cosmos

becomes mine. "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." [JHN 14:23] Don't tell me, Satan, that I have not kept his words. You don't know our human vocabulary. Jesus did not lay down as a condition for his abiding with us that we fulfil his word, but just that we keep it. I have not fulfilled it, but I have kept it unaltered. I have not accommodated Bible verses to my sins, but when I have committed sins I have left the word unaltered. Like David, I danced before the ark containing the tables of the commandments which I have

broken in my personal life. But David did not abuse his royal powers to change the commandments.

So God abides in me. If he abides in me, he brings with him all his responsibilities. They become mine. That is why Jesus says that I have the power to remit sins or to retain them, [JHN 20:23] to bind and to loose. [MTT 16:19] If God lives in me and in you, it depends on us whether beauty will conquer, or whether mankind will deteriorate more and more.

If God the Father and Jesus Christ abide in a Christian, it becomes his task to change the perverted, the immoral, the obsessed, the ambitious, the robbers; to transform a neurotic world into a world full of serenity.

If the Father abides in me, every time anyone in the world says an "Our Father", he addresses the Godhead within me, too. I feel the prayers of all mankind addressed to me, as if my address – Cell number eleven in the prison of the Ministry of Interior Affairs in Bucharest – is in fact God's address.

I used to wonder why the Church repeats the Lord's prayer so often. Now I understand. Every time I say it, I am reminded that mankind expects me and my brethren, the bearers of Godhead, to make his kingdom come – his kingdom of righteousness and joy. We have to see that his will is done on earth. We have to provide the hungry with the bread of life. We have to forgive.

Now I see the explanation of the words "Lead us not into temptation". God tempts nobody. But Godhead is in me. And I might tempt my fellow-man to sin. In saying these words, I am reminded of the many who wish to keep their innocence and pray to God that they may not be tempted. The prayer is addressed to me, too, because God is in me. I must not

tempt.

It is I, and you, who must deliver the world from evil.

It was prophesied that God would gather the scattered Jews back into their former land. God did not do it from heaven. There was a man: Theodor Herzl. He created the Zionist movement, and this gave birth to the Jewish state, where Jews are now gathered from all countries. God brought it about

through the Zionist leaders, and through the pioneers who brought their young lives as a sacrifice.

Men pray, "Deliver us from evil." Don't wait for a God in heaven to do this! Godhead is in you, as it is in me. The prayer is addressed to you, too. You must deliver mankind from the evil one. God's responsibilities are yours.

You, brothers and sisters in the West, are free. Don't you know about the evils of Communism? Some of you may be indifferent. But there is something worse than indifference. It is indifference to indifference. Some of you may not even care that the Church has become indifferent to the cries of millions of men martyred by the Communists.

When I say the prayer "Deliver us from evil", I don't address it to a God somewhere far away in heaven. I address it to you, those in whom God abides. All our prayers in these underground dungeons are an appeal to you, too. The Kabbala says: "God with Israel is God. God without Israel is not God." Even the greatest violinist can produce perfect music only if he has a good violin. What could he do without a good violin? What can God, to whom I pray, do if all his workers are on strike and his soldiers refuse to fight?

I see you congregated in your churches and praising God in beautiful songs. But why don't you leave God alone? According to the Talmud, God says: "O, that men would forget me and begin to love each other."

Don't you heed the word of Scripture? "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" saith the Lord: "I am full of burnt offerings... Bring no more vain oblations ... Learn to do well ... relieve the oppressed." [ISA 1:11-17] To relieve Christians oppressed by the Communists is a much more pleasing divine service than your holy masses and liturgies.

Abou Ben Adhem awoke one night from a dream – so runs the legend – and saw an angel writing in a golden book. He asked: "What writest thou?" The angel replied: "The names of those who love the Lord." He asked if his name was there, and the angel told him, "No." And so he begged:

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"I pray thee, then,

Write me as one who loves his fellow men."

