

The background of the book cover is a photograph of a small, picturesque village. A church with a tall, dark spire is the central focus of the village. The buildings are made of stone and have dark roofs. The village is situated on a green, sloping hillside. In the background, there are steep, rocky mountains under a clear blue sky. The title 'THE ORACLES OF GOD' is printed in large, bold, orange letters across the upper half of the cover.

THE ORACLES OF GOD

Rev. Richard Wurmbrand

THE ORACLES OF GOD

by
Richard Wurmian

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The Oracles of God

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THE ORACLES OF GOD

Introduction

A soldier in need approached Alexander the Great and asked for some money. The Emperor, who knew the bravery of this soldier in battle, refused but instead made him ruler over one of his cities.

Overcome by such royal largesse, the soldier demurred, exclaiming, "This gift is too big for me!"

"That may be," responded the Emperor. "But it is not too great a gift on the part of a king."

As you begin to read this book, you anticipate another collection of human thoughts bound within its covers. It is proper for you not to ask for much. But I write in the name of Christ, for whom it is customary to give more than a man usually expects. He is the King of kings. When one writes in His name or speaks on His behalf, he is intended to speak the oracles of God. (I Peter 4:11)

Shakespeare might have meant such a man when he wrote

"His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles,
His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate,
His tears pure messages, sent from his heart,
His heart as far from fraud, as heaven from earth."

In the great mystery religions of old (as in the Lamaist religion of today), some priests or priest-

esses were put into a trance-like state through drugs, dances, or incense, and what they spoke in this condition was thought to come from their god and was therefore deemed an "oracle."

Likewise, the one who writes or preaches in the name of Christ is meant to be God-intoxicated, a person who has first received the kiss of God.

For not savoring the mind of God, the Lord once reproached Peter: "You think not the things that are of God, but those that are of men." (Matthew 16:23)

Not only the apostles, but any man who deals with religious matters should not open his mouth unless what he says is a revelation from God. It might be but a little drop from the sea, but it must be from the sea itself. His words must savor of the things of God.

The Hebrew has strange expressions for our words "to speak" or "to tell." We consider every word expressed, however foolish, as falling, into the category of "speaking." Not so the Jews. It is in their genius to believe that the word is divine.

For "to speak" they use *ledaber*, akin to *davar*, which is used for "word." But *davar* is also the word for 'thing.' Hebrew words are real things, not simply talk. *Ledaber* means to communicate a reality.

Another word for "to speak" is *le-omer*, from the root *amir*, which means the highest branch of a tree. A man's words are worthy only if he speaks at the highest level he can reach.

For "to tell" the word is *le-saper*, from *saper*, meaning "sapphire." "To tell" is to give another a jewel. If you have a jewel to give, talk. If not, keep silent.

It is a risky thing for an author to write a book such as this. But I do so because I love you, my reader.

This book, then, contains the oracles of God.

* * *

Some readers may already be laughing skeptically: "What an absurd claim, to speak the oracles of God!" Countless men throughout the ages have claimed to speak such oracles, and some still do. All the false prophets and messiahs among the Jewish people, founders of new religions like Mohammed and new sects like Joseph Smith and Mary Baker Eddy not only claimed, but sincerely believed, that they spoke the oracles of God. All the promoters of heresies did so, as did the inquisitors. Hitler and Khomeini spoke as the voices of providence.

So why do I make such a claim?

Well, if you have already begun to laugh, I will tell you a joke to make you laugh even more.

George wanted to sell his horse and therefore boasted among his acquaintances, "My horse is indeed unique. In the morning I send him to the baker and to the dairy, and he brings me bread and milk, as well as the newspaper. The horse knows the way from my home to the office and back. I give him free

rein in the evening, and he takes me to my club."

Tom was deeply impressed and paid \$2,000 to obtain this remarkable horse.

Much time had passed, George and Tom met at a party. Tom immediately launched into a dismal recital of the horse's inadequacies. "It only likes to enjoy itself and is lazy and stubborn when you want to saddle it up for a ride. It doesn't understand any of the things I want it to do."

George warned Tom, "Stop talking like that, or you won't be able to sell the horse. I got a good price because I praised it!"

Obviously, only highly touted political and religious convictions are accepted by the populace. Anyone who wants to propagate an idea must boast of its merits. Every salesman for a product has to claim that it is the best.

But one idea, one product, is really the best. The idea of a "best product" cannot be discarded simply because lesser products are also touted as top of the line.

Of the many pretended oracles of God, some are genuine, some false. It is up to you to determine whether or not what I write is indeed a genuine sapphire.

Every book on metaphysical or religious matters will be useless or even harmful if the reader does not have the gift of a discerning spirit. He must be able to find out if what is presented to him is actually a message from God.

If a book only amuses, then enjoy it and have a little fun. If it claims to be from God and does not contain a message from Him, don't waste time on it. If it does, then you are obliged to accept its ideas in a spirit of obedience. The Master speaks through the author, and you will have to fulfill what He says.

But be very sure about the writer. Ask yourself whether God speaks through him to your soul, whether the devil speaks, or some human being expresses his own thoughts. Most readers or listeners are remarkably inattentive.

When a reader seeking treasure encounters a writer with jewels to share (why else should he write?) amazing things can happen. But the character and frame of mind of the reader must be part of the equation. Then if the writer speaks truth, he can expect sure and salutary results.

An experiment was carried out in Israel. The well-known radio announcer Kishon read a novel on the radio, beginning with the last chapter and ending with the first. He then read only the odd pages of another novel. Later he announced a novel and read the State budget. Only one man was moved to complain.

People swallow bad books, bad sermons, bad lectures with the same ease with which they swallow good ones. I would even say with greater ease.

* * *

I present this book with the claim that it contains an important message.

What God has for you in this book is not an ordinary gift. Earthly gifts may provide great pleasure, but ultimately they are in vain.

In Iran, near the town of Shiraz, there is a small, simple tomb with this inscription: "Man, whosoever you are, and whenever you will come, because I know that you will come, I tell you that I am Emperor Cyrus, and that I conquered for the Persians the dominion of the world. Leave me at least with this little piece of land that covers my body."

This minimal request has not been fulfilled; his tomb has been depredated.

Earthly gifts that God provides do not last. In time, wicked men or the forces of nature will take them from us. He gives earthly gifts while making it clear from the beginning they are but tokens of sympathy, which should open our hearts to receive the one great eternal gift reserved for us.

Now this gift is what the present book is all about.

I wonder how many of you have ever played cards. If you have, you know that it is neither advantageous nor fun to play with open cards. The challenge and enjoyment lie in *not* knowing another's cards, in guessing and surmising.

God keeps man in suspense; man doesn't know what trump cards God is holding. An author

representing God through his books must do likewise.

I do not want to tell you what God's gift is until I have prepared your heart to receive it. I want to awaken within you a state of intense desire for the unknown and the invisible. I put all my soul into what I write.

A perceptive child can often spot insincerity or indifference. In a Sunday School, the teacher recounted the story of Jesus' sufferings and death. A child remarked, "The story is not true."

Taken aback, the teacher asked, "What makes you say that?"

"If it were true," the boy replied quietly, "you could not tell it without weeping."

Sorribly, some Christian writers, authors of religious hymns, and preachers burn out quickly; some become soulless. Perhaps it is because they spend too much of their soul on their work, without taking due precautions to refill them daily.

William Cowper wrote the renowned hymn:

There is a fountain, filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.
The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day,
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

One feels there is life in this song. Cowper poured into it the blood of his own heart. But when old, he could no longer believe. He who had written that "the precious blood shall never lose its power" could not trust that his own sins were washed away by Christ's sacrifice.

It is necessary that we allow ourselves to be cleansed and purified.

To be in error is a dreadful thing, but it is even worse to embrace truth for the wrong reasons; because it is convenient, because it is pleasant, because it is profitable, because it is socially acceptable. God wants us to love the truth. It is the water of life He offers us. Don't adulterate it with pollutants.

Love truth for its own sake, and it will come to you.

The one who claims to speak the oracles of God must expect to be asked many questions.

He can be asked, first of all, "Who are you to make this claim?"

Every 'I' contains a multifaceted "we." We have within us a long history of *I's*, a composite of many personalities. Which of my *I's* speaks oracles?

If the different faces of the self alternate, and I think one thing at one time and something else at another, or if at times I live my unconscious life without thinking, then what happens in my mind at one moment can contradict what happened a few moments before, and I can be certain of nothing.

Can something uncertain be the oracle of God?

To claim certainty is mostly a pose. It is not reasonable always to be certain, to know things absolutely, when every event has so many faces, most of which are beyond our ken anyway.

Furthermore, there is no such thing as a state of perpetual illumination. Just as it is impossible to be in a constant state of ecstasy or to stand on tiptoe without relaxation, so it is impossible to be in full possession of truth twenty-four hours a day. (Only that the person who has been awakened once or twice to the truth is more susceptible to further awakening than those who have not had this experience.)

The apostle Peter said one day, under divine inspiration, that Jesus was the Son of God. After a few minute, another "I" of Peter said such terrible things that Jesus called him "Satan." Then Peter boasted that even if everyone else forsook Jesus, he would not. This was, again, another I. Then he denied ever having known Jesus—another I. Later he repented with tears and received the commission to feed Jesus' sheep, which he also did.

Legend says that when persecution erupted in Rome, he fled. That was, again, another I. While fleeing, he realized that what he did was wrong. He returned and died a martyr's death for Christ, asking to be crucified head-down because he did not deserve to die like Jesus. Peter had many I's. That is why he had three names in the Bible: Simon, Cephas, and Peter.

It is this same Peter who teaches us in his epistle to speak the oracles of God. Which of the I's of Peter spoke oracles?

We all have I's. I have had many opinions and convictions in life that I later abandoned. Then what authorizes me to believe that today, as I write these lines, I am speaking the oracles of God? What about all the things I said yesterday? And what will I speak tomorrow?

How can one find out for himself which of his many opinions are the truth of God? Peter, the man who said so many wrong things and vacillated so much, who was publicly accused by St. Paul of prevarication (Galatians 2:11 ff.), might have wondered himself which of his sayings, if any, were oracles.

How can one choose among the many who claim to speak the oracles of God? Does an objective, sure truth exist? If so, how can one find it?

The oracle of God must tell me, first of all, what an oracle of God is and must then accredit itself as such. The question is an important one, a critical one, but don't try to get quick answers.

Foreign lecturers speaking in Japan have wondered why students don't reply to questions put to them. But in their culture an immediate reply shows contempt for the speaker. It means that his questions are of so little importance that anyone can answer them without difficulty. Therefore the proper reaction to a question is not a quick reply,

but meditation upon it, indicating that the question and the questioner deserve respect.

The number of conflicts in families, churches, and society at large would be greatly reduced if spouses, children, parents, parties, leaders, and states would forego the felt need to respond immediately to every question and instead make each question an object of loving or at least civil meditation.

Therefore, my advice to you is not to swallow the present book in a hurry. Read a portion, then meditate. To make this easier, I have divided the book into small, bite-size portions.

* * *

But is there no hurry to find the truth?

"The truth induces men to seek the truth," said St. Makarios the great. And Blaise Pascal wrote, "We could not seek God unless in some real sense we already possessed Him."

St. Augustine says, "You would never have sought the truth if you had not already found it." The fact that you seek truth, that you ask for it, shows you have a love for it. Love for truth is an essential part of truth itself. If you seek it earnestly, you can afford to sit down quietly, like Mary Magdalene.

Which is more real to you, your problem or yourself? You existed before you posed the question to yourself about finding truth. How many hours a

day do you seek it even now? You are much bigger and more important than your search for truth.

Don't throw away the whole of your life for this particular, though valuable, preoccupation, this search for truth. Live your life. When you work, work. When you eat, eat. When you sleep, sleep. When you amuse yourself, amuse yourself. Truth and life are good companions. They are friends, not enemies. You don't have to exclude the one in order to have the other. Jesus said, "I am the Way." What does his "Way" consists of? He explained Himself immediately: "The Truth *and* the Life."

Take it easy, take one step at a time, and you will reach the truth. Meanwhile, be yourself.

Truth is the supreme goal, except that truth alone can be found nowhere, just as one cannot find iron or gold alone in the earth; they exist only in combination with other elements.

Jesus said, "I am the way; the truth *and* the life." If one wishes to know truth, he must know life too. If he wishes to fulfill the demands of truth, he must be attentive to the demands of life as well.

St. Paul taught us to beware of vain philosophy.

Long ago there lived a king who had a very valuable stallion. He appointed a watchman to do nothing else than guard the magnificent animal during the night. To satisfy his concerns, the king arose at night and went to the guard.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Well, your majesty, I was just reflecting on

why a circle is round and a square rectangular."

The king exclaimed, "I am happy to have in my service a real philosopher. Just continue."

Later in the night, the king went again and asked the watchman, "what were you doing now?"

"I was trying to find out what happens to the hole in a bagel after it is eaten. I did not eat the hole, but notwithstanding it has disappeared."

The king was very pleased to have a soldier with such interesting thoughts. He came a third time and asked the watchman, "What now? What are you thinking?"

"Now I have a really serious problem. There was a stallion in the stable. It is no longer there. Where could it be?"

For the sake of philosophy, he had lost the stallion of truth.

Seek the truth, but be careful not to destroy your life and the lives of other men for the sake of philosophizing about truth. Without men, where will the truth settle and of what good will it be?

The story is told: Pot Pol, Communist dictator of Cambodia, declared, "I have a truth that will make my people happy."

He was asked, "What if your people do not accept your formula of truth?"

"Then," he replied, "I will kill all those who oppose truth. Truth is for me above all things."

Out of a population of five million of his own people, he killed one million.

This is the attitude of the inquisitors of all convictions. This is the philosophy of those who tyrannize their families to force them to accept what they consider as truth.

God says, "You shall observe My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, *he shall live by them.*" (Leviticus 18:5)

Truth is given that you yourself and others might live by it, not die by it.

Be careful. Be forewarned.

A sage had a disciple called Moses. When he called, the disciple would reply, "Yes," and come immediately. The master would tell him a few things, but with a disappointed expression on his face. Moses did not understand why. Again and again, the master would call, "Moses!" Each time Moses would reply, "Yes," and elicit the same reaction. Eventually he came to the conclusion that his answer "Yes" was not what his master desired.

He changed, and for a time, as often as the master called, "Moses!" he replied, "Here I am." But neither did this answer satisfy the sage, though he continued to impart love to his disciple and to teach him the ways of God.

One day Moses had an illumination, and when the master called, "Moses!" he came, smiled, and said, "I understood." With this, he left his master forever.

The master gave a sigh of relief. Moses had become himself. He now knew he was Moses and no

longer had to be the copy of his master.

Likewise, I urge you to develop a personality that is able to discern the truth among the many lies that are told.

* * *

You may be sure that truth exists. There is no doubt about this. Socrates already showed the fallacy of the contrary assertion.

The Sophist philosopher Gorgias had asserted, "Truth does not exist." Socrates challenged these words in a conversation with Kriton, a disciple of Gorgias. He asked the younger man, "Does Gorgias believe what he says?"

"Yes."

"Then Gorgias contradicts himself."

"How?"

"According to the teachings of your master, no truth exists, yet he considers this assertion, to be true. Then he does acknowledge something to be true."

No one can escape the belief that men can know a sure truth. If we say, "Everything we know is relative," then this knowledge of ours, that everything is known only relatively, is an absolute truth. Everything we postulate is based on just such an assumption. So there exists a kernel of the absolute even in the midst of relativity.

There exists sure oracles.

The Bible calls the Creator "the God of truth."

(Psalm 31:5) There is a legend that the blood that flowed from Jesus on Golgotha formed the Hebrew words *Ani ha-emet*, "I am the truth." We can know a truth.

Socrates said, "I know that I know nothing." This assertion may exhibit modesty, but it can be accepted only with certain qualifications. It is simply not true that Socrates knew nothing. He knew the Greek language. He knew the whole alphabet. He knew grammar—substantives, verbs, conjugations. He knew how to think, how to speak. There always exists a core of sure truth at the heart of what is doubtful and relative in our thinking.

* * *

The problem is, we confuse knowing the truth with understanding it. "I have not understood a bar of music in my life, but I have felt it," said Igor Stravinsky. "I shut my eyes in order to see," said the painter Paul Gauguin.

Anna Pavlova, the renowned dancer, when asked once to explain her pirouettes, replied to the interviewer, "If I could say it, I would not have danced it." If painters could say in words, what they know, they would not resort to the brush and the palette. Einstein and other creative scientists have expressed their need to think in images. Words alone cannot yield the truth.

I have learned much about God not only from the words of Christian hymns, but also from the

Gregorian chanting in Orthodox churches and from the music of Bach and others. I also learned a lot from observing dancing Moslem dervishes, a religious dance festival in Thailand, Hassidic dances and dance at charismatic renewal meetings.

Only a small part of truth can be understood. The rest must be caught as an intense longing for a beautiful, loving, harmonious world. Truth is something much better than a set of ideas.

* * *

All music critics evaluate the notes played on instruments. But what about the music of the pauses between the notes?

Before being confined in Communist prisons for fourteen years, I believed that the whole Bible as written was the truth. In jail I discovered that in reality I had considered as truth only the black letters of the Bible, without paying attention to the white spaces between letters, words, and chapters.

Jesus is called in the Bible "the Word," not the sentence. He is just one word surrounded by white space. The other "word:" is something else, not to mention the white margins and blank pages within the Bible.

Many of the most interesting truths are written with invisible ink on these white spaces.

What did Jesus say to the priests when He conversed with them in the temple at the age of twelve? What did He do between twelve and thirty?

What is meant by the assertion that after His crucifixion He descended into hell? What happened after the resurrection between the days in which He appeared to His disciples?

Learn to read the white pages and you will know.

* * *

All this may sound irrational, but what if some truth is irrational? It could not be otherwise because there is much that is beyond reason in the universe. Any effort to understand it only by rational means will be futile and superficial.

The chief features of the world are, at one pole, conflict and struggle, the clash of antithetical forces, and at the opposite pole, ardent love. Human life is not all rational. It is a madman like Hitler beguiling the German people, then considered rational, with the senseless slogan "Blood and soil," and a loving priest like Maximilian Kolbe throwing away his life in Auschwitz for a man he never knew. To tell an SS officer he wanted to die in place of another prisoner was foolish. Logic would have taught him that the officer would laugh and kill them both.

Bergson said in *Creative Evolution*: "The intellect is characterized by a natural inability to comprehend life. Instinct, on the contrary, is moulded on the very form of life."

In the search for truth do not rely on intellect alone. "Golgotha" means in Aramaic "place of the

skull." When Jesus was taken there, He was crucified. If you wish Him to live, bring Him to the place of the heart!

Use instinct, intuition, feeling, faith, a high idea, a noble dream that should become the truth. Do not be the lackey of truth, saying only what it orders, but be its master and make of reality what your heart dictates in its best moments.

* * *

When Old Testament Joseph was sold by his brothers into slavery, he was only a teenager who had dreamed that his family would bow down to him. But God with his cooperation, caused the supposedly idle dream to become reality.

Salvador Dali, the surrealist painter, when reproached that his portraits did not look like the subject, replied that it was not his business to adjust to how a person looked, but to challenge the person to become like the picture he painted.

This is exactly how God paints the faithful soul. She is called in Scripture "the fairest among women," "a lily among thorns," "without spot or wrinkle." Rationalists would say this is simply not true. The description does not show the church as it is. It was never God's intention merely to describe how it is, but to tell us how it should be. This is the image God has of us, and he expects us to conform to it.

By a stroke of luck the word "to realize" has only in the English language the double meaning

“to understand, to be aware of,” and also “to cause something to be.” This is how truth is molded.

* * *

Truth when communicated in words is no longer pure truth. It passes through a censorship.

The Wycliffe Bible translators on the Solomon Islands were fined a pig and ten dollars in cash for having used the name Momoli in a story in a reading primer. It was simply a contrived name, but it happened to coincide with the name of an ancestor who was worshiped.

The translators soon found out they must be cautious. The common word for “sea”—*asi*—also had to be avoided because in the past it was the name of an important man. Now it was forbidden.

Another taboo is pronouncing the names of in-laws. Once in a church there was a Scripture reading from I Peter. The person who read the text accordingly said, “The reading this morning is from the first of my father-in-law, chapter one.”

On Misima Island, off Papua New Guinea, a person who had an in-law with a name that sounded like the word for “big” had to stop singing hymns whenever he came to that word.

We smile about these backward people. But can we express freely in civilized nations all we know to be true? Don’t we often have to use euphemisms?

Sexual organs and the sexual act cannot be

mentioned in polite society. The Bible never uses these words. The female organ is called *boshet*—"the shame." Homosexuals and perverted people are called Kedoshim, the word that also means "sanctified." (II Kings 23:7) This serves as code-word to show that saints have to avoid them.

It is a taboo to speak to children about one of the most dramatic aspects of life, which they will understand only when they are already involved in it. But then it is too late to learn.

In Germany after the defeat of Hitler, the word "fatherland" could no longer be used. It was considered a dirty word.

In psychoanalysis, both the patient and the doctor try to construct out of isolated threads a story that makes sense. When the psychoanalyst and his patient converse, they intentionally invest happenings with a coherence that may not have existed in reality. The facts of life are shaped to give them meaning and purpose. Both use literary skill.

We all try to give sense to everything, instead of acknowledging that nonsense is also a part of reality.

A religious usually romanticizes the story of his conversion. In Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, the youth, reduced to utter misery, returns to his father, who symbolizes God, for the simple reason that at home he would have better food. If the prodigal son had told the story himself, he would have said that a longing of his heart after

heaven made him return to his Father's house.

It takes only one black sheep to prove that all sheep are not white. If there were only one deformation of truth, it would be enough to assure us that not all stories and thoughts parading as truth are true. But falsehoods are multiplied without number.

Humanity by itself has no truth and cannot obtain it. Truth can only descend to us from a higher sphere.

* * *

There exists an unconscious wisdom called faith. The smallest notion of the unconscious soul is more important and true than the noblest production of our conscious thoughts. God loves to dwell in the darkness of the unconscious. There resides the truth for which the conscious has to fish.

The Sufite Mohammedan sect has a legend about Jesus, told in a beautiful book by Indries Shah.

According to this legend, Jesus once saw a group of sad people who, when asked about their grief, replied, "We fear we may go to hell." Then He saw another group who also looked very depressed and wept.

"What troubles you?" He asked.

"We heard there is a splendid paradise, and we tremble that we might miss it."

Then He met a third group, all worn out but

with faces full of joy. "What makes you so radiant?" He queried.

"Here and there we have obtained some little bits of truth, and we have within us a spirit that promises us even more. We now see things more and more as they really are. With what little truth we have, we realize that nothing else matters to us."

Jesus said, "These are the people who attain. They will see the face of God."

Pilate put the question, to which he got no reply; "What is truth?" (John 18:38) Before him stood the incarnate Truth, but he did not recognize Him.

Pilate's question is like asking, "What is the melody of a peach?" He makes the false assumption that truth is the fruit of discussion, that it is a collection of statements.

The right question is, "Who is the truth." Truth is a Person. Jews search the Scriptures; Buddhists search their canons; Moslems search the Koran. Jesus says, "The Scriptures testify of Me. Come to Me." (John 5:39; Matthew 11:28). Seekers after truth generally begin with the presumption that truth is a response to the question "What?" This is wrong. We need to ask, "Who is the truth?" The truth is a person. Jesus said, "I am the truth." Since He promises to live within us, in the measure to which we become like Him, we too can become the truth.

