

THE  
POOR SINNER'S GOSPEL

WILHELM WEITLING

*Translated by Dinah Livingstone*

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## CONTENTS

Foreword to the English Edition, David McClellan	vii
Preface to the Second Edition	xvi
Introduction	xix
I A Glimpse into the Mind of the Evangelists	I
2 A Brief Look at the Story of Jesus and His Disciples to Consider their Personalities	12
3 The Method of Teaching	41
4 Proofs and Conclusions	56
5 God, Jesus, the Apostles and We are All One	67
6 The Pure Teaching of Jesus	75
7 Actions	127
8 Interpretations	139
9 General Christian Morality	163
10 Organisation of Propaganda	173
11 What is Communism?	179
Appendix: Weitling's First Defence	187

## FOREWORD TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

Wilhelm Weitling was born in October, 1808, when Napoleon was at the height of his career. He was the illegitimate son of a Magdeburg cook and an officer of the napoleonic garrison in Magdeburg who, leaving all he had to mother and son, departed to die soon after on a Russian battlefield. The efforts of his mother enabled Weitling to attend secondary school after which he became an apprentice tailor. His training required that he wander through Germany, as was the fashion of his profession, though he found it very difficult to make a living. The French July revolution, which instituted the 'Bourgeois' monarchy of Louis Philippe and made liberal influences felt even in the autocratic German state, found Weitling in Leipzig. In the following years he was in Dresden and Vienna. Here he invented a pleating machine, made a little money from it and got engaged. 'But', he said later, 'the desire for like minded men drove me on to Paris.' These 'like minded men' he found in the League of the Proscribed, a socialist group formed out of the German workers in Paris who had first begun to organise themselves about 1832.

After returning to Vienna for a short stay, he remained in Paris from September 1837 until May 1841. In 1838 he became a member of the central committee of the League of the Proscribed and was commissioned by them to write his first book - *Mankind As It Is And*

*As It Ought To Be*. He was also active in other fields: he learnt French and translated Lamennais' *Book of the People* into German; he travelled a lot on propaganda trips, and founded in Paris a communist canteen, to guarantee cheap meals and help the strikers and the unemployed.

From early 1841 until his arrest in June 1843 he worked in Switzerland, again at the suggestion of the central committee of the league. In spite of initial difficulties (the Swiss workers at first found Weitling's communism too extreme), by the beginning of 1843 there were thirteen communist Workers Associations spread over several cantons with a total of more than 700 members. Weitling also started the first German communist paper and published, in December 1842, his second book *Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom*.

This marked the high point of Weitling's influence. Difficulties now began to increase: his newspaper was confiscated in France and thus could not be delivered in London; finally he was expelled from Geneva. He gave up tailoring to devote himself full time to communist propaganda, moving from city to city until in the spring of 1843 he settled in arch-conservative Zurich. His success, however, was nowhere near as great as before and it was as a new propaganda approach that he began to write the *Gospel*. He was arrested in June 1843 before it was finished and condemned to ten months' imprisonment. While in jail he finished his book, learnt English, and, on release, made his way to London. Here he was welcomed by the London members of the league.

In February 1846 Weitling went to Brussels where, for the first time, his path crossed that of Marx. After a violent argument, Weitling found himself excluded from the Brussels branch of the league. Soon after he left for New York, founded there a new Workers' Association and returned to Germany as its delegate on the outbreak of the 1848 revolution. He was once again active in organising mass movements and writing articles. On his expulsion from Germany in 1849 he returned to New York.

The worsening economic situation of 1850 in America brought his agitation considerable scope and he founded a successful revolutionary newspaper. This was of very short duration, however, and by the middle of the 1850s Weitling retired from active political campaigning. He married in 1854 and had many children, remaining in the dire poverty he had known all his life. In 1871 he took part in a meeting of the First International against the Franco-Prussian War and died three days later on 25th January.

Weitling was called by Engels the 'first German communist', a title which, in fact, he disputes with Moses Hess. His important work is concentrated in the years 1838 to 1845. Reports in the German press on the ideas of Saint-Simon and Fourier had already interested Weitling in communism in the early 1830s and the influence of Paris was decisive. In his first book the League of the Just had asked him 'to write something to demonstrate the possibility of a community of goods'. The book warned against conspiratorial methods and putsches - a view proved right a few

months later by the failure of Blanqui's insurrection – and urged propaganda among the masses as a means to revolution. Its style owed a lot to Lamennais and, in spite of its moral tone and appeals to natural law and christianity, it held to a rigid doctrine of class struggle. The book went through three editions and had quite a large circulation.

Weitling's work for the league in Switzerland also prospered and his newspaper had 1,000 subscribers, 400 in Paris and 100 in London. Engels, in his report on socialist movements written for the *New Moral World* at the end of 1843, wrote of the paper: 'Although written exclusively by and for workmen, this paper was from the start better than most French communist publications, even better than Father Cabet's *Populaire*.' In December 1842 Weitling produced, in his *Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom*, a systematic criticism of contemporary exploitative society and proposals for a future communist one. The law of uninterrupted progress, human instinct, the needs of the age, the interests of the immense majority, the precepts of reason – all required social equality as a fundamental principle of social harmony and human freedom. Bourgeois society, on the other hand, was rotten with the evils caused by private property and money which had torn society asunder into irreconcilable classes. It was this book particularly, coupled with the misguided publicity given by the Swiss authorities to his trial, that gained Weitling his reputation. He made a great impression on those radical German intellectuals who from young hegelian begin-

nings were evolving towards socialism: Feuerbach said he had never liked anything so much as the first half of *Guarantees* and wished to dedicate his next book to Weitling; Heine considered the book to be the catechism of the German communists; Marx talked in the summer of 1844 of 'the brilliant works of Weitling which from the theoretical point of view surpassed even Proudhon, however inferior they may be in execution. Where could the bourgeoisie, its philosophers and scholars included, produce works similar to Weitling's *Guarantees*?'

It was in the first half of 1843, at the high point of Weitling's influence, that he wrote the *Gospel*. It was written against a background of increasing difficulties in Zurich and both subject and style are affected by these circumstances. Weitling's books being confiscated and his finances low, he wished to base his case on a text whose authority was indisputable and whose availability was guaranteed - the bible. By constant reference to the new testament he intended to answer the common charge that communism was the antithesis of christianity and the denial of all morality. Weitling hoped to turn the weapons of the rich against themselves, and refute the view that private property was willed by God, a view propagated by all the mass media at the disposal of the ruling classes. He said of his book: 'Its aim was to strengthen belief in all places where it does not endanger the spiritual and material interests of one's neighbour and to expose any exploitation of the faith as being the exclusive prejudice of a few.' Yet the *Gospel* was no mere tactical manoeuvre: Weitling



passionately believed contemporary communism to be the historical continuation and spiritual successor to the communist tendencies of early christianity. The kernel of christianity was the struggle of the poor for an earthly kingdom based on love, and his *Gospel* was a summons to those without inheritance or rights to change the corrupt world themselves. There is little concern here for a world hereafter, little emphasis on patience and humility; God is all perfection and the unknown motive force behind nature; religion is the striving after this ideal; Jesus Christ is the perfect example of a fighter for freedom and justice.

For these ideas, Weitling, like all early German socialists leaned heavily on French sources. At the time of the French Revolution, Babeuf had talked of 'sansculotte Jesus', and this had been taken up by his disciple Buonarotti. In the early 1840s the Utopian communist Cabet equated true christianity with communism and described Jesus as the first communist, though for him, unlike Weitling, christianity was a means of class reconciliation. Weitling also drew on the young hegelian movement and particularly on Feuerbach, by insisting that pure atheism failed to realise the positive side of religion as a vehicle of man's fundamental, albeit idealistic, desires.

Weitling's *Gospel* had a wide circulation, with translations into French, English, Norwegian, Hungarian and Russian as well as five German editions. However, Weitling's impact on the early socialist movement soon faded: though welcomed at first as a martyr in London, his stay there and subsequently in New York made him

lose touch with continental movements and ideas. There was also his quarrel with Marx in Brussels in March of 1846 which discouraged Weitling and precipitated his decision to emigrate to America. This was not only a personal clash between two men whose origins, temperaments and views were very different: it was a clash between two different sorts of socialism. For Marx, any over-hasty attempt to influence the workers without a clear body of doctrine was bound to lead to the downfall of their cause. The concept of the 'unity of theory and practice' contained in his contemporaneous *Theses on Feuerbach* ruled out any theorising that was not strictly linked to practical conditions. Above all it was the strain of sentimentality and emotion in Weitling's ideas that Marx could not accept and his quarrel with Weitling represents Marx's emphatic and final rejection of utopian communism. For Weitling, on the other hand, 'communism was indeed a very simple doctrine of human brotherhood, quite innocent of intellectual subtleties; and he had no use for the hegelian philosophers who were developing German socialism as a theory quite unrelated to political practice. He wanted action by the workers - action in the spirit of new testament christianity: among the young hegelians he found himself out of his depth and responded by mistrusting them as self-destructive logic-choppers devoid of real feeling for the masses.'\*

Thus Weitling is a central figure in the nascent

\* G. D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, London, 1953, Vol. I, p. 228.

socialism of the 1840s, standing at the centre of several processes. He interpreted and popularised various brands of French utopian socialism among German-speaking workers in Paris and Switzerland; he was the only early German socialist of working-class origin and thus formed a link between workers' movements and the intellectual socialism of the young hegelians; and when the minds of radical German intellectuals were beginning to be interested in socialism, it was to Weitling that they looked as the authentic interpreter of the workers' struggle.

But Weitling, and particularly his *Gospel*, are important in another respect also. The enormous number and variety of 'new christianities' that appeared during the first half of the nineteenth century marks a turning-point in European socialism. The 1840s in particular afforded an opportunity to establish a lasting connexion between a christianity that revised both its medieval and reformed tendencies and a socialism that was still being formed. With the rejection of Weitling by Marx and the condemnation of Lammenais by the Vatican, there began a continuous hostility that was to the detriment of both movements. Texts such as the *Gospel* are important as evidence of efforts to forge this link when the opportunity first presented itself and there was still a chance that, rather as in the sixteenth century a connexion had been established between reformed christianity and the rising post-feudal class of the bourgeoisie, so in the nineteenth century a permanent connexion could be formed between a 'new christianity' and the post-bourgeois mass of working

people. The failure to achieve this has meant a fragmentation of the forces making for social renovation that is only now – one hundred years later – beginning to be overcome.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The best biography of Weitling in English is Carl Wittke's *The Utopian Communist* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1950). Information on the German intellectual background is provided in my *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx* and *Marx before Marxism* (both London, 1969). For the European socialist background as a whole, see George Lichtheim's *The Origins of Socialism* (London, 1969).

DAVID MCCLELLAN

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

This work was meant to come out in Zurich in the summer of 1843. Some like-minded people were to pay for the printing in order to bring it out as cheaply as possible. When half the printing had left the press I was arrested at night in the open street and the plates and the rest of the manuscript were confiscated. I was imprisoned for fifty weeks, banned, released, banned again and deported to England. The confiscated plates were *destroyed*.

But a friend managed to rescue most of the manuscript. In order to help me and also make its publication possible, he sold it while I was in prison to Mr Jenni in Bern. But while I was in prison I had decided to improve the manuscript and I did the work on it in London after my release. But this revision was too late for Jenni's edition which was already in the press. The strange adventures of the first manuscript had given rise to false corrections and printers' errors. To correct these and to make the work available to the poor, my friends decided to share the costs of printing a revised manuscript at a low price. It contains everything that was in the first manuscript, but arranged in a new way and expanded. In the first edition I gave references only to the gospels, in the second I give them also for the epistles. In order to prove that my interpretation of the gospel is the true one, I wrote a chapter on the

contradictions in the new testament, at the same time showing that these are not thereby contradictions in the teaching of Jesus. I also wrote a plan for the organisation of propaganda, which demands the reader's particular attention.

Jenni's edition was also subject to persecution. A hundred copies were confiscated in Zurich and their owners arrested and deported. The manuscript of the second edition, which was in the possession of one of the men who were arrested, was again in danger of confiscation but fortunately not found when the house was searched.

The government of Luzern apparently wishes to punish the possession of a communist book with five years' imprisonment.

The so-called radical government of the Zurich canton drew up a law at the beginning of this year against the communists, and it was passed unanimously in the Great Council on the twenty-fifth of March. According to this law, those who seek to further communism through the press or through meetings may be punished by a fine of a thousand Swiss francs or two years' imprisonment. We hope that no true communist will be too frightened by this law to go on spreading and defending communism with all the means at his disposal. Up till now communism was persecuted without a law. The Zurich government has the *immortal* honour of being the first to bring a law against the new doctrine. By their miserable work they hope to preserve the control over the power and the money and to keep the *sovereign* people in their state of folly. But the

people must come to see how they have been led by the nose and throw these holders of power, together with their laws against communism, to the devil.

The persecutions of communism will come to an end, just as the persecutions of christianity did. The laws against communism will be revoked just as the laws against witches were. It is for communists to bring this about, the sooner the better. Those who paid for the publication of this book pledge themselves that any man who is imprisoned for spreading this book will be compensated for every day of his imprisonment and for every mile he had to travel.

THE AUTHOR

## INTRODUCTION

Poor sinners, this gospel is for you. Make it a gospel of freedom.

All you whose faith is foundering and whose knowledge is uncertain, whose anchor of hope finds nothing to hold on to in a sea of doubt, come and take fresh hope and fresh courage from it.

If the official explanations of the gospel has killed all your love for it, do not therefore throw this book aside in contempt. It is not written by a saint, a cleric or a holy man, it is written by a sinner.

If your conscience doubts the rightness of its own judgment, if you need comfort and hope in the storms of passion, if you long for a better life and the priest gives you no satisfactory advice, if you are so oppressed by suffering that you are left with only humility and resignation and leave the satisfaction of your needs to heaven, take this book.

If at the cleansing of the temple some of the coins from the overturned tables of the moneychangers fall into the pockets of you poor sinners and they take you to court for judgment, take this gospel.

If people disregard your exhausting day's work and reproach you for your glass of wine or spirits, show them this gospel. You will find a 'gluttonous man' and a 'winebibber', a friend of publicans and sinners, to silence your moralisers.



With extravagant hands you poured out your costly ointment, sorrowing Magdalene. A sinner with languishing eyes. You let the unclean hand of little cupid shake the beautiful buds of your springtime and offered him but scant resistance. You were often overcome by passion but in the end you overcame it without losing the power to enjoy things and the strength to be virtuous. Queen of passion. Now you have conquered it.

Let others boast of their cloak of false virtue and parade their piety, innocence and chastity; they have not even put it to the test, in which you salvaged the power to be holy without losing the power of passion. If people reproach you quote them the gospel and say: 'We have loved greatly and so great things will be forgiven us.'

Come, all you who work and are poor and despised and oppressed. If you want freedom and justice for all mankind. This gospel will give you new courage and new hope.

It will make pale and careworn cheeks rosy again and rekindle the light of hope in sorrowing eyes. It will strengthen the faint-hearted and give the doubting mind the power of conviction. It will kiss the forehead of the convict with forgiveness and lighten the darkness of his prison with a ray of hope. It will bring to nothing the power of money and proclaim the kingdom of freedom which belongs to the Lord of Hosts and of sinners.

It will release faith from its errors, lighten the way of hope and pour the warmth of love and freedom into every heart. So be it.

## A GLIMPSE INTO THE MIND OF THE EVANGELISTS

### I Faith and Knowledge

As long as we are children, we *believe*, think and behave like children. It is only when our own mind develops through age and experience, that we *know*, think and behave like men.

A child who wants to learn from its teachers must believe their words, until by repeated reflection and its own experience and conviction it is in a position to put what it has been taught to the proof. If it does not do this, it will have to undergo a second period of learning, often much later on, and thus lose precious time. But when the teachers are themselves uncertain of the truth, when they do not *know* but only *believe* what they teach or do not even believe what they are obliged to teach, then of course it is better for the pupil to maintain his unbelief and learn nothing, than to have his understanding and feelings disordered by damaging and irrational impressions. His scientific education in this case can only benefit by his doubt and unbelief.

But doubt and unbelief are already a level of knowledge, which must be communicated to the pupil by people he trusts. Grown-ups and respected persons,

parents and teachers, hold a strong influence over children and can – if they are in agreement – pass on to them all their own prejudices, indeed proffer them these as truths. For while our mind is not mature enough to grasp a truth, if we are to learn it at all, we must take it on trust from other people. It only ceases to be a belief and becomes knowledge when we reach maturity.

For every truth is not so easily comprehensible that we can be given the proof of it as soon as we have been given the truth itself. We are often not in a position after years of study to pass final judgment upon a doctrine. Centuries pass before some succeed in solving a difficult problem. The same problem may puzzle the most eminent thinkers for thousands of years and they fall from one error into another and do not reach any conclusion. But the further we are from the knowledge of a truth, the more faith and trust we must put in the possibility of knowing it. The nearer we come to the knowledge of it, the better we grasp the new truth and our state of belief changes into a state of knowledge, as our position of learner changes into that of teacher. The growth period is stealthy like the growth of a child's body into a man's.

Thus as long as we only believe something we are not convinced of its truth for believing means not knowing. For someone who knows something is more permeated by the truth of it than someone who only believes it. Knowledge rests upon facts and proofs whereas belief rests only on opinions and guesses, written or oral communications which we are not yet in a position to criticise.

There are societies and individuals who have remained children intellectually when compared with other societies and individuals. These are the ones who need belief which is dispensable to the others because they are better educated and their belief has been superseded by knowledge. Every teacher of the people, every man who has an influence over the education of people, must not only believe what he teaches but he must *know* it, he must be permeated by the knowledge of what he teaches, must be able to offer proofs and to welcome rather than discourage criticism.

Parents, nurses, schoolmasters and every other teacher of those who are still children in mind as well as in body need the trust of their pupils and need it the more the less they know and the more basic the things they have to teach.

A teacher is in a position of power over his pupils because of his office. If he has the systematic support of others the pupil's intellectual development is entirely in his hands. He can keep them in the state of belief or help them to pass from belief to knowledge and give them the means to set about increasing their knowledge on their own.

The ruling classes in our present society have used this power exclusively in their own interests. These people who believe little because they know much are convinced that the education of the masses would put an end to their patience under oppression and the power of their rulers. The rulers do their utmost to prevent the education of the people passing from the state of belief to the state of knowledge.

The power and the wealth of the rulers are strong weapons for the attainment of their ends. They have been used to keep the whole teaching body under their control. Belief which should be a way to knowledge is now their end and they use their knowledge to keep the people in a state of belief. Instead of the people believing in order to learn knowledge, they learn in order to believe what the teachers themselves do not believe. Belief is not used as a means of teaching and learning but teaching and learning are used as a means to belief, that is to say, in spite of all learning and teaching, not knowing.

For years in the churches priests have been passing on a word not of their own choosing but prescribed to them by a systematic organisation. Critics in the congregation hardly dare to sigh under the pulpit and the weary peasants start snoring. Eighteen hundred years ago a twelve-year-old boy expounded the law to the elders in the temple, whereas in Prague a few years ago a little tailor who interrupted the preacher was banned from the feast.\*

\* This story was told me in Prague by the innkeeper. This tailor had formerly been his pupil and had always been able through his diligent bible study and criticism to point out the relevant passages. Once he interrupted the parson in his church, called him a liar and referred to the appropriate places in the bible. They could not give me these references. However, the incident caused such a scandal that the service was stopped. The young man was arrested and forbidden to take part in the feast. He owed his release three years later to the curiosity and probably also the sympathy of the Archbishop of Prague, who sent for him to question him. He defended himself so well from the bible that the Archbishop felt constrained to have him released. A little later he was with a friend in church (for they

State and church are united in keeping the people in a state of belief and not wanting them to pass from belief to knowledge. Freedom of belief is allowed but freedom of knowledge is led by mammon on a golden chain which tyranny tries to make shorter and shorter. Both belief and knowledge will always have their place. But let not the one usurp that of the other. Belief is limited by knowledge. Belief comes to an end where knowledge begins and begins again where knowledge comes to an end. But knowledge has no limits except the state of perfection which is unimaginable to us.

We cannot prove what we believe, only what we know. Do you all believe in God, but what do you believe that God is? The idea of perfection, you will answer, all that our intuition suspects and our mind cannot grasp. Good, that is what the evangelists also believe.

This belief cannot be taken away from mankind however severely he is oppressed by pain and weakness. It is an anchor in the wild storms of this unpredictable life and cannot be taken away in the highest state of human happiness. Knowledge is powerful enough to dispense with every form of belief, indeed with every belief, but who is bold enough to say that he has studied the secrets of the human heart in their deepest depths

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were careful not to let him go alone any more) and turned bright scarlet during the sermon. Unfortunately I have not this reference either. His friend immediately took his arm and led him out of church asking him what was the matter. 'Ah', he said bursting into tears, 'I cannot sit quietly while my brothers inside are being so shamelessly deceived.'

and that his knowledge will always be sufficient to satisfy his desires?

Man of knowledge, you are strong enough to look death in the eye at its most terrifying, a still and empty eternity. But are you certain that this proud strength will remain with you at every moment of your life? If your physical health is shattered, will not your mental powers be threatened? Might you not fall back into a state of childhood, out of which you are striving towards the perfection of knowledge and which you now look down on from your eminence? Death does not frighten you, you proud man. But if you have to drink the bitterest dregs of the cup, when everything forsakes you that you held dear in this world, and you have no friend to weep on, when all your passions unite to take away your strength will your knowledge be strong enough to withstand despair?

In that dreadful moment you need comfort, support and refuge. Do not reject it now in the fullness of your strength. Keep faith warm in you. Keep it for the time when your spiritual strength threatens to collapse under the burden of moral and physical suffering. Keep it. Perhaps it will warm your icy spirit again and give you back what you lost. You spared this faith in God to the weak and small. You cannot entirely rid it from your own heart. For you have not come to the end of your experience, and your knowledge only lasts as long as your strength.

We poor sinners all believe in God although we do not speak much about him and seldom pray to him. But what do we know of God? Think of infinite space

containing more atoms than the grains of sand in the desert. Think of these atoms as one big number and this number multiplied from eternity up till this moment by a number equally great, think of this number as the sum of all the unknowns which mankind must try to understand one after the other, and when you have solved the last of these then you will know what God is. Therefore let us believe.

## 2 Hope

At the street corner there stands a tired old man leaning on his stick. He looks at the passers-by with a troubled and beseeching look. He hopes for alms to keep his poor life nourished because his strength has been burned up by other people. But we poor sinners do not share his hopes. I am a poor luckless creature, sighs an old mother, was I born to misfortune? Dear God how have I deserved this hard lot, to be abandoned in my old age by my only child? Would that the dear God would take me to himself and put an end to my sufferings.

Do not despair. Put your trust in God who hears the prayers of widows and orphans, whispers the parson.

But we poor sinners do not trust him. I come home once more with an empty basket and an empty stomach, sighs another woman. My neighbour won't lend me anything more and the baker will not go on giving me bread on credit. I cannot get anything at the pawnbroker's for these rags. I have three hungry children at home and a sick mother, and tomorrow the landlord



wants the rent. Dear God have pity on us poor creatures and send us a merciful angel to save us from our need.

We poor sinners expect no angel. Look at the sufferings of a poor beast like me sighs another. My old mother has been sick for so long. My children give me no rest the whole day. They want this, they want that. I must provide for everyone and now my husband has fallen sick. I cannot stand it. If things don't get better I will jump in a lake.

Stand firm, good woman. The dear God will reward you richly for all that you have done, says her well-meaning neighbour.

We poor sinners do not believe it. We do not hope for such things.

But we hope that in time the poor man will not have to beg and plead for his bread but can sit down with everyone else at the table and enjoy nature's bounty.

We hope that a time will come when no one will have to beg for food from his fellow-men or go home after begging in vain with nothing in his basket for his family. We hope for a time when no one needs to borrow from his neighbour, when pawnbrokers are no longer needed, and no landlord demands the rent.

We hope for a time when no one has to care for his family, for the sick and the children without any kind of help. For a time when no one is so overburdened by the problem of keeping going that he is tempted to take his life.

We do not hope for eternal life and pie in the sky while nothing gets better here below. We hope that this life will change and get better soon. We hope for a

carefree happy life and justice for all men on earth. That is what we hope for.

Wanting things to be better in the next world is a selfish dream of people who are not satisfied with what this world can offer. But we poor sinners want nothing hereafter; we want things in this world. But we hope that things will get better and very soon. We only ask for joy hereafter in so far as we work for good in this world. We only ask for heaven in so far as we ask to share in the happiness of this world. Courage and patience. The words which were like the murmur of a little brook overgrown by grass have become a great flood beating against the dykes of the ancient privileged gangs of robbers. Soon it will burst through like thunder.

Therefore let us hope.

### 3 Love

Is it possible to understand the power of love which fills all creatures with sweetness? Can a man know what it is capable of working in his own heart? Is there a greater power or force or perfection than what we can conceive of when we love?

We stand with all our knowledge on the edge of knowledge. Only the mysterious power of love gives us insight beyond all the boundaries of our knowledge. It gives us insight into perfect love which is God, although our mind can only formulate it in a very imperfect way.

Let us make man in our own image, says God according to Moses.

Let us make God from a man who is like him, said Christ. And that was the God-man.

The two great mysteries, God and love, were made into one by Christ when he said *God is love*. Centuries have passed. God and love are still mysteries. The magisterium is an enclave of privilege, religion a deception to those who have lost their way and a stumbling stone on the road to progress. The christian God has become a God made in the image of man without human weaknesses.

You blind pharisees. What use would this God be to us if he had only life among us in the form of a man, and had not taken upon himself all our weakness, lacks, passions and imperfections. Was the bitter cup in the garden, the trouble of his soul, the pain of his bloody death on the cross nothing but appearance unconnected with his divine person?

This God-man stands out in history as a great man, by his teaching and his actions, by his virtues and his failings. Leave him as he is. Do not describe his human form irrationally as an unnatural being, which is contrary to all our knowledge. If you want faith to be respected you must also respect knowledge. Religion must be destroyed to free humanity. This was what Voltaire and others said. Lamennais and before him Karlstadt, Thomas Münzer and others showed that all democratic ideas sprang from christianity.