The angel wrote, and vanish'd. The next night

It came again with a great wakening light,

And show'd the names whom love of God had blest,

And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

[Leigh Hunt, ~Abou Ben Adhem~]

Jesus said that the second commandment, to love your neighbour, is like the first, to love God. If you love us, the oppressed Christians in the Red camp, you love God, because God is within us, in cell eleven, and twelve, and thirteen, and in the cell with the rats and in the cell reserved for tortures.

I cannot tell you what to do for us. The pastors among us have been smitten, and the sheep are scattered. Care for these sheep, gather them in. Our Bibles have been confiscated. Our families eat garbage. I don't know how you can reach them. But you are the abode of the almighty and omniscient God. He must know. I speak to God. That means I speak to you. I say an "Our Father". Listen, it is addressed to you: "Our Father, which art in heaven." What heaven is more beautiful for him than your believing soul? He is in you. "Deliver us from evil." Communism is evil.

Brothers and sisters from the West, deliver us. Amen.

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I Made Him Smile

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JESUS

I wonder if Greek or Indian mythology is simply a collection of fantasies, or if it contains a dim apprehension of spiritual reality.

Has Agni, worshipped in India as the god of fire, any real existence? They call him god. I would rather call him angel. But I like him. And is it possible that you can exclude from heaven one being who pleases me, your beloved?

Queen Isabella of Spain said to Columbus: "I don't know if the land you go to seek exists. But if it does not exist, I am sure God will create it as a reward for your faith."

So, if Agni is only a mythological figure, you can make him exist, just in order to give me pleasure.

I like him because of the following story. It is said that, in the course of a severe persecution of his worshippers, one of them was burned at the stake. His soul came to heaven, but Agni refused to admit him. The believer protested: "But don't you know that I gave my life under torture for you?" "I know," replied Agni, "but while you were burning, you did not rejoice."

Don't you like this story? It reminds me of how you went to Gethsemane singing psalms.

I can imagine how sad you must be when a Christian who has died in prison comes to tell you how he has borne the cross for you, and has two witnesses to this fact: Brother Murmuring and Sister Disputing. You sang when you went to face your arrest.

Neither can I imagine your mother as ~mater dolorosa~, the grieved mother weeping at the foot of the cross. She taught you from childhood that you were the Suffering Servant, that you

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would die by crucifixion, but would rise with the knowledge

of having redeemed mankind. I see her going before you on the way to Calvary, singing to you psalms of encouragement, while the uninitiated daughters of Jerusalem wept.

She was a Jewess. On the very evening of your crucifixion the Passover ritual must have been performed in the house of St. John, during which the ritual prescribed singing. She must have sung on that day and, as she is holy, I believe that she did it whole-heartedly.

Before my arrest I saw certain mothers of young Christians who were in prison. Their faces shone for joy. They considered it a privilege to have martyrs for sons. The holy virgin must have been even more exalted.

So let us forget for a while, Jesus, that you and I are in prison. I am very sorry we are detained in a cell. Because it is your character to stay with your little brothers, if one of them is in a damp and dreary prison cell, you have to stay in prison, too. I may get a heavy sentence. You may have years of prison before you. You know it is not my fault. If you stand and knock at the door of a free man, it depends on him whether he opens the door or not. You knew that you would knock on my cell door in vain. The guards keep the key. So you came in through the locked door. Then you invited me to sup with you, which was good. But afterwards you wished to sup with me. I had not much to offer you. We have one slice of bread a week, and every day a bowl of dirty soup.

But let us forget all that, and do what prisoners all over the world do when they have company in their cell. They try to have a bit of fun.

I will begin by telling you a joke. You must have heard many jokes at the marriage feasts and in the houses of publicans, and you must have enjoyed at least some of them.

An elderly lady once accidentally sat on her false teeth and broke them. Her husband was in dismay. "What a catastrophe! What will you do now?" She answered: "Don't worry. Let us look on the bright side. It is better to sit on your false teeth than on your natural ones."

What optimism!

This reminds me to tell you the difference between an optimist and a pessimist. The optimist says: "Under this Communist regime we shall all become beggars." The pessimist replies: "But who shall we beg from?"