There are no right answers to wrong questions.

In many places in the New Testament, "Jesus" is not just the name of one Person. He is called *ho Iesous*. He bears a generic name. There exists a category of men to whom at least partially the name Jesus can be applied. These are truth-bearers.

They represent Jesus. In Kabbalistic poetry they are called "the minuscule faces of God."

St. Laurence Justinian wrote, "He thirsted for us and desired to give Himself to us." Well, He has done so, which means the truth is in us.

We might not realize it most of the time, because of not making out the difference between what theologians call *fides directa* and *fides reflecta*— direct and reflected faith. If I say "I believe," I say that I believe to believe. I can believe I am a believer and be mistaken. Some, on the other hand, have a direct faith and are not aware of it or are aware only rarely.

But if Jesus lives within us, we are the people to whom John writes: "You have an anointing of the Holy One, and you *know* all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it." (1 John 2:20, 21)

Buddha's last words were, "Seek the truth." Jesus said, "I am the truth." Therefore his disciples are no more searchers for truth but its possessors.

Scriptures says that God "raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:6)

Observe, "we are raised up" and "sit in heav-

only places.”

Scientists are now preparing a space telescope that will be clear-sighted because of its position above the atmosphere, which bends, distorts, and absorbs light before it reaches the earth.

The night sky cannot properly be seen from the earth, any more than objects can be viewed through a fishtank filled with water. Light passing through the atmosphere or water is refracted and therefore dislocates the objects being viewed. Furthermore, air and water turbulence blur the images.

A space telescope remedies all these defects.

If we look at truth from the earth, we are unable to see it as and where it is, but with Jesus we are seated high above the world in heavenly places, where God's peace reigns undisturbed and undistorted. There we become possessors of the truth as it really is.

* * *

In the search for truth, we are doomed to meet innumerable speculators, eccentrics, crackpots, and out-and-out fakers, not to mention their gullible victims.

Even St. Paul recognized that those who teach are largely unreliable. He warned against the “many vain talkers and deceivers” in the early church. (Titus 1:10)

Psychologist Bertram Forer bought a news-

stand astrology book, from which he extracted the following character reading: "...You are extroverted, affable, sociable, while at other times you are introverted, wary and reserved. Disciplined and controlled on the outside, you tend to be worrisome and insecure on the inside. Your sexual adjustment has presented some problems for you, etc., etc."

This very same character reading was given to fifty students, who were each made to believe it was uniquely formulated for him as a result of a personality test. Forty-one percent of the students considered it a perfect fit to their personality.

Most of us tend to be gullible and are easily waylaid by countless individuals and organizations eager to lead us astray. A psychologist, Hyman, convinced them that he could read in their palms and found that they swallowed what he said as readily as before.

In a Seattle bus station, a woman went to the restroom, leaving her bags by her seat. Profiting from her absence, a man rummaged through her baggage and disappeared with something bundled under his coat. When the woman returned, she cried, "My tape deck was stolen!" Several men who witnessed the incident agreed to give their names and addresses for use in the insecure claim. When questioned later, they recalled the color, shape, and size of the tape deck.

Then they were informed that there never had been a tape deck. The whole incident was

staged as an experiment by the University of Washington to show the unreliability of witnesses and of human memory.

* * *

If we wish to have the truth, we must realize we have nothing to rely on. Truth can come only as a free gift from above. It is received as revelation or not at all.

The Romans had a saying: *Ouidquid recipitur, secundum modum recipientis recipitur*— “What is received, is received according to the manner of the one receiving it.” Aristotle said, “Wickedness corrupts a man’s nature and gives him false principles and evil measures of things.” Bad men are condemned to have false ideas. And we are all bad.

Jesus, the Pure, cleanses us from all sins. He, the embodiment of truth, identifies with us and becomes our new personality. He gives us His thoughts.

Those with ears only for what is earthly believe music consists of the sounds produced by crickets rubbing their legs together. But those who look up will hear the heavenly harmony of truth.

Just as pigeons or snails have a magnetic sense that helps orient them at great distances, so those who hear the sound of ultimate truth are irresistibly attracted to it. They know to whom they entrust themselves and where they are going. Jesus told us, “Where I go you know, and the way you know.” (John 14:4).

Lady Philosophy will criticize us immediately, saying, "Wait a bit. You jumped from the search for truth to the unwarranted assertion that Jesus is the truth. Why Jesus?"

Are we obliged to justify ourselves before her? What are her credentials? And who is she? Whence her right to interrogate and investigate?

And who are the philosophers? How much do they love? Who among them sacrificed a heaven for me? Who among them died on a cross for me?

If religion enters into a discussion with philosophy, its doom is unavoidable. Debating philosophy is a good way to commit spiritual suicide. A Romeo would not think of trying to justify before philosophy his sentiments for Juliet. Nor will we defend ourselves before the philosophic sowers of doubt.

The oracle says that Jesus is the truth. Where the oracle has spoken, let all else keep silent.

Ultimate truth is not something to be analyzed, to be debated. It is something to be practiced.

That Jesus is the truth is an essential fact of human life that only ignorance can deny.

* * *

The truth has come.

Maritain wrote, "Henceforth, God remains dumb, and has nothing to say, because what He said in times past to the prophets in a fragmentary manner has now been totally said. He gave us his

all, which is his Son, which means that to try now to interrogate God, or to will to have a vision or a revelation, does not only mean stupidity, it is also an offense toward God. We should have our eyes fixed on Christ, without seeking anything else.

God could tell you, "If I have revealed all things to you in my Word, which is my Son, I have no other Word with which to reply or reveal more than that. Fix your eyes upon Him, because in Him I have told you everything. I reveal everything to you, and you will find in Him more than what you desire or ask..."

"You desire words and fragments of revelations; but if you fix your eyes upon Him, you will find everything, because He is my entire world, and my entire answer. He is my whole vision and revelation. You have all the answers. I have given you the reply—as brother, teacher and companion, atonement, and reward."

But it seems Maritain was very sure that God has said everything through Christ. Just one little thing was lacking: that Maritain should add his assurance to Christ's revelation. My oracle might also be needed as also the private revelations which some children of God receive.

"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary." So said the angel. (Matthew 1:20)

* * *

I had been afraid to take Mary into my life and into my love. Then I heard the same words which

were spoken to Joseph. Now she is part of my life too, as well as Joseph and the multitude of angels who prepared for and were present at Jesus' birth.

Mary was obedient when the archangel Gabriel told her God desired that she give birth to the Messiah. She was a faithful Jewess who must have known the prophecies. She knew from Isaiah 53 that this her Child would be "a man of sorrows acquainted with grief." She knew from Psalm 22 that "they would pierce His hands and His feet" on a cross, that He would be rejected by His people, the object of scorn, that His whole life would be full of pain.

She knew that the calling to be the mother of God's Son was a call to suffer with her Child for 34 years and in the end to stand weeping at the foot of the cross.

Her quiet acceptance was heroic: "Let it be to me according to Thy word." (Luke 1:38)

Joseph's decision was also remarkable. He had loved a pure girl and was sure they would have a blessed marriage and would have children to rear in the fear of the lord. Then his heart was stricken—whose would not have been?—at the discovery that his bride was pregnant. She never gave him any explanation. Then an angel told him in a dream that what she had conceived was of the Holy Spirit.

Joseph probably knew little about who or what the Holy Spirit was. Such a thing had never happened before. Such a message was not easy to

believe. But he must have been a man who always put the best construction on events. He decided to obey the dream.

The experience had been hard on the bridegroom. The bride, Mary became taciturn and "pondered these things in her heart." Only seven words of hers are reported for 34 years of her life with Jesus. As for Joseph, we are not told of a single word he ever spoke.

The two spent their lives quietly in simple belief. When you have Jesus for a child, there is no need for much talk.

We too have to receive Jesus in faith, even while realizing that we must bear a cross and be crucified with Him.

What proof did Joseph have that the dream was not just a dream? The search for proof comes from doubt, and disbelief is sinful. Atheists may find it difficult to believe, but believers find it difficult to entertain doubt. Disbelief to them is as abhorrent as adultery or killing.

Only those who do not know Jesus question the logical legitimacy of faith. Mary did not doubt when an angel spoke. Neither did Joseph, even if the angel appeared to him only in a dream. How then should we doubt the One who died for us?

When we came to believe in Jesus, it was not the result of reasoning on our part, which could very well have been false. When Peter first acknowledged Jesus as the Son of the living God, the Lord

assured him. "Not flesh and blood has revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 16:17) This also applied to my faith.

We throw in our lot with Jesus, because He has the seeds of truth that contain the fruits of righteousness and the flowers of eternity. What philosophers and doubters have to offer is, by comparison, mere husks.

* * *

Jesus is repeatedly referred to as the Mediator. Now a mediator is never representative of only one side. He hears the grievances of both parties and seeks a middle way of peace.

God has many grievances against men. They sin against His law, though as Creator He has the right to require obedience.

But men also have their grievances against God.

The renowned Hassidic rabbi Levi-Yitzhak of Berdichev never hesitated to say that God has to ask forgiveness for the sufferings He imposes upon us, just as we have to ask forgiveness for trespassing against His law. He taught that the day of atonement is a day of mutual forgiveness.

He was very daring in his discussions with God. Once he told Him, "If you refuse to answer my prayers, I shall refuse to go on saying them." He put to God a question: "You gain by forgiving our sins. If we did not sin, how would you exercise your love

to pardon?"

In Isaiah 5:1-3 there is a song that is God's complaint:

Now let me sing to my Well-beloved
A song of my Beloved regarding his vineyard
On a very fruitful hill.

He dug it up and cleared out its stones,
And planted it with the choicest vine.
He built a tower in its midst,
And also made a winepress in it;
So He expected it to bring forth good grapes,
But it brought forth wild grapes.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem.

and men of Judah,

Judge, please, between Me and My vine-
yard.

Then God asks the question, "What more could have been done to my vineyard?"

Isaiah had no answer to this question. God did. He knew mankind's complaints were justified, too. And He did the one thing more that could be done: He came to share human life with all its hardships. How can one reproach a God who is a poor, suffering man just like you? A God who imposes pain on others must show He is ready to bear it Himself. This is what Jesus did when He became God in the flesh.

He also satisfied the just demands of God to the human soul. He paid the ransom for us. He bore

the punishment of our sins. This is how peace was established.

A pastor stayed overnight in a farm. In the morning the farmer showed him his chickenhouse. They paused before a nest on which a hen was seated. Under her wings she sheltered her chicks.

"Touch her, pastor," said the farmer. She was cold, dead, unmoving. A weasel had sucked out all her blood, but to protect the chicks, which the weasel would also have attacked, she had not moved.

Such a mediator we have in Jesus.

We may have grievances against God. Jesus did not take His defense in many words, though He said, "No one is good but God." Neither did He quarrel with sinners, but simply showed them His love and then died for them.

On Good Friday He was dead, but under His wings lay the assurance of life. Only a week before, He had lamented over His people, "How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!" (Matthew 23:37).

Because Jesus is just such a mediator, He split time in two. Recorded history divides time into the era Before Christ and the rest After Christ (*Anno Domini*—is the year of our Lord). Even the Communists, who hate Him, number the years from his birth.

* * *

During the French Revolution in 1789, a certain Lepaux launched a new religion called "Theophilanthropy." It made no headway, though supported by the government.

Lepaux complained to Talleyrand, a witty statesman, and asked for advice. Talleyrand replied, "There is a sure way to make your religion popular. Get yourself crucified, buried, and then resurrected on the third day. It would be advisable also to perform some miracles, to heal a multitude of the sick, to feed the hungry, and to bring a couple of dead men back to life."

This is how Jesus introduced His religion. This is how He became our Master, master in the absolute sense of the word. When He was still a babe, Simeon called Him "lord," using the Greek word "despot." (Luke 2:29) He is an absolute monarch with unlimited power, who is obligated to give account to no one for what He does. Therefore just to question His authority is sin.

But though endowed with all power, He does not exercise it. He does not dictate. Rather He reduced himself to our level and became a man like us, in fact, a man of low social rank. And "He was in all points tempted as we are." (Hebrews 4:15) Therefore this almighty "despot" can be our understanding friend.

Father Brown, the central character in Chesterton's crime novels, could easily detect murderers and robbers because he could feel what was

happening in someone else's soul. He knew the potential thief, crook and assassin within himself; he was attentive to the bad impulses of his own heart. He knew what he would do if he were to follow these evil inclinations. By identifying with lawbreakers, by infiltrating their skewed mentality, he was able to follow leads invisible to others.

Jesus, by identifying with mankind, was subject to like temptations—which must have caused Him untold suffering, beyond anything we know, because He never yielded to them. But his encounters with evil enables Him to have great understanding even for the worst of sinners, even for His betrayer and murderers.

He identified completely with them. Their sins became His, and he bore their punishment. The "despot" with complete, absolute power consented to die a malefactor's death on a cross.

Therefore God greatly exalted Him.

Bethlehem is a town connected with the name of two "despots". Jesus was born there. Herod was buried there. Herod, who severely exercised his despotic powers, is dead, and who knows what lies beyond? Jesus, who renounced His despotic powers, still lives and will dwell with His beloved for ever more.

Every one of us has the potential to dominate someone else. Let us learn from the example of Jesus how to use it.

* * *

John Berchman, of the seventeenth century, wrote the following beautiful teachings:

"Think of Jesus Christ raised up on the cross praying for His enemies; see how his blood flows from every wound... Looking at the head of our Lord crowned with thorns, I will pray for my superiors, both ecclesiastical and civil. Considering the wound in His right hand, I will pray for my relatives, for my brothers, my friends and benefactors. The wound in the left hand will remind me to pray for my enemies, for those who have offended me, for all those whom I myself have caused to be saddened."

"For myself, I will take the wound in his sacred side; I will ask him for these graces:

1. to love God with all my heart;
2. to be on fire with zeal for the salvation of my fellow men;
3. to persevere in my vocation..."

"Seeing the feet of Jesus pierced with nails, I will remember to pray for all, both good and bad."

The images of even the most renowned men of all time pale into insignificance when viewed in the light of Jesus, the Sun of righteousness.

An anonymous poet compared Him with Alexander the Great, the Macedonian emperor who conquered in the third century B.C. all the countries from Greece to Egypt:

"Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three; one lived and died for self, one died for you and me. One died upon a throne, the other on a cross; one's

life a triumph seemed, the other's but a loss."

"One led vast armies forth, the other walked alone; one shed a whole world's blood, the other gave His own. One won the world in life, and lost it all in death; the other lost His life, to win the whole world's faith."

"Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three; one died in Babylon, and one in Calvary. One gained all for himself, and one Himself He gave; one conquered every throne, the other every grave."

In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the good is defeated. Cordelia, his only faithful daughter, lies dead at the feet of her father, who had unjustly rejected her. In all great dramas as in real life, which is dramatic too, everything ends in death. *Oedipus*, *Medea*, *Clytemnestra*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, all the *Richards* and *Henrys* of Shakespeare's plays—all conclude with the great personalities dead and the curtain falling. What they accomplished, good or bad, was for nought.

John Berchman made the wounds of Jesus his subject of meditation. I also meditate on them. But where are these wounds? They are in the glorified body of Jesus, in the body with which He triumphed over death. He showed them to Thomas, and all the apostles saw them as proof of the resurrection.

And He assured us too of a glorious resurrection.

Worms, fire, or the sea might consume my body. But my soul will live in a world with no more wander-

ings and trials. I do not have to pass through many painful incarnations. Beyond death lies paradise.

* * *

Nature possesses amazing knowledge. The glowworm, for example, can produce light without losing heat. Our best machines have a practical efficiency of only forty to fifty percent, whereas those of nature work without loss.

Jung writes about the soul: "Its nature possesses unheard-of wisdom. It is completely impregnated with it. It contains knowledge about things around it, power of which we can become conscious if we grant our all to the psychic operations."

These are the words of an eminent twentieth century psychologist, but his thoughts are identical with those of the medieval mystic Eckhart, who wrote, "If you ask how big the soul is, you should know that heaven and earth cannot comprehend its grandness, but only God alone, who cannot be comprehended by all the heavens."

Long before his time, Heraclit (2500 B.C) had said, "If you wish to arrive at the limits of your soul, you will not find them no matter which way you go, so great are its depths."

Even if you do not believe the soul to be immortal, you must acknowledge that it has been considered as such by the greatest spirits of mankind, that the soul would deserve to be transmitted to a permanent sphere, that it would be good if it

could bloom in another world and still be useful.

The Greek philosopher Plato wrote, "The man whose heart is directed toward love of teaching and wisdom and who exercises this part in himself, will surely have immortal and divine thoughts if he apprehended truth. And in the measure in which it is in human nature to have immortality, he will not miss it."

How little do men value their own soul! Eve sold hers for an apple, Esau for a plate of lentils, and Judas for thirty pieces of silver.

For how much have you sold yours?

Take care of your soul. As the tree falls, so it remains. In eternity you will live the life that you have prepared here.

* * *

The Greek philosopher Plotinus wrote, "Often when I fall asleep and leave the external world, I come to myself. Then I see a wonderful beauty. I believe strongly in my belonging to a better and higher world. I live within myself, with power, the most splendid life and become one with Godhead. After having sojourned with the Godhead, when I descend to the activity of the body, I ask myself why I am descending and how come my soul ever entered a body when it was what it had revealed itself to me to be, in spite of its inhabiting a body."

Plotinus had experienced the existence of his soul.

It is true that no one has ever seen his soul, but neither have we seen our pain or our joy. We simply feel them.

It is nonsense to seek the seat of the soul because, like life itself, it is everywhere.

For years I lived alone in a subterranean Communist prison cell. In solitary confinement we had no books, no radio. There was no voice, no whisper. Perfect silence reigned. No one ever spoke to us.

But in those years I was with relatives and friends, those alive and those who had died. I was in many churches, in many lands; I was on all continents. I was in other spheres, with angels and glorified saints in heaven, with devils in hell. My soul was with Adam and Eve and with the generation that will witness Jesus' return.

I was not only in all space and time but also in a realm in which there is no here or there, no difference between a thousand years and one day because time is no more.

The soul only visits this material world, but since we do not belong to it, the soul cannot find here the explanation for or definition of itself. It is so different from all that is in this world that it sometimes doubts if it *is* at all, in the sense this world gives to the word "is."

It goes somewhere but wonders sometimes where it can go, since all realms already belong to it. Jesus says about His disciples, "Theirs is the

Kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3)— now, not in the future.

The soul is the Kingdom's most exquisite toy.

"The kingdom of God is within you," but not all of it is illuminated. The last words of Goethe, the great German poet, were, "Light, more light!"

This we should all seek. The present book is written to aid in the search.

* * *

Scientists have sought the locus of the soul in laboratories or during autopsies. They have never found it, nor will they ever. It belongs outside the realm of the objects of the inquest.

Then what is the soul, and where is it?

It may be that we are trying to solve a problem that is essentially meaningless. The noted British physicist Sir James Jeans wrote, "It is probably as meaningless to discuss how much room an electron takes up as it is to discuss how much room fear and anxiety or an uncertainty takes up." Matter might not be material at all. Perhaps the soul is not a "something" to be found "somewhere."

Lightning strikes. An artist can paint the splendid flash of light in the dark sky. A scientist describes it as an electrical discharge in the atmosphere. For Luther, lightning was the sign of God's wrath that propelled him into becoming a monk. Which of these perceptions is correct?

A mental event is described by the neurolo-

gists as an interplay of nerves, brain cells, hormones. It makes Romeo die for Juliet. It brings a believer to the ecstasy of faith. Yet Romeo and the early Christians did not even know that hormones exist.

Will, sentiment, and thought are connected with the body and can be explained in terms of the body. But the contrary is also true. The body and its functions are mental concepts. Our mind tells us (who is this "us" and who does the telling, and who analyzes the relationship between teller and told?) that the different senses give it a multitude of perceptions which it synthesizes into the notion "body".

Without a body, no mind. Without a mind no body, but a whirlwind of elementary particles. And these too are a product of the mind.

Poets and painters tell us about sunsets. Scientists enjoy the portrayals but are also convinced the sun neither rises nor sets; the earth turns around the sun. Which is the truth? Why should science be the truth and art and everyday experience not?

When I speak objectively, I limit myself to physiology and anatomy. Thinking as subject, I know my soul.

Virtually everyone lives in the presumption that space is a kind of receptacle within which things are located. A handful of scientifically trained people know that space is an attribute of matter. It

is a relationship between things and would not exist without things.

The scientists who think thus also live and walk around in space and create spaceships.

Souls exist just as all the beauties of nature exist, however much scientists might want to reduce them to cold chemical or physical formulas.

This soul can live eternally in happiness and usefulness or can get lost through persistence in sin, refusal of repentance, and denial of faith.

If you proposed to an ass, "I will give you enough straw to fill a house if you will allow me to cut off your head," the ass would not accept. But we accept such proposals as often as we sin.

We are like a man who has a costly jewel in the safe but cares more about the safe than about the jewel. Observing how well Westerners treat their pets, one might prefer to be their pet than their soul.

Jesus has come to save your soul. Listen to him!

* * *

An equilibrist stands upside down on a broomstick teetering over several shaky tables and plays the violin. A person in the audience leans over and says to his friend, "I wonder why he plays the violin in public. He's not a virtuoso."

This is how many people judge the thoughts of Christian prisoners wrenched from them in extremes of physical and psychological torture.

What I write below expresses what I felt while

viewing their sufferings in an underground Communist prison.

What intrigued us most was that we did not obtain from heaven what it was obviously reasonable to expect: a slight improvement in our situation, food to quiet our hunger, an abatement of the cruel torture. We did not get what we expected because heaven is not—humanly speaking—reasonable.

Jesus said: "There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15:7) This is surely not reasonable.

Jesus also said, "To whom little is forgiven, the same loves little," (Luke 7:47) Why should one first have to commit many heinous sins before loving Him? Therese of Lisieux objected to these words. Brought up in a devout family, dedicated to the lord at a very early age, a Carmelite at fifteen, dead at twenty-four, she used to say to the Lord, "I love you much, ardently, though I had not known the great sins of the world."

Nowhere does the Bible speak about the reasonableness of God, but rather about His foolishness. (1 Corinthians 1:21) He is as unreasonable as the thoughts of little children. Christ became a child and recommended that we become as children, too.

The renowned Franciscan Giacomone was considered mad because of the things he did out of love for Jesus. It is said that once even Jesus appeared

to him and asked, "Why do you commit such mad deeds?" he replied, "Because You taught me. If I am mad, You are even more so. Where is the reasonableness of Your dying for me? I am a fool because Thou has been a greater fool."

A newspaper published the story of a man whose hat was blown off while he was out fishing with friends. Quickly he jumped into the icy water to retrieve it and was never seen again. What a tragedy to risk a life for a hat worth a few dollars!

Was it reasonable to sacrifice the life of the unique Son of God for witless, dirty, dumb sheep? I have asked many shepherds what they would do if they saw a wolf. They all replied, "We would run for our lives." No man dies for sheep. Yet Jesus did. He died for beings worse than sheep—for those who denied and betrayed Him, for those who had demanded His crucifixion, for his killers, for those who blaspheme and hate God.