Religion must not be destroyed but used to free humanity. Christianity is the religion of freedom, moderation and enjoyment, not of oppression, extravagance and abstinence. Christ is a prophet of freedom.

His teaching is a teaching of freedom and love and he is therefore a picture for us of God and love.

We cannot sink our thoughts into empty spaces when we feel the need to pour the secrets of our hearts and minds into our concept of God. We must make a picture of God and this picture is Christ.

But if we are to love him this Christ must be the friend and brother of us poor sinners and not a supernatural unimaginable being. He must be subject to weakness like us.

And so he was, as we read in the gospel.

Therefore let us love him.

## A BRIEF LOOK AT THE STORY OF JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES TO CONSIDER THEIR PERSONALITIES

### I What is the bible?

The bible is a collection of books translated from different languages, written by many authors before the discovery of paper and printing. About fifteen hundred years ago the new testament was added. It is a collection of books written by different authors at different times.

What a job it must have been writing a book like that on parchment or papyrus, especially in those days when so few people knew how to write. And how hard it is to tell whether during the persecutions of the christians certain pages were dropped and certain pages added.

If in spite of everything the originals have been preserved intact, this is in itself remarkable. But even so it is still true that these books were written by men and this is all that is needed to make it possible for them to contain errors. For men make mistakes, and even though men like Socrates, Confucius and Christ taught truths which have remained for thousands of years, this does not prove that they never made mis-

takes. It does not prove that their truths always remain truths, needing no explanation and incapable of being perfected.

Men wrote the originals. These originals created christianity; it would be nothing without them. Is it possible to know for certain the truth of christianity from these documents? Certainly not. How then was it possible to keep the people in error for so long? Because in the new testament the ideas are not classified. Teaching and historical event are mixed up together in it. The whole is in a form which does not suit our times. It was intended to make converts among nations of fifteen hundred years ago whose political structures have long since vanished. Eight men wrote these books: Peter, Paul, John, Matthew, Mark, Luke, James and Jude. At least that is what we read. We do not have proof of this authorship in the older manuscripts. These manuscripts were first discovered in the sixth century. We do not know whether they were written then or earlier, neither do we know who wrote them. Among a hundred manuscripts which were discovered – all in the Greek language – we do not know which is the right one, they all differ a little from each other. That is not all. There is the translation into other languages, a very difficult undertaking because no one knows the ancient languages perfectly, or which of the ancient manuscripts is the right one. The innumerable synonyms in every language makes things even more difficult. Each man translates as he thinks fit and little shifts of meaning are inevitable. Is it surprising that there are contradictions in the new

testament both in the stories and in the teaching? Obviously not.

And who were the men to whom the authorship of the book of the new testament is ascribed? What guarantee can they give us that they were never mistaken? Their contradictions, disagreements and occasional unbelief are not recommendations of their infallibility. Paul persecuted the disciples, Peter denied the Lord, and they all lost their courage and forsook him in the garden. Wasn't that shameful for ten stout fellows? Can anyone of us defend this cowardice? Modern pharisees might suggest that if they had not run away they would have been caught too and the spread of christianity would have been impossible. Yes. Any act of cowardice can be defended in this way. When they fled they were surely not thinking of the spread of christianity. If they had stopped to think about it they would have been arrested. When people act quickly they feel before they think. Feelings govern our actions at such a moment and makes us resist or run away. And so with the disciples. If they had been fully convinced in their minds of the truth of the Lord's teaching, and their hearts full of love for him, they would rather have been struck dead than forsake him.

These were the people who wrote the new testament, from which the principles of christianity are drawn. They were weak and fallible men like us, but because they tell us of their weaknesses and do not try to hide them, we know them as real men, with whom in our time only Rousseau can be compared, who tells us in his *Confession* that he once stole a silver band, and when

it was found in his luggage he told the maid in front of the authorities that she had given it to him.

This story illustrates many of the stories in the new testament. There were often disputes and even bloody wars whose outcome decided the fate of whole nations. Millions of people killed each other in blind fanaticism without even knowing why. Each of the last eighteen centuries has had its religious slaughters, and its bloodthirsty fanatical tyrants. There have always been disputes about the teaching of Christ and even today it is not understood, even today christians are divided into more than a hundred sects and each member of each sect has his own way of practising his faith, according to his education and his interests.

The teaching of Christ comes from the heart and is meant to go to the heart. It is the expression of the feeling of justice and is open to various interpretations because ancient prejudices prevent the feelings of justice being the same with everybody, and because it is a feeling it cannot be pinned down and calculated by the sure standards of reason.

The men who proclaimed the teaching of Christ only said: live together in peace and you will be happy. But they did not say at all clearly how to do this. It cannot be said more clearly as it has to do with feelings. In fact the feelings played the chief part in the christian message and the intellect a secondary part.

But today the intellect is given a larger part than the feelings in the exposition of doctrine. We know very well that if we give everything to the poor today, tomorrow we will have to beg, borrow or steal. We know



that we should love our enemies and hate our father and mother, but we do not know how this is possible in our own society.

The authors of the original writings contradict each other in their teaching as well as in their facts. In other places they say unintelligible things and the whole is decked in the trappings of their own time. They speak of signs and wonders and only increase our confusion so that the places where the true christian teaching is plain to see are hidden like real pearls among a pile of fakes.

I now put myself in the place of an honest doubter and say: Because all this happened eighteen hundred and forty-five years ago it is most unlikely that it all happened as it says even in the smallest details. It can even be questioned whether there lived a man called Jesus at all. We could question the truth of the whole story. But all that does not matter very much to me. The important thing is not the life story of a religious philosopher but the teaching he gave. If one reads an interesting book one naturally looks for the author's name, but I am more interested in what he has to say than in his biography, which is only interesting because of his writings. The teaching is the important thing about the new testament, as always. The historical details and errors are of secondary importance.

In christianity I have found the following teachings which are worth examining and which would doubtless bring happiness to mankind if mankind could only discover how to put them into practice. Whether the teachings come from Zoroaster or Moses or Jesus,

whether they come from Lapland or Rome, whether they are six thousand years old or brand new, is of secondary importance. The important thing is the teaching itself, no matter how it is clothed.

If I have understood this teaching, I will do my best to discover how it can be put into practice. If this is possible, then the teaching will be a map of truth for me and something against which to test the rest of the writings from which I have derived it.

I have done this and I have found that the teaching can best be put into practice by the most perfect form of communism. I have found this teaching here and there in formulas and phrases, which have given rise to intentional or ignorant misinterpretation. But I regarded these texts as the shell and the teaching itself as the kernel of the nut. When I had found the kernel of the teaching and became convinced of the possibility of putting it into practice, it was not difficult to classify all the other texts relating to the teaching in the light of the teaching and thus to discriminate between the true form and the false.

It is true that it is a long time since I went to church or prayed and I am not likely to start praying again in the near future, but this does not mean that I want to stop other people believing or praying or going to church. But I do not want people's praying and believing and churchgoing to be put to use by hypocrites and cunning politicians. I want each man to enjoy the fruits of his own believing, praying and churchgoing, and no one to be compelled to do these things who does not find it makes for his happiness, no one to be com-

pelled to pay for the believing, praying and church-going of others when he himself does not go in for that sort of thing.

If anyone in mistaken religious zeal sees an enemy in me because of my interpretation of the gospel, let him remember that it is therefore his duty to love me, as I myself am also aware, and with our present social relations that is no light task.

## 2 Unbelief of the Apostles, Disciples and early Christians

Belief makes us happy and knowledge satisfies us. Let every man choose what suits his heart and spirit best.

Belief in a truth, which of course the learner cannot easily recognise but the teacher can, makes knowledge easier for the learner. Belief in an error or a lie leads to ignorance of the truth.

This is how we should consider belief, so often recommended in the gospels. The more difficult a doctrine is for the learner, the harder it is for him to become convinced of its truth and the more important it is for him to believe it. But when knowledge shines into the darkness of belief like a brilliant light, every effort to keep the learner in a state of belief proves that the teacher was not using this belief as a means to bring his pupil more easily to the knowledge of the truth, but as a means to keep him in ignorance and error. Pythagoras divided his pupils into grades according to the progress of their initiation into the mysteries. In the

lowest grades belief was indispensable, and this was also true of the people Jesus taught.

The position of a man who wants to change his contemporaries is always difficult. The higher his ideas the more careful he has to be not to bewilder his hearers. He cannot do away with their prejudices all at once but must undermine them slowly and on their own terms.

Furthermore, he is hindered by the persecutions of the sect to which he is often bound to belong and cannot speak as plainly as he might wish. This makes him all the more difficult to understand.

Pythagoras and Jesus both wanted a radical change in all social relations and had to deal with an ignorant and superstitious people. Partly because of their established way of life and partly through vanity and envy, those who would have been capable of understanding the new teaching were their enemies, and used every possible means to discredit them with the people and the government.

Pythagoras revealed his deepest mysteries at secret meetings only to pupils who had been stringently examined. This examination was so strict that often pupils had a two- to five-year silence imposed upon them. This is how mysteries were guarded in ancient times and the learner was asked simply to believe.

When put into practice, the teachings of both Pythagoras and Christ result in communism. Anyone who can go back that far can imagine how difficult it must have been to teach a people eighteen hundred years ago a doctrine which had to be expressed in covert language to avoid persecution. How difficult it

must have been to preach the nature and possibility of communism! What prejudices stood in the way of any clear explanations! They were interrupted, screamed at and jeered at. Why? Because an important doctrine like communism, with such far-reaching consequences, cannot easily be put over in metaphors, and the art of preaching itself needs to be learnt.

When there was a printed account of the teaching, things became easier, for a limited understanding finds the written word easier. Individual passages can be learnt and examined before reading on and there is less danger of a snap judgment.

Jesus and Pythagoras did not have the advantages of print. And it would not have helped them, for they appealed less to the understanding than to the feelings. They did not want everything to be easily comprehensible. That is why belief played so large a part in their teaching and so much has remained unclear to this day.

But if belief was necessary under those conditions it does not follow that it is necessary today. At least it should not be so in christendom because we have preached this doctrine for eighteen hundred years without anyone succeeding in silencing it. When a doctrine has been taught for eighteen hundred years, and printing has made its dissemination a thousand times easier, I think we should want knowledge of the doctrine and reserve faith for children and the weak, not for the grown-up and strong.

For when today faith is compelled to rein belief, deception, error and deceit has a hand in it and belief is being used for evil purposes.

Anyone who fights a doctrine in order to propagate another must be able to prove that his doctrine is truthful and the other erroneous. Jesus did this and found that the disciples of his opponents were in error, that they did not *know* but only *believed*. Jesus, however, did not believe the mosaic tenets by which he had been brought up, at least he did not obey certain parts of the law. He did not fast and did not let his disciples fast, he went about with heathens and sinners, evil people, as we would say today, and he healed the sick on the sabbath.

But just as Jesus did not believe the whole of the law of Moses, neither did his disciples believe everything he said, and the people even less.

When Nathanael heard that Jesus was from Nazareth, he said:

Jn 1: 46. Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

When Jesus taught that a man should forgive his neighbour seven times a day, his disciples said:

Lk 17: 5. Lord increase our faith.

The disciples found it hard to believe in the resurrection of Jesus:

Mk 16: 11. But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

13. And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

14. Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they sat at table; and he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they would not believe those who saw him after he had risen.

Lk 24: 11. But these words seemed to them as an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

12. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home wondering at what had happened.

And Jesus had often spoken to them about his resurrection on the third day:

Mt 28: 17. And when they saw him they worshipped him; but some doubted.

In Mt 16 Jesus tells the people that he will be given up and crucified and on the third day he will rise again. Peter answers him like a simpleton:

Mt 16: 22. God forbid Lord! This shall never happen to you.

He showed his love for Jesus, his simple understanding and his disbelief in the resurrection. He also earned a rebuke from Jesus. Neither did Paul believe firmly in the resurrection:

Phil 3: 11. That if possible I might attain the resurrection from the dead.

12. Not that I have already attained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

13. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.

According to Col 3: 1-4 we are already risen. That is perhaps why some thought that the resurrection had already happened 2 Tim 2: 18. Many of the early christians did not believe in the resurrection:

1 Cor 15: 12. Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

13. But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised.

There are many other stories in the new testament of the unbelief of the early christians and those they sought to convert:

Acts 17: 32. Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others said 'We will hear you again about this.'

Acts 28: 24. And some were convinced by what he said, while others disbelieved.

1 Cor 1: 23. But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.

2 Pet 3: 3. First of all you must understand this, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own passions,

4. and saying, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of the creation.'

1 Jn 2: 22. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.

26. I write this to you about those who would deceive you.

1 Jn 4: 3. And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already.

2 Jn 7. For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.



Jesus himself doubted that people would believe in him:

Lk 18: 8. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes will he find faith on earth?

He found no belief in him in his own country:

Mt 13: 58. And he did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. See also Lk 4: 23-29.

The Jews in Rome said to Paul about the disciples of Christ:

Acts 28: 22. For with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.

The story of the feeding of the five thousand and its aftermath is also remarkable. It shows how ready the people were to attach themselves to a person for material gain, how easy it is to control them with a basket of bread. It shows that faith was demanded as an alternative to the proof of signs, wonders and promises, without which no prophet of those days could make himself heard. The disciples were expected to believe the signs, wonders and promises, even if their five senses convinced them of their impossibility.

After the resurrection they saw him on the mountain. But some doubted! He must therefore have appeared to them in a quite different form or how could they have doubted?

We must question whether the one who appeared was another man than Jesus. At any rate he did not look like him.

Lk 28 mentions the walk to Emmaus, a village 16 stadia from Jerusalem. Jesus met some of his disciples on the road, who did not recognise him, even though

it was daytime. They thought he was a stranger. In the end they recognised him through the breaking of bread and the wounds in his hands and feet. But they did not believe that it was he. I am not surprised. If they had recognised his face I would be surprised that they did not believe that it was he.

Only at the meal. When the five thousand had eaten their fill and seen the miracle they said:

Jn 6: 14. This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.

15. Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force and make him a king, Jesus withdrew into the hills again by himself.

16. When the evening came, his disciples went down to the sea,

17. got into a boat and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark and Jesus had not yet come to them.

Then we are told that he comes to them walking on the water. Fine. I let it pass but only point out that it appears from the following verse that Jesus waited for his disciples on the shore.

21. Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

So much is certain, that Jesus first left the people himself, then the disciples left them under cover of darkness and used the way over the water as an escape route, and that on the other bank Jesus and the disciples met again. The intention was clearly to get rid of the people; Jesus could not always feed the people

because he often did not have enough for himself and his disciples to eat (see Mt 21: 18, 19; Mt 12: 1).

Jn 6: 22. On the next day the people who remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had only been one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone.

23. However, boats from Tiberias came near the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

24. So when the people saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

25. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, 'Rabbi when did you come here?'

26. Jesus answered them, 'Truly truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.'

27. Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life.'

According to Jn 6: 15 Jesus disappeared because the people wanted to make him king. But we see clearly from verse 26 that he was less afraid of being made a king than of having often to feed all the people. So he answered in a manner that left them with no hope of a second meal. He said that they had come only for food, that they should seek instead food which is imperishable, and spare him the trouble of having to feed so many thousands again. Then he went on to speak of the bread of his father in heaven which is the true bread.

33. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

34. They said to him, 'Lord give us this bread always.'

They were chiefly interested in getting bread and did not much care whether it came from heaven or the baker. They had seen one miracle of the loaves, and naturally imagined that things could continue in the same way. It is perfectly right for hungry people to ask a prophet for bread, but not right that he does not give it to them, particularly one who has said: 'If anyone asks him for bread will he give him a stone?'

When I say to someone, you do not come to me because you have seen signs, I express the opinion that my signs have made no impression on him and I am unwilling to do any more signs even should he ask for them. When I say to him, you come only for bread, he realises that I have no intention of giving him any more and will not ask for it unless he is driven to by need. But the people were hungry and asked for the bread of God. Jesus tried another way out.

35. 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger and he who believes in me shall never thirst.'

But this did not put anything in their bellies. They had been fed by a miracle and expected another one. The words of Jesus could not fill a hungry man. The people took them amiss:

41. The Jews then murmured at him because he said, 'I am the bread which came down from heaven.'

42. They said, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?''

There was nothing to be done except give them

bread or at least make it quite clear that he did not refuse them bread because he could not give it to them. He continued:

51. I am the living bread which comes down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.

52. The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'

This was too much, even for his disciples:

60. Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, 'This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?'

61. But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, 'Do you take offence at this?'

62. Then what if you were to see the son of man ascending where he was before?'

This shows that even the disciples of Jesus were bound to him by blind faith, and Jesus intended this to be so. They contradicted him and grumbled even as we do today when people tell us such things.

66. After that many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him.

Even in those days someone who concealed a truth in incomprehensible and seemingly meaningless language met with doubt, contradiction and unbelief from the thinking members of his audience. Without them no development of knowledge is conceivable. Our own doubts and unbelief are justified by the gospel itself.

### 3 Shortcomings of the Apostles, Disciples and Early Christians

Mt 1: 19. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

If Joseph had had a good conscience he need not have divorced his intended wife quietly, and it would have been wrong of him to do so if he did not want to bring public scorn upon her. If Joseph had slept with her, which is to be expected with a young bride, his intention is blameworthy. Matthew must have thought that he had slept with her or he would not have called Joseph her husband in this sentence.

For the rest, I confine myself to a few references.

Peter's jealousy: Jn 21: 21.

Peter's self-interest: Mt 19: 27.

Peter denies the Lord: Mt 26: 70, Lk 22: 57, Jn 18: 25.

Judas openly blames the Lord: Jn 12: 4, 5.

The disciples quarrelling for first place: Mk 9: 34; 10: 37; Lk 9: 46; 22: 44.

Flight of the disciples: Mk 14: 50.

Hypocrisy of the apostles Peter and Paul: Acts 11: 3; 16: 3; 21: 20-26; Gal 2: 11-14.

Neglect of early christians to attend meetings: Heb 10: 25.

Murmuring about unequal care of widows: Acts 6: 1.

Quarrel about going about with the uncircumcised: Acts 11: 2, 3, 19.

Dispute about circumcision: Acts 15: 1-29

The apostles are ill spoken of: 2 Cor 10: 1-3; 10-12; 2 Cor 8: 20, 21.

John Mark leaves Paul: Acts 13: 13; Paul does not want to take him with him again Acts 15: 38 and quarrels with Barnabas over it Acts 15: 39.

Immorality among early christians: 1 Cor 5: 1, 8; 11: 17-21.

Distrust and jealousy among apostles and early christians: Rom 16: 17; 1 Cor 1: 11; 3: 3; 2 Cor 12: 20, 21; Gal 1:7; 5: 15; 1 Tim 4: 1-4; 2 Tim 2: 14, 16, 18.

Paul stresses this further when he says:

Tit 3: 3. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by men and hating one another.

1 Tim 1: 15. The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the foremost of sinners.

1 Cor 15: 9. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.

Eph 3: 8. To me though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Even the best of us are sinners. So it was then, so it is now, and so it always will be. That is human nature and it will not change. Our mind is in constant conflict with our passions, and indeed only becomes what it is by constant victory over them. When we take up the bible, we should not forget that we have to do with a book written by men who had a human nature and passions like us.

#### 4 The human Jesus

Mk 10: 18. Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.

I quote this remark to show that Jesus himself did not consider himself good and never intended to say he was God. We never find in the gospels that he claimed to be God.

If we take Jesus as a picture of what we call God, this is because as christians we could not otherwise have any picture of God at all and we do not mean by this Jesus himself but his teaching. We must have some picture of God if we are going to pray at all. Jesus is the best concept of divinity we could have because his teaching shows the way to the greatest happiness.

But this does not mean that we must think of him as a supernatural unworldly being, free from all the passions and weaknesses of other men. We can see from the bible that he was subject to them as we are.

Mt 10: 5. Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans.

Here he forbids his disciples to consort with Gentiles in accordance with the Jewish law.

On another occasion a Gentile woman begged him to heal her daughter who was badly plagued by the devil. But he answered her not a word. But when his disciples became annoyed by the woman crying after them and asked him to get rid of her he said:

Mt 15: 24 I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.



25. But she came and knelt before him, saying 'Lord, help me.'

26. And he answered, 'It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.'

Later Jesus gave up his hatred of foreigners and often went about among the Gentiles. The Samaritans, a small and hospitable people, denied him lodging, which they certainly would not have done if they had not known that Jesus did not accept them, and the examples mentioned above were not common knowledge to them.

Jesus did not always have the power to control his tongue. He lost his temper against his own teaching:

Mt 5: 22. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool' shall be liable to the hell of fire.

Although this is his teaching here, he himself castigates the pharisees as foolish and blind (Mt 23: 17, 19). Paul also sinned against this teaching.

1 Cor 15: 36. You foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

The fourth commandment commands us to love our father and mother. But at the wedding in Cana Jesus said to his mother when she told him that they had no wine left:

Jn 2: 4. Woman, what have you to do with me?

In verse 10 it is clear that the company had no further need of wine to quench their thirst. But Jesus created another hundred and twenty or more gallons of wine, which shows that Jesus, like us, enjoyed

lingering over his cups in pleasant company. He did not deny this human nature in his attitude to wine. And quite apart from his ordinary human friendships there was his particular friendship with Mary Magdalene, Martha, Lazarus and John: Jn 11: 5; 13: 23; 19: 26. Mary Magdalene was known in the town as a sinner, that is a woman who was held in open scorn, and with whom no one else associated (Lk 7: 37, 39). The second was her sister, the third her brother.

Our human nature reveals itself in Jesus by the fact that he was affected by hunger and thirst and tiredness exactly as we are.

Like us he sought to avoid persecution: Mt 12: 15; Mk 3: 7; Lk 5: 16; 9: 10; 21: 37; Jn 7: 1, 10; 10: 39; 11: 54.

He hid on the mount of olives: Jn 7: 53.

He was afraid of death like us: Mt 26: 37, 39; Mk 14: 33, 34, 36; Lk 12: 50; 22: 42.

Now let us take an unbiased look at the relationship between Judas Iscariot and Jesus. We find here two human hearts with the same passions as we, and who often speak and act without giving themselves time to reflect on what they are doing.

Jesus and his disciples held all things in common. In those days people had fewer needs than we do. People were not so selfish as they are today. There was more sharing. Begging was allowed and no passports were needed. People rated hospitality as high as today we rate our privacy. Hunting and fishing were free and so was trade. People could gather fruit from the fields to feed themselves without being punished for it.

People could heal other people even if they knew as little about medicine as many doctors today. The people could get up and speak in the temple as well as the clergy. Under Roman rule life was in many ways much freer than it is for us today under national rule. I point this out in order to make what follows as plain as possible.

Jesus had forbidden his disciples to take with them gold or silver. What they were given on the way Judas carried in the common purse. Many women also went about with Jesus and the apostles, including Mary Magdalene (Lk 8: 2) and the wife of Herod's steward (8: 3). Jesus and the disciples were supported by these women.

Unfortunately the good Mary Magdalene took it into her head to anoint the head of her beloved Lord with costly ointment, or as John says, his feet. According to Mt 26: 7-11 and Mk 14: 3-7 the disciples were angry about it:

Why was the ointment thus wasted?

5. For the ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor. According to John only Judas was angry and spoke thus to the Lord. Jesus answered:

Jn 12: 7. Let her alone, she has done it for the day of my burial.

8. The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.

Jesus himself could not defend her action; he could only excuse it. She has done it for my burial means that it will never happen again.

Because the evangelists Matthew and Mark were probably there at the time, and they say the disciples were angry, this proves that they at least were among those who were angry; otherwise they would have told the story differently.

At any rate, anointing the head of Jesus was against their principles and a stupid thing to do in front of the disciples and the ill-disposed Judas. The scene must have made a bad impression on the disciples. It was a flat contradiction between word and action. John himself seems to feel this, when he mentions another reason for Judas' anger.

Jn 12: 6. This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it.

John's distrust has very slender foundations. I think Judas was really concerned about Christ's teaching but that he was acting less out of concern for the principle than to recommend himself to his master. It is certain that even earlier on Jesus did not greatly care for Judas. Jn 6: 64. 'But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the first who those were who did not believe, and who it was that should betray him.

70. Jesus answered them, 'Did I not choose you twelve and one of you is a devil?'

71. He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was to betray him.

According to Matthew Judas only decided to betray him after the anointing, in which case Jesus showed an unjust suspicion of Judas on the earlier occasion.

Mt 26: 16. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

At the anointing Judas and Jesus became irreparably at odds. Imagine how Jesus must have smarted, when a disciple whom he did not respect reproached him with apparent good reason for acting against his principles.

According to some of the evangelists that same evening, and according to others a few days later, they ate the paschal lamb together.

Think of the effect of the scene on the circle of Jesus and his disciples. Think how proud each member must have been to belong to the group which was appointed to preach and found the community of Christ, how proud to be recognised by his fellows as a useful member of the group.

Imagine them gathering for a common meal, which was not often possible for them. Such a meal needs friendship and trust, and if one has something against another it is unsuitable to take part in such a meal and turn food in his mouth to poison. Imagine Judas convinced that by his open blame of the anointing a few hours or a few days before he was more hated than ever by Jesus. What must Judas have felt when during the washing of feet Jesus said:

Jn 13: 10. You are clean, but not all of you.

I can imagine how cutting this must have sounded to his guilty conscience. But I also think that I would find it difficult to be so cruel to an enemy in the presence of others whose respect he valued. And then Jesus says: 21. One of you will betray me.

Poor Judas. That was not the end of his persecution. 26. 'It is he to whom I shall give this morsel when I have dipped it.' So when he had dipped it he gave it to Judas the son of Simon Iscariot.

Nail me rather to the cross if you need martyrs for a good cause, but do not pass me this shameful sop. I would find it as hard as Judas to control the anguish which drove him to betrayal and suicide. O Jesus how cruel you were at this hour which was so important in the lives of the two of you. Even if the unhappy Judas was the frightful beast who had long intended to betray the Lord, these cruel words were what finally drove him to it.

27. Then after the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, 'What you are going to do, do quickly.' 30. So after receiving the morsel, he immediately went out and it was night.

Night indeed, black night outside in the world and within the heart of the traitor. Who has enough strength and courage and experience to look at the hideous void when something frightful has suddenly killed all the flowers and trees of the life of the spirit, when some blow has made us go wrong about all our experience, faith and love and turned our once sovereign personality into a being which speaks and acts without thinking and thinks without knowing what it thinks? Only someone who has had this experience can understand what went on in the heart of Judas after he had been given the sop.

True, Judas may have had an evil heart, but this sop must have thrust him right down into hell. For it

robbed him all at once of everything that bound him to life, honour, respect, friendship, love, hope.

Judas began at once to hate what he had loved, and hated it the more, the more he had once loved it. His repentance and death should have been his atonement with the world and lifted from him the curse of centuries. He had the courage not to survive his shame, while at the same moment Peter, the rock upon which Jesus decided to build his church, and to whom he gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven, denied his master three times.

Jesus had also received at the scene of the anointing a spiritual blow which kills the spirit without touching the body. Judas's reproach must have more than wounded his sensitive spirit. A good friend should have made this reproach to him when they were alone and not in the presence of strangers and women and the other disciples, but our feelings can make us react without reflection and speak too hastily. It is even more difficult to control them when some passion suddenly emerges from where till then it had been hidden. It needs enormous strength of character to keep control in such circumstances. Judas could not believe, when the interests of the movement required belief. Hurt pride, envy and distrust poured their poisons into both their hearts. Each prepared the death of the other. We too have tasted the bitter cup and must drink still deeper from it in this evil world until we have drained it.

One drank it for the sake of thirty pieces of silver, the other for the sake of three hundred pence. Some

lay no money when they prepare their poison. But we must all drink the cup to the dregs.

### 5 Jesus was a Carpenter and had Brothers and Sisters

It is remarkable that the evangelists tell us nothing about the best eighteen years of a man's life, the years between twelve and thirty. We have no word at all from the life of Jesus during these years.

When the evangelists have told us that he came to the temple when he was twelve years old they jump ahead to his thirtieth year and only tell us that during the interval he was a carpenter and that he had four brothers and several sisters.

Mk 6: 3. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?

It follows that the virgin Mary first bore a son by the power of the Holy Ghost and then bore six children to Joseph.

There are other references to the brothers and sisters of Jesus in Mt 12: 46, 48; 13: 55, 57; Mk 6: 3; Lk 8: 20, 21; Jn 7: 3, 5; Acts 1: 14; 1 Cor 9: 5.

Although it is clearly stated that Jesus had brothers and sisters, pious christians are inclined to overlook the fact. I have known people who read their bible regularly who were quite convinced that Jesus had no brothers until I stuck the passages under their nose, and then the scales fell from their eyes. These brothers and



sisters were the children of Mary which she conceived from Joseph her husband.

Mk 1: 25. And he did not know her until she had borne her first-born son.

Then he did. Mary's virginity, like that of all other girls, ends with the time of her first conception.

## THE METHOD OF TEACHING

### I The Political and Social State of the Society in which Jesus Taught

The Hebrews had lost their political freedom as a people and were under Roman rule. All classes wished to overthrow this rule, high priests, Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Jesus and the people. They agreed on this but they were not agreed on what government to put in its place.

After the death of the last prophets the people had become weighed down with innumerable laws, orders and customs. Then a priest named Zadok proclaimed a new doctrine and rejected all laws and customs except those held to be divine. His disciples called themselves Sadducees. The opponents of the new doctrine were called Pharisees, that is to say, sinless. They were distinguished from the Sadducees by special clothes and by their strict and punctilious observance of the laws.

The Sadducees denied angels, spirits, devils and the resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees believed in all these things.

The Sadducees denied the divine foreknowledge; the Pharisees believe in it. The Sadducees rejected the

teachings of the elders, which the Pharisees defended. The Pharisees observed strict fasts and prayed often at street corners and in the temple in order to be seen by men. They never ate without first washing, they flogged themselves till the blood ran through their clothes. They avoided contact with the poor and whores and drunkards. Whenever they returned from the market they washed and bathed because the market was also used by gentiles and they believed that contact with them made a man unclean. There was no end to the washings that went on in their house. Their pots had always to be clean. They slept on narrow boards, hard stones or thorns and travelled about making proselytes. Their most solemn oaths were 'by the gold of the temple' and 'by the sacrifice of the altar'. They regarded themselves as purer and holier than all the rest of the people and even their spittle as purer and holier than other people's. They were very proud and wore beautiful, wide fantastic clothes and cursed everyone who did not study the law under their tuition. Many of them were of the opinion that the unlearned would have no part in the resurrection.

Because of their way of life they were highly respected by the people, although, as we are told in Mt 23: 13-36, it was all hypocrisy.

Besides these two sects there were the Essenes, who held their meetings in secret, as the freemasons do today in countries where they are not openly tolerated.

The Essenes taught that good should be held in common, and on the whole they were in agreement with christian principles, but we are not told whether

they disagreed on smaller issues. This suggested to me that Jesus himself could have been a member of this secret brotherhood which was like that of Pythagoras. The relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus made it seem all the more likely. John appeared before Jesus.

What Jesus later taught was what John had taught before him. It was the principle of common ownership, which had already been taught by the Essenes before John.

This John who came before Jesus was so frequented by the people, that even the Pharisees, themselves highly respected, were afraid to say that his baptism was from men, and Herod was afraid to kill him. Jesus did not have such great influence with the people. And were it possible John had even greater energy than Jesus. He told Herod to his face that it was wrong of him to take his brother's wife, whereas Jesus before Pilate answered the questions upon which his judgment depended either by keeping silence or indirectly by 'thou sayest it' or sought a way out by saying 'My kingdom is not of this world'.

John was in all respects a great teacher of the people, as Jesus himself says in Jn 5: 35 when he calls John a burning and shining light. In Mt 11: 11 he call John the greatest of all who have been born of woman. Is it not strange then that John himself preaches to the people about another prophet greater than he, whose sandal strap he is not worthy to unloose.

Is it really possible that John would preach this greater prophet if he had never seen him before?

(Jn 1: 31, 33). Would he have risked his prophetic vocation to preach a stranger as the Messiah, when this stranger might have lacked the power and the means and the talent for such a calling?

No, that is not possible. It would have been the maddest thing to do which could only have been done by a prophet against the interests of his own teaching. If they had known each other before, then it would have been a very good way of spreading their teaching and a very clever plan.

1. The prophet displayed the virtues which recommended him to the people, humility and modesty, and thereby only increased his reputation.
2. He deflected the jealousy and envy from himself to Jesus.
3. He made Jesus' appearance as a prophet easier. If John had remained alive, in spite of this recommendation, his own influence with the people would probably still have been greater than that of Jesus.
4. This recommendation of Jesus may also have had the intention of deflecting the wrath of the Roman and Jewish authorities from himself to Jesus.

However, I find it highly probable that Jesus and John had both belonged to the Essene brotherhood, and had planned beforehand how to amaze the people and display signs and wonders for the prophets and their teaching.

Actually we have no more certain information than that of the historian Josephus, who mentions the rise of the Essene brotherhood.

We know for certain that this group arose and

developed its activity at the time of Christ. And that John and Jesus appeared in public proclaiming the principle of the group. Every sect seeks to increase its membership with like-minded people and directs its attention principally towards the talented, energetic, brave and respected. Jesus and John could not therefore have been unknown to the Essenes. If they were unknown before their appearance in public, after it they would have been sought out by the Essenes and encouraged.

By their teaching John and Jesus were Essenes and the Essenes disciples of Jesus. Whether either of them were accepted members of the sect, or whether there were any Essenes among the apostles is uncertain. But the way in which Jesus and John were publicly received and the similarity of their teaching on their society makes it most probable. All the problems, signs and wonders can be much more easily understood if we imagine the interest and co-operation of the Essenes in them. From the words of John:

Jn 3: 30. He must increase, but I must decrease.

We may gather that the roles they were to play had been decided on beforehand, and that before they had appeared in public they had a secret understanding on the exercise of their prophetic mission.

But, of course, this is not known for certain, only very probable. Without it we cannot see the good intention in many events, only lies and deceit. The following chapter will prove that Jesus had a secret understanding with his disciples in their policy towards the people. We do not know whether this was an

understanding with the Essenes or not. The important thing was the understanding itself.

If a secret society concentrates all its strength, knowledge and courage upon one member without the people knowing this, if the work of the whole group are claimed to be supernatural powers of the one member, if the people's faith in him is both created and strengthened by the group members, then we have an explanation for all the signs and wonders.

## 2 Faith was the Necessary Condition for the Signs and Wonders

Jn 20: 29. Blessed are they who do not see and yet believe.

Eighteen hundred years ago people's minds were full of belief in the devil, ghosts, signs and wonders. Religion and morals were interwoven with such things as if they were eternal truths. The leaders sought the support of the masses by strengthening and perpetuating such beliefs. In the christian middle ages the situation was even more irrational. People who made the laws and religion and who should have been among the most enlightened had innocent people burnt as 'witches' because of their superstitions. Luther the reformer believed in various devils. But this irrationality is not the important thing about the reformation. And in exactly the same way the stories of ghosts, spirits, devils, signs and wonders in the bible are not the important thing, they are not essential to the christian

doctrine and may be interpreted at will without affecting the doctrine in the least.

Anyone who wanted to teach the people in those days must have been aware that signs and wonders were expected of him, or people would not believe in him. Jesus sought to weaken their superstition with the same weapon. You will not believe in me unless I show you signs and wonders. All right, I will perform no signs and wonders for you unless you believe. He who did not blindly believe was not his disciple and could not be helped by him. Faith allowed for no more doubt. What Jesus said must be held true even if sound reason and all five senses contested it. What better weapon could he have used against the Jews so hungry for signs and wonders?

Because Jesus found faith here and there, here and there he performed miracles. Where he found no faith he performed no miracles:

Mk 6: 5. And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hand on a few of the sick and healed them.

6. And he wondered at their unbelief.

With faith, everything was possible, even signs and wonders. Faith was always demanded: Mt 8: 13; 9: 21, 22, 28, 29; 15: 28; 17: 19, 20; 21: 22; Mk 5: 34; 9: 23, 24; 10: 52; 16: 16-20; Lk 7: 9, 50; 8: 25, 48, 50; 17: 19; 18: 42; Jn 11: 40, 42; 14: 12; Acts 3: 16.

Anyone who preached a new doctrine to the Jews was expected to perform signs and wonders: Mk 1: 22, 28-34; Jn 3: 2; Acts 4: 30; 5: 12-16; 1 Cor 1: 22. The



people followed Jesus more for the sake of the signs and wonders than for the teaching itself: Jn 6: 26; 7: 31; 11: 47-40; 12: 18. Likewise the apostles, Acts 13: 12.

Men who were highly respected by the people said that Jesus cast out devils: Mt 12: 24; Mk 3: 22; Jn 10: 21, 22.

Others said that he was possessed by the devil: Mk 3: 21, 30.

Jesus did various things when he healed a man: Mk 3: 5; 7: 33; 8: 23.

In this last passage read on and ask why did Jesus put clay on the blind man's eyes? Why could he then not see immediately? Why was he sent to a far away pool to wash? Why did not all the people recognise him again when he returned? In other words, who is telling the story and what is his interest in telling it?

Jesus often criticised people who asked for signs and wonders:

Mt 12: 38, 39; 16: 1, 4, 5; Mk 8: 11, 12; Lk 11: 29.

Jesus did not heal all the sick who were brought to him as may be seen from the following passages in which there is mention of many: Mk 1: 34; 3: 10.

Jesus gave his disciples the power to cast out devils Lk 10: 17-19. But they were not always able to cast the devils out: Mk 9: 18, 28.

When the disciples asked why they were not able to cast out the devil Jesus answered very naïvely:

29. This kind can only be cast out by prayer and fasting. Why had he not said this earlier?

Others who did not believe also performed signs and

wonders: Acts 8: 9-13; 13: 6; 19: 13; 2 Thess 2: 9; Rev 13: 13.

Jesus could not or would not prevent such unbelievers from performing signs and wonders: Lk 9: 49, 50. There would also be antichrists to perform them: Mt 24: 24.

Both before and after Christ, according to the bible, the dead were raised: 2 Kings 4: 35; Acts 20: 9-12. How necessary faith was to the signs and wonders can be seen from the accounts of the resurrection. The disciples speak to a man they do not know even though they can see him and hear his voice. This man tells them that he is Jesus and they do not believe it. In order to prove that he is Jesus he breaks bread among them, eats fish with them and shows the marks of his wounds. This is to make them recognise him. Why could they not recognise him by his voice, his face and his body? It could have been someone else who claimed to the unbelieving disciples that he was Jesus.

I notice several things about the account of the raising of Lazarus. Jesus was going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover and raised Lazarus from the dead in a neighbouring village. A few days later his head was anointed, then he rode into Jerusalem and cleansed the temple. The reader can see that the scenes are related. Jesus needed followers in order to gain publicity. He could not wait till he entered Jerusalem because he did not have many followers there and could easily be arrested (Jn 11: 18); he had to collect his followers on the way up. Nothing could have served him better than the fame of the miracle of the

raising of Lazarus (Jn 12: 9, 11). Lazarus was the brother of Mary Magdalene who travelled around the country with him together with her sister and other women (Lk 8). The brother and the two sisters, the evangelist tells us, were loved by Jesus. Mary Magdalene, moreover, was the first person to whom Jesus appeared after he rose from the dead (Mk 16: 9). Now let the reader make his judgment, taking the following passage into account:

Jn 11: 15. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.

If he had said this to his disciples after he had visited Lazarus, they would not have believed that Lazarus was dead and Jesus was going to raise him. What follows from this?

Jesus hears that Lazarus is sick, but remains for two more days before paying attention to the sisters' request (11: 6). He must have known that he would be able to raise Lazarus from the dead. In that case why did he weep? (11: 35).

Let it suffice that Jesus needed the reputation of a wonder worker for the propagation of his teaching. In order to make this easier he said 'Blessed are they who do not see and yet believe', and used every opportunity to draw attention to his prophetic power: Lk 10: 18; Jn 1: 48; 11: 15, 48; 13: 19; 14: 29.

We must conclude that Jesus used jesuitical methods for the attainment of his ends: the end was to justify the means. But isn't this a good maxim when the end is good? If a strong poison is needed to cure a disease, a milder one will not suffice. Do not doctors, teachers,

nurses and parents obey the same maxim in the interests of their inexperienced, fearful or weak-headed patients? The more ignorant the society, the more difficult it is to spread enlightenment among them, and the less choice of means there will be, and in certain cases it will be all the more necessary to resort to jesuitical methods. Such cases occur daily in every household. All forms of behaviour which we call wrong or unlawful or sin or passion have as their purpose the attainment of a good end or the avoidance of a greater evil. Indeed there are occasions in human life when the failure to apply this maxim would be wrong, cases in which the individual or the society are subjected to great dangers and have no other way out.

There has been no great man, no teacher of the people, who has not been more or less obliged, in order to spread his doctrine, to mystify those of his hearers who could not understand him and from whose prejudices he has more to fear than to gain.

We christians know perfectly well how to explain the miracles of Mahommed. We say that the dove which spoke in Mahommed's ear had been trained to eat out of his ear. We say the voice that cried out of the earth that Mahommed is a great prophet was a man hidden in a stream. Mahommed let him hide so that his deceit would not be discovered. The Jews said similar things about the apostles:

Mt 27: 63. 'Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, "After three days I will rise again."

64. Therefore order the sepulchre to be made secure

until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, "He has risen from the dead" and the last fraud will be worse than the first.'

It appears that it is difficult to make a disappointed people happy without deceiving them, if they have grown up with rooted prejudices, errors and superstitions. Socrates himself said about the platonic state where all things were held in common:

We shall have to employ many means. Bodies which need no medicine may be served by a bad doctor, but if a doctor is needed he must be a good one. Our rulers will have to employ all kinds of falsehood and deception for the benefit of those they rule.

So thought Socrates in Athens 350 years before Christ and in a more civilised society than the Jewish at the time of Christ. Should Jesus have been less familiar with the Jews than Socrates with the Athenians?

We may conclude from this chapter no more and no greater miracles were ascribed to Jesus in the bible than to others before him, in his own time and after him. They were even ascribed to him by people who did not believe in him and Jesus himself ascribed such power to his enemies. It follows that the signs and wonders of Jesus are of no great value. They cannot be for us a reason for honouring him. Even if he was the only miracle-worker of his time, what is that to us when today no one gets any benefit from them? What is that to us when people are helped here and there but not everyone? Only the doctrine that he taught can be of use to us if it is possible to put it into practice. If we

want to try it, let us throw aside the shell with which it was necessary for a man teaching 1,800 years ago to cover the kernel of his doctrine, the food of faith in all subsequent centuries. Finally a number of texts which show that God is merciful even when we do not believe: Rom 11: 30-32; 2 Tim 2: 13; Jn 12: 47.

### 3 Various Small Means which Jesus used to achieve his Purpose

If one wants to spread some news, one need only entrust it to a few people as a secret and under the seal of secrecy. One might pick out certain people who cannot keep their mouth shut, and then it will pass from ear to ear, under the seal of secrecy, as fire leaps through a whole town.

Jesus often commanded people to say nothing about his miracles: Mt 8: 4; 9: 30; 17: 9; Mk 1: 44-45; 3: 12; 5: 43; 7: 36; 8: 26; 9: 9, 30; Lk 8: 56; 9: 21, 36.

An exception to this is Mk 5: 19.

When a man is questioned in court and avoids a straight yes or no, he is as slippery in the hands of his judges as an awl in the hands of a child. In an equally slippery way one can answer 'you said it' which can mean yes or no depending on the tone of voice. Jesus often gave such unclear replies: Mt 24: 3, 4; 26: 25; 27: 11; Mk 15: 2; Lk 22: 70; Jn 8: 25; 18: 34, 37.

Further mysterious words and slippery answers are

to be found in Mk 11: 33; Lk 12: 41; 17: 37; Jn 8: 25; 12: 34; 13: 28; 14: 22; 16: 18-31.

Jesus often taught in parables which even his disciples did not understand. When he was alone with them or with those of them he trusted best he explained the meaning.

Mk 4: 34. He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything. (See also Mt 13: 34.)

Why did he not explain to all his hearers these parables which he preached in public? Was not the explanation as necessary to the ignorant people as to his disciples? Jesus himself explains his practice as follows: Mt 13: 11. To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

12. For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (Mt 25: 29; Mk 4: 25; Lk 8: 18.) Because verse 12 follows verse 11 and can only be understood by reference to it and forms one sentence with it, I translate as follows:

'He who has understanding will understand these parables, and understand more about the purpose of my teaching than those who have no understanding and will only find the parables confusing.'

Mark puts it even more plainly:

Mk 4: 10. And when he was alone, those who were about him with the twelve asked him concerning the parables.

11. And he said to them, 'To you has been given the

secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, <sup>12</sup> so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn again and be forgiven.' (See Jn 9: 39; 14: 22-26.)

Here we clearly see the intention to deceive. But why deceive the people through parables?

In order to understand this we must try and imagine very clearly what things were like at that time. Among the people to whom he preached the parables, there were of course his enemies as well as his friends. With his intimate friends and followers of his teaching he did not need to speak in dark similitudes, but in the presence of his enemies it was necessary because they were ready to catch him out on his every word and either destroy his name with the people or charge him before the Jewish or Roman authorities.

Jesus had a revolutionary purpose, as we shall see in what follows. He wanted to overthrow the Roman and the priestly authority and institute a community of goods, and even of joy and suffering. He would not have needed to hide his teaching in parables if it had been about a kingdom of heaven in the sky. The Pharisees who knew very well what he was up to, tried to catch him out by their questions and put him in an impossible position, but Jesus always beat them.



## PROOFS AND CONCLUSIONS

## I Contradictions

In order to arrive at the pure teaching of Jesus, it is necessary to bring out the disputed contradictions in the new testament because they are what have caused the most confusion in the exposition of christian doctrine. Those contradictions which have already been pointed out by the opponents of christianity, will be more than doubled by me, trying to defend it. The philosophical atheists and antichristians often set side by side the strange sayings in the bible and their own strange sayings. It never occurs to them to seek out the principle of Christ's teaching. I find that their writings contain nearly as many contradictions and faulty arguments as the bible, and moreover do not even lift up our hearts. They are what Paul calls 'the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge'.

I have found a power in the principles of the new testament, which all the contradictions are unable to weaken. As I am both pointing out the contradictions and defending the principles I am taking up arms against both philosophical and theological opponents and oblige them to find new weapons or lay down their old ones and respect the truth.

1 Jesus will judge all men:

Jn 5: 22. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the son.

27. and has given him authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of man.

30. As I hear, I judge.

Jn 9: 39. For judgment I came into this world, that that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind.

Jesus will judge no one:

Jn 3: 17. For God sent the Son into the world not to judge the world, but that the world may be saved through him.

Jn 12: 47. If anyone hears my sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.

2 Jesus eats with sinners:

Lk 15: 2. This man receives sinners and eats with them.

Paul forbids eating with sinners:

1 Cor 5: 11. But rather I wrote to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother, if he is guilty of immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard or robber – not even to eat with such a one.

I take this for a contradiction for according to my definition of the word 'sinner', no one can be guilty of immorality, greed, or be an idolater, a reviler, a drunkard or a robber without also being a sinner.

3 Jesus tells us to help people who are not of our faith!

See the parable of the good Samaritan (Lk 10: 29–37).

John tells us to greet or entertain no one who is not of our faith (2 Jn 10: 11).

Paul tells us to do good to all men, especially those who are of the household of faith: Gal 6: 10.

4 John says All that is in the world is not of the Father but of the world (1 Jn 2: 16).

John says all things and the nature of all things were created by God (Rev 4: 11).

5 Paul tells us not to curse

Rom 12: 14. Bless them that curse you. Bless and do not curse.

Paul curses

Gal 1: 8. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed.

6 Jesus tells us to rebuke a sinful brother privately:

Mt 18: 15. If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

Paul tells us to rebuke the sinner openly:

1 Tim 5: 20. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all.

7 John says: He who is from God does not sin (1 Jn 5: 18; 3: 9).

John says: We are from God (1 Jn 5: 19; 4: 6); therefore we do not sin.

John says: If we say we have not sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, we make God a liar (1 Jn 1: 8, 10).

8 Peter is hypocritical with Gentiles and Jews: Gal 2: 11, 14; Acts 11: 3.

Paul criticises him but behaves similarly: Acts 16: 3; 21: 20-26.

9 Jesus says that John the Baptist is Elijah: Mt 11: 14; 17: 11-13.

John the Baptist says he is not Elijah: Jn 1: 21.

10 Jesus knows all things: Jn 16: 30, 31.

Jesus does not know all things: Mk 13: 32.

11 Jesus does not accept the witness of man: Jn 5: 34.

John the Baptist bears witness to Jesus: Jn 1: 31-34; 3: 26; Mt 17: 9-13.

After John had openly borne witness to Jesus, he sent from prison to ask him whether he was the one who was to come or should we wait for another: Mt 11: 3.

This last sentence itself contains a contradiction. John first proclaims Jesus as the Christ and later sends to him from prison to ask him whether it is true or should we wait for another. This is how I explain it: John in prison hoped that Jesus would soon organise a rising and sent this message to him hoping to remind him of it. It was also a reproach that nothing was happening. Moreover John testified to Jesus publicly and his question was for the private ear of Jesus and his disciples. This explanation also reinforces the theory that Jesus and John were members of the Essene brotherhood and had a secret understanding.

12 Jesus says: If I bear witness to myself then my witness is true (Jn 8: 14).

Jesus says: If I bear witness to myself, then my witness is not true (Jn 5: 31).

13 Jesus says to his disciples: 'You will seek me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, Where I am going you cannot come' (Jn 13: 33).

Jesus also says to them: Whither I go you know, and the way you know (Jn 14: 4).

Jesus also says to them: Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me; because I live you will live also. (Jn 14: 19).

According to the last two sentences the disciples will not need to seek Jesus. If they see him, if they know where he is going and know the way there, why should they seek him? Do they not also know where he is going?

14 Jesus says that God leads us into temptation! (Mt 6: 13).

Paul has the same opinion: 1 Cor 10: 13.

James says on the other hand:

Jas 1: 13. Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one.

15 Paul on the kingdom of God:

1 Cor 15: 50. I tell you this brethren; flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

16 Jesus on the kingdom of God:

Lk 22: 29. That you may eat and drink at my table in the kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

17 Jesus says: his (God's) form you have never seen:  
Jn 5: 37.

Paul says: Jesus was in the form of God: Phil 2: 6.

18. According to Paul the christian is not justified by works but through faith.

Rom 3: 28. For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

According to James we are justified by works and not through faith alone:

Jas 2: 24. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.

19 According to Paul all authority is from God: Rom 13: 1. According to Peter all authority is of the human order: 1 Pet 2: 13.

20 According to Luke Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, showed them his hands and feet, let them touch him, but they did not know him or believe in him. Why not?

They did not believe him for joy. For joy of seeing him alive again, they did not believe that it was he!

Lk 24: 41. And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said to them, 'Have you anything to eat?'

21 Jesus says: Truly I say to you there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom (Mt 16: 28). The all died long ago but the kingdom has not arrived.

22 Peter says: When he was reviled he did not revile in return: 1 Pet 2: 23.

Matthew and Mark say he reviled people even when they had not reviled him: Mt 15: 26; 23: 17, 19, 33.

Besides these contradictions there are many historical contradictions, which have been pointed out by other authors, but because they are historical and not doctrinal contradictions, they are not relevant to the proof of the christian doctrine. But our culture, which we call christendom, is today being shaken to its foundations by these historical contradictions. Why? Because the theologians and their opponents confuse christianity with the accretions which have for centuries surrounded it. Both parties dispute about the shell and disregard the kernel of the nut. Because theologians have clothed their christianity in historical garments, it has not been difficult for their opponents to dig up historical contradictions. The theologians were incapable of presenting the doctrine itself without the trappings in which they had decked it. Their opponents could not do this either because they did not understand the principle or because they were afraid to see their knowledge put to shame in the face of its power and nobility. These debates between the theologians and the atheists were

nothing but word battles, and no one knew what he was trying to prove.

The mistakes made by the theologians in their exposition of the christian doctrine are partly caused by the contradictions we have just discussed. I listed some of these contradictions in order to separate them from the doctrine itself which is to be discussed in the next section, and in order that ambiguities may be explained not in the light of further ambiguities, but in the light of the principle itself.

If we consider the contradictions listed above, we see that only five of them, 2, 3, 6, 15, 18 arise from any ambiguity in the principle itself. In the first four Jesus contradicts the apostles, and therefore it must be agreed that what Paul and John say here in contradiction to Jesus cannot be taken as christian doctrine. We must consider the teaching of Jesus itself and not the interpretations of the apostles. Thus we find in these four cases that there is no actual contradiction in the doctrine, for the doctrine comes from Jesus and he cannot be blamed for the apostles' interpretations of it. In 18, two apostles are in disagreement about justice. They cannot agree whether man is justified by faith or works. Of course both are best. We need faith in justice so that we may not lack the courage to work for it. I will not try to decide the issue but leave it to the reader's judgment - he has perhaps already decided against Paul.

The other contradictions are serious enough to shake the foundations of orthodox christianity, but do not affect the christian principle.



## 2 Ambiguities

'Avoid the quarrelsome debates which are falsely called knowledge', Paul says. But as he wrote this he must have forgotten that he was quite accomplished in this art himself. In his debates he is able to call life death, death life, sin righteousness, and perhaps even righteousness sin. He tries to affect his hearers by playing with words like a juggler, and so does John the evangelist. Both of them did a great deal to spread christianity, but I think it would have been better to have done nothing if they were incapable of speaking as radically and plainly as Jesus, John the Baptist and James. The few words that John the Baptist spoke could not be misunderstood by anybody and were not subject to contradictory explanations, unlike Paul who attracts the hypocrites and the good, the ignorant and the would-be learned to interpret him in countless ways without realising what they are doing until they are completely lost. If one gives to words which are there for our understanding a quite different meaning and advises or encourages the reader to understand the words in this different way, then understanding is quite impossible and the result is confusion. The bible is as full of such ambiguities as the writings of many modern philosophers. I hoped to find a key in the new testament for the interpretation of some of the ambiguous words, but was unable to do so, which is a pity when one tries to read John and Paul. The teaching of Jesus of course does not need the vocabulary of Paul,

but I wanted to find as much of Paul's writing as possible which was in agreement with it and with common sense. I did not do a great deal of work but this is what I found.

*What is sin?* Unrighteousness, wrongdoing, not using an opportunity to do good, that which does not proceed from faith: 1 Jn 3: 4; 5: 17; Js 4: 17; Rom 14: 23.

*What is 'subjected'?* There are places in the bible where slaves are advised to obey their masters with fear and trembling. On the other hand I have found the following passage:

1 Cor 7: 23. You were bought with a price; do not become the slaves of men.

What Paul recommends to slaves he also recommends to their masters, and if we take this literally it results in an equality between them. According to 1 Cor 16: 15, 16 and 1 Pet 5: 5, 'subjected' can only mean to be at peace with one another.

*What does 'rational' mean?* If christians took literally what Paul and John have to say about 'reason' and 'rational', none of them would possess reason any longer or even want to be rational. Col 1: 21; 2: 4, 8; Eph 3: 19; 1 Cor 2: 4; 1: 18-28; 1 Jn 2: 27; 1 Tim 6: 20. These texts could harness the whole rational world against christianity. But Mark saves reason in the name of Jesus by one word:

Mk 12: 34. And when Jesus saw that he answered rationally he said, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.'

*What does 'tempt' mean?* This word is usually used in the bible to mean to lead astray, or to seduce. But in

Jn 6: 6. it also used to mean 'put to the test'. In Acts 15: 6 in the lutheran translation I find 'examine' instead of 'test'.

### 3 Strange and Difficult Phrases and Ideas

They are numerous. I quote only a few.

Acts 2: 40 can be read as Peter recommending the apostles as 'low bred' men to those who had come to be baptised.

According to Jn 11: 33, 38 Jesus became angry at the death of Lazarus.

Rom 8: 10. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness.

1 Cor 15: 31. I die daily.

In this category I also put the whole of the book of Revelation. What can be understood from it is not worth the trouble of keeping and can be easily replaced by other books in the new testament.

## GOD, JESUS, THE APOSTLES AND WE ARE ALL ONE

### I The Nature of the Birth of Jesus

The spirit of man, whether or not it knows the truth, enjoys deceiving itself or letting itself be deceived by fantasies. What it cannot discover by its knowledge it seeks to supply by fantasy, what it is not sure of in reality it tries to imagine. Because these fantasies are so powerful and have such strong influence on behaviour they have always been exploited for certain ends. They have even been used to the detriment of understanding by people who have presented them as the truth and their origin and consequences as incomprehensible truths.

In order to enhance the reputation and increase the power of exceptional men, people ascribed to them knowledge and power far greater than that of their society and turned them into 'supernatural' beings, gods.

Zoroaster, Perseus, Castor and Pollux, Alexander the Great, Romulus and many others were given supernatural origins.

Jesus came at a time when the dominant Roman and Greek culture filled people's thoughts, politics, history, religion, patriotism, domestic life, spiritual and physical

being and everything else that was important to them with splendid gods and supernatural occurrences. Which makes it easy to understand why Jesus himself had to have a supernatural origin.

Jesus was born in accordance with the angel's annunciation. This happened to other men in the bible, such as Samson, Jude 13; John the Baptist, Lk 1: 8, 13; Samuel, after a prayer, 1 Sam 1.

Jesus was born of a virgin just as the Chinese emperor Kienlong was born of a pure virgin.

Jesus was said to be the second person of the Trinity. Vishnu, the second person of the Indian Trinity was also born of a virgin and worked a similar redemption.

Jesus came to save mankind and was born at the end of December in a stable among oxen and asses.

Ormuzd charged her first-born son Mithras to save mankind and he was born at the end of December of a pure virgin in a stable among oxen and asses.

We see clearly that christianity continues the traditions of the pagan religions that came before it.

The bible represents Jesus as the Son of God by describing his birth from a virgin overshadowed by the power of the Holy Ghost. It also says that in his humanity he is a son of David. In this case it would have been better to trace his ancestry back to David through Mary and not through Joseph. Otherwise it sounds as if the seed of Joseph was necessary to his descent from David.

According to Rom 1: 3 this must be taken literally and Joseph taken as the natural father of Jesus: concerning

his Son who was descended from David according to the flesh.

It is impossible to make sense of this unless it is taken literally. The theologians quote against such plain evidence texts which are much less plain. Here is one which may be of use to them:

Rom 9: 8. This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God but the children of the promise are reckoned as descendants.

Has such a sentence any other purpose than to confuse us? What value can it have when it seeks to prove that we have this or that fantastic lineage? This may have been interesting to the Jews and Greeks of 1,800 years ago but what interest can it possibly have for us? The descent of Joseph from David is furthermore extremely doubtful because Matthew and Mark contradict each other and give Joseph a different father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

Jesus himself explains what we are to think of the miracles which mystify his birth. In Jn 3 he says to Nicodemus: He who is not born again cannot enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus does not understand him. Jesus explains. He who is not born of water and the spirit cannot enter the kingdom of God.

6. What is born of the flesh is flesh and what is born of the spirit is spirit.

Consequently no one can be born of the spirit who has not already been born of the flesh. 'To be born of the spirit' is an expression which simply means arriving at insight, understanding and wisdom.

## 2 How the Apostles Understand the Relationship Between Jesus and God

1 Cor 3: 23. We are Christ's and Christ is God's.

1 Cor 11: 3. Christ is our head and God is the head of Christ.

Eph 1: 3. Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph 1: 17. The God of our Lord Jesus.

1 Pet 1: 21. Through him we believed in God.

Heb 3: 2-4. He was faithful to him who appointed him.

Heb 9: 24. He appears in God's presence for us.

Consequently God and Christ are different. God is the head, the father and the God of Christ. God made Christ and Christ appears in God's presence for us. Christ is not God but subordinate to him as we are.

1 Cor 15: 28. When all things are subjected to him then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to everyone.

The apostles therefore did not think Jesus was perfect.

Phil 2: 8, 9. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Therefore God has highly exalted him.

Heb 1: 4. He has become superior to the angels.

Heb 5: 8, 9. Although he was a Son he learned obedience through what he suffered, and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation.

Heb 2: 10. For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering.

1 Cor 1: 27, 28. God has chosen the foolish.

Rom 8: 3. Sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin he condemned sin in the flesh.

Jesus began imperfect, disobedient and foolish. The prophecy of Isaiah which referred to Jesus corroborates this opinion.

Is 7: 16. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you stand in dread will be deserted.

God is said to be almighty, omniscient, all-wise, all-good and all-just. In this case Jesus in his lifetime was not God.

He was not almighty because he gave his disciples the power to cast out devils and they still could not do it: Lk 9: 40. The Pharisees silenced him, that is he did not know how to answer them: Lk 11: 53.

He was not omniscient or he would have known about the Copernican system and would not have said that the sun, the moon and the stars would fall from heaven. He would have known when the last day was to come: Mk 13: 32.

He was not all-wise or he would not have cursed the fig tree for bearing no fruit when it was not the season for figs.

He was not all good or he would not have snapped at his mother: Woman what have I to do with thee? Jn 2: 4. Or he would have taken the man with him



from whom he had cast out the devils into the herd of swine and who begged to go with him: Lk 8. He would not have been so angry with Peter (Mt 16: 23) and the Pharisees.

He was not all just or he would not have forbidden the disciples to go into the lands of the heathens and Samaritans (Mt 15: 24, 27).

Jesus is called 'God' only three times in the bible, whereas he is called 'the Son of Man' about forty times and four times 'the man Jesus Christ': Mt 9: 8; Rom 5: 15; 1 Tim 2: 5; 1 Cor 15: 21.

### 3 How Jesus Understands the Relationship between Himself and God

Jn 14: 28. The Father is greater than I.

Mk 10: 18. No one is good but God alone.

Jn 7: 16, 17. 'My teaching is not mine but his who sent me. If any man's will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.

Jn 5: 30. I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.'

This is so clear that it needs no explanation.

### 4 We too can be Without Sin

Rom 5: 8. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

Rom 6: 11. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

1 Jn 5: 18. He who is born of God does not sin.

1 Jn 3: 9. He who is born of God cannot sin.

### 5 We too can be Children of God

Rom 8: 14. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Gal 3: 26. Through faith in Jesus we are children of God.

Before Christ the Jews already called God their father:

Jn 11: 52; 8: 41; Hos 1: 10.

We are called children of God in the new testament:

Mt 5: 16, 48; 6: 14, 15; 18: 14; Jn 1: 12, 13; Rom 8: 16, 21; 1 Pet 1: 14; 1 Jn 3: 1.

If we are called children of God we can also be called sons and daughters of God and every man be called the son of God. But although the expression means exactly the same as 'child of God' it has to be used more carefully. One has to be cautious when one is dealing with people full of prejudice and passion. One can tell them everything but must be careful how one puts it.

Jesus said to the Jews:

Jn 10: 30. I and the Father are one.

This caused a great scandal. People thought he was himself claiming to be God. But Jesus explains:

34. Is it not written in your law, 'I said you are gods?'

35. If he called them gods to whom the word of God came (and scripture cannot be broken),

36. do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world 'You are blaspheming' because I said 'I am the son of God'.

Indeed if the word 'gods' is used of all the Jews then each single Jew is entitled to call himself God, and and Son of God if we are all called children of God. But we do not find that Jesus called himself God.

### 6 We can become like God and Christ

From the above we see that the name 'God' in the bible is not reserved for one being alone. In those days people made other people gods as today they make them kings, ministers, etc. At the time of the apostles this custom was at its height:

Acts 12: 22; 14: 11, 12; 17: 28, 29; 28: 6; 2 Thess 2: 4; Acts 17: 28, 29 calls men 'divine'. We can become exactly like Christ: Rom 8: 17, 29, 30, 32; 1 Jn 3: 2; 1 Cor 6: 17.

Jesus says:

Jn 17: 22. The glory which thou has given me, I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.

Mt 5: 48. You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Mt 19: 21. If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.

## THE PURE TEACHING OF JESUS

### I The Principle of the Christian Community

#### (i) *The gospel is preached to the poor*

Repent, become better people, unite. The promised Messiah is coming. The kingdom of heaven, the best kingdom on earth, the most perfect society, the victory of the poor and oppressed, the overthrow of the rich and the oppressors is at hand.

This was the earliest preaching that Jesus and John offered the people.

Lk 4: 18. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

Lk 6: 20. Blessed are you poor for yours is the kingdom of God.

21. Blessed are you that hunger now for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you that weep now for you shall laugh.

24. But woe to you that are rich for you have received your consolation.

Jas 2: 5. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom

which he has promised to those who love him. But you have dishonoured the poor man. It is not the rich who oppress you, is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme that honourable name by which you are called?

Js 5: 1. Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Behold the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have killed the righteous man; he does not resist you. Be patient therefore brethren until the coming of the Lord.

(ii) *Christian freedom and equality*

Mt 23: 11. He who is greatest among you shall be your servant;

12. whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted (Lk 14: 11).

Lk 7: 28. I tell you among those born of women none is greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

Jesus means by this last sentence that in the kingdom of God everyone will be equally important, and he who wants to earn more respect cannot do it by arrogance,

envy or pride but by humbling himself in the lowest place. Thus he would escape the envy, illwill and pride of others more easily and be loved and honoured for his modesty. This comes out even more clearly in the following passage:

Lk 14: 8. When you are invited by anyone to a marriage feast, do not sit down in the place of honour, lest a more eminent man than you be invited by him; and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give place to this man' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend go up higher'; then you will be honoured in the presence of all who sit at table with you.

In the kingdom of God he who serves others the most is the most honourable, he who submits to others and is most humble, that is to say he who best fulfils the principle of loving our friends and our enemies. However, in the kingdom all brothers and sisters are equal. No one is above or below anyone else.

Mt 20: 25. You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.

26. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant,

27. and whoever would be first among you must be your slave.

Mt 23: 8. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren. See Mk 10: 45, 46; Lk 22: 24, 27.

Lk 12: 37. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table and he will come and serve them. (This verse contradicts what in Lk 17: 7-9 might be thought to uphold a system of inequality. See also Lk 22: 27.)

Jas 1: 9. Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation  
10. and the rich in his humiliation.

Gal 5: 13. For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another.

1 Cor 8: 9. Only take care lest this liberty become a stumbling block to the weak.

Jas 1: 25. But he who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he shall be blessed in his doing.

Col 4: 1. Masters treat your slaves justly and fairly.

1 Cor 7: 21. But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.

Gal 3: 28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (See Col 3: 11.)

1 Cor 7: 23. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

*(iii) Not faith alone, but above all action is necessary to the kingdom of God*

Mt 7: 21. Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my father who is in heaven.

Jas 2: 14. What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

(iv) *Equal responsibilities and duties*

Mt 7: 12. So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.

Lk 22: 27. For which is the greater, one who sits at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves.

Jn 13: 8. Peter said to him, 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part in me.'

Gal 6: 2. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.

(v) *Abolition of property and community of goods*

It was the abolition of property, the necessary condition for putting the teaching of Jesus into practice, which made its open proclamation and propagation so difficult. It was in the interests of Romans and Jews, priests, levites and sadducees to suppress such a doctrine.

The rich in those days were strong enough to overcome opposition to their interests. They fought for their property savagely. Four hundred years before Christ Mazdak in Persia had won the king over to this



doctrine but it was repudiated by the crown princes who banished its teachers from Persia amid streams of blood. The same thing happened to the disciples of Pythagoras in Italy.

These forces are at work in our society today and the parsons use the same weapons. They confuse us by interpreting all passages in favour of this doctrine in a false and meaningless way. But could the abolition of property be more plainly advocated than in these many passages? Don't they become nonsense unless this is their meaning? Judge for yourselves:

Lk 14: 33. Whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Lk 18: 29. There is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God

30. who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.

Let us note this last passage carefully. It is unambiguous. Jesus speaks of this time and of the future and says plainly that whatever a man renounces will be replaced manifold in this time. But only with an economic system in which work is done and goods are held in common is it possible so to raise the general standard that each man has more freedom and enjoyment and less worries than he had when he had his own houses, money and possessions.

To the rich young man who had kept all the commandments from his youth and asked what more he should do, Jesus said:

Lk 18: 22. One thing you still lack. Sell all that you

have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me.

23. But when he heard this he became sad, for he was very rich.

24. Jesus looking at him said, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!

25. For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'

See also Mt 19: 16-30; Mk 6: 8, 10; Mt 6: 25, 33, 34; Mk 10: 17-30; 12: 28-34; Lk 10: 7, 8, 25, 28, 37; 14: 7, 15; Jn 15: 12.

Rom 12: 4. For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one another.

1 Cor 10: 24. Let no one seek his own good but the good of his neighbour.

We learn that the early christians really behaved in this way from the following:

Acts 2: 44. And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

45. and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them all, as any had need.

Acts 4: 32. Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common.

34. There was not a needy person among them for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.

He who withheld his money was regarded as a thief from the community.

Acts 5: 1. But a man named Ananias with his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property,

2. and with his wife's knowledge kept back some of the proceeds and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3. But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land?'

That is to say that everything that a christian keeps back for himself and does not give to the community, he has stolen from the community. We have an even stronger proof of this in the following: Lk 6: 35. But love your enemies and do good, and lend expecting nothing in return.

If a christian may not exact interest, then investment is not possible. Without interest the capitalist would have to work or go hungry in spite of his capital. In the fourth century certain money lenders did not take money but goods as interest. St Ambrose said, you should take nothing, whether you take money or goods it is still usury.

Now, you capitalists. You are like the Slovaks whose clothes are greasy with bacon and they never wash or change them but let them grow foul on their bodies. They do not know the pleasure of washing themselves clean and you do not know the pleasure of a clean conscience. Because both right reason and the teaching of Christ give you a bad conscience those with a good conscience have the less to fear from you. Without

christianity and the enlightenment you could oppose the abolition of property as mothers once opposed vaccination against smallpox.

You know the will of your Lord but be careful when you ask him, 'Lord what must I do to enter the kingdom of God', and he answers, 'share your goods with the poor', that you do not hang your head like the rich young man. Our society is like a shipwreck in which each man tries to grasp a plank in the wild waters and is glad when he sees his neighbour perishing and would even refuse to get in the same boat with him which would save them all.

How hard it is for the rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Our pastors know this well and have turned the needle's eye into a barn door. The camel bucks a bit before the pastor's great work and rushes in with God's old cob.

(vi) *Abolition of inheritance*

Lk 12: 13. One of the multitude said to him, 'Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me.'

14. But he said to him, 'Man who made me a judge and divider over you?'

We see from this how wrong the people were about the teaching of Jesus. They asked a man who taught the community of goods to be bothered with the division of an inheritance between two brothers and to judge between them.

15. And he said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.'

Even today many people do not understand this, they are so obsessed with money. Of course one can live on money, and live well, one need not even work. Strange! Money and goods are dead things which do not work, yet someone has to work. Money has to be made by someone. It follows that no one can live on his money without working for it or depriving someone else of the fruits of his labour. If he says he can he is either ignorant or a deceiver. The ignorant man does not see that money is only a means of depriving the poor of some of his power by making him work for others without being aware of it. The deceiver knows this but takes care to maintain the poor in their blindness so that he may rest. No one lives on his money without other people's work.

He who has much money and many goods has many means of making others work for him and himself work less or live better than they. Goods are privileges for which we poor sinners must pay the price. The handing on of this unholy and unchristian state of affairs from father to son is called 'inheritance'. We should inherit from no one but we should ensure that our neighbours inherit the fair earth with all its fine buildings and wealth in common. Let there be no inheritors who live by deceit; they would do better to spend their time helping their wives with the washing and cooking.

(vii) *Abolition of money*

Poor sinner, take your dearest coin in your hands and consider the number of different things you can buy with it. Consider how many working hours this coin

represents and you will find that it sometimes pays for a month's work and sometimes for scarcely half an hour.

You will find that without it you cannot obtain the necessities of life. If you have no money you must die, and in order to get money you must fulfil the conditions of those who have it. All who have to live by their work must agree to the conditions of those who pay for their work, although these are for the most part idle men who understand nothing of the work and are only exploiting the workers to enrich themselves. Every monetary system has become a permitted means of deceit and robbery. Things have gone so far that it occurs to no one that by money, the so-called justly earned income, he can deceive others or be deceived by them. First money must be abolished and a system of exchange introduced which makes robbery and deceit impossible.

Money can only be harmless in a christian society in which people own things in common, do not rob and deceive each other and need neither police nor judges. A society which has not reached this happy level must abolish money or surrender it to serve the above purposes.

Jesus of course did not positively say that money must be abolished. He said we should not store it up, or carry it with us or refuse it to those in need:

Mt 10: 9. Take no gold nor silver nor copper in your belts.

Mt 6: 19. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal.

Mt 6: 24. No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

But in our present society where few of these principles are obeyed, it is impossible for the poor to obey them because they must have money for their daily life, and the rich refuse to obey them, and nothing is changed. Even the disciples could not obey them literally; one of them had to carry the common purse containing what they had collected and what they had been given to pay for their common needs.

Jn 12: 6. He was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it.

And so as long as the money system remains we remain more or less slaves to it. Blessed is the man – whether fate has made him the slave or the possessor of money – who does not give up trying, like a wise child of the world, to act in accordance with christian principles.

#### (viii) *The family*

Jesus' concept of the community of mankind involved the abolition of the family. He denied the family and expected his disciples to do likewise. He did not allow anyone who wished to follow him to take leave of his parents. To a man who first wished to bury his father he said 'Let the dead bury their dead'.

Once when Jesus sat in a house and was told that his mother and his brothers were looking for him, he said:

Mk 3: 33. Who are my mother and my brothers?

34. And looking around on those who sat about him he said, Here are my mother and my brothers.

35. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.

And he taught his disciples:

Mt 23: 9. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one father who is in heaven.

This strong denial of the family is probably based on Jesus' own family experiences. He was the illegitimate child of a poor girl, Mary, and according to the prejudices of his time, people despised him. Joseph the carpenter had not succeeded in removing the stain by marrying Mary, the people persisted in their attitude. Jesus probably heard many unkind remarks. It is therefore not surprising that as a fatherless waif he preferred to call himself a child of God rather than a child of Joseph, which prejudice had made into something shameful.

Jesus sacrificed the bonds of the family to the principle of community. What must he have suffered before reaching such a conclusion? What feelings of pain and joy, hatred and love before he went thus far? Surely there must be interesting stories about Jesus at the age of eighteen which are lost to us.

Jesus attacked the family, and we too want to attack it, but only the family which is held together by financial interest, inheritance and common gain, the family which is a socially disreputable herd, beset with prejudices which they pass on to their children and propagate from generation to generation. It is a herd



which is bound together by self-interest and inheritance against a common enemy. It needs neither love nor friendship, which is what constitutes the true family.

These are the families we should found and love more than ourselves, but we should value the family of mankind even more than our individual families.

If property was abolished, family and marital relations would improve. Now because the man is solely responsible for the support and future of his family, the wife is still partly the property of the man. Whether she loves him or not she is obliged to stay with him for financial reasons, if she has no other means of feeding her family and nowhere else to go. The man can count on her fidelity because he considers himself responsible for the support of his own children alone. But this would cease with the abolition of property. Whether a couple has ten children or none, whether a woman has twenty husbands or just the one, the children would be treated alike. Society should care for the raising of all children, without depriving the parents of their rights. No one would be obliged to remain with a partner he or she no longer loved for purely financial reasons. Marriages would not be held together by self-interest but by love and friendship. People who are morally or physically incompatible would not have to persevere in a marriage of quarrels, lies and deceit, poisoning both of their lives. Now nearly all marriages are made out of self interest, but in a true community this would not happen. Now people swear a hypocritical fidelity before the altar, then they would not swear at all. Jesus says with respect to marriage:

Mt 5: 34. I say to you, Do not swear at all.

37. Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'.

When love and friendship and not self-interest bind hearts together, when the woman has a freedom equal to the man's and has security for herself and her children, when she is no longer obliged to live with a man whom she does not love, or kept from living with a man whom she does love, there will be no more illegitimate children. All children will be legitimate, even though the mother recognised no other father but God or the Holy Ghost. The woman will be proud at her first conception and none will need to be ashamed of it. The man will take pleasure in hearing her name him the father, whereas now he often regards it as a calamity.

People will no longer seek to satisfy their passions in unnatural ways, which according to some famous doctors happens almost universally, especially among women, at least those who are too old to find a husband. There will be more enjoyment and less dissipation. When a love relationship is shameful to the world this is usually because of the concept of property. But the christian who is free of such prejudices should take no notice of the world. He cannot do so without casting a slur on the mother of Jesus and on Jesus' ancestry. Matthew mentions four women in his account of the descent of Jesus, Tamar, who seduced the father of her dead husbands, Rahab a prostitute, Ruth who won the heart of her cousin by creeping into his room at night, and Bathshebah the adultress, Uriah's wife.

Jesus speaks plainly enough about marriage. In

Mark 10: 11, 12 and Luke 16: 18 he calls every divorce an adultery, and even calls it adultery to give an adulterer his freedom. According to Mt 19: 9 every divorce is justified by adultery and in Mt 5: 27, 28 Jesus calls every desire for another woman an adultery. Therefore every marriage consists of a pair of adulterers and contains grounds for divorce. The disciples said:

Mt 19: 10. If such is the case of a man with his wife it is not expedient to marry.

11. But he said to them, 'Not all men can receive this precept but only those to whom it is given.'

This proves clearly that Jesus did not think the disciples yet capable of understanding his teaching on marriage. He chose rather to leave the disciples – some of whom were married – in ignorance than to risk arousing their wildest suspicions.

Let us also remember that Jesus was unwilling to condemn the woman taken in adultery any more than any other transgressor and that he himself and many of the apostles had friendly relations with the opposite sex (Jn 11: 5). So this unclear part of the teaching of Jesus agrees with the rest. But the application of a principle must be tactically different during the period of transition from when the time comes to introduce it fully. This is what causes so many mistakes when the practical application of a principle has not been fully worked out. Paul speaks about marriage in 1 Cor 7. Among other things we find:

1 Cor 7: 1. It is well for a man not to touch a woman.  
2. But because of the temptation to immorality each

man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

This chapter is full of truths and contradictions and each man must judge it for himself. In the early days of christianity various christian sects even abolished marriage altogether and held everything in common, even bodily love. These sects were the Simonians, the Nicolaitans, the Carpocratians, the followers of Basilides and the Marcionites and others who were called Gnostics.

The ideas of women in common and the freedom of women were constantly confused. When women were held in common they were regarded as a herd over which each man had rights. This state, in which men are privileged, must be distinguished from that in which the woman has equal rights with men in all her capacities and needs.

(ix) *The love feast*

Of course it no longer exists. But patience, poor sinners, it must come again. We must have tables loaded again with Easter meat, bread, and wine and sit down to them with our women and children. There must be no more Lazaruses who hungrily collect the scraps which fall from the rich man's table.

You modern christians, you give us little bits of bread and little offerings but you will not even let us dip our fingers in the pan that cooked your meat. You give us a sip of wine or none at all while you go home and live it up. This is the way to make the love feast a pretence and to keep the reality from your poor brothers.

The Copts in Egypt and the Abyssinians, who were christians long before you, do not give offerings instead of a supper. The supper with them is a common meal in church, at which bread and wine are eaten and drunk in the ordinary way, unlike the mass at which the people are spectators who smoke during the show and clap when it's over.

The first supper was not like that. The apostles came together to eat and drink because they were hungry and thirsty, and after the death of Jesus they came together to remember him by a meal. Even with the early christians there were disruptions at the supper, which nearly always happens in societies which are not used to orderly behaviour. Paul tried to correct the evil by ordering no one to begin eating and drinking until everyone had arrived, so that some would not be full and drunk and others hungry and thirsty. Anyone who could not wait that long ought to eat and drink something beforehand at home.

1 Cor 11: 21. For in eating each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk.

22. What! do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No I will not.

33. So then my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—

34. if any one is hungry, let him eat at home.

'Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing' means despise those who come late and whose bread you have eaten up and wine you have drunk.

Paul's rules for the love feast are simply the rules which should be learnt by all rude people who are invited out to dinner. We can also apply them to a love feast today, without making an empty ceremony of it to shame the poor.

All this must be changed and the love feast restored. We will no longer celebrate it with downcast eyes and on our knees, but round a table with an Easter lamb, bread and wine, milk, potatoes, meat and fish. We will enjoy it together and share with one another.

Don't you agree, poor sinners, that would be a splendid Easter feast. But the crucified and the oppressed must first rise from the grave of deception and lies. Come out of your dark holes. The love feast is ready, the great table is laid. Come and celebrate the morning of the resurrection.

The night is dark and gloomy and our hearts are heavy and afraid, but why must our gaze rest on the darkness when beyond the fog it is already beginning to dawn.

The sorrowful clouds that lay over us are dispersing after the long storm and the light grows rosy. Get up you sleepers. Already the cock has crowed three times. How much longer will you lie abed denying your salvation?

## 2 Love of Enemies

When we share our burdens and our joys, when goods are held in common, a necessary condition for a truly human life, all those crimes relating to money and

property will no longer exist. When we have introduced a means of exchange which makes robbery and deceit impossible, when we have reformed the vote and our parliament, the remaining human passions of hatred, anger and impure love will not be able to do such very great damage.

How should we set about it? Build prisons? Make laws? Make police and judges and thus ten evils out of one and ten burdens out of one? Certainly not. Society must be conducted so that wrongdoers are treated as sick men needing help. Our customs and morals make it hard for us to see things in this way, even though it is the right way. We do not now regard a drunken man, or a feverish man, or a very stupid man or a psychologically disturbed man as responsible for his actions. But every thoughtless action we live to regret is irrational. Of course we seek to justify ourselves. But if our enemy whom we have injured does us good in secret, so that no one sees our shame, we may repent. This is the christian teaching of love for our enemies, and it involves regarding evil-doing as sickness and treating it as such. Scorn, shame and punishment are in direct opposition to the christian teaching.

The command to love our neighbours includes of course the command to love our enemies, but Jesus mentioned love of our enemies in particular so that love of our neighbours would not be limited by evil passions.

Mt 5: 43. You have heard that it was said to you, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.'

44. But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for

those who persecute you. (See Lk 6: 27-35.) For the commandment to love in general see also Mt 6: 2; 22: 36-40; Lk 7: 41, 42; 11: 4; 1 Cor 13: 1-10; 16: 14; Col 3: 14.

The Jews regarded certain sick people as sinners. This also happens today. 'God has marked the man. It is God's punishment', can still be heard in catholic and protestant countries. Prejudice regarded the sick as sinners, whereas it should be the other way round.

Plenty has been done and written in eighteen hundred years; christian truths have often been misunderstood and distorted. I have said nothing new in saying that criminals are sick; Jesus says:

Mk 2: 17. Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

He compared sinners to the sick and commanded us to love them, which of course would be impossible if we did not regard them as sick and treated them with patience and sympathy. If the christian does not regard crime as sickness how can he understand this passage? Mt 5: 39. But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other one also. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

If sin is sickness, the forgiveness of sins is healing. If sickness and sin go together, so do recovery and forgiveness. Mt 9: 2; Mk 2: 5; Jn 5: 14.

Jas 5: 16. Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed.

Paul describes the workings of passion:

Rom 7: 14-25. I am carnal, sold under sin, etc.



That is to say, 'I do not know what I do, for I do not do what I want but what I hate. It is not I that do it but the sin which dwells in me. I know that in my flesh nothing good dwells. I have the will but not the ability to do good. The good that I want I do not do and the evil I do not want I do. But if I do what I do not want it is not I that do it but the sin that dwells in me. So I find that although I want to do good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self. But I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. I serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.'

Paul is also regarding sin as a sickness here. But when sin is regarded as sickness the law which exists to punish it becomes useless and damaging. Paul proves that the law requires sin. Rom 3: 19, 21, 25, 26, 28; 5: 13; 7: 6-9, 13; 1 Cor 15: 56; 2 Cor 3: 7, 9. Rom 4: 15. For the law brings wrath but where there is no law there is no transgression.

The law of Christ has abolished the law.

Gal 4: 1-5; 5: 1, 4, 5; Eph 2: 14, 15; Col 1: 13, 14; 2: 14, 15, 20, 21; Rom 10: 4.

Christ put grace and forgiveness in the place of laws and punishment: Rom 4: 5, 7, 8; 5: 20, 21; 9: 31, 32; Gal 2: 16, 21; 3: 10, 11, 23; Heb 7: 19.

Gal 3: 24. So that the law was our custodian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.

If sin and transgression are actions which our calm reason cannot approve because they will not serve our

welfare or that of other people, then we should refrain from judging and blaming other wrongdoers. Lk 6: 37, 41, 42; Jas 4: 12; Rom 14: 10, 13; But he who judges will be judged himself Mt 7: 1-5; 26: 52; Rev 13: 10.

This is how the christian should behave with his erring brother:

Mt 18: 15. If your brother sins against you go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you then you have gained your brother.

16. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of one or two witnesses.

17. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if he refuses to listen to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. (People whose company must be avoided.)

21. Lord how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?

22. Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you seven times but seventy times seven.'

Mk 11: 25. And when you stand praying, forgive if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Rom 14: 13. Then let us no more pass judgment on one another but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

Gal 6: 1. Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

2. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Col 3: 13. Forbearing one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

2 Cor 5: 18. All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

See also 1 Cor 6: 1-8; Lk 17: 3, 4.

Christians should not punish each other. If a man is incorrigible he can be expelled from the christian community.

Mt 18: 17. If he refuses to listen to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

1 Cor 5: 13. Drive out the wicked person from among you.

2 Thess 3: 14. If any man refuses to obey what we say in this letter, note that man and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed.

See Mt 25: 32, 33.

All the punishments threatened in the new testament are concerned with the last judgment and not this life.

The christian has no judge save Christ. Acts 10: 42; 2 Cor 5: 10.

This Christ who judges and punishes us will come with clouds on the last day: Mt 26: 64; Mk 8: 38; 13: 26, 27; Lk 21: 27.

He comes in this way to judge us: Mt 16: 27; 24: 30; 25: 31-46; 2 Thess 1: 7, 9.

We shall have to give an account of ourselves to him: Mt 12: 36, 41, 42; Lk 11: 31, 32; Mt 6: 15.

The bad will be meted out fearful punishments:  
Mt 3: 12; 5: 22; 10: 15; 11: 22-24; Mk 6: 11; Lk 3: 17;  
10: 12-15; 12: 5; 2 Pet 2: 9.

They will suffer in body and soul. Mt 5: 30; 10: 28;  
Mk 9: 45, 48.

The first christians expected the last judgment to come during their lifetime.

Mk 9: 1. There are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.

John the Evangelist says nothing about the last judgment. What he has to say about judgment and punishment makes the final judgment look quite different.

Jn 3: 17. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

18. He who believe in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already.

19. And this is the judgment that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Jn 16: 7. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away the Counsellor will not come to you, but if I go I will send him to you.

8. And when he comes he will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.

So according to John it is the Holy Ghost who will conduct the last judgment. John calls him light and comforter.

John's opinion is what we would now consider the

most appropriate. It comes to the same whether we regard our conscience or sound reason as our judge.

Whether it is the Holy Ghost, Jesus Christ, God, reason, or conscience or whatever that will judge us, this does not alter the teaching of Christ. The main point is that christians should not judge and punish each other, or recognise any judge or judgment amongst themselves. The christian should be subject to no law and no judge but the law of Christ. On this all the texts are agreed.

In our society laws and punishments are directed against offenders as enemies, but christians are supposed to love their enemies, that is to say not to punish them but to make them better, heal them and do them good, removing the causes which make them revolt against the established order. That is what we should do.

We say now, do not offend against anyone so that you will not be punished by anyone. But Christ taught 'judge no one so that no one will judge you'.

We see the principle of reconciliation in action in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15) and the story of the woman taken in adultery (John 8). This principle should govern our actions, not judgment and punishment. The worst offence should be brought before the community and the worst punishment should be to treat the hardened offender as a heathen and a tax collector, that is to break off relations with him. But Jesus did not even follow this strictly, for as we know he went about with tax collectors and Gentiles and sinners.

### 3 The Teaching of the Spirit

Jn 16: 12. I have yet many things to say to you but you cannot bear them now.

13. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth; for he will not speak on his own authority but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

14. He will glorify me for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

This shows that the disciples did not understand everything that Jesus taught, or that Jesus purposely did not make everything plain. It also shows that Jesus was convinced that he had spoken great truths which would later be better understood.

This is Jesus' opinion of his disciples, and it is the evangelist's opinion of us, for he closes his gospel with the following words:

Jn 21: 25. But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

He would not have said this unless he had thought that what he had written was still partly obscure, like for example his Revelation. There are also many difficult things in the gospels. We have seen and still see how confused opinions can be about them. The apostles themselves contradict each other.

One of these difficult words is 'spirit'. Don't be surprised, reader, that I call this word which has be-

come so common a difficult one. A word is easy to understand when everybody gives the same description of it, and this can only happen with something apprehensible by the senses. Many think of spirit as an airy invisible being which lives and thinks, inhabits the body during the body's lifetime and afterwards lives on and thinks on for ever without a body. This is possible but I do not understand it. I cannot teach this to anyone because I cannot prove it.

The earth draws everything towards its centre. This is called gravity. Magnetic force draws the needles towards the poles. Let us think of our earth being drawn towards a comet and joined to it, and together they are reduced to dust or burnt up, would the magnetic force in it cease to exist or lose its power? I don't know. Neither do I know about the future of the secret force which gives us our powers and constitutes our personality. These powers are the unknown causes of effects with which we are familiar. 'Power' is also a word but it is used to refer to many things and so for 'unknown causes of our activity' the words 'thinking faculty', 'spirit' and 'soul' are used. All these three are simply names of the known workings of an unknown cause. These workings are divided in a familiar way: understanding, reason, reflection, free-will and conscience. When I speak of spirit, soul or thinking faculty, I mean all these workings together with others unnamed, which I may name later; when I say soul or spirit it is to avoid having to list the five words above or to describe what I mean by all these words together. This is how I understand the word 'spirit' or 'soul' and

what I expect others to understand when I use the words. But one of the words is still superfluous. If I have a spirit, I do not need a soul and vice versa. I do not know how to distinguish between spirit and soul

Several passages in the bible suggest that Paul meant by 'spirit' a being separable from the body, an idea which I said above I did not understand. Acts 16: 6, 7; 18: 5; 20: 22, 23, 28; 21: 4, 11; 1: 2.

Jesus expresses the same idea in the following passage:

Mk 13: 11. And when they bring you to trial and deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say; but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak but the Holy Spirit.

Be that as it may, we can only be certain that people know what is meant by workings of the spirit and no one has any other proof for the reality of the concept of spirit except these workings.

There are plenty of passages in the bible to support my opinion and all the others, those mentioned above and others mentioned later, can easily be interpreted in this light.

1 Cor 12: 6. And there are varieties of working but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone.

7. To each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good.

8. To one is given through the spirit the utterance of wisdom, to another the utterance of knowledge, according to the same spirit,

9. to another faith by the same spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one spirit,



10. to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

11. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Jn 14: 16. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever.

17. even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him for he dwells with you and will be in you.

The following passages are to be interpreted in this light. Mk 1: 8; Lk 4: 1, 1; 9: 35; 12: 11, 12; Jn 3: 1-8, 34; 15: 26; 8: 26; 15: 13; 1 Cor 2: 10-12; Eph 5: 9.

All the gifts of the spirit mentioned here, that is to say all the workings of the understanding, reason, reflection, free will and conscience, which the apostle calls wisdom, knowledge, wonder, tongues, gift of healing, etc can be used to do good or harm to our fellow men. Harm particularly when cool understanding, which includes in this instance reason and reflection, exploits other people out of self interest and goes against the deeper feelings to which conscience bears witness.

The core and quintessence of this deepest feeling is the mystery of love. Love draws people together and gives them union and harmony to use their powers for a common goal. It takes many forms and we call it friendship, faithfulness, devotion, helpfulness, kindness, gentleness, generosity, etc.

Just as what I called the understanding can overstep

the limits which the good of other people imposes on the individual, so can love, when it is concerned wholly with self-seeking. Experience teaches people to balance love with understanding and understanding with love, that is to say to balance heart and mind. Understanding must be loving and love must be understanding. How is this possible? When we keep to the principle of seeking our good only in the good of our whole society and never in the pain of other people.

Understanding can do more damage when it is without love than love without understanding. That is why Christ placed more emphasis on love than on understanding. So did Paul. After he has listed the spiritual gifts he says this about love:

1 Cor 13: 1. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

2. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3. If I give all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

According to Paul giving away one's goods to the poor, which Jesus tells the rich man is the condition of perfection (Mt 19), is only secondary; the important thing is whether it serves the precept to love our enemies. Paul continues:

4. Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful;

5. it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

6. it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.
7. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
8. Love never ends; as for prophecy it will pass away; as for tongues they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.
9. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect.
10. But when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.

Love prevents us from using the other gifts for the attainment of selfish ends, or making them serve our passions. It teaches us not to seek our welfare in immediate satisfactions but in the broad aim of general human welfare, in which understanding is not always the paramount consideration. All the gifts of the spirit are to be used for the *general good*.

By 'Holy Spirit', as I read it, we are to understand all the truths which serve the good of mankind. Jesus called these truths the comforter, who will come and teach us all things we need to know. Jesus puts this spirit of truth higher than himself. He says:

Mt 12: 31. Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

32. And whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

The Christian should do good to his neighbour, renounce all things for his sake, love his enemy, judge

no one, forgive everyone, but he should not forgive the sin against the Holy Spirit. This is indisputably the most important point in the whole christian doctrine. All the apostles agree on it, all the evangelists cite this passage (Mk 3: 28, 29; Lk 12: 10; 1 Jn 5: 15); but what constitutes a sin against the Holy Spirit Jesus and his disciples have left us to gather for ourselves. Now that we have come so far, this will be easy for us.

We only know what the spirit is through his workings, through his gifts listed by the apostle. No one can say that the spirit is something separate from these gifts and no one can say that he is not this; therefore we can be certain that we mean these workings and gifts when we say 'spirit'.

We must use these gifts for the common good. How? By using them to bear our burdens together and share our joys, to forgive our fellow-men and love our enemies.

We are virtuous in so far as we strive towards this end with all the love of our hearts, and sinful in so far as we fail to do this. If we use these gifts against the common good, when we harm others by cunning, betrayal, exploitation or intrigue, when we purposely spread lies and errors as the truth, in short, when we use these gifts in a shamefully loveless way, we sin against the Holy Spirit. Then we cannot be forgiven because no one can trust us any more, we cannot be forgiven in our present society or in that which is to come. Now we will be despised, then we will be banned from the society.

The sin against the Holy Ghost is therefore all that

we do with the intention of maintaining the present state of injustice and inequality in our society.

Every truth whose purpose is the love of our neighbour is a christian truth and a working of the Holy Spirit. This spirit of truth continually perfects his gifts in us and so the teaching of Christ can never cease, because we will always need to strive for perfection. The christian will always have work to do in applying the christian norm of love to all the new and useful ideas and discoveries for the renewal of society, and in keeping heart and mind together on the right way.

Christianity must never cease to keep the renewal and growth of understanding within the confines of christian love so that they do not fall away into mere selfishness.

#### 4 Sacrifices which Jesus thought Necessary to the Spread of His Teaching

When an enthusiastic hearer of the teaching of Jesus asked to go with him Jesus answered:

Lk 9: 58. Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head.

59. To another he said, 'follow me'. But he said, 'Lord let me first go and bury my Father.'

60. But he said to him, 'Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.'

61. Another said, 'I will follow you, Lord; but first let me say farewell to those at my own home.'

62. Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'

Jesus only considers the man who for love of his teaching has broken all bonds with his family, domestic happiness and ancient customs as fit to spread the gospel. To these he said:

Lk 10: 4. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and salute no one on the road.

Although they collected from the people, and accepted money to support them while they spread the gospel, no one was to have his own purse, but Judas kept all the money in a common fund.

People who tried to live like this today would be treated as tramps by the property owners. It was not so bad in the time of Jesus, people were not so chained to property, they had fewer needs and were used to practising hospitality. We see from the following passage that Jesus did not regard this way of life as vagrancy and did not regard asking for hospitality as begging:

Lk 10: 7. And remain in the same house eating and drinking what they provide, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not go from house to house.

Jesus gives this rule to those who have nothing. He did not want them to beg humbly for their needs. On the other hand he advised those who had possessions:

Lk 14: 12. When you give a dinner or a banquet do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbours, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid.

14. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.

Of course the rich will crib at inviting such guests as the maimed, the blind and the lame to their table. They do not even enjoy inviting the less disgusting poor to their table, unless they have some plan in mind or seek some other satisfaction. But then they are not christians but enemies of christians who offend against the Holy Ghost.

Lk 14: 26. If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

27. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

28. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

29. Otherwise when he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him.

Whoever takes fright at the enormous work needed to build the tower, whoever says to himself, 'I can't face it' or 'it is impossible to get enough workmen and materials to do it', and above all whoever is not prepared to set more store by building this tower than by all his personal pleasures, comforts and joys, let him stand aside so that he does not hinder the other workers.

In such an important work of course there will be many who grow tired, lose their courage, fail to understand the plan of the building, criticise the work schedule, divert the workmen and so hinder the work.

None of this should frighten those who are interested in the completion of the whole work, who seek their happiness in that and nothing else.

Lk 14: 10. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend go up higher'; then you will be honoured in the presence of all those who sit at table with you. Millions of men now sit in the lowest place and long for a saviour who will call to them, 'Friend go up higher'. From time to time we hear people cry out enthusiastically, 'Freedom, Freedom' or 'Friend, go up higher' but only after they themselves together with the money men have taken the first places. When will the greatest saviour come to lead the peoples to a common table and say to all the poor, 'Friend go up higher'? They sit so low that they no longer have the courage to raise themselves by their own efforts. They are morally and physically adjusted to the purpose of their oppressors. They cannot help themselves by their own power. It is for us to set to work, we who have been saved by our knowledge of society's evil and the means to change it.

The most important task is to give back to these unfortunates the consciousness of their own value. In many countries they have become far too humble and submissive.

Doesn't it make your blood boil when you see these poor weary heads bend low before the healthy splendour of the rich? Don't you mind that it is always these poor who make their humble greeting and are often answered



by scarcely a movement of the rich man's hand?

The exchange of greetings is a good custom when it is a smiling thing, but horrible when it displays the gulf between rich and poor. There are beggar's greetings which the foolish poor man gives to the rich man's clothes. If the rich man takes to carrying a bundle on his back it will occur to no one to bow before him.

Tell did not bow down before Gessler's velvet feathered cap but today in Switzerland many bow down before splendid clothes and Paris fashions. This should not happen, at least not in Switzerland. A man who is too proud to shake hands with us should not be bowed to. Since the first revolution it does not happen in France, smock does not cringe to finery and yet the poorest classes have beautiful manners in their social relations.

Politeness is a goldfish in a silver lake but cringing is a sow in a dungheap. Let us take every opportunity to behave accordingly. If we cannot better ourselves materially, let us improve morally as much as we can, but let us also remember that it will not be more than a small help to our cause.

He to whom much is entrusted should prepare himself to do great things for the spread of christianity. Let each man bring something of his knowledge and abilities to help the cause, whether writing, speaking, money or goods.

Lk 19: 8. Behold Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything I restore it fourfold.

Zacchaeus the publican did this. You rich should do the same, so that we may have joy in you, as Jesus did

in Zacchaeus. For the propagation of our christianity we can make good use of your influence and some of your money. For the putting of our christianity into practice we need everything that you have. For you have as little right to it as christians as you have to it as human beings. What you have belongs to us. We created it, and what we have belongs to you if you are prepared not to be idle loafers.

These are hard truths for your ears which you will not hear in church, although you will not find them lacking in the gospels. You do not enter the kingdom of God with gold and silk and servants, but by sacrifice. Mt 7: 14. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

He who would earn money must work for it, but he will be rewarded by greater rest and pleasure than the man who wastes his time doing nothing. Christianity rewards us in accordance with the sacrifice which we make for it.

See also the following passages: Mt 5: 11-14, 16; 7: 13, 14; 8: 19, 20; 9: 36; 10: 19, 28, 40, 42; Mk 8: 34; 12: 41, 44; Lk 9: 23; 14: 16-24; 21: 1-4.

It is especially important for the spread of the doctrine that every committed apostle should avoid everything which might divert the powers and means at his command, and among other things he should be free as far as possible from earthly cares.

Lk 12: 22. Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on.

23. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

24. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse or barn, and yet God feeds them.

29. And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be of anxious mind.

31. Instead seek the kingdom of God, and these things shall be yours as well.

These passages contain the following teachings: At the moment some are free from care and want because by their property, their inheritance and their money, they have defrauded others of the fruits of their labour, whereas those others become subject to even greater worry and want. At the moment the spread of our doctrine is gravely hindered by this worry and want. We should therefore, whenever possible, transfer this worry and want from the oppressed to their oppressors but not to others who are equally oppressed and thus hinder their work in spreading the teaching.

When we act thus and are not anxious about what we will eat and drink, neither need we pray, 'Give us this day our daily bread'. If we have the courage and the power to take the bread and meat and wine that are ours, we need ask no one for it. We will only pray when our weakness makes us feel the need to do so. Under communism our weakness will not make us feel the need to pray because every man will be assured that his needs will be met. Then we will not need to pray, 'Give us this day our daily bread'.

So stop being afraid. Your small means will not

achieve much any way. Do not be anxious who will employ you tomorrow. You will not go hungry except at your own free will. Do not worry about setting up house, let the achievement of the community of goods be our household. We do not want separate establishments but a common establishment. Let us not be anxious to get married. If we wait we save the marriage fees and need enter no relationship against our inclination.

Do not be anxious about the future, or your old age. Let each man who still has no grey hairs undertake to convert one of his fellow men every fortnight to the principle of community of goods before his grey hair comes. This is the best insurance for our old age, to reach our goal as quickly as possible. Let us not be anxious about any of these things but let us seek the kingdom of God and all this will be ours as well.

It is all so plain. We should not always be looking up at the sky when we talk of the kingdom of God. We must establish the kingdom of God upon earth. If we have not the courage to do something towards establishing this kingdom on earth, when there is so much to do, then let us not bother about establishing it in heaven either. For however we understand the kingdom, we know it can only be brought about by fulfilling the commandments of Christ.

Take courage, disinherited sinners. A beautiful kingdom is prepared for you. Look at the sloping fields, the trees laden with fruit, the fair streets and buildings, the ships on the sea, rivers and lakes, the roads and the railways, along which the products of every climate

come to be exchanged at lightning speed. Look at all the cattle in the meadows, the shops, the birds in the air, the fish in the water, the plants high in the Alps and the precious minerals under the earth, all this by God and by right is our common property. Let us claim it back from those who subject it to the strait-jacket of inheritance and the madhouse of personal property. They are deceived deceivers who have not the courage to give it up. They have received false coin and give false coin in return, some knowingly and some in ignorance.

As long as we have not the courage to ask for what is ours, no one will give it to us. So it is for us poor sinners to act.

As long as we are not afraid of the necessary sacrifices, and make use of them wisely and are united in how to use them, then the kingdom of God is near. Brothers, the meal is ready; the kindness of nature itself has richly decked our table.

The Lord (the power of the truth and true feeling) has sent out his servants (the preachers of true christianity). Many were invited but the firstcomers lost their courage when they saw that the room did not fill quickly, others took fright at the trouble and sacrifices necessary to our propoganda. They cared more about their personal interests than the common interest. 'I have a lot to do to support myself, pay my debts and keep up my place, I have all the expenses of marriage and children.' Many said this and turned back leaving the work to others. They have lost their reward for they do not know the reward of those who persevere to

the end. This reward is the supper which they will not taste.

Let us call *everybody* to the feast. Comrades, old friends, when I look at the sacrifices you have made and the offerings you have brought my heart overflows and I could weep for love and joy.

## 5 Revolutionary Propaganda

### (i) *Jesus has no respect for property*

It is easy to understand why. A man who was concerned with the good of the people and saw this good in the community of property and the abolition of private ownership, inheritance, laws and punishments, who said expressly that he had come to preach the gospel to the *poor*. Naturally he would have no respect for private ownership for it was what hindered the putting of his teaching into practice more than anything else; it had impoverished those people to whom he had come to preach. Every attack on the property of the rich by the poor would be at least excused by him and not condemned, because for one thing Jesus was against all human judgment and punishment.

Listen to what Jesus says about stealing:

Mt 5: 40. And if anyone would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well.

Now you christian property owners, christian lawyers and legal christians, what have you to say to this passage? And you poor sinners before you were communists didn't the reading of such passages confuse you? They can only be understood by those who have

given careful consideration to the solution of social problems, others will laugh at them or find them unbelievable.

I would like to speak more plainly: let us imagine a future in which our present monetary system was abolished and replaced by an exchange system in which cheating and stealing were impossible, and the things which were exchanged were valued by the time it had taken to produce them. No one could avoid the necessary work and no one could accumulate or inherit private property; every man could have the same as everyone else with the same small exertion. There would be nothing left to steal in such a situation, stealing would be impossible and people would laugh at the idea rather than become angry. If my shirt and boots were stolen I would be given others. There would be no point in stealing if the thief already had what I had, could not exchange his theft for money and still had to work for his daily needs. But while theft is still possible this shows that the society is not properly organised. We can test the society by asking whether theft is possible. In a good organisation of society theft should be allowed. The only guilty person would be the man who possessed something which not everyone had and excited the desire to steal in other people, and the society itself which had not legislated to prevent this possibility.

Anyone who is working for the principle of the community of goods will realise that as long as the people respect what has caused its sufferings, what has defrauded it surreptitiously of the fruits of its

labours, as long as the people respect private property nothing will change. Jesus did not say to the poor, 'go out and steal' because he knew that they often steal as unjustly as those who steal from them but he said to those who possessed things, 'do not complain when the poor man steals from you for he would not steal if he did not need to. If you did not possess more than he, he would not have been able to steal from you.' This is how we should read the following passage:

Lk 6: 30. Of him who takes away your goods do not ask for them again.

The christian has no right to punish the thief because as long as theft exists christianity is not realised among us. The christian has no right to force a man to give what he has stolen or been lent. But the christian may take from the man who has more possessions what he has stolen from the poor. For we are not now living in the kingdom of God but in a state of battle. We will only get out of this mess when the poor have become less ignorant and the rich more sensitive through the teaching of Christ.

There are very few who now see beyond their own private interests. Each family fends for itself and does not see that by combining their interests they would all benefit. They are blind like old Tobias. As long as the worker does not rebel against the man who lives for free off his labours and maintains a humble and begging attitude towards his masters who control his bread, he will not escape the evils of his condition. Preaching will not help for he has no time to listen to long sermons, and anyway we have no opportunity to



preach them. But something must be done. Let us therefore use the Gospel which is in every house as a manual for the poor and against the enemies of the poor. Let us begin to teach again with its help the christian doctrine. Let us proclaim that poverty must be overcome but not by almsgiving but the abolition of private property. Let us give the poor working man the conviction that he is of more value to society than his oppressor. Let us make him ready to do anything rather than beg to overcome his misery. He should not ask for the necessaries of life but take them.

Lk 11: 10. For everyone who asks takes (RSV receives) and he who seeks finds.

The same chapter contains the parable of the man whose friend comes at midnight to borrow three loaves. Jesus says that even if he is unwilling to get out of bed and give his friend the loaves, he will have to if the friend won't give over.

8. I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

Jesus tells a parable of a steward who was justly accused of wasting his master's goods. The master asked for a reckoning and the steward, seeing that he had been found out and would lose his post and his livelihood, thought of how to secure his future. While he was still in office he used his master's money to buy himself friends who would support him when he was dismissed. At the end of this parable Jesus says to his disciples:

Lk 16: 9. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves

by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations.

This justifies many actions which are now labelled unjust. As Jesus interprets the parable, it is right to use money and goods for the common benefit.

11. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches?

12. And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?

According to christian teaching nothing belongs to the individual which he has not himself produced or rather contributed to by his work when it was his duty to do so. If a man appropriates such products, that in biblical language is the unrighteous mammon.

14. The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this and they scoffed at him.

People will say that it is possible to read the bible in any way you please. True, you rich. It was a gospel of freedom, equality and love and you have made it a gospel of tyranny, servitude and deception. When you made your mistake, it was from personal interest. If I am mistaken it is for love of the common good. I do not hide my purpose but admit it openly. I have quoted the passages on which I have based my argument. The reader can examine them and come to his own conclusions. Faith is free and must be respected in other people, whatever its manifestations.

(ii) *Jesus preaches war*

Jn 18: 36. If my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight; but my kingship is not of this world.

This is what Jesus answered Pilate to the question are you the king of the Jews? The orthodox use this passage to transfer the goal of christianity into an ideal region and make the earthly serve the heavenly. Poverty and misery wait patiently for the hereafter and serve the interests of others here on earth.

We have already mentioned that people often put trick questions to Jesus in order to be able to accuse him, and how cleverly Jesus answered them and with what wisdom. Jesus in this case was on trial and the answer to the question was a matter of life and death. It could be objected that Jesus had already accepted a martyr's death but that does not mean that he did not want to delay it as long as possible for the good of his work. If he had only come to Jerusalem to die he would not have bothered to leave the city at night and hide in the garden. The words 'My kingdom is not of this world' are a cover for his teaching, 'for then would my servants fight but now my kingdom is not of this world'. The word *now* is most important. Now (because they do not come and fight) my kingdom is not of this world.

Jesus knew that his work could not be accomplished by preaching alone. He knew that the sword lay between the theory he taught and its realisation. But he was not afraid of this sword.

Lk 22: 35. When I sent you out with no purse or bag or sandals, did you lack anything? They said, 'Nothing.'  
36. He said to them, 'But now let him who has a purse take it, and likewise a bag. And let him who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one.'

These words justify resistance against the disorders of society, property, inheritance and the monetary system. Before this Jesus had told the apostles to take nothing with them, but he revokes this now because the situation has changed. He who has no sword should sell his mantle to buy one.

Now that Jesus saw his death before him and all the persecutions to come to suppress his teaching, he wanted to employ extreme measures against extreme dangers. So he who had a purse, that is to say property, should keep it, he who could get hold of one should do so, he who has none should sell the coat off his back and buy a sword. He who has no purse to pay for his daily needs should not suffer want but fight for them with the sword.

Jesus said of those who would reject the apostles:  
Mt 10: 15. It shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

But these towns had it bad enough. They were destroyed by fire and brimstone and no trace of them was left.

Lk 12: 49. I came to cast fire on the earth and would that it was already kindled.

51. Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you but rather division.

Mt 10: 34. Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace but a sword.

This is the revolutionary Jesus. He did not preach to the poor humility and renunciation above all things,

he did not merely promise them pie in the sky. He knew that oppressors could not be convinced by words alone. He saw that it would come to war and gave warning of it. He wanted peace if possible and war when it was inevitable.

## 6 Certain Truths in the Teaching of Jesus

These are truths which are necessary and always will be for the general good of mankind: mercy, sacrifice and love of enemies. The practice of these can be very different according to the circumstances. It must be appropriate to the demands of a developing society. Almsgiving is not a universal precept because in a christian communist state it would be impossible. Self-sacrifice in defence of one's country, nationality, etc, are not eternal precepts because under communism all peoples might be united and speak a common language. Religious reforms (clerical pay, clothing, laws, ceremonies, articles of faith and rules for priests) are not eternal truths because conditions change and maintenance of particular forms in these matters is never essential to the good of society.

The eternal truths of the teaching of Jesus were already taught before him:

Lev 19: 17. You shall not hate your brother in your heart.

18. You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself.

These last words are repeated as they stand in the new

testament. Solomon also teaches us to love our enemies: Prov 25: 21. If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty give him water to drink; 22. for you will heap coals of fire on his head.

We find what Jesus has to say about the false holiness of fasting in Is 58: 3-5. Isaiah also gives us christian doctrine in the following:

Is 58: 6. Is not this the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? 7. Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked to cover him, and not to hide from your own flesh?

Homer speaks of mercy and good works and the sacredness of hospitality in the *Odyssey* XIV 385-389, and further in XIV 400-406.

Antonius says (*de se ipso* I. VII 26): Take care that you do nothing despicable to your enemy. If he hates you, he is responsible for it; I want to behave well and be friendly with everybody.

Seneca in *de ira* I: 14 says that we should look on an enemy as a mistake which we should not hate but seek to correct.

John the Baptist who began his preaching before Jesus taught the same principle:

Lk 3: 10. And the multitudes asked him, 'What then shall we do?'

11. And he answered them, 'He who has two coats let him share with him who has none; and he who has food let him do likewise.'

I call the unknown cause which leads us to discover, test, and know the eternal and positive truths with both mind and heart, the spirit, or in the language of the bible, the Holy Spirit. Whoever speaks new or important truths speaks through the Holy Spirit, whoever by force or cunning gives out lies for the truth seeking to hinder the spread of the truth blasphemes against the Holy Spirit. If we want to make a biblical distinction between spirit and Holy Spirit, we may take 'spirit' for the concrete and 'Holy Spirit' for the abstract term, the former expressing individual spiritual activity and the latter referring to it as a universal. This Holy Spirit does not manifest itself in the activities of one person alone but of many. It can be present in anybody, in some more than others, and at all times, at some more than others. This Holy Spirit manifested itself in an amazing way in the work of Kepler, Copernicus, Newton, Bacon, Columbus, Gutenberg and others for the good of mankind, but even more amazingly in Jesus Christ. For his teaching always converts men to want the good of mankind in some way or other in spite of all perversions of it, whereas the work of the others is of purely intellectual value and could be put to the service of selfishness against the teaching of Christ. It is true that their discoveries have done more for humanity up till now than christianity has done. But that is because christianity has never yet been put into practice.

## ACTIONS

## I Jesus' Attacks upon Property

According to Mt 12: 1, Mk 2: 23, Lk 6: 1 Jesus and his disciples picked corn from the fields. Today christians would call this stealing and take action against it, imposing corporal punishment, imprisonment or fines.

According to Mt 8: 32, Lk 8: 32, and Mk 5: 13 Jesus allowed the devils to enter the herd of pigs and they plunged into the sea and were drowned. Mark gives their number at two thousand. The swineherds fled and the owners begged Jesus to leave the country. Nowadays not many christian property owners believe in the devil, but those who do still believe in him would not be pleased if he carried off their possessions with Jesus' permission. They would not merely beg a prophet who did such a thing to leave the country but arrest him and deliver him for judgment.

According to Mk 11: 2 Jesus told the disciples where they would find a colt tied up. They were to untie it and bring it to Jesus. It was probably tied up so that it would not run away. It must have been the owner who tied it up because he could not be there to look after it. If anyone asked the disciples why they were untying it, they were to say, 'The Lord has need



of it'. Everything happened as Jesus had said and he got the donkey. No one would give away a donkey like this nowadays, although when we compare the incident with that of the herd of pigs we are not surprised that Jesus got the donkey. After what he had done to the pigs it would have been more than dangerous for the owner of the donkey to refuse or oppose him. According to Mt 21 the disciples took the donkey and the donkey's colt and we are not told that the owner noticed them. Luke (19) does not tell us whether or not the owner was willing to part with his donkey.

If today anyone wants to ride a donkey belonging to his christian brother, he is arrested and condemned to transportation or death. Is that christian?

According to Mt 21: 12, Mk 11: 15, Lk 19: 45 and in particular Jn 2: 15 Jesus made a whip of cords and drove the traders and money changers out of the temple, scattering their gold and upsetting their tables. Shouldn't we imitate him in this? Haven't we sufficient cause to do so? There is plenty of business going on in and around our temples. Merchants and usurers have even begun to build their own temples to mammon in which they play games with the blood and the money of their christian brothers. We are accustomed to find this respectable, but is not this robbing the poor in a worse way than any of the actions which are called stealing under the law? Hypocrisy and deceit masquerade as morality, virtue and conscience. When will it all end? When we follow Jesus.

We also find in the old testament that the chosen people did not respect other people's property. When

Moses was commanded by God to lead the Jewish proletariat out of Egypt, he did not know where to get money for the long journey so God said to him:

Ex 3: 21. And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go you shall not go empty, but each woman shall ask of her neighbour, and of her who sojourns in her house, jewellery of silver and of gold, and clothing, and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters; thus you shall despoil the Egyptians.

That is to say, steal from the Egyptians. But who did these gold and silver vessels and these clothes really belong to? Were they not the product of the forced labour of the children of God, and so their property? And may a man not take back what belongs to him? Moses himself said, 'Thou shalt not steal'. But what were his presuppositions? What was his idea of property? He had much clearer ideas about it than our learned christian economists. He rejected entirely property rights over land. 'The earth is God's', he said. The earth is not a product of our labour and cannot therefore be anyone's property. We can only own what we produce from the earth by our own labour. Moses divided the promised land into equal parts for the families of the eleven tribes of the children of Israel. The families had an inalienable right to the land. The land could be confiscated but after fifty years (the jubilee year) it reverted to the family, without payment. It was with reference to this social structure that the just God commanded: Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, maidservant,

cattle, etc., and threatened severe sanctions. But he only did this after every child of God had been given the possibility of a human existence.

Moses was a barbarian and a nationalist. He did not know the christian principle of universal love. This is proved by his laws against strangers. But even with strangers he behaved more humanely and honourably than many of our christian statesmen. What would he say if he came back to earth purged of nationalism and saw the unholy mess made by our christian Israel? He would frown horribly and say, 'You speak my divine commandments but go against them every day. Do you call yourselves children of God? What has become of the inalienable right over the land of every child of God? Are we back in Egypt? Do I not see a great number of you condemned to forced labour for the rich and with nowhere to lay your head? Go away from me, you hypocrites.'

He would say something like that and he would be right. For the thoughtless way in which the bible is read today is going a bit too far. It looks like hypocrisy. Or have we really lost our understanding and our sense of justice?

Our modern property laws were drawn up originally by Roman jurists, the greatest rogues and babblers under the sun and they are as great a shock to the law of Moses as a clenched fist in your eye.

## 2 He Went About with Sinners

All the gospels agree that Jesus sought the company

of the poor and the despised. He performed his miracles especially for them, he thought them fit to be in charge of the founding of the kingdom, he hoped that their experiences, their courage born of suffering, their endurance, their hatred of property and privilege would enable them to succeed in the work.

Customs change with the times. Even at the end of the last century dances and various sorts of entertainers were regarded as disrespectable. People avoided their company as today a young girl from one of our schools would avoid the company of prostitutes. This was true of the last century and perhaps some of the prejudices remain, at least I have sometimes heard them expressed. This was the attitude of the Jews at the time of Christ to publicans and Gentiles.

All the people that today we call wicked, outcast, debauched, immoral, common, etc, were called in those days plain sinners. These publicans and sinners who were despised by all were the very people sought out by Jesus and he ate and drank with them.

Mt 9: 10. And as he sat at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples.

11. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your master eat with tax collectors and sinners?'

12. But when he heard it, he said, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

13. Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." For I came not to call the righteous but sinners.'

Jesus sat at table in a Pharisee's house, when a woman came to him, knelt at his feet, washed and anointed them and wiped them with her hair. This woman was Mary Magdalene who was known in the town as a sinner. The Pharisee saw it happen and said: Lk 7: 39. 'If this man were a prophet he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.'

40. And Jesus answering said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' And he answered, 'What is it Teacher?'

41. 'A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii and the other fifty.'

42. When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?'

43. Simon answered, 'the one, I suppose, to whom he forgave more'. And he said to him, 'You have judged rightly.'

Jesus describes how the woman has shown her love for him and concludes:

47. Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.

Jesus forgave her sins and took her under his protection. He forgave the woman taken in adultery. According to the law of Moses she was guilty of death. Jesus was brought up to regard this as the law of God and the death penalty could not be gainsaid. They were trying to corner him.

Jn 8: 7. Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.

11. Neither do I condemn you; go and do not sin again.

In Luke 19 Jesus enters the house of Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector.

7. And when they saw it they all murmured, 'He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.'

Although this tax collector gave half his goods to the poor and if he had wronged a man he restored it four-fold the people still called him a sinner because his office required him to rob the people and he could only give back what he had gained by robbery.

Lk 7: 34. The Son of man has come eating and drinking; and you say, 'Behold a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'

Jesus Christ was not an obscurantist or a bigot or a creep, he was a man full of feeling, capable of joy and pain who found as much joy as he could in his short and difficult life without losing sight of his goal. Despite the world's condemnation he ate with sinners. Those who had sinned greatly could be forgiven much and love greatly. When the guests were already drunk at the wedding feast of Cana Jesus changed water into wine. At a passover feast he took leave of his disciples and the world and commanded his followers to eat this love feast in his memory.

### 3 Jesus Went About with Sinful Women and was Supported by Them

Lk 8: 1. Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him,

2. and also some women who had been healed of evil

spirits and infirmities: Mary called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out . . .

This Mary is the sister of Martha and Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead. John tells us (11: 5) that he loved this family and he sometimes stayed with them.

This Mary had anointed his feet with precious ointment, and was called a sinner by the Pharisee, which Jesus did not deny. Furthermore we are told that seven demons and not just one had to be cast out of her. Yet she went about the country with Jesus and his disciples.

8: 3. and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

It appears that Joanna had left her husband to follow the apostles. At any rate it is certain that several women went about with Jesus and provided for him. We also have the following passage:

Lk 23: 49. And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance and saw these things.

Mk 15: 40. There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome,

41. who when he was in Galilee, followed him and ministered to him.

'Ministered', of course, means supported him. Paul states clearly that women were allowed to travel with the apostles and in fact did so.

1 Cor 9: 5. Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? (See Acts 16: 13, 15, 40.)

Prostitutes and tax collectors also went to hear the preaching of John the Baptist and they were the ones who had most faith in him. Mt 21: 32.

Let us take Jesus as an example in our battle between reason and passion, enlightenment and prejudice. Woman, he forgave you many things. When you had committed adultery he forgave you even though the law of the land condemned you to death. You wiped his feet with your hair as a sign of repentance and went about with him and his disciples. He promised a Samaritan woman living with a man out of wedlock, water of eternal life and no more thirst if she drank it. He forgave much and therefore must have loved much.

Brothers and sisters, when prejudice regards our love with contempt, do not be dismayed. Let our good feelings and the harmony of our faculties be the test by which love is judged. Let us be chaste and loving but let us not despise any of our brothers and sisters. If you are father or mother to an illegitimate child, do not be ashamed. If you are persecuted, if the priest and the dignitaries refuse you their blessing, think of us. We poor sinners will not despise you, least of all when you are despised by our oppressors.\*

At least you have not bought yourself a husband or a wife with money. You received freely what they had to

\* Translator's note. The above paragraph condenses a longer passage in the German.



buy, what they had to sell you gave freely and lovingly away.

Do not fear for your child. It will grow up in a better, purer and more loving society. As for you hypocritical and envious world, take an example from Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Be chaste as they were, but love and enjoy yourselves as they did. If your friend makes a mistake do not cast the first stone, or you yourselves may have stones thrown at you tomorrow. For we all make mistakes. The bible says that even the just man falls seventy times a day, but the christian should forgive his brother seventy-seven times and do good to his enemies. We must come closer to this ideal and get rid of the prejudices which stand in the way of loving. We must welcome the Samaritan woman and the repentant Mary Magdalene and forgive the woman taken in adultery.

#### 4 The Apostles' Daily Bread

A short time ago the English government sent out a well-paid commission to enquire into the living conditions of the poorest classes. The commissioner had the nerve to report that a grown man could live on 2s. 6d. a week, which was less than he spent on his breakfast. Of course it is possible to live on 2s. 6d. a week without dying of hunger. Even priests could live on this, and much more easily than people who are exhausted by hard labour. And of course this is what priests should live on as long as there are millions of other christians who have to, so long as there are

christians living among christians in such poverty. But the priests are not such fools. The income of the church is ten million pounds, which would give eight hundred thousand people 2s. 6d. a week. But this ten million is shared between a mere thirty thousand. And what do they teach the people to earn it? Things which they themselves do not understand. Feelings which they do not share and whose relation to reason they disguise in the interests of the false rich christians. They speak for mammon, because mammon gives them their offices and promotion. Do you think they believe what they teach you? They are not so stupid. From time to time men have arisen with doctrines for the good of mankind, they entrusted their doctrine to others, but the people have always been deceived in these rulers and teachers whenever these rulers and teachers were better off than they were. We cannot trust rulers and teachers who make such a good living. A man can only be trusted with the teaching and welfare of others if he himself is short of the necessities of life and his future is threatened by poverty or at least is not assured. He must be prepared to seek improvement in his living conditions by the improvement in the living conditions of everyone else.

The bible is not lacking in examples but what use are they when priests have sold out to the rich and powerful? Our priests are fully aware of this, but they do not want to be, it is not safe for them to be aware. They know that the apostles lived by the work of their hands, and that when later they were supported this was not in order that they should live a life of luxury at

the cost of a weekly sermon. See 1 Cor 4: 12; 9: 1-15; 2 Cor 11: 7-9; Acts 20: 33-35; Phil 4: 10, 14; 1 Thess 2: 9; 2 Thess 3: 8-12. (Paul was a tentmaker, Acts 18: 3.)

Under communism all people will have the same resources for bringing up their children and for their own development. Mental work will not be confined to a small class, an unpleasant and unhealthy state of affairs, but every man will do some mental and some physical work. Mental work would be impossible for most people now because they are exhausted by a twelve- to fourteen-hour working day. But when work is organised rationally with full use of machinery, the working day will be scarcely five hours, and this will leave everyone time for other things such as writing and study. Some of the people who spend all their time writing at the moment produce such rubbish that it would be better for them and their readers if they spent five hours a day at some useful work. Only outstanding geniuses should devote all their time to intellectual work, and not as happens now be wasted in getting together enough to live on which leaves them little time for anything else.

## INTERPRETATIONS

## I Trick Questions

(i) *Marriage*

The woman was less free under mosaic law than under ours. A man could divorce his wife when he wanted to. He did not have to provide a reason, except that she no longer pleased him (Deut 22). He had only to give her a writ of divorce. The woman did not have the same right. In many respects she was the slave of her master. This injustice was against the principle of Jesus but a radical change was not possible before the abolition of property. It was not a case of simply limiting the rights of the husband for that would merely change things without improving them. It was a case of giving the woman equal rights with the man. This was only possible through the abolition of property and first it was necessary to do away with the prejudices of the Jews who were accustomed to the subjection of women. But this was not the right way to go about things. The thing to do was to *undermine* the prejudices and particularly the basic prejudices upon which the rest depended, and if necessary to suffer the others in silence as long as this was not acting against the principle. The Pharisees were aware of this and led the

discussion in this direction precisely in order to catch Jesus out. Our lawyers are particularly fond of such trick questions today. One must be careful to answer neither 'yes' or 'no' or one will be caught out. Furthermore if one has proposed a principle one must be careful not to go against it in one's answer.

Mt 19: 3. And the Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, 'Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?'

If Jesus had answered 'yes', this would have been in contempt of his principle. But if he had answered 'no', as they expected, they could have got him for preaching against the law.

Jesus took two passages from the bible for his answer, Gen 1: 27 and 2: 24, which are against Moses' divorce law, but he was careful not to say that Moses was wrong, he merely described a mosaic divorce as adultery, and thus stated his position without playing into their hands.

### (ii) *The Baptism of John*

The fame of Jesus' miracles was spreading. The high priests and the elders came to him and asked:

Mt 21: 23. 'By what authority are you doing these things and who gave you this authority?'

If Jesus had answered 'God', they could have denounced him as a blasphemer, but if he had answered that his authority was from men, people would have lost their trust in him, and the Pharisees could have accused him of working miracles by the power of the devil. Jesus answered:

24. 'I also will ask you a question; and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things.

25. The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven or from men?' And they argued with one another, 'If we say "From heaven" he will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him?" But if we say "From men", we are afraid of the multitude; for all hold that John was a prophet.'

27. So they answered Jesus, 'We do not know.' And he said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.' (See also Mk 11: 27-33; Lk 20: 1-8.)

(iii) *Tribute to Caesar*

Mt 22: 15. Then the Pharisees went and took counsel how to entangle him in his talk.

16. And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are true, and teach the way of God truthfully, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men.

17. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?'

18. But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, 'Why put me to the test, you hypocrites?'

19. Show me the money for the tax.' And they brought him a coin.

20. And Jesus said to them, 'Whose likeness and inscription is this?'

21. They said, 'Caesar's.' Then he said to them, 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.'

If Jesus had said 'yes it is right to pay tribute to Caesar', the people would have turned against him, for they resented the rule of Rome almost as much as today the Irish resent the English. If Jesus had said 'no', they could have accused him of rebelling against Caesar. (See also Mk 12: 13-17; Lk 20: 22-26.)

(iv) *The woman taken in adultery*

Jn 8: 3. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst,

4. they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery.

5. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?'

6. This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.

7. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, 'Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.'

8. And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.

9. But when they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.

10. Jesus looked up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?'

11. She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and do not sin again.'

Why did Jesus spend so long writing with his finger

on the ground that they had to repeat their question? Probably to gain time before he answered. This time he did not have the right word ready quite so quickly. He also wrote after he had given his answer, because it was still possible that they would stone her or ask him another question to explain his answer.

It is rather unlikely that the scribes were to hand immediately after the act of adultery and immediately conceived the plan to use it to test Jesus. It would also have been a lucky chance that Jesus was in the temple at the time. More probably this woman agreed with the Pharisees to play the role of adulteress, and so also to test whether Jesus knew the true situation or not. If she had really been an adulteress it is unlikely that they would have gone out one after the other and foregone the stoning. Probably they had agreed to leave the woman alone with Jesus. If not, it is very strange that they all went out. But Jesus' answer brought their plans to nothing for they hoped he would contradict the law of Moses.

Jesus' answer contains rather more sophistry in the following encounter:

(v) *The resurrection*

Mt 22: 23. The same day the Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection; and they asked him a question, saying, 'Teacher, Moses said, "If a man dies, having no children, his brother must marry the widow, and raise up children for his brother."'

25. Now there were seven brothers among us; the first



married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother.

26. So too the second and third, down to the seventh.

27. After them all the woman died.

28. In the resurrection, therefore, to which of the seven will she be the wife? For they all had her.'

29. But Jesus answered them, 'You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God.

30. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.'

This answers the question in its own terms but proves nothing. Jesus continued:

31. 'And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God,

32. I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.'

Jesus is quoting Ex 3: 6. Of course these words really have no bearing on the resurrection. The conclusion that God is not the God of the dead is not a proof; it needs proof itself and explanation too.

(vi) *Son of David*

Mt 22: 41. Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question,

42. saying, 'What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?' They said to him, 'The son of David.'

43. He said to them, 'How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,

44. "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, till I put thy enemies under thy feet"?

45. If David calls him Lord, how is he his son?’

46. And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did any one dare to ask him any more questions.

The quotation is from Psalm 110. Anyone reading the psalm through might well ask if the prophecy, if it is meant to be a prophecy, is in accordance with the teaching of Jesus. I do not think so, neither do I think the quotation of it proves anything. The sort of proof given by Jesus would not be acceptable to thinking people today. The quotation and the whole psalm is so unpleasant, that anyone writing now would be ashamed to write such a thing. It is a pure expression of vicious hatred for enemies, and the barbarism of the Jews of the time.

## 2 Parables

### (i) *The sower*

Mt 13: 3. A sower went out to sow.

4. And as he sowed some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them.

5. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they had not much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil,

6. but when the sun rose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away.

7. Other seeds fell upon thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.

8. Other seeds fell upon good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty.

Jesus explains the parable:

19. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart: this is what was sown along the path.

20. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;

21. yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.

22. As for what was sown among thorns, this is he who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the delight in riches choke the word and it proves unfruitful.

23. As for what was sown on good soil, this is he who hears the word and understands it; he indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.

See also Mk 4 and Lk 8. If Jesus had always explained himself as well as he does here and intermingled less mystery in his teaching, all distortions of the christian teaching would have been much more difficult.

In this parable 'kingdom of heaven' means the best kingdom, the best society. If it does not mean this what else could it mean? In the following parables, however, which begin, 'the kingdom of heaven is like . . .', the reader will realise that he must read. 'The propaganda for the kingdom of heaven is like. . . .'

(ii) *The weeds*

Mt 13: 24. The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field;

25. But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.

26. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also.

27. And the servants of the householder came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds?'

28. He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.'

29. The servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?'

29. But he said, 'No; lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them.

30. Let both grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'

Jesus explains the parable:

38. The field is the world and the good seed means the sons of the kingdom; the weeds are the sons of the evil one,

39. and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the close of the age and the reapers are angels.

This interpretation depends upon a belief in the last judgment. For one who does not believe in the last judgment, the interpretation is more obscure than the parable it is meant to explain.

(iii) *Mustard seed*

Mt 13: 31. The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field;

32. it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown

it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches. (Mk 4: 31, 32.)

(iv) *The leaven*

Mt 13: 33. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.

We understand that when some people are convinced of a doctrine which is new to everyone else, as they go about among others they will find converts to the doctrine, until everyone is converted. We see that Jesus means teaching by 'leaven' from Mt 16:

6. Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

12. Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

(v) *The treasure*

Mt 13: 44. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

The field is the world (society), the hidden treasure is the secret doctrine which must be carefully guarded against its powerful enemies so that it will not be destroyed at the beginning. Someone found this treasure, that is someone accepted this doctrine and kept it hidden. He did not speak about what had to remain silent at the time. He sold all that he had. He

shared all his goods and renounced everything. He bought the field, won converts by propaganda.

(vi) *The pearl*

Mt 13: 45. Again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls,

46. who on finding one pearl of great value, went out and sold all that he had and bought it.

The merchant is a man seeking the truth. Good pearls are good doctrines. He sold all that he had to buy the best pearl, that is to embrace the best doctrine.

(vii) *The net*

Mt 13: 47. The kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind;

48. when it was full men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad.

Many will be won by propaganda but they will not all be good men. Some will have to be rejected so that their rottenness will not corrupt the others. The net is propaganda, the sea is society. When the preaching begins to be successful, the converts will have to be sorted out, according to their behaviour.

(viii) *Equal rewards*

Mt 20: 1. The kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard.

2. After agreeing with the labourers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the market place;

4. and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went.

5. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour he did the same.

6. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing; and he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?'

7. They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.'

8. And when the evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the labourers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last up to the first.'

9. And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius.

10. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them received a denarius.

11. And on receiving it they grumbled at the householder,

12. saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.'

13. But he replied to one of them, 'Friend I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?'

14. Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last as I give to you.

15. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?'

16. So the last will be first and the first last.

Whatever we do to bring about the kingdom of God we cannot expect material advantages over those who have done or suffered less. Even our enemies will benefit as much as we. Whatever a man does for true christianity, whatever he does for his own welfare, he must do for the welfare of all. Christianity knows no privileges.

(ix) *The rebellious tenants*

Mt 21: 33. There was a householder who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge around it, and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to tenants, and went into another country.

34. When the season of the fruits drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants, to get his fruit;

35. and the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another and stoned another.

36. Again he sent other servants, more than the first; and they did the same to them.

37. Afterwards he sent his son to them, saying 'They will respect my son.'

38. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.'

39. And they took him and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

40. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?'

41. They said to him, 'He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.'



42. Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures, "The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes?"'

43. Therefore I tell you the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.'

(See also Mk 12: 4; Lk 20: 9.)

The householder is God, the vineyard is mankind, the tenants are the people of God, the servants are the prophets, the son is Jesus. All the authorities (the teachers and rulers of the people) reject him, his doctrine will remain the foundation of human happiness.

(x) *Ten maidens*

Mt 25: 1. Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten maidens who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

2. Five of them were foolish, they took no oil with them, and five were wise.

3. For when the foolish took their lamps they took no oil with them;

4. but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.

5. As the bridegroom was delayed they all slumbered and slept.

6. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Behold the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'

7. Then all those maidens rose and trimmed their lamps.

8. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil for our lamps are going out.'

9. But the wise replied, 'Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the merchants and buy for yourselves.'

10. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut.

11. Afterward the other maidens came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.'

12. But he replied, 'Truly I say to you I do not know you.'

13. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

The bridegroom is the kingdom of God, the ten maidens are all those who work for the kingdom of God, the lamps are propaganda, the oil are the material means which are necessary for the propaganda and for the putting of the teaching into practice. The cry at midnight is the unexpected revolution which the propagandists must go out to meet. Trimming their lamps is calling people to the kingdom of God. Foolish propagandists are those who are not ready for a revolution when it comes suddenly, they let their opportunity slip by them and the power falls to those who are better prepared, as for example happened in the 1830 revolution in France. If a couple of hundred men had gone to the national assembly on July 28th to demand their human rights from the 213 deputies, they would have won and Louis Philippe would not have become king, for the whole aristocracy of Europe trembled at that moment before the will of the people. The elector of Hesse was addressed as *Du* by one of his officials and

was forced to dance with him round a fire in the castle square which was burning some of his legislation. The crown Prince of Saxony (now the king) rode among his rebellious people weeping and asking them about their hardships and promising to help them. The whole ancient slavery of Europe was shaken. The lords and slave-drivers could have been crippled. But no one knew what to do, or no one appeared who knew what to do in the interests of all.

Having no oil is to lack the minimum material necessities for action. At the moment when they are wanted, it is often impossible to lay hold of them, for speed is essential at the time. We must therefore study the nature of communism and the means necessary to attain it.

(xi) *The talents*

Mt 25: 14. The kingdom of heaven is like a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted to them his property;

15. to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

16. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them; and he made five talents more.

17. So too he who had the two talents made two talents more.

18. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money.

19. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

20. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.'

21. His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.'

22. And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.'

23. His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.'

24. He also who had received the one talent came forward saying, 'Master I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow;

25. so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.'

26. But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed?

27. Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest.

28. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has ten talents.

29. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

The man who went on a journey is Christ. His goods

are his teaching; the talents are spiritual gifts; the understanding of the teaching, increasing the talents is the increase of spiritual gifts; burying the talent is to occupy the understanding with base things, sensual satisfaction to the neglect of the propaganda. Burying the talent also means failing to use means with which one has been entrusted for the spread of the propaganda and the making a reality of the kingdom of God. These means should be entrusted to persons who can show that they will put them to good use. Persons who do not understand the teaching aright should not be entrusted with the means of propaganda. A man of understanding will be enriched by the teaching; a man of no understanding will merely be confused.

(xii) *The supper*

Lk 14: 16. A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many;

17. and at the time of the banquet he sent his servants to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for all is now ready.'

18. But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.'

19. And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you have me excused.'

20. And another said, 'I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come.'

21. So the servant came and reported this to his master. Then the householder in anger said to his servant, 'Go

out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.'

22. And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'

23. And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.'

24. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'

The householder is Jesus, who proclaims the teaching; the servant is his disciples. The invitation to the supper is the call to accept the teaching of the kingdom of God and do something for it. The first to be invited refused to accept for reasons of business. When they proved unsympathetic it was decided to preach the doctrine to all without exception, even to those whose company one would not otherwise seek. These, continues the parables, are the ones who came and sat down to supper. Those who were first invited will not taste the supper, they will not be glad at the progress and the arrival of the kingdom of God, because they did nothing for it. Their consciences will reproach them and they will be ashamed at the cries of victory. These twelve parables are all concerned with the spread of the teaching and the necessary sacrifices involved. The following parables are concerned with reconciliation and love of enemies.

(xiii) *The lost sheep*

Lk 15: 4. What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-

nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which was lost until he finds it?

5. And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing.

6. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbours, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.'

7. Even so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous who need no repentance.

(xiv) *The lost coin*

8. Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?

9. And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours saying, 'Rejoice with me for I have found the coin which I had lost.'

9. Even so I tell you there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

(xv) *The prodigal son*

11. There was a man who had two sons;

12. and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property which falls to me.' And he divided his living between them.

13. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living.

14. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want.

15. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything.

17. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare but I perish here with hunger!

18. I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father I have sinned against heaven and before you;

19. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.'

20. And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

21. And the son said to him, 'Father I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22. But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet;

23. and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry;

24. for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

25. Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house he heard music and dancing.

26. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant.

27. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and



your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.'

28. But he was angry and refused to go in. His father went out and entreated him,

29. But he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.

30. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!'

31. And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

32. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost and is found.'

Although everyone knows the parable of the prodigal son, I have quoted it in full, because it is particularly clear and teaches a morality which is completely disregarded today without anyone being aware that they are going against christian teaching. I have quoted it in full in the hope that the reader will pay more attention to it this time. It needs no explanation. Christ wishes us to forgive the prodigal, the sinner, the enemy. But we are not happy about this forgiveness. We would say of a father who behaved in this way that he spoilt his children and was himself responsible for their failings. No one would blame and many would praise the attitude of the elder brother. No one would approve and and very few would sympathise with the behaviour of the younger. Why? Because the christianity we see

around us is a lie, and a true christianity can only be established when self-interest has been overcome. Even the theory of christianity has become a lie. It is defended in the name of self-interest. This is a perversion of the truth.

(xvi) *The wicked servant*

Mt 18: 23. The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.

24. When he began the reckoning one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents,

25. and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had and payment to be made.

26. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Lord have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'

27. And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

28. But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.'

29. So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, 'Have patience with me and I will pay you.'

30. He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt.

31. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place.

32. Then the lord summoned him and said to him,

'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me;

33. and should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'

34. And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt.

35. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

We see here, too, that it is God not man who judges, God not man who will punish. Our modern jurisprudence spins a thousand sophistries to entangle our brothers in Christ and suck their money and blood. They invent a thousand crimes and punishments but they do not punish a man like the servant in the parable; they do not even regard his action as criminal. He is perfectly within his rights and blameless. We have many heartless servants like this among us but very few such merciful masters.

## GENERAL CHRISTIAN MORALITY

Whatever you do not want a man to do to you, do not do to him, if he would not like it or it would not do him good.

Whatever you would like others to do to you, do that to them, if they would like it and it would not hurt anyone else.

These words give us a guideline in practical christianity. But now we are not living in a state of practical christianity, and where everything is ordered in such an unchristian way, no rule can be without exceptions.

We do not like being deprived of money, for example, by a bankruptcy. But it is often not possible for us to avoid depriving people of money by our own bankruptcy. We want someone to support us, invite us to share in some action, defend us, etc, but we are often not in a position to do this for others.

Often when in several cases the social relations are the same, the result is still different because the personal relations are different. The same blow aimed against a cheerful or a gloomy person will produce very different results.

People's past experiences will also affect their reactions. A man who has often been deceived will be distrustful and difficult. A man whom the truth has often

endangered is more likely to be a liar. The person, the environment, even the style of language all make a difference as to whether a word has a good or a bad effect. A sultan had a dream and ordered the interpreter to tell him what it meant. 'You will see all your relations die', he said. The sultan ordered him to be given a hundred lashes and sent for another interpreter. 'Allah be praised; you will survive all your relations', said he and received a hundred golden pieces. A German minister had said something to displease the prince. He was dismissed. A fool said the same thing to the prince, which made the prince think of something else, and he did nothing to harm the fool and recalled the minister.

We often despise someone for a wrong action which we think has been proved in every detail until we discover later that it was all a mistake and feel ashamed of ourselves. The lawyers have innumerable cases filed away where mistakes were made and the truth was buried by a death. No one brings these cases to light for fear of putting the law to shame. If we offer a friend in need a shilling we take more pleasure in it than if we had lent it to him when he asked. If we help out a friend and others know what we have done, our loan may do him harm when we are compelled to ask for it back. What the christian lends he should regard as a gift. But if on the other hand a friend asks us to give back what he has lent, if he makes his loan public or refuses to help us, can we be certain that he had evil motives in doing so? Must we always suspect the worst? Should we not seek excuses for our friend?

The human heart is very complicated, full of positive and negative feelings which only come under the control of reason after they have had their first effects; they are very difficult to control because they constantly take new forms.

But nevertheless we must work for the establishment of practical christianity, and in our judgments of others we must not forget that christianity means the community of goods, that is to say the freedom, joys and sufferings of all. Those who oppose this must be regarded as the enemies of christianity and all good christians should unite against them.

We should not forget that these enemies will try to put every possible obstacle in our way. They do not give us the option of loving them as brothers; they do not want to be loved as brothers but as masters. But that is against our principle. Should we then love them as enemies? Yes. As soon as we have got the better of them they will benefit as much as we. We will neither judge them nor punish them. But for the moment we must not forget that they are our enemies. When we realise this we will endeavour to cultivate the following qualities.

*Moderation*, which includes chastity, thrift, etc. An old saying tells us that 'covetousness is the root of all evil'. Let us say rather, immoderation is the root of all evil, for pride, envy, gluttony, unchastity are not necessarily caused by covetousness; it is lack of moderation in the broadest sense of the word which is the cause of every disorder in human desires and faculties. It may affect the mind or the body and harm the individual

only or others as well. I prefer to call it a sickness rather than sin, crime or transgression. Health is the harmony of the individual with himself and of all members of society with one another. Disturbance of this harmony is sickness. The law imposes moderation, and the health of a society or an individual can be discerned from their constitution.

A badly surfaced road is better than no road at all. But if one wants to put a good surface on the road one must tear up the old surface. Likewise our society is probably better than in the middle ages, but we need an even better one. We will need a period of horrible disorder before it can be established, but should this make us afraid to attempt the transformation and sit still and do nothing?

*Patience.* In spite of all the setbacks we experience we must not give up the struggle to put real christianity into practice. Endurance is what gives generals and diplomats their victories. We must not despair when we make only small advances and the future we want seems even further away. We must not lose our courage when our friends desert us and even those that remain are losing their enthusiasm. We must not lose courage, we must hold out and in the end things will begin to look different if our cause is true. The most severe trials to our patience will come from our own brothers. Let us make it a rule not to answer anyone back or write letters when we are in a bad temper. Let us remember to regard others who have lost their temper as sick men who for the moment are not masters of themselves, and then we will not be aggrieved. Later he will regret his

behaviour and we will be glad of ours, even if he was rude and cruel to us. Should we have the same patience with those who hinder the establishment of true christianity because they want to keep their privileges? Only for as long as it is strategically necessary.

*Faithfulness* to friend and enemy when it is a matter of fulfilling duties freely undertaken. The world must have more faith in our word than in the word of kings and clerics; we must be punctilious in keeping it. We will not despise or avoid the thief, but only the man who breaks his word with evil intentions. Must we then be faithful in everything? Not in those things where a promise has been exacted from us against our will. When we have made a promise we must do our best to keep it, but since no one can guarantee his future thoughts and feelings we must be careful not to promise things which for various reasons we may be unable to do.

*Honesty* in all our dealings. This may not always be possible in all our dealings with the enemies of christianity or they will put us in prison or impose fines on us. If it is useful to the cause to avoid these punishments we may make an exception in our rule of honesty, but we may never make an exception in order to harm others.

*Modesty.* This quality appears at first sight to have little to do with our cause. But if we consider more carefully we realise that it is of the greatest importance. For the greatest hindrance to any movement is the disharmony of its members who are jealous or envious of each other. The less we boast of our worth and the



better we co-operate with others, the better we will promote the good of the cause and harmony among the comrades. This is the modesty we must practise for the sake of unity in the movement, but we need not behave modestly when our rights are threatened.

*Goodwill.* We must show goodwill towards everyone we can. However, the oppressed cannot show goodwill towards their oppressors. They would only call it obedience, good service, etc, and this is not what we want.

*Mercy* for the unfortunate, always. This is a beautiful and christian quality but not always a possible one. The merciless great men of this earth have appropriated the goods of millions of their christian brothers, and are only willing to feed them enough to make them capable of working, reducing them to the depths of misery. These unfortunates are the ones who cry loudest for our mercy. But we ourselves have barely the necessaries of life and would lose even this if we gave it away to those who are in greater want than we. Let us not give to those who beg from us but tell him to take from the rich. Jesus did not say 'he who asks, gets,' but 'he who asks, takes'. The rich who are responsible for the existence of the very poor hardly ever come into contact with them, and we should do everything we can to bring these two extremes together. To every poor man who asks for my help I say, Go to the rich. Often I say more than that but he looks bewildered and does not seem to understand me. If we want to make sacrifices, let it be for the spread of our cause. We can help the poor better in this way than by giving them money to

fill their stomachs, and for this we should send them to others. This is the voice of reason. But in these situations it is not often reason which decides, feelings are stronger and it is difficult to decide which we want to win most.

*Silence.* If you can save yourself by a lie, you are free to do so. Apart from this, let everything that passes our lips be the truth but let not everything that is the truth pass our lips. Be cunning as serpents and innocent as doves.

All the virtues connected with the notion of property are derived from the law of Moses. Four of the commandments are based on this notion but we find no trace of it in the teaching of Christ. When christianity has been put into practice these commandments will lose their meaning in relation to private property, for there won't be any private property. At the moment they protect property and it is not for us to practise them except in the interests of the poor against the rich, the weak against the oppressor, the industrious against the idle, the hungry against the full, the useful labourer against the useless.

A distinction is made between sins in the new testament. One kind can be forgiven, the other can never be forgiven. These are the sins against the Holy Ghost (Mt 12: 32) and sins unto death (1 Jn 5: 16, 17). The first are the sins of immoderation, the second the sins of falsehood. The christian should try to avoid both. His health can be harmed by immoderation, by a disorderly life, impurity, overwork, idleness, jealousy, anger, etc. Or another man's health can be harmed by

encouraging or compelling him to behave in these ways. Lies, deceit, intrigues to damage another man's life, livelihood, good name, progress, etc, is falsehood.

Falsehood must be avoided except when its purpose is to establish equality and without evil and selfish intentions. In this case it could even be a virtue, if it serves the establishment of true christianity. Except in this case it is a sin to damage another man's property through false dealing. We should attack property openly not by falsehood and intrigue. These are the means used by our enemies to appropriate most of the property belonging to society to themselves and deprive everyone else of it. We do not want to imitate them. I have no sympathy for the secret thief or the house thief, but when I read of a bold robber who does his deeds in the open, my heart pounds with joy.

Falsehood is unforgiveable and he who commits it must be banned from the community as soon as his sin is discovered. At least this is necessary at the moment to maintain unity of propaganda. Why can a liar not be forgiven? Or course he is forgiven in that he is not given a painful punishment, but he is punished even more severely by the fact that no one trusts him any more, and he cannot consider himself to be a man worthy of other people's trust. He bans himself when his falsehood is discovered and is no longer regarded as a comrade in the movement. For who will trust him a second time? Even if he is often forgiven and allowed to remain in the community, he is still morally excluded in so far as he is not trusted.

In short these are the rules to follow during the time of propaganda:

1. If you are in a temper do not answer back at the time. Wait. Keep silence or go away if you are not in control of yourself. At the time you may feel that keeping silent is shameful, but if you keep control of yourself you will be very glad you did the following day. You will not have made an enemy of your opponent, perhaps you will have forgiven him and in any case the witnesses of the scene will sympathise with you. In any case you will have gained more and lost less than if you had spoken.

2. Be especially careful not to write to anyone when you are angry, but make it a rule not to send a letter you wrote in a state of excitement for at least twenty-four hours and then read it through again. Remember that you can make up for a word spoken in anger by your behaviour and it will quickly be forgotten, but a written word always remains as a permanent source of resentment or remembrance of your weakness in the hands of your opponent.

3. If you have to tell someone off, do it quietly and in private.

4. Do not make the fault public unless it is a case of falsehood. In this case what you tell your friends should take this form: 'Dear brothers, I am very distressed on account of N. I beg you to set my mind at rest and to justify our brother. This is what happened.'

5. If one of your friends is broke, do not forget to take him with you to the public house or to invite him to dinner if you are cooking on a Sunday. Even if there is nothing else you can do for him, do this at least.

6. If you lend anything do not expect to get it back.
7. If you borrow from anyone, remind him often of the sum as a proof that you have not forgotten the loan.
8. Beware of borrowing too much from close friends. Try and unload some of your poverty on to our enemies, so that the movement will not be impoverished.
9. If you suspect that your friend is in trouble, offer him help.
10. Greet people more politely the poorer they appear.
11. Do not stop or betray anyone who is running away.
12. Regard disordered passion as a sickness and the criminal as a sick man, the liar as sick in the brain, the intemperate as emotionally sick. Do not despise him.

I read through these twelve rules again and have to confess that I fall short in all of them. I am especially weak still in numbers one and two. I am going to write them down and put them up in my room so that I will be ashamed when my friends see me still failing in them.

## ORGANISATION OF PROPAGANDA

Brothers and sisters! I hope the truths I have expounded in this little book will satisfy your hearts and minds. The machinations of our enemies to prevent its publications encourage me to think so. If it was money I wanted, I could have sold the manuscript for a hundred pounds sterling; I had more than one offer for it but then it probably would not have been published. Fortunately I found friends who were willing to print it at their own expense and this made it possible to distribute it cheaply among the people. If it makes a good impression on you, do not let that come to nothing.

Make a small sacrifice of time and money for the cause. Pass the book round among your neighbours, and from town to village, and listen to what others say about it. Before I have heard your opinion, I make the following suggestions:

1. Let every man who has understood the truth of the gospel of Christ undertake to engage others of like mind in the common project.
2. Let this group of likeminded people agree to meet at least once a fortnight for a simple supper or a tea party. New people should be invited to join the meeting.
3. These meetings should be held in people's houses

and not consist of more than sixteen people, unless special arrangements are needed to suit the locality.

4. More than sixteen people should divide into two 'leaves', five to twenty of such 'leaves' make a 'bud', five to twenty 'buds' a 'blossom', five to twenty 'blossoms' a 'fruit' and five to twenty 'fruits' a 'core'. Each leaf should have a treasurer and a president. The presidents of five to twenty leaves then form a bud. These should then also choose a president and a treasurer, etc. The core is formed in another way.

5. The president of each leaf will make a cheerful report to a member of the provisional committee described below, and this will be read out at the meetings of the other leaves. Each leaf will receive a written monthly report from the committee, or a printed one when the situation requires it. Six months after the founding of the first leaf, the core shall be elected to take the place of the provisional committee. The process shall be as follows:

6. Every member who feels it to be necessary will make a report for the committee on the best means of propaganda for the attainment of the common end. When these reports have been sent in to a member of the committee they will be printed together without signatures or addresses. Every man will vote for one of the reports and the authors of those which receive the most votes will be elected to form the core. This core will be in charge of propaganda and the common treasury. The results will be published but not the names of the nominees. These are to remain unknown because we are unfortunately beset by the passions of the society

which brought us up and in whose nets we are enmeshed.

We must banish all envy, jealousy and distrust from our midst, or at least seek to render it harmless, which is only possible when the leaders remain unknown to each other. The unity of the core can be ensured at the first election by a vote among the members of the core or by lot, so that there will be no disputes over whose plan is to be adopted for the organisation of the propaganda.

The blossoms must meet as often as the leaves, and this means that a member of a 'fruit' will have five meetings in a fortnight, for which he will not be paid. He should regard this as a sacrifice for the propaganda.

7. Every member should undertake to bring a good new member every month and not to miss meetings himself.

8. The meetings begin with the president hearing accounts from each member of what he has done for the propagation of our principles since the last meeting. If he has done nothing, the president will ask why and give him advice on how to do better. Then reports from other groups will be read and also the report drawn up since the last meeting and due to be sent out. A small collection will then be made for postage, etc, and given to the treasurer for safekeeping. Then the future organisation of society will be discussed and the discussion can cover questions which have been put by the core to this leaf. Alternatively, the discussion can be on the best means of propaganda. Meeting in private houses means less expense than if the meeting were held at an inn. It will also mean that women and children will have the opportunity of hearing sound moral



teaching. Thirdly, it will avoid disturbances by strange, ignorant or ill-intentioned people. Fourthly, every member will become accustomed to teaching and discussing, whereas in big meetings they would only have the chance to listen because they are not so practised at speaking in public which would be necessary to put their point across. The fifth advantage is that unity will be better preserved and evil passions will have less opportunity to spread when the disagreements are between a few members at a time.

The purpose of the discussion at the meetings is to prepare the people for the transitional period. Often it has been on the point of victory but did not know how to press its advantage. And it fell a prey to one deceiver after another. Therefore it is essential for the people to be prepared. It is the christian principle which is worth waiting for. History has shown this to us and the future will continue to do so. The purpose therefore of all discussions at meetings is to discover the best way to put the christian principle into practice, and how this should be done.

Have you still no courage to undertake this holy work? Is the road too long for you? Of course, if it could come at once you would support practical christianity and its proclamation. Listen, I have one more thing to say to you. There are some methods which demand small sacrifices and attain their end speedily. Pay close attention and I will describe one to you.

This is how I talk to a man who finds it difficult to understand our teaching: You work early and late and get so little for it, that you can hardly buy anything for

yourself and your future is insecure. But your neighbour or the man who lives up the hill lives comfortably with his family on enough and to spare without having to work for it at all. Is that right? No, he will answer, that is not right. Wouldn't you be pleased if it could be different? Yes of course, the sooner the better. Do you think that other poor people think the same as you? Certainly they do. In that case things can be changed within the year without a war or a revolution. That I don't believe. No? Do you not believe that you could find one person every month who would answer our first question the same way as you? Oh, I could find one all right. If I had the time I could find one every day. You need find only one a month, and each of these must find one a month, and if you begin quite alone today in eighteen months we will be more than 160,000 and in twenty months more than half a million. And if we both begin today together there will be more. I have shown earlier in the chapter how such a great number can be kept united, at least they can be kept together better this way than in all former associations, for envy, jealousy and discord have no place among them. There can be no doubt that such a great number can prevail on questions which concern their welfare. As long as they remain united they will not need weapons and they will not need to fear that the movement, like so many other people's associations, will fall apart without achieving its aim. But it is essential that every new member is careful to fulfil his duties, namely to attend meetings and make propaganda. Will you make a start? With great pleasure. Now we are two and in a month's

time we shall be four. We want to do our duty, brothers, and we shall not fail.

I have asked this question of all my readers, and answered for them. I cannot believe that I am wrong about their opinions. And even if I am wrong, they cannot treat my words contemptuously. When millions can be won over for political games, we should be able to hope that the truth of christianity will find its supporters, if only the truth is explained simply to the world, as I have tried to do in this little book.

## II

### WHAT IS COMMUNISM?

Communism is a way of organising society which makes use of all human possibilities, all hands, all minds, all hearts, every talent, intelligence and emotion for the highest possible satisfaction of the needs, desires and wishes of each individual, or in other words, the fullest possible enjoyment of his personal freedom.

This means that every individual is morally obliged to devote all his energies, thoughts and feelings towards this end, using them not merely for his own benefit but for the common good.

But this moral obligation has to compete with his natural selfishness which seeks above all his own advantage. There is a constant battle between selfishness and self sacrifice in the heart of every man.

Men are not alike in their appearance, capabilities, thoughts or feelings. All forms of superiority in any of these encourage a man to idleness or to the exploitation of his less gifted fellow men. This is a source of social inequality which we can do nothing about. There is no way of overcoming these differences and neither would this be for the good of society for they are the source of progress in knowledge.

Because this is the factor which is a continual threat both to social equality and to individual freedom, the

communist principle and every communist system must give an account of itself in terms of it. Indeed this is true of any social system. The human heart is the proof. When it supports the most general ends in self-sacrifice, love, courage and sympathy and all noble feelings, it is supporting communism. When reason confirms the heart's nobility it proves the truth of communist teaching. Every individual who is in a strong position which would be threatened by the establishment of communism and who nevertheless does something for its establishment, I call a communist. Every person who does not look to communism for the improvement of his own position but for the improvement of the conditions of millions of his fellow men, and who sees this improvement as possible only by the establishment of communism, I call a communist. Every person who is sorely oppressed and who has the courage to take from the superfluity of others for his basic needs and who is prepared to defend his action proudly and publicly before the courts and before the people, I call a communist.

Their communism is from the heart, and they are committed to it. But it often takes a purely intellectual form, particularly when it is necessary to prove the truth of their conviction. The question is often asked. How can the capabilities of all be put to use under communism to the best attainment of the common end? How can one man know he is being made as good use of as another? This cannot be left to chance but must be regulated. Without regulation good will alone could not prevent disorder and even disadvantage to some in

social relations. How should work and leisure be organised? How can it be ensured that what is needed is produced and what is not needed is not produced?

These questions can only be answered by the establishment of a communist system and not in any other way. This proves the necessity of the system.

But let us not overrate the system. The differences between several systems based on one principle are of little importance. If *one* system is founded making possible the realisation of a principle, then a hundred others could be founded, based on the same principle but slightly different in detail. Systems which are based on personal or metaphysical principles or on some other confusion are even more easily established, as we see daily. Every new law changes the system. But the cause is harmed by disputes between like-minded people over such details; these disputes are only justifiable if the principle itself is at stake.

Communists should avoid such disputes about detail as far as possible, not because they are disloyal but because such disputes are often more concerned with personalities than the matter at hand, and these personal rivalries are against the basic principle of communism.

Many who call themselves communists are not content with any system and work hard at criticising them all. This is going too far. Such people do harm to themselves and to us and their motives are questionable. They do us harm by calling themselves communists without any protest from us. Indeed, how carelessly they reject systems which they do not even understand!

This lays us open to criticism by friend and enemy and it is not surprising if this criticism is adverse, particularly if the discussion has been confused with fine words and phrases. Many who call themselves communists take it upon themselves to inform people that German philosophy created communism. This is shameless. German philosophy is nothing but a confusion of ideas; it is the quintessence of German foolishness. What is called philosophy is pure nonsense expressed in grand terminology, an artfully constructed metaphysical hocus-pocus. A famous philosopher once admitted that there has been no nonsense or error that has not been accepted and defended at some time by some philosopher. Proudhon, who has read them, says the same. I know very little about them but quite as much as someone who has studied them thoroughly. This man did not understand them for all his study and learnt nothing from them; it is the same with me, although I did not study them, having neither the inclination nor the opportunity to do so, I was disgusted by their nonsense, although I do not dispute that they may have been trying to discover the highest truths and many traces of these may perhaps be found under their metaphysical dung-heap. Perhaps! They have confused us thoroughly and now they want to include communism in this confusion. That is why I get so angry. They will end up by perverting communism just as christianity and christian love have been perverted.\*

I have said elsewhere that we need a philosophy. But

\* Translator's note. This paragraph condenses a longer passage in the German.

I do not mean these confusing philosophers who have written such fine books about religion, atheism, spirit, God, understanding, soul, etc; I do not mean Schelling or Hegel. The famous Hegel I regard as a confuser. I have the right to call him this even though I have not read him. Why? Because no one has been able to tell me what he means, even though the whole German philosophy of confusion made such a noise about him. Frederick the Great said of him, 'If I wanted to punish one of my provinces I would give it a philosopher for a governor'.

I am talking about all those philosophers who fish for abstractions in a supersensual world and write many learned words on the subject, but nevertheless say nothing which is either new or important. All they have done for mankind is to spread confusion. The workers have set about reforms in quite a different way. In the last thirty years machines have been invented which can do the work of sixty million men in England alone. These inventions were mostly made by uneducated workers; they will reform society without the philosophy of confusion playing any part in this reformation. But people still have the greatest respect for men who are clever at playing about with words. They also admire a man who can play clever catching and balancing games with a hammer. But does that make him a good blacksmith? Wouldn't it be better if he simply used his hammer to make something useful?

The power of communism comes from the noble feelings invested in it, but these noble feelings must be governed by a clear understanding. Understanding



makes us see that communism is necessary for the realisation of the greatest possibilities of human freedom. Understanding guards us against fantasies, and makes us realise that it is unwise to combat hostile opinions by offending people's feelings; it is better to bypass feelings if they cannot be used for the good of the cause.

Understanding shows us that communism's most bitter enemy can be affronted religious feeling, but that this religious feeling can be put to powerful use in the service of communism. This it is extremely important to do because in fact the same feelings are involved. Without the engagement of these deep feelings communism will lose its force and its direction. Religious people under communism can keep all that they now hold dear in their religion. Communism only insists that they must not do this at the expense of others who do not want religion. Communist rule does not require religious or legal doctrines, it merely teaches that morality propounded at the beginning of this book which is necessary to the nature of communism; this morality does not contradict any religious doctrine. The practice of religion is a matter of choice, and as long as work is done, there is no reason why leisure time should not be spent on it. People who have done their four to six hours' work a day, who are free on Sundays and have had a good education, can very well spend a holiday holding a religious service, hearing a sermon or going to mass, etc, if they feel the need to do so. They can keep their bishops, priests and jesuits so long as these people work like others, and teach their doctrines with

the interests of believers in mind and not out of self-interest. Anyone may preach nonsense and should be free to do so, provided he has the means and does not live off the labour of others, and provided he does not seek to prevent others preaching nonsense or the truth. Nonsense need not be feared if the truth is free to oppose it. In this battle nonsense will be all the more powerless, the greater the freedom to propagate it, especially when there is little material advantage to be gained from it.

We need not be afraid that religious freedom will lead to clerical rule as it did in the canton of Lucerne in 1830 when the liberal institutions which had been introduced, including the vote, had exactly the opposite effect to that which had been intended. We need not be afraid if we do not introduce the democratic principle of election by majority. For such elections will always appoint men to rule who share the prejudices of most of the electors. But the majority is not enlightened enough to judge understanding and talent. Only he who possesses these is capable of judging them, and he will judge correctly when he does not judge the person but the policy itself. Nevertheless, election by majority has its uses and we do well to put it to as good a use as possible.

But what should we do to ensure that a sudden social upheaval does not leave us unprepared and bewildered?

Let us remember the four following principles and draw our own conclusions.

Communism is a state of equality and justice among all capable of work. Every man capable of working who has more leisure and produces less than another

is acting unjustly against this principle. He is stealing from his fellow men and they have the right to take back what has been stolen.

Communism is the greatest possible community of working capacities, enjoyment and freedom. Every man can have as much as another, and this makes stealing impossible. As long as stealing is possible, the society has not attained the state of communism. Stealing is therefore the test of a social organisation.

Communism is the ordering of consumption and production by the intelligence of all and in the interests of each, that is to say all. Those who are in positions of government have no greater merit and no greater material advantages than the rest. After a social upheaval no man can be trusted to rule who is not prepared to live at the same material level as the poorest and most humble members of the community. No man should be elected to rule who demands a good salary and does not put all his goods at the service of the community.

Lk 16: 14. The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this and they scoffed at him.

Now they will read this book and say one can make whatever one likes of the bible. Too true, for they have made it a gospel of tyranny, oppression and deceit. I wanted to make it a gospel of freedom, equality and the community of faith, hope and love, if that is not what it already was. If they were wrong, they were wrong out of self-interest. If I am wrong, it is for love of mankind. My intention is plain and I have quoted my texts. Let the reader now read, examine, judge and believe what he will. Amen.

## APPENDIX: WEITLING'S FIRST DEFENCE

My lords: I have not prepared an answer to the numerous charges against me, some of which were first made at yesterday's hearing, and which were in any case read out too quietly for me to hear them. I have prepared my defence in answer to the document I received a fortnight ago which spoke of the disturbance of religion. I will concentrate on this charge as far as possible.

As long as individual interests are not united in the common interest, every new work – however beneficial its implementation may be for society – will always find enemies in persons and classes whose private interests and privileges are threatened by it. This opposition will be all the stronger when mammon is against the new work. This is an old story and this court today will provide a new version of it.

I am on trial for printing a new interpretation of the bible. I am on trial for attempting to reinterpret the bible in a reformed canton, a canton whose people under the leadership of Zwingli and other reformers came to the conviction that the interpretation of the bible given by the priestly cast needed revision, and indeed revised it and the doctrines derived from it, like other reformed communities, and they called the new doctrine reformed religion.

From then on in a reformed state no interpretation of the bible could reasonably be called a disturbance of

religion, because that is what the reformation itself had been. The reformation, which accomplished the translation and distribution of the bible, which criticised the theology of its time, cannot now censor criticism and interpretation without standing guilty before the world of the same errors as popery. The high and mighty of our own day who try to control faith and knowledge in their own interests should not forget this.

The reformers were not the first to question the current interpretations of the bible and religious ideas of their day. Every century of the christian era provides us with numerous examples. Even Paul speaks in his letters of divisions among the christians; some believed the resurrection had happened and others, although they were christians, did not believe in it.

The reformation was not the last time, either, that the bible was given a different interpretation from the official, for the reading and interpretation of the bible was enormously increased by the invention of printing, and encouraged by reformed rulers all the more when they saw the lengths to which Rome was prepared to go to prevent it.

Christians divided into numerous sects differing on points of doctrine, particularly in countries, like North America, which enjoyed political and religious freedom. No one cried that religion was in danger, as they did this May in Zurich when some leaflets were printed concerning the foundation of a new society.

Religion, as it affects the inmost feelings of a man, is a spiritual good, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, from which every man can take as much as he wants

without harming anyone else. Religion is in danger from no man; no man can be a threat to it. I would be ashamed to say that my religion, my opinion, my convictions were threatened by the teaching and opinions of another. No, my lords, we should not fall a prey to this deception. Religion cannot be threatened by the doctrine of any man, only the rights and privileges which people seek to defend by religious formalities. These can be threatened. Ancient institutions which over the course of the centuries have become a source of privilege to some and an oppressive burden to others, can be threatened, and the more they are threatened, the less they will be a danger to the freedom, decent life, the future, the education and the enlightenment of the workers.

It is not religious feeling which is endangered but religious oppression. If freedom of belief is not to be a mockery we must oppose the enforcement of one interpretation of the faith. We must oppose the use of religion to appropriate the wealth created by the labour of millions for the benefit of the few. We must oppose the deception whereby religion is regarded as the property of a minority which they use for material support and to win friends and perquisites.

Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and all the reformers of the church maintained that the interpretation of the bible is the right of every man according to his convictions and not the privilege of a particular class.

But these reformers were reformers of the church; they were not concerned with the reformation of social relations as such, and although this was a proper con-

sequence of their interpretation of the bible, they went against their own principles. Luther stormed against the rebellious peasants who made their own interpretation of the bible because the lutherans did nothing for their work-sore hands and empty stomachs. He wrote to the princes whom he was encouraging to repress the peasants: 'Strike them dead like cattle.' Another time he wrote, 'The common man must be kept down or he will have it too good.' Calvin behaved no better. He allowed a friend in Geneva to be burnt at the stake because he held different opinions.

Three hundred years have passed but in spite of all our enlightenment we are still living in thick fog. The form of belief is still rated higher than the freedom of belief and the interests of the powerful are still tied up with certain forms of belief. The sword of justice has been put in their hands so that they are able to prevent any attempt to interpret religion for the common good. This sword is raised above all against knowledge which could be useful to all men. Every step forward in religion or politics or social relations is in danger of tripping up on the golden carpet placed in its way by the servants of mammon, and the man who dares to take that step gets a knife in his heart.

My views on the abolition of judicial punishments are cited under the heading disturbance of religion. But this abolition of punishments follows necessarily from christian principles, for I cannot love my enemy if I maintain laws to punish him.

Civilisation, in spite of all the obstacles placed in the way of spiritual progress and in spite of the enormous

increase of laws, has in fact come closer to the abolition of punishments, not moved further away from it.

Let us look back over the past eighteen centuries and compare the moral progress of society with the christian principle itself. Must we not acknowledge that all our progress still leaves us very far short of the project given to us eighteen hundred years ago? And why? Because knowledge has been hamstrung by the forms of belief imposed upon us by those in power.

As christians we should obey the commandment to love our enemies, but in order to do this we must know the best way to go about it. Knowledge must inform the works necessary to fulfil the christian principle, works which fulfil the purpose of belief and without which, as the apostle says, belief is dead.

None of the discoveries and inventions made since the time of Christ have been used directly to put christian principles into practice. But in so far as they have served the improvement of social morals they have indirectly served the christian principle, not by faith but by knowledge. The christian principle in the form of faith was kept frozen for eighteen centuries under an iceberg full of injustices. Every new enthusiast for the faith added weight to the iceberg and even the reformation did nothing to disturb it. It was the French revolution, which the anti-religious Voltaire, the atheist Meslier, and the nature-philosopher J. J. Rousseau helped to bring about, which first made social morals more gentle. Because of the form in which it was preached, christianity in eighteen hundred years, in spite of its magnificent principles, had been unable to do this.



Before the French revolution a gallows stood at every cross-roads and human justice felt uneasy if it could not call rods, whips, branding irons, pillories, the rack, the axe, the wheel and the scaffold to its aid. In this city a catholic, in that a protestant, could not be a citizen or a teacher. The peasants were serfs and the burghers were enslaved by the guilds. The lord of the manor could take a bride on her wedding night, and this still happens in christian Russia and in the christian colonies. Serfs were not free to move or marry as they wanted.

The christian principle is not the cause of these abuses, for they are in plain opposition to it. But they all happened among christians who, in accordance with the form of their belief, chattered about God and religion every day. They were abused among christians, upon whom repugnant beliefs had not been imposed, but christians who were governed by so-called christians and plundered by them. In the fullest sense they took up their own cross together with the iron cross laid on them by their lords.

It was the revolution with its abolition of these religious forms which put christian principles into practice, principles which christianity had been incapable of realising for eighteen hundred years. The revolutionary principle of the sovereignty of the people and equality before the law abolished evils which neither Rome nor the reformers had done anything about. And even today there are Pharisees who refuse to acknowledge the blessings that follow from the putting into practice of these principles. But the prin-

ciples of the revolution are small coin compared with christian principles, a candle held to the sun.

Why is it that people refuse to put christian principles into practice? Why is it that we pay lip service to their promised blessings but fail to put them into practice?

Because the realisation of christian principles is a difficult matter to understand and previous interpretations have always been bound up with the interests of a few instead of the interests of all.

It is possible to deflect any teaching from its goal in this way. For example, if a city favoured this or that branch of the philosophy of Schelling or Hegel and made the study of it the main requirement for posts in the teaching profession, appointed professors to give this study every advantage over others, in time we would have a couple of philosophical systems which Schelling or Hegel would find even harder to decipher than their own. Instead of one piece of nonsense we would have a whole heap of nonsense and this would be the opposite of what had been intended. For every doctrine, like the doctrines of the above-mentioned philosophers, is obscure and needs interpretation, and this will differ according to the purposes of those who undertake the work of interpretation. This can also happen with the bible, particularly if those for whom the interpretation is made are required to believe in it.

So it is not surprising that in our own day, when nearly everyone can read and write and has a bible in the house, men of the people also try to interpret the bible according to their convictions, to resolve the con-

traditions encountered by the discerning reader which are neglected by the priests.

I read in the bible that Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. In the Lord's prayer I read: 'Lead us not into temptation', but in Jas 1: 13 Paul says:\* 'God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one.'

As I read this I wondered did Paul think that Jesus was not God? For Jesus was tempted by the evil one and taught us to pray to God not to lead us into temptation. Paul and Jesus contradict each other here. But to admit this is thought by the orthodox to be a sin or even blasphemy, although Paul says:

1 Cor 12: 3. No one speaking through the spirit of God ever blasphemes Jesus.

What does it mean to speak through the Spirit of God? The bible gave me the answer in the following passage:

4. Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit,
7. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
8. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,
9. to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,
10. to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between

\* Weitling apparently thought the epistle of James was written by Paul.—*Translator*.

spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

11. All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Using these gifts for the common good, teaching others for the common good, is to speak through the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. But how can the christian use these gifts for the common good? The answer is not difficult. What is a christian's duty? To fulfil the commandments of Christ. What are these? They are summed up in the sentence: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. This, as Jesus says, is the first and greatest commandment; it contains all others; it is the law and the prophets.

If Christ teaches that we must use the gifts of the spirit for the common good or the love of our neighbour, it is also certain that every use of these gifts which is not for the common good is against the commandment of Christ and the sin is all the greater, the more these gifts are put to selfish uses. The greatest sin of which a christian can be guilty is to use these God-given gifts to prevent others from using their spiritual gifts in the interests of all, or in other words, of the oppressed. The apostle calls this the sin unto death which we should not pray to God to forgive a man.

1 Jn 5: 16. There is sin which is mortal; I do not say one is to pray for that.

Mt 12: 31. Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven a man, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

32. And whoever says a word against the Son of man

will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven either in this age or in the age to come.

If the spiritual gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit in us, every misuse of these gifts is a sin, and indeed the greatest sin, if we use these gifts for a purpose which is against the commandment to love our neighbour.

If by wilful misinterpretation of certain formulae of belief we confuse our fellow men and put their spiritual powers to sleep, in order to enjoy the fruits of their physical labours, we blaspheme against the Holy Spirit and we will not be forgiven. If we use our money to pay for lies and hang the bread-basket of the truth out of reach, we blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. If we justify our dominative behaviour towards our fellow men by lies and deceit and slander, we blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. Whenever a doctrine is spread or repressed by dominative methods this is a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit which will not be forgiven in this age or the next.

When we find the bible thus condemning the fruits of that faith which is dead, we are encouraged to pursue our search further. I therefore decided to make an exposition of the chief passages in the bible on the subject, and strove with all my might to discover how the command to love our neighbour ought to be put into practice.

Whatever happens to me, I am convinced that the way I have pointed out contains nothing which is against the realisation of the christian principle. The

bible is in every man's house. Even if I am rendered dumb, there will be a thousand others to speak for me.

The prosecution also accuses me of blaspheming against Jesus. If in my writing I have used any expression, which taken by itself could be construed as a blasphemy against Jesus, this will be seen not to be the case if it is taken in its whole context. Any sentence can be falsified and given a different meaning if words are singled out for this purpose. My intention was not to blaspheme. I did not want my gospel to be a fifth wheel to the cart, which it would have been if I had had blasphemy in mind. But every blasphemy against the Son of man will be forgiven. Only the sin against the Holy Ghost can never be forgiven, and that is why I wrote my gospel.

I saw how for eighteen hundred years the teaching of christianity had served the interests of injustice, and I wanted to teach it to serve the interests of justice, if it is indeed a doctrine about justice; and if it is not I would rather dispense with it altogether. I understood that the christian principle is communist; this is how to put the command to love our neighbour into practice. The key I found was the command to love our enemies too, and this is only possible if we are prepared to regard all crimes as sickness. This is the only way to love our enemies, and that is how I came to regard the christian principle as the quintessence of communism and personal freedom, which is thus the quintessence of social happiness.

But philosophical intentions are poor defences in the eyes of human justice, and count for little in their

scales. I give this explanation more to protect public opinion from the deceptions of my opponents than to defend myself, now that the manuscript of *The Poor Sinner's Gospel* has for the most part fallen into the hands of my judges.

Legally speaking I have only this to add:

The manuscript was still incomplete when I was arrested. It could not be properly understood until it was finished. In order to avoid misunderstandings I did not want to publish it in part and that is why I kept it locked and sealed so that nothing would appear before I published it as a whole.

From letters I have received I understand that people think I advocate the use of force to put my principles into practice. However, nothing can be proved to this effect from my own letters and I cannot be held responsible for what others write. My answer to these letters is clear enough.

I put the case of a doctor who announces that he has found the cure for a certain disease. I imagine that other doctors regard this cure as harmful and instigate a police investigation. Can this doctor be punished as a poisoner, when there is no proof that he had given his pills or medicine to anyone? If the mixtures were found in his house, incomplete and well guarded? I do not think so.

Neither can the passages mentioned from the sheets of my manuscript which were confiscated provide proof of the accusations which are made against me. If they are used as proof against me, this will serve as a further proof to me that the law can be used in any way

they want to protect the interests of the ruling class. Every accidental death can be called a poisoning, every unfinished sketch a caricature and every unfinished sonnet a lampoon.

If that is so, then the freedom of the press in the canton of Zurich is a trap to catch those who dare to make use of their knowledge and discoveries to help their poor brothers. To catch those who dare to tell any of the lords of Zurich uncomfortable truths or to question lies which serve their self-interest.

This would be a state worse than censorship. Before the censor crosses out passages he at least reads the whole manuscript through, and at most make remarks on this or that particular page. But here every author would have to pander to his opponents from the first pages of his manuscript. This would be barbaric and nonsensical, a censorship of thought, a rack for mind and body.

Censorship would be better. True, it is an oppression and a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, but it would not sacrifice so many innocents. It is not a mere tool of the powerful. Censorship is aristocratic; it says what it will allow and what it will not. It is not underhand, for it is conscious of its power. It has more pride and gives the servants of freedom time to escape from its threats and carry the fruits of their hard labours to freedom. If the freedom of the press is to be used only in the interests of the rich and not the poor without endangering personal freedom, then better the censor. Censorship steals the fruits of the spirit from society but it does not also steal a man's personal freedom.



Now I wait for judgment. Whatever you decide I am certain that it will be for the good of the cause I serve. And I set my trust in the judgment of public opinion which, as you know, is what in the last resort decides on what ought or ought not to be printed.