Come, Jesus, can't I make you laugh a little? True, the gospels speak of your weeping, and never about your laughter. But how is it, then, that children flocked round you? Children are not attracted to sad men.

I will tell you another story. This is sure to make you laugh.

A sultan once drove in a luxurious carriage over a bridge. The horses were frightened, overthrew the carriage, and the sultan fell into the river. On the bridge sat a beggar named Osman. He could not imagine the world without the sultan. So he jumped into the water and saved the sultan's life. Another carriage was brought, and the sultan invited the beggar to sit at his side, as an honour for saving his life.

While they were driving towards the palace, the sultan said: "Osman, I owe you my life. So I have decided to give you a sack full of gold coins. You will be happy and always remember me before Allah in your prayers. Are you satisfied with this reward?" The beggar was delighted, but the sultan regretted having promised so much. So he said: "It is not good for you to have so much money. You might be killed by robbers. I had better give you a hundred sheep. You will eat their meat and drink their milk and remember me before God. Are you satisfied with this?" The beggar, having no choice, agreed. But the sultan again regretted his generosity, and said: "There may be an epidemic, and your sheep will die. I had better give you a small hut. There you will live in peace and pray for me. Are you satisfied with this?" The beggar was happy to have at least a hut. But even this seemed too much for the sultan. By this time the carriage had entered the palace yard. The servants ran to meet it. The sultan said: "Give this man a good beating. Then he will surely remember me for his whole life."

You are weeping, Jesus. Isn't the story amusing?

I am sorry I have made you sad. Instead of laughing, you are crying. I should have thought of that. I have just remembered Dostoievsky's ~Idiot~, the best portrait of a Christian

character. He never laughed.

You are weeping bccause you see that my teeth have decayed through lack of sun and calcium. You thought of this, when I told you the joke about the false teeth. You are weeping because men rule over great countries, transforming other men into beggars, wiping out the rich instead of wiping out poverty. You did not enjoy the joke about optimism and pessimism. You weep because you yourself have been the victim of ingratitude. You were whipped like poor Osman because you saved lives. It was very tactless of me to tell you such a story.

How will you appear before the god Agni, Jesus? He will reproach you, too, for not being joyful. Just take it as another joke. I know the truth. Agni will appear before you, not the other way round. But the Indian religion is a very old one, older than the one you established. Old religions are very daring, and Agni might forget his position of utter inferiority before you. He might question you.

But until then, may I tell you something very frankly? You insist on sharing my cell. But it is not funny to be with you in here. Under the Nazis, I had many cell companions. Some of them made me forget all my sufferings. They knew how to make me laugh.

I have tried to make you laugh, but it is not possible. I wonder how it was in the furnace, in Daniel's day, when you were there with the three young men. You saved their bodies from being burned, just as my body miraculously survives the heavy attack of tuberculosis. Did you comfort their souls, or did you sadden them with your infinite sorrow? I think the latter must be the truth. Evidence of this is that, once released from the furnace, they remained for ever silent. Not one word more was heard from them, not even a word of heroism.

I sometimes have the feeling that you come to us who suffer, not in order to comfort us, but to draw comfort from us. You called the Holy Spirit "the Comforter". Why, then, did the

Comforter have to descend on you at your baptism? Were you - are you - in great need of comfort?

Most of the great mystics have experienced the dark night of the soul, when they felt terribly alone, without you. St. Gertrude prayed: "You are I and I am you." If this is true of

mystics, then the dark night through which they passed was only a mirror of the dark night in your own soul. You, who have been tempted like us in all things, must have known spiritual dryness, too. The words of the Song of Solomon must have had meaning for you too: "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.'' [SOS 3:1-2] You know what it means to be without any comfort.

How stupid of me to try to tell you jokes. Your depression is too deep. You cannot laugh.