Do not be surprised if you fail to get from God what you might reasonably expect. If He were truly reasonable, He would never listen to the prayers of people like us, nor would we have salvation.

Rather, God loves to the point of folly.

If you are in the sad situation of experiencing neither His reason nor His mad love, you might consider that in the parable of the ninety-and-nine, it is only the lost sheep that has sure proof of His love and concern. The others could reasonably say they were neglected and abandoned. When the

prodigal son returned home, he was embraced with love, was given a ring, and was feted with the fatted calf, music, and dancing. The faithful son who came in from the fields all tired out and sweaty was not even greeted with a kind word.

Those who are faithful should simply be glad that others experience His love to folly.

The good Samaritan of the parable was not a tourist. He doubtless was making an important business trip and had appointments to keep. His extraordinary good deed must have delayed him considerably. Perhaps he even neglected other duties because he stopped to serve a wounded man.

In solitary confinement while waiting for years for God to come to my aid, I realized he tarried and tried to think of Him as the good Samaritan. I was sure He had set out to help but that he Himself might have seen a wounded man He stopped to succor and carry to the inn. I thought that he who saw a sparrow fall might also stop to brush the dew from a flower petal weighted down. In solitary, we were happy about His mad love even in moments when we were not its recipients.

Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, enraptured, ran about her convent carrying an image of the crucified Jesus and crying, "O Love! I shall never cease, my God, to call you 'Love.'"

Do not count on reasonableness in heaven and you will never be disappointed. Count only on the fact that there is One who loves you to such folly

that He died for you. In response, forget about sweet reason and let yourself fall madly in love with Him. These my words are oracles of God.

* * *

To learn from your enemies is the best way to love them, because it makes you thankful for them.

How different is Jesus' teaching about loving your enemy from what the world prescribes. Frederick the great, king of Prussia, once said, "He is a fool, and that nation is a fool, that, having the power to strike his enemy unawares, does not strike and strike him the deadliest."

To the contrary, in Judaism, love for others is considered a duty.

In *Baba Kama*, a part of the Talmud, there is an example of some of the beautiful attitudes of love taught by the Jews: "If a companion calls you an ass and asks you to carry him like an ass, put the saddle on yourself immediately." It is better to suffer more injury than to lose your temper. It is better to be among the afflicted than those who afflict.

A very old Amish bishop taught me, "If someone shouts at you or wrongs you, put a thermometer in your mouth immediately to be sure your temperature does not rise."

If someone becomes your adversary, remember that many men are better than they look. There are evil spirits trying to control and direct their lives. Who knows from what pits of corruption they may have arisen? They might not have had oppor-

tunity to see the world from an angelic viewpoint.

The Sufites, members of a Moslem sect, have a beautiful saying: "He who is not my friend, may God be his friend; and he who bears ill will against me, may his joy increase. He who puts thorns in my way on account of enmity, may every flower that blossoms in the garden of his life be without thorns."

* * *

In Gethsemane, Jesus called Judas, his betrayer, "Friend."

There is certain truth: where lie the difficulties in finding it?

In a free country, many more real events take place that a man can be informed about through the media. If he desires, he can check his information by telephoning, writing, even traveling to the place where the events took place.

For many years I was a prisoner in a solitary cell with not the slightest means of communication with the outside world. There was the world of reality, but I was in no position to ascertain the truth about it because I was in jail.

There is such a thing as truth, but we all are prisoners— of time, space, and our own surroundings. Supposing that ultimate truth lies outside of time and space, what possibility do I have of finding it?

A man in a bar asked the bartender, "Billy, do you know what time it is?"

"Two o'clock in the morning," was the reply.

The drunkard commented thickly, "I'm probably going crazy. I've been asking people again and again what time it is, and everyone has a different answer."

We are all caught in time. Because time flows, it enters into conflict with our convictions, which tend to be fixed. "I know what I believe. Don't confuse me with the facts," we say, half-joking. But time constantly brings new facts.

Every time you meet a man, you meet someone different from the one you knew before or who has been described to you. But too often, after one or more meetings with a person, we form an opinion that we tend to cling to, whether good or bad. This opinion, which is progressively more difficult to change, epitomizes our view of natural, psychological, or social reality.

Because we humans are prisoners of space, for thousands of years we accepted as truth the notion that the sun travels around the earth. Now we have discovered that this is an optical illusion. But what if our current belief is only another optical illusion, which will be uncovered in future centuries?

A man with defective eyesight may imagine that he sees flies on his plate; for him they have full reality. Though the flies are not real, the illusion is.

The experience of our phenomenal world is like that of the short-sighted man. We all labor

under the constant illusion of perceiving things where, in fact, there is only emptiness.

In Brahman initiations, after a very old ritual, when the disciple asks what the world is, the priest swings around a firebrand, which then resembles a solid wheel of flame.

This visual response was a splendid foresight of modern science. We now know that, contrary to ancient beliefs, there exists no solid world. We ourselves consist of and are surrounded by a whirlwind of elementary particles which, because of the rapidity of their movement and the limitations of our senses, appear to be solid bodies.

Circling at crazy speeds, the particles can look like a bowl into which one can place "solid" objects. The nonexistent "bowl" can hold the nonexistent "objects." What exists is only the circling of ultra-microscopic particles.

The world is like a firebrand swung around in a circle. It took us thousands of years to come to this knowledge, but we do not know if after another thousand years even this would be considered the "real thing"; if our imprisonment in time and space did not keep us from going even further in our discoveries.

For many prisoners in solitary confinement, the walls of the cell are the ultimate limits of their reality. Free men also have limits—of time, space, and surroundings.

One thing further: Our only means of know-

ing the truth, our only instrument for apprehending it, seems to be the mind. But to the works of the mind one can apply the same things that Isaiah, the Jewish prophet, wrote some 3,000 years ago about idolatry:

"The carpenter stretches out his rule; he makes it out with a line; he fits it with planes, and he marks it out with a compass, and makes it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house."

"He hews him down cedars, and takes the cypress and the oak, which he strengthens for himself among the trees of the forest: he plants an ash, and the rain does nourish it."

"Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindles it, and bakes bread; yea, he makes a god, and worships it; he makes it a graven image, and falls down thereto."

"He burns part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eats flesh; he roasts roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warms himself, and says, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:"

"And the residue thereof he makes a god, even his graven image: he falls down unto it and worships it, and prays unto it, and says, Deliver me; for thou art my god." (Isaiah 44:13-17).

Are not the worshipers of the mind guilty of the same thing? With a part of the mind we think about how to make a living; with another part we

seek fun or amusement; with a part we compose jokes or poetry; with a part we sometimes dream foolish things; and then with another part of this same mind we conceive a god, bow before it—or what is worse, we deny the very existence of God and the need for Him.

We search for truth with the same mind that composes jokes and fantasizes in dream; that seeks high status in society and picks up a girl in a bar; that creates a beautiful poem and drowns its sensibilities in alcohol or drugs. And then we believe in the product of such an unfastidious mind.

In the Rumanian language, the word for mind is “it lies,” because the mind, by its very structure, can only tell lies.

What does the mind know? Its work is done by the brain. What does the mind know about its own brain?

The “text” of the genes of one single *E. coli* bacterium cell consists of four million symbols. The human brain is a network of some ten billion nerve cells, each of which has 200,000 contacts with neighboring cells. This huge mechanism, in addition to controlling all sorts of bodily functions, creates symphonies and dirty jokes, decides how to fight for an ideology or religion or rob a bank, plans to woo or deceive, thinks to speak or keep silence. And some of what it thinks, it declares to be the truth. Again, how reliable is this complex organism?

We see stars in the sky that we know disappeared a long time ago. We see them as fixed, though they move. We have corrected and intensified our eyesight by the use of telescopes. But what if the telescope only magnifies an illusion that will be discovered years hence—supposing, of course, that mankind survives his succession of illusions?

The Bible says of a previous age, "Every intent of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5)

In such a context, truth seems unattainable. Therefore the psalmist prayed, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." (Psalm 61:2) The rock that a child finds impossible to climb is within reach if his father lifts him up. This is what God does for us.

* * *

If you can't find the truth, stand without it and love. St. John of the Cross said, "On the evening of life, we will be judged according to love." Augustine wrote, "Lord, send into my heart sentiments of clemency so that, being drawn by love of truth, I will never lose the truth of love." St. Francis de Sales echoed these sentiments: "Truth which is not charitable ceases to be truth, because in God, who is the supreme source of truth, charity is inseparable from truth."

Love must embrace the wicked as well as the good. It is said of St. Paissy that when he prayed for one of his disciples who had abandoned Christ, the

lord told him, "Paissy, you are praying for the one who had denied me?" Undisturbed, Paissy, continued to pray for this man. "Paissy," the Lord then said to him, "you have equaled me in love."

This is how God enables true Christians to think and act.

It is related that when St. John the evangelist was extremely old his disciples were wearied of his constant repetition of the words, "Little children, love one another." It seemed that this was all he said. When he was carried into their assembly, they asked him why he always repeated these words. "Because," he replied, "it is the Lord's commandment, and if only this one were fulfilled, it would be enough."

Not fulfilling this commandment is the greatest hindrance to the conversion of peoples and nations. No miracle can suffice where there is no love. It is all-powerful and all-inclusive. It centers in God, and God is love.

* * *

Jesus taught—and demonstrated—that we should love our enemies. In doing so, we should realize that something might be said in their defense, that people often have many faces.

The evil-speaking of one person against another may not actually be directed against the recipient. It is an expression of anger that has other motivations.

People who are frustrated, who cannot convince others of their merits, often awaken against themselves a great deal of hostility. Then they have the consolation of believing that these "enemies" stand in the way of an acknowledgment of their merits.

If we are having difficulty with "enemies," it would be profitable to ask ourselves if we are engendering this hostility, if perhaps we are behaving like those who irritate us, if our convictions about them are indeed well-founded, if there are overtures we can make to break the bonds of ill will. The history of mankind would have been vastly different if individuals, both highly placed and lowly, had stopped to examine their own hearts and motivations.

Therefore, it is better to love than to hate your enemy, because you may not be properly informed about his state of mind. Perhaps you are both seeking truth. Be careful to defend your own cause without harming the one who attacks you.

* * *

Don't ask many people about truth rather keep silent.

"The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him." (Habakkuk 2:20)

What I miss much in churches is silence. For years I lived in perfect silence in my underground cell in Communist prisons and have embraced it as

a friend.

There have been countless studies about the words of the Bible, but none about its silence on a multitude of subjects that are worthy of notice.

Most of the great problems of life that concern us certainly troubled such men as Moses and the apostles, all of whom met God face to face. Surely they asked difficult questions and received some answers about which the Bible is silent.

A sage once sat in profound meditation. He was asked, "Where is God?" The sage kept silent. The man repeated his question. Again, silence. The question was put the third time. Still, no reply.

"Don't you want to answer?" the man asked.

"I replied, but you did not hear. God dwells in silence."

The Bible not only reveals many things, but also keeps silence about many. What did Jesus think and do between the ages of twelve and thirty? We find no answer to this in the Bible, not because there is a secret to be hidden but because such answers are communicated in silence.

Jesus was a marvelous preacher, but He also knew how to keep silence marvelously. He was silent before Herod, thus teaching him that soon his foul mouth would be silenced by death. He was silent when Pilate asked Him, "Where are You from?" (John 19:9) Pilate should have understood that He was from the realm of silence.

The historian Macrobius relates that in Crete

and Egypt, when worshipers came to the temple, they found it locked. A priest called "the keeper of the threshold" stood at the door and asked, "Do you know what house you are entering?" They were obliged to reply, "We know." "Do you know before whom you will stand?" They answered, "We know,". Only then was the door unlocked.

The worshipers thus had time to compose themselves before appearing in the presence of God.

The Spirit of adoption makes us cry out "Abba, Father." (Romans 8:15) Not much more is needed. A little child embraces his father's leg and says lovingly, "Daddy!" So much. Moved by the spontaneous expression of life, the father will surely do his utmost for the child, and he knows better than the child what is best.

Let us speak to God and for God, but, most important, let us also have our times of deep silence.

Surely we must pray in words, but let us not neglect silent prayer.

Francis de Sales says that in this "the soul becomes quiet wax waiting for God to impress on it His word."

As long as one prays in words, there are two: God and the soul. In sacred silence, the two become one. The ability to remain silent in God's arms is the measure of love for God. Mary Magdalene could pass a whole evening quietly at the feet of Jesus,

listening to His voice. A bride does not speak when her lips are covered with the kisses of the bridegroom.

The silent no longer need to worry about building on a rock. They become rocks on which others can build.

As the lotus rooted in watery darkness seeks the light and rises to the surface, so the silent, though born and educated in the world, rise above it in unsullied beauty.

Francis of Assisi went to town once with another friar to preach. On the way, they were mocked but did not reply. When they returned to the monastery, Francis asked the brother, "How did you like my sermon?"

"You did not say a word."

"We have both preached well," responded Francis. "The message of our sermons was to remain silent when scorned."

Historians report that when king Frederic II asked St. Francis why he was silent, he replied, "Who can put into words the sublimity of silent service?"

How can a God "with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17) move the whole universe? Only a motor that moves can move a machine.

Let a beautiful girl enter a room and sit down quietly in a chair, and all around her will begin to move. Beauty moves while remaining unmoved.

God's splendor moves the universe.

Jesus said to Matthew simply, "Follow Me," without providing any argument as to why Matthew should abandon his business and go after an unknown. The radiation of Jesus' spiritual beauty was sufficient to impel him. Matthew locked his custom office and followed Jesus.

We do not need the much talking and moving in prayer. Silent prayer imparts something of heaven's glory. As we reflect the beauty of holiness, it will move God, Christ, the glorified saints, angels, and those in this world, without our pronouncing a word.

The jewel of silence is a pearl lost by the church. Let us practice silence—but at the same time keep silent about the practice.

* * *

The English translation of Psalm 109:4 says, "I give myself to prayer." The Hebrew original contains only two words: "I—prayer," not even "*I am* prayer," which would establish a relationship between myself and prayer. This would overstate the meaning. I and prayer are identical, as Richard Wurmbrand and myself are identical.

Prayer should consist not only of words but also the spirit and the whole person. Augustine wrote, "The spirit prays, even when the tongue is silent," just as the heart and the kidneys function without speaking.

The essence of prayer is quietness, as the beginning of the Orthodox liturgy suggests: "Let us put aside all worldly worry." It is prayer to forsake my opinions, my fantasy, my passions, even my thought about God.

When my son was four, I told him to think about God. He replied, "Why should I think about this big God with my small mind? Let Him with his big mind think about me." Jesus said, "The Son of man is coming at an hour you do not think." (Matthew 24:44) Our thoughts play a secondary role in prayer.

At the entrance of church in Albania, there was this inscription: "Those who wish to enter through the gate of God's house, leave the drunkenness of thoughts to find inside the Judge full of grace."

May prayer be an hour of secret communion with God, but not an hour of self-condemnation (of "down-thinking of yourself," as the Greek of 1 John 3:21 suggests.)

Certainly it is proper to review in prayer your past sins one by one, but not as sins attributable to you. They belong to Jesus.

Luther wrote with much boldness, "Christ is the greatest liar, thief, murderer, the world has ever had. Not through committing these deeds, but because He took them all upon Himself. Now they are His. After you have ascertained that, because of His sacrifice, you do not have any more sins, which

now lie on His shoulders. Meditate slowly on all His attributes, visualizing them not as His, but as yours, because they are His gifts to you. His splendid kingdom is within us."

Emerging from such an hour of prayer, you will be able to sing, whatever others may think, "I am a rose of Sharon" (Song of Solomon 2:1); "I am lovely" (Song of Solomon 1:5); "I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14).

* * *

It is not the length of prayer that counts, but its quality. Many believers are sad because they feel they cannot pray much. If that is the case and no words come during your time of prayer, keep silent. Perhaps the Lord does not wish to have words. A loving look may convey more to the heavenly Bridegroom than many words. Do not let lakes and forests speak to the human soul, though they have no mouth?

Contemplate the beauty of His holiness and meditate on His mercy and loving-kindness. What counts in prayer is above all the state of heart.

* * *

I wish to have the truth for myself. There exists something better than this: it is the denial of the self.

Jesus teaches men to deny themselves for the simple reason that even without our denial, the self

is only an illusion. It is we who gather on a string different events of our life, different opinions and convictions that we have maintained over time, and then designate them as the "self."

I am surely not my self. If I were to meet my self on the street as I was at the age of nine, or fourteen, or thirty, or fifty, I would not salute him. I would probably not recognize him, except that now we have photographs to remind us of what we once were. At a time when photography did not exist, men would not have recognized themselves at all.

If I were to read or hear the things I said when a child, a teenager, or a mature man before my conversion, I would feel absolutely no sympathy for those opinions. I would not even recognize them as being my own.

From heaven's viewpoint, the words and opinions of even the greatest saints on earth must seem childish; glorified saints would probably not recognize them as ever having been their opinion.

Jesus did not consider it useful for us to know even one of His thoughts or words between the ages of twelve and thirty. Of how much less value are our opinions!

What kind of self, then, can I boast of if I can detach myself from it; if I can deny it; if I can even commit suicide?

Everything I observe has an objective existence: it can also be observed by other individuals

and I can verify my conclusions. The self can be contemplated by no one but me. I have no witness to corroborate my analyses. My "self" declares what my "self" is, and this "self" is not reliable.

Again, the self has as its material tool the brain. The brain is an apparatus with which we think that we think. But let us be honest with ourselves: how many hours a day do we use our brains for thinking? How much of what we have thought proves to be true?

A false comparison has been made between the human brain and a computer. The computer gives mathematically exact results; the brain does not. The self is a deceiver. Therefore Jesus says, "Deny yourself." The self is a poor instrument for discovering truth.

The shortest Biblical names of God in Hebrew are *Yah* and *EI*. These names are found in pre-Biblical times, in the Ebla tablets.

It is said that the Japanese used to have very long names. By way of illustration, the story is told about a Japanese who fell into the water, and a man desperately tried to explain to another that Taramcecapatostarnecaton was in danger of drowning. By the time he finished saying the name, the man in the water went down for the third time and was beyond saving. Since then, the Japanese have restricted themselves to short names.

In Hebrew, the name *Yah* is constituted of only two letters. By pronouncing just one syllable,

a person may be in His presence immediately.

America's fiftieth state, the Hawaiian Islands, were once called the Sandwich after the Earl of Sandwich.

From him also comes the name of a popular food often eaten between meals. A passionate gambler, he would not leave the gaming table for lunch or dinner. Therefore, he invented the "sandwich," which one can eat while pursuing other interests.

If the passion for gambling can shorten the time for eating, so that passion for heaven may shorten religious talk. What good is it anyway? "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." (Romans 10:13) For this purpose, God gives Himself—even in English—a monosyllable as a name and puts in a short word the one single condition of salvation: "The just shall live by *faith*." (Romans 1:17)

* * *

The truth must also have a short name by which to be known to those who need it immediately. Like a coin or a bill hidden in a wallet, it must be readily available in an emergency.

But just as popularized science is not science itself, so a shortened message about the truth is not the whole truth.

Be happy to have found the truth in a short name and in a short message. But then seek diligently for more treasure when the emergency has

passed.

Small nuggets of truth can tell us a great deal about the whole truth; but the whole truth, arrived at by conclusions from the few things that are known, must be kept entire. Nothing less than the whole creed will do in religious matters.

There is both an advantage and a disadvantage to short messages.

* * *

Suffering may help out to arrive to truth.

"Tears, tears, bitter hulls but with such a sweet kernel," wrote the much persecuted Romanian Christian poet, Traian Dorz.

Most people have an unjustified phobia against suffering. Unnecessary tragedy should be avoided, but we should also realize that there is much good in suffering.

Milton wrote his finest poetry after he became blind. Only when deaf, did Beethoven compose his most beautiful music.

The German philosopher Kant, who suffered from an incurable sickness, wrote, "I have become master of its influence on my thoughts and actions by turning my attention away from this feeling altogether, just as if it did not at all concern me." Wilberforce, hero of the fight against slavery in the British empire, could not live one day without pain-relieving drugs, but he had the willpower to take only a minimum dose.

Henry Stanley, reared in a poor children's orphanage, there learned the endurance he later needed to find the lost Livingstone and to explore the interior of Africa. Kernahan, born without arms or legs, became a member of the British parliament.

Solzhenitsyn wrote, "Blessed be thou, prison." The seven years in Soviet jails made of him the most powerful opponent of Communism.

I can say about myself that my fourteen years in Communist prisons were the most fruitful years of my life.

I know of no great character formed apart from suffering. A world without suffering would consist of weaklings. What kind of life endures without painful sacrifices? He who counts the sufferings involved will never be a daring hero.

Jesus Himself was made perfect through sufferings. (Hebrews 2:10) He is in heaven now, but it is written that saints who sin crucify him even there. He feels the sins of each of us as if nails were driven again into His flesh. (Hebrew 6:6).

A heaven entirely without suffering would not satisfy the saints.

Jesus said. He would make some saints rulers over cities. Can one be a righteous ruler without having to endure tribulation? Every good monarch suffers with the afflictions of all his subjects.

When Pope Alexander VI, criticized by Savonarola for his unworthy life, offered him the position of cardinal in order to keep him silent,

Savonarola answered, "May God keep me from being unfaithful to Him. I do not desire any other red cap than the crown of martyr colored with my own blood."

The highest state of a Christian reader, as well as that of a Christian writer, is to be Christlike. (The reader who is not a Christian would please God by becoming one.)

Christ was called a "Man of Sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3) and "the lamb slain before the foundation of the world." (Revelation 13:8)

To be a Christian, whether writer or reader, means to become a co-sufferer with Christ. The more of His pain we are ready to share, the more truth we will receive.

Someday we will sit with Jesus and the Father on the heavenly throne from which universes are created and administered. (Revelation 3:21) At that time there will be pain, but only because forgiving love will need to be exercised and questions will need to be resolved. Eventually, a merciful God "will wipe away all tears" from the eyes of His saints and all will be able to rejoice wholeheartedly.

* * *

During World War II, I saw the Soviet army enter my country in pursuit of the Nazis. The moment they crossed our Romanian frontier, on hearing people speak a foreign language, they

asked if they were near Berlin. To them, what was not Russia was Berlin.

In earlier times, there were many pilgrims who traveled from Russia to the Holy Land. They mistook the first town they came to as Istanbul and the first river as the Jordan.

I have met men who never ventured beyond the borders of their own village. They only knew that beyond their village was a pub with good vodka. They would say, "Who can know what is beyond this pub?"

In essence, we are all similarly afflicted. Even the most cultured and the most well-traveled know only a small part of the surface of the earth. They have not been within its depths. Only three men have ever walked on the moon, and on only a tiny area at that.

Our telescopes and spaceships have scanned the surface of other celestial bodies. Spectroscopy tells us their constitution and that is all. If there were intelligent beings on other heavenly bodies, we would not know about them.

If our mind cannot tell us what the world is, even less can it answer who its creator is. The mind does not even know what the mind is. If you were to ask, the mind is the questioner and the answerer. The mind has created an artificial separation between what is inside and what is outside. It has divided reality into subject and object. But this division is a mental artifice to which nothing corre-

sponds in reality. Subject and object are inseparably interrelated.

