


TRUTH IS ETERNAL





I feel that,
individually
and as a group,
we should be
humble and
ready to learn
from all men
and all groups
past and present
who have sought
for the Truth, and
we must listen for
that “of God” in all men.
This is desperately urgent
for all men, also for those in
community, for they are no better
than other men, and have been led by the
same truth which stirs the hearts of other men;
a mutual exchange is a great enrichment to community.

celtic symbol: This Celtic symbol has no beginning or end. It symbolizes eternity and the interconnected forces of life or the “circle of life.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maureen G.F. Burn, neé Hamilton, was born in Ireland in 1905 to Scottish-Irish missionary parents who worked in India, (now Bangladesh). She studied medicine in Edinburgh with the aim of returning to India as a medical missionary to help Hindu and Muslim women who at that time were not allowed to be seen by male doctors.



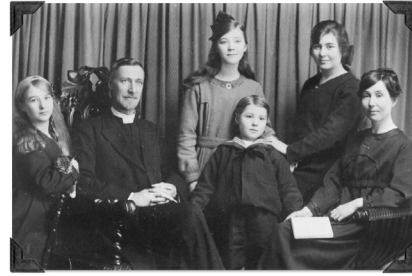
Age 17

When she couldn't find a church to sponsor her that stood for non-violence and against war, she gave up her medical studies and threw herself into peace work and a desperate search for Truth.

This search led Maureen through all the main world religions and philosophies of life—through many different religious and non-religious movements throughout history. Many times she found the “hidden Christ” shining out from the lives of people who did not know about Jesus, who claimed to be agnostics or atheists but cared deeply about their fellow men and served love.

This book contains some of the notes she made of eternal truths gleaned in her quest.

In 1934 Maureen heard about a small international group of people trying to follow the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount like the Early Christians in the Acts of the Apostles. She felt that here was the answer to her search.



Last family photo before father died
L to R: Agnes, Father, Kathleen, Alec, Maureen, Mother

Her husband, though he recognized the life these people lived to be true, felt he could not make the sacrifice it demanded.

For ten years Maureen waited, hoping her husband would come to feel as she did. Finally she had to follow her conscience and made the sacrifice. Obtaining her husband's reluctant consent, she left him and her two eldest sons to join the little community in Wheathill, England. Her two youngest sons remained with her.

The search to stay true to her convictions led her through many ups and downs during her long life of now 100 years and many people, young and old, have been inspired by her witness to eternal Truth that runs through history like a golden thread.



Passport photo for Paraguay, 1952

TRUTH IS ETERNAL
Searching for Truth

Maureen Burn

Maureen Burn
1938

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Editor's note: Unfortunately, during the many travels of Maureen's life, her chapters on Judaism and Lao Tse were lost.



Truth is Eternal

BOOK I



TRUTH



1 AKHNATON

My thoughts on Akhnaton are based on the first showing of Arthur Weigel's display on Tutankamon's Tomb in Edinburgh. I was also influenced by Dimitri Merejkowsky's book, Akhnaton.

AKHNATON WAS AN ANCIENT PHARAOH who manifested true Christianity long before Christ. He was the immediate predecessor to Tutankamon who, remarkably enough, became Akhnaton's son-in-law by marrying one of his daughters. Akhnaton and Tutankamon's lives stand in complete opposition to one another. Akhnaton abdicated to be a wandering preacher of nonviolence and brotherhood. When he died, he had no tomb. His successor Tutankamon, however, reverted to the old religion of Amon, which was linked with the interests of the ruling class,

together with priest craft and superstition. When Tutankamon's tomb was discovered, the luxury of gold, alabaster, and lapis lazuli astonished the world.

I remember my enthusiasm over a lantern lecture by Arthur Weigel, the excavator of Tutankamon's tomb, which was found in the early 1920's. When the sealed entrance to the tomb was opened, there on the sand were the imprints of a naked human foot—the last to have left the tomb three thousand years before. Three thousand years distilled in a naked footprint! If we were to study the actual times and ideological conflicts that were prominent then, it would seem that the three thousand years were non-existent. We are confronted by the same conflicts today that were faced so bravely by Akhnaton eons ago.

Either one surrenders oneself to the promptings of the Truth within or one acquiesces to the conventional life of the times. Tutankamon did the latter and reaped his reward in a lavishly furnished tomb where gold, lapis lazuli, and alabaster dazzle our eyes with their splendor but tell us nothing of Him who is important to us. Tutankamon's luxury resulted from his marriage to Akhnaton's daughter and his position among the priests of Amon. Tutankamon supported the status quo and fought to smash the reforms of Akhnaton, building up incredible prestige and wealth for himself in the process. How different it is with his immediate predecessor, King Akhnaton, who followed the promptings of his "inner light." Arthur Weigel says of him, "Like a flash of lightning in the night time, Akhanaton stands out amid the black Egyptian darkness and disappears once more—the first signal to the world of the future religion of the West. No man whose mind is free from prejudice can fail to see in him the resemblance to Christ; he is the prototype par excellence of Christ." With him the

“light touched the top of the pyramid while the rest of the world was still in darkness.” He preached peace and justice and, in opposition to the rigid forms of Egyptian art, he had Nefertiti, his wife, painted as large as he was portrayed in portraits.

The life work of Akhnaton was to reject the religion of Amon, which supported the ruling class and involved priest craft and superstition. In place he tried to put Aton, the god of peace and father of mankind, who would encompass all other religions in his love so that men would be united. The religion of Aton was open to the sunlight, literally and metaphorically, and entirely free of superstition and priest craft. It also had such strong ethical implications in the direction of the brotherhood of man that Akhnaton finally abdicated in order to become a wandering preacher or propagandist of brotherly love. While he was yet king he aroused the fury of the rich by freeing all territories conquered by force and by rejecting militarism. A decade or two ago a peasant woman in Egypt was found to be crumbling baked bricks to fertilize her cabbage patch. A traveler discovered that they were stamped with cuneiform letters, and it transpired that they were Akhnaton’s edicts revoking laws made by former imperialist conquerors in outlying parts of the Egyptian empire and offering freedom to the subjugated peoples. The woman said she had found the bricks stacked in the cellar of a ruin that must have been the depository of Akhnaton’s letter or brick file. Therefore, it is not surprising that a curse was pronounced on Akhnaton after his death, stating: “May the Lord destroy the memory of him in the land of the living, and may he find no rest in the kingdom of the dead.” The poor who had loved him dared not mention his name. Secretive names were coined for him including “The Enemy,” “The Fool,” “The Buffoon,” “The Criminal,” and “The Monster.”

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In Merejkowsky's novel, *Akhnaton*, an Israelite convinced that Akhnaton is the Messiah of the Hebrew prophecy comes and says: "You are He." But Akhnaton says, "No, I am but his foreshadowing." In another passage in the same novel Akhnaton is arrested and brought before a judge for subversive propaganda.

Judge: *What is your name?*

Akhnaton: *Nesser Beta (his assumed name meaning "The Son of God")*

Judge: *Are you joking? Take care. Is it true you incite the mob to violence and want to make the poor equal with the rich?*

Akhnaton: *No, it is not true. Violence is an evil thing and I want only what is good.*

Judge: *Why then don't you honor our gracious God-king?*

Akhnaton: *The king is not God; only one man on earth shall be God.*

Judge: *What man?*

Akhnaton: *Men call him Osiris, but they do not know his real name.*

Judge: *Do you know it?*

Akhnaton: *No, I don't know it either.*

Judge: *And will he be like you?*

Akhnaton: *No. The sun is not like the shadow.*

Judge: *Is it he who will make the rich and the poor equal?*

Akhnaton: *He, He alone and no one but He. You have said it well, my brother.*

Judge: *I am not a brother to you, but your judge...*

Earlier in the novel we see Tutankamon as a court adventurer whose forte seems to have been an ability to adjust to whichever

way the wind was blowing. We see him early in Akhnaton's reign as a loquacious supporter of the new God "Aton." Indeed, he had a pair of sandals made with the face of Amon on the soles so that at each step he might tread on the unholy god. Everyone marveled at his ingenuity and predicted that he would go far in those sandals. He did, for he married one of Akhnaton's daughters and became Akhnaton's heir, as there were no male descendents. Under Tutankamon, Egypt was again shrouded in darkness. Once again the religion of Amon triumphed, bringing such darkness that Egypt became the land par excellence of priest craft. Magical rites, religious superstition and formalism took over the God-ordained hierarchical society. To this day, we see remnants of that mantle of darkness enveloping world religions, obscuring the pure teaching of their founders. I often wonder if the word "mammon" derives from "Amon." It means the same thing: money hoarded to gratify one's lusts and pride, and selfish impurity. Along with these goes the violence used to achieve them, and the hypocritical lies—the worst being in the name of religion—perpetrated to mask the issue.

"You cannot serve God and Mammon." Or, as Akhnaton put it, "you cannot serve Aton and Amon."

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2 ZOROASTER

SO EGYPT LAY SHROUDED IN DARKNESS. However, in other parts of the world there appeared men who were born sensitive to the sufferings of their fellows. They were blameless of self-seeking and had a pure mind, which recoiled from the crude brutality of contemporary religious and secular life; they were endowed with passion for Truth and for healing the world's great sore.

Among these Truth-seekers was Zoroaster, who lived five centuries after Akhnaton. Apart from preaching pure monotheism and monogamy, his main contribution to ethical truth is the sharp cleavage he makes between good and evil. It is interesting to note that the icon of the lion and unicorn "fighting for the king's crown" are taken from Zoroastrian mural decorations.

One such frieze, discovered in the remains of Nebuchadnezzar's palace at Susa, portrays the fight between the lion (representation of evil) and the cow (portrayal of good). The cow, depicted in profile, becomes the one-horned "unicorn." This theme also appears as the most popular motif in the older Persian carpets where a realistic fight is portrayed between the lion and the cow with a background of a flowery forest.

Later on, when commercialism reached Persia, the lion-versus-cow motif became increasingly conventionalized. Today it can be traced to a formal motif, namely:  This grouping of lines can be seen in many Kidderminster and other non-Persian carpets, which borrowed their design from the later Persian carpets of the mass-production type. This was clearly demonstrated at the Persian Art Exhibition at Burlington House in London in the early 1930's.

The lion and cow seem to me to be well chosen emblems of evil and good. The lion lives at the expense of others—appropriating and sacrificing their lives for his own purpose. He personifies "self" and the serving of self. He represents war—bloodstained in tooth and claw, pitiless, cruel, and destructive—all for the sake of "self." In war, nations engage in collective selfishness, though this is hidden from the combatants. In order to eradicate the monster of self and cruelty to others, Zoroaster does not preach the use of greater brute force and cruelty but the spirit of selfless service to others. The cow is chosen as the emblem of good, for in life and in death it renders service to others. It robs no creature of its life, nor does it oppress any other with fear. The common grass of the field is all it takes from life, but it gives milk, butter, and cheese, muscle power for wagon and plough, flesh for meat, leather, glue and horn. Does this symbolism not remind one of Christ's words,

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“It is more blessed to give than to receive,” “He who serves most is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven,” “Do not overcome evil by evil; overcome evil with good,” and “You cannot throw out Beelzebub with Beelzebub”?



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3 GAUTAMA BUDDHA



NEXT CAME GAUTAMA BUDDHA (500 BC), known as the “Light of Asia.” More than any other, except perhaps Akhnaton, he reminds one of the “Light of the World.” He also preached brotherhood and pacifism. He was heir to his father’s throne, but is quoted as saying, “While men moan I cannot live in ease. If I who ache not, lack not, grieve not—save with griefs which are not mine—gave all, laying it down for love of men, and thenceforth spent myself to search for Truth, surely the veil would lift. The woeful cry of life and flesh cometh up into my ears, and all my soul is full of pity for the sickness of the world, which I will heal, if healing may be found, by uttermost renouncing and strong strife.”

As a young man, Buddha realized that the stark realities of life

had been purposely hidden from him. His confined existence in the luxurious palace had given him a rosy picture of life, while hiding the common lot of humanity from him. Buddha went out of the palace toward a park. On his way he observed a decrepit old man, a diseased person, a corpse and a dignified hermit. The first three sights revealed to him the suffering of humanity. The fourth showed him the way to overcome the ills of life and to attain peace and calm. Realizing the worthlessness of sensual pleasures and appreciating the value of renunciation in which the wise seek delight, he decided to forsake his life of comfort and go out in search of Truth and eternal peace.

Buddha went, leaving his young wife and unborn child. He comforted her with the thought that through their personal grief a way to peace on earth might be found—even though it sunder them. It was not that he loved her less; he loved humanity more. (She joined him six years later in “the way.”)

A picturesque Buddhist legend records the fact that Prince Gautama was tempted to stay in the security of his palace and act as a good steward of the vast wealth to which he was heir. However, he did not succumb to the temptation but renounced all claim to the throne and became a mendicant seeker after the Truth. As mentioned above, he preached brotherhood and pacifism. The legend depicts the spiritual struggle of the young prince and is set in the luxuriant palace grounds, ablaze with color and heavy with the scent of flowers. A bird of prey enters the tranquil scene and pounces on the prince’s pet dove. Gautama rushes to the spot and pleads for the dove’s life. In response, he is told that he is robbing the bird of prey of its food. Then he bargains with the bird of prey, saying he will cut off an equivalent portion of his own flesh, which he will sacrifice instead of the dove’s. A pair of

scales appears. The dove is placed on one pan, and Gautama cuts off a piece of his own flesh equal in size for the other. The scale will not balance. Gautama cuts off more and more flesh to add to his side of the bargain—but without the desired result. Finally he throws himself onto the pan and immediately the dove is ransomed.



4 SOCRATES



NOW WE TURN CLOSER TO HOME, to Greece, as it was a generation after Buddha's time. Here, by reason of her bold and honest thinkers, Greece had reached a pinnacle of fame throughout the world of thought. The fame and value of these thinkers lies not so much in mighty achievements but rather in the questions they dared to ask. (The comparative freedom of thought that prevailed was, doubtless, due to the absence of any strong priestly class.) First and foremost among these thinkers is Socrates—the son of a stonemason. He displays in his personal character a complete absence of self-seeking. His passion is Truth—the uttering of which causes him to be more and more disliked by those in power, until finally the latter have him imprisoned and poisoned. They offer to set

him free and give him his life on condition that he ceases to search for the Truth or disseminate his findings. He refuses, however, saying, "An unexamined life is not worth living." Again we see the truth of the statement "Truth is eternal." His executioners are dead to us whereas Socrates, insofar as he grasps something of the Truth, is alive and goes on living in each new mind which is imbued with his thoughts or which recognizes the aspect of Truth which he explored. Socrates exalted Truth above everything and tolerated no belief—no hope—that could not pass the ultimate test of Truth. Faced with the clear eyes of Truth, the old questions of faith, speculation, and illusion shriveled up.

As was inevitable, Socrates' skepticism of anything less than the Truth led to the shattering of the vulgar faiths—both religious and patriotic—of most of his young listeners. Socrates' aim was to discover the kernel of Truth by stripping off the husk. But with some of his young listeners, the discarding of the husk was the only process that took place; they never reached the kernel. Between rejecting an outgrown faith and grasping something greater, there lies a dangerous zone. Many young men cast away the lesser without catching a vision of the greater Truth, being suddenly in the pitiable state of having no cause outside themselves to which to attach their loyalty. We have letters from irate parents of such young men, blaming Socrates and his teaching for the drunkenness and dissipation of their sons. Here, perhaps, lies the one justification for organized belief—it saves such individuals from their lack of independent thought by inculcating the personal life of goodness by precept. But it overlooks the responsibility toward social goodness.

To return to Socrates, his famous doctrine is that "virtue is knowledge." When a man does evil it is because his knowledge is inadequate. It was this conviction that real knowledge leads to

good living that inspired Socrates' untiring search for moral truth. He was deeply conscious of the need for, and the lack of, clear insight into principles in matters of conduct. His belief was that right principles were the important factor. When found and acted upon, appropriate conduct would follow. Thus, virtue is knowledge put into practice.

Greek democratic privileges only applied to Greek citizens, not to slaves, serfs or foreign residents of the "city-state." Greece was made up of numbers of city-states which never coalesced; that would have obliterated every advantage by which their citizens lived. Narrow and intense patriotisms separated these small geographical units. As an instance of the lengths to which this partisanship was carried, the famous Pericles, who ruled Athens for thirty years and under whose patronage the renowned marble buildings of Athens were erected, could not marry his beloved Aspasia of Mitetus, a woman of great intelligence, because she was a "foreigner" from a neighboring island. No wonder a great soul like Socrates, whom the world acclaims, would not be cramped by narrow men such as these city-state partisans. Because of his skepticism and rejection of anything that could not stand the searchlight of Truth, he was accused of being "impious." Yet his search had been for moral truth, which he believed was true knowledge and which, when acted upon, became true virtue.

In the death cell, before he drank the cup of hemlock, we are told, he said, "Man is a harper playing on physical strings, dependent on them for the quality of the music but independent of them for his existence, since the player may leave one instrument and go to another." We call Socrates a skeptic. We call his methods skeptical, yet he affirms the existence of moral truth and the survival of some element in man after death, which we may call the soul.

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5 GREEK CULTURE

SO SOCRATES, SEEKING TRUTH for his fellow citizens, was poisoned. After his death, his pupils had to flee. Among them was Plato, who later incorporated Socrates' teachings into his own writings, but gave all the credit for them to Socrates.

Plato had learned from Socrates to take nothing for granted, not even the common relations of husband and wife, parent and child. During Plato's exile, Athens had experienced a disastrous war. When Plato returned to Athens in the aftermath of the war, the social disorganization occupied his attention, and he set to work to apply Socrates' theories toward a planned society: Plato's Republic.

It is interesting to note that for the successful working of this republic it was necessary not only to have justice and goodness

on a large scale in the state, but also justice and goodness in the individual. With reference to the latter (which is often overlooked by exponents of ideal social systems) Plato says: “We must act and speak in such a way as to make the human within dominant over our whole nature. Noble actions are those that subordinate the ‘wild beast’ element of our nature to the human or, perhaps, the divine principle in us. Every one must be ruled by the divine and truly wise principle which he must have within him so that we may all be comrades and friends—as men under one control. In education our task is to set up a guardian to bear rule within our pupils. Only thus can we give them true liberty.” (Plato’s Republic)

Perhaps the most important aspect of Plato’s Republic for us is its emphasis on living according to right principles, both in the social system and in the personal life, and the basing of the latter on following the Divine Inner Principle. Unfortunately history shows a fatal tendency to departmentalize life, and these two spheres, which Plato linked, are sundered apart. Hence, various religions preach personal goodness while wholly ignoring social responsibility (except in the form of “wiping pus off the sore”), resulting in an unjust social system. On the other hand, we have attempts to plan a just social system, while denying the presence of any inner divine principle.

Plato’s Republic, however, had its grave fault—due, as Tolstoy says, to Plato’s “lack of disinterestedness.” He failed to see that slavery conflicted with the principles he taught, because a denial of slavery would have swept away the lifestyle to which he was attached. On this point, Lenin’s ideal society has a much more truthful basis; namely, “To each according to his need, from each according to his ability.” Plato’s blindness as regards slavery is an illustration of the fact emphasized by Aldous Huxley in his

Ends and Means that only those disinterested and unattached to worldly things can have true clarity of vision.

Plato founded a school of thought that lasted nine-hundred years.* The philosophy of Plato, in a nutshell, was that the Absolute Good became the ultimate interpretation of all reality, and that the truest realities are not those revealed by the senses. In his famous allegory in the *Republic*, Plato describes the unthinking man of ordinary life as a prisoner chained in a cave, who never sees more than the shadows of what is going on outside and, never having known any better, takes the mere shadows to be reality.

Hippocrates emerged as a shining luminary in the Greek medical world, a contemporary of Socrates and Plato often mentioned by Plato. The aphorisms—short prophetic utterances on prognosis and diagnosis—of Hippocrates are world famous and have aided physicians ever since. Recent scientific medicine has been able to explain causes and effects that were detected by Hippocrates' shrewd eye and amazing power of correlation. The Hippocratic oath is a formality still used in all medical colleges.

A pupil of Plato's, namely Aristotle, first initiated organized science in the world. He sent one thousand naturalists (untrained observers, of course) through Asia and Greece to collect material for his natural history. (Not until two thousand years later was money available for scientific research.) Political economy also occupied his attention, and he and his pupils analyzed 158 different political constitutions. All nations at that time had slaves, some cruelly treated, others moderately well. The Greeks alone argued whether

* Few ancients have had such a vast spiritual progeny (following). Plotinus and the neo-Platonists influenced the Greek Church Fathers. Then, in the ninth century there was Erigena at the court of Charlemagne, whose influence appeared later in the mysticism of nature in the centuries preceding the Reformation. Plotinus influenced the great German mystics Eckhart, Tauler and others; they themselves influenced the mystical anti-sacerdotal groups of "heretics." (Sacerdotalism is a religious belief emphasizing the powers of priests as essential mediators between God and mankind). And one final following of Plato, as their name implies, were the Cambridge Platonists.

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it was right to have them, and “cranks” occasionally proposed their emancipation!

In the sphere of architecture Greece is still pre-eminent. In the plastic art of Greece, beauty and simplicity are the keynotes. Artists in all ages have been so enthralled by Greek art that Leonardo da Vinci once said, “Why do you drink from the cup when you can drink from the fountain?”

“If Greek art is the cup, what is the fountain?” was the reply.

“Nature,” said Leonardo.



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6 THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD AND ROMAN EMPIRE

SO ATHENS REIGNED SUPREME as the seat of culture till Alexander the Great became king. His conquests abroad, however, spelled the doom of Greece as the home of culture. After thirteen short years in which he conquered most of the known world, Alexander died and Athens was replaced by Antioch, Alexandria, and Pergamum as the seats of what culture was allowed to remain. This was due to the fact that at Alexander's death, his three generals divided up the vast empire and set up the above three capitals respectively. They formed dynasties of their own and patronized the type of "culture" which pleased them. This gave rise to decadence in art, censorship in political discussion, and philosophical speculation. The movements that had been following

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Greek philosophers declined; rather than planning model states, people developed elaborate and consoling systems of evasion. The Cynics, Stoics and Epicureans did not care for the betterment of social life but only for the relation of the soul to God or how man should order his own personal life. They were, however, advocates of “free will.”

With the Greeks’ rise to military power, the star of her genius set. The Greek Empire lasted 177 years and then succumbed to the force of Rome. The success of Rome as an empire, as compared to Greece, is perhaps due to the fact that Rome, unlike Greece, did not flirt with culture on the one hand and empire building on the other. She had no time for evolving culture; rather, she devoted herself to her empire. From the standpoint of military power, culture and religious diversity become enemies of the state, as they draw energy or loyalty into other channels than that of the force machine. The more militaristic the state becomes, the more it oppresses and silences “culture”* and true religion.

So Rome took the vast possessions of Greece. She also took the whole Greek Olympus of gods and goddesses for popular worship—merely giving them Latin names. She copied Greek architecture. And if a Roman wanted to give his son an education, he employed a Greek slave as tutor. The Romans, however, deserve credit for their fine civil engineering, building roads, aqueducts, bridges, and sewers. They also gained a reputation for their law, which often made conquered peoples willingly submissive, in order to enjoy the privileges which were extended to Roman citizens. I wonder, however, if shrewd old Socrates would not have probed deeper and discovered that “where there is no equality, law is merely the interest

* During the military buildup of Germany under Hitler before World War II, an oft repeated catchword of the military was: “When you hear the word ‘culture,’ get ready to shoot.”

of the stronger,” as Plato quotes him. Roman society was divided into “patricians” and “plebeians,” whose interests clashed, we may be sure, to the detriment of the weaker. There was no equality, so equity of the highest order was also absent from Roman law.

The uninspiring quality of the Roman spirit is seen in the complete lack of research in the realms of science, philosophy or art. What an opportunity they had to collect scientific materials from the abundance of nature, and food for thought from the great thinkers of that vast empire (Zoroaster, Buddha, etc.). The empire, however, was ransacked to its remotest corners to supply the pomp and gluttony of Rome—which was content to feast, exact and grow rich, without any yearnings to search for Truth, be it by the path of religion, philosophy or science. Lucretius was Rome’s only seed of enlightenment, but it was smothered in the atmosphere of vile wealth and military oppression. The true figure to represent the classical Roman attitude to science is not Lucretius but the Roman soldier who hacked Archimedes to death at Syracuse. (H.G. Wells, *Outline of History*)

A little picture of social life at the height of Rome’s fame has come down to us. A group of Roman ladies are foregathering at the house of Lyddia, wife of Graccus. Each one is boasting of her jewels and vaunting her precious trinkets, except for Lyddia. She is asked, “What about your treasures?” to which she replies, “Come upstairs and I will show you.” She takes her guests to her two small sons. Poor Lyddia. She must have had a lonely life among the purse-proud patricians of Rome. However, she had other interests of more

value. We read that she had been steeped in Greek philosophy since her father had introduced it to her as a child, and it bore fruit in her sons' lives. Both of them, though patrician by birth, became leaders of the plebeians. They were, like their mother, unattached to wealth, self-seeking, and personal prestige, but ardently attached to the right social principles of Socrates and the dream of an ideally planned society of Plato. They were not only socialists but also anti-imperialists, which shows that they were more clear-sighted than many who call themselves socialists today. Their comprehensive outlook on social problems led them to recognize that the slave labor of subdued countries in the empire was the direct cause of unemployment at home. The patricians martyred both these brothers for championing the cause of the plebeians. Of them one may say that they did "not seek to lay up for themselves treasures on earth," but sought to bring about brotherhood among men. They died for a good cause—a cause that has claimed the adherence of all men who have love and intelligence, throughout all ages and into the future. This cause will never die, for each soul born into the world has divine intuition. Where this intuition escapes, unscathed by the process of education, propaganda and hypnotic suggestion in the form of tradition, prejudice, and convention, it will point to the Truth.

We have noted how physical and biological science died on Roman soil, while political and social science never germinated. Political discussion would have been treason to the Emperor, for social or economic enquiry would have threatened the rich.

The wealthy patricians, sated with all that wealth and self-indulgence can give, found they must seek some new form of pleasure that had not yet palled for them. "Self" had become so prominent with them that they ceased to feel the pain of others.

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This attitude gave birth to such entertainment as the gladiatorial combats. One can understand how a race that could enjoy and approve of such “pleasures” could impose the peace of Carthage. The words “Carthaginian peace” have come to mean the most ruthless form of cruel and merciless peace treaty where revenge is given free rein. Versailles is a modern instance. “It almost seems that as long as physical pain was inflicted on others, Roman morality was satisfied” (H.G. Wells). In social life the exposure of infants was so common that it passed unnoticed. On the other hand we read that Caesar’s wife was above reproach, but we feel it was not so much because of the love of virtue and purity but rather the pride and self-esteem of Caesar.

Preface to Book II

Few know that for its first three hundred years, Christianity maintained an uncompromising denial of capitalism and egoism. Christians renounced militarism and submitted to no spiritual authority but the inner light of Christ.

When Christianity “fell” in AD 312, however, it lost its spirit of pacifistic community. Christians began to compromise with a social system based on self and maintained by force, both of which Christ had denied. Tragically, in turning to bourgeois pseudo-Christianity, the vast majority of people have rejected Christ—the revolutionary of revolutionaries—who denounced hypocrites, challenged the rich, and preached love to one’s neighbor. Jesus also preached love of God—meaning that there is a moral law of love, which is the supreme authority for each man. It is in love’s service that a man realizes his true freedom and is able to care for his fellows. Christ taught brotherly relationships between men—a love that literally gives the other coat and returns good for evil—not a social system whereby men oppress each other, corrupting science, art, and literature. Jesus said, “Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven (brotherly relations), and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Solibull, 1939

Truth is Eternal

BOOK II · PART I



TRUTH



7 THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

THESE CHAPTERS are in no sense an adequate description of Christ, or a summary of what he stood for; words are inadequate for that purpose. At best, they are a feeble attempt to express something of the illumination that came into the world with the One whose consistency with the Truth warrants his title of “The Light of the World.”

St. Augustine said, “What we call Christianity has always existed since the beginning of the world and before the manifestation of Christ in the flesh.” The wonderful thing is that Christ, in his own life and teaching, combines all the facets of the Truth that earlier Truth-seekers had represented in part, and goes even further. Christ himself said,

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“I came not to destroy but to fulfill”—that is, as regards all that is in accordance with the Truth.

He not only uttered the Truth but also *was* the Truth. In him precept and practice, teaching and action perfectly coincided. He embodied, and did not merely enunciate, the things he proclaimed, with the result that the best commentary upon his words is his life, and the best interpretation of his life is his words.

It is striking how Christ uses no other proof of his authenticity except the Truth and his harmony therewith. He says: “Because I tell you the Truth, you believe me not. He that is of God heareth God’s words; ye, therefore, hear them not because ye are not of God.” (Leyton Richards, *The Christian’s Alternative to War*)

“Now you seek to kill me—a man who told you the Truth.” (John 8: 40) “And you shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free.” (John 8: 32) And to Pilate he says, “To this end was I born, and to this end am I come into the world: that I should bear witness to the Truth.”

Pilate said unto him, “What is the Truth?”

What is Christ’s doctrine, which he claims to be the Truth? After two thousand years of lip service to Christianity we still find that Christ is the Great Unknown; we must still ask with Pilate, “What is Truth?” Christendom professes to worship the Prince of Peace, yet Christendom is rent from end to end with war and preparations for war. As such, Christianity is too weak to resist the doctrine of Nietzsche. It relies on brute force—not the path of love—as the final arbiter in international conflicts. It professes love yet acquiesces in the exploitation of poorer classes and subject races.

The official church may not wish to see it, but others who do not profess to have illumination from Christ see that imperialism means war. Christ refused to become the military messiah who might save his country from the tyranny of Roman imperialism, but he strikes at the root of imperialism. So deeply does he strike that it leaves political revolutionaries far behind. Only twenty years after his death the Roman author Celsus recognized this and said so. Yet Christianity acquiesces in imperialism and those lesser “isms” which are smaller editions of the same thing—nationalism, capitalism, and individualism. One might express it thus: individualism is personal selfishness, capitalism is family self-interest, nationalism is collective self-interest, and imperialism is mammoth collective self-interest. We are so far from Christ’s call to give up all and follow him, to lose one’s life for his sake and find Life, to love God and one’s neighbor as oneself. In theory, Christianity professes to love God. But it fails to give a practical witness to loving one’s neighbor as oneself. Instead, Christians take advantage of their brothers for profit and turn them into cannon fodder.

After two thousand years of “Christianity” we have reached such a barbaric state that little children, the aged, and the bedridden are the hapless targets of modern warfare. Today the pathway to the betterment of mankind is blocked by war, the fear of war, or preparation for war. The established church is silent, and we look to it in vain for light amid darkness that is woven out of selfishness, ignorance, and hate. Should one’s eyes rather wander to India to Gandhi, who is believed by countless Indians to be the reincarnation of Christ? Christ, in the words of one of Gandhi’s followers, is “the most glorious of Satyagraha” (Satyendranath Datta, a Bengali poet). It is interesting to note that “Satyagraha” literally means, “holding or grasping fast to the Truth.” Its usual translation is “nonviolent

resistance” to evil. So great is Gandhi’s soul-force, so much does he resemble Christ, that he has been asked why he does not call himself a Christian. His answer is, “Because I have not yet met one.”

India, in the words of Dr. Nichol McNichol, is the epitome of world spirituality. Most truthful and spiritually minded Indians criticize Christianity, saying: “We do not want your Christianity; we want Christ.” This is how far we have fallen short of Christ.

In Holman Hunt’s famous picture, “The Light of the World,” Christ is seen standing outside the ivy-covered door of a soul. Whether it is the soul of the world, the soul of official Christendom or the soul of an individual, too often he knocks unheeded. Rather than admit the “Light of the World” into one’s soul as the supreme authority, we acquiesce, accepting sub-Christian standards. We substitute civic and social morality (which is, at best, only compromise) for the individual morality, which demands that every man should be delivered up to the unswerving judgment of his own soul. Thus men, because of their positions, feel bound, not by the eternal laws of the human conscience, but by the accidental and transitory demands of their positions. They say, for example, of another fellow human being, “As a man I sympathize with him, but as a judge or soldier I must torture or kill him.”

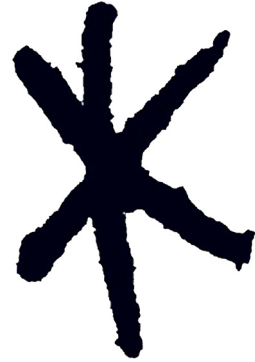
Hypnotic suggestion, to which we are all subjected from cradle to grave, has so great a hold that we allow tradition, convention, national prejudice, or middle class taboos to guide us rather than the Light within—that illumination which comes from Christ.

Thus we close the door of our soul to the Truth. Christ, on the other hand, called men to seek the Truth and to follow it, obeying the Truth rather than any authority that opposed it. He called men to seek the will of God and to do it here on earth. This is the path he trod.

The Gospels give little or no metaphysics; the language of theology is foreign to them. Instead, they give the portrait of a person who had a remarkable experience of God and of oneness with him. He saw life as it should be when lived according to the ethical standard he preached. Jesus' teachings center on the "Kingdom of Heaven," where laws of morality are upheld and the law of life is Love. He taught us to pray for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth and that each of his followers should live according to the ethical standards that are its fabric. H.G. Wells says of it: "The Kingdom of Heaven doctrine—of which the churches speak so little, and of which Christ speaks so much—is one of the most revolutionary doctrines that has ever stirred or changed the hearts of men." Someone else said, "The Kingdom of Heaven on earth is an overturned world." C.F. Andrews, the best loved Englishman in India, friend of the oppressed and of Gandhi and Tagore, called the Christ whom he followed the most revolutionary thinker the world has ever seen.

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8 THE HIDDEN YEARS: THE POPULAR MESSIAH

WE KNOW VERY LITTLE of Christ's first thirty years—so little that they are called “The Silent Years” or the “Hidden Years.” The history of events and movements in and around Galilee during those thirty years, however, is very revealing. They show that, quite contrary to the conventional picture of Christ maturing in the rustic seclusion of a sleepy country district, Galilee was a hotbed of ideas. It was a region where opposite systems of life met, and in such a region new principles are eagerly canvassed by all classes. Greek culture and paganism were protected by Rome on the shores of Lake Gennesereth, which irritated the Jews of Galilee. We are safe in assuming that the principles and merits of Jewish and Greek civilization were the frequent subject of discussion in Galilee

during the first thirty years of the Christian era. Likewise, both these civilizations were under the heel of Rome—that mammoth military structure embodying material gain. The relative merits of Greek culture, the religious feeling of the Jews, and the aggressive militarism and imperial dominion of the world by the Romans, must have claimed the attention of even the most thoughtless, for all three were present in Galilee.

From the birth of Christ until AD 70, Galilee was the region par excellence, where sedition against Rome seethed turbulently and talk of armed revolution found popular approval. Galilee was the home of the religiously inspired nationalist movement whose founder was Judas Maccabeus, a Galilean. It spread throughout Judea as the Zealot movement. Simon the Zealot, one of Jesus' disciples, had once belonged to it.

The Zealot movement appealed to the unthinking masses and to every Jewish schoolboy; it was a form of psychological compensation for the humiliation of being subject to foreign rule. But it also had much deeper roots. Superficially, the Zealot movement manifested as a desire for revenge in the form of “driving the Romans into the sea.” Fundamentally, however, the vigor and passion of the movement was religious in origin. Jews, who believed themselves to be God's chosen people through whom salvation should come to the world, found it an intolerable humiliation to be crushed under the heel of pagan Rome. The presence of Roman soldiers desecrated even the remotest parts of the Promised Land, the milk of which was skimmed and the honey stolen to feed the gluttony of Rome. The messianic thread of the Old Testament crystallized into a hope for the advent of One who would set God's chosen people free, not only from the burnished helmets of their Roman cohorts but from the puppet princes in the pay of Rome who mimicked

Gentile ways of life, dress, and speech (one of which was Herod). They longed for a Judea ruled by the Law of Moses, a Judea governed according to the Law of Moses, by the Jews and for the Jews. They awaited a Judea that would be governed from the Holy City, Jerusalem, which would be governed from the Temple where the God of Israel dwelt. In this way Judea would indeed become the Kingdom of God. It is very interesting to note that the whispered watchword of the movement was “The Kingdom of God.”

When Christ was an infant, this password, originating with Judas Maccabeus of Galilee, began to pass from lip to lip in and around Nazareth. Men were so eager for the messianic leadership touted by Judas Maccabeus that it spread like wildfire. The Maccabean headquarters were at Sephoris, five miles from Nazareth. In AD 5 a furnace of rebellion broke out in Galilee. The Roman Proconsul Varus, knowing the dynamic of a messianic consciousness, determined to crush it with the utmost harshness. He had Judas Maccabeus and two thousand of his messianic followers crucified at Sephoris. The child Jesus, then five years old, could have looked from high-lying Nazareth and seen the forest of crosses five miles away. We can hear the child ask his father what the crosses meant and old Joseph saying, “The cross is the punishment by Roman law for any who calls himself “Messiah” or “King of the Jews.”

The power of a messianic consciousness is hard to destroy. So in spite of the brutal quelling of the AD 5 rebellion, another would-be Messiah arose six years later. Again it was in Galilee, and again the boy Jesus, now eleven years old, would have seen the forest of crosses. Within his first eleven years, Galilee had witnessed the coming of two messiahs, both of them military ones.

A year later, when Jesus was twelve, the gospel narrative lifts the

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veil that hides the silent years for a brief moment, and we see the boy Jesus thoughtful and intelligent beyond his years. We see him question the rabbis in Jerusalem (some of whom may still have been alive twenty-one years later to shout “crucify him”). Most likely, Jesus was asking them about the attributes which were to be the “hallmark” of the Messiah. Even at the age of twelve, he was unable to find satisfaction in the draught offered by the rabbis to assuage his thirst for Truth, because his analysis disintegrated what they offered. (Henry Nicholas, aged eight, found the Roman Catholic Church unable to give him illuminations on his problems. He was punished for asking about the secret things of God. So, thenceforth he kept his musings to himself and reached for the freedom of Truth.) The young Christ must have been thrown back on his own Inner Companion (as Plato called it) from that time onwards. He analyzed life in the light of that Divine Inner Consciousness and pondered the idea of a Messiah. He had witnessed two military messiahs. Did they fulfill the forecasts of the prophets? We can see the thoughtful boy devour the utterances of the prophets—those men who broke away from ritual and temple worship and whose only sanction was an inner light. The Light within him must have responded to those earlier gleams, which shone through the prophets.



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9 THE HIDDEN YEARS: GREEK CULTURE AND ROMAN IMPERIALISM IN GALILEE

AS WE PREVIOUSLY INDICATED, Greek culture was protected by Rome on the shores of Lake Gennesereth. Long before the Roman conquest, however, parts of Galilee such as Capernaum (to which Jesus' mother and brothers moved after leaving Nazareth) had been dedicated to the Greek god Chinyros-Adonis. Capernaum had then been called Chinnezor-Chinnereth, the Sea of Galilee being Lake Chinnereth. This pagan god was the type who sheds his blood and sacrifices his life for his worshippers, unlike the prevalent type of god who coveted sacrifice from others. The god Chinyros-Adonis was associated with the emblem of grain dying in the ground and then being resurrected.

When Christ walked the hills of Galilee by the shores of Lake Chinnereth, he could have heard the *kinnora* (shepherd's pipe) mourning the dying god Chinyros-Adonis. It would have sounded as mournful as the sigh of the wind in the reeds. To this day, the bright red anemones that stain the hills and lakeside like drops of blood are called the "Blood of Adonis." Christ is bound to have known of this suffering god who was no myth but a local deity to the Greeks of Capernaum. The concept of the death and resurrection of corn was associated with the Greek expectation of a "Coming One." Certain ceremonies associated with the "Coming One" and emblems of the dying grain were held regularly and were known as the Eleusinian mysteries. This name derived from the Greek word *Eleusis*, meaning "coming." It is interesting to note that when certain Greeks from the semi-Greek city of Bethsaida came to their fellow townsman Philip, who had become a disciple, they asked to be taken to speak to Jesus. Jesus said, "The hour is come that the son of man should be glorified" (John 12:20). He recognized that, although Rome had material dominion, the Greeks had the intellectual supremacy. The comment of the Pharisees was: "The world is gone after him." In speaking to these Greeks, Jesus quotes the central fact of the Greek religious mysteries surrounding the Coming One. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24). The Greeks would not have failed to understand this dying and resurrecting corn to be Jesus himself. He goes on to express the method in which he will die... "And I, if I be lifted up (on the cross) will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). In so saying, he claims to be the "Coming One" of Greek Eleusinian mysteries as well as the Messiah of Hebrew hopes. He was so accepted by many Greeks as the One for whom they waited that shortly after his death he had become the Light of the Gentiles.

THE HIDDEN YEARS: GREEK CULTURE
AND ROMAN IMPERIALISM IN GALILEE

In Greek culture we also come across the repeated theme of turning water into wine. In Euripedes, in the Bacchantes chorus, Bacchus cries “Evoe” and the springs produce wine. Amaened strikes the ground with her thyrsus, and water flows. When she plunges her thyrsus into the earth, wine gushes out. Pliny the naturalist says that this happened on a certain date every spring, in the temple of Dionysius at Ondros. Merejkowsky says that Christ performed his sign at Cana of Galilee on the same date. The Evangelist who writes of it calls the turning of water into wine a sign (*semeion*), not a miracle (*teres*). A miracle is something that takes place outside a man, but a sign takes place within him.

Let us now turn from the Jews and Greeks to Rome.

In Galilee the sun scorched down on the burnished helmets and shields of the Roman legionaries. Their reveille cleaved the air in Galilee just as in the silvery hoarfrost of far away Britain. It was said, “*Pacis Romanae magestas immensa*” (the majesty of the peace of Rome is without end). This peace, maintained by brass helmets and reveilles, ruled over all. Among the privileged upper class in Rome there was an unearthly boredom (*taedium vitae*), which resulted in frequent suicides. The indulgence of the body through excessive food and drink, perfumed baths, costly apparel and amusements had reached a fine art. Suicide itself, caused by *taedium vitae*, became an art. It was carried out by opening a vein in a hot bath and dying in painless luxury.

How did Christ react to Roman imperialism? He had witnessed military attempts by two armed messiahs. He knew that one couldn’t cast out Beelzebub with Beelzebub. Celsus, who lived twenty years later, described Christ’s chosen path when he said, “By a pitiable death Jesus of Nazareth ended a contemptible life.” The same Celsus, however, refutes his own words in the growing

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concern with which he later said, “If all men become Christian there will be no Roman Empire.” Celsus did not fear the military messiahs; their superficial methods could easily be dealt with. But this other messiah struck at the root of imperialism by living and preaching love.

Thus we see that Christ studied life in the crucible of rival ideologies rather than secluding himself from the currents of political and intellectual thought. The marker placed over Christ’s cross, calling him “King of the Jews” in Roman, Greek and Hebrew, testifies to the fact that mixed languages and cultures flourished side by side in the Judea of his time.



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10 THE HIDDEN YEARS: HIS HOME AND NATURE

JESUS STARTED LIFE at the bottom of the social scale; He was born in a plebian home, a proletarian home. All along his sympathies were with the poor. Unlike modern revolutionaries, however, he had no class hatred. Hatred is always destructive. It gives temporary energy for action but eventually weakens and enervates. Love, on the other hand, gives ongoing energy, according to Gandhi.

Jesus' understanding of life is amazing. He lived as a carpenter and was familiar with all the village gossip, having watched his fellow villagers give birth, marry, and die respectably. He also knew the despised—the publicans, sinners, and tax gatherers—who were outlawed by the Romans. He had, perhaps, known a prodigal son

in Nazareth. He surely knew a woman in Nazareth like the one he met later, who loved much but whose trust had been betrayed, so that she had become a sinner in the eyes of the world. The patching of garments and the havoc of moths are homely pictures, most likely associated in his mind with Mary his mother, busy patching her children's clothes or exclaiming over the ruin brought to the winter garments by the summer moths.

From boyhood on Jesus wandered alone into the hills around his home. Away from village life, so occupied with the pursuit of daily bread, he would listen for something that satisfied his deeper hunger. From the age of twelve onwards, he sought this within his own soul. In solitude he sought to experience the divine within him. As time passed, he must have relied more on his solitary search for Truth than on frequenting the synagogues and questioning the rabbis. St. Augustine said, "Our souls are restless till they find their rest in Thee." Throughout Jesus' ministry he escaped frequently from the voice of man, so audible in the crowd, to hear the voice of God in the mountain solitude where, as a boy, he first sought his Heavenly Father. Jesus depended more on communion with nature for his refreshment, strength, and inspiration than any great soul who has lived and through whom Light has been brought to the world. Einstein, one of the greatest modern Jews, says:

The Jewish tradition contains a sort of intoxicated joy and amazement at the beauty and grandeur of this world. Some of the psalms show it. This is the feeling from which true scientific research draws its inspiration, but which also seems to find expression in the songs of the birds. The individual feels the nothingness of human desires and aims and the sublimity and marvelous order, that reveal them-

selves in nature and in the world of thought. This cosmic religious feeling can alone have sustained men like Kepler and Newton. What a deep conviction in the rationality of the universe and what a yearning to understand the feeblest reflection of the mind revealed in the world led them to spend years of solitary labor disentangling the principles of celestial mechanics.

Jesus, with profound insight, turned from celestial mechanics to man. He knew that it lay in man's hands to use his powers to do good or evil. In view of the sublime and marvelous order revealed in nature, Jesus must also have sensed the nothingness of human desires and aims. He concentrated his attention on God's desire and aim for men—namely, the right relationship between men. This, to him, was of fundamental importance. Others have centered their interest on the laws of celestial mechanics. Sir James Jeans, for example, found great mathematical thought in the layout of the universe. Christ, however, realized a more fundamental and eternal arithmetic behind the universe. He understood the moral law, which taught that right differs from wrong and that the doing of good or evil breeds either good or evil, even if we do not live to see the result. To Jesus, it was the force of good alone that could overcome evil. Mankind was his chief interest, since it is through man that the moral law operates on earth. To him, the relationship of man to man was of paramount importance. The intuitive perception of Jesus was greater than that of any other mind, as is shown in his discerning of the principle that man must love God and his neighbor as himself before anything can be added to him as a blessing.

Because they lacked Christ's great vision, men have concentrated on scientific progress rather than seeking brotherhood under the Fatherhood of God. History has proved that scientific progress, without brotherhood, has always been linked with aggression. This has reached such proportions that science has become a curse, not a blessing. This will only change if man learns to obey the moral laws. The twentieth century, with its increasingly deadly methods of mass murder, is showing men the Truth discerned by Christ, who saw it without the aid of any such external stimulus. Aldous Huxley expresses it well when he says, "Without progress in charity, technological advance is useless. It is worse than useless, for it merely provides us with more efficient means for going backwards."

Two thousand years ago Jesus had the clarity of vision that men only gain through desperation today. He unerringly put the first things first.

Christ's love of nature is vividly revealed in his frequent allusions to it. He loved the grandeur of mountain lakes and storms. He loved nature's helpless simplicity, as shown in "the little sticky buds" that trembled at the approach of a nibbling goat. To him the lily's beauty far surpassed the artificial splendor of Solomon's glory. All along, Christ preferred the natural and the simple to artificial extravagance. He avoided large cities where people, like Martha, were occupied with trivial, external things. He rejected the exacting details of etiquette and custom and of middle class taboos. He scorned conventional living with its unnecessary expenditure of men's labor, the endless quest to tempt man's appetites, the endless preoccupation with external attire, and the obsession with bourgeois prejudice. He sums it up in saying that the pagans were preoccupied with what to eat and drink and with their outer

clothing. Jesus called his followers to live seeking God's will as the highest purpose in life, rather than stagnating.

It is worth noticing that Christ avoided big cities, frequenting instead the small village settlements. He went to Jerusalem only to die. During the week he spent there, he retired to the village of Bethany each evening.

Jesus had a penetrating inner feeling that saw the relationship between luxury and poverty which Henry James expressed so well in modern times: "And, as the relations between man and man were his chief preoccupation (after his love of God), he could not accept the luxury which was bought at the price of another's degradation." Christ showed a marked preference for God's paradise in nature and avoided places where men bartered their souls and exploited others, such as they do in metropolitan areas. In summary, he says, "If a man gains the whole world and loses his soul, it profits him nothing." And he speaks about material gain, saying, "Seek first the Kingdom of God (where men are as brothers under one Father), and everything else shall be added unto you."



TRUTH



11 THE TEMPTATION: BREAD

ONE AMAZING FACT about Christ is that he had already reached an absolute insight into living when he entered his three years of active ministry. His way of living was not only relatively good but absolutely good. He chose the way of complete surrender to the will of God the Father. And in pursuing this will, he left behind the pragmatic attitude of looking to the result. When a man adjusts his life to the will of God in love, he unites himself with the source of Universal Life. He has no regard for immediate consequences. His actions are no longer individual acts dependent on time and space. Rather, his actions become causes in themselves and have endless, unlimited significance. Christ's life of thirty-three years—only three years of which were spent in the public eye—proves the truth of this statement. He was so united

with God that his life has, and will continue to have, unlimited significance.

How absurd do the narrow, worldly words of Celsus, written twenty years after Christ, seem to us now, when he said, “Jesus of Nazareth, by a pitiable death, ended a contemptible life.”

Before Christ reached the amazing clarity of vision and steadfastness of purpose that characterized his ministry, he must have had his times of groping in the dark. What course of action was demanded by “the voice within”? This is summed up in Christ’s temptation, which is depicted in allegorical form, so beloved to the Jewish mind. The temptation depicts the doubts and uncertainties—the battle between good and evil—that plagued the mind of the youthful Jesus. During the “Silent Years,” Jesus surely weighed the “pros” and “cons” of the prevalent persuasions of thought, comparing them with the promptings of his innermost soul. He pondered the attributes of the Messiah, which he gleaned from the prophetic writings; they echoed in his heart as being true.

The temptation of Christ is of momentous consequence to mankind. During the temptation, the reality of Christ becoming the “Light of the World” was balanced on a razor edge. Had he accepted any of the three paths that tempted him, he would not have become “The Light of the World.”

When Jesus was tempted, the idea of material equality as the panacea for the world’s ills presented itself to his mind. Bread. Give all the people bread, equally shared. His critical analysis, however, rejected this. “Man does not live by bread alone.” He rejected materialism as unworthy for the Son of God. For him, true life came from responding to the divine within. This does not mean that Christ ignores the cry of the hungry for bread.

In his picture of the Last Judgment, the “damned” are condemned because they failed to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Their cries of “Lord, Lord” and outward shows of religion were of no avail; they counted as nothing to the Judge. The sole criterion for judgment was whether they fed and clothed the Christ in every needy man. Christ rejected the drive for material gain as the sole aim of life, whether it took the form of an individualistic pursuit of wealth as in the rich bourgeois or whether it manifested itself collectively, as with the proletarians.

Man tends to “live by bread alone” when he is in dire need of it or when he has excess. One can understand why bread looms so large in the vision of the hungry. But do we notice that superfluity also tends towards materialism? The sensuous indulgences made possible by increasing wealth choke the higher sensitivities of the mind, thwarting the deeper aspirations of the soul. It is a truism that “high living and low thinking” go together. Hence, material betterment, beyond a reasonable standard of living, should not be man’s aspiration in life. Is “champagne and caviar for each and all” a worthy goal?

History has proved that once hunger is appeased, bread is not satisfying to man. We saw this in the *taedium vitae* of the wealthy in imperial Rome and in recent times among the excessively rich. Tolstoy, himself born wealthy, expressed it well when he said:

I turned from the life of our circle, acknowledging that it is not life, but a simulacrum of life and that the conditions of superfluity in which we live deprive us of the possibility of understanding life. Men who have realized their cherished dreams of power, glory, and riches, discover that all is vanity. Even the well-to-do peasant who has saved two hundred rubles is finally disillusioned.

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Collective materialism, as an object in itself, will, no doubt, be the same. How many find joy only in giving, in stripping themselves of the sensuous gratifications that money can buy? The ancient prophet Habakkuk spoke of man's need to rid himself of the "thick clay" he acquires through the excesses of life. Furthermore, materialism as a philosophy is not consistent with the Truth. Many who blindly follow the teachings of Karl Marx endorse materialism today. While hailing Marx as a great bringer of light who revealed part of the Truth that centuries of greed had hidden, we must remember that he lived at a time when materialism was the creed of scientists. Today it is no longer so. Men of science like Einstein and Sir James Jeans deny materialism. Even scientists who tend toward materialism, denying moral order with supreme inconsistency, admit that moral progress is essential in preventing the destruction of man through science.

Christ rejected bread for another reason. He saw that society needed more than external adjustments in order to eradicate evil. Evil is too deeply rooted in the individual will. What dark evil within a man can turn the communist into a self-seeking egoist? Evil, as lust for gold, is squashed. But it rears its head as lust for power, ambition, and strategic positioning of oneself. Materialism cannot conquer the tiger of "evil" in the primeval jungle. Christ realized, as Plato five centuries before him, that the less one relies on the Divine Inner Guide within each individual, the more one has to rely on external authority and coercion. Coercion, however, breeds domination on the one hand and servitude on the other. It is, therefore, incompatible with equality, liberty and brotherhood. Christ realized that even in the temporary loss of spirituality, as when man ignores or forgets the divine within, the claims of

egoism become apparent. One cannot build an ideal state on egoism but, rather, on its opposite. So Christ rejected the idea of founding the Kingdom of God on the basis of materialism, which would deny God and the divine in man. He realized that the only way man could justly distribute “bread” in the Kingdom of God is through the free development of the divine in man. Bread alone is no basis for the brotherhood of man, because it ignores both the divine and moral law. It savors too much of the *panem at circenses* (bread and amusements) which bribed the servile to acquiesce under the Roman heel of inequality and tyranny. One cannot serve God and mammon.

Vile body, take the crust,
 Tis nobler food
 Than all the capons
 Plucked in servitude
 To mammon.

As Tolstoy said many years later, “The division and safeguarding of property occupies the whole world; it is the root cause of war and poverty.” Christ strikes at the root of all ills by teaching the rejection of property in order to be attached to things of lasting importance—love, brotherhood, justice, freedom, peace, the Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man.”

Man cannot live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.



TRUTH



12 THE TEMPTATION: OTHER-WORLDLINESS AND POWER

THE SECOND AND THIRD TEMPTATIONS, which Christ rejected, have been accepted to varying degrees by organized religion. The second temptation was to enter into the supernatural world, the world of the occult, mystery, secrecy, and methods of priestly trickery and religious superstition. Christ rejected all this. The cross was the epitome of his rejection of false miracles when he was touted with the words, “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.” He also rejected the supernatural when he refused to prove his mission by signs. Christ saw that moral Truth could not be proved like physical truths, by any phenomenon. It is recognized as moral Truth by a sense of divine intuition in the hearts of men.

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Most churches have also accepted temptation in the form of indulging in otherworldliness. They divorce the “spiritual” from the “temporal” and hallow the “spiritual” in a separate compartment, shut off from real life. Thus it happens that one day every week men pray to God while preying on their neighbors the other days. This behavior has resulted in the hypocritical blend of spiritual radicalism with political conservatism. In addition, the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, for which Christ taught us to pray, is banished to another world. Christ’s words “My kingdom is not of this world” are taken to mean that Christ’s ethical standards cannot be applied to society here and now but only in that “happy land far, far away.” The derision this evokes among the downtrodden of the world is aptly expressed in the familiar parody:

Hope and pray,
Work all day,
Live on hay.
Bye and Bye
You’ll eat pie,
In the sky.

Christ rejects the departmentalization of life into sacred and secular. To Christ, life is a whole. Religion is not separated from everyday life. The absurdity of separating religion and politics is portrayed in an instance quoted by Aldous Huxley. Warring seaplanes were prevented from landing on the Sea of Galilee for fear of outraging religious sentiment. The religious sentiment, however, does not object to the use of these same military seaplanes, but is only concerned that they shall not land on a hallowed body of water!

The Roman Catholic Church has especially accepted the third temptation—the lust for worldly power. In the twelfth century the

mighty machinery of the Roman Church was at its zenith. Kings trembled before the pope who drew more revenue than they themselves. This incredible wealth and power was matched only by the spiritual bankruptcy of the church, which was unable to satisfy the spiritual hunger of its flock. Into this panorama came Saint Francis. He revitalized the spirit of Christ and undermined the prestige of the church.

The authority of the church was buttressed by worldly power and wealth. Christ rejected worldly power and wealth because they are maintained by brute force and bloodshed, attained by exploitation of others. He also rejected authority and preached that no man had the right to wield spiritual authority. This is captured in his words, "Call no man Father." He denied all authority except that of the Spirit within. He challenged the authority of Judaism, of its scribes and even of Moses. But the church established its authority again under the name of orthodox Christianity.

Christ saw that authority stifled the growth of conscience and reason; it led men to believe that life, both public and private, must be governed by rules. The church, as seen in both Judaism and the Roman Empire, was founded on authority. It was, therefore, the direct antithesis of the policy that Christ conceived as essential to the ever-continuous growth of virtue in men.

The Kingdom of God, which Christ visualized, was neither a kingdom based on materialism nor was it an idyllic land far beyond the grave. The Kingdom of God did not consist in subscribing to certain rituals of a church whose authority was blindly and slavishly obeyed. Church rituals often became a collection of superstitious beliefs, credulously accepted and passed on unverified. As such, they hindered the spread of true religion, preventing people from seeking and living out the Truth, for

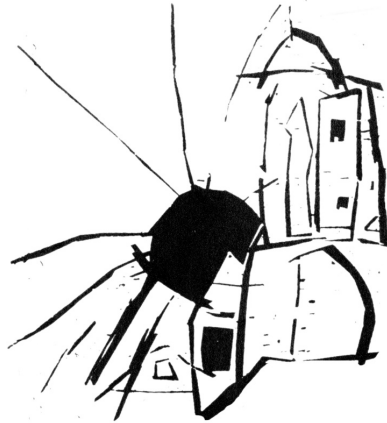
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which purpose Christ came into the world. Jesus said, “I am come that men may be free”—free from spiritual and temporal servitude, and free in conscience. Such was Christ’s liberating doctrine.

Another conception of the Kingdom of Heaven, not mentioned in the temptation but with which Christ was familiar, was that of John the Baptist. This movement also originated in Galilee with John, who was a Galilean. Its basis was asceticism. Asceticism was a practice openly renounced by Jesus. He rejected the whole system of thought which regards matter and pleasure in the senses as evil. He also rejected the belief that material things, whether touched or tasted, could themselves defile the soul. Rather, the only thing that could defile a man was his own evil thoughts.

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13 THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN DOCTRINE

THE DOCTRINE of the Kingdom of Heaven is certainly one of the most revolutionary doctrines that ever stirred and changed human thought. It was the main teaching of Jesus, yet it plays such a small part in Christian creeds. H. G. Wells says, in his *Outline of History*:

Jesus, in his Kingdom of Heaven doctrine, struck at patriotism and the bonds of family loyalty in the name of God's universal fatherhood and the brotherhood of man. The only righteous life was the service of God's will with all we had and were. He denounced private riches. So too, in a score of places, he flouted that darling virtue of the formalist—the observation of the Sabbath.

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In his Kingdom there was to be no property, no privilege, no pride or precedence, no motive or reward but love. So, he jarred on the established ideas in general—of the rich man, priest, and trader, imperial official or ordinary respectable citizen. Yet any follower of Gautama Buddha or Lao Tse (founder of Taoism) was Nazarene in spirit and could have accepted his teaching. Is it any wonder that to this day this Galilean is too much for our small hearts?

Added to the above is the fact that pacifism has never been so superbly expressed as in Christ's teaching, especially the Sermon on the Mount, which he also lived out. The Sermon on the Mount was one of the formative influences of Gandhi's life, and his satyagraha movement looks on Christ as the greatest of satyagrahis.

How far we are from the justification of so-called righteous wars—wars that are only made possible by the sanction of official churches that nevertheless claim the name of Christ.

Christ saw long ago what modern Truth seekers and prophets of clear vision, like Tolstoy and Gandhi, propound—the link between property and violence. Property is maintained by violence and is, in its turn, the main motive for violence. Gandhi says, "Since so much selfishness, fear, anger, envy and conflict arise out of our concepts of property, it will be wise for the nonviolent resister to develop in relation to property an attitude of detachment consistent with the sentiments of love and human unity." Christ taught the same. He, himself, had nowhere to lay his head. In his teaching the rich are condemned, simply for being rich. And the poor, who serve neither mammon nor materialism, are called blessed.

One does not need to ponder long over Christ's teaching to see that it subverts the very structure of our social existence.

Yet educated men unconsciously strive to hide this fact from themselves and others. In the same way, slavery conflicted with the moral principles taught by Plato and Aristotle, yet neither perceived it because a disavowal of slavery would have destroyed the life by which they lived. Hence, honest objectivity is the one quality above all others needed today if we are to have clarity of vision. This should be the gift of the Christian faith. For one can only begin to see things in their true perspective when one's faith is deeply rooted in a reality that is not moved by the rise and fall of civilizations or the loss of earthly advantage. Without this anchor, we are blinded by concerns over possessions, prestige, social security and personal ambition. In order to have clarity of vision, we must detach ourselves from everything except the Truth or Ultimate Reality. Aldous Huxley says in this regard:

The dictators do all they can to prevent men from taking the road that leads towards non-attachment to the things of this world and attachment to that which is superpersonal. The higher manifestations of religion are far more suspect to the tyrants than the lower, and with reason. For the man who escapes from egotism into superpersonality has transcended his old idolatrous loyalty, not only to himself, but also to the local divinities—nation, party, class, or boss.

Tolstoy expressed it thus: "A man who knows the freedom which Christ gives can no more be coerced into his former idolatrous worship of the state than can a chicken be forced to reenter its shell." The law of love is a higher law. Love works no evil, so love is the fulfilling of the law.

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In this way we can understand why Christ said “The Truth will make you free” and why he compared the Kingdom of Heaven to a pearl of great price. What man is willing to sell all he possesses and give up his lesser attachments? Surrender and sacrifice go with any rich and intense life, though not as ends in themselves, which would be asceticism. Christ told us clearly that it is impossible to live without dying to self.

It is no wonder, then, that the Jewish teacher, Rabbi Josef Ben Levi, said of the teachings of Christ, “The Kingdom of Heaven is an overturned world.” Merejkowsky adds, “One must repent; that is, change all one’s values and standards and one’s will. One must leave the world of three dimensions and enter the world of four dimensions.”



14 THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY was, above all else, a way of life. It exhibited freedom, variety, and personality (Rufus Jones, *Mystical Religious Groups*). The main characteristic of this apostolic age was a peculiarly rich and vivid consciousness of the divine presence that produced a source of illumination. The proof of this inwardly formed self is victory over fleshly passions and a steady manifestation of love.

The main characteristic of the early Christians, the Inward Divine Light, has been neglected by official Christianity and replaced by metaphysical doctrines relating to God and Christ. The uncompromising way of love, lived by the early Christians, has been replaced by the palliating of an unjust social system. This is nothing less than the patching of the old garment.

The early Christians, insofar as they expanded beyond the family group, lived as a self-supporting republic—a fellowship of brothers and equals—where each rendered service according to his ability and received according to his need. Going beyond the competitive self-seeking of individuals, they lived the communism of love—the love that will never claim anything as “mine” while a brother is in need. This love gives the other cloak. It is the Christianity that can be summed up in the words of Christian Morgenstern when he said, “Since Christ we have no other aim but to become brothers.”

To the early Christians, the church was a mystical fellowship formed and gathered, not by the will of man or schemes of flesh and blood but by the direct revelation from God to the soul.

Not only did the early Christians dispense with private property in order to live the communism of love. In obedience to the same law of love, they did not engage in war or other forms of violence, nor did they exploit their fellow men.

To quote some early Christian authors: Clement of Alexandria spoke in AD 200, saying, “Christ, with his blood and with his word, gathers the army that sheds no blood.” Justin the Martyr (AD 150) says, “We refrain from making war on our enemies but gladly go to death for Christ’s sake. Christians are warriors of a different world, peaceful fighters, but in fidelity to their cause and in readiness to die, they excel all others.” These were not idle words. Justin himself was thrown to the lions, along with hundreds of others whose names are lost to us.

A writing from Lactantius of Bithynia, dated to the fourth century, states, “When God prohibits killing, he also warns us not to do even those things which are legal among men. It is unlawful for a just man to serve as a soldier or accuse anyone of a capital

offence. It makes no difference whether you kill with a sword or with a word, since God regards his creature, man, to be sacrosanct.”

From pagan sources we learn that the early Christians fed all who were hungry in their vicinity, whether Christian or not. Their active love led them to deeds for others, such as taking the place of a doomed man in prison to set him free.

Besides such acts of personal kindness to individuals, they witnessed as a group, opposing selfish competition, private property, the exploitation of others, and war. This was possible because they insisted on reconstructing the fabric of their social and corporate life in accordance with Christ's doctrine. They did not merely patch what was old and decaying; their life witnessed to a completely new order of social relationships.

It is no wonder, then, that the fall of Christianity corresponds with the Christians' return to competitive society, private property, and war. In compromising, they cloaked themselves with the old mantle of society, accepting evils in the name of Christ, who had repudiated them.

Though short-lived, the witness of early Christianity is such that every new revealer of the living Christ and every movement towards a more spiritual and unfettered Christianity have called men to “a revival of primitive Christianity.”



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15 THE FALL OF CHRISTIANITY

JESUS SAID, “Now ye seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth.” The reaction to the Truth is always the same from those who seek power, privilege, and wealth. It is the same in the twentieth century as in Akhnaton’s time. Ernst Toller wrote, “The Truth is the greatest luxury on earth, for uttering it men are exiled or put in concentration camp.” Tolstoy called the suppression of Truth, “The Wall of Silence.” He refers in particular to the teachings of Jesus that have been so effectively silenced that men persecute their fellow men in the name of Christianity.

After the initial era of Christianity, the idea of faith as the heart’s attachment and obedience to the will of Christ began to pass away. It was replaced by the view that faith was a definite body of doctrine to be held and handed on.

The organizational structure of the early church was as fluid as the inward life of the church itself. There was only a committee of seven who distributed the communal supplies of food and other necessities of life. Apart from that, the church was a fellowship of brothers and equals in the faith—each contributing according to the measure of his gifts to the life and power of the whole. Capacities for service of every sort were considered “gifts” of the spirit. At a later period people endowed with “gifts” were given official titles. The first Christians had no laity and no clergy. If the presence of the Holy Spirit, which filled the lives of the first Christians, had lasted, there never would have been a distinction between clergy and laity. “With the spirit of the Lord there is liberty.” When God’s spirit was lost, liberty was also lost. Hence the idea of the church as a spiritual fellowship where each is imbued with the spirit of Christ, as branches of a vine sustained by the same sap (and therefore closer than brothers to each other), began to yield to the idea of a church which was formed by Christ and left in the care of vicars whose authority came by ordination. And then there was the priest. He became a mediator between God and man who professed to cure sin-sick souls—not by revealing the source of spiritual power within but by the exercise of his so-called supernatural power or magic rites.

One can trace the development of Roman Catholicism’s imperial system in the first three centuries until the ultimate fall of Christianity took place in AD 312. As those who embodied the imperialistic tendencies of Catholicism became an increasing majority among the early Christians, they set before themselves the ambition of winning the Roman Emperor to Christianity. In order to land such a “catch” they were willing to compromise to the utmost if necessary. When he was on a military campaign,

Constantine the Emperor dreamed that he had seen the stars overhead in the shape of a fiery cross. He catered to the superstition of the pagan Romans by using a wooden cross as his emblem in the next day's battle in which he beat the Germanic tribes in an enormous slaughter. Using the same mascot with further success, he decided to become an adherent of that sign. The church, which had longed to win the Emperor, now flung herself into his arms. Continuing his pagan life and morals, Constantine became a "Christian" and gave Pope Sylvester enormous wealth and temporal power, which has ever since been in the possession of the papacy. The Roman Empire therefore became Christian overnight. Members of the imperial army became nominally "Christian" while still remaining soldiers.

Before this union of church and state, the Christians openly declared that they could not fight with carnal weapons; their warfare was a spiritual one. However, only two years later, in AD 314, the now "Christian" Emperor Constantine issued an edict, pronouncing: "All Christians who throw away their weapons in time of peace shall be excommunicated." From that time on anyone who followed a life of brotherly love in sharing and nonviolence was called a heretic.

The installation of a pope signaled the end of the authority of the Inner Light or "Divine Spirit within" that had led the early Christians. Private property, which had crept in, was now firmly installed as the right thing. "Christ's vicar" was now not only a rich man but had the riches and temporal power of a king. With the "uniting" of pope and emperor, pacifism was banned. This was the price that had to be paid for the capture of such a mighty convert. Two years after the "conversion" of the Emperor, in AD 314, the Council of Arles passed a resolution stating, "They who throw

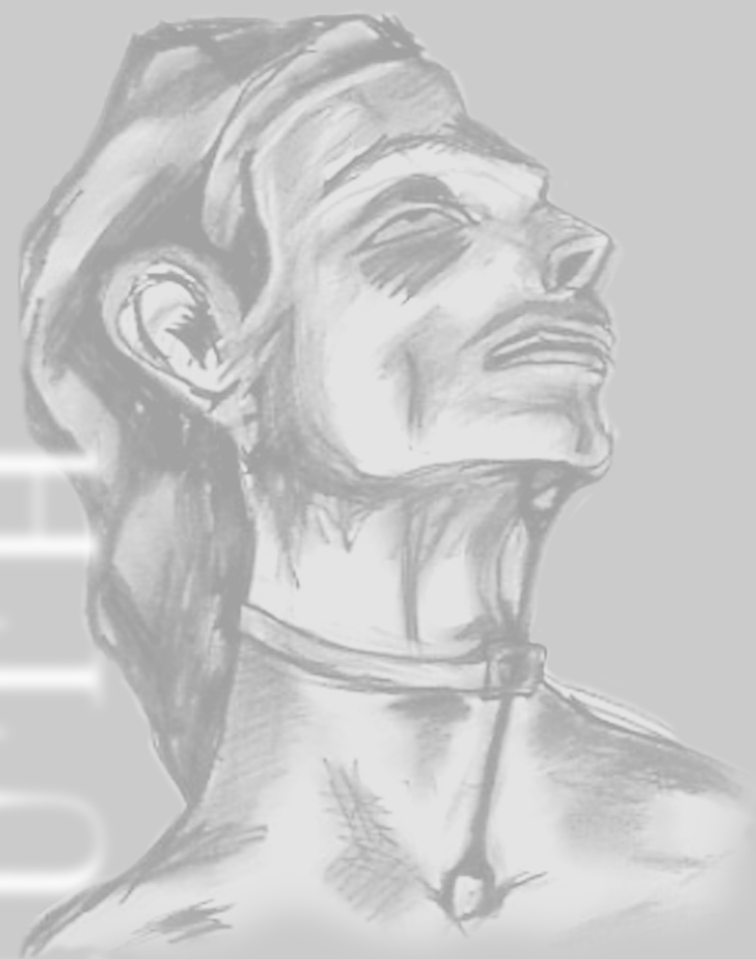
away their weapons in time of peace shall be excommunicated.”

What a fall from the days when, to become a Christian, one had to fling away the sword. Records show that numerous soldiers were killed on becoming Christian; they were not allowed to resign from the army. What a fall from the time of Celsus, the Roman author, who feared the end of the Roman Empire if more people became followers of the Nazarene. In his time, men refused to kill their fellowmen and were free of the desire for wealth at the expense of others, which is the root of imperialism.

Since the fall of Christianity, the Roman Catholic Church has sanctioned war and a hierarchical social system. This system catered to the rank and file of the hierarchy, filling their bellies, satisfying their worldly ambitions and giving them control of invisible powers. But eventually, the church had to reckon with man's unstilled hunger and thirst for a reality that would satisfy his deeper self. It was inevitable that prophets would arise who claimed the soul's unalienable right to God. They upheld the right of a man *to think* and be his own priest, refusing the “stone” which the church offered as bread.

With ruthless cruelty, the Roman Catholic Church persecuted any who tried to apply Christ's doctrine to life in the uncompromising manner of the early Christians. The pagan Roman state had called such people “Nazarenes,” throwing them to the lions. The Roman Catholic Church called them “heretics” and burned them at the stake. The Roman Catholic Church tolerated pacifism and communism only in the seclusion of the monastery and among celibates. They would not allow it in general life, as it would subvert established society, with which they were in league.

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16 THE HERETICS



IT WAS NOT WITHOUT a struggle that materialistic doctrines such as transubstantiation (the miraculous conversion of the Eucharistic elements into the body and blood of Christ) entered the church, bringing with them the blight of moral character and the supremacy of the priestly order. Among those who found the machinery of the Roman Catholic Church unable to satisfy their inner spiritual hunger were the Montanists, who preached that, “The Holy Spirit is the vicar of the Lord, and those who have received him put Truth before custom.” They were bitterly persecuted and put to death, and their witness was obscured as effectively as possible.

We know more about the Montanists than about many other groups, for the Church of Rome had not yet perfected its

“Wall of Silence,” a weapon which was used throughout the following centuries in conjunction with “the stake” to obscure the witness of heretics. Instead of publicizing the doctrines of those who were inspired by the Spirit of Truth within, which manifested itself in such ideas as brotherhood, pacifism, and the following of the Inner Light of Christ as the sole authority, the Roman Church decided on the “Wall of Silence.” Catholicism knew it could not refute these doctrines; their truth would be recognized by the latent sense of divine intuition in men. The only effective way of combating the influence of these disturbing Truth-bearers was to suppress their witness.

It is curious that heresy is never defined or discussed; it is merely silenced. Among the “heretics” there must have been numbers of humble followers of Christ who did not leave a written record of their spiritual aspirations. The “heretical” works that were documented were burned at the stake with their authors as a routine measure carried out by the Roman Church. Few works have escaped the flames, but they show a singular similarity—an insistence that the soul of man alone is the seat of religion, that Christ’s ethic of love should be lived out in life and that true philosophy and religion are one. They refused to kill or exploit the labor of other men and wrote that Truth should be exalted and falsehood condemned.

The records of the Inquisition, which condemned the “heretics” to be burned, teach us much about them. Here, although biased by hatred, the spotless purity of the lives of these men and their unselfish devotion to the Truth shines out. How great was their courage and love of Truth; they could have escaped death by denying their beliefs and acknowledging those of Rome instead.

These heretics called men to renounce their bribes and to rise

above the fear of punishment by the Roman Church; they called men to seek the Truth within. They practiced the Truth, which posed a grave threat to Rome; living the Truth is a far more effective way of propagating it than merely speaking or writing about it.

Over and over, the verdict of the Inquisition read, “They taught the giving up of externals and the following of the spirit within.” Other accusations stated, “They sought to know more than they ought,” and, “They sought to practice their dangerous doctrines by carrying them out in daily life.” They were dangerous to established society because it is not lived according to the ethic of love—love to one’s neighbor as oneself.

Thus in the twelfth century a man might be suspected of heresy when living a life of extraordinary purity and simplicity. A hunter of heretics who knew the signs of heresy, dated to that time, writes, “Heretics are recognized by their customs and speech, for they are modest and well-regulated. They are chaste and temperate in meat and drink. They do not frequent taverns and dances or partake in other vanities. They take no pride in their garments, which are neither costly nor vile. They are known by their modesty of speech, avoiding scurrility and detraction, light words, lies, and oaths. They do not even say “*vere*” or “*certe*”, regarding them as oaths. They do not engage in trade to avoid lies and frauds but live by their labors as mechanics. Their teachers are cobblers. They do not accumulate wealth but are content with necessities. They restrain themselves from anger. They are always at work. They teach and learn and, consequently, pray very little.”

These words aptly describe the Waldenses, a heretical group in the twelfth century. Being obscure men accustomed to manual labor, the church took little notice of these people except to “tax

when orthodox, and burn when heretic.” Persecution drove them into steadily increasing opposition to the church until they were forced to realize that the church could not be reformed from within. It was, rather, apostate, or as they put it, “a house of lies.” Persecutors of heretics, on the other hand, were promised remission of sins for their service to the “church.”

The twelfth century saw the worldly might and prestige of the Roman Church at its zenith. Every crowned head in Europe trembled before the pope, who not only had military supremacy, but also was believed to have power to “damn” the soul. The spiritual bankruptcy of the church was abysmal; its depths were as great as the height of its temporal power and wealth. Around this time two men appeared from within the church who spoke openly against this appalling state of affairs. More important than their invective was the witness of their lives imbued with the spirit of Christ, in startling contrast to the official church. Machiavelli spoke with profound insight, saying, “Christianity would have become entirely extinct had not St. Francis and St. Dominic renewed its life and kindled it afresh in the hearts of men by their imitation of Jesus. They saved religion but destroyed the church.” After their deaths, everything was done to trim the doctrines of these men to fit into the architectural structure of the church. The spiritual Franciscans, a left-wing branch of that order that clung to Francis’ simple life and uncompromising standards, were pronounced “heretics.”

The teaching of groups of socio-religious heretics as culled from the annals of their bitter enemies is, “The earth is the Lord’s, so all property should be for the common good; private property is theft.” Another states, “Good will and spiritual insight are more efficacious than the sacraments.” And, “Heaven and hell are not places, but he who knows God possesses heaven, and he who

commits a mortal sin carries hell within himself just as a man carries a decayed tooth.” “The final achievement of God is the manifestation of himself in the hearts of men, and the highest achievement of man is the inner consciousness of God.” And finally, “The soul’s inner voice is safer than the ‘truths’ preached by the church.” They branded the Roman Catholic flock as ignorant, unspiritual, and superstitious. They called it idolatrous to have statues and incense and laughed at those who kissed the bones of the saints. More and more of the Roman Catholic flock gradually saw the truth, due to this “pestiferous spirit of liberty,” which was paid for by those courageous Truth-lovers, the heretics. They deserve not to be forgotten, for they belong to the list of the brave who have trusted in the grandeur of the soul and have helped to free it, at a great risk and cost.

This “pestiferous spirit of liberty,” as church authorities termed it in the twelfth century, proliferated until the fifteenth century, when the Reformation occurred. As he investigated the “Wall of Silence” raised by the Roman Church, Tolstoy discovered a heretical document dating to this period. (Tolstoy publicized the Church’s stifling attitude to manifestations of the conscience, aptly naming it the “Wall of Silence.”) The document had escaped the flames to which its author, Peter Chelcicky, had succumbed, and had lain unprinted for four hundred years. It was called “The Net of Faith” and told of Christ’s command to his disciples to be fishers of men. But, it stated, in AD 312 two big fish broke out of the net—namely, the pope and the emperor; all the little fish followed. Hence the church was no longer within the net of Christ’s faith.

In his *Light of Asia*, Edwin Arnold expresses how the merging of religious authorities with the ruling classes applied to all of official Christendom in Europe. “Wilt thou dare shake down the

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law that feeds the priests and props the realm?” said the Tempter to Gautama. “In the name of Truth, I dare,” said Gautama. This same answer was given by Christ and by the socio-religious heretics. They were revolutionaries seeking to found a society of love, brotherhood, nonviolence, justice, equality, and peace. This society would replace that which was based on self and maintained by force. It is of little wonder, then, that those who championed autocracy and militarism deemed these doctrines “dangerous.”

Truth is Eternal

BOOK II · PART II



TRUTH



17 WYCLIFFE AND PRE-REFORMATION ENGLAND

JOHN WYCLIFFE was called the “First Protestant,” though many heretics had witnessed against the Roman Church right from the times of the early Christians. He lived fully one hundred years before the Reformation and was the first man of world eminence in England to denounce the doctrine of transubstantiation. Wycliffe’s filling of a chair at Oxford drew students from all over Europe to England. He is also known as the “Father of English Prose,” just as his contemporary, Chaucer, is known as the “Father of English Poetry.” Both these men ridiculed the blatant corruptions of Rome, though one from a much more superficial standpoint. While Chaucer veiled his darts in meter as in the *Canterbury Tales*, Wycliffe wrote daringly truthful and challenging pamphlets. While

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Chaucer poked fun at the friar selling “indulgences hot from Rome” or sacred relics made from “piggies’ bones,” Wycliffe went much further by publishing a critical analysis of the fabric of “popery” (Roman Catholicism).

Wycliffe’s pamphlets were barbed with truth and sincerity and did much damage to the system which was so interwoven with falsehood and insincerity. His pamphlets ran thus on the doctrine of transubstantiation itself:

I maintain that among all the heresies which have ever appeared in the Church, there was never one which was more cunningly smuggled in by hypocrites than this, or which in more ways deceives the people. For it plunders them, leads them astray into idolatry, and denies the teaching of scripture.

He also said:

The revenue that the Pope draws from England alone is greater than that drawn by any king in Christendom. God gave his sheep to be pastured, not to be shaven and shorn. (Trialogus IV Chapter II by Wycliffe)

At first, Wycliffe’s pamphlets appealed to the greed of the nobility and brought him their support. But when they realized that he also preached equalitarian doctrines, they forsook him. While these pamphlets worked toward the destruction of the Church of Rome, an edifice unworthy of God or man, Wycliffe had a constructive message also. This was based solely on the call, “Back to Christ.” Scrap all the concretions of ecclesiasticism and uphold Christ as the only authority. He writes, “The apostles without any saints’ days loved Jesus Christ more than we do.” And “As oft as the song

delighteth me more than that what is songen, so oft I acknowledge that I trespass grievously.” Jesus did not preach Temple worship. His anti-Temple talk was part of the evidence used to condemn him to death. Nor did Jesus preach the necessity of having clergy, saying rather, “Call no man Father.”

On the other hand Jesus taught men an inward religion, whereby man might become the temple of God and a son of God if he followed the dictates of “the God within.” He was to worship in spirit and in truth. William Longland, a contemporary poet of the common people, vividly expressed the inarticulate longing of the common folk for a religion lived out in everyday life in his “Piers Plowman.”

Thus Wycliffe gathered followers from all strata of society. These followers or “Lollards” did not recognize the authority of any clergy. (“Lollard” meant “vain babbler”; it was a nickname of approbrium like “Quaker.”) They preached against social injustice and exploitation. The catchword of the Peasants’ Revolt, “When Adam dug and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?” was definitely of Lollard origin, as were other such anti-feudal feelings espoused in the name of the “brotherhood of man.” The Lollards also opposed war and preached against the existence of such trades as the armorer, whose work was to forge weapons to kill men. Another profession rejected by them was that of the jeweler, whose handicrafts fostered luxury in a few while the masses lacked the bare necessities of life. We can imagine what a troublesome set of babblers the Lollards were to the adherents of the feudal system and of the Roman Catholic Church.

As stated earlier, the nobles at first backed Wycliffe, lured as they had been by the possibility of snatching booty for themselves. In other words, they hoped to appropriate some of the fabulous

sums that were shipped from their estates to Rome each year. But when they grasped Wycliffe's "Sermon on the Mount" ethics of brotherhood and nonviolence, the nobles joined with popery to persecute him. Catholicism willingly embraced the nobles, for it also wished to extinguish Wycliffe's light from motives of self-preservation. Wycliffe's theory of the supremacy of the individual conscience meant throwing on the dust heap both churches and ecclesiasticism. The nobles fought this tooth and nail.

Rather than dying to self and embracing life, the landowners who formed the bulk of Parliament at the time of the Peasants' Revolt endorsed the spirit of self-preservation at all costs. Richard II, the young boy king, attempted to palliate the peasants with promises of emancipation from serfdom, but Parliament answered that their serfs were their property. The king could not take their goods from them without their own consent. "This consent," they ended, "we have never given and never will give, were we all to die in one day."

The combined opposition of the so-called spiritual and temporal powers forced Wycliffe to resign from Oxford. Seeing the partnership of a false Christianity with the rapacious nobility, it is no wonder that Wycliffe and the Lollards in general referred to the church as anti-Christ. (The early Quakers used the same term to denote the church).

The university fell into a state of stagnation after this ban on Truth and Truth-seekers had been passed. Wycliffe, be it understood, was the most learned man in the Europe of his day. Culture and learning and the other manifestations of man's higher sensitivities only come into their own when Truth prevails in the simple creed of brotherhood under the Fatherhood of God. Or, as the ancient Hebrew prophets put it, "When the knowledge of the

Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the sea.” Thus Oxford stagnated until the coming of the new learning a century later.

Not only were the rich prelates united with the nobility, but the hypnotic influence of the church (*nulla salus ex ecclesiastica*) that pronounced Wycliffe a “heretic” was enough to make the mendicant friars forget their age-long feud with the rich prelates, taking up the cause against Wycliffe instead. Wycliffe’s bitter comment on this alliance was, “Pontius Pilate and Herod are today made friends. Since they have made a heretic of Christ, it is an easy inference for them to count simple Christians as heretics.”

So Wycliffe had to live in retirement. The authorities dared not do worse to him; he was not as socially “obscure” as many of the heretic martyrs had been. In seclusion, Wycliffe translated the Bible into the English vernacular, a harmless enough pastime in the eyes of the authorities. Yet Wycliffe knew he was forging a weapon. Wielded by other hands than his, the translated Bible would accomplish the emancipation of millions from the bondage of the triumphant hierarchy. A Bishop of Leicester “let the cat out of the bag” and witnessed to the efficacy of Wycliffe’s work, when he uttered with chagrin, “The scriptures have now become a vulgar thing—more open to lay folk and women that know how to read than to the clerks themselves.”

The Lollards, meanwhile, were bitterly persecuted. This must have been a trial for Wycliffe, for it is easier to suffer oneself than to see the suffering of those we love. (Tolstoy also experienced this when he saw “Tolstoyans” condemned to prison while he was left free.) But Wycliffe never swerved from the belief that Truth would conquer in the end, in spite of tremendous opposition to his teachings from both civil and religious authorities.

Wycliffe’s health deteriorated, and he died before the “stake”

could be meted out to him. His enemies would have killed him had they dared. Wycliffe was popular as an educated man who used his learning and intellectual powers for the enlightenment and emancipation of the common man. He was also loved for the personal charm that accompanies real greatness, which deepened the influence he derived from the spotless purity of his life.

Among other works and his short incisive pamphlets, Wycliffe wrote *Civitas Dei*, which embodied Jesus' revolutionary doctrine of the "Kingdom of God on earth." It dispensed with ritual, churches, and clergy and pointed to an inward religion whose implications were in the law of love lived in everyday life.

Wycliffe was fearless in burning every bridge behind him, venturing his life on his soul's insight. He challenged the supremacy of the church on behalf of man's direct approach to God.

The spiritual influence of such a fearless and selfless seeker of the Truth cannot be measured. Indeed, he was acclaimed by later ages as the "morning star of the Reformation."



TRUTH



18 JOHN HUSS: BEGINNINGS OF HUMANISM

SO WYCLIFFE PASSED AWAY. A college was built at Oxford to counteract his teaching, and statutes were passed to annihilate his followers. Wycliffe's remains were dug up and thrown into the River Trent, and all the might of the Roman Catholic Church gathered to extinguish the flame that Wycliffe had kindled in the spirit of his cry, "Back to Christ."

Yet the flame was never extinguished in England. Rufus Jones, himself an eminent Quaker, says, "Lollards and Quakers had much in common. The very founders of Quakerism were martyred directly or indirectly for their faith in Lollard views. Consciously or unconsciously, Fox and his followers were the genuine apostolic successors of Wycliffe's 'evangelical men.'" But, adds Rufus Jones,

“The kindling power of the Wycliffe flame gets its most remarkable revelation in Bohemia with John Huss and his holy experiment in Christian communism.”

It is an interesting object of speculation as to why the influence of Wycliffe’s teaching in England stopped short of Christian communism. In England the Lollards preached socialism, pacifism, and an inward religion based on the inner light. On the continent Wycliffe’s direct followers lived all three principles.

It is interesting to trace how Huss became “infected” with Wycliffe’s teaching. At the time of Wycliffe the Queen of England was née Ann of Bohemia. Being convinced of the truth of Wycliffe’s teaching, she took (or sent) some of his works to Bohemia. They filtered into the University of Prague and were noticed by some of the ecclesiastical principals of the university—those secret police of orthodoxy! The university authorities ordered the works to be publicly burned in Prague Square. It was perhaps because of the bonfire that a young student of the university, John Huss, became curious to know what ideas were so odious to Mother Church. He procured Wycliffe’s works and read them and was fully convinced of their truth, so much that he determined, with a group of like-minded friends, to put into practice the teaching of Wycliffe. Thus arose the socio-religious, communistic, pacifist group of Hussites. Or, more briefly stated—thus began an experiment in human brotherhood based on love.

This group lived the same life as the early Christians, for the same reasons, though they knew much less than we do about them. (It was not until the nineteenth century that a remarkable series of finds were made regarding the early Christians.)

It was an experiment of brief duration. For some ten years the Hussites lived as a city set on a hill, as a candle in the dark room

of false Christianity. The light from that candle illuminated the farthest corners of Christendom. The spark of God in the most unlettered Christians responded to the flame. Here indeed was “bread.” What the church offered was “a stone.” This witness to Jesus’ teaching was so dangerous to the prestige and power of the Roman Catholic Church and the privileged classes that drastic measures were taken to quench the light that would enlighten the ignorant and the oppressed. Huss and many of his followers were cruelly burned at the stake.

Yet the group’s brief shining had tremendous influence in paving the way for others to break away from Rome. Luther was greatly influenced by Wycliffe’s writings. They inspired his bold denouncement of Rome, though he did not preach the uncompromising “Back to Christ” doctrine that was lived by the Hussites. In later years, when Luther’s teaching began to disturb the peace of the Bishop of London, the latter declared, “This is no pernicious novelty but only new arms being added to the great band of Wycliffe heretics.”

Before moving beyond England I should note that Oxford awoke from its century of stagnation with the study of Greek, which represented a birth of new learning. There were three friends who led this movement. Colet, who lived from 1466 to 1519 and was one of the “reformers before the Reformation,” was probably born in London and met Erasmus at Oxford. The others were Thomas More and Erasmus. All three determined to learn Greek with the sole object of reading the New Testament in the original, in the hope of discovering the historical Jesus, whose figure had been so perverted and obscured by the mummery of the church. As Greene says, “The awakening of a rational Christianity, whether in England or in the Teutonic world at large, begins with the studies

of Colet. To him Greek was the way by which he could unlock the Gospels and the New Testament; in these he thought he could find a new religious standing ground based on a vivid realization of the person of Christ.”

Erasmus wrote as a young penniless student in Paris, “I have given up my whole soul to the learning of Greek. As soon as I get any money I shall buy Greek books; after that I shall buy some clothes.” Erasmus was inspired by the same search to rediscover the historical Jesus as were his friends Colet and More, and their efforts bore fruit. Thomas More’s famous book *Utopia* was directly inspired by his vision of Jesus and his teachings, a fact that is often overlooked. The book was More’s interpretation of Jesus’ “Kingdom of God on earth.” To this day the word *Utopia* denotes the perfect society.

Colet, inspired by his vision of the historical Jesus, put all his money into the founding of the first grammar school. He was the pioneer of middle-class education. His friend More wrote to him: “No wonder your school raises a storm, for it is like the wooden horse in which armed Greeks were hidden for the ruin of barbarous Troy.”

We have another glimpse of Colet that raises him above the clergy of his day. At the outbreak of war between England and France, he thundered from the pulpit of St. Paul’s that “even an unjust peace is better than the most just war.” He also said, “When men fight and destroy one another out of hatred and ambition, they fight not under the banner of Christ but the devil.”

Erasmus protested against war in the same vein. He also attacked the war-makers of his day, saying: “There is no offering more acceptable to the devil than when one Christian kills another.” And, “Kings who are scarcely men are called ‘divine’ and

‘serene,’ though they turn the world upside down in a storm of war; ‘illustrious,’ though they grovel in ignorance of all that is noble; ‘Catholic,’ though they follow anything but Christ. The eagle, of all birds, seemed to represent royalty to wise men—a bird neither beautiful nor musical nor good for food but murderous, greedy, hateful, and the curse of all, whose harmful powers are surpassed only by its desire to do harm.”

Erasmus was also the pioneer of “higher criticism,” an exponent of the hitherto much overlooked commandment, “Love the Lord thy God with all thy mind.” His life’s work fostered the spirit of inquiry, thus helping to free men from the claims of authority.

The outcome of this partial “back to Christ” movement resulted in branding war as unchristian. It denounced the ambition of the princes, freely criticized the political order and orthodox dogma, and believed in universalizing education. These men were forerunners of the rationalists and dreamt the dreams from which our age is turning in disillusionment. Theirs were the dreams of a golden age wrought peaceably and purely by the progress of intelligence and the development of human virtue. Reason was to be the instrument whereby the old world of ignorance and bigotry was to vanish away before the light and knowledge of the new reign. Like most rationalists, they ignored the problem of evil—that mysterious selfish will in the individual that sacrifices anyone and anything for itself. If they recognized evil at all, they equated it with ignorance, supposing it would flee away as the dawn of enlightenment approached. This assumption is true but does not go deep enough; it does not fit the unpleasant facts of life.

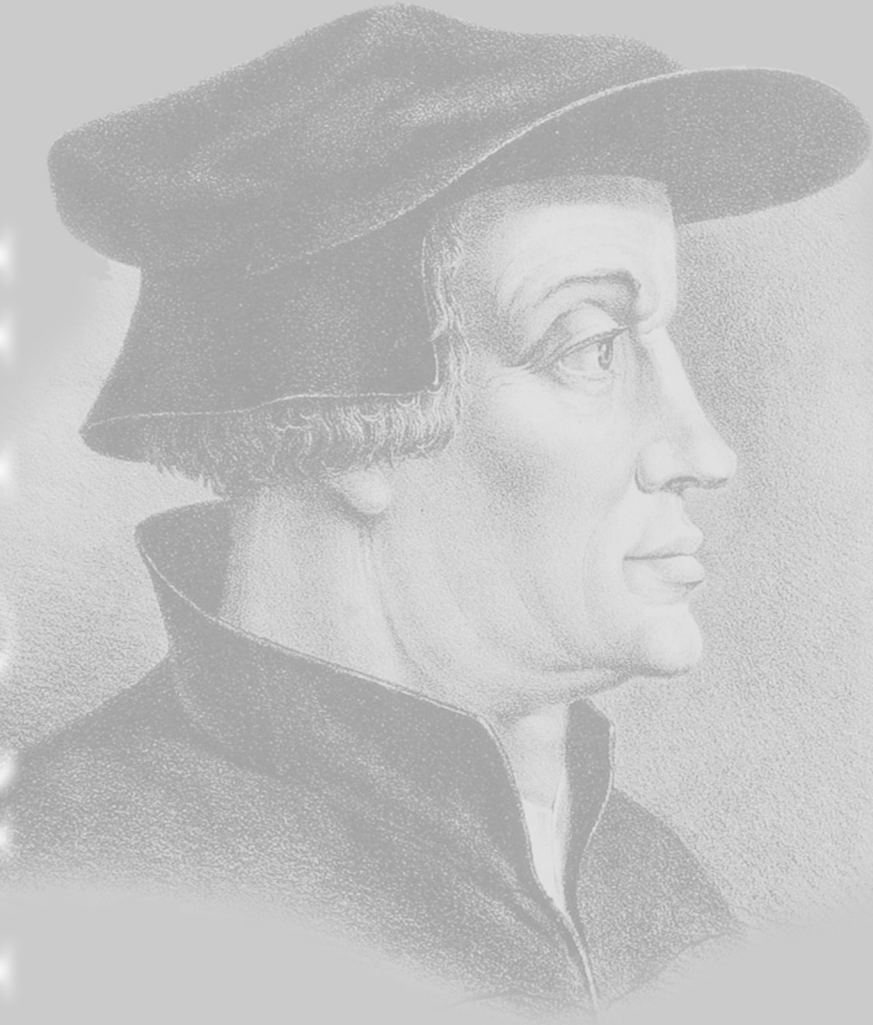
As an instance of the fallibility of human reason, it is interesting to note that Alfred Nobel, the discoverer of dynamite and founder of the famous Nobel Peace Prize, believed so much in human

TRUTH IS ETERNAL

reason that he thought his invention would contribute to world peace. He reasoned that dynamite would render war so barbarous that human reason would recoil from anything so unreasonably foolish and destructive.

Reinhold Niebuhr aptly describes today's tendency to acknowledge the insufficiency of reason in saving mankind. He says that man in the heyday of rationalism was like the son "wasting his substance in riotous living." Now that he is bankrupt, man is slowly returning to the Father.

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19 THE REFORMATION: ITS POLITICAL ASPECT

AFTER THE INSPIRING witness of Wycliffe and Huss, the Reformers Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli make a sorry contrast!

The extent of their reform only covered the flagrant corruptions of Rome such as popery, transubstantiation, image worship, celibacy, and the sale of indulgences. They did not probe the fundamentals of Jesus' teaching as did Wycliffe and the heretics before him. Doing so they would have lost the support of the princes and the rising bourgeois class. Both these groups backed the Reformers, acting out of selfish motives. If the Reformers had preached dangerous equalitarian doctrines like Wycliffe and Huss, they would have had no support from these two classes.

As the spirit of nationalism grew, the princely classes resented Rome's foreign interference and pecuniary exactions in their territories. The rising middle class looked on the Roman Catholic Church as a real obstacle to their further progress. The Roman Church had always backed the feudal system, sanctioning its colossal landlordism as divinely ordained. Thus it looked on the rising middle class of merchants, who "lusted for gain," with disfavor. Hitherto, people had been content to make an adequate living, believing that God ordained each one's status in society. But now they wanted to make a profit, which was branded by the Roman Catholic Church as "usury." To its credit, the Roman Catholic Church had always preached against usury or taking interest. But they were supremely inconsistent, swallowing that other camel of "hereditary landlordism."

From the standpoint of the rising bourgeois class the Reformation was merely a religious disguise for its first decisive battle against feudalism. To the princes, however, it became the means of shaking Rome's interference in their territories and of stopping the flow of gold to Rome. In many countries the Roman Catholic Church owned one third of the land. With the coming of the Reformation, the princes could confiscate this land. No wonder they backed the Reformers. But they remembered the lesson of the Hussites before them and were determined that no "back to Christ" movement would be tolerated. Their support of the reforms stopped far short of Christian communism. They only endorsed a dilute and innocuous Christianity, not a dangerous and subversive return to the literal following of Jesus' teaching.

The Reformers were consumed by their desire for widespread reform. Thus, they were willing to compromise to acquire the support they thought necessary for success. To achieve worldly suc-

cess, they had to omit the principles of pacifism and communism. Similarly the doctrine of the Inner Light of Christ had to be dropped; the prince of each petty kingdom denied the authority of the pope, claiming to replace him as head of the church and controller of men's consciences in his kingdom. Whole countries became "Protestant" overnight. This gave birth to the national churches in countries such as Scotland, Sweden, Denmark, and Prussia. In spite of his immoral private life, Henry VIII became the first head of the Church of England. Elizabeth also led the Church of England. She endorsed the lucrative new slave trade, attaching a ship to Hawkins' expeditions for her own personal profit and naming it the "Jesus." In these ways the leadership of the Church of England fell far short of the ideal of universal human brotherhood and Jesus' ethic of love.

The birth of Protestantism was a tremendous impetus in the rise of nationalism. One might almost describe it as a twin-birth of Protestantism and that odious fetish, "nationalism." Protestant countries began linking patriotism with religion. This was expressed in such cries as "God, Prussia, and Hohenzollern"; "God, the Netherlands, and House of Orange"; and "God and the king." People began serving both God and the king. This caused an appalling confusion in what had once been clear ethical thinking. There was now a veritable mixing of black and white. To this day God is merely a name to the masses. Man's supreme loyalty has become the national totem pole of flag, race, or king. It is to these that he gives his allegiance.

Heering says: "Where the eternal has receded and vanished, the transitory and earthly presses to the fore as the chief and only reality."

In regards to war and the persecution of "heretics" the Reformed

churches were no better than the Roman Catholic Church. They all sanctioned war. Zwingli himself was killed in battle fighting against Roman Catholicism. And his disciple, Bizer, wrote a treatise on "The Execution of Heretics." Luther reassured "Christian" soldiers, soothing their disquieted consciences by saying, "The hand which bears the sword of government is, as such, no longer man's hand but God's. It is not man but God who hangs, breaks on the wheel, beheads, strangles and wages war." (Luther, *Ob Kriegs Leute*)

Luther was also not a radical in regards to social injustice. He did not try to unseat the privileged, nor did he side with the oppressed. Such sentiments would have spoiled his chances of success. Luther rather supported the upper class. When a widespread peasants' revolt broke out in Germany, influenced by people's newly acquired access to the Bible in the vernacular, Luther urged the nobles to annihilate them, squelching their cries of, "Christ has made all men free" with the words, "He who rebels against government, however evil that government may be, is deserving of death." Luther's reverence for government, no matter how unjust, was linked with his scorn of the mob, which he degraded as "the stupid and sinful populace."

Luther's Christianity was sadly superficial. We must, however, give him credit for his feeling against the corruptions of Rome and for preaching "justification by faith" rather than through ritual and sacraments. But he ignored the social implications of that faith, to the extent that the later German Socialist movement reacted violently against all "religion."

Calvin accepted all of Luther's tenets with only slight variations. Chief among these is his answer to the problem that vexes sincere followers of Jesus: how can one live out the spirit of love in

a social system based on self and maintained by force? The Roman Catholic Church had escaped this difficulty by pointing to the lives of vowed men and women in convents and monasteries. In so doing, they were able to ignore the subversive social witness of a group of people living under the law of love. It is significant that groups that maintained family life, upholding the unit of the monogamous family, have always been persecuted, both by the Roman Catholic Church and by the state. The obvious reason for this is the self-preservation of their privileged positions.

Luther escaped the dilemma of how to reconcile state morality with the ethic of love by preaching that man must live on two levels. Man's outer life, said Luther, must be subject to the state and temporal powers; his inner life alone need conform to the ethic of love. In practice, this meant compromising with the exploitation of men in outer life while merely endorsing a lofty idealism in the inner life. This rigid separation of "religion" from "life" led to an extreme form of transcendentalism. In Lutheran countries the socialist movement branded "religion" wholesale as the "dope" of the people.

Calvin adopted a third method to escape the problem of duality. He upheld the whole Bible as an object of worship, stressing the Ten Commandments and the stern and violent indignation of the Old Testament. He used the sheer bulk of the Old Testament with its lower ethical standards to crush out the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount receded into the background as a beautiful but impossible ideal. In contrast to Lutheranism, Calvinism fails to justify the Sermon on the Mount's thorough ethic of love in the face of social and political morality and to reconcile the two. In Calvin's correspondence we catch no hint of the conflict between man's citizenship of the state and his

citizenship of the Kingdom of God, which the keenest Christian conscience demands. Calvin failed to realize that the conscience demands an ethic of love. This strengthened Calvinism but made it less inward than Lutheranism. Calvinism knows nothing of the distinction between the morality of free intent and fettered morality.

Thus for Calvin, the state was not merely the means of punishment and antidote for sin that it was with Luther but rather the “Christian” state. Calvinism avoided the dualism of Lutheranism by bringing the state and its instruments of power under a “Christian” law based mainly on the Old Testament, promoting outward means of salvation. God’s glory was therefore involved in the Christian state, and everything that ministered to the glory of the Christian state was also to the glory of God! Calvinism, rather than Lutheranism, took root in England. Here the idea of the Christian state clouded the thinking of the socially minded. They imbibed the Calvinistic Church’s superficially optimistic belief in “Gradualism.” On the other hand the socialist movements in England were not on the whole anti-religious.

It was Oliver Cromwell, the Calvinistic Puritan and Independent, who laid a religious foundation for English imperialism with his belief in the Christian state. This imperialism was imitated by other nations. Cromwell’s imperialism began with his own person; he believed that God had elected him to carry out his plans for England and subsequently for the world.

Cromwell applied to his race the Jewish theocratic idea of the Kingdom of God on earth, which was applied by Augustine to the Roman Catholic Church. Cromwell reasoned that if righteousness and peace are the characteristics of the realm of God on earth, the elect British nation had the task of establishing righteousness and

peace over the whole world. But to that end it must dominate the whole world. The first requisite for this was a great fleet. This was followed by violent colonization. Cromwell used the Old Testament severity of Calvinism to justify “the means which are needful to the end.” He stated: “We must needs admit many cruelties if we are to be able to effect righteousness and peace. Is not that righteousness already beginning with the ‘word of God,’ which men are preaching in subject territories?”

The German comment on this was that “The Englishman speaks of Christ and thinks of cotton.” It was not necessarily hypocrisy on the part of the English but rather a boundless self-assertion due to their conviction of a world mission from God and a belief that their state was “Christian!”

Thus began the “white menace.” It was worse than any menace seen before, witnessed in the total extermination of the Tasmanians (a race of exceptional interest to paleontologists) and the near extinction of most “red” Indian races and the aborigines of Australia, New Zealand, and the West Indies. Yet the superficially minded believed this was for God’s glory! Religiously inspired nationalism and imperialism is indeed the devil incognito, as is the dilution of Christianity. It misleads people and justifies extreme unbrotherliness to other races in the name of Christ. Much of the self-deception of the Calvinists was due to the fact that prominence was given to strict Sabbath observance, prohibition of dancing and swearing, modesty of dress and behavior, and abstinence from intoxicants. This gave the false impression that the ethic of love governed the whole of life. In reality, the Reformed churches, like the Roman Catholic Church before them, were far from living the implications of love; they acquiesced in social injustice and war.

As stated earlier in this chapter, the Reformed churches champ-

ioned the rising middle class, whose “lust for gain” was frowned on by Roman Catholicism which, itself, championed feudalism. The Protestant churches suited their teaching to fit this new class. Calvin writes: “What reason is there to prevent the income from business from becoming larger than that from landowning; from whence do the merchants’ profits come, except from his own diligence and industry?” The Puritan Baxter tells his flock that unless they take full advantage of all opportunities for acquiring wealth, they are not serving God. “If God shows you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way and if you refuse this, choosing a less gainful way, you refuse to be God’s steward. You may labor to be rich for God, though not for the flesh and sin.” Wesley, the Methodist leader, says: “We ought not to prevent people from being diligent and frugal; we must exhort all Christians to gain all they can and save all they can. They should, in effect, grow rich.”

The New England Puritans believed that their aim was the glorification of God through a disciplined life in which thrift and hard work was desirable, and luxury, extravagance, and idleness were undesirable. The best Christian was, therefore, a man whose activity was suited to the acquisition of wealth. Benjamin Franklin expressed it thus: “The way to wealth depends chiefly on two words: industry and frugality. In other words, waste neither time nor money. He that gets all he can honestly and saves all he gets will certainly become rich.”

This is the spirit of capitalism.

For the Calvinist, however, it was more than ordinary advice; it was an ideal of Christian conduct. The best way to work for the glory of God was to put this teaching into practice. The rich man could enter the Kingdom of Heaven after all, as a steward of wealth. The homeless Master who had nowhere to lay his head and

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whose material possessions were no more than the clothes he wore upon him would not have made a good Calvinist.



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20 THE REFORMATION: ONE ETHIC OR TWO ETHICS

FOUR HUNDRED YEARS have passed since the Reformation. Knowing that the “successful” Reformers compromised so grossly in order to carry “the world” with them, we should not be surprised at the disillusionment of man today. He seeks for light in vain, finding none in the official churches. Thinking the official churches are the genuine interpreters of Jesus’ teaching, he turns away and denies that Jesus is the “Light of the World.” He seeks deliverance in Marxism and other “isms,” which are only partial truths.

All the official churches have treated Jesus and his revolutionary doctrine after the fashion of Dostoyevsky’s “Grand Inquisitor.” In this imaginary episode, Jesus appears again on earth.

The poor acclaim him with joy and his words inflame them with a new purpose in life. *The truth will make you free. I am come to bear witness to the truth. I am come that you may have life more abundantly.* To the Grand Inquisitor these teachings are highly subversive. He does not believe that the common man, poor, sinful, ignorant creature that he is, is capable of either knowing the truth or accepting freedom. The Roman Church has accepted this assumption and is built on authority. The teachings of Jesus, on the other hand, will set men free from authority. So, the Grand Inquisitor summons his guard to arrest Jesus. Under cover of night the Grand Inquisitor secretly visits the prisoner. He says: “Are you He or only his semblance? Why have you come back to upset our work? We have corrected your work. Go, or I will have you burned as the most dangerous of heretics!”

It is not only the Roman Catholic Church that has “corrected” Jesus’ work. The Reformers also corrected Jesus’ revolutionary teaching with “success” as their object. They watered it down so that it would be acceptable to the superlatively rich—namely, the princes. The princes, in return, granted this subverted form of Christianity their protection and military backing. Thus whole countries became “Protestant” overnight, just as the pagan Roman Empire turned Roman Catholic in AD 312.

Conversion on such a vast scale can never be anything but nominal—Christianity in name but little more. Luther comments sadly on the spiritual poverty of his huge flock after surveying his vast “success” in wresting most of the Teutonic peoples of Europe from the Catholic fold, saying: “Genuine Christians are none too common. I wish I could see two together in a place.” Yet, where true Christians were found together, Luther and his counterparts did everything possible to persecute and silence them. For Luther,

Calvin, and Zwingli, success was the main goal. Hence they looked on the “whole-hog,” “back to Christ” Reformers as a menace to the cause of a successful Reformation. The moderates (Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli) knew exactly what degree of reform the princes would back. They squashed the revolutionary wing of Reformers who antagonized the princes and robbed the Reforming party of their military backing by proclaiming the undiluted doctrine of Jesus. The moderates were ready to compromise to any necessary degree to achieve their ends. But the “whole-hog,” “root-and-branch” Reformers were willing to stake their lives on their vision of the Truth. Rufus Jones aptly expressed it thus:

There are two types of religious genius. There is first the genius who sees through the complex tangle of his time and forecasts a truth which all men will recognize in a happier age to come. Once he has seen it, this vision transforms all his ideas and aims. It spoils for him all meaner gains and half-truths which must be won through the surrender of a possible better. He is obedient to his vision, regardless of the cost. He bears witness to the full light that he has seen, even though he can compel no one else in the heedless world of his generation to see it. He may only cry in the wilderness. But he will cry at all events. And he will cry of the highest thing his heart knows. This viewpoint was held by the “root-and-branch” Reformers.

The other genius understands his age like an open book. He knows how far his contemporaries will allow themselves to be carried. He compromises freely in order to carry his epoch with him toward the goal he sees. He will not travel further nor faster than the substantial men of his time consider safe and wise!

Such were the moderate Reformers of the “successful” Reformation—Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli. And such was the secret of their “success.” In retrospect, there is no question which group of reformers was right—the moderates who compromised and “succeeded” or the radicals who died for their ideals and “failed.” The radicals would not compromise the Truth but followed fearlessly. The moderates compromised and “succeeded,” believing the world was not yet ready for the love ethic. They did not witness to the Truth but to a “corrected” version of Jesus’ teaching—“corrected” to fit an unjust social system imbued with the spirit of acquisitiveness and maintained by force. Official Christianity, both Roman Catholic and reformed, is entirely inadequate as a light to the world because of its lack of vision for society and its horrible entanglement with money and power. Few know of any other kind of Christianity. The “wall of silence,” used so effectively by the Roman Catholic Church in the days of its power, has been used just as effectively by the Reformed churches. They have judiciously drawn a veil of oblivion over that branch of Reformers whom we have called the “whole-hog Reformers” or “root-and-branch Reformers,” who called themselves “Spiritual Reformers” and took an extremely left-wing political stance. True spirituality is also true materialism. To socialists today, the word “spiritual” arouses immediate suspicion. Spirituality has been so degraded by dualism—by the separation of the sacred and secular, things of the “other world” and that which is of “this world,” and the void between man’s ideals and the practice of them.

Those of us who say, “We do not want your Christianity; we want Christ,” leap with joy on discovering the truly Christ-like reformers. They were the extreme radicals of the Reformation and were consumed with social passion. They had a vivid consciousness

of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Therefore, they were not only socialists, but thousands of them lived as Christian communists. Their communism was the outcome of an honest attempt to live out the law of love. They witnessed to the brotherhood of man, and their lives declared: “since Christ we have only one aim—to become brothers.” The acquisitive, covetous man died to be reborn as the man of disinterested ethical passion. Their goal was to form a society, here and now, in which man might be free of every kind of tyranny and exploitation.

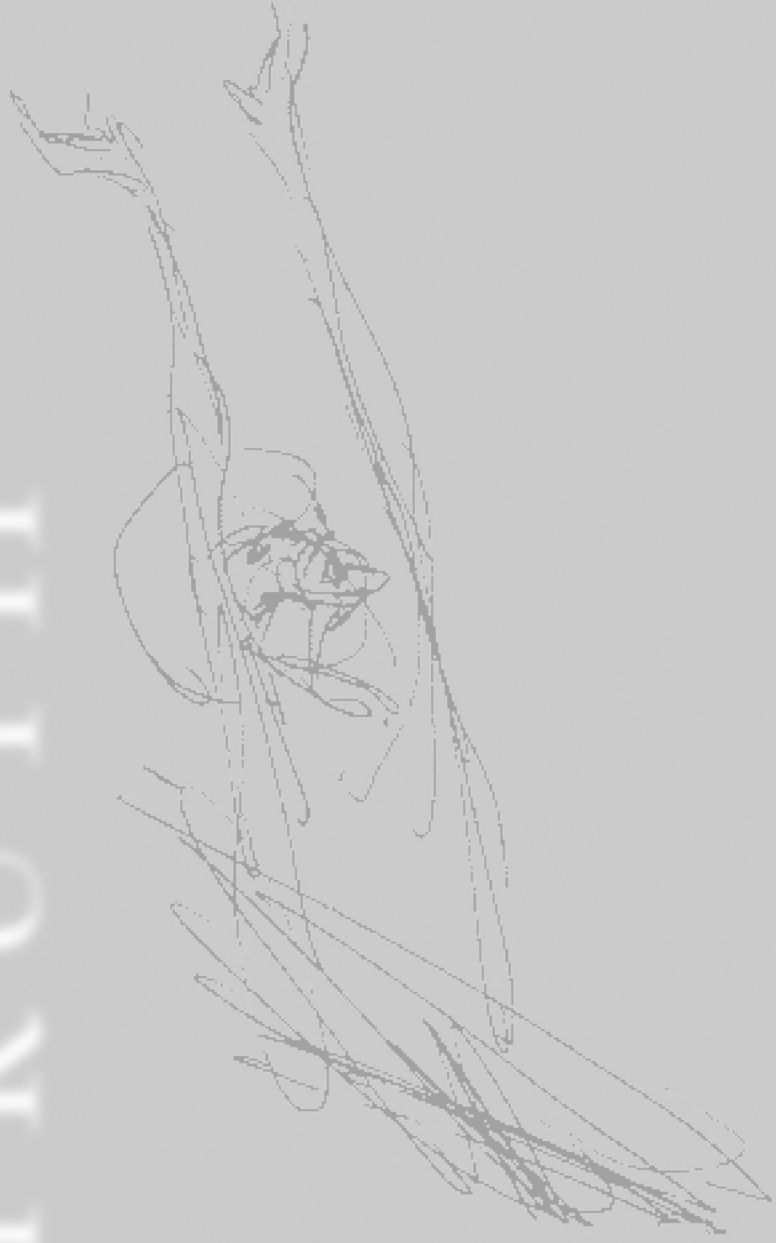
Official Christianity, however, has compromised the Truth and made itself palatable to social and commercial selfishness. It is, therefore, nothing more than bourgeois pseudo-Christianity and cannot claim to follow Jesus’ direct teaching. Bishop Gore said, “The profound antagonism to the spirit of Christ by social and commercial selfishness is not recognized.” It is easy to understand the wild fury toward the undiluted teachings of Jesus by persons and groups embodying social and commercial selfishness. The feudal lords and the princes found Christianity odious. The rising middle class also turned from it with impatience. They were just emerging from their age-long servitude to the feudal system and were intoxicated with the prospect of economic individualism, which promised the potential to amass private riches. They had neither eyes nor ears for anything else. To them, economic individualism was synonymous with freedom. In the long run, such freedom means nothing more than freedom to buy cheaply and sell at exorbitant prices. It is the freedom to make unlimited profits, in any way and at the expense of one’s fellow men. Few saw the deeper issues involved, and few could resist the dazzling prizes that such freedom promised.

The “successful” Reformers, as mentioned previously, backed the

rising bourgeois class and its social ethic. According to B. de Ligt, the bourgeoisie has exceeded any previous caste, state, or class in resorting to violence. Their violence ran vertically (between classes) and horizontally (between nations). Is it a wonder, then, that the Reformed churches are discredited, along with the Roman Catholic Church, for their social blindness?

Today it is easy to see economic individualism for what it is, for its evil fruits are obvious to all. But at the beginning of the capitalist era, it was easy to be misled by the tempting bait it offered the common man. It was only the keen spiritual insight of such men as the Spiritual or Radical Reformers that led them to recognize the breed of voracious monster to which they belonged. Many, however, were misled in its embryonic stages. The Radical Reformers saw that capitalism, even in its infancy, sought to make man the instrument of its riches. Hence, they turned it down as wrong in principle, in spite of the flowery path it seemed to offer in its early days. They were not content to merely deny it in words; they witnessed to its opposite—love, which implied brotherhood of soul and economics.

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21 THE REFORMATION: THE RADICAL SPIRITUAL REFORMERS

THE SPIRITUAL REFORMERS not only displayed clarity in social thought but also believed in an inward religion for the layman, which dispensed with clergy, churches and ritual, and emphasized the Light within. They called themselves “Spiritual Reformers,” being convinced that nothing could be effected outside the soul. They maintained the principle that spiritual change can be wrought in the soul only by voluntary choice. By his own choice, each man is made spiritual and saintly, or unspiritual and unregenerate. A man could become godly only by submitting the individual will to “that of God” within and by doing the will of God.

The Spiritual Reformers believed that nothing could be effected by magical rites and superstition. Hence they dispensed with all

priest craft and sacerdotalism. They similarly rejected all theological language and scholastic subtleties, and shifted the emphasis from dogma and doctrine to ethics and life. Do the works and you shall know the doctrine.

To them the Protestant Reformation was little more than the replacing of one ecclesiastical system with another, exchanging one form of orthodoxy with another. The Spiritual Reformers were “whole-hog” or “root-and-branch” reformers. They wished to wipe the slate clean of the long line of Augustinian cleavages—for instance, the separation of sacred and secular, faith and reason. They subscribed to the ethics by which men not only gave lip service in church, but lived their ethics in social as well as everyday personal life.

The men who initiated and guided this significant exhibition of what they persistently called “spiritual religion,” were influenced by three great tendencies—the humanistic or rational tendency, the mystical, and the distinctive faith tendency of the Reformation. These were harmoniously united and led towards a religion for the layman.

As a religious force, humanism influenced the direction of the lay type of religion. This was due to the fact that humanism pushed man with his “momentous will” into prominence, as the center of interest and to the detriment of ecclesiasticism. The humanists, with their gift of the Greek language, had access to the New Testament in its original. There they caught a glimpse of the historical Jesus and his powerful message and rejected the Augustinianisms of the ecclesiastical systems to embrace the teachings of the Great Master.

The leaders of the Spiritual Reformers were devoted humanists in so far as they accepted the deductions stated above. They

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enthusiastically shared the rediscovery of those treasures which human reason had produced. They rose to a more virile confidence in the sphere and capacity of reason than had prevailed in Christian circles since the days of the early Greek Fathers. They were also, however, devoted mystics, and proclaimed that there is a “Light” which is an inalienable part of reason. They believed in the “Word” and “Image of God” as something permanent, reliable, universal, and unsundered from God himself. They read and loved the mystics¹ and enjoyed times of direct refreshment from an inward source of life. Mystical teaching also tended toward lay religion in that it emphasized the nearness of God to man.² There was no need for clergy, rituals, or ceremonies; one could find the Infinite within. According to this form of thought, God and man have a common meeting place within the soul, for man has in him a spark of the divine. Mysticism also emphasizes man’s free will to follow or to reject the promptings of the Light within. The word “mysticism” is used by the Spiritual Reformers in the sense in which the Quakers use it—that is, an immediate awareness of relationship with God and direct and intimate consciousness of the Divine Presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense, and living stage. Christian mysticism is the doctrine, or rather the experience, of the Holy Spirit.

Mysticism is not an exceptional experience; it is life in its wholeness, as opposed to a partial life. It is life consummated in the practice of the presence of God. Josiah Royce states: “The mystic is a thorough-going empiricist.” On the other hand, there is a one-sided mysticism—the pursuit of the “*via negativa*,” which is

¹ Plotinus, Erigenes, Eckhart and Tauler

² Mysticism has this common characteristic all over the world. Even in Islam, a mystical sect of dervishes preaches: “God is as near as the vein in the neck.”

the result of loving God without loving one's neighbor as oneself at the same time. *Via negativa* consists in living withdrawn and apart from humanity; it is the flight of the "alone to the Alone." It is the line of least resistance when confronted with the facts of evil, pain and sin. In the rapt contemplation of God and all that is of God, such mystics forget to take account of multiplicity and its attendant evils. Thus God becomes an abstraction without attribute—far removed from the God whose image we see in Jesus, who identified himself with all human suffering.

The Spiritual Radicals were mystics of the former type. Far from being dreamy and unpractical, the Spiritual Reformers insisted on living and doing rather than merely contemplating or preaching.

In attempting to practice their belief in love to God and neighbor, they encountered such storms of opposition that they would have been overwhelmed had their anchor not reached beyond the veil.

Besides the rational and mystical tendencies, the Spiritual Radicals also displayed the characteristic "faith tendency" of the Reformation. They accepted Luther's trumpet call: "The just shall live by faith, not works." The Roman Catholic Church had claimed to have a monopoly on the water of eternal life and salvation. It preached that a man that partook from this "hydrant" by doing prescribed "works"—attendance at mass, paying of tithes, and confession—would be saved. Luther's clarion call aroused many from such externalism and pointed inward, to individual faith as the deciding factor for salvation. Unfortunately the bulk of Protestants understood faith as something of a lower order than the inward vision of which Luther spoke. For them, faith consisted in subscribing to some cut-and-dried dogma or theological doctrine.

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In the primary sense, faith has a mystical element in it. It is an inward power by which the soul lives above the seen and the temporal. It is a conviction, arising from the very rationality of the Spirit in us, that there is an unseen spiritual universe, an eternal moral order. It is the soul's vision of what ought to be and its confidence in the reality and permanence of that estimate of worth—the assurance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

To the Spiritual Radicals, "The just shall live by faith" meant that the just shall live according to their soul's vision of what ought to be. In so doing they sought to bring about, here and now, a miniature lesson of that divine event which is the goal of all true religion and socialism—the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God. They sought to form a society governed from within, a society free from every form of tyranny and exploitation. Thus they were exponents of social freedom. Because of their humanistic tendency they worked for intellectual freedom, and their mystical tendency made them champions of spiritual freedom. This may seem like a cold analysis of their tendencies. But the genuine mainspring of all these tendencies was their loyalty to the Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount. In following him, they found that the Truth had indeed made them free.



TRUTH



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THE CIRCULATION OF THE BIBLE in the vernacular among the people was the deepest spring and occasion of both the Spiritual Radicals and the moderates. The priests were right in their age-long contention that it was dangerous for the “common man” to have the Bible. It was indeed dangerous to the foundations of an exclusive priesthood! Men and women with no wealth but hands of toil were reading and pondering. As they read and pondered, they saw a new heaven and a new earth. With his open Bible the “common man” became his own priest and, in a measure, his own prophet. He suddenly found himself in strange new relations to God and came to possess a picture of the church

wholly different from the “church” that he knew. All at once, he realized that the priests had pitifully deceived him. The finer spirits throughout the ages had suspected this, and had known of an inner way to God. Now the common man began to realize it. Under the powerful inspiration of the Bible, with its vivid prophecies and its luminous ideals of a pure and spotless church, there surged forth a great movement towards emancipation and the realization of the splendid vision that the Bible had opened. In answer to Luther’s trumpet call, “The just shall live by faith,” there suddenly appeared numbers of little groups of men and women who were determined to live by genuine faith. They were determined to put into practice the vision of their innermost soul—to reconstruct the church after the New Testament model and to revive primitive Christianity.

In his youth, Luther was filled with glowing ideals. The living realization that “the just shall live by faith” had suddenly burst into his consciousness, and he saw the same vision as the Spiritual Reformers. In 1521 he wrote: “I believe that the universal Christian church is nothing other than the community or assembly of the saints. I believe that in this community of Christendom, all things are common and each shares the goods of the others; none calls anything his own.” The young Luther also expressed his faith in “spiritual” religion thus: “No one can understand God or God’s word unless he has it revealed directly by the Holy Ghost. But nobody can receive anything from the Holy Ghost unless he experiences it. The Holy Ghost teaches through experience, without which nothing of value can be learned.”

There was a short but glorious period, 1517-1523, during which it seemed as though the spiritual and intellectual travail of the three preceding centuries was to be consummated in the birth of a truly liberating and thoroughly adequate reformation. The

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battle raged between those who wished to patch the old garment by reforming the old form of church, and those who wished for something totally new.

The adherents of the “new mantle” rejected theological language and scholastic subtleties, root and branch. They shifted the emphasis from dogma and doctrine to ethics and life. Their ideal of a church was a family—an “apostolic brotherhood,” a spiritual fellowship, and “an embassy of God.” To them the true church was a spiritual organism composed of those born from above and joined to Christ in unity. They adopted baptism as an outward sign of membership in this “unity of doers of Christ’s teaching.” It was not looked on as some supernatural rite but as the sign and seal of a man’s obedience to the implications³ of the Law of Love. They felt that infant baptism was an invention of apostasy that had no New Testament sanction. To them infant baptism supposed that there was some kind of saving power in the priest or baptismal water; the child, being wholly unconscious and unable to exert any personal faith, was presumably “saved” by something being done by a priest. This was the very essence of sacerdotalism and bald superstition. It gave the priest the fulcrum of all his power and opened the door for bringing “the world” into the church. The mere act of receiving baptism made one a member of the church, quite apart from the exercise of personal faith or a spiritual attitude of soul. The Spiritual Radicals were determined to lay the axe to the root of every superstition and to utterly destroy sacerdotalism and priest craft. Infant baptism was, therefore, plainly the place to strike.

In 1525 the Spiritual Radicals took the step that gave them their opprobrious nickname “Anabaptists.” The name is a misnomer;

³ These implications, now just as then, were the same: nonviolence and a witness to brotherhood.

it means “rebaptisers,” but the Spiritual Radicals believed in only one baptism—that which was the sign and seal of their faith and membership into the “new mantle.”

Both Zwingli of the “successful” Reformation and Oecolampadius, the eminent humanist, wavered for a time on the subject of infant baptism. They were on the point of declaring it unscriptural, but the deeper issues involved finally turned them against this insight. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Luther had seen the vision of the “new mantle,” but the deeper issues involved in pursuing such an “upper room Christianity” also turned him against it. In other words, it was too startlingly revolutionary. So Luther, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, and the large majority of Reformers voted for leveling their ideals down to the standard which custom and tradition had made familiar.

Thus Luther turned from his vision of the “new mantle” and started to patch the old, laboriously constructing a new system of theology. If “Truth for Truth’s sake” had ever claimed his devotion, it claimed it no more. He rather chose to be a statesman-like director of ecclesiastical reform. Expediency and compromise became his guides, not the Truth that belongs to a kingdom whose source is not of this world. It is not difficult to understand why Luther turned away from the revolutionary Truth. He was fundamentally of a conservative disposition, a friend of princes and rulers and a preserver of the status quo. Hence it is easy to understand how unpalatable the equalitarianism of true communism must have been to him.

Luther’s subsequent writings reveal his complete volte-face from his earlier convictions. In 1525 he published “The Unfree Will,” in which he says: “This is the acme of Faith, to believe that a God who saves so few and condemns so many is merciful. If, by any

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effort of reason, I could conceive how a God who shows so much anger and harshness could be merciful and just, there would be no need of faith.” To the Luther of the “successful Reformation,” God is not fundamentally a father, but an angry God who is appeased by Christ’s death. Salvation is thus a plan by which we escape from a God of justice and wrath because our sin has been balanced off by someone else’s merit or righteousness.

Luther’s “God” was not the Father of mankind ascribed to by the Spiritual Radicals. Neither was Luther’s “man” the potential “son of God” of the Spiritual Radicals. To Luther, man was “wholly depraved, born in original sin and devoid of merit,” a creature whose personal goodness is of no value and whose only hope is certainty of divine favor through faith in the merit of Christ’s sacrifice.

The Spiritual Radicals considered this idea of justification most unworthy of both God and man. They said, “We are always wrong when we represent God as angry. Whenever God dwells in a truly God-like man, he always reveals his sorrow over sin. As a man rises in the spiritual scale he grows more sensitive to sin, and his sorrow over it increases. This sorrow over sin comes from the fact that it is the nature of God Himself to grieve over sin, and such grief is always a sign of God’s presence.”

The idea of vicarious salvation was also odious to the Spiritual Radicals; to them it was “divinity minted in hell.” They said, on the other hand: “Just as we are lost, not by Adam’s sin but by our own, so we are saved—not by Christ’s historical death but by our own obedience to the law of the spirit of life revealed in him, and by our own death to sin.” To the Spiritual Radicals, Christ’s death was the supreme expression of his complete dedication to love and self-sacrifice.

The atonement, to the Spiritual Radicals, was not the appeasing

of an angry God by the blood sacrifice of Jesus but the uniting of man's will with God's—the personal and the divine. They preached this as salvation—a thing of consummate joy. It was the beginning of heaven here and now. To the Spiritual Radicals, heaven and hell were states of consciousness before they were places. They said, “Man carries hell about with him as he does a rotten tooth.” Hell is the state of estrangement from God, the state of willing contrary to his will. “Man has a hunger both for the universal will of God and for the particular will of self. Thus he puts on heaven or hell as he puts on his clothes.”

The theologies of Luther and Calvin, on the other hand, continued the old Roman Catholic ideas of Heaven and Hell as places beyond the grave where recompense or punishment were meted out. Luther and Calvin preached the doctrine of predestination. But the Spiritual Radicals said, “The doctrine of predestination is more fit for devils than for Christian men. There is no man so ‘chosen’ that he may not damn himself, nor any so reprobate that he can keep God's commandments and be saved. As no man begets his son to the gallows, nor any potter makes a pot to break it, so God does not predestinate any man to destruction.” The Spiritual Radicals also denied the doctrine of man's total depravity and original sin, saying: “Not only is there a power of free choice in the soul; there is also an elemental hunger in man which pushes him Godward.” God has given free will to men in order that they may choose for themselves either the good or the bad. Thus the Spiritual Radicals were believers in free will. Sin, they said, is also explained by “freedom.” Sin was the free choice of something for one's private and particular self in place of aims that fulfill the good of the whole and realize the universal will of God. To sin was to live for the flesh instead of the Spirit, to pursue the aims of a narrow private self

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when they conflict with the spirit of universal love. To turn from the word of God in the soul and follow the idle voices of the moment was, to them, the very essence of sin.

Another point on which the Spiritual Radicals differed from the moderates was in their attitude toward the scriptures. The Protestant Reformation replaced the “infallible” pope with the “infallible” Bible. It is expressed thus by Luther: “The infallible scripture is God’s final communication to helpless man and is the ultimate and only basis of authority in religion.” The Spiritual Radicals, on the other hand, placed the indwelling Holy Spirit higher than the written scriptures. They followed the “Inner Light” or “Word of God,” saying:

The scriptures we consider above every human treasure, but not so high as the “Word of God” which is living, powerful, and eternal. For it is God himself—spirit and not letter, written without pen or paper so that it can never be destroyed. The scriptures are the external Word and are witnesses and pointers to the real and momentous thing—the Word, which is written in the heart and which increases in clearness and power as the will swings into parallelism with the will of God, and as the life grows in likeness to the Divine Image revealed in Christ.

What would it profit me if I knew the whole Bible by heart and did not know the Spirit that inspired the holy men who wrote that book, nor the source of their knowledge?

The Bible is a closed book unless the illuminating spirit of Truth is within the reader to open it. The preachers of Babel jangle about the husk—the written word—and

miss the Living Word. Scripture worship is legalism and scribism in a new dress. To substitute scripture for the self-revealing spirit is to put the dead letter in place of the living word. This letter killed Christ in Judea and is killing him now.

The Spiritual Radicals contested the Protestant idea that university degrees can make a “man of God,” saying: “No book, and no amount of ink, paper, and letters, can make a good man, since religion is not knowledge but a way of living a transformed life that involves an inward life-process, a resident creative power.” They expressed opinions that were clearly enunciated by the early Quakers a century later when they said that head-knowledge was but moonlight knowledge in comparison to the sun-lit illumination of following the Inner Light. It followed as a corollary to this viewpoint that personal faith and individual experience were fundamental points for all the Spiritual Radicals. The Radical, Hubmaier, in a dialogue with humanistic Oecolampadius says, “You tell me of the faith of another—be it father or mother or godfather, or the faith of the church, but that is all without foundation in the scriptures. For the just must live by his own faith.” To the Spiritual Radicals, true religion was an act and attitude of the person’s own spirit. It was never wrought by magic, rite, ceremony, or sacerdotalism. Salvation was a change of nature within the soul, wrought alone by a personal transaction between the soul and God.

On all these points of difference, our generation would at once agree with the Spiritual Radicals. Four hundred years ago, the Spiritual Radicals saw that true religion must express itself in ethics and life, and that the undue emphasis laid by the Protestant

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Reformation on dogma and metaphysical doctrines was like “threshing so much theological straw.” For a man might believe the most orthodox dogma and yet be utterly alien to the spirit of the Kingdom of God. (Calvin’s disciple and collaborator, Sebastian Castellio, found that “To resist Calvin was, in the eyes of the latter, to resist the Holy Ghost.” He severed himself entirely from Calvin, winning fame and much persecution as an exponent of the doctrines of nonviolence and liberty of conscience.)

Today the theologies of the Reformation are left far behind. They are considered more completely bankrupt than the scholasticism of Aquinas. It is sad that the Spiritual Radicals, who in 1523 saw the glaring inconsistencies of the Great Reformers, are unknown and unheard of—their names barely rescued from oblivion. Today, however, men are not interested in “threshing theological straw.” There is a striking parallel between contemporary currents of thought and those of the Radical Spiritual Reformers.



TRUTH



23 THE WALL OF SILENCE AT WORK

IT IS SAD THAT THE ONE PARTY that stood for a thoroughly adequate reformation was submerged, its witness banned and silenced in both Protestant and Roman Catholic countries. The Anabaptists, alone among the Reformers, stood for Jesus' "uncorrected" doctrine. They called for a new social order. The new "wine" of the ethic of love needed a new "bottle"—a new and brotherly social system. Through this, the Kingdom of God would break through on earth. One group of Anabaptists, those of Münster, advocated the use of the sword in hastening the Kingdom of God on earth and considered adult baptism quite unimportant. They were not, therefore, true Anabaptists. Real Anabaptism saw the implications of adult baptism, the complete loyalty to the spirit of Christ, as obligatory. Killing was impossible in that spirit.

True Anabaptists were staunch opponents of all forms of violence and killing for any purpose, even the best purpose they knew of—the establishing of the Kingdom of God on earth. The Anabaptists' belief in the necessity of a new social order was the damning element in their creed from the standpoint of both the secular and the ecclesiastical powers of their day.

They witnessed against private property and the injustices that flowed from it. This was a “red rag to a bull” in the face of mammon and mammonized pseudo-Christianity. Hence, as Rufus Jones says:

Judged by the reception it met at the hands of those in power, both in church and state, Catholic and Protestant countries, the “Anabaptist” movement was one of the most tragic in the history of Christianity. But judged by the principles which were put into play by the men who bore this reproachful nick-name, it must be pronounced one of the most momentous and significant undertakings in man's eventful religious struggle after the truth. It can be safely said that no other movement for spiritual freedom in the history of the church has had such an enormous martyrology. Almost all the Swiss leaders suffered martyrdom when the movement was in its infancy.

Only three years after the Anabaptists adopted adult baptism in a decisive step with revolutionary implications, the Swabian league sent out four hundred, then eight hundred, then one thousand armed troopers to scour the country and “at once and without law or trial” put to death all Anabaptists wherever they were caught. Literally thousands of Anabaptists were killed in a few years. Thirty thousand were killed in the Netherlands alone. Such was

the reception given by “Christendom” (both Roman Catholic and Protestant) to the undiluted, unfalsified teaching and practice of Jesus’ way of love.

The Anabaptists, who were mercilessly hounded to death themselves, were the only Reformers who maintained the principles of nonviolence and preached against war and capital punishment. Alone among the Reformers they upheld liberty of conscience and condemned all persecution of “heretics,” saying: “To burn a man does not defend doctrine but burns a man.” The Anabaptists’ genuine attempt to live out integral Christianity was treated ruthlessly by pseudo-Christians. Everything was done to obliterate, annihilate, and silence its witness. Calvin’s disciple, Bizer, referred to nonviolence as being a diabolical doctrine and wrote a treatise on the extermination of heretics!

The “whole-hogism” of the Anabaptist viewpoint is rarely found today; it is confined to exceptionally clear-visioned individuals and little-known groups. But the influence of Anabaptism has filtered into much larger fields in a very dilute form. Rufus Jones says, “Anabaptism is the spiritual soil out of which all non-conformist sects have sprung whose ideal was an absolutely free and independent religious society.” One connecting link between non-conformity and Anabaptism can be traced through Menno Simons. This young Dutchman was moved to join them as a result of witnessing the huge massacre of Anabaptists, including his brother, in Holland. He asked, “How will this unjustified bloodshed rise up against me in the day of judgment if I do not also preach the unfalsified Word?” He then became the leader of a dilute and, therefore, less daring form of Anabaptism. He omitted the communism of the real Anabaptists but retained the opposing of oaths, war, and capital punishment. Also like the Anabaptists, he declared the law

to be outside the sphere of the Christian's love ethic. He opposed salaried ministry and interference of the State or civic authorities with the church and taught that it was a personal faith and birth from above that makes a new man.

The next link in the chain of connection was a group of English people who joined the Dutch Mennonites in Holland. They later split, and half of them decided to return to England with a much-diluted version of the Mennonite creed. It was particularly diluted in regards to ethics. While accepting much of the Mennonites' teaching, they did not, like the Mennonites, take an uncompromising stand against oaths, war, and magistracy. Thus in England the General Baptists (as they called themselves) were looked on as a harmless sect. In the eyes of official Christianity they were "a little ratsbane in a quantity of sugar." The "ratsbane" consisted of their congregational form of organization, the complete separation of church and state, the wide toleration of faith and practice, and the privileges and function of the laity, including women.

To the credit of the General Baptists, it is worthy to note that the doctrine of absolute religious liberty was voiced for the first time in England from their meager little meeting house in London when, in 1614, they published "Religious Peace or A Plea for Liberty of Conscience."

The teachings of the Anabaptists filtered into England in other ways, chiefly through the continental Anabaptists who found refuge from persecution in England. (Carl Heath says that the prototype of Bunyan's "Christian" in *Pilgrims Progress* was one of the refugee Anabaptists of Bunyan's day.)

Anabaptist ideas were being so widely diffused during Henry VIII's reign that he resolved to "repress and utterly extinguish these persons who, whilst their hands were busied about their

manufactures, had their heads also beating about points of divinity.” He had a list of items made of their “abominable heresies.” These items are of a distinctly Anabaptist tincture, for instance:

Item 2: “All established religions whatsoever they be, are contrary to Christ’s religion.”

Item 17: “It is as lawful to christen a child in a tub of water at home, or in a ditch by the way as in a fount stone in the church.”

Item 18: “Christ dwells in no church made of lime and stones but only in heaven above and in men’s hearts on earth.”

In his *History of England*, Froude commemorates a small group of Anabaptists who were burned in England for propagating their liberating views, saying: “Poor Hollanders they were. At their death the world looked on complacent, indifferent, and exulting. Their lives might have been as useless as the lives of most of us. In their deaths they assisted to pay the purchase money for England’s freedom.”

Although there existed in England these traces of Anabaptism, they were so diluted that it seems almost too far-fetched to draw any parallel between them and Anabaptism proper. Today the world is discontented with diluted Christianity. Through compromise, half-hearted Christians escaped the persecution which mammon always stirs up against real Christianity. But pseudo-Christianity can no longer hope to claim the allegiance of men of good will.

Far from witnessing to brotherhood, watered-down Christianity is supported by property and is built on depressed classes and subject races (which are the implications of property). Similarly, it condones war, that most bestial manifestation of

unbrotherliness, and backs it for the purpose of maintaining privileged races and classes—not as revolutionaries do, for the sake of social justice and internationalism. No wonder men seek outside of compromised Christianity for the Light, rather than within it. Lenin and Gandhi shed more light amid the chaos than does diluted Christianity. What about Christ—the Light of the World? Wherever he has been truly and uncompromisingly followed, Lenin’s segment of the truth and Gandhi’s have been preached and followed. However, the “wall of silence” has been so effective that few know of true Christianity where spiritual religion (lay religion), communism, and nonviolence are part of a whole—the living out of love to God and one’s neighbor. This new social order is to be a cell of the Kingdom of God on earth. We seek in vain for accounts of such Christianity in the history books or the religious books of the young. The church does not calendar the leaders of such movements as “saints” because they witnessed so effectively against the whole ecclesiastical system and the social injustice and militarism with which it was in league. Today, the average man of goodwill has never heard of unfalsified Christianity. He attaches his loyalty to truths that official Christianity has neglected, which are witnessed to more effectively by materialistic communism or Indian satyagraha (nonviolence). By these channels, some are discovering the tremendous sweep and range of the Truth revealed by the “Light of the World.” They are horrified at the extent to which official Christianity has obscured the Truth and explained it away.



TRUTH



24 THE QUAKERS

ACENTURY AFTER THE REFORMATION, a vigorous movement arose in England under the inspiration of George Fox. It was a lay religion with mystical and humanistic elements. Fox found ready ears for his new and stirring call to “follow the Light within.” There was a spiritual hunger in numerous individuals and groups who were seeking the Truth. They were quite dissatisfied with the forms and doctrines of the various Reformed churches and denominations. Some of them may have caught the torch from the native English Lollard tradition or from continental Anabaptist sources. Or they may have reached their insight alone, led by the Divine Inner Principle, which is there for all earnest

truth seekers.⁴

Influences from the Continent had undoubtedly prepared seeking groups all over England for Fox's call. But it seems clear that Fox reached the same truths as the Spiritual Reformers on his own. He was led more by the guidance of his own Inner Light than by external sources.

George was the son of Christopher Fox (known to neighbors as "righteous Christer"), a weaver who worked before the days of machine production. One only has to read Daniel Defoe's description of the comparatively happy lot of the weavers in the days of the handloom⁵ to realize the horror wrought by the changeover to machinery, which was used unethically. I mention this to explain the fact that the social evils due to private ownership of machine production had not yet developed in Fox's day.

At an early age young George revolted from what seemed to him an artificially built religion of doctrine and dogma. The turning point of his life came when he discovered that God is not far away

⁴ Rufus Jones, himself a Quaker, writes: "It used to be supposed that Fox appeared on the scene suddenly and abruptly, without forerunners and with little or no connection to the spiritual travail and historical movements of his age. His message was assumed to be unique and newly born. A sober look at history has corrected that impression. Many of the religious movements set in motion by the Reformation quietly and gradually invaded England—sometimes by the immigration of a persecuted leader or a hunted group, sometimes by the return of chance visitors who had contracted the "contagion" while on a journey abroad. Little by little, books appeared that put the thoughts of continental mystics and spiritual reformers into English. As a result, small, submerged fellowships were formed in widely sundered parts of England. From about the year 1648 George Fox began to give articulate expression to the dreams, faiths, and hopes which lay, more or less unuttered, at the heart of the best of these movements and fellowships which were waiting for someone who could give them co-ordination, direction, and vision. Fox did just this. What had before been vague and more or less subconscious he now rendered conscious, explicit, and visible in an organized form.

⁵ Defoe describes the little plots of land with cows, pigs, fowl, and vegetables, attached to the houses of the weavers. The weaver employed apprentices, who often lived with him and married into his family; they had every hope of becoming master weavers themselves!

in the sky or at the top of a ladder of theological speculation, but is a living spiritual presence revealed within the soul. He expresses it thus: "I came to know God experimentally as one who has a key and doth open." When his parents chided him for reading the Bible in the orchard and not going to church, he said: "Did not the apostle say to believers that they needed no man to teach them, because the anointing teaches them?"

As a lonely and distressed youth, Fox set out to seek a true way of finding God. He visited innumerable professors.⁶ But his visits were in vain. Fox explained: "I saw that to be a true believer was another thing than they looked upon it to be. So I could join neither them, nor any of the dissenting people. I was a stranger to all, relying wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ."

After several years of acute mental and spiritual anxiety, he reached the insight that "there is one, even Jesus Christ, who can speak to thy condition." In his wanderings he avoided staying too long in any one place, especially if he found he was becoming too influenced by any human agent, for he desired to be led by the spirit of Christ alone. Then, as he wrote: "The Lord's power began to spring, and I had great 'openings'⁷ in the scriptures." The greatest opening was that there is a "Divine Inner Light," a "Seed of God," a "Light of Christ," an "immediate contact of the soul with God" in every man. If followed, this would lead him to the Light of Life and towards the full stature of Christ. But there could be no further Light without a following of that measure which one already possessed.

⁶ Fox uses the term for those who profess Christianity

⁷ A term still used by Quakers

While maintaining, “The Light lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” Fox also emphasized the enmity between the carnal mind and the Light. He affirmed that a man’s relation to the Light Within is entirely one of opposition until the time of conversion. It is this that makes possible Fox’s sharp distinction between those living in the light and those not living in the light. Fox describes another “opening” of his thus: “I saw that there was an ocean of darkness and death, and an infinite ocean of light and love which flowed over the ocean of darkness.” Fox was upheld in his costly witness to the truths he had reached by his conviction that the spirit of good, of truth and of love was more permanent and stronger than the darkness and would finally overcome the darkness. Amid persecutions and frequent terms of imprisonment, he showed an unwavering courage and cheerfulness, saying of his persecutions: “I was over them in the power of God.” And, “God’s seed is over all, and before all, and will be when that which makes to suffer is gone.”

Fox grew in spiritual perception. He writes:

As I traveled through markets and divers places, I saw death and darkness in all people where the power of the Lord had not shaken them. Some said I was mad and spoke to my outward relations to tie me up. And the Lord’s power began to spring in me, and I heard him say: ‘That which people trample on must be thy food.’ And the Lord opened it to me that those who profess did trample upon life—even the life of Christ—and fed on words, living in airy notions talking of him. It seemed to me strange at the first, that I should feed on that which the high professors trampled upon, but the Lord opened it clearly to me by his eternal spirit and power.

With wonderful courage Fox witnessed to his “openings” and stood the cost. He frequently rose up at the end of a service in some church, published the truth, and refuted Calvinistic theology. He spoke against the institution of clergy and “temples made with hands” (he called them “steeple-houses”). The following is typical:

I stood up in the steeple-house yard and declared to the people that I came not to hold up their idol temples, nor their priests and tithes, nor their Jewish and heathenish ceremonies and traditions—for these I denied. I told them that piece of ground was no more holy than another piece of ground. Therefore I exhorted the people to come off from all these things, and directed them to the spirit and grace of God in themselves, and to the light of Jesus in their own hearts, that they might come to know Christ, their free teacher, to bring them salvation, to open the scriptures to them, and to bring them into unity with God and with each other.

Here and there, someone would be convinced of the truth of Fox’s words. But usually the congregation and clergy were hostile, and Fox was subjected to the blows of a violent mob. Or he was imprisoned.

Fox’s “openings” regarding religious beliefs coincided with those of the Spiritual Reformers rather than with the Protestant Reformation. Fox and those who joined him called themselves “Publishers of Truth” and “Children of the Light.” They later took the name of “The Society of Friends,” but were better known by their once-opprobrious nickname of “Quakers.” As mentioned above, their beliefs about God and man and about the Inner Light, free will, sin, and the scriptures resonated with those of the Spiritual

Reformers, better known by their derisive nickname, “Anabaptists.”

The Quakers and Anabaptists differed not in beliefs but rather, in the practice thereof. They shared the same spiritual religion, which was, of course, a lay religion stripped of ecclesiasticism, ritual, and externals. They also shared the conviction that the carnal mind wars against the Inner Light of Christ and that only the pure in heart can see God. Their vision of God was the same. He was the Father of a potential brotherhood of man. They shared the same absolute denial of the use of carnal weapons for any purpose, even for the sake of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Both believed in human brotherhood. The Anabaptists expressed this belief in caritative (charitable) communism, the Quakers through philanthropic activity within existing society. The Quakers believed they could best serve humanity by living in an acquisitive society as God’s stewards. They lived purely and frugally, dispensing their surplus to feed the poor and clothe the naked. They called for prison reform and the abolition of slavery and worked toward improved and freer methods of education for the young. The Anabaptists were revolutionary in the social sense; the Quakers believed rather in the gradual amelioration of existing society.

If we take a bird’s-eye view of the socio-religious groups within Christianity, from the times of the early Christians to the Anabaptists, we find that they all took a firm stand on three major issues—the Inner Light (or the Holy Spirit), nonviolence, and the communism of love. To them, these three golden links were inseparable from the Truth. The Quakers witnessed to two of these links but modified their witness to the third. They favored

the prevalent Calvinistic idea of “stewardship of wealth,” which received eloquent support from the pulpits of the Reformed and dissenting churches.⁸

In the one hundred years between the time of the Anabaptists and the birth of the Quaker movement, man’s worldview was revolutionized by epoch-making changes. These changes fostered an intense and blind individualism. It was an age of rampant individualism—personal individualism and social individualism (if one may be permitted the contradiction in terms). The former led to the belief that God’s will was different for each individual, an idea that cloaked self-centeredness and led to self-deception. The latter inevitably led to economic individualism and its train of injustices. In other words, capitalism was in its ascendancy; its injustices, so apparent in its decline, had not yet become glaringly obvious. They had not yet drenched the world with tears.

In those days, when the rising middle class was emerging from the thrall of feudalism, the prospects of social betterment for mankind seemed to lie in the direction of economic individualism. Hence the Quakers did not feel urged, in the name of love, to witness against private property as the Anabaptists and their spiritual forebears had. Instead, the Quakers accepted the Puritan idea of stewardship of wealth and, while living within an unjust social system, they courageously endeavored to witness to the brotherhood of man in which they believed. They refused “hat honor” and the differential modes of addressing “superiors,” which caused them much persecution and imprisonment. They also lived frugally and dressed plainly, saying: “The very trimmings of the vain world would clothe all the naked.”

⁸ Calvin, Baxter, etc.

The history of Quakerism shows that they have been in the forefront of all the philanthropic endeavors on behalf of prison reform, education, and ending slavery. This was how they chose to express the third link—the social witness to the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God. They did not witness against private property, so they also did not witness against the law (which protects property rights), as the communistic groups had done.

The Quakers, however, refused to swear any oath⁹ in court of law or elsewhere. They testified to Christ's command not to swear at all and witnessed to the fact that a man professing to follow the Light Within cannot vow allegiance to any other human being or authority. The Quakers suffered courageously for this.¹⁰ The Quakers' witness to nonviolence arose as a shining light; it was based on their refusal to swear implicit obedience to any authority but God. Christendom today is rent with war and preparation for war, and the official voice of the churches sanctions and "blesses" this organized butchery—for good reasons, of course.¹¹ In shining contrast, the official voice of Quakerism witnesses against war and preparation for war, including the militarization of the young, official Air Raid Precaution, and other allied activities linked to the organization of the community as a war machine.

In this connection it is interesting to look at Christendom through the eyes of a Gandhi follower—the late Bengali poet

⁹ As did the socio-religious groups before them.

¹⁰ Ruth Fry states that in 1660, out of a population of five million, there were thirty to forty thousand Quakers. In the second half of the seventeenth century, twenty-one thousand Quakers suffered fines and imprisonments and 450 died in consequence.

¹¹ No war has ever been embarked upon without some good reason having been instilled into the minds of the combatants.

Satyendranath Datta. He writes:¹² “Though they do not call me Christian, yet I bow to Thee, Thou Son of God, Thou saintliest of saints, Thou poorest of the poor, Thou greatest of satyagrahis. Christianity is lip service and too weak to resist the doctrine of Nietzsche. Three witches dance on bleeding Europe—war, race, and the lust for gold. That is no place for Thee. Come to this Asia whose blood flows in Thy veins, this Asia of Buddha, Nānak, and Gandhi.”

Alas! It is true. Brute force is enthroned not only as the mainstay of our states, but in our churches, which pay lip service to love. A person seeking despairingly for a Christianity with something of the great Nazarene in it thanks God for the witness of the people called Quakers. The accusations of Datta, quoted above, cannot be leveled against them. It is the Inner Light of Christ and lay religion that develop sensitivity of conscience, not an ecclesiastical system where the clergy do the thinking and God-seeking for the congregation.

When Fox was a young man in his twenties, he was confronted with the choice whether or not he could take up arms for the Commonwealth, with its democratic principles of parliamentarianism, against Charles Stuart and his ideas of despotic monarchy and the “divine right of kings.” He refused, saying: “I live in the virtue of that Life and Power which takes away the occasion of all wars.” Fox was then subjected to another severe term of imprisonment. It is a fact worthy of note that Fox scarcely alludes to the Civil War in his Journal, though it was taking place at the same time as Fox’s own war against falsehood and darkness. Fox had a depth of spiritual insight which showed him that the real war to which Jesus called

¹²“Ode to Christ on Christmas Day,” by Satyendranath Datta, 1925

men was the battle between the principles of light and darkness, truth and falsehood, good and evil.

Fox was a courageous champion in this war, and stood valiantly for the Truth. In talks and writings, he attacked falsehood and its consequent darkness wherever he found it entrenched, using the sword of the Spirit. One of Fox's anti-sacerdotal books was entitled "The Great Mystery of the Great Whore." The "whore" he referred to was the impure, pagan pseudo-Christianity of the official churches from which he called men to seek the Light of Christ within and follow it in practice. The Quakers did this in their refusal of oaths and war; in this respect Quakerism has been a light amid the barbarism of western Christendom. It can be said to the credit of the Society of Friends that they have witnessed not only in words but also through suffering. They were against each war in which England engaged, from the time of Fox to the present day. One can thank God for the light of the Quakers.

The "holy experiment" in colonization by the Quaker William Penn is also worthy of note. Penn, unlike most colonizers, bought Pennsylvania¹³ from the Indians and made a treaty of friendship with them under a tree by the Delaware River. This treaty was neither sworn to, nor was it broken. Penn refused to garrison his colony. His was the only colony not guarded by arms, the only colony to escape attack by the Indians. This happy state of affairs lasted for some seventy-two years. The infiltration of non-Quakers with their military views then became so great that the majority voted for the usual armed "protection." The Indians now, for the first time, retaliated with armed attack. If Penn had merely talked of this unprotected colony and the treaty of friendship and trust with

¹³ King Charles II in payment of a debt to Penn's father, gave Penn a charter for that stretch of land.

the Indians, he would have been laughed to scorn. He would have been called an unpractical dreamer whose theories could have been refuted by those whose verdict was that “the only good Indian is a dead Indian.”

In the preface to the Constitution of his colony, Penn says, among other wise words: “Liberty without obedience is confusion, obedience without liberty is slavery.”

Again the light of the Quakers shone out amid the darkness of “Christendom” at the end of the First World War when Lloyd George was seeking re-election. His election cry was, “We’ll squeeze Germany until the pips squeak; we’ll make Germany pay for the war.” This was calculated to meet the approval of the bereaved relatives of the slain. The response was immense, and Lloyd George won the election. The Quakers were the only group of “Christians” in England who remained aloof from this spirit of blind hatred and revenge. Many individuals in the churches shared the Quaker viewpoint, but the official stance of the denominations was in support of war. As soon as the war was over, the Quakers went over to Germany to help alleviate the starvation there. Their free soup kitchens became so well-known that even after the advent of the Hitler regime, free soup kitchens of any sort in Germany were called “*Quakerspeise*.” Corder Catchpol tells an instance of gaining his point in an interview with an important Nazi official,¹⁴ merely because he was a Quaker.

George Fox deserves credit for the organization of the Society of Friends. It was marked with the utmost simplicity of structure and

¹⁴The interview was on behalf of freeing Ossiedsky from prison. The Nazi official agreed to it after pulling out a photo of his two small sons from his pocket and saying: “The Quakers saved them from starvation.”

method. There were no essential officials, no rituals or outward sacraments (all life was looked upon as sacramental), no music or paraphernalia of any kind. There was the widest freedom and the greatest possible stretch of the principle of democracy. One might have supposed that chaos would have resulted, but it did not. A rare type of spiritual leadership emerged—leadership through the personal influence of the men and women who possessed prophetic vision. (Women were completely equal with men.)

The fact that a gathering of eight hundred or one thousand people, to which every member is free to come and speak, can be conducted with no machinery for disobedience, and that it can conduct the business of the Society with no inner ‘cabinet,’ seems to show the possibility of a true democracy in which each person realizes his responsibility and the trust imposed in him, which gives him his freedom.¹⁵

Fox called men to cease waiting for a miraculous event and to turn to the present miracle within them where a seed of God, a Light of Christ, was waiting to grow. Isaac Penington says of this seed: “We were directed to search for the least of all seeds and to mind the lowest appearance thereof, which was its turning against sin and darkness. And so, by minding and observing that in us which turned against sin and darkness, we came to find by degrees that we had met with the pure, living, eternal Spirit.”

John Bellers writes: “The silence of religious and spiritual worship is not a drowsy, unthinking state of mind, but a sequestering and withdrawing of it from all visible objects and vain imagination. Except all excesses of the body and passions of the mind are

¹⁵ Ruth Fry

avoided through watchfulness, the soul doth not attain to true silence.” Another Friend, Joseph Rowntree, writes: “Our worship is based on silence—not a mere absence of noise, but a living silence in which each worshipper seeks, in company with his fellows, to empty himself of self and to offer himself as a worthy channel through which the divine spirit may flow.” This is spiritual religion—the Inner Light—the first of the three links to which the socio-religious “heretics” witnessed.

Although he was great in other respects, George Fox was a child of his times in his social thinking. We cannot question his sincerity, nor dare we criticize him, for he was a man wholly unattached to self. In his earlier years he, like his Master, had nowhere to lay his head.¹⁶ Numerous Friends’ houses were open to him later. The early Friends were also men who gave up all to spread the Truth. It was not self-interest but insufficient light in their social thinking—understandable enough in that age of rampant individualism—that led them to accept the prevalent belief in “stewardship of wealth.” Cromwell said of the early Quakers, “Here indeed are a people risen up whom I cannot bribe with money or position.” Fox adds in explanation, “As we have forsaken our own, we are not likely to look for such things from thee.” Fox also said, “Natural soldiers do not cumber themselves with the world, much less soldiers of Christ who are not of this world.”

When a namesake of Fox claimed to be kindred with him, Fox said: “My kindred are those who stand in the Life and Power of God.” Indeed, the great brotherhood of Light-bringers¹⁷ would all

¹⁶ Fox notes in his Journal: “A report was raised that I would not sleep in any bed, for at that time I lay many times without doors.”

¹⁷ Joseph Rowntree

claim him as their spiritual kin. Fox, however, never wished to be looked upon as the complete oracle of God. When a group who were dazzled by the light he shed wished him to remain with them as their teacher and pastor, Fox at once hastened to depart, saying: “It is time for me to be gone, for if their eye is so much to me or any of us, they will not come to their own Teacher; our labor is to bring all men to their own Teacher in themselves.” This group surely did not fully understand Quaker principles here.

Today we all need a clearer insight into the undivided mind of Christ.

Can one deny the weapons wherewith wealth is maintained and yet sanction stewardship of wealth? Can one witness to peace while acquiescing in the economic system that inevitably leads to war? We, today, are not deceived by individualism that appears as a dense mirage with its myriad flowery deceptions. We are disillusioned. And even the most superficial thinker is blaming economic individualism for the plight of the world. The social teachings of Quakerism are not adequate, for today capitalism—whether called naked capitalism or “stewardship of wealth”—is thoroughly discredited.

The Quakers justify their social viewpoint by saying that any practical attempt to witness to the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God, such as in Christian communism, is living “out of the world.” They, however, feel that they are called to be “in the world,” though not of it. Surely, however, to aid and abet the competitive system with its desire for profit is to be “of the world,” where the world is “red in tooth and claw” like the tiger in the primeval jungle. To aid the capitalistic social ethic is to have been overcome by the world. Rather, we should witness in the world to a social and economic relationship that is “not of the world,” for

nothing is more remote from the spirit of Christ than the spirit of capitalism. Likewise, when we ask what the world needs most today, I feel the answer is a model of the Christian society—a witness to Christ's revolution and the society it produces. All the good works done by those who try to witness to brotherhood while compromising to a system based on inequality and injustice are doomed to be futile. They merely act as a palliative to mitigate the distress caused by that system and prolong the life of a dying system beyond its day. Such good works are analogous to “the wiping of pus from a sore instead of eradicating the abscess.” They are “the red cross behind the capitalist firing line.”

Is it possible to witness to brotherhood across an economic chasm? Such attempts are impaired by the tendency to patronage on the one hand and sycophancy on the other. It is obvious to even the most rudimentary socialist that capitalism inevitably means war. Thus, even the Quakers, wonderful as they are in witnessing to two links in the triangle of Truth, fall short and find themselves in the same position as the official church in regards to social justice. This third link was an indispensable part of the witness of the few who have sought to live Jesus' undiluted teachings, which runs like a thin gold thread through the ages.

In most respects Quakerism has been a light in Western Christendom. The Quakers' witness to the Inner Light and to non-violence shines like a light, shed by the Prince of Peace, on this bloodthirsty, bloodstained Christendom. But have the Quakers witnessed to that other injunction of their Master, to “Love thy neighbor as thy self?”

TRUTH





25 NIHILISM OR THE NATIVE RUSSIAN COMMUNISM

THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE did not discover communism. But they were the first to incorporate communism into real life on a large scale.

The ideal of communism in the deepest sense of the word, as sharing among men, is mankind's great eternal dream. The word communism comes from communion; it means commonness and mutual participation. Such spiritual community between men presupposes that they partake of some higher source of life—God. Only in God and Christ is real communism among men attainable. Brotherhood is only possible when men unite under the same Father.

We come across gleams of communism since the beginning

of time. At times it took the form of a lone voice, crying in the wilderness to deaf ears. At other times, groups were knit together by the desire to live their vision of the ideal society.

As an instance of the former we have the Egyptian Akhnaton three thousand years ago. Arthur Weigel calls him “the prototype of Christ” and adds, “He is for us the first ray of the sun which touches the top of the pyramid while the rest of the world is yet in darkness—the first signal to the world of the future religion of mankind.”

Plato’s Republic was also communist. It was the best pre-Christian outline of an ideal society. But Plato was not a wholly disinterested man (as was his master Socrates); he bases his Republic on slavery. A denial of slavery would have meant renunciation of the comfort to which he was attached. Clinging to his comfort, Plato excluded the slave class and foreigners from the communist society of his Republic. Plato, however, had the insight to realize that social planning was not enough. Each member must subject himself to the “divine principle within” so that his beastly nature could be controlled and they might all be comrades and friends under one control.

The immediate followers of Jesus of Nazareth were also communists, of an all-embracing kind. It is said of them: “And no one called aught that he had his own; they had all things in common” (Acts 2:44 and Acts 4:32). They admitted anyone to their fellowship who had inner unity with them in the cause of brotherly love, regardless of race or class. They were both slave and free.

From the fall of Christianity (circa AD 312) to the time of the Reformation, numerous socio-religious groups witnessed to the same truths. They preached the end of the age of ecclesiasticism

and the dawn of the age of the spirit—the ending of the dualism between church and life. This led to the birth of a new society, a communistic society imbued with the Holy Spirit. Their bitterest enemy was the Roman Catholic Church, which burned them at the stake along with their writings, in order to silence their witness to the Truth.

The Anabaptists were also communists. The treatment meted out to them in Protestant countries was no better than in Roman Catholic countries.

Then came Thomas More's Utopia, which was also a communist society. "Utopia" has now become a household word, denoting the ideal society. The source of inspiration for More's work was his reading of the New Testament in the original Greek. There he hoped to find an ethic for everyday life based on the life and teaching of Jesus, stripped of the concretions of ecclesiasticism.

The Communist and Socialist movements of nineteenth-century France, though vague and indefinite, were of a spiritual and even religious character. At the time of the quelling of the Paris Commune, Dostoyevsky quoted a Paris superintendent of detectives as saying, "We are not particularly afraid of all these socialists, anarchists, infidels, and revolutionaries; we keep a watch on them and know all their goings on. But there are a few peculiar men among them who believe in God and are Christians, while being socialists at the same time. These are the people we are most afraid of. They are dreadful people. The socialist who is a Christian is to be dreaded more than a socialist who is an atheist."

This is a profoundly wise statement. Real Christianity is dreaded much more by mammon than is atheistic communism.

In other organized religions the preaching, but especially the living of communism, has been equally banned. For instance, in

the sixth century there arose a communist sect in the Zoroastrian religion in Persia. The king became a convert. But Prince Noshirvan, the king's son, slew them with the sword at Lanquet in AD 528. This was aided and instigated by the priestly class. Such movements—although prophetically inspired—find their worst enemy in the priests and the privileged class.

Now let us turn to Russia and see how “Holy Russia” became the home of militant atheism. It is important to remember, in this connection, that the Greek Orthodox Church of Russia has always been the most eschatological* and the least evolutionary of all the main churches. It is also important to note that during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Russian Church was imbued with a strong messianic consciousness. This was partly due to the fact that Byzantium—the “second Rome” and center of the Eastern Church—had fallen to the “infidel” Turks. Moscow felt called upon to become the “third Rome,” the center of what was considered the only pure orthodox faith and the metropolis of an orthodox empire. In the seventeenth century the Patriarch Nikon introduced Greek influences into the Russian Church. This offended the Russian messianic consciousness, and a schism occurred. The messianic and eschatological elements were preserved in an intense form in the various schisms or Raskols. These Raskols were persecuted and oppressed by the united action of both church and state, and they soon came to look upon the Greek Orthodox Church as “anti-Christ.” They adopted a suspicious and anarchistic attitude toward the state. The most radical Raskols, the *Bezpopnoslvo* (meaning “without priests”), show a marked parallel with later Russian Nihilism. (Russian Nihilism was the native Russian communism before Marxism

* Eschatology: concerned with the end of the world, the Second Coming, or the Last Judgement.

was introduced into Russia from the West). Russian Nihilism expresses the same messianic and eschatological feeling and the same anarchistic attitude toward the state. The Raskols denied only the official church but not the revolutionary teachings of Jesus, but the Nihilists denied all Christianity—both true and false. At the same time they unconsciously lived much that is identical with true Christianity. With them, the messianic consciousness meant that the Russian people had the messianic vocation to be light-bearing people and to lighten the bourgeois darkness of the West. Messianic consciousness is at home on Russian soil. It may, however, take different forms of expression. Dostoyevsky was imbued with it and believed that the Russian people had the messianic vocation to be the God-bearing people for the rest of the world. His words: “A Light will arise in the East to lighten the darkness of the West” express in a nutshell the essence of the messianic consciousness, whether religious or social. As stated above, the Greek Orthodox Church has been the most eschatological and the least evolutionary of all the churches. Owing to its eschatological basis, it has always had certain inherent tendencies. These tendencies are most pronounced in the radical Raskols. The most radical Raskols show a marked affinity with nineteenth century Russian Nihilism, which is also animated with intense eschatological feeling.

Eschatological feeling can be defined as an awareness of the tension between the powers of good and evil (understood socially rather than personally). The world to be is in the death grip of the world that is. A new age arises in a final catastrophe amid the ruin of the existing order of injustice.

This eschatological trend of thought is, in effect, the direct opposite of the “stewardship of wealth” theory, which germinated

in the sixteenth century Protestant schism of Western Christianity. The latter led to bourgeois pseudo-Christianity and the reconciling of God and mammon, whereas the eschatological tendency led to contempt for worldly goods and bourgeois virtues. It calls for an ascetic striving to live frugally and be content with bare necessities in the cause of the "City that is to come," whether it is understood religiously or socially. In this connection it is worthy of note that Russia never went through a bourgeois revolution in its economic sphere. Hence, the bourgeois idea of "stewardship of wealth" was not popularized among the masses as it is with us. This contempt for bourgeois life can be seen in the words of the occidentalist Herzen, who, after advocating the westernization of Russia, visited Europe and was so disenchanted by what he called the bourgeois quality of the West that he gave up his Occidentalism! (Occidentalism refers to being "Western.") This attitude is made plain even more emphatically by Dostoyevsky, who makes one of his characters declare that the most frequent guise in which the Devil appears is that of the "eighteen stone merchant's wife, to whom the trivialities of everyday life are all sufficient."

As a spiritual disposition, eschatological feeling always displays certain characteristic features, whether expressed in a religious or anti-religious way. These features consist of a tendency to maximalism or absolute consciousness.

So intense was these Russians' striving for absolute values, that they tended to deny the value of anything that would compromise. They refused the processes of history; they were preoccupied with the philosophy of history, but the relativity of history disgusted their absolute consciousness.

Another feature of eschatology is an inclination to opposite extremes. The world is seen as being composed of two oppos-

ing camps representing light and darkness, truth and falsehood, communists and worldwide bourgeoisie.

Another characteristic of eschatology is the tendency towards a basic asceticism. This is the opposite of the “stewardship of wealth” outlook. Part of this basic asceticism, which holds worldly goods in contempt, consists in denial of culture.

These Russians looked on culture as “unlawful luxury” or a “mental debauch” that ignored the sufferings of the common people. They felt that culture was bought at too high a price and at the expense of others. It was not only the Nihilists and the radical Raskols who felt this way. The quest for salvation, whether understood socially or religiously, is inherent in the structure of the Russian soul. It was all-important to seek salvation, so they rejected the creation of culture. To them, cultural creation was secondary to the search for the Kingdom of God on earth. Tolstoy and Gogol felt this acutely. For instance, Tolstoy called music “dutile pleasure.” By this he meant that music was of secondary value; it would find its proper and fullest use only after the establishment of right social and economic relations.

Pisarev, an early Nihilist exhibited the same urgent demand to put first things first. He massacred art and rejected Alexander Pushkin’s artistic abilities out of asceticism, saying: “Aesthetics are a useless and inadmissible luxury. The only art that can be allowed is art that serves the actual needs of mankind. We must free ourselves, not only from all illusions and self-deceit, but from every mental and artistic luxury.”

Idealistic and spiritual metaphysics were branded as mental or artistic luxuries—spiritual debauches—that led one to forget the sufferings of the poor. This applied to the highly speculative leanings of the Greek Orthodox Church and the Byzantine glitter

of its music. Thus the Nihilists rejected religion (which in reality was only pseudo-Christianity) due to moral and ascetic considerations.

Both religious and social eschatology expected a catastrophic end to social injustice and unrighteousness. Both groups revolted against historical (official) Christianity because of its compromise with injustice and unrighteousness. With the Nihilists this led to a radical rejection of Christianity and of all religion; with the religious groups it led to a yearning for some pure form of Christianity unspoiled by association with historical Christianity. Tolstoy expressed this attitude remarkably well. He, like the Nihilists and the radical Raskols, separated himself from the world of falsehood and untruth in an anarchistic and nihilistic spirit. He revolted against its history and culture and overturned all its values. In his intense striving for absolute values, Tolstoy also shared the nihilistic tendency to deny the value of anything that is relative. He is what one might call a religious nihilist.

Besides having the tendency to absolute consciousness and basic asceticism, eschatological feeling can be described as the obsession with the supermundane. Man cares for nothing on earth but the Last Judgment of social revolution and the City that is to be—the perfect communist society. Unfortunately, most revolutionaries, like the official church that they oppose, sanction armed force to attain their end. The religious “Nihilists,” as a minority, had deeper spiritual insight and recognized that “the means make the end;” there is no shortcut to Utopia, including the use of armed force. They advocated voluntary communism, knowing the truth of the maxim that says, “the more violence the less revolution.” For them, an inner revolution was the prerequisite to the communist society. It was, therefore, a much more revolutionary thing.

The eschatological feeling of the radical Raskols can be thus expressed: "Every earthly city is evil, unjust, relative, and subject to the Prince of this World. Christians have no lasting city; they seek the City that is to come, the Kingdom of God on earth." The quest for that City is even shared by those Russian souls that have denied God in name, out of protest against the earthly city full of evil and injustice.

There were other reasons besides ascetic considerations that led the early Nihilists to reject "religion." Chief among these was the fact that official Christianity backs social untruth. The Nihilists saw that much that was labeled "God" was bad and untrue, such as the so-called "God-given" feudal privileges and hereditary land owning which the official church upheld and maintained. The early Nihilists, with their striving for Truth at all costs, rejected the "god" of social untruth and with it, a host of conventional lies and hypocrisies. Thus it happened that many nineteenth century Russians became Nihilists out of a love of truth and justice.

The Nihilists also rejected "God" because they felt that a God who created a world so full of evil and injustice must be rejected for moral reasons! Their intense longing for justice for their fellow men here and now led them to reject "God." In a wonderful passage on God and his manifestations Gandhi says: "God is the atheism of the atheist." Thus emerged the paradox of atheistic communism. It held that "God must be denied in order to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth." It is interesting to note at this point that in the West, nineteenth century atheism was largely due to the conflict between religion and science, but that in Russia, nineteenth century atheism was due to the conflict between religion and social truth and by the fact that the official churches backed up social untruth.

Russian Nihilism, therefore, contained the nature of true religion in spite of its avowed atheism. Nihilism, with its passionate yearning for social justice here and now, rejected all values but one—that of social truth, justice, and the welfare and happiness of the oppressed. It recognized this value as supreme. It follows that everything must be sacrificed to that higher value and that it is immoral to think of anything else. Hence the Nihilists rejected idealistic or spiritual metaphysics along with all other aesthetic or mental luxuries. It was definitely moral and ascetic considerations that determined the atheism of the Nihilists.

The founder of the Nihilist movement is often regarded as Bielinsky. Although Orthodox in his youth, Bielinsky's passionate yearning for the Truth led him to protest the conventional hypocrisies of pseudo-Christianity. Russian Nihilism of the 1860's was largely founded by sons of priests. Dobroliubov and Chernyshevsky were among these. As an example of the type of soul in which Nihilism and anti-religious feeling can arise, we can study Dobroliubov's youthful diary. It reveals an astounding soul that is deeply religious, earnest in faith, pure in morality, and severely ascetic in character. It remained such to the end. Like the other early Nihilists, Dobroliubov was painfully hurt by the hypocrisy and baseness of his Orthodox Christian surroundings. He wanted light, but was surrounded by the kingdom of darkness. He decided that man must bring light into this dark, unjust world himself and became a Nihilist enlightener. Dobroliubov's Nihilism was directed by noble, pure, spiritual motives, as were all the early Nihilists. They could not see the corrupting results of atheism as a philosophy, for they were untainted by it themselves.

While holding earthly good and happiness to be the only object of life, these Nihilists showed complete selflessness in

regards to their own temporal lives. They light-heartedly went to prison, forced labor, and the scaffold to further an end that they, personally, had no hopes of attaining in their lifetime.

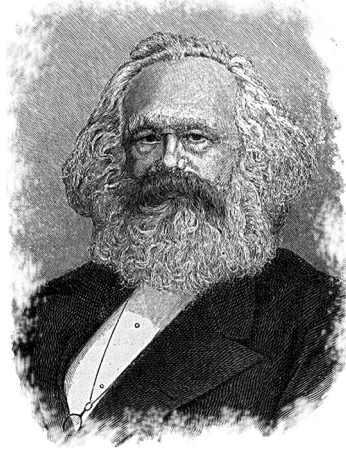
The Nihilists were considered avowedly atheist and anti-religious, but one cannot fail to see in them the elements of true religion. They belong to those described by Isaiah's suffering servant who suffers in the service of mankind. Their atheism was the protest of men who seek Truth and revolt against dominant untruth. They did not see the danger in denying God and the spiritual element in man. These alone will make men better servants of the ideal of brotherhood.

At the end of the nineteenth century a strong Marxist movement grew up in Russia and entered into battle with Russian compassionate atheism or Nihilism. The intellectual Marxian elements prevailed over the compassionate and ascetic elements of Nihilism. After the Revolution of 1917–1920 was accomplished, the Marxian type of atheism was victorious. Its appearance was quite different in tone from the traditional Russian Nihilism.

There is an abyss between Bielinsky, Dobroliubov, Chernyshevsky, Lenin, and Stalin on the one hand, and the souls over which they hold sway on the other. Their spiritual texture is completely different. Among the masses, atheism was merely a protest against beliefs that held them in slavery; their anti-religious feelings can be explained in terms of Adler's psychology—namely, compensation for former humiliation.



TRUTH



26 MARXIAN COMMUNISM

AS WE HAVE SEEN, there were revolutionaries in Russia full of spiritual dynamic long before the introduction of Marxism from the West. They embraced Marxism because its theory of “scientific inevitability” and the “messianic vocation of the proletariat” seemed to suit their purpose. The former gave optimism in face of terrific odds and the latter gave promise of compensation for former humiliation. Thus Marxism, with its basically superficial, materialistic doctrine, was grafted onto the structure of the Russian religious soul, which is characterized by an eschatological expectation of the advent of God’s Kingdom on earth. The messianic element in Marxism, rather than the scientific, dominates in Russian Communism. In Germany, on the other hand, the messianic element was very weak; it was the rational, objective

elements that predominated. It followed, then, that the German Social Democratic Party, whose creed was also Marxism, was a businesslike moderate party. It lacked the fire of religious inspiration and possessed little enthusiasm or abnegation. It was devoid of all fanaticism.

As stated above, the mythological and religious elements of Marxism predominated. Without these, the theory of economic materialism is merely one of many scientific hypotheses. As such, it could not inspire but rather made a man drop his arms in despondency. Thus it happened that in Russia the messianic faith of Marxism united with the old Russian messianic faith. They became welded into a messianic consciousness of tremendous dynamic. Messianic consciousness is always religious in origin; it dates back to Hebrew sources. It is an unscientific idea foreign to rationalistic thought.

The Russian interpretation of Karl Marx by St. Simon and Proudhon²⁰ is a religious one. They took to materialism in the same religious spirit so that science itself became an object of religious faith and idolatry for Russian atheism. Vladimir Solovyev expressed this fundamental paradox thus: "Man has evolved out of a monkey; therefore it is our duty to love one another."

It would be more logical to say, "Man has evolved out of a monkey, so let us carry on the law of the survival of the fittest." Or, "Each for himself, and the devil take the hindmost," which is the creed of capitalism. Capitalism, however, professes to being "Christian," the religion of brotherly love; Communism makes obligatory the soulless creeds of materialism, behaviorism and the mechanistic interpretation of life. It would be more in accordance with their aims if they would change creeds.

²⁰ French socialist, 1809-1865, "father of anarchism."

Illogical as it may seem, the majority of Marxists deny all religion with a wave of the hand, favoring a superficial materialism. Karl Marx himself, however, was a man of deeply religious capacity. His “atheism” was of a deeply religious origin. Karl Marx called Christianity “the essence of all religion.” He also declared that any denial of the Truth of Christianity was “undialectical.” Marx quarreled with the form of Christianity, not its content. He also used religious language in a truly religious sense when he spoke of his material life, referring to existence as a human being in society as his “earthly existence,” and his citizenship of the truly democratic state—the communist society—as his “heavenly existence.”

How few Marxists know Karl Marx as a philosopher and religious thinker as revealed in his *Thesen Über L. A. Feuerbach*. How few know of the formative influences and ideas which are given material form in his Marxian Communism.

One of the most important formative influences in Marx’s thought was Feuerbach’s *Essence of Christianity*. In this work Feuerbach aimed at restating the content of Christianity in purely humanistic terms. Marx was so influenced by Feuerbach that he declared that no one could reach the true communist position without first having been “baptized in the fire brook,” “fire brook” being the literal translation of Feuerbach. Feuerbach, in turn, had been influenced by Hegel, who maintained that his philosophy embodied the full content of Christian doctrine. After Hegel’s death the Hegelian school of thought divided on the question of whether their philosophical position was compatible with theism. The left-wing branch of the school, consisting chiefly of Feuerbach, rejected belief in God and committed themselves to the task of disentangling the essential content of Christianity from its religious form.

If we define the “Christian myth” as the idea of God as Father and of man as his potential son, we find that Feuerbach (and humanism in general) deny only one part of that myth, that of God. They maintain that man retains the divine attributes and intrinsic worth with which he is portrayed in “the Christian myth.” God is denied, and anthropology is put in the place of theology. Marx carried this process a stage further and denied both parts of “the Christian myth.” He denied both the theocentric and the anthropocentric outlooks and replaced them by one that is sociocentric or proletariocentric. Thus man tends to lose his intrinsic worth as a person and tends to become a mere function of society. The ideal communism, on the other hand—the Kingdom of God on earth—must be both “*personaliste et communaire*.” Here Marx overshot his mark. He was right, however, in maintaining that Feuerbach had failed to carry to completion his aim of restating the content of Christianity in humanistic terms. He was right in pointing out that Feuerbach’s philosophy still remained tainted with sentimental idealism. It was unrealistic because it was not rooted in the recognition of labor—that is, of active physical labor as the determining factor in human existence. Marx set about restating the sentimental religious idealism of non-integral Christianity, in the form of a practical, materialistic humanism.

At this point one might quote the familiar words of Karl Marx: “Philosophers have explained things; it is our duty to change them.” In the development of his thought Marx had reached the truth that philosophy becomes practical when it has reached its completion as a speculative system. It must seek the realization of itself in the lives of men and their society. This is surely the essence of true religion! It reminds one of Jesus’ constant emphasis on *doing* and *being* rather than merely *talking*. He scorned lip service in no

ambiguous terms, judging those who merely say, “Lord, Lord” and saying, “Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity; I know you not.”

Marx similarly inveighs against “idealism.” He does not deny its truth but says that the greatest barrier to the realization of idealism in the marketplace is the isolating of the “ideal” from actual life—the social and economic as well as the personal. He denounces the worship of an ideal for its own sake, saying: “The ‘idea’ itself will be felt to be the enemy by those who feel spurred into action by the idea, precisely because it is merely idea and as such, antithetical to action. The effort to unite idea and actuality, to fuse theory and practice, appears as the antithesis of the effort to maintain the purity of the idea in its ideal isolation from the world.”

In this insight Marx is on the same ground as true Christianity. He opposes the dualism of organized Christendom with its double morality of worshipping idealized love while, at the same time, condoning in its worshippers the cutthroat competition in the jungle of everyday life. As an escape from the cutthroat competition of “Christendom,” the individual finds the realization of his true nature in ideals. He defends the unrighteous system that isolates ideals from social and economic life. Hence organized religion defends the present unjust system by acting as an escape mechanism from the ruthlessness that accompanies an unjust system. Moreover, the ecclesiasticism that isolates ideals from real life lives or dies with the capitalist system. Any attempt to put the “idea” into practice would mean communism—either the imperfect atheistic attempt at communism or the communism of love, which is true Christianity. Thus, in spite of the fact that they are warring against their own Truth, the official churches defend capitalism against any form of communism. Look at the treatment meted

out to the socio-religious heretics throughout the ages by official Christianity (both Roman Catholic and Protestant). The left wing cynically remarked that the vexing problem of the splits in the church would be solved in the last ditch of their fight against communism, where they would be united in a common cause.

There is theoretically nothing preventing the churches from true Christianity but themselves. They need to die to ecclesiasticism and be born again as the Holy Spirit of a just social order. This would be the ideal of true religion. But if one is a materialist, as Marx professed to be, one cannot believe in such a Holy Spirit. Here again Marx is seen to have overshot his mark. Or, to use the banal expression—"he threw the baby out with the bathwater." When rejecting religion with a small "r," he also threw out the real thing. Religion with a capital "R" (true religion) is the only spirit that can create truly disinterested men and true communists. Where that spirit is lacking, there is neither true religion nor true communism.

This overstepping of the mark can be seen in Marx's dialectical treatment of religion. He maintains that "religion" finds a necessary place in an irrational and unjust society as an escape mechanism from the frustrations of such a society. When the function and necessity of "religion" is understood, it leads to its dialectical negation. To use the terms of his much hackneyed dialectical process: when dualistic religion is denied as a "thesis," it leads to its "antithesis"—out of which the "synthesis" arises as an amalgam of the two. Synthesis is the translation of the ideas of the thesis into actuality in society. Marx declared that "religion" was unnecessary at the stage of the synthesis mentioned above. He was wrong. True religion is of the nature of this very synthesis, in that it is a way of life rather than lip service. The just social order cannot

easily be attained or maintained without true religion or the Holy Spirit. If all religion were dispensed with and successfully rooted out of men's minds, men would not be able to serve such a cause as the synthesis mentioned above. They would rather fall prey to self-seeking (if not for money as with the capitalists, then for strategic positions or power). With the elimination of all religion, the loyalty to such an ideal as communism would also go, for it is a religious ideal.

Marx was a German Jew. He had abandoned the faith of his fathers, but the messianic expectation of Israel remained in his sub-consciousness. For him the proletariat was the New Israel, God's chosen people, the builders of an earthly kingdom that is to come. A chosen class replaces a chosen people. It is impossible to reach such a notion by means of science. It is a religious idea and is quite foreign to the rationalistic mind. Messianic consciousness is always of ancient Hebrew origin, and it always imparts an enormous dynamic.

It is also perfectly clear that Marx's "proletariat" was not the empirical working class that we observe in actual life. It is a mythological idea, not an objective reality. Similarly, the messianic vocation is a faith, not science; it is of "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Marx's proletariat and his perfect communistic society are "invisible things." They are religious ideas and objects of faith.

Marx reveals his religious soul structure again in the strong eschatological feeling that he shared with the Russian Nihilists and with the belief in a catastrophic end of capitalist society—the certain coming of the Last Judgment. He and the Nihilists also shared the acute feeling of the furious struggle between darkness and light—between the demoniacal, irrational forces in history and the

triumph of reason, justice, and organization. He also had a certain faith in the triumph of light over darkness. Or, as he expressed it, he believed in the triumph of reason, justice, and meaning over the irrational forces of history. These are ideas of a definitely religious origin. Therefore, Marx fails to be logical in his thought when he couches them in the language of materialism.

Thus, in prodigious contrast to his own professed materialism, Marx believed in the “dialectical process” of Hegel. Hegel’s dialectics are connected with the idea of a Universal Logos—the “Meaning” or purpose of the universe. This idea of the Logos or Meaning is best expressed in the opening verses of St. John’s Gospel. Marx believed that the Logos—the “Self-revelation of Intelligence” or the “Meaning of the Universe”—must infallibly triumph. At the same time he upheld a superficial materialism. Matter, however, is ignorant of the triumph of Meaning. There is no reason to suppose that blind, ignorant matter may not lead to the triumph of darkness, slavery and the irrational forces of history. Marx, however, with supreme inconsistency, introduces the ethical religious idea of the Logos into the heart of matter itself and calls it dialectical materialism. The brilliant future is inevitable; the realm of freedom or the triumph of Meaning is pre-determined. The dialectics of the material process infallibly lead to the Kingdom of God on earth, but without God.

Marx rejected God, which leads to the denial of the spiritual in man. He also preached that any means could be used to gain the desired end. This is consistent with materialism. In this he agrees with official Christianity, which also sanctions bloodshed and violence as a means towards a “good” end. On this point, of course, true religion and real Christianity are opposed to both Marxism and official Christianity. Thus we find Marx making use

of negative feelings such as class hatred. He believes in the benefit accruing to his cause from the “*Verelendung*” of the workers—namely, the increasing misery of the workers’ lot. True Christianity cannot agree with the former. But the “*Verelendung*” may awaken the apathetic and self-centered to ethical passion. It is ethical passion, not mere malcontent and economic distress, which makes true revolutionaries. For those who are revolutionaries only because of their sufferings, the removal of economic distress may also remove their revolutionary leanings. This, unfortunately, is too often the case. True religion is more realistic. It claims that blind necessity cannot lead to freedom because freedom is of the Spirit. Only when the Truth is inwardly discerned and outwardly lived is the realm of freedom or ideal society attained.

Marx is a complete amoralist in his conscious thought. He is an extreme determinist, despising every moral appreciation and denying the existence of moral freedom. His sanctioning of violence and hatred is consistent with this thesis. His teaching on the class struggle, however, is quite inconsistent with an amoralistic viewpoint. It is, rather, thoroughly moralistic. For instance, he teaches that there is no Absolute Good. But evil and injustice are apparent in the exploiting of man by man. Thus Marx teaches that it is immoral for one class to exploit another. It is also immoral to have national wars for markets. It is immoral to have unequal distribution of goods, education, and leisure, and immoral to have private ownership of the means of production.

Marx defines “exploitation” as something with a purely economic character. But the idea is ethical in character, as it is passing a moral judgment to say that exploitation is wrong. With Marx, exploitation is the original sin at the basis of human society. Hence Marx affirms that to maintain and justify itself, an exploiting

society needs an illusory doctrine that is foreign to the Truth. It follows that all the ideas and beliefs of an exploiting society are untrue. We pseudo-Christians who are so accustomed to double standards may find this to be a sweeping statement. But it is our vision that is blurred.

As long as a class society exists, ethics must be arbitrary and authoritative. Under capitalism you cannot ask why property rights are sacred or how the property was acquired. The right to private ownership is looked upon as a categorical imperative, rooted in the Divine Will of the very nature of things. It is enforced as a moral code by “religion,” education, art, literature, and social taboos, as well as by the law. But it cannot bear rational investigation and is at once condemned by any moral criticism.

Our whole society is based on the foundations of private ownership of land and capital. This leads to a class society. If these foundations would go, nothing would remain the same. Art, philosophy, religion, customs, morals, class distinctions, and even science itself would be changed into something new and strange. Landmarks would be altered, and we would not comprehend things in the old terms anymore.

Marx’s *Manifesto* is in keeping with the sweeping statements made above. It sweeps with a clean broom and is intolerant of anyone wanting to patch the old unjust system. He says: “There are certain bourgeois who want to redress social grievances in order to safeguard bourgeois society. To this category belong economists, philanthropists, humanitarians, welfare workers, charity organizers, members of societies for prevention of cruelty to animals, temperance fanatics, and hole-and-corner reformers of every imaginable kind!”

Marx did not patch the old garment. He saw a vision of the new

garment—a new world and goal of society: “To each according to his need; from each according to his ability.” He labored toward that end and dreamed of a happy time when the state would have “withered away.” There is no doubt that *To each according to his need and from each according to his ability* is the only political theory that upholds the Christian position of absolute equality and the value of every individual, while maintaining that all state restraint is evil.

The anarchistic note in the ultimate communist hope is one of the definite marks of its religious temper. The Marxian Communists, however, expected to reach the goal where all human relationships would be moral rather than political through political measures alone. They denied and ignored the moral and spiritual nature of man.

The denial of God and the spiritual nature of man is the one basic falsehood of Marxian Communism. It is the source of all the negative elements, frustrations, and evils in the wonderful attempt to build a new world in Russia.

TRUTH





27 SNAPSHOTS OF TWENTIETH CENTURY LIFE

The following chapter, containing snapshots of twentieth century life, was written by Maureen in Paraguay as a teaching lesson for her students.

SOME TIME AGO I remember being struck by a cartoon in *Punch*. It showed two fishes in the ocean opening their eyes in astonishment at the magnetic mine which was floating by near them. The younger fish asked the older one what it is, and the old fish answered: "Oh they are just things that appear in the water every twenty years or so."

I also remember during World War II, an Air Raid Precautions warden of an English city boasted in the newspapers of the efficiency of the organization. As proof of this he asserted that he had

managed to supply the necessary air raid protection for a baby five minutes after its birth. What a welcome from its fellow men!

Another picture, imprinted indelibly on my mind, is of the young man in the plane that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. Unable to bear the guilt of it, which he felt personally (and yet which we bear equally), he gave up everything and became a monk.

Then I see the picture of another young man, Lauro de Bosis, an anti-fascist exile in London. His poem “Icarus” (based on the legend of Icarus and his son, who made wings of wax and flew away from the tyrant of Crete) foreshadowed his own death. Icarus and his son were drowned as their wings melted, and Lauro de Bosis lost his life in a dilapidated plane over the Mediterranean after scattering anti-fascist leaflets over Italy. He had spent all he had printing these leaflets, learning to fly, and getting the cheapest possible plane for his flight, to call his fellow countrymen to other ideals—ideals in harmony with the universal brotherhood of man.

Again I recall the deep impression made on me by the play, *It Fell on America*. The characters are several scientists conversing together as they wait for the zero hour of the exploding of the experimental atom bomb in the New Mexican desert. One says to another, “Do you realize that if this bomb is a success, it will bring in a new age? We are experiencing the birth pangs of a new age, the Atomic Age. It will be an age of death on a devastating scale if man does not change.” “How can he change?” “Well, I suppose he must again learn to believe in a God, and humble himself to find the purpose in the mind of God. In other words, become childlike again. That is the only alternative to human extinction.”

Such are the facts of our present day. No one can stand aloof,

thinking he is living in the “Islands of the Blessed,” as Plato would say. We are all responsible. How can we effectively give our lives so that an answer may be found for our day and generation? I find the words of Jesus before Pilate very important for us in our search. He said: “To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world—that I bear witness to the Truth. Everyone that is of the Truth hears my voice.” I feel that, individually and as a group, we should be humble and ready to learn from all men and all groups past and present who have sought for the Truth, for “the Light lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” and we must listen for that “of God” in all men. This is desperately urgent for all men, also for those in community, for they are no better than other men and have been led by the same truth that stirs the hearts of others. A mutual exchange is a great enrichment to community.

On the other hand, it is desperately urgent for all men that a practical attempt is made, however feeble, to live according to the Truth. Indeed, that is the greatest service that can be done for mankind—to let the Truth live through one’s self-surrender to it—so that a way may be found. But what is the Truth? Jesus said, “They that are of the Truth hear my voice.” Augustine, who himself had lived as a Manichean for most of his life before he became a Christian, said, “What we call Christianity has always existed since the beginning of the world and before the manifestation of Christ in the flesh.” It was these gleams of the Truth that Jesus fulfilled—accepting what is true and illuminating and revealing what is false by his life and teaching. For instance, when Philip, who came from the semi-Greek town of Bethsaida brought two of his Greek friends to meet Jesus, Jesus at once quoted the central theme of the Greek mystery religion which centers around faith in the “Coming One” or redeemer of Greek hopes. This mystery—the Eleusinian

TRUTH IS ETERNAL

mystery (from the Greek word *Eleusis*, or “Coming One”) was associated with a ceremony in which dying and resurrecting corn plays a part. So Jesus, in quoting the passage, “except a grain of corn die,” to these men, was claiming to be the “Coming One” of the Greeks, just as he claimed to be the Messiah of the Jews. Many Greeks, we read, became his followers, so that immediately following Jesus’ death differences arose between his ex-Greek and ex-Jewish followers that had to be smoothed out. Just as Jesus extended a hand of friendship and understanding to the Greek seekers, so an understanding of the ideas and goals of our fellow men will enable us both to learn from them and to extend a hand of friendship and fellowship to them in a common search.



TRUTH

28 BROTHERHOOD UNDER FATHERHOOD OF GOD



Editor's note: The following was found written by Maureen in place of the last chapter of her book:

I could not write this chapter because I was not living it. Being unable to write this last chapter from outside, I stopped writing anymore. I felt any more writing would just be an ESCAPE so I stopped writing in August 1940, and went to Wheathill in February 1944. I concentrated on the Bible, especially the New Testament, for four years. I read the Bible and sought the meaning of 'realized eschatology' for here and now. I did not write this chapter but tried to live it.

On the following pages we have inserted the letter Maureen wrote to Wheathill in 1944, stating her convictions based on her long search for Truth:

TRUTH IS ETERNAL

6, The Crescent

Solihull

13th February, 1944

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I am writing to you in great need. I am certain that nothing can help in the universal misery of today (of which my deep distress of conscience is but a tiny part) but Love in action without compromise. I feel convinced that any moralistic idealism of any brand leads only to the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees and does not overcome the division of torn humanity. The only way open is the way of selfless love, and I feel that is a mighty force.

I feel broken in pride and in self-esteem, and I see only frustration and bitterness in any other way of life but yours. I would like to devote my life to the cause of brotherhood, justice and peace, if you will have me and two children. I feel now that even if I must part with all my children, I must live your way of Love.

Brian is 8 years 8 months, and David 6-1/2 years. I should be so happy if you could have us, in spite of the fact that I shall not be able to bring any financial help; I have nothing but our clothes and some linen.

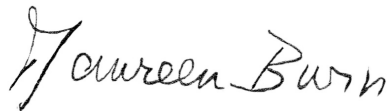
For four years I have constantly weighed the pros and cons regarding the cost of following Love. And though I have shrunk from the heavy cost in the past, I feel more and more that I can now do

LETTER TO WHEATHILL

no other. I have cut myself off from pacifists and others who, in part, approximated to my views, in order to rely all the more on the voice of God. I feel more and more that I must be a doer and not a hearer or sayer of the Word. Matthew does not agree with my wish to join you; he is unwillingly letting me have two children. But I feel there is a Higher Will to which one must bow than that of any human being, however beloved.

I shall always hope one day that I may have the great happiness to be united to Matthew in the Truth—but at present that is not so. I shall love Matthew forever. I hate hurting him and the boys by this step, but deep down I know it is a deeper Love to follow the Truth than to live in recognized falsehood. I have nothing but faith in Love or the Unity of God to rely on—I trust nothing human. Please say if you will have us at once. Write or phone me at 6, The Crescent, Solihull.

Yours, in the cause of Peace and Unity,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maureen Burn". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Maureen J. F. Burn

P. S. I enclose a few notes giving my beliefs in more detail. Please excuse pencil and haste.

Notes: After so long a silence I must write to you. These last four years and before, the Bruderhof has been a “city set on a hill” to me. I know it has been

cowardly of me to accept the comfort and hope your witness gives while you, not I, are paying the price and accepting the cross which is entailed.

I feel I cannot join any group or any movement.

My solace (which I know has just been an escape from action) has been reading and finding unity, which I cannot find with anyone but with people such as the socio-religious “heretics” of the first centuries or those of the left-wing branch of the Anabaptists or with the theoretical outlooks described in Stanley Jones’s *Christ and Communism*, Aldous Huxley’s *Ends and Means*, Tolstoy’s *Walk in the Light*, and other works like J. M. Murry’s *Necessity of Communism* and *Necessity of Pacifism*.

However, it is a far different thing to put these eloquent pleas for brotherhood into practice. For that, the “natural man” (with his petty jealousies and rivalries) must die. This would almost seem an impossible task, were it not for the living witness of the Bruderhof. Thus if the Bruderhof should lose its inner unity, God forbid (reverently speaking), I feel I should lose all faith. I have been finding some fellowship, if not very deep, with the Quakers. But I would never join them. They are, I feel, socially unclear in backing “stewardship of wealth.” Similarly, the unity in the Truth for which I long is quite lacking with them. That unity seems to me the most wonderful thing on earth. It is, I feel, the incarnation of the God of Love in society.

I have been a great unbeliever, and have doubted

LETTER TO WHEATHILL

everything till I could be convinced otherwise. I have, however, turned over every stone I could in my search for the Truth, and I find that Christ is the fulfillment of every avenue.

For ten years now I have been a pacifist. But I see how negative it is unless it is an implication of the law of love in Christ. In denying war, which is the inevitable outcome of unbrotherliness, one must live the conditions that make for peace—that is brotherhood under the Fatherhood of God.

Maureen Burn



TRADITIONAL GAÉLIC BLESSING

Deep peace of the
 running waves to you,
Deep peace of the
 flowing air to you,
Deep peace of the
 quiet earth to you,
Deep peace of the
 shining stars to you,
Deep peace of the
 shades of night to you,
Moon and stars always
 giving light to you.