When you were about four or five you were told about the children who died in Bethlehem, and about Rachel weeping for them. It was the man who received you into the stable who was to blame. If he had not given you shelter their innocent blood would not have been shed. As a grown man you brought the wrath of God upon Israel by demanding love from those who have no love, by demanding that wolves should be lambs, and by provoking your own crucifixion, which was inevitable after such demands.

And so there followed the punishment of God.

Since then, all who receive and love you have to bear a heavy cross. They have to crucify their lusts - a painful task. The pain may be as great as that which you endured on Golgotha. Some have to die in prison. Some are tortured. Some are killed.

And you suffer the sufferings of them all. You still endure far greater pain than we, because we feel only our own sufferings. You feel the sufferings of all. You need comfort more than we do.

Jokes were the wrong way to comfort you. I apologise. I am

only human. I meant well. I wanted to make you happy. I remember how St. Onofrei as a child offered to your image half of his apple, and you stretched out a hand from the image to take it. I remember the Orthodox tradition about the circus boy who did his juggling act in front of your icon, and how, when the monks tried to stop him, you smiled in the icon, showing your approval. But that was in the early centuries

when Christians were children and could believe such things. You must have been happier. Now we have systematic theology in which St. Onofrei has no place.

Now you need a different kind of comfort.

The only comfort I can give you is to tell you that I, and thousands of others who suffer, love you. Even if the beast rules the world, when our candles burn out our last words will be, "Beloved Jesus."

Don't be depressed by our suffering. Believe me, we can bear it. We can bear it more easily if we know that you are happy in your heaven and enjoying the fellowship of the angels and the glorified saints. We love you, Jesus. Be happy.

Look, I will do something like the boy in the circus. Our prison is an old one. The bourgeois regime built it for the Communists. Now the Communists are using it for their own enemies. Chalk is crumbling from the walls. I will take a piece of chalk and draw your picture on the door. Here are the curls, the beard, the eyes, the nose. And now it depends on me. If I give an upward curve to your lips, you will have a smiling face. You will not be able to help it. So I will do it. And now you are smiling again, as you did for St. Onofrei, or when you had a St. Rose of Lima, to whom you could say, "Rose of my heart."

I have made you smile. Hallelujah!

Now, just be happy for a while. And please don't reproach me for breaking the second commandment by making an image. To make you, the Man of Sorrows, smile, is more important than the entire decalogue.

Who can live without an image? The mystics claim unmediated communion with God, but when you compare them with

each other you can see that even they had fellowship with God, not as he is, but with an image of him formed by their individual background. Even yogis, when they arrive at perfect imagelessness, have an image of imagelessness given to them by Hindu tradition. In other circumstances these same men would have had a different mystical experience. We all draw pictures of you in our minds. I have drawn one on the door to make you smile.

And you, reason, be silent. Don't tell me that it was only the picture of Jesus which smiled, and not Jesus himself. He is himself an image - "the express image of God's person". [HEB 1:3] If you challenge my right to attribute to Jesus the smile in my picture, then you have to challenge the fact that whoever sees him, the image of the Father, sees the Father himself.

This is a day of great triumph for me. I have made you, Jesus, smile. I pray that I may do it always. Amen.

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DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

When they take us out of our cells to lead us away for interrogation, they always blindfold us. We must not get to know the layout of the prison. It might help us to escape. I don't mind. They blindfolded him, too. [LUK 22:64] And whenever they do it to us, they do it to him again.

I remember how St. Paulinus wrote that Christ did not die only once but was the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world. He was murdered in Abel, offered up in Isaac, persecuted in Jacob, betrayed in Joseph, blinded in Samson, sawn asunder in Isaiah. I have often pondered the thought with which he goes on, that Christ's passion continued after his resurrection. It was he who was stoned in St. Stephen, flayed in the person of St. Bartholomew. He was roasted upon St. Lawrence's gridiron, burned in St. Polycarp, frozen in the lake where stood the forty martyrs of Cappadocia.

St. Hilarv goes even further, saying that the sacrament of Christ's death is to be accomplished only by suffering all the sorrows of humanity.

It is he who is blindfolded by my jailers.