The Nobel Prize-winning physicist Werner Heisenberg wrote, "We have to remember that what we observe is not nature herself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning."

From information received through the senses, our mind forms a picture of nature. The mind formulates a question about this picture and receives answers according to the question posed.

The questions become more and more complicated. We ask about the lifetime of a subatomic particle that exists for only a trillionth of a second. But any measurement is a highly complicated affair.

We measure, for example, the temperature of something by reading the thermometer. What we really do is to take the thermometer's temperature. But doesn't the thermometer register the temperature of the man in whose mouth it is placed? Yes, it does—but only after two or three minutes have passed. During these minutes, the temperature of the human body and of the thermometer have adjusted to each other. Some of the heat of the body has passed to the mercury of the thermometer, but some of the cold of the thermometer has also passed to the human body.

When it is a question of an interaction between a small thermometer and a large human body, it makes no visible difference. But when we

wish to measure the temperature of a very, very small object, we are never really able to ascertain a true reading."

Similar considerations led Heisenberg to his renowned "uncertainty principle."

If you were to focus a bright light on me while I am sitting or walking, you will see me as I am. But if you focus the same light on the position of an electron, the photons of the bulb give the electron such a jolt that it changes its motion. To avoid this, you have to view the atom with low-energy light. But then the resulting picture is not clear. You may know the position of the atom but not its motion. You cannot know precisely both position and motion.

Interestingly enough, the same is true if you wish to measure social events. Polls taken by different institutions or individuals yield results that vary greatly, because the answers people give depend very much upon the character of the questioner, the form of his question, the timbre of his voice, and so on.

To us, the stars appear to be calm, steady, slow—moving heavenly bodies, but we only know about them from high-velocity sources—rays of light, which travel at maximum speed.

Can we rely on the mind? Dreams come from the same mind that governs perceptions of reality. Would we accept these dreams as truth?

There exist sight, foresight, hindsight, in-

sight, and one thing more: blindsight.

Professor Weiskrantz of the University of Oxford demonstrated it as a form of unconscious vision possessed by a small number of blind people that allows them to see without knowing they see.

Persons who had become blind because of a lesion in the cerebral cortex would respond negatively when asked if they could see an object held before their eyes. Then they were asked to guess. Surprisingly, ninety percent guessed correctly. This was explained as the result of a different nerve connection between the eye and the brain, passing through the mesencephalon.

Those with blindsight perceive things without being able to define them. It is analogous to a sudden awareness of a person's presence just before he enters the field of one's peripheral vision.

This blindsight helps us understand a phenomenon much debated in the underground Orthodox church of the Soviet Union.

In that country there are men like Patriarch Alexei or Metropolitan Pitirim who probably believe in Christ but have compromised with Communism and serve as its tools, just as many Lutheran leaders did in Nazi Germany. They have turned their back on the persecuted. On the other hand, there are atheists like Sakharov who take the defense of all innocents who are made to suffer.

The underground church asks itself, "Is not Christ the beloved of everyone who loves justice?"

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, "If in invincible ignorance one believed in the name 'Jesus,' which means 'salvation' in Hebrew, even if he did not know the Jesus born in Bethlehem, such belief would constitute an implicit and sufficient faith."

God is love. Whoever serves love serves God, even if he does not know it, just as an illiterate person speaks prose, though he is not aware of it.

Such persons are called "anonymous Christians." They are not blind; neither do they have normal sight. They have blindsight. They also belong to the soul of the church.

Perhaps Jesus has touched their eyes slightly only once; therefore, "they see men as trees." (Mark 8:24) We believe they will receive the second touch. There is a place in heaven for them too. They believe in Jesus without knowing His name.

One can know truth without knowing he knows the truth.

* * *

This present book claims to contain the truth, "the oracles of god." Now, there exists a justified skepticism regarding the truth.

If someone is convinced that he has what he believes to be the truth, he must first believe that mankind can know truth, and that mankind can know the means for discovering it. He must also believe that he personally knows these methods and has used them well.

Whoever is aware of the strictures of these conditions will not lightly assert that he has the truth.

Goethe said in a conversation with Luden, "Truth is something which must necessarily be thought; something which simply cannot be thought otherwise." An example would be that two and two are four.

The most widespread definition of truth is this: "correspondence between thinking and reality." But the question remains: what is reality? Does reality reveal itself to me as it is?

The world, including our bodies, is constituted of atoms, yet for centuries we did not know this. Who can count the multitude of other specks of reality hidden from us? Our thinking might correspond to reality as we know it today and still be very far from the truth.

To know a truth, we must first have a true definition of truth. I must know what truth is before I declare or accept a teaching as truth. I would also have to know truth before accepting as true any definition of truth. We therefore need an endless series of preliminary knowledge, which is unrealizable.

Philosophically, truth is unattainable, but that is no cause for worry, because mining is also impossible philosophically.

For mining we need tools of iron. In order to have iron, we must first be able to mine for iron. And

so the argument runs. Meanwhile, miners mine.

Jesus promised, "You shall know the truth."
(John 8:32)

As a seeker for truth, one must fulfill certain conditions. The first is a readiness to suffer for it when it is discovered.

Four girls once met, whose names were Fire, Air, Water and Truth. They spoke about many things. On departing, they said, "We were so happy together, let us meet again. Where can we meet? Fire, where do you live?"

Fire replied, "Sisters, rub two pieces of wood together and you will find me."

Air said, "You will find me wherever you see a flower trembling or a leaf moving."

Water said, "Dig in the earth at the roots of trees. I will be there."

Truth said, "I was expelled from the world and no one receives me. Whoever takes my side is crucified."

It is said that when Pythagoras discovered his renowned theorem, he sacrificed a hundred oxen to the gods. Since then all the oxen in the world tremble every time a truth is discovered, and the possessors of oxen kill the possessors of truth. Fearing this fate, most men settle for less than truth.

Not so Jesus. He said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." (John 18:37). He

witnesses the truth and teaches us, by His example, to do the same whatever the result, even if it is painful and shameful death on a cross.

Second, we must seek the true truth and reject any surrogate.

A man went into a shop to buy cloth for a suit. He noticed that the shopkeeper's yardstick was short and asked him why. The merchant answered, "It doesn't matter. It may be short, but it's very thick."

Sometimes what is presented as truth might be very beautiful, attractive, or pleasant, might give peace or joy, but these qualities cannot replace the most important element we must seek in a religious teaching—its truthfulness.

Third, we must be very careful whom we listen to of those who speak in the name of God. Credulity is dangerous. We can be led astray and lose our souls.

It is said that when Alexander the Great went to war against Darius, king of the Persians, he took a bath and caught cold. His friend Philip, a physician, cared for him.

Just at that time, Alexander received a letter from his most faithful commander advising him to be suspicious of Philip and not to take his medicine, because the physician was in collusion with King Darius to poison him. Philip had allegedly received money and the promise of Darius' sister for his wife.

When the physician entered the room with his

medicine, Alexander took the glass in one hand and with the other gave the letter to Philip. The emperor drank while Philip read. Then Alexander said to him, "I have confidence in your medicine and in your friendship." He regained his health.

This example is often quoted in sermons to suggest that if we can have such confidence in man, then we can have even more in God, our great Friend.

It is my firm conviction that, assuming Alexander really responded in this manner and the story is not legend, he was misguided. Many kings and rulers have been poisoned by their physicians. Many of Stalin's comrades were killed in this manner.

Jesus taught, "Beware of men." (Matthew 10:17) We must beware of men in material things, financial matters, and everyday affairs. Even more, we must not easily give our confidence when the eternal destiny of the soul is at stake.

If anyone desires salvation and sanctification, he must find a religious teacher whom he can trust to speak the oracles of God. But be very choosy.

* * *

One of Romania's richest men told me how he attained his wealth.

At ten, he was a poor orphan boy, without any income or possibility of schooling. He thought to himself, "What should I do? I can start to sell

doughnuts on street corners. Then I will have doughnuts. If I start with gold, I will have gold."

He had seen on a large building a sign designating it as the seat of a gold-mining company, so he applied for the job of elevator boy. Once, the owner of the company rode up the elevator and asked who he was. He told his story, including his motivation for applying at a gold-mining company.

The owner, impressed, called him into his office, where he questioned him at length. He helped him obtain his schooling and enter the university. Eventually, he gave him his daughter as wife and made him the heir of the company. This is how he became rich.

Dream big, think big. Old Testament Joseph, a shepherd boy, dreamt he would become something big and that his brothers, and even the sun, moon and stars, would bow before him. His dreams may have seemed laughable, as yours will seem. But he became Prime Minister of Egypt, a benefactor to many people, and a type of the Messiah to come.

I was a prisoner of the Communists, confined in an underground cell. But I dreamt about a worldwide mission. My dream came true. This Christian Mission to the Persecuted Church (The Voice of Martyrs) "Love in Action Society in India" now works in over fifty countries and prints Christian books in some sixty languages.

Expect great things from God and you will do

great things for Him. They might not be spectacular in the eyes of others. Your works might not even be external. They may consist in forming a Christlike character, rearing a child in the fear of the Lord, witnessing in humility for the Lord, but the results will be of eternal value.

Jesus said, "I will make you fishers of men." The first Christians used a fish as their sign of recognition, because the Greek word for fish spells the initials of "Jesus Christ, son of God, Savior"—*Jesus Christos Theos Hiu Soter*.

Yes, catch fish. Catch first of all the greatest fish, ICHTHYS, Jesus Himself. When you have caught Him, you have caught the Truth itself, the most reliable of teachers.

* * *

A king asked several sages, "How is it that an aquarium filled with water and containing a goldfish weighs as much as the same aquarium with the same amount of water but without the goldfish?" Innumerable answers were given. Even the principle of Archimedes was quoted until in the end someone said, "But does this equality of weight exist? We should first check." Such individuals are rare.

Truth is not easily found. One would be well advised to beware of the peddlers of cheap truth, who rely on the immense credulity of people.

A story is told that may not be true, but it is

an excellent illustration of man's gullibility. Allegedly, someone opened a restaurant but without much success. In danger of failing in his venture, he resorted to a device to attract customers. He put in the shop window an aquarium filled with water and an inscription, "Here are invisible fish." Thousands gathered to see the unusual fish, and business prospered.

Lord-Boyd-Carpenter, who had been Financial Secretary of the British government under Churchill, wrote: "Once a gathering of the Defence Committee seemed to go on endlessly, without any progress. Churchill, getting bored, suddenly pointed a finger at the window and asked those present, 'What kind of bird is that?' Everybody stared at the window. One said, 'Probably a jay.' Another, 'Perhaps a seagull.' And so on. One dared to say, 'I didn't see any bird.' To which Churchill replied, with laughter, "There was none."

In this simple way, he showed the ministers and the generals that they spoke empty words.

Likewise, in your search for truth, be sure you verify facts and challenge assertions before accepting them—especially if they ring true. No one likes to discover his coins are counterfeit.

"Test all things; hold fast what is good."
(1 Thessalonians 5:21)

* * *

In a renowned French movie *Typhoon in*

Nagasaki, a woman who loves an engineer named Morsac unexpectedly appears on the same train as her dear one, who is leaving for Japan. Surprised, he asks, "Why are you here?"

She answers, "I didn't stop to think even for a minute. If you leave, I leave too."

Then he kisses her and tells her, "How beautiful you are when you don't think."

In the Bible it is written that the Son of Man comes in an hour when we do not think. (Matthew 24:44).

A converted lady who had been an alcoholic was asked by what method she had overcome her addiction. She replied, "Method? Method takes thinking and repeated endeavors. I knew that my Beloved who dies for me willed it, so I promptly obeyed. That was all."

The believer places himself before God like a canvas awaiting a painter. Obedience is taken for granted. The canvas, after all, does not resist the gentle pressure of the artist's brush.

The Christian life is not a life of constant choices between the ways of Christ and those of the world. Thinking stops. The choice has already been made. My self has merged with His Self. We are one in the Beloved who is the truth.

A soldier by the name of Alexander was brought before Alexander the Great, charged with desertion. Hearing the accusation, the emperor said, "I do not punish you for your cowardice but because,

as a man who trembles in battle, you bear my name and put it to shame. You would have gone free if you had changed your name."

We are sinners because, while bearing the name of Christ, we have not behaved accordingly.

Jesus said to the heavenly Father, "Behold, I have come...to do your will, O God." (Hebrews 10:7) Before the world was created, when there were no choices to be made on behalf of sinners because there were no sinners, Christ decided to pay the price in the eventuality that man will sin. After the Fall, He never had to choose between coming to earth and not coming. How beautiful that he did not stop to think. Let us imitate him in this.

The Hindus, the Buddhist, and the Tibetan religions prescribe lengthy and difficult practices of meditation. Christianity is a spontaneous, prompt, loving fulfillment of the wishes of our bridegroom.

* * *

In Karl Maria von Weber's operetta *Abu Hassan*, a man of Baghdad lived in utter poverty with his wife Fatima.

In their desperation, they conceived of the idea that Hassan would feign death, for, according to an old custom, every widow without means would receive a big purse from the caliph for the burial. So Fatima ran to the palace with the false news and received a full purse from Zobeide, the caliph's wife.

Hassan then decided on another trick. Now Fatima would feign death. He ran to the palace and also received a purse, this time from the king.

A quarrel arose between the caliph and his wife; who died first, Hassan or Fatima? They went to the poor cottage and disputed the matter in the presence of the two would-be corpses. With a rising voice, the caliph finally promised loudly a thousand ducats to anyone who could tell him who died first. Immediately, Hassan revived and declared he was the first to "die" and claimed this money as well.

We too are poor creatures who have heard that God is rich in mercy towards those dead in trespasses and sins. He offers them forgiveness, blessings, and an eternal paradise.

Now, from this knowledge about the grace of God, two conclusions can be drawn: 1) we should endeavor to be gracious like Him towards those who sin against us, and 2) we should recognize that we are dead in sins, without any possibility of helping ourselves, in order to obtain, without cost, God's free gifts.

Once we have acknowledged that we are sinners by nature and can receive new life only through God's favor, we should not continue to feign death after being revived. We should not stretch out on a couch and let God do everything. Once you are alive, says St. Paul, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:12)

If Baghdad has a good caliph, he should be approached only in times of real need, not in place of working honestly for a living.

Similarly, it is not right to expect God to give us what we can obtain by our own endeavors.

Jesus said to the community of His disciples, "You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:14) You are *one* light, not lights.

In West Germany one evening, twenty-two planes took off from a military airport for an exercise. Unexpectedly, a thick fog arose. Eight planes immediately returned to the base. Four planes got lost. The pilots of the other planes tried to break through the thick wall of fog.

The local radio station interrupted its programming for an urgent news release: "All drivers are asked to go quickly to the airport and keep their headlights on. They will help the planes that are still lost in the fog to land securely. Please communicate the message to other drivers."

Soon the airport was surrounded by 2,500 cars. The drivers were ordered to turn their lights on bright. The lights of one car would not have helped the pilots, but thousands of massed lights did.

A fool poured a cup of water on a house that was on fire and then said, "You see, it is just superstition to believe that water quenches fire. I poured water on the fire but it continues to burn." One cup of water will not save a house on fire, but

the combined mass of water in firehoses can. No self has the truth, but only the community of Christian.

Let us unite our efforts! We will be able to serve as light to the world and to quench many fires from hell.

On one point all large Christian denominations agree. The catholics phrase it this way: "*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*—Outside the church there is no salvation." Calvin wrote, "Outside the church there is no forgiveness of sins, and you cannot hope for salvation. Abandoning the church is always fatal." Luther said the same: "Outside the Christian church there is no truth, no Christ, no salvation."

These statements are of no great help, because the question remains: which is the church?

The Jews had a church established by God Himself in all its details, yet its leaders consulted on how to kill the Messiah.

"All the chief priests and elders took counsel." (Matthew 27:1) We are told this because the decision did not arise out of personal wickedness, but out of the collective wickedness of the social category to which the ecclesiastical judges belonged, what we term the clergy.

I would advise all seminarians and all students in Bible schools to show great diffidence and take many precautions before they seek to become part of the clergy.

In Matthew 23, Jesus pronounced an eight-fold "Woe" over the Pharisees, religious leaders of

His day. He called them "fools and blind," "hypocrites," "serpents," brood of vipers."

Many consider these denunciations too violent and indiscriminating, but they were right .

The Lord does not denounce the existence of scribes or of an ecclesiastical authority. But if we honestly view the characteristic vices of the clerical elite throughout the ages, especially when the Church was politically powerful, and their awful hindrance to the kind of spirituality Jesus taught, we are forced to acknowledge that He had good reason to utter these terrible woes.

Surely they can be read by the clergy—as well as the flock—only with a sense of horror, especially since the tragic history of the Church has shown the Christian clergy to be no better than the Jewish hierarchy. But why should men of God be so unreliable in spiritual matters?

The reasons are many. I will name just one: the manner of recruiting clergy.

"The Lord spoke to Moses, saying,...'No man...who has any defect may approach to offer the bread of his God,...a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long, a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch.'" (Leviticus 21:18-20)

The Jews in Jesus' time observed such commands punctiliously. And in our day there are probably few Christian clergymen with such de-

fects. But we have not delved into the deeper meaning of such words.

Why could a man with a broken leg not be a priest? It is because all men with deformities are in danger of developing an inferiority complex and therefore of over-compensating.

God desires that His servants not have defects in their spiritual body. A minister must have the right proportions; he must walk uprightly; he must grow to a proper stature and be full of courage; he must see well spiritually. No one should be ordained in a church without the healing of his spiritual infirmities. Then he will be able to impart truth.

* * *

In a factory where fine linen was produced, the workers were told to push a button if the threads became tangled, so that the master could come to correct the work.

The threads at a machine where a young girl was working became tangled. An elderly co-worker came to her rescue, but she tangled the threads even more.

When the master came, she apologized, "I did the best I could."

The master answered, "the best thing you could have done was to call me in the beginning."

Mary Magdalene did not try to do anything. She just sat quietly at Jesus' feet, and the tangled

threads of her life were put in order. God said to Moses, 'tell the people to stand still.' When they did, the waters of the Red Sea parted.

The writer and reader of a book like this present volume must be like men possessing nothing, poor people following the poor Master, in perfect quietness.

The earnest searchers for truth are strangers and pilgrims in this world, dead to its allurements and achievements. Expecting nothing from the world, they seek the truth, they love its message and revel in its beauty.

Not to have, and not to desire to have is one of the conditions for obtaining truth. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor." (Matthew 5:3)

In Hebrew, the verb "to have" does not exist. You cannot say, "I have a house," "I have a car," because there is no concept of "having."

No one can speak the oracles of God, nor can one understand them, if he is attached to possessions.

When St. Francis of Assisi was converted, he threw his purple vestments and all his gold at his father's feet. Standing naked before him, he said, "I will no longer say, 'My father, Peter Bernardone' but, 'Our Father which art in heaven.'"

Because he had the truth, the prophet Jeremiah was taken prisoner and thrown into a muddy pit. He was not success-oriented, though he spoke with great earnestness. He was content to fulfill his task, even while knowing his warnings

would not be heeded. "Success is not one of God's names" wrote the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber.

A battle over what the truth is rages constantly. In times of war, truth is the first casualty. Everyone engaged in battle proclaims what is profitable for his cause, even if it goes against the truth.

The seeker after truth, then, does not run after advantages from knowing it, reading it, or proclaiming it. He is simply thirsty for truth for truth's sake.

* * *

We can have full confidence in God, the Author of truth.

Hunter and Percy Mather, missionaries in Mongolia, were lost in the Gobi desert and could not find their way out.

One day their servant came to them and announced, "We have only two handfuls of rice."

Mather answered, "It is not so. We have two handfuls of rice plus God."

And he sat down and recited Psalm 23, knowing that, in difficult or depressing situations, God can introduce entirely new elements to alter circumstances. When he came to the words "You prepare a table before me...", he looked up and saw the caravan of an English explorer who was passing through this inhospitable wilderness for the first time. The Englishman gave the missionaries all they needed and brought them safely out of the desert.

The Mathers knew that if it is not admissible to say, "Lord, Lord" and not do His will, neither is it admissible for God to call us "My child" and "My son" and not give us what we ask of Him. They have confidence that their prayers will be answered.

It is wise to be optimistic in one's thoughts and attitudes.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us to think about God as the good Father who feeds even the birds. Now, birds have their predators, but we are enjoined to think about how God provides for birds and to consider ourselves of much greater value. Jesus also suggests that we contemplate the lilies of the field, which God clothes with beauty, though they soon fade and die. We are urged to see the beauty, not the dying.

It was Jesus' desire that we apply this principle of sanctified optimism to our daily lives.

* * *

In a Laurel and Hardy movie, Hardy is sick and asks his friend to fetch him a doctor. When he returns with a veterinarian, an indignant Hardy asks, "Why did you bring me a vet?"

Laurel replies, "It is wrong to discriminate. A person's religion shouldn't count when you're sick."

This is only a comedy, you say. But for a great many people it just does not matter what religion they have, provided they have one. They are less choosy about religion than about food or clothes.

Religion shows me the way to heaven, just as mathematics charts the course of a spacecraft. A small error in calculation and the astronauts would not reach the moon, nor would they return.

Wrong religion is religion and as such might yield some satisfaction—but it might also land us in hell.

Right religion is more important than right virtue. The astronauts must first be sure that everything has been done to ensure a safe return to earth. Then they can decide which virtues to exercise.

At a party, the question was asked, "If you were shipwrecked on a lonely island, what one book would you prefer to have?" One said, "Shakespeare." Another, thinking to show himself a profound believer, said, "The Bible." The smartest was the third: "I would like a book that would teach me how to build a boat to help me get back to the mainland."

Right religion is just such a boat.

When St. Paul preached in Athens, he did not say one word against sin, but only against false religion. Likewise, the books of Kings and Chronicles in the Bible categorize the Jewish kings not according to their economics or politics, but only according to their manner of worship.

Don't accept a veterinarian as your doctor. You are human.

* * *

Every author rejoices when he sees a good

review of his book. After we die, God will read the book in which we have inscribed the reality of our lives and will reward us accordingly.

It is important to know that we have the possibility of receiving honor and glory from our heavenly Father.

Pasternak, the Russian Nobel Prize winner rejected by the Soviet regime, described "the happiness that every event happens not only on this earth in which the dead are buried, but also in something else, which some call the kingdom of God, others history, again others otherwise."

Events on this earth are recorded not only in time and space. When the Russian Communists imprisoned and killed writers and destroyed their literary works, the theologian Bulgakov wrote, "Manuscripts don't burn." There is another world that keeps "photocopies" of all things written on earth.

Over two thousand years ago some obscure Esserian scribes in the Qumran community wrote books that remained sealed in jars hidden in caves till the mid-twentieth century. For century after century no one knew of their existence. Then one day an Arab boy found a jar that led to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which have so marvelously enriched our knowledge of the Bible.

We may feel that our lives have little value or impact. But the life apparently lost on earth will reappear in a new and greatly improved edition.

Such a hope cleanses the soul. In that new edition we will have our childhood again, our youth, our maturity, every minute of our past life, to relive in a new and better manner.

Yesterday is not gone; it exists in another sphere.

The Bible says God performed a miracle for the Jewish king Hezekiah: the hand on the sundial moved back ten degrees. It was as if at six in the evening it suddenly became eight in the morning of the same day.

One Sunday morning I preached a sermon in Los Angeles, then traveled fifteen hours to New Zealand, crossing the dateline en route, and arrived in time to preach another sermon on the same Sunday morning. Not satisfied with the sermon I delivered in California, I had the opportunity of preaching a better one on the same Sunday morning at the same hour.

The years of our lives have not passed. They have been kept for us so that we may one day relive them in an improved form.

* * *

The Bible says that Satan deceives the whole world. (Revelation 12:9) Since we are in the world, this means that we can be deceived too. If I am obliged to seek the truth, I might fail as other very sincere seekers have failed. Wariness is an essential part of faith.

Truth is not a butter knife, but a surgeon's scalpel. One must be ready to accept the rigors of its cutting edge.

For example, it is a painful truth that religious as well as non-religious literature is afflicted with the virus of banality. Very often it makes no difference which religious book you read, because they all say the same thing. Conversion stories are virtually identical. Read the first three pages of almost any book and you can usually predict, with little margin for error, the middle and the end.

To the contrary, God is never banal.

The French painter Chirico exhibited a large canvas on which nothing was portrayed and entitled it "Void Space." I prefer this to canvas smeared with banalities.

In another art exhibit, an empty canvas was shown with the title, "The Grazing Cow." When the painter was asked, "Where is the grass?," he said, "the cow has eaten it all up."

"And where is the cow?"

"Why should the cow remain if it can no longer find grass?" was the reply.

There is more content in such mockery of art as in many of today's religious books.

If you seek the truth, be prepared for entirely new ideas and be willing to count yourself among the very few who receive the truth. Be ready for the eventuality that you might even have to stand alone in defense of the truth.

Nowadays, many churches believe that the truth is arrived at by taking a poll. A good example is the question of the ordination of women. But you cannot replace truth with public opinion polls. Voices should be weighed, not counted.

We have to distinguish between facts and opinions.

When a journalist writes, "Such and such a house burned down," he states a fact. You can verify it by going to see the rubble and the ashes. But when he writes, "The concert was bad," he expresses only an opinion.

Are you sure you are accepting facts—or merely opinions?

Seek truth even if it comes from very unlikely sources. Occasionally, one can receive fragments of it from untruthful persons. Heaven sometimes speaks through the mouth of hell. The Apostle John made special note in his gospel of the words of the Jewish high priest Caiaphas, who spoke the truth about Jesus' sacrificing His life for the people (John 11:29, 50), though Caiaphas did not mean to serve the truth. But his words were correct, even prophetic.

The seeker after truth may be obliged to give up the beaten path. In the words of Robert Frost, the American poet, he may need to choose "the road less traveled by."

Bacon was the first to speak out against preconceived ideas, against people who took things

for granted, because authorities like Aristotle and Socrates had uttered them. He introduced the inductive method, which asks us to step from facts to teaching, instead of the accepted deductive method, in which men judged the facts according to the teachings of philosophers of old—who might be wrong.

Jesus said, "I receive testimony from no man." (John 5:34) No man, apart from Jesus, is reliable enough for us to build the whole edifice of truth upon his sayings alone. Not even my own mind is good enough for that.

When Peter declared that Jesus was the Son of the living God, Jesus immediately explained to him that these thoughts did not come from Peter's own mind but were a revelation from God.

We have, draped over our beds, tight mosquito nets of systems, conventions, abstractions, simplifications, and superficialities. We are also victims of the media, which always have a bias. They choose to be anti-this or pro-that and then fit the facts into the predetermined mold. If there is an important political upheaval, the appreciation of these very same facts may undergo a radical change and be given on a new significance entirely.

When Hitler took over Germany, the whole history of the country as taught in the schools was changed. The Communists followed the same tactics whenever they came to power. Khomeini has done the same thing in Iran.

So often the mind does not allow the facts to speak for themselves. They are confined in the strait jacket of preconceptions.

Open the gates of your mind to new ideas. Jesus said, "Put new wine into new wineskins." (Matthew 9:17)

Schiller wrote to Korner, "It is disadvantageous to the creative activity of a soul when the intellect examines too closely the ideas that steam towards it. Let the ideas rush in pell mell. An idea, fantastic in isolation, might become important through the one which follows it."

Resolve that you will renounce all repugnance toward a new idea simply because it is new.

* * *

If you are a seeker for truth, give up any hope of a quiet life. Emerson wrote, "God offers to every man his choice between truth and repose. Take whichever you please, but you can never have both."

Seek the truth, not expecting anything for yourself. Remember also that the truth you find might be acceptable for a time but may prove to be insubstantial or unreliable later on.

Rembrandt is the only painter who left ninety self-portraits. He painted pitilessly the slow ruin of his own flesh. His times of skepticism and courage, melancholy and calm, appeared like a full confession before a priest. He also painted fancies about

himself. He painted himself as a wealthy nobleman and a flamboyant cavalier. Though by 1640 he had become the most successful artist in Amsterdam, he knew this popularity would not last. So he painted his decline as well. After ten years, his popularity was fading. By 1652, he was bankrupt.

As you view the truth about yourself, be sincere in accepting it.

* * *

If one were to try to write a book in Hebrew proving that man has only one life, he could not do it. In Hebrew, the language of the Bible, the word for life is *haim*, a plural. (Plural substantives end in *-im*.) In Hebrew One can only say, "I have lives." To say "I have only one life" is impossible.

There is such a thing as the next life. It is next door to this present life. But we do not have to await death to enter it, because faith brings the future into the present.

The renowned English evangelist Charles Spurgeon once asked a parishioner who was on his deathbed, "Will you go to heaven when you die?"

"No," was the reply, to the dismay of Spurgeon.

"Have I then preached in vain? Don't you know that believers in Jesus go to heaven at death?"

The dying man answered, "Let them do as they like. I know better. I don't go to heaven when I die. I have already been in heaven for thirty years."

In Tewin churchyard, Hertfordshire, England,

there are four trees growing from one root. These trees have an interesting story.

When Lady Anne Grimston was dying, she mocked religion, saying, "I shall not live again. It is as unlikely that I shall live again as that a tree will grow out of my body." She died and was laid in a strong marble tomb, with tall iron railings that hold the masonry together. But somehow a young tree broke through the masonry and destroyed the walls of the tomb. (*The Book of Knowledge*, Educational Books, London, 1921)

Atheists have a vague sense of eternal life. Pasternak, whom I have already quoted, was brought up in a godless environment, but in his renowned *Doctor Zhivago*, he circles around the problem of eternal life:

So what will happen to your consciousness? *Your* consciousness, yours, not anyone else's? Well, what are *you*? There's the point. Let's try to find out. What is it about you that you have always known as yourself? What are you conscious of in yourself? Your kidneys? Your liver? Your blood vessels? No. However far back you go in your memory, it is always in some external, active manifestation of yourself that you come across your identity—in the work of your hands, in your family, in other people. And now listen carefully. You in others—this is your soul. This is what you are. This is what your consciousness has breathed and lived on and enjoyed throughout your life—your soul, your immor-

tality, your life in others. And what now? You have always been in others and you will remain in others. And what does it matter to you if later on that is called your memory? This will be you—the you that enters the future and becomes a part of it.

“And now one last point. There is nothing to fear. There is no such thing as death. Death has nothing to do with us...”

This is how much he knew about eternal life.

We know more. In no way we can conceive now the depth, the height, the breadth, the duration of God’s love for us. So we cannot imagine yet what awaits us in eternal life.

We will continue to live, but not only in others. Jesus promised. “To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with Me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on his throne.” (Revelation 3:21)

Jesus assures us that there is such a thing as a divine throne. And we can be with Him as real beings, in actuality sitting in the place from which universes are created and ruled.

Now, I realize that words are not the names of things but of our idea of things. The words above are surely only our idea of the things that will be. But what will be are “real things” which will give us unspeakable joy and a rich reward. Life will have meaning and fulfillment there in a way that we cannot even imagine here.

* * *

There exists eternal life with a heaven and a hell.

Many descriptions of them in the Bible are obviously figurative. For instance, Jesus says of a Jewish city, "Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell." (Matthew 11:23) Now, Capernaum has never been in heaven; that was simply a manner of describing how greatly exalted the city was. But then descent to hell must also be only a figure of speech.

Whatever the interpretation, there exists a place or state of reward and one of punishment.

We have to accept the fact that some of us shall be damned.

Should we pray that no one will be damned? If lice and rats and disease viruses could pray, that is what they would pray for. Should we pray that guinea pigs not die? Then children must die because of the many sicknesses which can be conquered only through animal experimentation.

It is better not to speculate too much about the future, but rather to beware of hell.

We must know about heaven and hell. Pascal wrote, 'the immortality of the soul interests us so much, so touches our lives, that whoever remains disinterested, indifferent to it, must have lost any sentiment.'

We need to decide whether we desire to go to hell, the place where men are immobilized in utter selfishness, or to heaven, the place of utter compas-

sion, of those willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of anyone who suffers in God's great universe if there is the slightest chance to save him.

It is obvious that as long as beings suffer, there will be no possibility of joy for the compassionate, except the joy of sharing suffering and trying to be of service. Heaven is a place of love.

The selfish person does not have to die; he is dead already. Those here who are heavenly minded already have heaven and will be in heaven. Death cannot abolish their existence.

If we are on the way to heaven, the idea of death should not obsess us. Charles Spurgeon said rightly, "Remember you are immortal till your work is done. If the Lord has more witness for you to bear, you will live to bear it. Who is he that can break the vessel which the Lord intends again to use?"

During World War II, a bomb blast destroyed the beautiful stained glass windows of a European cathedral. Nobody bothered the man who gathered up the tiny fragments. After two years of assiduous labor, the stained glass windows were as good as new and could again embellish the altar.

God can give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning over the loss of loved ones, and garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. (Isaiah 61:3)

Everything that has been wrong in life can be mended. We have only to throw every sin into the fire of Jesus' love. Essentially, hell is that within us which has refused the fire of love. What dooms us

to hell is only the terrible sense of ownership which claims for itself even sin. Throw sin away in the right manner and in the right place, throw it upon Jesus, and you will find yourself in heaven.

* * *

We do not have the choice simply to disappear at death. Sigmund Freud was right when he said, "Fundamentally, nobody believes in his own death." No one could live a day, no one could ever smile, if he were truly convinced that all sense of being in this world is only to prepare a tasty meal for worms in the grave.

Even the heathen philosopher Seneca (the emperor Nero's adviser) had intimations of immortality, for he wrote, "As nine months in a mother's womb keeps and prepares us not for itself, but for a world to which we are alike conveyed as soon as we are able to breathe independently and survive in freedom, just so we mature during the interval from babyhood to old age for another birth. A new birth awaits us, new circumstances. The day you dread as your last is your birthday for eternity."

Life after death is contested though without conviction by those who have no life before death, i.e., the quality of life which nothing can destroy, not even death. Most people live lives easily disturbed by minor incidents. How could they believe otherwise than that death will destroy it? Such individuals may hibernate, but they do not really

live.

Some look down on ascetics, who practice detachment from this life in order to prepare better for the next. But the detachment practiced by the unbeliever demands even greater renunciation and more rigorous effort, because he must detach himself from a fuller, richer life in the here and now.

How much did Napoleon renounce to retain his pride! His last thought was to keep his title as emperor, as evidenced by the fact that he himself wrote the announcement of his death: "The emperor of France, Napoleon I Bonaparte, died on... 1821 after a grave and long sickness." His adjutant had to fill in the date.

Marshal Ney, who was with Napoleon during the invasion of Russia, signed his last letter with the title "Duke of Moscow." Camille Demoulins, one of the leaders of the French Revolution, asked that his tombstone bear the inscription, "Here rests a man who has great merit before France."

Who cares today about all the titles these men had? Students become bored simply having to study about them.

The great German poet Goethe, on the contrary, was always a believer in eternal life. In his last letter to Wilhelm Humboldt of March 20, 1832, two days before his death, he wrote: "The thought of death does not frighten me, because I know that our spirit is indestructible and immortal. It is like the sun. It only seems to us that it sets, when in

truth it moves continually and shines always."

The French queen Marie Antoinette, beheaded during the Revolution, prayed to God in her last letter that her son might not think to avenge her death, and then she blessed the henchmen who performed the bloody deed.

We need to decide in advance in what spirit to die. We would do well not to wait till the last minute, as did Voltaire, the cynical critic of the church. Only a few hours before death he wrote, "I ardently implore God for forgiveness."

How many funerals have we attended? Some day others will attend my funeral. To prepare silently for a good death is the highest philosophy.

"In all you say, remember your end and you will never commit a sin." (*Apocryphal Wisdom of Sirach* 7:36)

Plato once said, "*Vera philosophia est meditatio mortis*—True philosophy is the meditation on death."

Savonarola said, "O man, the devil plays chess with you all during your life and waits for the moment of death to call 'Checkmate!' Therefore be ready. Think well about your last move. If you win at this move, you have won all; if you lose, everything has been in vain. To win at this last move means to win the battle for life. Therefore watch out for the checkmate that threatens you. Always think about death, because if you are not well prepared for this move, you lose all you obtained in this life."

* * *

Death is the opposite of life. Things contrary to each other provokes sentiments at opposite poles—but not so where love to God intervenes. We must not hate death because we love life, nor the contrary. We can love life as long as its prolongation is possible without abdication of Christian principles. We also love death, God's messenger who brings us to Him.

Paul writes, "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21)

Thus the miracle has taken place that overthrows all psychological laws. We can have the same sentiment toward opposites. It would seem logical that one who loves a friend can only hate his enemy. No so in Christianity. We love friends *and* enemies, just as Jesus did.

We do not avoid the thought of death. It does not frighten us, any more than life does. We look death in the face and, because it draws nearer every moment of our lives, we earnestly avoid sin.

St. Dionysus said, "No one who delves into the essence of sin wishes to commit it." Take one minute before committing any sin and say to yourself, "It can send me to hell." Then visualize the suffering and the eternal separation from a loving God. You will not sin. Think about the beauty of heaven that you can inherit by refraining from trespasses, and you will not sin.

Again, Savonarola: "Look to the hare. When dogs pursue him, he zigzags while fleeing, to de-

ceive the enemy, that the dogs might not catch him. He was taught to do this by nothing more than dread of the dogs. Just so, if you will think about hell as your enemy, you will not sin as you do now, but will learn to flee from it. And when you are tempted to do evil, you will say: 'Shall I lose heaven, where comfort is eternal, and go to hell where suffering is unceasing, for a little satisfaction, for a little faith, for a little property, all transitory?'

"The one who thinks seriously about death will also think about heaven and hell. Then love for God and fear will enter the heart and these will lead toward doing good and avoiding evil."

"In the desire to beware of sin we must have God's grace. Without it and without the light of faith no one can shield himself from sin, and therefore those who wish to live a good life and to keep themselves pure from sin must first ask God to give them light. Therefore, take this as the first rule; pray every day to God that he might give you His light."

"Christians must wear the glasses of death," he continues. "*Qualis unusquisque est, talia et sibi videntur*--Man looks at things according to his disposition. In wrath, you see one way; in passion, in greed, in love, another. May death always be before our eyes."

"You who wish to enrich yourself through dishonest deals, remember death. Put on the glasses of death and say: In hell none of the things I have

will help me. You who run after fame, remember that you will die. Put on the glasses of death and consider that all the honors of the world will profit you nothing if you enter into hell. Woman, if you have the desire for luxury, put on the glasses of death and see how not to suffer eternal condemnation because of it. Youth, when tempted to commit sin, put on the glasses of death, remember that you will have to die, and serve Christ with a pure heart and body. Priest and monk, put on the glasses of death and you will find that they will be very useful for the fight against all temptations."

It is good spiritual exercise to visit cemeteries and the dying. Take a skull as an object of meditation, remembering that this is what your head will one day be like.

Remember the Bible verse, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." (Psalm 116:15) Be a saint and then don't worry. Neither future events in our earthly lives nor death can reach us at a speed of more than sixty minutes an hour. If one is a saint, death is no longer hideous.

* * *

What separates us from God, what hinders us from becoming gods (John 10:34), what makes death frightening, is the untamable power of sin.

In the museum of Naples one can see an old caricature: a butterfly holding reins put around the neck of a dragon. The illustration represents the

philosopher Seneca, who tried to restrain through his philosophy the murderous passions of his disciple, the emperor Nero.

Philosophy is powerless before passion. It does not restrain even the philosopher, who himself is dominated by sin.

Evolution is impossible in any sphere without differentiation. Inequality is the motive force of the universe. Energy is manifested only where there is a difference of level. Sin is the stubbornness to remain at a low level.

Some people are free of certain sins. The individual who has never loved does not know the sin of jealousy. Those without the slightest bent for fantasy do not lie. The impotent do not commit adultery. But everyone has sins of some kind and seems to do his best to put himself to share.

Who could possibly enumerate all human sins?

* * *

The first man born on earth, Cain, was a murderer. But he could easily have found forgiveness.

Jewish legend says that Cain told the Lord, "Well, I killed my brother, but You are the one who put a bad impulse in me. You, the guardian of all creatures, allowed me to kill Abel. You are the one who killed him. If You had received my gift as You did his, envy would not have arisen in me. You must

have informers around You, because my father and my mother are here on earth and do not know that I killed Abel. But You are in heaven. How do You know it?"

The Lord said, "Fool, I carry the whole world. I made it and continue to carry it." Cain said, "You bear the whole world and don't wish to bear my sin?"

God was in Jesus and bore the sin of the whole world, including the sin of Cain. But since the time of Cain, murder has never ceased.

In fact, sin has blighted the landscape of earth so that everything is tainted. By the time of Noah, God noted that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5)

If the dollar bills that pass through our hands could tell their story, we would shun them. How many individuals have sold body and soul for this dollar, how often has it been used for alcohol, or gambling, or prostitution, or for a bribe, or for weapons? It is soiled with tears and blood. No beverage inebriates like money.

How ugly is envy! Men snuff out big candles so that their little lights might be seen.

A story is told about an angel who came to an envious man and told him, "God has decided to grant you whatever your heart desires, but only with the provision that the competitor whom you envy will get double what you receive."

The man was granted twenty-four hours' time

to think. Then he said to the angel, "gouge out one of my eyes so that my competitor may lose all his sight."

Man is capable of many things. He can reach for the stars or sink to the level of a brute. He can use his gifts in the service of others, as Jesus demonstrated, or bury his talents in the ground, thus polluting mother earth. He can enter heaven by faith or sink into hell by wickedness or indifference.

Heaven or hell—this is the choice. And it must be made.

* * *

Obviously, the intelligent choice is not to sin. Human effort can obtain much, even if not everything in this regard.

Greek mythology tells about the sirens—half woman, half bird—who sang songs in the Aegean sea to entice sailors to abandon their ships and drown. Ulysses escaped the temptation by plugging his sailors' ears with wax and having himself lashed to the mast of his ship so that none of them could respond to the seductive sweetness.

Orpheus, too, passed those rocks where the sirens dwelled, but his method of escape was to play and sing with such surpassing sweetness that he drowned out the ravishing songs of the sirens and caused them to abandon their enterprise.

People today can plug their ears to the temp-

tations of sin. They can refuse to read bad literature, watch bad movies, frequent bad places. They can sing a song more beautiful than the cheap songs of a sinful world.

But even the best succeed only partially. Most don't even try. Mankind is burdened with grave sins.

* * *

Individuals can repress remorse for a long time, though not for ever.

A man in Tennessee kept for nearly seventy years a secret that could have freed a Jewish factory superintendent convicted and later lynched for the murder of a fourteen-year-old girl.

At the age of eighty-three, Alonzo Mann signed a sworn affidavit naming a janitor at the factory and claiming that the star prosecution witness against the superintendent had threatened to kill him if he revealed the truth. His parents had also warned him not to get involved.

Anti-Semitism, mob violence, and a revival of the Ku-Kluk-Klan followed.

Everyone tries to run away from his sins, but they will entrap him, if not in this world, then in the next.

All need forgiveness and we can have it without charge, with no strings attached. Jesus expressed the desire that those who are forgiven should in turn forgive others. But God forgives

before we decide on what to do about those who have wronged us.

In *The Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoievsky, Ivan raises objections to forgiveness.

The Soviet regime is filled with such unspeakable cruelty that people forget the horrors of the Czarist regime. But Dostoievsky tells about a Czarist general from whose garden a child stole some apples. Incensed, he had the child stripped naked, then forced him to run and ordered dogs to give chase and tear him to pieces. Who would have condemned a Czarist general?

Ivan says that God refuses even the virgin Mary's prayers for the forgiveness of such wicked men until all their victims have forgiven them. How can the mother of this child forgive? The past event is irremediable. What has been done cannot be undone.

Ivan concludes: "I don't desire that the mother embrace the wicked person who had her son torn by dogs. She should not dare to forgive. If she wishes, she might forgive him for herself; let her forgive the immeasurable pains of a mother; but she is not entitled to forgive the suffering of her child hounded to death. She, as a mother, is not allowed to forgive the wicked person even if the child itself has forgiven."

It is simple to deal with Ivan's objections.

We all commit bad deeds in our sleep and in our daydreams. We are not bothered by them when

we awake. At the resurrection, we will realize that the world from which we have come was not the real world. The man I killed in dream is alive. The girl I polluted is pure. The man from whom I stole lost nothing.

So it will be when we encounter our former acquaintances in the other world. I will have done no one any wrong; on the contrary, I have done them good.

Jesus tells about a thief named Zacchaeus who had stolen from many people. He repented and restored fourfold what he had taken unjustly. The man who had lost \$1,000 now had \$4,000.

Jesus forgives because He is not only compassionate toward His martyred church but also full of understanding for the murderous general. He had been a child once and, like all children, had belonged to the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of childish innocence. But he had also been badly treated by those in authority.

No one becomes a murderer just because he likes the idea. It is circumstances that bring him to this extremity. Even the Nazi and communist murderers have, each of them, a story about how they became murderers.

A French proverb says, "Who understands all, forgives all." God understands everything. Therefore, everyone can obtain forgiveness.

Stalin was the illegitimate child of a nobleman, who bribed a drunkard, a cobbler, to marry

his pregnant mistress. The story became known. As a child, therefore, Stalin was the object of mockery. Children teased him and called him a "bastard," at that time a very degrading appellation.

Then he went to a seminary run by the Russian church, which was very chauvinistic. In the seminary of only Georgian students, the mother tongue was forbidden. Stalin was Georgian.

When Stalin was fifteen, his real father was killed, and he was accused of the murder. Because he was an illegitimate child, he was treated as one belonging to the lower class. For lack of sufficient evidence, he was acquitted.

He later became a member of the Social Democratic Party, as the Bolsheviks were then called. He was given the assignment to commit robberies in order to finance the party, while his comrades spent their time propagating ideas or organizing strikes against actual injustices. During this period, he fell in love with a girl, but then she was given the assignment to become the mistress of a rich man in order to get money from him for the Party. The next day she hanged herself—and so on and on his story goes.

We surely deplore Stalin's victims, but a knowledge of his background helps us understand his moral deviations and excesses. They can be forgiven, especially since we believe in a resurrection in which the innocent will be rewarded for what they suffered with love and faith.

The feelings of martyrs in heaven must be ambivalent. They feel that their sufferings must be avenged. (Revelation 6:9, 10) But would they have had such shining crowns and the white garments of conquerors if it had not been for those who martyred them?