Everything transitory is only a parable, says Goethe. So this blindfolding must have a spiritual meaning too. Why do the

Communists blindfold not only their fellow-men but also the divine Christ? Why did his judges blindfold him two thousand years ago?

If I had to defend them before God, I would tell him: "Understand them, and forgive them. They are simply retaliating. You blindfolded them first. Is it not written that you have 'blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that they

should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, and be converted'? [JHN 12:40] You were the first to blindfold men. You cannot condemn them for doing the same to you. I have had to pass through unspeakably bitter experiences. I had to be spat on and mocked and beaten before I understood why you did it. They, lacking the experience, could not know why."

It is a terrible thing to have one's spiritual eyes opened. It is a blessing from God to have them blinded and not be converted by the devious and difficult path of understanding. St. John, the seer, when he saw Jesus in his divine glory, fell at his feet as if dead. [REV 1:17] Which of us could bear to see all the seven heads and ten horns of the red dragon of Communism? [REV 12:3] Who could understand why this beast has seven crowns on his head, when Jesus had only a crown of thorns? What a good thing God has blinded our eyes and hardened our understanding, so that we should not be converted by seeing or understanding but simply by loving and trusting. It is only right that there should be nobody more blind than he that is perfect, the Lord's servant. [ISA 42:19]

The enemies of Jesus two thousand years ago did not understand, and neither do the Communists today, that nobody can see God and live; that those whom God loves most and wishes to be his servants must be blind to the final realities. The Communists retaliate by hating God. That is why they blindfold us and beat us while we are blindfolded, an excessive torture because you don't know from which side the blow will come, and you cannot defend yourself at least by bending your head the other way.

I can understand our torturers, because I also had a grudge against God for not answering my questions and not showing me if there was any hope. But today I have decided to accept blindness.

I was washed long ago in the blood of Christ. But today I have told him I will give him my feet to be washed, too; my feet which, walking through the valley of deep sorrow, have become soiled with the dust of murmuring against God. Then I shall be clean every whit. [JHN 13:10]

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I read, when I was free, that the Red Indians, wondering at the paleness of the white men's skins, removed their shoes to see if their feet were white, too. My feet must be white. When my torturers beat me on the soles of my feet they have the right to see clean feet, whiter than snow. Jesus said: "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." My feet may be swollen because of prolonged hunger and the other experiences through which I have passed, but those who beat me have the right to see the beautiful feet of a bride of Christ who brings, even to them, good tidings. [ISA 52:7] I must have my feet washed by Jesus. He is far away. But I preach in his name, by Morse code. I have given sacraments in his name. Why should I not wash my feet in his name, believing that he himself is doing it?

Down with you, rags. I have no shoes. For two years I have walked in them, to and fro across my cell, three steps one way, three steps the other, chanting prayers in the Jewish manner. For two years I have danced in them. They have done their job. A shoemaker gave them to me as a present before I went to prison and told me: "Use them in the service of the Lord." He did not know, neither did I, that they would be used to dance in the Lord's honour.

On one foot I have only rags. On the other I have a fine woman's stocking. I found it in the toilet. How and why a female prisoner left it behind there, I don't know. I needed it badly. I took it. We don't think in terms of property here.

I have undressed my feet. The cement is cold. The water which I pour over them is icy. What was the water like which Jesus used to wash the disciples' feet? Perhaps it was very cold, too. On that same night, the guards had to kindle a fire in the temple yard to warm themselves. Perhaps St. Peter shrank back from the coldness of the water when he said: "Thou shalt not wash my feet." What Jesus did on that evening happened on the icy peaks of the highest spirituality, where God takes the humblest form of a servant. It is not easy to have your feet washed in the almost freezing water from those divine

springs.

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I wash my feet in the name of Jesus. It is he who washes my feet. Listen, God; listen, angels and demons; listen, brethren and Communist torturers. I have washed my feet. Now I am clean every whit. Listen, you victims of my past life.