There is a place for forgiveness.

* * *

An important question is posed by Simon Wiesenthal in his book *The Sunflower*. Wiesenthal is a Jew who suffered persecution under the Nazis and afterwards dedicated his life to hunting those suspected of Nazi war crimes. (Why only Nazi war crimes? The Soviets and the Western allies also committed crimes.)

He had worked during World War II as a slave laborer in Poland, doing repairs in a hospital. A nurse called him to the deathbed of a Nazi officer who, with great remorse, told him his story.

He confessed to Wiesenthal that he had been among those who crammed many Jews into a house together with women and children. Inflammable canisters were set inside, and then the Nazis tossed in grenades that exploded, causing a conflagration.

An old Jew jumped from a window with a little child, whose eyes he covered. His garments were aflame. This officer shot them both.

A few days later, he found himself on the battlefield with an order to attack. As the Russian

soldiers advanced, he saw coming toward him the burning Jew and the child and said to himself, "I will not shoot at them the second time." in that moment a grenade exploded near him, wounding him mortally.

Before dying, he had only one desire, which he had communicated to the nurse: a Jew should tell him he was forgiven. Wiesenthal heard the confession of the repentant Nazi officer but left the room in silence. He did not say "I forgive."

Since then, over forty years have passed, but Wiesenthal has not found peace of heart. He goes from person to person asking, "did I do right not to say a word of forgiveness? Had I the right to forgive in the name of the Jewish people?"— a question which could also be inverted: "Had I the right to refuse forgiveness in the name of the Jewish people?"

Should he have forgiven? Have the victims of this Nazi officer no right to be avenged, with at least the satisfaction of knowing that he would not die with the serenity of a forgiven man?

Can we be forgiven so easily for all our sins? Can God afford to be so nice? Can man?

Should a mother forgive the one who ordered dogs to maul her child to death? Is she authorized to do so? Who authorized her? The innocent child perhaps?

But again, who gives her the right to be cruel to the murderer and to refuse forgiveness? Does she know how the murdered child thinks about the

matter in the next world, where he is with Jesus? Jesus forgave those who crucified Him. Is it forbidden to be more than human, better than the best?

Rabbi Hillel advised that we judge no one until we have been in his situation. But have the innocent necessarily been in the situation of murderers or other kinds of vile sinners?

I prefer the attitude of Mrs. Rathenau to Wiesenthal's. Her husband had been a Jew, finance minister of Germany in the twenties. An anti-Semite killed him only because he was Jewish. The mother of the murderer was in desperation over the crime her son had committed. Then Mrs. Rathenau, wife of the victim, a Christian herself, went to comfort her. She also visited the murderer in jail and brought him to Christ.

Many years later, the murderer was in a high command position in the German army in Marseille, during the Nazi occupation of France. He did his utmost to help Jews escape from France and thereby saved the lives of a great multitude. In the end he was discovered. The former anti-Semite murderer was executed for having been a savior of Jews.

* * *

Full forgiveness and forgetfulness of wrongs endured are both possible. Depth psychology asserts there is no forgetting, but only de-actualization. However, since through the new birth man becomes a new creature, the past is buried, never to

be resurrected. Therefore, nothing divides a person from the one who has hurt him the most. Paul became a respected apostle in the community of early Christians, many of whom he had sentenced to death, while persuading others to renounce their faith.

There can be no limit to forgiveness, just as there can be no degree of honesty or virginity. A girl cannot be half-pregnant. Forgiveness is total or it is not forgiveness.

The average man identifies with either the murderer or the victim. Christians can identify with both and love both. In my own case, I always pray for both parties.

The murderer by killing has broken a divine law: "Do not kill." Is this law an absolute? The same God ordered the extermination of the Canaanites and the execution of criminals. What if the young German SS officer had been taught to consider the Jews as reprehensible as the Jews in Joshua's time considered the Canaanites?

Why should it have been compulsory for the SS officer to obey the law against killing if we disregard another law of the same God that we must forgive those who trespass against us? The conscience of every person can err. There exist depths in men that attract some to crime, others to sainthood, depths that can also make a criminal become a saint (what every criminal becomes who contritely confesses his sins) and a saint a criminal,

which is beyond our comprehension. Since every man is a riddle to his fellow man, the best recourse is not to judge but to be helpful.

If Jews will not forgive the death of six million at the hands of the Nazis, neither should the blacks forgive the enslavement of millions who perished in slave hunts in Africa, and other millions brought to America by the slave-traders; Armenians and Greeks should not forget the Turkish massacres; Arabs should not forget their losses during the establishment of Israel; other nations should not forget the Communist mass-murders; Protestants should not forgive the Catholics and Catholics should not forgive the Protestants; the North and the South should not forget the thousands who died in the fratricidal American Civil War; the Americans should not forget Bataan and the Japanese Hiroshima—one could multiply instances of cruelty and barbarism ad nauseam.

If no one could forgive and no one forget, where would we all be? Nations, religions, and alliances exist only through the grace for forgiving and forgetting even heinous crimes.

Spinoza once wrote cynically, "Everyone has as much right as he has might." Men may have the might to kill, but not the right. We recognize only the right to forgive, and also to ask forgiveness.

* * *

A legend says that Jesus was once seated at

a banquet in heaven with His apostles. One place was empty. Jesus had not yet pronounced the blessing, so no one had started eating. At a certain moment, Judas entered the room. Jesus received him as a friend and said, "I have waited for you. Now the meal can begin."

I dreamt one night that I asked Mussolini and some other dictators forgiveness for the fact that I do not have a yielding and humble character, that I do not do gladly what others demand of me and thus oblige them to dictate to me. In my dream, in the measure to which I asked forgiveness, the dictators ceased to exist. I find this dream very significant.

One might ask if the victim of theft, murder, or rape is always without guilt. The only ones for whom I could vouch would be children, young victims of crime.

Jesus was modest in his demands. In fact, He did not teach us to forgive those who commit crimes against us. In the Sermon on the Mount, He spoke only about forgiving the one who gives you a slap, or takes away your coat, or compels you to do forced labor. But He Himself forgave Caiaphas, Pilate, and the executioners when He said on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

It is well to follow not only His words but also His example, perhaps even to surpass it, as He suggests in His matchless discourse at the Last Supper. (John 14:12) God is love. We must be love,

not only exercise it.

* * *

I have known no believer who was not at some time or other troubled in his faith by the fact of pain. Why should a good God have ordained pain?

"Pain is a more terrible lord of mankind than even death itself," wrote Albert Schweitzer.

However, we are told that the main function of pain is to signal the body of any harm to its tissue. We need such signals, admittedly, but could we not do with something less traumatic?

Experience has shown that what is not painful does not work. We do harm to our bodies with our smoking, drinking, poor eating habits, and promiscuity. We ourselves cause our own cancer and heart disease, but because we feel no pain before it is too late, we continue these suicidal practices. Pain is a sign of the intense desire of God to do us good.

If not for pain, we would undoubtedly disregard many dangers to the organism and would compromise ourselves still further. The inability to sense pain is one of the horrors of leprosy.

But most of us see pain only as an enemy, and so we consume annually thousands of tons of pain-killers.

Moslems attribute pain to fate, *Kismet*; Hindus to *Karma*, the result of sin in past incarnations; other Middle Easterners to the Evil eye.

Pain has meaning. By taking pills, our medi-

cated society deprives itself of the discovery of meaning. Pain can also be borne courageously; it can be faced. Societies that flee pain in all circumstances need horror movies and violence to compensate.

Jesus at the cross refused an anesthetic.

Try the experiment of fixing a short time for bearing pain without an analgesic or sorrow without a tranquilizer. Remember that Rachel refused comfort. (Matthew 2:18)

A man sleeping on the ground with his mouth open had a snake crawl down his throat. Another man who witnessed the event shook him awake and vigorously pounded him on the back again and again to make him vomit. The first man understandably resented what he considered an unjustified attack and responded violently.

When, finally, he vomited up the snake, he had explanation and complained, "Why didn't tell me what you were doing?"

The reply was simple: "You were not receptive to arguments at that point. A person in that predicament needs a kick, not a explanation!"

If God imposes suffering on us, we can be sure it is more painful for Him who inflicts it than for us who bear it. If we had His wisdom and sought our salvation as passionately as He seeks it for us, we would choose to pass through the very sufferings that afflict us.

Therefore, believers bear with understanding

the sufferings imposed upon them.

In *The Fathers of the Desert* appears the story of a monk well versed in fasting and asceticism who could not resist the thought of whoredom. With this in mind, he went to Jericho to fulfill his desires. But when he approached the prostitute, he discovered that he was covered with leprosy.

Gratefully, he returned to the monastery praising God: "Glory be to Thee, O God, that You gave me this punishment to save my soul."

Some believers choose voluntary sufferings.

The *Zohar*, an ancient book of the Jewish *Kabbalah*, writes, "Why did Jacob choose to work seven years for Rachel and not only a few months?" The reply is, "So that when at last he came to her, he would be as it were the heaven to her earth."

Suffering works. Exile changed the Fascist dictator Mussolini into a Christian.

Dostoevsky, sentenced to death in his youth and pardoned when he was already on the gallows, said that in the moment when he slipped from the noose around his neck he had an illumination. "As an atheist I had been in prison even when I was free, but now jail has become for me the gate to freedom."

Dostoevsky remained sick for the rest of his life. God must have had a purpose in this, because as a result he created works of art about the sickness of the world in his books *The Idiot*, *The Demons*, *Crime and punishment*, and so on.

Someday we too may learn that there was a reason for the sufferings we have endured.

* * *

Huldreich Zwingli was a Catholic priest in Switzerland in the sixteenth century. A personal experience of conversion led him to become first an adherent of Erasmus of Rotterdam and then of the reformer Luther. As a result of his influence, the Reformation became law in Zurich.

Many real abuses practiced in the Catholic church were abolished. All images and organs were thrown out of churches, and celibacy in the priesthood was renounced.

He had to fight at the same time on many fronts; against those who did not accept this puritanic morals, against the Baptists who did not recognize infant baptism, which Zwingli endorsed, and then also against Luther, with whom he differed in the understanding of the Lord's Supper. Whereas Luther believed in "consubstantiation" (in and with the bread and wine given to the communicant are the flesh and blood of Jesus), Zwingli believed that communion had only symbolic significance.

Because of this difference, Luther refused even to shake hands with him.

Zwingli was very adamant about making the whole of Switzerland forcibly Protestant and urged the "slaughter of the Catholic cantons." He even used terror to encourage respect for his moral rules. In the end, he planned the blockade of food for the

Catholic cantons, which, with the support of catholic Australia, then went to war against Zurich. The battle was fierce and hundreds died. The Catholics shouted, "Death to the heretics!" The Protestants replied, "Death to the idolaters!"

Catholics found the dying Zwingli and asked him if he wanted a priest. He made the sign "No." Then they told him, "There is no more time for confessing. Pray to the mother of God and the saints that they may obtain grace for you." When he refused this too, they decided he did not deserve to live.

After he was killed, opinions differed as to what to do with his body. Some proposed that he be cut in five pieces, one for each canton as a trophy. Others were for burning the corpse.

As for his master Luther, he considered Zwingli's death a judgement of God and wondered if the Swiss reformer could be saved and enter heaven—not because he fought Catholics, but because he had committed the greater sin of differing with Luther on an understanding of the Holy Communion. Yet Jesus, in instituting the Lord's Supper, said, "Take and eat," not "Take and philosophize about it."

Jesus also said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:35) We should all be ashamed of our past hostilities and the continuation of divisions.

Let us be known by our love in spite of differences in opinions. It is clear that any opinion is no more than an opinion, not the truth.

The truth is far above opinions.

* * *

An artist painted a bad conscience as a galloping horse surrounded by wasps and mosquitoes. The caption read, "Your running is in vain."

Augustine said it in words: "A man bothered by his conscience is his own punishment. A man can run away from his enemies, but where can he find refuge from himself?"

Regrets alone do not help a troubled conscience. The mind that decides to sin then decides to regret, but conscience is not assuaged. Judas regretted profoundly that he sold his Lord. Then the same mind reverted to despair and soon decided on suicide.

Repentance is something entirely different. In repentance, one ignores the mind, which Luther called "the beast reason, whose eyes should be gouged out, the devil's bride a lovely whore."

"Listen," he said to reason, "you have lied to me often and in weighty matters in which it was not your business to interfere. You have a limited, low-ranking job in matters which do not involve religion, morals or ultimate truth. Stick to your menial work. For overstepping your attributes, I give you the boot. Out! Henceforth, the mind of Christ will be

my mind, I will not be taught any more to sin, neither to lose my time in vain regrets, nor ever to despair."

This is the change that takes place at the new birth.

With such an attitude, even after the betrayal, Judas would have been spared his tragic fate. Saul of Tarsus, the great persecutor of Christians who became the apostle Paul, is an example of what can happen to a person who truly repents.

If Judas had been born again after the betrayal, he would be known today as St. Judas Iscariot. He could have lived out his life and died with peace, understanding that he had been sacrificed on the altar of gathering precious experiences for the church, just like the man who was born blind, with all the ensuing suffering, for no other purpose than that "the works of God should be revealed in him." (John 9:3)

Truth can be attained only by individuals born again.

No one who assumes false names and titles can be considered a gentleman.

We bear the name of Christians. Are we entitled to it? Jesus said we must be born again. Have we passed through the new birth? Without this we are fake Christians.

Nothing except the new birth can enable us to get to heaven.

No amount of religiosity can cleanse us of our

sins.

A Samaritan woman asked Jesus some theological questions. His response was, "Go get your husband and bring him here." The man whom she called her husband really belonged to another woman. And this was not her first sin. She had known many men, from whom she had received pleasure or money. Certainly she had not fulfilled the aim for which God brings individuals together—to help one another become like Him.

This woman did not need theology. She was lost. And it made no difference whether she worshiped according to the Samaritan or Jewish religion.

No good intention helps. If a person has ink on his fingers, his decision to wash himself will not make him clean. Only the act of washing removes the stain.

We need the washing of the new birth. Therefore we extend to all people everywhere the warning, "You must be born again."

A man who was eating his lunch in a restaurant was approached by another man from a nearby table, who said, "Sir, may I tell you something?"

The first man replied, "I see by your face that you mean serious business. I want to enjoy my dinner, so kindly leave me alone." After finishing his ample meal, he turned to his neighbour: "I did not mean to be rude, but I was very hungry. Now you can tell me what you had on your mind."

The other responded, "I'm sorry, but it's too late. I only wanted to tell you that you had put your overcoat on a chair too near the stove. By now the heat has burned a large hole in it."

Most people do not wish to be disturbed by serious talk about what follows death and about the need for a new birth in order to enter heaven. The loss is theirs! After death, they will have to face either heaven or hell. And "except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven."

A monk always complained to his abbot about the evils committed by his brethren. Exasperated, the abbot advised him to go on a pilgrimage to Israel and bathe in the river Jordan. "But," he told the monk. "when you bathe, you should wear around your neck a garland of onions, garlic, and green peppers." The monk returned from the pilgrimage but was still the same man, delighting in slandering others.

The abbot asked him, "Did you bathe in the Jordan?"

"Yes."

"Did you wear the garland of onions, garlic, and green peppers?"

"Yes, though I saw no sense in doing so."

"Please bite into the onion and the garlic." They were bad-tasting and strong and burned his mouth. "Now bite into the pepper." The monk spat after having done so. Then the abbot said, "You see, bathing onions and peppers in the Jordan does no

help. Neither do the rituals to which you subject yourself."

Nothing helps except becoming an entirely new creature, who yields up all his self-will. The new-born man is compared by the apostle John to the wind that blows in different directions, simply fulfilling the laws of its nature.

Cromwell said, "The man who does not know where he is going, goes the farthest." The Bible asks, "Who is blind but My servant?" (Isaiah 42:19) Abraham forsook his surroundings to follow God to a country which would be shown to him. He was not told where it would be. The new-born man is like an object without its own will, like clay in the hands of the Divine Potter.

Before becoming a man, Jesus was a babe, and before that an embryo, before that a divinely fertilized ovum, before that "the holy thing" (Luke 1:35), a conglomerate of molecules that needed to be organized into a living cell.

In 1 Corinthians 1:27, it is written that God chose not men, but certain "things" to be his representatives in the world, *i.e.*, men without self-will, like inanimate objects, ready to be used. This is the result of the new birth.

A kingdom was waiting to have Saul proclaimed as king, but he, unaware of the occasion, was out seeking asses. The most beautiful kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, is awaiting us, on condition of our being born again. Yet we run after

trifles.

A king who had a rebellious son sent him into exile. As a result, the son suffered many years of deprivation and even hunger.

In the end, the king had compassion on his son, forgave him, and sent emissaries to bring him back. Their instructions were, "Give him whatever he desires." When the prince saw them, he said only, "Give me something good to eat." He could have had his position in the palace restored to him, but he yearned only after a loaf of bread and butter.

We are all in the same situation. Through the new birth, we can become God's children, yet even when we talk with God's messengers, we settle for trivial things.

Express your desire for the new birth today and confess publicly that you belong to Christ. Then your natural desire to be thought consistent will enable you to follow through and investigate Jesus' teachings, and he will give you the grace of being born again.

* * *

God's great gift is the possibility of being born again.

The new birth does more than purify from sin: it deifies men.

The newborn man begins to live and act as if he had seen paradise before his eyes. Then slowly the baptism of action drives away the dark clouds

that veil heaven and, as clearly as he sees material things, he gains the intuition of invisible powers, because this invisible world will become real.

A newborn man is a man who has found God, and all at once the vague, distant notion of Godhead is exchanged for a personal, sensible, present, and living reality. Here resides the distinction between repentance and regret.

My five-year-old grandson Alex on being told he had to go to the doctor's office, asked, "What for?"

"For the cough."

Later, he cheerfully reported to me, "They didn't need to take me to the doctor. He doesn't cough."

When we have sins, problems, sorrows, pastors show us the way to Jesus, the great Physician. We return from him radiant: "He is all right. He does not cough. He has none of our problems and unrest."

Jesus met on the road to Damascus a persecutor of Christians, a multiple murderer and blasphemer. He asked Saul of Tarsus nothing about his state of mind. He did not examine him, X-ray him, inquire about what he had done, come up with a diagnosis, or give a prescription. Jesus simply revealed Himself in the glory of His resurrection. That was all. Then Saul knew, "The doctor does not cough. There is nothing wrong with Jesus. He is healthy, alive, powerful, loving. Far from telling me I must be hospitalized, He gives me great and noble

tasks to perform.”

This is the story when a soul has the privilege of meeting Jesus directly.

But rarely does this happen. Usually, we meet Him through priests and pastors and authors of religious books—all Christ’s underlings. These surrogates do not always grasp the deep meaning in Jesus’ parable of the lost sheep:

“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?”

“And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.”

“And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’”

“I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”
(Luke 15:4-7)

When little Alex heard this story and was asked what he understood from it, he replied. “The shepherd should have been more careful not to lose the sheep.”

Holding revival meetings over and over is not enough. In fact, why should Christian “patients” have to be revived at all? Once they are newborn in the faith, why should they get lost?

Luther, drastic as usual in his expressions,

when asked, "Whom can we call a true Christian?", replied, "Whoever has once entered a church. That nothing came of it is not his fault, but that of the pastor."

According to the apostle Paul, "God Himself gave some to be pastors and teachers." (Ephesians 4;11) Why? If Christ is always with His church, what is the purpose of subsidiary pastors?

One might as well ask why, when electricity is available everywhere, a lamp is needed to give light. Electricity has to have a focal point at which to manifest itself. The pastor is the focal point through whom Christ shows His beauty.

Who are the pastors one can trust?

In 1179, at the third Lateran Council, the papacy decided to uproot heretics. As a result, the Albigenses, the Waldenses, and later the Hussites were tortured and killed by the thousands. Many were killed merely for possessing a Bible.

Pope Pius V has been canonized, though the breviary calls him "the ruthless inquisitor." In the same breviary, the lesson for May 30 praises king Ferdinand III of Castile for his zeal against heretics. He himself, eager to perform good deeds, carried the wood for the stakes on which heretics were burned.

Ironically, the Protestant reformers often echoed the sentiments of the Catholics they opposed. Calvin wrote:

"We should define the power wherewith the

priests of the church should be invested, seeing that they are put to administer, to proclaim and to preach the Divine Word. Their duty is to dare everything and to compel all the big and highly situated in this world to bow before the majesty of the Almighty God and to serve Him. It is their duty to build the kingdom of God and to destroy the wolves. They have to reprove and to give advice to those who listen; to accuse and to destroy the adversaries. They can win and loose; they can throw lightning and thunder; but all these things in conformity with the Word of god."

Calvin meant just that. He too burned at the stake those with whom he disagreed.

We cannot walk in the footsteps of Catholic inquisitors or Protestant persecutors. To whom then should we go?

Jesus said, "I will build my church." He used the future tense. He did not say when He would have a church worthy to be called His. Perhaps the churches of today are only the scaffolding for building that one church.

A few have recognized it and have already come to the "church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven." (Hebrews 12:23) Seek this church! Seek it within the churches to which you belong!

At a certain moment Jesus gave to Simon a new name—Peter. His true name from then on was the one Jesus had given him, not the one he was known by. He thought of himself as Peter; the past

of a certain Simon no longer belonged to him.

We too have to look upon ourselves as Jesus does. We have to call ourselves by the names He gave us: "children of God," "elect," "much beloved," "apostles."

At a certain point, Simon declared, "I am something entirely different from what I have been. I am not Simon, but Peter. When you call 'Simon,' I will not turn my head." If he were here today, he would probably change the name on his driver's license.

The whole world— as well as ourselves— realizes we are a church torn asunder by schisms and heresies, hostilities and iniquities, and soiled by the blood of innocents shed by fellow Christians.

We too are not what the world calls us and what we ourselves think we are. After meeting Jesus, we were called His "fair bride," "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." (Ephesians 5:27) How is this possible? We simply become, through His transforming power, what He says we are, though the world may see us differently, and we may have misgivings.

We are one because he says so. Peter is Peter and not Simon.

Those who can accept this truth are on their way to the true church.

* * *

Among Christians there often exists a great

deal of dissatisfaction with their churches and pastors. In some cases, the inner turmoil of the churches has become so great that they ceased to exist.

Bear this patiently. All men defend the institutions of which they are a part, especially if they created them. God allowed his temple, every detail of which he had designed, to be destroyed. The destruction of the temple was a test revealing that His truth remains unaffected by external events, no matter how tragic. The church will survive no matter what happens to your congregation.

My former church in Bucharest, Romania, has been bulldozed by the Communists but I constantly receive testimonies showing that what was previously sown within its walls continues to bear fruits.

The Jews worshiped God before they had the wilderness tabernacle. Their own tents, and before this the shacks in which they lived as slaves in Egypt, served as places of worship. Our homes, too, should be churches.

As for the church itself, why should we look so much to bishops, priests, and pastors? Have you ever tried to obtain spiritual edification from the janitor of your church?

Do you wonder about the propriety of such a question? Well, the Bible provides long lists of priests and singers, but then adds a list of "gatekeepers," who had "duties just like their breth-

ren, to serve in the house of the Lord." (1 Chronicles 26:12)

No history book of any other nation or religion would have included such a list. What were the names of the servants of George Washington and of the lackeys in Buckingham Palace? In what church history will you find the names of the caretakers who served in the great cathedrals?

We can learn from caretakers—and so can pastors. Wesley, on entering the pulpit one morning, said in dismay, "I am lost; I left my sermon at home."

The janitor asked him, "Do you remember at least what it was about?"

"Yes, it was about trusting God."

"Parson, trust God to help you deliver a sermon without notes." After this, Wesley never again used notes.

If the pastor does not know his sermon, how will the audience learn it?

Do not look down on pastors who make but a small contribution to the advancement of the truth. During the last two years, millions of men have been educated in Christianity, but this was not the work of great preachers or exceptional pastors. By and large, the average and less than average pastors did the job. For this we should be grateful.

Learn truth from them.

* * *

At the Last Supper, the Lord told His disciples that one of them was a traitor. I have witnessed such scenes often in the underground churches. On these occasions each one begins to guess which of those around him might be the evil man. But the first apostles did otherwise.

None of them thought evil of his brother. Each one, knowing the potential for betrayal that lay hidden in his own heart, asked himself, "Am I not the traitor?" Each knew his own readiness to sell even the One he loved most. Therefore the apostles each asked that most unusual question, "Lord, is it I?"

In my church there was a lady who always congratulated me after every sermon, adding to her praise this comment: "Your sermon was just right for Sister So-and-so." One Sunday, weary of not getting through to her, I mentioned from the pulpit that there are those who always apply the sermons to others, instead of drawing lessons for themselves. Afterwards, I was again congratulated by the same person: "A wonderful sermon! It just suited Mr. So-and-so."

Let us give up our preoccupation with looking for the speck in a brother's eye and recognize the beam in our own. (Matthew 7:4)

* * *

We often meet people who appear to be perfect gentlemen. We may know of no great sin they have committed, and they consider themselves upstand-

ing citizens, moral in every way. But is anyone a true gentleman if he regards everyone but his own father?

God is our heavenly Father, and we owe to Him our whole life. We are guests in his world and enjoy the blessings he confers on us. We usually behave well when we are guests in another's home, but somehow we neglect to thank God for the multitude of things He gives us, and often we don't behave well among His other children.

How to worship God is not a big problem. We may express our gratitude by fulfilling the purpose for which we were created.

Is a man who does not pay his debts—assuming he is able—a gentleman? Yet Christians have a prior debt. The apostle Paul describes the state of us all when he writes, "I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise." (Romans 1:14) As Christians, we are all debtors who owe everyone the greatest opportunity to gain salvation. Do we fulfill this duty?

Christians must show great determination in this enterprise. If necessary, they must be willing to give their lives that others may come to a knowledge of Christ and be converted. Grateful for their own salvation and for inner peace and the promise of a future life, they are concerned about the salvation of the rest of the world and look for opportunities to serve their fellows.

The world of today is not unbelieving, but

ignorant. It includes the heathen, the Jews, those under Communism who are taught atheism, and those who are Christians in name only. In addition, every seventh inhabitant of the earth is a Moslem. How many of these have ever read a Bible or heard an intelligent and loving sermon?

Therefore, every one of us must become a missionary.

At a Christian conference in Switzerland, an old man gave his testimony. He told how he had been on the *Titanic*, which went down in the north Atlantic in 1912 with some 2,200 passengers on board. Among the 700 who survived, he found himself struggling in the cold seawater trying to stay afloat.

Near him swam the American evangelist Harper, who asked him, "Are you saved? Think about your soul." With this, Harper sank under a wave of the icy sea, then after a few seconds reappeared. Again he asked, "Are you prepared to appear before the Lord?"

The man replied, "I don't know how to get saved."

"Believe in the Lord Jesus. His blood cleanses from all sins."

"These were his last words," continued the old man. "He succumbed to the rigors of the icy Atlantic. A boat then picked me up. I am Harper's last convert."

When we think about men like this evangelist,

we have to be ashamed to call ourselves Christians.

* * *

The initial work of Christian missions among the Matacos and Tobas in Argentina was very difficult. For one thing, the missionaries had to walk fifty miles (80 km.) from their station through the jungle to get to these tribes.

One of their first converts was an Indian who had come ornamented with feathers. In his hand he had a heavy stick with which he had just killed his mother. (It was the custom to kill the dying to free them from evil spirits.) In order to obtain their magical powers, witch doctors ate firstborn children. Yet such men were converted, and some even became evangelists.

William Carey was inflamed for missionary work by reading about Cooke's journeys. He asked himself, "If others can risk so much out of a spirit of adventure or in the desire to serve science, why should we not do the same in the service of Christ?"

In his cobbler shop he put a map on the wall and noted what he knew about the religions of different peoples. He constantly had on his mind the millions who are lost.

As an assistant preacher in a small Baptist community, he attended a church conference and asked whether the commandment to preach to all nations was still binding. He was not allowed to continue. He was called "a miserable enthusiast."

Later, Carey went to India, where he proved to be a genius of languages. It was he who translated the New Testament into Bengali. Eventually he was to give to the people of India the New Testament in thirty-four languages.

The cobbler became a professor of Oriental languages at the University of Calcutta. He wrote grammars and dictionaries in many Indian dialects. He was also a botanist and introduced to India many new agricultural and gardening methods. He was a creator of schools, a teacher of native evangelists.

Because of his influence, the savage habit of throwing children to crocodiles at religious festivals in Ganga-Sagar ceased, as did the burning alive of widows with their dead husbands. He also took care of lepers.

When he was on his deathbed, one of those standing in the room praised Carey. His last words: "You have spoken about Dr. Carey. When I am gone, don't speak about Carey but about Carey's Savior." He himself chose the epitaph for his grave: "A miserable worm who appeals to Your compassion."

John Williams at the age of twenty went to preach in the islands of the Pacific. Traveling in a small ship, he went to Raratonga, the Samoa Islands, and Malaysia. Everywhere he went he brought people to Christ and established churches. Idolatry and polygamy disappeared, and many

islands became sanctuaries full of the praises of God. Within a circumference of two thousand miles not one island remained without a church.

In 1839, on the island of Erromanga, Williams was killed by cannibals after having brought 30,000 souls to Christ.

John Paton came in Williams' place to these volcanic islands. At first he was frightened by the blood-thirsty savages. Because of the influence of traders, they hated the whites, who brought new sicknesses to their people. In their culture, a man was free to kill his wife if he no longer favored her, and the killing of children was common among them. They also believed in witchcraft. But with the Gospel message Paton conquered the New Hebrides for Christ.

John Elliot, the first missionary to the American Indians in the seventeenth century, translated the Bible for them. Thus the first Bible printed in the United States was for the Indians. He also gave them a written language and a grammar. At the age of eighty he still went to visit them in the forests.

David Brainerd, his successor, went to live with the Indians in their savagery, sleeping on straw in a wood hut. The Dutch colonists mocked him, but he had only one wish—to win souls for Christ.

He did win souls, but not only among the Indians. Henry Martin read his diary and said to

himself, "now I will spend my life for God." He became the pioneer missionary among Moham-medans.

In Germany, count Zinzendorf, when he was very young, stood before a picture of the crucified Jesus in the Dusseldorf Art Gallery. The picture bore the caption: "This I have done for you. What are you doing for me?" Zinzendorf could not forget that question. He said, "A faith that does nothing is just chatter." He formed the community of Moravians which has as its slogan, "The Saviour deserves everything." Missionaries from this community went to Greenland, to the Indians, and to the blacks.

Zinzendorf asked Sorensen, a person from his community, "Would you be willing to go to Labrador as a missionary?" Sorensen answered, "I would go tomorrow if I could get a pair of shoes." Some of the missionaries were killed by the Eskimos, but others followed. Soon the Moravians had missionary activity in twenty-eight countries.

In 1740, missionary Rauch went to the Mohican Indians. Cioop, one of his converts, later said, First we had a preacher coming to us who told us only that there is a God. We finished with him; we had known that. Another told us, "Don't lie, don't steal, don't get drunk." We answered him, 'go and tell it to the white faces. They do these things more than we do.' But then Rauch came. He spoke to us about the love of God shown in the sacrifice of

Jesus, and then he went to sleep quietly in my bed, not fearing that I might kill him. So I was won for Christ."

Allen Gardiner (1794-1851) went as missionary to Patagonia. Darwin had visited the area and believed that the Patagonians were the link uniting man and ape. They had a very low forehead, and their thoughts and habits were debased. But within two decades the missionaries changed everything. Darwin, after revisiting the country, said, "I always believed that civilizing the Japanese was the greatest miracle of history. Now I am convinced that what the missionaries have done in Patagonia by civilizing the natives is at least as wonderful." And he became one of the regular contributors to this Christian mission.

Evolutionists today could follow his example!

In recounting these adventures for God, we walk on holy ground; we should take off our shoes.

We remember Henry Thomas, one of the first missionaries to Korea. While he traveled upriver in a boat, stopping here and there to preach, the natives attacked him from the shore with spears. Wounded, he jumped into the water and in one last effort swam to shore holding up a parcel of Gospels in his hand, which he threw into the hands of the murderers. His wound was fatal and he drowned. Some of his attackers were converted by reading those very Gospels.

We remember Bishop Hannington of Uganda,

who was eaten by cannibals. While he was being taken to the place of execution, he loudly repeated over and over to himself, "Love your enemies. Pray for those who wrong you. Do good to those who do you evil." When the news of his death reached Britain, two of his sons decided to go as missionaries in his place and had the privilege of baptizing and later giving holy communion to those who had eaten their father.

We think about Devasagayan, a native of India. Because he preached the Gospel, he was bound to an ox and led from one village to another, where the inhabitants beat him. They put around his bare neck a garland of poisonous plants that pricked the skin. Then they put pepper in his open wounds. When one person expressed compassion for the chains he had to wear, he kissed the man and said, "To me they are like beads of pearls."

Devasagayan was a man who could not read, but when the passion of Christ was read to him he said, "O lord, how bad my life has been in comparison with Yours. How can I live well when You suffer?" His last words were, "Lord Jesus, save me."

During the war, the Japanese burned alive, crucified, and disemboweled Christians, then hanged them head down. They considered Christ to be the God of the Americans. For many blacks Jesus is the God of the whites; for Jews He is the God of the anti-Semites; for Communists He is the God of the capitalists. Missionaries are willing to face all

these prejudices as they fulfill Christ's commandment, "Make disciples of all nations."

Strangely, missionaries have had to fight with some of the churches. Until recently there were still American churches where blacks are not welcome. Mahatma Gandhi did not become a Christian because, being colored, he was not allowed to enter a church in South Africa.

In Rumania, the synod of the Orthodox church decreed during Nazi times that they would not baptize Jews. In some Lutheran churches, Gypsy Christians were given holy communion from a separate cup from that of other believers.

Missionaries have to overcome difficulties created not only by their avowed enemies, but also by their churches. But it still behoves every Christian to be a missionary.

The commandment to go and teach all nations is not given only to professional missionaries. In the Scriptures, we read that it was given to men without schooling; "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13) Jesus enjoined a Galilean who had just been healed of demon possession to go and proclaim the kingdom of God.

God asks today, as He did in Isaiah 6, "Whom shall I send?"

The answer is still, "Lord, send me."

* * *

The Jewish prayer book contains the following petition: "Lord of the universe, you have commanded that we bring certain sacrifices at certain times and that the priests when they serve, and the levites in their job, and the children of Israel, should stand in a certain place. But because of our unrighteousness, the Temple is destroyed now, the perpetual sacrifices ceased, and we have neither a priest serving, nor levites in their office. Therefore may it be pleasant, O Lord, our God, and God of our fathers, that the words of our lips might be accepted before you as if we had brought the perpetual sacrifice and were standing on the chosen place."

There is deep meaning in such a prayer.

The religious situation among Christians is in a sense similar to that of the Jews.

Ideally, Christ the teacher continues His existence in the church. St. Augustine said, "Christ and the church are one and the same person." Bossuet wrote, "the church is Jesus Christ spread out and communicated." These sayings remain valid, because the treasure of truth possessed by the church is tremendous.

But tragically much of modern theology could be called the Gospel according to Pilate or according to Judas.

In Communist countries many of the clergy played treacherous roles and were denouncers of their brethren.

Who are the trustworthy pastors? This is a

question that Jesus asks too; "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?" (Matthew 24:45)

After putting the question, the greatest Teacher gives no answer. There is just a question mark. In the original manuscripts even the question mark is missing.

Let us also live without demanding an answer. One can not feed his soul with questions. Know that you need good teachers in the church. Know that they are scarce. Beware of false teachers, and trust in God. The right teaching will find you.

This book claims to impart it, to be an oracle of God.

* * *

The modern philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote: "There is, to me, something a little odd about the ethical values of those who think an omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent Deity, after preparing the ground through millions of years of lifeless nebula, would consider Himself adequately rewarded by the final emergence of Hitler and Stalin and the H-bomb..."

"It is clear that fundamental Christian doctrines demand a great deal of ethical perversion before they can be accepted. The world, we are told, was created by a God who is both good and omnipo-

tent. But if, before He created the world, He foresaw all the pain and misery it would contain, He would have to be held responsible! It is useless to argue that the pain in the world is due to sin. In the first place, this is not true. It is not sin that causes the river to overflow its banks or the volcano to erupt. And even if this *were* true, it would make no difference."

"If I were to beget a child, knowing beforehand that this child would become a homicidal maniac, I would have to accept responsibility for causing his crimes. If God, as such, knew in advance the sins of which man would be guilty, he would clearly be responsible for the consequences of these sins when He decided to go ahead and create man anyway..."

"The usual Christian argument is that the world's suffering is a purification for sin and is therefore a good thing. This argument is, of course, only a rationalization of sadism—but in any case it is a very poor argument. I would invite any Christian to accompany me to the children's ward of any hospital, to watch the suffering endured there, and then to persist in the assertion that these children are so morally degenerate as to *deserve* what they are undergoing."

"In order to bring himself to say this, a man must abandon all feelings of mercy and compassion. He must, in short, make himself as cruel as the god in whom he believes. No man who believes that all is for the best (in this suffering world) can keep

his ethical values unimpaired, because he will always find excuses for pain and misery."

Because we do not have all the answers to questions raised by individuals like Russell, that does not mean God does not exist, but only that we do not understand all His doings.

Atoms existed in reality long before men knew about them, before scientists proved the hypothesis that postulated their existence. Atoms continue to exist, though they still pose mysteries for us.

If we cannot explain why Hitler and Stalin existed in the creation of an omnipotent, omniscient and benevolent Deity, neither can Bertrand Russell explain why thousands of saints have been ready to give their lives in suffering for love, truth, and God.

Russell has no explanation for why rivers overflow, but neither can he explain why rivers exist in the first place and are a boon to mankind and a delight to the eye.

When we say God can do everything, it means He can do all things that are consonant with His character.

He cannot annul the cause that produces a certain effect, though He can perform miracles. But the miracle does not cancel the laws of nature, which He Himself set in motion. It introduces new elements that counteract or accelerate the predictable effects.

Even God cannot make wrong thinking yield the truth.

Russell's error consists in judging reality as subject rather than object. There are beauties that can be seen only from a certain position. The position of subject versus object is not the right position to perceive and understand material and spiritual realities as they are.

One of the Biblical names for god is *El Shaddai*, which means "a sufficient God." Since He answers all our needs, we don't need him plus explanations about Him. A man can live a full life breathing air without having its qualities explained to him.

God is one, the only one. All reality exists in Him. There is no one apart from Him or co-equal with Him to affirm or deny Him. His creation, for which He alone is responsible, does not break up His oneness. "*In Him* we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

Billions of bacteria and viruses inhabit our bodies, but if they had Bertrand Russell's mind, they would deny our existence. And if they had some mystical sense of our existence, they would be against us because we sometimes take medicines that destroy them.

God is far above our categories of believing or non-believing.

* * *

Some years ago while in Norway, I dreamt I

heard a voice that said, "You will not always have a God." For a long time the dream troubled me, until finally I grasped its meaning.

Meister Eckhardt had a similar intuition: "The man united with God has no God."

The verb "to have" does not exist in Hebrew, the language of the Bible. Even in modern Hebrew no one can say "I have money," "I have a car," "I have a house." But neither can one say "I have a God."

We were never intended to *have* a God. We were meant to realize our high calling to being one with God. Jesus says, "Ye are gods." (John 10:34) We are meant to be overcomers, to whom Jesus gave this promise; "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My father on his throne." (Revelation 3:21) Only God sits on God's throne. This is also my final destination. Then evidently I will no longer *have* a God. I will be *with* God.

Everything less than becoming godlike is unworthy of a child of God. It is a shame for a prince to be only a good shoemaker.

Realize your calling and you will not ask such questions as to why rivers overflow, volcanoes erupt, children are in hospitals, and tyrants reign. You will sit on the heavenly throne from which universes are created and ruled. You will be above these things.

A good pastor is also godlike in this respect.

He does not give many explanations, as God does not explain Himself much. The right pastor will help you realize your calling to be God. You will no longer ask foolish questions. You will sit on a throne in perfect serenity, doing the right things whether you are understood or misunderstood.

* * *

The Hebrew does not have the singular 'face,' but only the plural "faces"—*panim*. (Every Hebrew *-im* at the end is a plural).

God, too, has many faces, one of his faces is hidden, veiled in deep darkness. Those like Russell who look at that face and see nothing cannot escape the strange impulse to write against this "nothing." They are like today's astronomers who write about black holes they can only postulate.

But this is not the only face of God.

In the Bible God is called "Our Father." The Hebrew word *av*, meaning "father," is strange. It is a masculine noun, but in the plural it receives the ending characteristic of feminine nouns and becomes *avot* instead of the normal *avim*.

So God is a father who also has female attributes. It is written, "God created man in His image, in the image of God he created him," and if you ask what this image is, the explanation follows: 'male and female He created them.' (Genesis 1:27) Furthermore, God compares Himself to a mother: "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort

you.” (Isaiah 66:13) Also, “Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son in her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you.” (Isaiah 49:15)

There is no possible good that He does not embody and that as both father and mother He would not gladly impart to His children.

A rabbi told a joke from the pulpit; A Jew won a million in a lottery. The agent who sold him the ticket asked how he knew what number to choose. “Well, this is not a problem for a Jew. In our Bible, seven is the holy number: the seventh day is Sabbath, there are seven branches in the candlestick, and so on. Seven times seven is forty-eight. So I chose number 748 and won.”

The agent replied, “But seven times seven is forty-nine, not forty-eight.”

“Well, God knew that I was poor in arithmetic and knew I’d make a mistake, so He made 748, not 749, the winning number.”

The rabbi continued, “As long as you are a member of the chosen people, you don’t have to worry. God will honor even your mistakes. You will always be on the winning side.”

This is not simply a joke.

A few years ago, I met a prince, member of an Asian royal house. When young, he had decided to commit suicide. To give a gentle setting to his intentions, he looked up the radio program in the newspaper and fixed his suicide for the next day at

10 p.m when there would be dance music.

According to the radiolog, the half-hour music program was followed by preaching at 10:30. But the man at the radio station made a mistake and at ten put on the sermon, which began with the words, "Perhaps you are fed up with life and have decided to end it all. This is the right decision. Throw away your life and get another one. Jesus offers you a new, rich life."

Through a careless mistake, the prince changed his mind and was converted.

Christians too can be quiet about their mistakes. God can use mistakes to glorify His name.

He knows if we are poor in arithmetic.

* * *

The first ecumenical council of Nicea (325 A.D.) worked out for Christians the method for calculating the date for Easter Sunday. It has to depend on the Jewish Passover, which was celebrated only at the time of the full moon.

However, good care was taken for it not to coincide with the Jewish Passover, though the events celebrated at Easter obviously took place at that time.

Writing about the acts of the First Council (which were not preserved in written form), Constantine the Great, emperor at that time, made some very good observations and some that do not bring him credit.

We read: "What could be more beautiful and festive, than when a feast that instills within us the hope of immortality is celebrated by everyone without variation, in accordance with a single rite and an established order?"

But he also says: "It appeared unseemly to celebrate this holy feast together with the Jews, who, having defiled their hands with an iniquitous act, have rightly been stricken as impure with blindness of soul... Your prudence would have striven in any way to see to it that our pure souls would not in any way have communicated and would not have been taken with the customs of these most worthless of people."

Jesus, a Jew, was sentenced by the Jews Annas and Caiaphas, and also by Romans. We have this information from Jews whose aim it was to cause the nations to believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah. This Jew, after being crucified, was resurrected on the third day in Israel. Within weeks, the Holy Spirit fell upon a company of Jews. Thus the first church was established in Jerusalem and was constituted of at least three thousand people, all Jewish.

Why must these events be celebrated with enmity toward the Jewish people? Why must the rule demand that Easter cannot be celebrated when the Jews have their Passover—even though it feasts another event.

The Council of Constantinople promulgated a

decision in which all innovations regarding the date of the Easter feast were committed to a curse. He who in this regard "does not follow the customs of the church... As well as the impious astronomers who counteract the decrees of the holy councils, let them be cursed, separated from the church of Christ and the assemblies of the faithful."

When some Orthodox churches, under pressure from their respective governments, changed the calendar to make Easter come nearer to Passover, other Orthodox churches considered this a betrayal of the faith. A split occurred that resulted in a breach of unity.

Healing of the schisms caused by hatred and discord is a consummation devoutly to be wished!

We must be careful that the cultivation of truth does not destroy another great gift of God; fantasy. All religions contain holy and useful fiction united with truth. It could not be otherwise, because great religious leaders and teachers are generally men with a rich imagination.

The Christian writer Dostoievsky describes such an innocent fantasy in his novel *The Idiot*. In it, General Ivolghin illustrates his points, which were well-founded, with "facts" he had invented.

Jesus Himself created stories, such as the one about the wedding feast for a king's son, or the one about ten virgins who had fallen asleep while waiting for the bridegroom to arrive.

If we do not accept trust plus fantasy, we must

reject all literacy prose, poetry, drama, and science fiction (which often becomes tomorrow's science fact). The opposite of truth is not necessarily a lie. Some persons indulge in harmless invention to make life more pleasant and interesting.

Usually artists and actors undergo a professional make-over. They often act out their fantasies in daily life and frequently create legends about themselves. This is the price one has to pay for the rich use of fantasy.

Such fictional embroidery need not be considered lies. If said or written selflessly, it uncovers a rich part of the artist that does not appear on the surface. (B. Filipov, *The Unselfish Liars*.)

Anderson, writer of children's fairytales, included the story of a princess who preferred a ceramic rose and a metal bird to the natural objects, because these had been made real for her, and her alone, by her lover.

Pushkin mocked those for whom the darkness of low truths is preferable to uplifting "deceit." He was wrong in calling fantasy "deceit," however, since it has its legitimate place in the pantheon of truth-lovers.

It is interesting that Goethe entitled his biography *From My Life—Truth and Poetry*.

The more science advances, the more we realize how many of its assertions have been fancies, though very useful ones. This is true even of mathematics. Nothing is true until proven true.

Even empirical evidence can be misleading. Because the sphere of truth is very small, allow room for fantasy—but never confound it with truth.

Even great scientists know very few things to be true. About many other things they think differently on Mondays and Wednesdays from what they think on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

One mathematical rule, called Merten's Conjecture, which was always found true for the first ten billion numbers, proved not to hold true when tested for higher numbers in fast computers. What is true in ten billion cases is not necessarily true always.

No matter how many individual cases are studied to prove a thesis, there will always be many more that have not been.

What science calls absolute natural laws from which no exception is possible also belong to the world of fantasy, this splendid sibling of truth. Don't swear by what is truth alone. To be really true, it needs the clothing of fancy.

* * *

A Christian must be a valiant fighter for truth.

Spurgeon said: "When I came to London as a young minister, I knew very well that the doctrines which I preached were by no means popular, but I for that reason brought them out with all the more emphasis. What a storm was raised! I was reading

the other day a tirade of abuse which was poured upon me about twenty years ago. I must have been a horribly bad fellow according to that description; but I was pleased to observe that it was not I that was bad, but the doctrines which I preached.

"I teach the same truths now; and after having preached them these four-and-twenty years or so, what can I say of the results? Why, that no man loses anything by bringing the truth right straight out."

"I wish to bear this witness, not about myself, but about the truth which I have preached. Nothing has succeeded better than preaching out boldly what I have believed, and standing to it in defiance of all opposition, and never caring a snap of the fingers whether it offended or whether it pleased."

We should imitate Spurgeon in his zeal for truth, but also give due regard to fantasy. There exists a natural right, sometimes even a duty, to dramatize life stories or even to embellish them.

We have to accept all of life as it thrust itself upon us. Does it help to defend oneself against fantasies?

Fantasy arises out of the wisdom of the subconscious, which should be highly valued. Don't distrust it. It corresponds to a fundamental psychical demand. Maintain an inner relationship with your own subconscious.

It is better to educate the fantasy than to repress it. David was successful; he wrote, "I re-

member thee upon my bed." (Psalm 63:6).

* * *

I have had a guardian angel for all my eightyfour years; you have also had one since you were born. What did your angel do before your birth? Angels were created long before men.

It is most probable that before guarding me, my angel guarded others of former generations, which means he possesses a tremendous experience of life to draw from in serving me. Our angels also have the experience of the beatific vision; they see God every day. (Matthew 18:10)

To have an angel as a friend is more important than to have thousands of influential men as friends.

While in jail, I had occasion to observe fights between two groups of ants. It was always a cruel war. But if one group had one single man as its ally, he could wipe out the whole camp of the enemy with one giant step. Likewise, one angel assured the victory of the Israelites by killing 185,000 Assyrians in one night.

We possess the history of several ancient people, among which the most important is the history of the Jews. The secret of the mysterious role of the Jewish people consists in the fact that they were in communion with angels. Even God was called "the Angel of the Lord" when He appeared to men like Jacob and Moses.

"How can two walk together unless they are

agreed?" (Amos 3:3) Most of us make no effort to know our guardian angels, yet without their ministry a successful spiritual life is all but impossible.

In my book *In God's Underground*, I mention briefly how I got acquainted with my guardian angel. It was an illuminating experience, figuratively and literally.

Buddhists and Hindus try to explain by means of reincarnation some persons' strange memories of past or places where they had never been. There exists a more plausible explanation. The angel shares with us the experience of others he guarded before us.

* * *

Each of us has a certain religion that he betrays. We are divided not because of religions we practice but because of different religions we leave unpracticed.

It is said that a black queen from Africa was introduced to Queen Victoria of Britain and boasted that she too had English blood in her veins. When asked how this happened, she said she had eaten Englishmen.

We too have fed on the religion of love and self-denial, the religion that ensures the new birth. We have enjoyed the fellowship of God and communion with heavenly angels.

One of the least observed interdictions of the Bible is this: "Behold, I send an angel before you... Obey his voice, and *do not provoke him.*" (Exodus

23:21) Have we taken care to avoid this?

If you see a man with a destructive character, ask yourself what kind of angel he has. The Bible speaks about an angel named "the destroyer." (Exodus 12:23) It also tells about evil spirits, which are the angels fallen from Paradise with Satan.

It is written, "You shall make two cherubim of gold" (Exodus 25:18), not images of cherubim, but cherubim. The word *cherubim* is considered in the Talmud to mean "childlike being," coming from *cherubiah*, "as children." Angels help shape our characters, as we help form theirs. In part, it depends on me to have childlike angels of golden heart.

Angels ascend to heaven after bringing us some communication. (Luke 2:15) What will they report from or about us? How do we receive their messages?

Ponder this.

* * *

Does there exist an absolute and eternal practical rule to differentiate between good and evil?

In every age various cultures have thought differently. Conceptions of good and bad are conditioned by race, geography, climate, history, and culture. Spengler wrote, "There exist as many moralities as there are cultures."

Pascal wrote, "Truth on this side of the Pyrenees is error on other side." The sophist Antiphon wrote, "The claims of law and habit are

arbitrary. Nature knows only the claims of need."

Plato approved of slavery. In his book *Nikomachic Ethics*, he wrote, "There exist no friendship and right toward inanimate beings, nor toward horses or oxen or slaves in their capacity of slaves," and again, "Slavery is an institution of nature...A slave is a possession of another man and has no claim to love and no right toward his master."

Suicide has been looked upon differently in different ages. The Stoics praised suicide. Cato and Seneca chose this way to end their lives. Today some Orientals consider suicide an honorable way to die. Kamikaze pilots and Moslem fanatics commit suicide in acts directed against their targeted enemies. Faithfulness in dealing with an adversary is deemed stupid by many.

Some say that ethics can be only situational. I would agree provided it is conceded that situational ethics is right only in certain circumstances, which means there exists a non-situational ethics. There is an ethics valid absolutely whose application depends upon circumstances.

* * *

Is it ever lawful to divorce?

Jesus said that Moses had permitted it only because men had hardened hearts. A spouse who is not allowed to divorce can turn his partner's life into hell. The ideal, as expressed by Him, is that those

joined by marriage should remain together for life. But where is the ideal husband, the ideal wife? People continue to have hardened hearts.

I knew the wife of a clergyman who constantly had to watch over her daughter of twelve so that her father would not assault her sexually. I advised divorce. I knew that Jesus' point of view was that of the potential victim.

Is it right to be a denunciator?

Ahasuerus was a cruel despot, and two of his servants had plotted to lay hands on him. Mordecai and Esther denounced the plotters to the king, who had them hanged. (Esther 2:21-23) Mordecai and Esther are rightly considered examples for believers.

Not to denounce sin can be a sin. It is written. "If a person sins in hearing the utterance of an oath, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of the matter—if he does not tell it, he bears guilt." (Leviticus 5:1) This refers to a blasphemous or criminal oath.

Old Testament Joseph reported to his father the evil words of his brothers. (Genesis 37:2) Someone reported to David about Absalom's plan to kill him. (II Samuel 15 and 17) St. Paul's nephew revealed a conspiracy to kill the apostle. Were these reprehensible acts?

The majority of church fathers excuse the actions of Tamar who mated with her father-in-law, knowing that her progeny would be the proper ancestor of the future Messiah; the incest of the

daughters of Lot, who did not wish to have children from idolaters; the ruse by which Jacob obtained the blessing that was his brother's due, because he knew his brother was unfitted to receive it; Moses' killing of an Egyptian oppressor; Samson's suicide, which killed many of the enemies of God, etc.

Is it right to dissimulate for a good purpose?

Jansenius and Duvergier of St. Cyran, when young, decided to dedicate their lives to the reformation of the Catholic church. They also determined to keep silent about their purposes until they could insinuate themselves into high places, where they would be effective. The first became an abbot, the second a bishop.

I cannot see how we can win any war without dissimulation. Underground church in Communist and Moslem countries dissimulate constantly. Its leaders live and travel under pretended names, they hide their whereabouts, they mislead the authorities and secret police, and so on.

Sir Stafford Cripps, hearing one of the broadcasts of the Psychological Warfare branch, said, "If we have to resort to this sort of thing to win the war, I'd rather we lost it." He should have seen what a lost war looks like in the shambles of Germany and Japan; then he would have changed his mind.

Other members of the British war cabinet were wiser than he. They sent an exact double of Marshal Montgomery to Gibraltar, while he himself was putting the final touches to the plans for D-

day, the invasion of France. The Germans did not expect an imminent attack, knowing Montgomery to be far away on an inspection.

The British cabinet had followed a biblical pattern in which soldiers were taught to lie in wait under cover of darkness. (Judges 9:32) Ruse is an effective weapon for those who have a great calling but are weak.

If anyone has scruples about dissimulation, certainly we can all agree that it is not morally necessary to disclose all one knows.

During World War II, the German ship *Graf Spee* was in Montevideo for repairs for only forty-eight hours, the time limit in a neutral harbor. Two small British ships lay in wait but were impotent to take the *Graf Spee*. The British Admiralty, aware that larger ships were too far away to arrive in time, resorted to deception and signaled that a big battleship with an aircraft carrier would join them soon. The Admiralty was sure the Germans would break the code. The result was that the German captain Langdorff scuttled the ship and committed suicide. The British won without a battle.

When St. Thomas went to evangelize India, he entered a temple which was not his property and destroyed all the idols with an axe. Was this moral? Was it proper for Moses to send some Jews to spy out the land of Canaan?

Newton's laws of mechanics and Maxwell's laws of electrodynamics are valid up to a point, but

they do not work in the infrastructure of the atom. Likewise, Biblical and moral laws are valid to a point.

To say there exist no absolute moral laws because they do not apply everywhere at all times is wrong. This is the error of situational ethics. To say that those who apply absolute moral laws must not have concrete circumstances in view is also wrong. This is the error of the legalists.

An Eskimo has to conform to other circumstances than a Zulu, which does not make either immoral per se.

Krishna taught that we should be preoccupied only with deeds, not with their fruits. Jesus said, on the other hand, that we will know the moral value of a deed by its fruits. And it is really not of primordial importance to do great works. Whatever we do, even on a small scale, should be done with a great heart.

But one cannot recommend a given attitude for all circumstances. Very often we have to choose between Jesus as truth and Jesus as life.

There are times when we must boast and times when we must humble ourselves. When the devil comes to you with the temptation to be haughty, humble yourself because of your many sins. When he drives you to despair about your salvation, boast of your rank as a child of God.

In Church, lie about being a great sinner, and in every day life be a saint. Usually we do the

contrary; we sin in everyday life and sing holy songs in church.

* * *

Jesus was not very polite to the Pharisees when he turned and pronounced His woes against them, especially in public. His confrontation could scarcely have pleased them. From this experience we may conclude that it is not a duty always to be polite.

Politeness does not always come first. Nothing always comes first.

In Scripture there is a very strange expression: "It happened on the second Sabbath after the first." (Luke 6:1) Obviously, any Sabbath can be the second after the first. Why the designation? The Greek expression is *deuteroprotos*, which means literally "the second things first."

The occasion involved the Sabbath on which Jesus' disciples did something forbidden by law. Being hungry, they plucked heads of grain on the Sabbath and ate them.

Now, there are days on which secondary things take first priority. As a general rule, filling the stomach is a secondary matter, but there are times when nagging hunger moves it into first place.

Jesus reminded those who objected that when David was hungry, he had eaten forbidden things which it was only lawful for the priests to partake of. Jesus had no word of condemnation for David,

who with his small band of men had been on the run, persecuted because he defended a just cause. In effect, Jesus excused his action.

* * *

If the law makes false suppositions, mused Mr. Bumble, a character in Dicken's *Great Expectations*, then "The law is an ass, an idiot."

Laws are asses when they apply ordinary norms to exceptional circumstances.

During World War II, the Nazis wanted to deport and then kill all the Jews of Rome. The city's municipal government could not save all the Jews, but it salvaged the lives of many by changing their identities, giving them forged documents and hiding their true parentage.

For humanitarian reasons, the respective employees committed acts that would be considered immoral and would be condemned by the laws of any civilized country. But the circumstances were extraordinary and demanded suprallegal acts.

A man who really loves another is willing to do extraordinary things, even if it means breaking the rules.

We should be harmless as a dove and wise as a serpent (Matthew 10:16), not foolish as an ass, and never mindless as a swine. (The atheist philosopher Nietzsche boasted that he was the sow mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 7:6)

Both Judaism and Christianity have at times

used questionable methods to establish their religions.

Zinzendorf wrote, "If our predecessors had not used methods which our principles no longer admit, Christianity would not be. We have to thank those who did an ugly preparatory work in order that we might remain clean."

Is it justifiable to kill a guard who keeps you from an important task when you have been innocently detained by a tyrant? God in effect said "yes" when He freed Peter from jail, thus jeopardizing the lives of a number of Roman soldiers responsible for Peter's custody.

There exists no ideal crystal or gas, Reality differs from laboratory formulas. So it is with morals.

Must one always speak out for the Savior? When Paul was confronted by his accusers before the governor Felix, he did not say one word about Jesus. (Acts 24:10-21) Under the circumstances, it was more important to defend himself than to be witness for Jesus. (Later he did take an opportunity to do so.)

Dr. Fritz, in his *Pastoral Theology*, says that it is not under all circumstances wrong or contrary to love to omit private admonition. He cites Luther's statement about the Eighth Commandment: "For when the matter is public in the light of day, there can be no slandering or false judging or testifying; as, when we now reprove the Pope and his doctrine,

which is publicly set forth in books and proclaimed in all the world. For where the sin is public, the reproof also must be public that everyone may learn to guard against it." (pp. 230-2)

Luther also says that false teachers are to be condemned without a hearing, without entering long discussions with them, since their errors have already been sufficiently refuted by the public confessions of the Church (Walch edition, IV, 1057). And elsewhere Luther commends the holy fathers of Nicea for not allowing the Arians to defend their heresies, but silencing them by "hissing unanimously."

In Dedeken's *Thesaurus*, an opinion is given regarding the question public sin must first be verified before being rebuked. This is vigorously denied, with the argumentation that John the Baptist didn't ask Herod what he had done (he might have denied it), but condemned his public sin, as also Nathan did with David. Likewise Joseph told his father when there was an evil report about his brothers (Genesis 37), and Paul wrote public admonitions on the basis of what he had heard (II Thessalonians 3:11). (*Thesaurus*, I, 864-5)

If moral problems are so intricate, where lies the solution? How can one know for sure what is good and what is bad?

Meister Eckhart long ago gave a reply to this question: "Everything is good that a man does who has become one with God." It is written, "God saw

everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1:31), though He had also made the serpent which would tempt Eve and produce the whole catastrophe.

* * *

In *Sufite Legends*, Indries Shah reports the following:

"A man who was very easily angered realized after many years that all his life he had been in difficulties because of this tendency."

"One day he heard of a dervish deep of knowledge, whom he went to see, asking for advice."

"The dervish said: 'Go to such-and-such a crossroads. There you will find a withered tree. Stand under it and offer water to every traveller who passes that place.'"

"The man did as he was told. Many days passed, and he became well known as one who was following a certain discipline of charity and self-control, under the instructions of a man of real knowledge."

"One day a man in a hurry turned his head away when he was offered the water, and went on walking along the road. The man who was easily angered called out to him several times: 'come, return my salutation! Have some of this water, which I provide for all travellers!'"

"But there was no reply."

"Overcome by this behaviour, the first man

forgot his discipline completely. He reached for his gun, which was hooked in the withered tree, took aim at the heedless traveller, and fired. The man fell dead."

"At the very moment that the bullet entered his body, the withered tree, as if by a miracle, burst joyfully into blossom."

"The man who had been killed was a murderer, on his way to commit the worst crime of a long career."

"There are, you see, two kinds of advisers. The first kind is the one who tells what should be done according to certain fixed principles, repeated mechanically. The other kind is the Man of Knowledge. Those who meet the Man of Knowledge will ask him not for moralistic advice, but for truth about what is right in this specific situation."

The dervish master who figures in this tale is said to have been Najmudin Kubra, one of the greatest of Sufi saints.

* * *

It is important to avoid quarreling.

The Fathers of the Desert contains the story of two brethren who decided to live together. One of them said, "Whatever my brother tells me I will do." The other said, "I will always do what my brother decides."

For many years they lived together harmoniously. When the enemy saw it, he tried to divide

them.

One day, as they sat on a bench in front of their house, he showed himself to one as a dove and to the other as a crow. The one said, "Do you see the dove?" The other said, "It is a crow," and they began to quarrel, each claiming to be right. In the end they beat each other to the blood, to the great joy of the enemy, and then they separated.

Three days later, distressed over their fractured relationship, they woke up to a realization of the cunning of the enemy. They reunited and lived in harmony till the end.

The bird has been a swallow.

How stupid for men who worship the same God to fight about the manner of worshiping, especially since one's particular religion in most cases is due to an accident of birth. Even those who choose a new religion often do so as result of chance encounters or circumstances.

Lao Tse wrote, "There are numerous religions, but there is only one reason, and we are brethren."

We should also avoid slander and should abstain even from listening to it. Furthermore, if others speak evil of you, you are not permitted to reply in kind.

Michelangelo and Raphael were both great artists, but whereas the latter was very much beloved, Michelangelo felt himself despised because he was ugly as a result of an accident he had in his youth.

Once, friends came to Rafael and said, "Michelangelo is speaking much evil of you."

In reply, Rafael arose and said, "As for me, I thank God for having the privilege of living in the same century as the unsurpassed artistic genius Michelangelo."

"Why do you praise him when he insults you?"

"Rafael replied, "My attitude towards Michelangelo depends not upon his attitude towards me, but upon the dictates of truth and love."

Remember that not only artists, but also the workers in God's kingdom are few. We cannot afford to discard a single one. Even if a brother is weak and a sinner, we cannot spend time on anything that would deflect us from effective work for the kingdom.

It is a virtue to avoid evil-speaking completely. According to the Talmud, the fact that you speak evil against a man puts God on his side:

"When an unrighteous man persecutes a righteous one, God is on the side of the persecuted righteous. When an unrighteous persecutes another unrighteous, God is on the side of the persecuted unrighteous. When a righteous man persecutes an unrighteous, God is on the side of the unrighteous. God is always on the side of the persecuted."

It is better to be slandered than to speak evil of another.

I have no artistic talent when it comes to

drawing. Once when my granddaughter, then five, saw me sketching some human faces, she said, "Grandpa, you sin. God made men beautiful. You make them look ugly." Her assessment applies not only to bad painters or to artists like Picasso, but also to those who speak evil of men.

The Bible records a notable example of the virtue of not speaking evil of another.

Pilate was the sixth Roman procurator of Judea and held the office for ten years. He has been described by both Josephus and Philo as an arbitrary, tyrannical ruler who, because of this, was recalled by Rome and banished to Gaul, where he died by his own hand.

We have this unflattering information about him from other sources as well; the Evangelists record nothing bad about him.

The Talmud in the treatise *Pesahim* 57A wrote about the high priest who sentenced Jesus, "Woe over the house of Annas, woe over their curses, woe for their serpent-like hissings."

The Bible does not say one bad word about Jesus' judges.

* * *

One cannot overemphasize the virtue of peacemaking.

Mehilta, a Jewish religious writing, says, "If, in regard to stones which cannot hear or see or talk, just because they are the stones of an altar which is to make peace between Israel and their Father in

Heaven, you are ordered not to lift up an iron tool upon them, how much more shall no punishment befall him who makes peace between two men, or between a man and his wife, or between two towns and nations, or between families and governments."

Without peace-making, you will never have the great Christian virtue of calmness and tranquility. And without inner peace, it is difficult to use your time well.

A Christian is a lover of peace if for no other reason than that quarrels are a great waste of time.

Euclid, the Greek mathematician of antiquity, once had a misunderstanding with a friend, who threatened him by saying, "May I die if I do not avenge myself against you."

The philosopher answered, "May I die if I do not make peace with you."

These words ended their quarrel.

We have a Saviour who was so intent on making peace between the sinner and an offended God that he gave His life for it. We too should be willing to make this commitment.

Inner peace is a prerequisite for making peace.

During a tempest at sea when the ship was tossed to and fro by the angry waves, the wife of a naval officer asked her husband, "How can you be so calm in such a storm?"

The officer drew his sword, pointed it at his wife's breast, and asked, "Why are you calm and unafraid?"

Surprised, she protested, "Why should I be afraid? The sword is in the hand of my husband, who loves me too much to harm me."

Her husband smiled and said, "This is the source of my calm, too. The wind and the waves are in the hands of my loving Father. Why should I be afraid?"

* * *

Kant testified to Jesus' ideal perfection. Hegel wrote, "He is the union of the human and the divine." Spinoza: "He is the truest symbol of heavenly wisdom." Rousseau: "He is the highest person we can possibly imagine with respect to religion, the Being without whose presence in the mind, perfect piety is impossible." Renan: "He is the most beautiful incarnation of God in the most beautiful of forms."

It is written that "when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not believe in them." (John 2:23, 24, in the original)

May we be such ardent believers in the Perfect one that he in turn might say joyously that He believes in us, because we have given him all that is in us. I will say to men, "I believe in Jesus," and He will say in heaven, "I believe in Richard Wurmbrand."

* * *

Many readers of this present book love Jesus, I am sure. But there are many degrees of love. The bride in Solomon's Song is "lovesick." (Song of Solomon 5:8) This is a sickness without recovery. You yearn for the Beloved as a person with a high fever yearns for water.

To some people, religion is rooted in fear. To others it is a do-it-or-you-will-be-damned proposition. To still others it is social service or cultic practice. To the lovesick it is an ardent passion that leads ultimately to being crucified with Jesus. You live no more; He lives in you. And just as His life was that of a Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief, of a Shepherd whose primary concern was to sacrifice His life to the wolves on behalf of His sheep, so you too will take suffering consciously upon yourself.

To be God-filled, to be Christ-filled, and to be Spirit-filled are not the same thing.

The God-filled person shares God's serenity. "In Him there is no variation or shadow of turning." (James 1:17) The Christ-filled person knows the church is the continuation of Christ's incarnation with all the human temptations, sufferings, and triumphs it involves. He continues this fight. The spirit-filled person sees his main role in being what the Spirit is—a Comforter, a Guide to light.

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This is what I had to tell you and you can be sure - these are oracles of God.

Is what I gave you too little? Is it not too big a claim to give the name "divine oracles" to thoughts of ours, some of which are only common sense? You might have expected more.

Those who believe the Bible to be the oracle of God would do well to read the endless genealogies in it or Numbers, chapter 1-4 with boresome details of a census. Then they will realise that the common, the average, the boresome also belong to reality and to God's truth, the more so common advise which can help those walking the way of salvation.

We should not expect things too big. What could an Einstein reveal to toddlers? What could God say to little beings like us? We are still in preschool. But we can get hints of what follows in highschool, college, university.

Today's oracles prepare us for getting gradually the whole truth in all its beauty.

Pastor Richard Wurmbrand is a Lutheran Minister who was imprisoned for fourteen years by the Communists for his faith and ministry in Romania.

After being "purchased" out for £ 10,000, he came to the United States where he testified before the Congress and Senate.

Pastor Wurmbrand wrote twenty six other books which have been published by major houses around the world, translated in over 50 languages, and sold over eight millions.

He became famous due to his activity as founder of Christian Mission to the Communist World, an interdenominational Christian organization with offices in 53 countries, which help Christians persecuted behind the iron Curtain.

Because of his unusual experience, many people depend on Pastor Wurmbrand for spiritual guidance. They write to ask his views in matters of faith as well as in matters of daily life, and even family relations.

Love In Action Society

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