I don't know what my future will be. Perhaps I shall break down under torture and become a traitor. Perhaps I shall lose my faith. Perhaps I shall earn the martyr's crown. Perhaps I shall be released only to commit great sins. Perhaps prison life will have destroyed my character. Perhaps I shall do great deeds for God. I tremble to think about Hans Nielson Hauge, the great Norwegian evangelist, who was imprisoned for his faith some two centuries ago. He, who had set Norway aflame with love for Christ, lost his simple faith in prison. Who knows what fate is reserved by Providence for me?

But I need not worry. Jesus has washed my feet. Jesus is in me. He is my real me. I am his real he. I speak and act in his name. It was not I myself but he who washed my feet, and I will believe that now I am and shall remain clean every whit.

Once, having passed through a terrible torture, I tapped through to a pastor near me: "What can I do? I have lost my faith." He tapped back: "But did you ever believe?" I replied: "Certainly I did." His answer was: "It is written, 'Blessed is she that believed.' [LUK 1:45] The verb is in the past tense. To have believed is enough. Rely on this."

I am clean every whit, and I shall remain so because I have once been so. Betrayals and gross sins may come. They will never change my status before God. I recall that Spurgeon once said that the past, present and future sins of believers are all forgiven. I cannot remember on which Bible text he based this teaching. But if it is false, that is his business with God. God should not have given him such a great name among his children if he taught falsely. I will rely on his word.

I am, and remain, clean every whit through the humility of Jesus Christ, who washed my feet.

My torturers, I offer you a precious gift. I offer to your rubber truncheons the soles of feet washed by Jesus himself,

feet which, like those of the angels, have to be covered [ISA 6:2] because they are surrounded by a divine halo. You will beat my feet, and the halo around them will speak to you of the holiness of the one who humbled himself for me. Amen.

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Epilogue

It was not my intention to give you another exposition of Christian truth. For this you have your Bible, your church and your religious teacher, who answers for your soul before God.

I know your problems. Religious teachers of Christianity differ widely in the most essential questions. There are so many divisions, and in each, especially in Protestantism, innumerable subdivisions. You may understand that I had thoughts apart under conditions apart. But you would like to know what my theology and moral rules are now, when my outward life has returned to normal.

I have no original ideas to offer. I am not an original religious thinker. I believe that theology is like wine: the older the better. If you were to ask what I think about one or other religious matter, my answer would in general be that of any average Evangelical pastor, with one of the slight variations which are the beauty and privilege of Protestantism, and the result of the liberty which it has brought. But I could never define, finally and absolutely, what my theology is, and I will tell you why.

I once tried to explain "systematic theology" to a Russian pastor of the Underground church, who have never seen a whole New Testament. Systematically, I began to explain to him the teaching about the Godhead, about its unity in three persons, the teaching about original sin, about the fall, about salvation, about the church, about the sacraments, about the Bible as infallible revelation. He listened attentively. When I had finishcd, he put to me a most surprising question: "Have those who thought out these theological systems and wrote them down in such perfect order ever carried a cross?" He went

on: "A man cannot think systematically even when he has a bad toothache. How can a man who is carrying a cross think systematically? But a Christian has to be more than the bearer of a heavy cross; he shares Christ's crucifixion. The pains of Christ are his, and the pains of all creation. There is no grief and no suffering in the whole world which should not grieve him also. If a man is crucified with Christ, how can he think systematically? Can there be that kind of thought on a cross? Jesus himself thought unsystematically on the cross. He began with forgiveness; he dreamed of a paradise in which even a robber had a place; then he despaired that perhaps there might be no place in paradise even for him, the Son of God. He felt himself forsaken. Then all at once he remembered his mother. But the thirst was so unbearable that he forgot about her and asked for water. Then he surrendered his spirit into his Father's hand. But there followed no serenity, only a loud cry. Thank you for what you have been trying to teach me. I have the impression that you were only repeating, without much conviction, what others have taught you. Systematic theology of any kind is impossible in Christianity."

This pastor, uncultured theologically, did not even know that he was thinking the same way as Kierkegaard, the most eminent Lutheran theologian who, from another standpoint, also denied that a Christian can ever speak academically about Christ. A Christian is a person who is madly in love with Christ. Juliet could not make a peroration about the anatomy of Romeo's body. She could only caress him and express to everybody her burning desire for him.

I think the same way as that Underground pastor. So I could only put in writing some of the thoughts I had when I was in solitary confinement. By now many of these thoughts have changed. That is the fate of thoughts. The thoughts of today will not last either. They may change again tomorrow, if the Communists kidnap me and put me in a solitary cell again. Thoughts about the Godhead, just like thoughts about any other subject, belong to the transient world. In our solitary cells, we lived in the sphere of eternity.

I felt it to be my duty to lead you by a roundabout way into this sphere and not to bother you with the thoughts which I

hold today. Thoughts are a reflection in our mind, true or distorted, of reality. We should try to apprehend the reality of God and not remain in the sphere of words and thoughts. Thoughts about God are not God. Only God is God. Never be satisfied with anythihg else than God himself. I am in fellowship with all men who seek God - to seek him means to have found him, says St. Augustine - and with all those who bear the marks of suffering. A Christian, even if he is a healthy young millionaire, is a man of sorrows. That is what makes him a Christian: that he appropriates to himself the sufferings of Christ and of all creation.

As regards moral problems, ask the pastor of your church. Morals are concerned with the relationship between man and man in the sight of God. I am still living basically in solitary confinement. There the relationship is only with God. Morals cease to exist. But looking out from there to the church and the world, where man enters into contact with man, I can tell you two things.

First, there is a tremendous value in the traditional Biblical standard of morality. If it did not have the whole weight of the Godhead and of thousands of years of man's experience behind it, how is it that every sin committed even thirty years ago gave such painful remorse in prison? By sinning today, you prepare for yourself hours of regret in the future.

Secondly, understand that nobody can live an endless crucifixion. Jesus was on the cross only a few hours. When a man experiences great suffering, or the pain of an unsatisfied imperious longing, condemn him if he yields after a few hours. But after years of struggling a man may fall under the burden of the cross. To understand, to love and to free him from this cross is also a part of morality. Love is the interpretation which God himself gives to all Bible verses and commandments. I know nothing better than St. Augustine's words: "Love God, and do what you will."

"Of making many books there is no end." [ECC 12:12] There are enough

books of Christian doctrine and morality. I did not feel called to add another one.

I wanted to describe to you the hell of Communist solitary confinement. I wanted to illustrate for you the words of the

Creed that "he descended into hell", to suffer himself its anguish, and to take upon himself its terrors as he has taken the sins of mankind, and to bring even there a ray of the light of God.

Every man must be believed in his own art. When it comes to the things of the spiritual life, you must believe those who know it thoroughly. St. Catherine of Genoa said about hell: "When we shall have departed from this life in a state of sin, God will withdraw from us his goodness and will leave us to ourselves, and yet not altogether, since he wills that in every place his goodness shall be found and not his justice alone. And if a creature could be found that did not, in some degree, participate in the divine goodness, that creature would be, one might say, as malignant as God is good", which would deny the sole absoluteness of God.

Communist solitary confinement with the remembrance of past sins is a corner of hell. There were times when I looked at the cup of water which I had in my cell to convince myself that I was not yet in hell. I knew that in hell there was no water.

But even in the moments of utter doubt and utter despair, we were not left to ourselves entirely. The one who promised "I am with you always" [MTT 28:20] (in Hebrew he could say only ~bekol iom~, which means literally translated "every day the whole day") has proved to be faithful. So we were able to overcome.

There are thousands of other Christians in solitary confinement today, in Red China, North Korea, Vietnam, Russia, Albania, Rumania, Czechoslovakia and so on. Will you stand by them? Will you send your winged guardian angel to tell them that you love them? Will you consider as your responsibility the work of the Underground church, from which they have been snatched away, that it may continue to grow in their absence?

To make this appeal to you was my purpose in publishing this book.

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The End of "WITH GOD IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT"