



**ANSWER  
TO HALF A  
MILLION  
LETTERS**

**RICHARD WURMBRAND**



**ANSWER TO HALF A MILLION LETTERS**

by  
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"I am content that my book be deficient in acuteness, if only it be pious. Let it not train men for the discussions of Sorbonne, provided it train them for Christian peace. Let it be unserviceable for theological debates, provided it be used for religious living."

Erasm of Rotterdam

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*"..... We are such stuff as dreams are made on,  
and our little life is rounded with a sleep."*

*(Shakespeare "The Tempest")*

## QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK ME

I have been in the free world for ten years. During this time I have received at least half a million letters as a result of my sermons, lectures, and the books which I have published.

Most of these letters show enthusiastic support for the cause of the Underground Church in Communist countries, the cause that constitutes my life. But many contain questions not related to Marxism, the persecution of Christians, and the methods of aiding these victims: they are from people who have entirely other concerns.

A man who has been a pastor for decades asks me, "What is the destiny of life? Do we go to a completed heaven of heavens, with no work to do and no creative abilities needed? Are our mansions above furnished, arranged beforehand, and will we not have to give them a personal touch? Why does God allow evil to tempt young men? He knows we are weak and frail. Who can stand against Satan except Christ? What is this school of life and suffering for? Why does the Revelation consist only of general statements, without specific explanations?"

This pastor had had to dispel the doubts of many for long years. He first had to listen to the doubts, and while trying to heal others, he himself was contaminated.

A soldier writes that he will commit suicide unless he gets answers to the things that trouble him. "What is it that makes me torn between two emotions—hate and love? What is it that makes me afraid of my fellow man because he may be of a different color or social standing? If the Bible is the truth and the whole truth then what about all the Jews, Buddhists, Moslems, Hindus, etc? Will they

automatically be excluded from the kingdom of God, whatever that consists of? What about the millions of people who were born and who died before the time of Christ, such as the Romans, Greeks and Babylonians? They could not have been all bad. What about the pygmies and the primitive people in South America and various parts of the world who have never heard of Christ and most likely never will?

"If the Bible is the truth, then I am indeed in need of forgiveness, for while I have never killed anyone or committed other such crimes, I have, in my heart, hated others, have lusted and have been jealous, have nurtured false pride, lied, cheated, and more. That being the case, I have much to atone for, yet still I remain a paradox. I could become a Christian (if that's what I am supposed to become), and tomorrow if I were sent into battle somewhere, which could well happen, I probably would kill not once, but many times over. Yet I would feel disgust at myself and would probably go insane. Christ wouldn't strike back; in fact he went meekly to the cross. The Fifth Commandment says, 'Thou shalt not kill.' Then what should I do if faced with an armed enemy? Stand still and let him kill me?"

This letter is a proof that in spiritual matters analysis often leads to paralysis. Here it could have led almost to suicide.

Another man asks: "How can we, how dare we (the United States, Britain, France, Germany, etc.) send missionaries to Africa to convert the so-called heathen while in Europe these Christian nations spilled each other's blood in two world wars with a cruelty that would make an animal disgusted with the human race? Who is the heathen and who the Christian? What about people who are supposedly insane and confined to asylums? What happens to them? Are not years in an asylum a



living hell here on earth?

“What happens if I become a Christian and then am tempted by a woman and once more fall into sin? Do I pick myself up and start over again? And if that is the case, then why tell people that only by *obeying* God’s Commandments will we share in his kingdom? Would it not be more sensible to say that by *trying* to keep God’s Commandments we shall share in his kingdom? I believe that love is not merely an illusion, that it is real and therefore in that sense God must be real, but it still disturbs me—who is God? I have been told to pray for understanding, to approach the Bible in prayer, etc. But I can’t accept that. Before I pray I want to know who I’m praying to. I can ask a woman for the next dance, but I know who I’m talking to. She takes shape and form. My eyes tell my brain, *This is a cute girl*; my brain then replies, *Well, don’t just stand there—ask her to dance*. I hope you see what I’m trying to get at.”

From a third letter: “A thing that has always disturbed me is the constant *don’ts* I hear from Christians. Don’t do this, it’s a sin; don’t do that, it’s a sin; don’t look at a pretty girl too hard as she passes by, it’s a sin; don’t go to a Rock-’n- roll concert, it’s a sin—until my head reels with don’ts. What about sex? It’s supposed to be a sin outside marriage, yet it’s the same act in marriage or out. Does an ordained minister have to declare them married? Can it not be just another human being? And who ordained him? And if that is so, why cannot I and some girl just declare ourselves married? Why all this ceremony with a pretty dress and a white cake?”

“And if I come to believe that Christ is our Saviour and know who God is, then what must I do to be saved? Go to Romania and allow myself to be put in prison and be tortured like Reverend Wurmbrand? I couldn’t do that; the very thought of it chills my blood. Then should I go to

Africa and heal the sick? (I can't even take care of a simple cold when I catch one myself!) And besides, many blacks today are aware that much of our so-called Western civilization has been built at their expense, by their sweat and blood. Many of them hate white people, and I can well understand why. I don't relish the idea of ending up mutilated like some white nurses in the Congo.

"If neither of these two, then should I stand on a street corner with my Bible and scream at passersby to repent and preach to them? (I personally feel that most people are turned off by street-corner preachers; however, I can only speak for myself here.) Should I, if nothing more, have a minister pour water over my head and, numbing a few words, baptize me, making me feel good (physically speaking), much as an Englishman who, upon winning a tennis match, is congratulated by the Queen?"

Mormons, Seventh-day Adventists, Ahmedian Muslims, and adherents of different trends of the Evangelical faith write, putting tears and the blood of their hearts into their letters, to convince me that I must receive the true revelation which only they have. I can discard none of these religions as stupid or unbiblical and be done with them. Different religions could never have arisen if they did not correspond to some specific disposition, some fundamental psychological experience.

As for the variations within Christianity, I remember that once when Rabbi Shammai quarreled with Rabbi Hillel about the sense of some Scripture, a voice from heaven said, "Both are words of the living God." There exists within Christianity a place for variations in nonessentials.

I side with Jesus. I could never make up my mind with which religion to side.

Nominally I am Lutheran, but this religion is not old enough for me. It was founded by a former monk in 1517. There are trees in California much older than that. Angli-

canism exists because a pope would not allow King Henry VIII to get a divorce. Presbyterians and Congregationalists are denominations approximately the same age as Lutherans. Methodism arose in the Eighteenth century. Mormons, Seventh-day Adventists, the Salvation Army, Christian Scientists, Pentecostals, and Jehovah's Witnesses are all like Little girls. A religion not much older than a hundred years has not yet passed the test of time. Why should I be a Mohammedan? Where was the truth before the appearance of Mohammed in the seventh century A. D., or before the appearance of Buddha in the sixth century B. C. ?

I have decided to believe in the Holy Trinity which exists outside of time and to share the faith which Adam had before the Fall, the faith of righteous Abel and of all generations who have adored God in spirit and in truth. Letters trying to convert me to another religion find no echo in me.

A beautiful girl of nineteen sends me her picture. She has fallen in love with me through reading my books. She is worth a million. Would I not marry her? She knows I have a wife, but after thirty-five years of marriage I might have become tired of her. For fairness' sake, I must say that my wife has received a similar letter from a student, except that he had no million to offer. An old British lady writes, "I gather from your books that you must be a very good man. Help me. I am seventy-one and seek a husband. I would accept even a non-Anglican. You know many people. Recommend somebody." I have long since forgotten to laugh about such letters. They express the suffering of a creature of God as much as any other letter.

"Now, when the visit to the museum is almost finished, I ask for questions," a guide said.

"I have a question." A lady lifted her hand.

"Please."

"I would like to know what you use to clean the floor."

Questions like these are sometimes asked of me, too,

after people read my books or hear my sermons about God, Christ, the persecution of Christians in the Communist camp, and the heroism of the persecuted.

Let us not fool ourselves. In many parts of Africa, blacks listened to missionaries and might even have asked questions about religion. But for them it was a pastime. What they liked about the missionaries was that they mended guns and brought beads. In the New Hebrides, all the population was converted when the missionaries had successfully completed the first well and provided good drinking water. With this all the questions in their minds about whether they should believe in the spirits and witchdoctors, or in one God in three Persons, revealed in the Book they could not read, were solved.

We are not better than they. In thousands of cases friendship with a nice girl or a handsome boy leads to conversion. The religion of the beloved is accepted and later propagated with zeal.

When someone is over-zealous in trying to attract me to his faith, I ask him, how he happened to hold to his beliefs and discover that he needs my approval for beliefs with which he has become connected only as a result of some biological accident.

A spiritually ignorant Russian from outer Siberia heard a Russian broadcast from Manila which the organization "Jesus to the Communist World" had sponsored for a long time. "You said over the radio that God has come to this earth," he writes. "Could I have a picture of him? I would very much like to see the living God. What is his address?" Such a letter, if written by a Westerner, would be a mockery. From Russia it is genuine.

A Catholic nun writes, "After having read about the martyrs in the Communist camp, I regret for the first time my vow of poverty. I would liked to have much money to give. But I say like Peter, 'Gold and silver I have not; what I have

I give.' I promise prayer and penance for them." She had read about Baptists killed in Communist prisons. A Baptist minister writes, "Why do you worry so much? Let God take care of the martyred Baptists. They are not my concern. I have other tasks from God."

A letter from a child in Russia says, "Father returns from prison after four months. Both of his feet are gangrenous. I am so small. Why is my life so dark?" A letter from Ghana says, "Can you tell me the reason why God allows Christians to suffer in Communist lands?" An American lady whose first husband had been a drunkard and whose second husband has been paralyzed for twenty-six years asks, "Why am I singled out for sorrows?" A child who has given up candy to help Christian prisoners writes, "Does it always hurt to do something good?"

A Jewess in Israel read about me in a French newspaper. She had heard me preach once in a shelter thirty years ago during a raid over Bucharest. She had witnessed my arrest by the Fascist police for this crime and thought me to be dead. She had innumerable questions about me and wanted to know why a Jew should believe in Christ. Why don't the Christians defend the state of Israel?

A letter from New York asks, "Why should a good God torment any of His creatures forever when you know that *you* would not do anything like that yourself?"

"I am seventeen years old and was a member of the Communist Youth organization." This is a letter from a South American country in which Communism is against the law. "Now my eyes have been opened and I am born again. I promise to defend the faith against my former comrades. To enable me to do it, please answer the following questions." Following were some thirty questions about Marx, Communism, and atheism.

A Russian living in the United States writes, "There is so much suffering in your books and in your life. Would you not

like to laugh a little bit? Why not tell you a joke? You will surely enjoy the following one:

"A soldier was on duty before the monument of Lenin in a small Soviet town. At midnight he heard Lenin's voice: 'Tell Brezhnev and Kosygin they should send me a horse. I am tired of standing. I wish to be shown on the statue riding a horse, like Peter the Great and Napoleon. I have achieved more than they. I shook the foundations of the whole world. Tell them to bring me a horse.' With this, Lenin turned and ascended the pedestal again.

"The half-dead soldier reported to his officer. The officer did not believe, but decided notwithstanding to be with the soldier at the statue the very next night at midnight. Lenin again appeared alive asking for a horse. So eventually the request reached the top leadership. Brezhnev and Kosygin arrived at midnight before the statue, together with the officer. Lenin descended from the pedestal and shouted in anger at the officer, 'I asked you for a horse and you brought me two asses.'"

I laughed at the joke, but I must have associations of ideas apart. While laughing, I remembered Kundry's words in Wagner's *Parsifal*, "Are animals not sacred here?" I understand why there are jokes about the Russian Prime-minister, but why should asses be made a subject of mockery in this joke? Jacob, when praising his son Issachar, called him an ass, a being which carries heavy burdens for others.

A lady writes from Colorado, "I read in your books about children taken from Christian parents by the Communists and brought up in godlessness. How could I keep myself in such a case from killing my children in a merciful fashion rather than risking their going to hell? (In my book *The Soviet Saints* I documented the fact that Ana Nevelinaia and other mothers did this.) Would it be right? What if I had to prove under-torture how strong is my faith in Christ? I worry very much about where my breaking point would be.

A woman from Ohio asks "a few brief questions" : "If the Communists should come over here to the United States, or before they come bomb us, would a Christian be justified in taking his life? I could not help thinking of all those other people who have turned the gas on and willingly taken the lives of their whole families because they could not bear religious persecution and torture. Will they go to heaven? I could not bear to face the torture you speak of I have no courage to stand up for my faith under insurmountable situations such as those you describe. Would I go to heaven if I took my life because of this? I want to live very much, and it would certainly be a death forced on me by the communist enemy.

"How does a human being start to develop the Christian fortitude and courage needed to go through—willingly—such inhumane, indescribable torture? How? And how can a Christian here on earth, seeing what he sees from day to day, believe in God so completely—even though he has never seen Him or had a spiritual experience?

"I know I am a coward. There is no courage in me or strength to fight for Christ in the face of torture. I am shy, afraid, scared, and I know I could never face what you have faced. Is there no salvation for people like me? I hear all the time about your kind, but what about my kind—the kind who *never* die for their faith, who do not have the courage even to suffer a little bit for it? Is heaven made only for those who are willing to face these hardships? I so, I will never go to heaven. Please help ease my troubled mind about these questions."

A Christian from another country asks, "Should I continue to give tithe to my church, which is rich? Would it be better to give the money to families of martyrs who hunger?"

I wrote him that it is much more important to realize that no sin is rebuked in the New Testament so often as that of *pleonexia*, more "having." The rich man in the parable

went to hell. Lazarus, while poor, had a much greater chance to reach Abraham's bosom. Therefore, don't have many things; don't have many questions either; and don't take on more work than you can quietly do. Don't load your head with superfluous knowledge. Be rich in the only sensible way. Rich indeed is the one who enjoys the state in which he happens to be.

A letter from Australia says, "Why do you react with such apprehension to any rapprochement between China and the Western world, be it on a political, social, or economic level? Why not cultivate it? A comparison between your publications and the anti-Capitalist invective that one picks up at Chinese and Russian information services is unavoidable." A similar letter from Britain says, "The Communists are bad guys. Yet why not try a policy of great patience which, one day, after many disenchantments, may finally be rewarded?" Then in a letter from the United States we read, "St. Peter taught one to be obedient even to a Nero who oppressed terribly. Should we not do the same?"

On the other hand, the Romanian exile magazine *Vatra* writes just the contrary. "Pastor Wurmbrand has an undeserved generosity with the enemies of the human race. The love shown by him surpasses even that shown by God, who, instead of sharing His bread with Lucifer, chased him from heaven with a fiery sword. He was not gentler with Adam and Eve when they trespassed, but showed them the door by which they should leave paradise. Jesus, when he met the merchants, took the whip."

A Swiss Christian wishes to get advice: "With the many Red pastors, we have the same experience which we had in Nazi times with the German Christians. The betrayal starts with the World Council of Churches and with the beautiful flats of pastors. Should I protest by leaving the church, or would I render a better service by remaining in the church and protesting from within?"



I have been arrested many time, by the Nazis and by the Communists. I have been interrogated up to vivisection. "To be questioned" has a sadic connotation, when it happens under a totalitarian regime. Inquiry and inquisition have arrived to be ominous words. When I came to the West, I was sure that now I have escaped questioning. The contrary happened. I am questioned more than ever before.

What should I do about so many varied letters which swamp my desk daily? I cannot answer everyone individually. I would not even if I could.

Questions about facts in the material and intellectual world have to be answered with facts or their explanations.

Regarding spiritual questions, the choice is not between a right and a wrong answer. There is danger in answering at all. You can destroy a soul by making him listen to you.

Yajnadatta, of an Indian legend, was handsome, and he knew it. He would spend much time admiring himself in the mirror. One morning his image was not reflected in the mirror which he had before him. He thought his head was missing and went around asking himself, "Where could I have put my head"? How could he have found it? The head for which he was searching was the head which did the searching. Through carelessness he looked at the back side of the mirror. After this he used his head to look for his head. The more he sought it, the less chance he had of finding it.

Never seek the answer to spiritual questions from somebody else. Look into the right side of the mirror and you will find it existing in yourself. "The kingdom of God is within you," says Jesus, but every kingdom has a king. If I should answer your letters, I would have to put words next to each other. But the Hebrews, through whom the Word of God was given to mankind, had no distinct word in their language for "word." They used for it the expression *davar*, which means "thing." The introduction to the Gospel of John in Hebrew reads, "In the beginning was the real thing,

and the real thing was with God, and God is the real thing."

Words cease at the limits of life. Only substance remain. The last words of a man who died near me in prison were, "So it is true." What was true? If he had been able to speak, he could not have put in words what he experienced. He had experienced the *davar*, the reality, in the deepest sense of the word. Here words cease.

We are happy about every man who has ultimate things as the object of his thoughts. But how many think about thinking? How much is it worth? How reliable is the thinker? What are his limitations? Is he competent enough to think about the *davar*? Would it not be better to live the reality? We are not called to meditate upon eternal life, but to enter it. When my son was five he once told me, "Father, I am bored. What should I do?" I answered, "Think about God," to which he replied, "Why should I think about the big God with my little head? Let Him who has a big head think about me."

When you think about your thinking process, you despise it. It is bound in the straitjacket of what happens on a minuscule speck of dust called Earth during a limited period of time. (Astronomers are the privileged ones who think about many bigger specks of dust.)

Don't you realize that it is wrong from the start to confine yourself to time? Tuiavii, chief of a tribe on the island of Upolu in the Southern Ocean, was brought to Europe for a visit. When he returned, he mocked the whites, the Papalagi, as they were called. He said, "They cut the day into small pieces which they call seconds, minutes, and hours. They all have some tick-tocks with which they observe how many pieces of time they have lost. Why did they not keep them better? When a greater piece of time has passed, a finger on something which they wear on their left wrist shows them how wrong they are. Sometimes a bell rings to alarm them, 'You have done wrong to cut the time in pieces.' It dies away.

They walk on wheels and fly like birds to make the pieces of time not pass so quickly. If only they had not divided the time, it would never have passed away. They would not have had to worry." (Saemann, 9/73)

There are as many answers to Philosophical, theological, religious, and spiritual questions as there are strawberries. But it is wrong for me to give answers. You can pick some berries yourself.

St. John writes, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and Ye know all things." (I John 2:20)

The Talmud says that Rabbi Joshua ben Levi came upon the prophet Elijah and asked him, "When will the Messiah come?" The prophet's answer was, "Go and ask Him yourself." The Lord Jesus, after having healed a leper, straightly charged him (in Greek *embrimesthe*, which means "sternly enjoined" him), See thou say nothing to any man." Jesus begs, "Don't make Me the subject of vain words. Become a reality which puts men in touch with Myself. If you speak beautifully and wisely about Me, people may remain for life enjoying your enticing talk and never reach the Saviour."

If the enemy cannot turn us from Christ by means of vain thoughts and sinful ideas, then he brings back into our minds good things we have been taught and fills us with beautiful ideas so that one way or another he may lure us away from Christ, whom he cannot bear. It is called "a theft from the right-hand side," and in it the soul, putting aside its communion with God, turns to find satisfaction in communion with the good in himself or with created things. Do not admit during times of prayer even the most lofty of spiritual thoughts. If you see that in the course of the day time has been spent more in improving thought and talk than in the actual hidden prayer of the heart, then think of it as the loss of a sense of proportion, or a sign of spiritual greed. This is above all true in the case of beginners, for whom it is most needful that much more time be given to

prayer than to the other facets of the devout life.

My answer to the spiritual questions would be, "Don't ask questions." Who is the questioner, the questioned, the One about whom you ask questions? The thinker, the thought, and the one thought about are one. Tauler wrote, "The eye by which I see God is the same eye by which God sees me. My eye and God's eye is one eye and one seeing and one knowing and one feeling."

Jesus' first request of a disciple is, "Deny yourself." You must deny everything, including the tendency to ask questions. Give life a "let go." Give reality, the *Davar*, "the Word," a chance to operate in you freely. Does a surgeon stop every other moment to present his diploma and to explain what he is doing? To deny yourself means to have times not only of inaction, but also of non-thought. One of the highest signs of faith in God is to rest, thinking about nothing in particular. If you have to think all things out, what do you leave for Him to do?

Count Zinzendorf said, "We should die completely to reason, reflection, and spiritualization in matters of truth belonging to the heart, and should achieve the blessed simplicity. We should know nothing except what we hear from Him."

Even the wisest words of the best teacher are only fingers which point toward heaven. Gazing at the finger, you may miss heavenly glory. The father image of a pastor, upon whom you are childishly dependent, storming him with questions, can keep you forever away from the Father.

Jesus teaches us to become like children. Like how big a child? Luther says, "Like a child yet unborn." He is right. But I will yield. Be like a sleeping babe. He does not think about past, present, future. He does not fancy. He is like Chief Tuiavii. His spirit is in the natural state. Jesus was surrounded by children. They never asked Him questions, though children usually do. But why should they

ask Him questions? He was the answer. Do not analyze. I repeat, analysis is the beginning of paralysis.

My answer to your questions is that you have the answer; the head is right on your shoulders. Don't go around looking for it. And even allow your own head to rest.

Many wish to attain different aims in life and ask my advice. I even had an inquiry from a burglar who repented of having chosen such an ugly, dangerous profession. A burglar could be shot if he gets caught. He asked me if it would not be preferable to start a new life as a pickpocket. It is a cleaner job. Since I had spent so many years in prison, he would rely on my words. Others who write to me have higher aims. They would like to do well in politics or in the ministry. They have thousands of questions. I can tell all of them, "Whatever aim you choose might end in disillusion, even if your aim is to become a big saint." Don't worry and be troubled.

Mary Magdalene, when Jesus entered her house, sat at His feet and heard His words. After having listened for an hour, she did not rush to fulfill them. She sat another hour to hear more. Heaven is to hear His melodious voice. So begin your eternity in heaven now. She did not pursue aims. She had even forgotten about her existence separate from Him. He was her all. She had chosen that good part, which was never to be taken away from her.

Sitting still, you will need no more answers about becoming a pickpocket or a missionary. People will put their money at your feet as they put it at the feet of the apostles (Acts 4:35) and souls will flock to you without your having to run after them.

Many moral questions are asked of me. I wonder what good they will do. Nobody becomes more moral by asking moral questions. The Talmud tells us about a category of Pharisees nicknamed *Mah hovati*?—"Which is my duty?" Instead of fulfilling what they knew to be right, they would

go from teacher to teacher asking questions about the right moral and religious attitude, with the hope that they would find one who would make the way easier for them. The rich young man who came to Jesus asking him, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" might have belonged to this category.

Jesus told his disciples before they even asked any question, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." (John 14:4) Nobody would ever ask a moral question if he were not bothered about the fact that he has the sure answer but does not wish, or does not have the power, to do what is right.

An elderly Christian lady had the habit of drinking a little glass of whisky every evening, just to warm her up a little. She had doubts about whether this should be the last act of a child of God before falling asleep. But she said to herself, "What is wrong with it? We old people feel cold. I do it in my bedroom and take just a little bit. I don't get drunk. I do harm to no one. I don't lose my mind. It is just for warming up my stiff bones." But then she doubted again if it was right. One evening she smashed the bottle and the glass. From that moment on she knew that she had been wrong.

If you have doubts about moral matters, smash the bottle.

In these problems, as also in religious and spiritual matters, it is always important to know how to doubt. Everyone who debates a question within himself is already divided, and he should not be. There is in him the questioner and the questioned. If you are in this predicament, doubt on the right side. You can believe in God and sometimes doubt His existence, or disbelieve God and wonder sometimes if He does exist in reality. Doubt being a believer. You might practice pre-marital sex and doubt if you do not sin. You might keep yourself chaste and doubt if sex should not be

allowed. Doubt on the right side. Smash the bottle with the glass and you will have the answer. You don't need me as an adviser.

I don't discourage anyone from asking questions. On the contrary, I am happy to have received so many letters. I am happy to know that most of the writers have asked not only me, but surely also many others. When he was young, Jesus asked questions. (Luke 2:46) My position will be made clear by the following age-old story:

A man asked a sage for the path of truth. The sage answered, "You need truth; I need a carpet. Bring me a carpet and I will give you what you need." The man had no money. He went to a carpet shop and explained his predicament — that he badly needed a carpet in order to obtain truth. The shop owner said, "You can get it from me if you bring me a bundle of threads for weaving carpets." So he begged a spinner woman to give him threads so that he might obtain a carpet in exchange for which he would be taught truth. The woman did not care about truth. She said, "Bring me some goat hair from which to make thread, then I will serve you."

When he asked a goatherd for hair, the goatherd said, "Bring me a goat. Without a goat, whence should I get hair for you?" He found a man ready to give him a goat but with a problem in that he did not have a place to keep his animals at night. "You seek truth. I'm not interested in it. You provide me with a pen; you'll have goat hair of which thread will be spun, of which carpets are made, and for the carpet you will get the truth. So we will both be served." The man found a carpenter able to make a pen, but not very willing to work at that time. He was sad because he wished to marry and nobody would accept him because he was too ugly. "Find me a wife and I will build the pen." The man inquired and found a woman who told him, "I know a girl who would like a husband who is a manual worker just like the one you

described. I'll give you her name if you give me what I want, knowledge." "This is fine," the man answered, "but knowledge you can get only in exchange for a carpet made out of threads spun from goat hair. I was promised such hair in exchange for finding a carpenter who would make a stable, but it so happens that that carpenter will not work until he finds a wife." "Stupid," the woman answered. "I wish knowledge and not your foolish stories." The man left her in despair.

One evening, he slept in a foreigner's home. His daughter was sick. In her delirium she spoke about a carpenter whom she loved. It was just the carpenter of our story. So he told her the carpenter would be happy to marry her. Our man got the goat hair and threads were spun. Finally, he took the finished carpet to the sage in the hope of receiving the truth. The sage told him, "I have no truth to give you. You have had it the whole time. It was the giving up of all selfish aims in order to have the one precious jewel."

What higher truth do you wish than the continual digging after truth? You want answers. But most of the revelation of God consists of questions.

There are so many competing religions. Some souls desire ardently to know which is the bride of Christ. The question is asked in the Bible. Solomon asks, "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?" (Song of Solomon 3:6) The answer is only a question mark. In the original Hebrew even this is missing. Every believing soul would like to have an authority on whom he can rely as being the leader of the church ordained by God, obedience to whom would surely be the right way. We ask what Jesus asked, too: "Who is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?" (Luke 12: 42) The answer is again only a question mark.



The kingdom of God is within you. Where you don't have the answers, be content with questions. God does not owe you anything, not even answers. The Archangel Michael's name is an unanswered question. Michael in Hebrew means "Who is like God?" Perhaps God's revelation to you and His will for you in a certain matter is that you still remain in the questioning stage. On the cross Jesus passed through this stage for a time. The revelation of God to Him and through Him was a "Why?" with a question mark at the end. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The answer was a new wave of mockery from men, with no response from His Father. Do you wish to be greater than your Master?

There are situations in which it would be a disaster for a soul to have answers to his questions. He would be obliged, because he knows the answers, to do deeds for which he was not at all prepared. Teenagers ask me to tell them the secret of happiness. But they should first ask themselves if they are entitled to happiness. There should be no happiness without righteousness, and even the righteous have to wait. Are you prepared to be a saint?

What about accepting heavy suffering as the norm for you instead of happiness? St. Afra, the first female Christian martyr of Germany, had been a loose woman. When she was threatened with flogging and burning she told the governor, "My body deserves to be tortured. May the flames cleanse my soul." Accept your handicaps and sufferings in this spirit.

For most of us the best thing is not to have answers. The Lord says, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin." (John 9: 41) God in His grace, keeps us in blindness in many matters. You wish answers. Are you prepared to accept them?

A man sought a lamp shop, having been told that there he would find a device which enables a person to read in the

dark. Somebody told him, "There is a prerequisite. In order to read by means of a lamp you must first be able to read." The man answered scornfully, "I was not told this by my first informant." And he spent his money for a lamp which proved to be of no use to him in reading. Answers to your questions might prove useless to you, too. Have you fulfilled the prerequisites?

Instead of clarifying matters, every answer might raise new questions. I would rather tell you some things about *me*, the person questioned. Perhaps I will have my wife's good fortune. She told some things from her life in a book called *The Pastor's Wife*. Nobody asked her anything after having read her book. She received a letter from a Christian lady: "I found in your life the answer to all questions which I have asked myself for twelve years."

There are many questions. My son Michael was five years old when he asked, "Who created the devil?" The story of Lucifer's fall did not satisfy him. He had a second question. "Why doesn't God kill the devil?" The moment you interrogate God, you take the place of a superior in relationship to Him. What kind of God would He be if He did not do things which are strange in men's eyes?

Reason will never find answers to its many inquiries. Love rests because it never questions what the beloved does.

Be quiet, worship, and love. This is all.

## WURMBRAND—THE QUESTIONED

I have had a message from God to tell the free world about the sufferings and the heroism of the Underground Church, its needs, its longing for liberty. This message has gone out to all continents, and missions in fifty countries work continually to spread it and to organize relief.

I feel that I have essentially fulfilled my duty and that now it is time for me to withdraw into a shadow and anonymity.

Years have passed since my first appearance in the West. They have not come to be counted, but to count. Every year has been marked by the formation of missions to the Communist world in a few more countries. It has been marked by articles, new books, big rallies. It was natural for men to ask themselves, "Who is Wurmbrand?"

To answer would mean to embed him in words, to compare him with other persons of the Christian world, to show the similarities and differences, to categorize Wurmbrand. This is not possible.

My early life was such that I could not emerge polished, kind, and open-minded, or without great self-confidence.

Without the latter characteristic, I would not have been able to create our fellowship of missions. I am atypical.

I was atypical in my activities as a pastor in Romania. I would go from one house to another to tell people about Christ. Some would not receive me. Then I would stand in front of the house for hours in the snow, in bitter winter, praying for those inside and waiting in case they might change their minds. The owners would see me through the window. They would come out from time to time and tell me, "Go away. You'll freeze to death. I am not interested in what you have to say." I would answer, "But I love you, and I know that you will be lost eternally if you don't accept my message. I will not leave." In the end, they would pity me, call me in, and give me some hot tea. Not many pastors proceed this way.

But I have been atypical in my sins, too. They have amounted to crimes. Many would be interested in knowing their details. We know that St. Paul beat the Christians and cast his vote for them to be sentenced to death. These were the first martyrs of Christianity. How much we would like to know their stories, their names. There must have been beautiful episodes of faithfulness to Christ unto the end. Why are their stories not told? Why don't we have their

precious names? We only know that their torturer was later converted.

It took many Sabeans to be robbers so that Job would shine in righteousness. What made them into robbers? What happened to them after they enabled Job to become a saint? You have your head right on your shoulders. So don't seek the answers from me. But the same reasons which made the authors of the Bible silent in these matters keep me from recounting what has been recorded on the videotape of my life. Furthermore, my sins have been erased by the blood of Jesus. Jesus has forgiven. If I don't die a sudden death, my last word will be addressed to men—"Forgive."

I have told the story of glorious saints and martyrs who are suffering or dying for Christ today in Communist prisons. This created a kind of halo around my head, too. Many identify me with the beautiful souls about whom I write. The praise which I have received is undeserved.

I was permitted to be put in prison because God considered that to be my place. He hoped that others would pastor my church better than I had. I had a chance to flee from Romania but remained there knowing that I would go to prison. But it is not true that I stayed only because of faithfulness to my duty as a pastor. Pride played a big role in my decision. At that time I could not have foreseen how much and how terrible was the suffering that awaited me. If I had known, I probably would not have remained.

I did not suffer as much as others did. Think only about the fact that when I was released I was greeted by a loving wife and son who had waited for me. The Orthodox priest Popescu found his wife re-married. His daughter, whom he had left behind as a girl of ten, had also married in the meantime and had become a Communist. When her father knocked on her door after having sought her much, she received him with curses, slapping him and driving him out of the house. He spent his first night in the waiting room of

a railway station.

From the day that I left Romania, I knew I had to fulfil an exceptional calling. I knew that it was my calling and nobody else's. At a presidential nominating convention Truman said, "During the next four years there will be a Democrat in the White House, and you are looking at him." I had this self-confidence. I had the gift from God of finding great men of God in many countries who had confidence in the message which I brought.

God has used them to build up the International Fellowship of Missions to the Communist World. I personally did not do much for its creation. God says, "I will raise up a prophet." (Deuteronomy 18:18) False prophets rise through their own endeavours. Those who know the history of our mission realize that its leadership has reached its position on the crest of the wave of enthusiasm of believers, in whom God dwells, from the whole world.

I had to write a multitude of books: But my English was poor. God brought into my path a journalist of exquisite style, Mr. Charles Foley. We met in London. I had to go to Devon the next day. He said, "I'll come with you to Devon." I replied, "You had better come with me to heaven." He edited my books and my wife's. The books spread. One followed another. So I became known.

My books were generally very well received. *Christianity Today*, USA, of October 2, 1972, said about them: "Wurmbrand is rapidly writing an appendix 20th-century style to Fox's *Book of the Martyrs*."

Huge crowds listened with intense emotion to the story of the Underground Church told at rallies in America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia.

The average reader or listener had no difficulty in believing what I told. After me the Soviet Communist Mrs. Ghinzburg, who had spent eighteen years in Stalin's jails herself; Roy Medvedev, a member of the Party, in

his book *Let History Judge*; and more recently Solzhenitsyn, the Nobel-prize winner, told exactly the same facts of horror which I had related: salt water sprinkled in the throats of prisoners, pepper applied to the raw skin of men who had been flayed, female officers of the Secret Police beating men over their sex organs, and all the other "beauties" of the Red paradise. Former Romanian prisoners confirmed my report about prisoners being compelled to eat their feces and drink urine.

In my book *In God's Underground* I recounted the fact that, when a delegation of Western ladies visited the prison of Gherla, a lunch was prepared for us in the Hilton Hotel. Solzhenitsyn had not read my book, but it was as if he had plagiarized me. He told the story of Mrs. Roosevelt visiting a Soviet prison and seeing inmates neatly dressed, enjoying libraries, attending religious services, eating dainties—everything an *ad hoc* comedy.

My sermons and books were received with enthusiasm by the masses of Christians and many church leaders. Some of the latter were put in an embarrassing situation. The rank-and-file believers asked them why they had not been told these things before, why decades had passed without even a prayer being offered for the persecuted brethren in the Soviet camps. So they had to belittle my sayings. They attacked me.

Though many bad words were said, they amounted to almost nothing compared to what bishops had said in times past about Therese of Avila or Joan of Arc. The latter were canonized. The names of the bishops who insulted them are no longer remembered. Livingstone was accused of no less than raping black women, killing his co-workers, enriching himself through his book, and being ruthless to his own family, along with a whole catalogue of other crimes. Today his body lies in Westminster Abbey. And who remembers the names of the leaders of the

Baptist Union of Britain who opposed Spurgeon?

I have considered it best not to answer accusations in any other way than through deeds: unceasingly helping the persecuted church and unceasingly showing the corruption or naivete of church leaders who compromise with Communism.

We had to try to drag some out of the ditch. Whoever does this must get dirty. Brooms can sweep out dirt only by becoming soiled.

I have overcome these things, too. But a sadness has remained. I show more mirth than I am master of.

I have also received some, though very few, letters expressing doubts about what I have written. There were people who could not take it. *Vanterland*, Luzern, of April 22, 1972, reminded its readers how difficult it was to get men to believe the Nazi atrocities. This was the first newspaper to tell them.

Some of my readers pointed to discrepancies in my books which could have arisen only if not everything that I said in them was factual.

I myself have contributed to these doubts. In my books I have said that I find it legitimate to lie to Communist interrogators who would like to know these secrets of the Underground Church. And I have enlarged upon this problem and have disapproved of persons who are so sincere that they would tell a hostess who had worked hard in preparation of a meal that her dinner was a disaster. About some of the things I wrote I can say with Shakespeare, "I moralize two meanings in one word." (*Richard III*) A Christian broadcaster wrote to me, "Once you state your belief in stretching the truth under such circumstances, I find myself wondering how much of your book you also stretched for what you consider good and just purposes. Would you, please, respond and let me have your thinking on this?"

My answer is simple:

The Gospels contradict each other. There are sometimes contradictions within the same Gospel. This proves to me their truth. Perfectly consistent stories are usually made up.

But what would be wrong if I had not been factual in everything I told in my books? Goethe published his biography under the title *From My Life—Truth and Poetry*. I believe that every autobiography is like this. I have listened to many people telling the story of their conversion. A grain of idealization or dramatization could easily be perceived. We have the parable of the prodigal son as told by Jesus. If the prodigal himself had told the story, he would not have been as blunt as to say, "I returned to the father because the food cooked in his kitchen was good." There is nobody who does not repress some material, who does not avoid certain issues, who does not express in age-old symbols the reality which he cannot bring himself to say. The drive for symbols is as powerful in us as hunger, sex, or the desire to be a somebody.

I don't believe that anybody has the right to ask from me the videotapes of what I have done and spoken without allowing me any modifications. Where I had to erase something, I have filled the empty place with music. The truthfulness of the books is seen in the fact that they contain music and that this music is so beautiful that it has brought souls to conversion.

But because the very few who question are so insistent, I will do more than satisfy their curiosity. I will tell them the most intimate side of the life of a man: my dreams. In them those who inquire about many matters will find perhaps the reply they seek. If not, they might find the way to discover the reply within themselves.

I personally see no reason why dreams should be considered less real than impressions received when one is awake.



On the contrary, dreams often affect one much more than the humdrum events of daily life. They can be more significant than ordinary perceptions.

The New Testament begins by telling us a series of dreams and finishes with a vision. So they must be important. God often speaks through dreams.

In 1902, a rascal in Italy, Alessandro Serenelli forced a girl of eleven, Maria Goretti, to submit to him or be killed. He held a knife to her throat. She answered, "I cannot yield, because the deed is evil. You would go to hell." He stabbed her several times. Before dying, she forgave him and said, "I would like to have my murderer near me in heaven." After his sentencing, he displayed the most obstinate hardness and cynicism, until he had a dream: "I thought that I was in a garden full of flowers and the whitest lilies. And there I saw Maria Goretti, radiant and clad in white, gathering them and making them into a garland. She offered them to me, saying, 'Take them!' I took them, and then very gradually I saw them change into little flames in my arms...flames that glowed like candles."

In 1910, he was won over to a lasting and sincere repentance. In a letter to the priest who visited him, he wrote: "I weep over my misdeed...for I have taken the life of an innocent girl whose one aim was to save her purity, shedding her blood rather than give in to my sinful desires. I publicly retract the evil I have done and beg pardon of God and of the stricken family. I dare to hope that I may obtain that pardon, as so many others have done on this earth."

On Christmas Eve, 1937, and on the following Christmas morning a scene took place such as we find only in the annals of Christianity, and perhaps we would have to turn back many a page to find its parallel.

Alessandro had become truly penitent and had served his sentence. On his release he had taken up honest work and tried to live as a good Christian. But since that July

afternoon in 1902, the mother and the murderer of the child had never met.

Assunta was now the housekeeper of the Archpriest of Corinaldo. Accompanied by him, Alessandro sought her out. He cast himself at her feet and humbly begged her forgiveness.

The old mother's voice broke as she fought back the tears.

"Maria forgave you, Alessandro," she answered, "so how could I possibly refuse?"

The following morning, Christmas Day, the parish church at Corinaldo was filled to overflowing as Assunta and Alessandro entered side by side. Together they received Holy Communion, and at the express wish of Assunta, as well as that of the Archpriest, Alessandro spent his Christmas in the rectory.

Maria had won his soul, a victory that could come only from heaven. Heaven knew the facts that history is somehow inclined to pass over, in its horror at the enormity of his crime, and the innocence of his little victim. Heaven must have understood that Alessandro had never known a mother's love and that he had received but little love from a worthless father; that he had led a roving life in his boyhood, with no religious or moral training worth speaking of, and that bad companions from the start and then obscene and pornographic reading material did the rest, and made him what he became.

But the gentle Maria, the sweet child of only eleven years, eight months and twenty days, obtained from God the grace to *thaw* his frozen soul. He ended his days quietly, prayerfully, in a monastery in Italy, employed as a gardener. Surely the final story of Alessandro is one of the most inspiring aspects of the beautiful story of Maria Goretti.

Dreams can radically change a man.

Sometimes they are relatively clear as in the case above.

Sometimes they are obscure. The Bible tells us twenty-one dreams, many of them with their interpretation, which, thus, is also considered important. We know nothing about the dream life of most of the personalities of the Bible. We know no dream of Jesus. As a rule, dreams don't occur for the purpose of being remembered. Such dreams are a rare exception. Ordinary dreams create the mood for the next day or two. The dreams of Jesus were such as to enable Him to live as Truth and Beauty incarnate in a Man of Sorrows.

I am attentive to my dreams. All those who have spent many years in prison are. It was part of the ritual of prison life for us to tell each other our dreams every morning and then some experts would interpret them. Their unanimous explanation was always that we would soon be free. But some of us had our own thoughts about their meaning.

If you have no self-knowledge your knowledge will be blind...No useful, deep self-knowledge is possible without the knowledge of your dreams.

I will tell mine not only because some of my questioners would like to know the intimacies of my life, but also for another reason. Over the years a certain woman asked me all kinds of deep theological questions. I knew that someday she would tell me what was really bothering her. It was apparent to me that she had difficulty in expressing her real need. But I could wait. One evening she told me of the tragedy which obsessed her. After that her need to have answers to theological problems ended. They had been a pretense.

I would like to put what I have to say in the language of dreams. Dreams hide nothing. They have no moral implications. They are the vacation of the soul, of the organism. What is an illusion or a fear for my conscious mind becomes a happy or grim reality for the unconscious which expresses itself in dreams.

I had a series of interesting dreams while planning this book. When I finished the first draft, they ceased.

So, in the chapters to come, we will communicate on the subliminal, subconscious level. You will find out here that you had the answers you seek. Your head is right on your shoulders.

"For the past twenty years," Rabbi Israel H. Leventhal pointed out in 1929, "students of psychology, influenced by Freud, gave all their time to searching the subconscious realms. It is true that the subconscious reveals much of the mystery that can explain human actions, but not all of our actions. It can explain the abnormal, but not deeds that are above the normal. The latest psychology, sponsored by the French schools, has discovered a new region in man, which it terms the superconscious. In contrast to the subconscious which represents the submerged currents of our nature, it reveals the heights to which our nature can reach. Man represents a triple, not a double, personality; our conscious and subconscious being is crowned by a superconsciousness. Many years ago the English psychologist, F. W. H. Myers, suggested that 'hidden in the deep of our being is a rubbish heap as well as a treasure house.' In contrast to the psychology that centers all its researches on the subconscious in man's nature, this new psychology of the superconscious focuses its attention upon the treasure house, the region that alone can explain the great, unselfish, heroic deeds of men."

Before telling my dreams, I have one other thing to do, and that is to tell you the methods I use to impress upon you my ideas. We will communicate on the subconscious and superconscious levels which express themselves in dreams, too.

## HOW TO COMMUNICATE

I receive criticisms; I receive compliments. The most frequent compliment is that I am a powerful preacher.

A Christian magazine calls me "the most dramatic preacher known today." A young pastor who would like to proclaim the Gospel well, asks me, "What makes big crowds flock to you, while our churches stand empty?" A prison warden writes, "How can I find the words and understand so that I can convert a non-believer?"

I don't consider it important to be what men call "a good preacher." Livingstone, who opened the center of Africa for Christ, had been a poor one. On the other hand, many golden-tongued spellbinders have done much harm. People swallow without discernment their false teachings.

But I consider it important for every man to be able to tell others what he thinks, so as to bring home to them the truth he holds. The art of earnest preaching is none other than earnest witnessing for your faith, or the art of communicating with other men so as to influence them. I do not write the present book for the pleasure of writing but because I wish you to accept my thoughts. I will tell you how I learned to preach and to write so as to influence souls. My experiences might be helpful to any man in any profession. The following thoughts concern not only pastors, but also those who must choose from which pastor, political leader, or educator they wish to learn. They might help you to teach others, at least your children, what you know.

Most of what is learned in seminaries—Latin, Greek, Hebrew, church history, dogma, hermeneutics—unfortunately does not serve the supreme purpose. Sometimes it may even go so far as to cripple future pastors in their task of winning souls for Christ. Something else is needed.

When I was a very young pastor, a renowned Romanian actress attended our Sunday services. After three or four weeks she gave me a call: "Please, come and have a dinner in my home. But I would prefer that you come without your wife." I wondered about this condition but accepted it.

She received me considerably dressed and considerably

undressed. On the table there were all sorts of imaginable dainties. We two were alone. Together we enjoyed the food, talking banalities. After the meal she told me:

“You are wondering why I invited you. It was for a definite purpose. There is a story which I would like you to know.

“In the time of the Reformation in Germany, thousands came to listen to Jacob Bohme, a self-styled Christian philosopher, I believe a shoemaker by profession. He preached the newly discovered Gospel with such power that thousands wept and laughed at his command. The rumour spread: *A great man from God has risen among us.* Bohme got used to being highly appreciated by his audience.

“One Sunday, he observed in church a man who looked like Jesus as shown in holy images. Bohme could read on the face of this young man that the sermon did not satisfy him, but rather grieved him. The next Sunday and the Sunday after, the same thing happened. Bohme could not bear it. He stopped this man at the end of the service and asked him,

‘You seem dissatisfied with my sermon — is it so? What do you dislike?’

‘Your sermons are much too beautiful to be true,’ was the reply. ‘Two and two are four. This sentence is not beautiful, but it is absolutely true. You wish to win souls. Your purpose is good. But in your enthusiasm, you launch yourself further and further. Two and two become four and a half and five, then six, eight, and ten. Truth is simple, prosaic. How simple are the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes! God is truth. He does not agree with your sermons. Neither do I.’

“These words made a great impression on Bohme. He could not forget them. And as often as he got worked up in his peroration, he would feel as if somebody were whispering to him, ‘Is what you say really so? Do you speak the

truth?" He would begin to stammer, to lose his train of thought. People wondered what had happened to the eloquent preacher of times past. He must have lost his gift. Fewer and fewer people attended his sermons.

"Finally, the one who had been beloved of thousands came to church one Sunday to find only a few old women and this one Jesus-like person. At the exit, the latter told Bohme, 'Now for the first time you have preached the naked truth. Your future task is not to allow it to remain naked and to tremble. Clothe the truth in beauty. No ornament is too costly for truth. Clad it in jewels.'

"And Bohme again preached beautifully. But now he preached the *truth* beautifully."

"I have heard you preach several times," the actress continued. "You are young and you preach beautifully. So I thought it would do you good to know this story. I called you without your wife, thinking you might feel ashamed to be criticized for your sermons in her presence."

I had believed her to have other intentions.

After my many years of prison, she visited me in the hospital. She also had suffered persecution. From her I learned much about preaching and writing, but above all, how to communicate with my fellowmen simply and effectively.

The directives for a good sermon are: Read yourself full, think yourself clear, pray yourself hot, and then you will have the truth. Once you possess it, do not have the slightest scruple about dramatizing and ornamenting it. Know that you fulfil your duty to truth by covering it with the most costly jewels. Tell as beautifully as you can one illustration after another to embellish it.

Another important aspect about preaching and speaking to men regarding earnest things I learned from Garrick, the former century's renowned actor, interpreter of Shakespearean characters.

I read his correspondence with a young pastor who had

questioned him. "You are a master of the spoken word. People vibrate at every word and gesture of yours. Teach us as pastors how to handle the word. Supposing you had to play on stage the role of a priest who preaches, how would you do it? What would be the modulations of your voice, the expressions of your face, your movements?"

Garrick answered by saying that he lives his roles. When he plays Othello he is jealous, when he plays Hamlet he is torn by doubts, when he plays Romeo he is enamored. He transposes himself into the state of heart of the personalities he has to reveal. "So," he continued, "if I had to preach on stage, I would transpose myself into the following state of mind: I am a young physician. Before me lies, deathly sick, my beloved bride. She may have a chance to recover, but only if she takes a drug which I have specially prepared for her. She is in a bad mood and does not wish to take it. I plead with her, 'Take this medicine, otherwise you will die, and with you my happiness too. Life without you means nothing to me. If you take it, you will live and we will both enjoy unspeakable felicity.' "

Garrick wrote to the young pastor, "Think like this when you preach, and you will not have to care about the right intonation, gesticulation, expression."

Hundreds of books and courses about the art of preaching have not played such a decisive role in my manner of delivering the Word as this letter of Garrick's.

At the start of my career as a pastor, I was usually only the preacher. The liturgical part was taken by someone else. I used the time when others sang or said their prayers to project in my mind a definite image: *Those before me are eternal souls, all born in sin, all doomed to perish, unless they agree to take the medicine I offer them.* I loved every one of them. If it were a small congregation, my look would pass from one man to the other, and I would pray for each one: "Save this man. If not, he is lost, and I cannot be happy without



his being in the Kingdom." When I spoke before thousands, I would pray for the right side of the gallery, then for the left side, then for those in the rear, those in the front rows, those who stood. I would love them with the feelings of Rachel, who said to Jacob, "Give me children or I die."

A third episode.

When I was a young pastor, I was very proud. I was considered a handsome young man and the cassock suited me well. I was tall. When I entered the church, I saw people looking toward me with love, admiration, and great expectation. I am Jewish. A Jewish Christian pastor is a rarity. Christians make the mistake of spoiling Jewish Christians, showing them an affection apart.

An Orthodox monk, a friend of mine, who had heard me preach observed how things were. At a dinner he told me a story, saying that I could use it as an illustration in a sermon:

"On Palm Sunday, when the Lord entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, he was received with shouts of 'Hosannah, son of David!' and with the waving of palm branches. On that evening, the donkey told his fellow donkeys in the stable, 'If only you could have seen with what honours I was acclaimed in Jerusalem!' They called me "Son of David, King of the Jews." I had never before known the name of the ass who was my father. I was very pleased to find out that he was called David. And the crowd seemed very determined. They wished to make me king. They threw their clothes before me on the pavement, that I might walk on softness. I suppose they will come tomorrow to enthrone me. I imagine that when an ass becomes king, he gets plenty of hay and is not made to carry burdens any more!"

The monk finished, "Poor donkey, he did not know that the fuss had been about Jesus, not about him." He looked at me significantly. "There are quite a few such donkeys. Young pastors are prone to believe that the honour they receive is for them."

A preacher has to be humble.

If he has natural abilities, it is surely a great asset. But you can do without. Neither the sermons of St. Peter or St. Paul nor the speech delivered before his death by St. Stephen showed rhetorical abilities. They also have shortcomings as regards scholarship. My examiner in hermeneutics gave me a bad mark. He was sure that I would never do as a preacher. Perhaps the apostles would have failed his tests. St. John Vianney, the curate of Ars, was a man with a low I. Q. Notwithstanding, he was a very effective preacher, because he was humble and never pretended to have what he lacked.

My son delivered his first sermon as a seminarian with the words, "From this pulpit many great preachers have spoken. One of them sealed his sermons with a martyr's death. Don't expect much from me. I cannot preach like them. I cannot give you deep teachings. But I point toward One who will satisfy all the needs of your soul and your intellectual demands. This is all I dare to do. I enter the shadow and let Him speak to you." The audience listened to him attentively because he had been modest.

I knew a preacher who was greatly loved because he would say in the midst of his sermon, "Wait a little—I have forgotten what I had to say further. I remember it was something important. Just be patient a little bit."

With most preachers such a thing would not happen. They would fill a gap in their memory with empty words. Humility wins. Everyone has enough trouble with his own price. He will not swallow yours.

Goethe said, "Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration." I believe the same. In order to be a good preacher, a man has to work hard. The sermon must be the result of the labour of a whole Christian life, not of a few minutes or even a few hours of preparation.

The worst ink is better than the best memory. I write

down every significant dream, every significant word I hear in a sermon or private conversation or read in the Bible or a newspaper, every episode from my life or that of others which can be used as an illustration. For every idea, I have one sheet of paper. I put on top the Bible verse with which I believe it could best be used. And then I classify them from Genesis to Revelation. A man who makes ten notes a day will have 30,000 notes after ten years. I once had hundreds of thousands. Some were confiscated by the Communist Police. Some escaped.

When I have to deliver a sermon on a given subject, I go to the respective drawer and usually find far too many illustrations, plus linguistic and theological explanations. I have plenty of choice. People wonder afterwards about the richness of thought in the sermons. Well, it is not the thoughts of this week, but those I have gathered across the years.

What I have said in this chapter applies not only to pastors, but also to every man who wishes to witness effectively for Christ, to everyone who wishes to communicate on a spiritual level.

Pastors should not preach only on Sundays. Bishop Latimer recommended the devil to his clergy as an example of a good pastor. He visits his whole parish every day. He speaks not only with the chief of the household, but also with the wife and with each individual child, and then he enters the kitchen to say a word to the maid who might be there, too. Do the same when you pay a visit as a Christian. Have a story prepared for every child according to his age. Prepare yourself for a private conversation as you would prepare yourself for a sermon before thousands. I was won for Christ in a private conversation. Since that time, thousands have been influenced for Christ through me. Who knows the value of the one man or child to whom you dedicate your time? He might be a future Spurgeon or a great saint in process.

Consider that every sermon or simple conversation may be your last one or the last one heard by the man before you. It is a sin to give less than the best of which you are capable. Never care what your bishop, your board of elders, or the audience will think about your sermon or what the world will think about your talk. Simply deliver the message which you have from God, always adjusting it to the level of understanding of the people to whom you speak.

## DO WE HAVE TO FEAR A COMMUNIST TAKEOVER?

And now I will tell you a couple of dreams, along with some interpretations.

All men are partially illiterate. Not everyone knows how to read musical notes, symbols used by atomic scientists, or chemical formulas. Very rare are those who can read the subliminal language of dreams.

But perhaps you will find in their symbols peace for what troubles you and makes you ask me questions.

All men when awake are in a common world but when asleep are in a world of their own. Dreams are the most personal episodes of our lives. And when communicated and explained they awaken what is the most personal in the reader. Within each person is an unlimited reservoir of energy and creative intelligence which can be tapped to fulfill the potential of the individual. In order to reach this reservoir, however, the mind must be able to transcend thought. There are different means to achieve this, such as the repeating without concentration of the prayer of the heart in Orthodoxy, "Jesus, Son of God, pity me a sinner." But communication of dreams and attempts to understand their symbolism might have the same liberating effect.

## FIRST DREAM

*I am with Gerald Ford, then Vice President of the United*

*States. He prays with a loud voice. (The day before, I had watched his swearing-in on TV) I intend to propose that a regular hour of prayer be organized in the Senate. At once an army storms the place. It is Russian Cossacks with their swords drawn. They arrest all those who have no money, among them Ford and me. I don't even have a shirt on. I laugh about the new situation in which I am placed.*

This dream is indicative of my continual concern about a possible take-over of the United States and the whole free world by the Communists. In the year 1973 alone, revolutionist groups stole from the United States military barracks 628,488 guns and revolvers, enough to start a small guerrilla army. In the last five years, leftist organizations have been involved in some five thousand armed attacks, robberies for political reasons, and blasts.

Why should I be so concerned about a Communist take-over?

It is not because they are atheists. In a certain sense, Christians are the same. Justin Martyr wrote, "We confess that we are atheists as far as gods of demonic sort are concerned, but not with respect to the true God, the Father of temperance and other virtues." Many who call themselves atheists are such only with respect to the false image of God which has been presented to them. But Communism denies any possibility of God. Lenin wrote, "Marxism is materialism. It is relentlessly hostile to religion."

Now, in fair competition it would be very easy for us to defeat materialism.

A Communist lecturer once explained that man is matter, only matter. No spirit, no soul, no angel, no eternal life! We are matter and we decay when we die. A Christian stood up and, as if in anger, threw his stool on the floor. He straightened it, then stormed onto the platform and slapped the atheist. The atheist began to shout, "You have insulted the Party which I represent here! Police, arrest him!"

The Christian very quietly replied, "There must be a misunderstanding, comrade. Did you not say that we are matter just like the wood of the lectern before you? You saw me throwing the stool to the floor. Stool, are you angry at me? Stool, do you wish to retaliate? Comrade, matter has no emotions, it does not love, it does not hate. It does not know wrath, it does not avenge itself. The fact that you call the police shows that you yourself are more than matter. You have a soul. See that it is saved."

Tragically, the story does not end here, because in Communist countries one is liable to go to prison for contradicting a materialist lecturer. The Communists oblige all to think alike, which means that practically nobody dares to think at all.

When I consider the Communist danger, I see before me more than the prisons, which are almost as numerous in Russia as motels in the United States; I see more than cells with moldy walls in which Christians, Jews, Moslems, and Buddhists, reduced to simple numbers, sit in abject despair, more than the spiked box in which they sometimes are forced to stand, lacking not only food but even air. I see more than the mockeries.

I see the sufferings of the Communists themselves. An officer of the Communist Secret Police told me, "You are a pastor. Wherever you go, you leave behind you comfort. When I enter a house, children ask me, 'Why do you leave us without a father?'" I think about poor Trotsky, the founder of the Red Army. He had promoted permanent revolution. During this unceasing revolution, two of his children were killed by Stalin; his brother, his sister—in-law, and his niece were deported to Siberia; and he himself was killed with an axe by the order of his own comrades.

Zinoviev was the president of the third International. Under Stalin's tortures he confessed to having been a counter revolutionist and spy. He and his interrogator who had

squeezed his confession out of him wept together when Zinoviev signed it. His last words before being shot were, "Listen, Israel, your God is the only God." He said the words in Hebrew, as he had been taught in childhood.

I was in prison with officers of the Communist Secret Police who had fallen afoul of the Party during a purge. They told us how during their training in ruthlessness they were made to shoot, using consecrated wafers for targets. They had an Orthodox or Catholic background. Some of them felt they had actually aimed their revolvers at Christ.

Solzhenitsyn writes in *Gulag Archipelago* that it was the habit of Iagoda, former head of the Soviet Secret Police, and his friends to shoot at ikons.

I think about whole peoples wiped off the face of the Soviet Union : the Chechen, the Kalmik, the Tatar, the Tinu-Tawus. It is like deporting all the Welsh to some island in the channel and allowing them to starve there.

I see the triumph of hatred.

In *Message to the Tricontinentals* Che Guevara wrote, "Hatred is an element of struggle; a relentless hatred of the enemy, impelling us over and beyond the natural limitations that man is heir to, and transforming him into an effective, violent, selective, and cold killing machine. Our soldiers must be thus; a people without hatred cannot vanquish a brutal enemy." Lenin in 1922 wrote, "The time has come to put an end to opposition, to put a lid on it. We have had enough opposition." In *State and Revolution* he quotes Engels as saying, "If the victorious party does not want to have fought in vain, it must maintain this rule by means of the terror its arms inspire in reactionaries."

I am serious when I say that all the Bible's lurid descriptions of hell are a picnic compared to Communist hell.

My utter concern for a Communist takeover of the West, expressed in this dream, was one of the motives for the creation of the International Fellowship of Missions to the

Communist World. In 732 A.D. Charles Martel, king of the France, turned the tide and threw Islam out of Western Europe. I suppose that "The Christian Mission to the Communist World" has been created by God for a purpose like this.

You have many nagging questions? Give them up and do your share so that Christian civilization may not be swallowed up by the Red dragon.

## CHRISTIANS AND POVERTY

In my dream, the Communists arrested only those who had no money. I didn't have even a shirt.

First of all, it is a fact that almost all those who filled Red prisons were poor. Millionaires, as a rule, had fled the country or were used by the Communists as skilled professionals.

But the dream expresses my belief that Christians should be poor. In the dream I laughed heartily when I saw myself without even a shirt. What is best in me would like me to be so. The image comes from Romanian folklore, according to which a rich man who was sick was told that he would be cured only if he could put on the shirt of a perfectly happy being. He sent his servants to find such a person, but everyone questioned lacked something. In the end they found a wood-cutter who sang heartily. They promised him much money for his shirt. He had to tell them that, unfortunately, he had none to give them.

St. John Chrysostom preached, "Every rich man is a criminal or the son of a criminal. You say to me, 'When will you cease to speak against the rich?' I answer, 'When you cease to oppress the poor.'"

Under Savonarola's rule, Christians burned all articles of luxury in Florence. Then Pope Alexander Borgia ordered that Savonarola be burned. But Savonarola had been right



as far as Christianity is concerned.

The Jewish law commanded that a woman who had given birth to a child should bring a lamb into the temple for a burnt offering. If she was not able to bring a lamb, then she should bring two "turtles" (or "turtle-doves", see Leviticus 12:8), which Mary the mother of the Lord did. She was poor. She could not afford a lamb except her Son, who was the Lamb of God. Why should we be rich?

Jesus was crowned with a crown of thorns. Should Christians wear gold, pearls, and jewels?

Do we wish the Communists to be God's tools in fulfilling a prophecy given to Isaiah? Just listen: "In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings, and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty." (Isaiah 3:18-24)

Rabbi Akiba said that poverty suits the daughters of Jacob as a red harness suits a white horse.

Not only is the wearing of jewels wrong. Whoever overeats denies to somebody else the necessities of life. Every kind of comfortableness is an enemy of Christianity. Children of God make their lives more difficult through ease and comfort. Jesus could not stretch His limbs on the cross. For us no armchair is relaxing enough.

Westerners are persecuted with the easy life. It is a terrible persecution. It kills the Christian life much more readily than the truncheons and pincers used by the Commu-

nist torturers. It is so easy to follow a life of apathy and ease and refuse to take up one's cross and follow Jesus by getting involved.

It would be better for us not to exist than to renounce sacred poverty. We would renounce a blessing. Jesus said, "Blessed be ye poor." (Luke 6:20) We must be radical in this regard. The poor must be our teachers. We should abhor the disgusting ownership of things. We should despise money. We should seek the lowest position and happy to be despised.

The Christian life without at least some measure of ascetic practices is false. Simone Weil renounced sugar for six years in order to give it to the soldiers on the front. Tens of millions are hungry in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. We should at least be willing to give up ice cream.

It is a shame that even some American missionaries live pretentiously, loudly, with ostentation.

The mother of Ludovic of Thuringia complained to him that his wife, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, had made a leper sleep in his bed in his absence. Ludovic looked and saw Jesus in bed. He thanked Elizabeth.

This is how I think. Such examples inspire me, and because I don't live up to my ideal, I appear to myself happy at least in my dream when I am poor, without a shirt, under arrest.

The selfishness of life under Capitalism prepares the way for atheistic Communism.

Many ask if this or that in which they indulge is permissible. My answer is, "Be very poor. Never use money for drugs, alcohol, clothing which excites." Jesus uses for "poor" the Greek word *ptohois*, which means abject poverty. Choose this and sinners will not accept you in their company.

The "*Pateric*" tells us that a young monk came to a father of the desert and asked him what he should do against the temptation of the flesh. The father answered, "I don't

know the temptation and therefore can give you no advice. Ask somebody else." So the monk went to another elder and told him the negative reply he got. This elder said to him, "Return to the one who sent you to me and ask him why he does not know the temptation." He received the explanation, "Because I eat little."

Prison was a place of terrible sexual obsessions and fantasies. These disappeared in times when our food was very, very scarce.

Twenty percent of mankind eats eighty percent of the food which is produced. And then they spend money on postage asking about their moral problems. They will never get a satisfactory answer. After Jesus had fasted forty days, the devil could tempt him only from afar, as it were, and found not the slightest echo in Jesus.

To thousands of letters asking complicated sexual, marital, and moral questions of all kinds, my answer might seem to be a foolish one, "Eat less."

The priest in Cronin's *The Keys of the Kingdom* tells a rich lady who bored him endlessly in the confessional to lose weight if she wishes to enter the Kingdom of God. Its gate is narrow.



# SHOULD WE ALWAYS SPEAK THE TRUTH

## SECOND DREAM

*I am in the office of an organization which leads a secret work behind the Iron Curtain, but whose methods of promotion I consider unfair. Its director shows me the picture of a Hebrew Christian lady, a friend of mine. She has a terrible wound. Her breast has been cut off. I ask, "Who has done this?" He replies, "Her husband." He has been dead a long time. I say, "You can't publish this as a proof of Communist atrocity. They have not done it." He replies, "I will publish the picture without saying expressly that the crime has been committed by the Reds. People will draw their own conclusions. So I will not have lied." I tell him, "Lying is not what you say, but what you make others think. When Abraham told Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister, this was true. She was his half-sister. But he suggested that she was an unmarried girl."*

In my dream life I always object strenuously to lying. This is because I had to say much untruth in the underground work under Nazism and Communism in Romania. I cannot see how you can lead this work without lying.

Churchill was right: "In war truth must have an escort of lies." The church wages a war: "Onward, Christian Soldiers, Marching as to War." How can you lead a war telling an enemy where, when, and how you will attack him? So much the more in the underground fight.

I believe that everyone who asserts that he leads a secret work without lying is telling the biggest of lies.

I had to use lies during interrogations. I had to lie in prison. Many prisoners would have died of despair if we had not supported their hope. To support it with the hope of paradise was not enough. They would not have survived

if I had not assured them again and again that Americans were coming to free them, that as a matter of fact they were already on their way to Romania.

There exist white lies. A father and son were in prison near me. The father always lied that he did not feel well and could not eat so as to increase the starvation ration of the son. The father died and saved the son. There exist saving pretences. In prison a mother almost went mad after hearing the truth that her daughter had died. A Christian lady recently arrested told her the white lie that she had seen her daughter alive. Thus she saved the mother's sanity.

In Isaiah 32:5, after the promise that once "a king shall reign in righteousness," it is said that then "the vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful," which implies that under unrighteous rulers it is acceptable to give good names to bad people in order to keep your life. Jacob gives Esau the impression that he has seen the face of God in order to make Esau afraid.

To preach the Gospel as you would teach a scientific truth in the university is also impossible. When the professor writes popularized science, he draws a picture of the atom or of the universe which my imagination can seize. He knows that matter is not picturable. St. Paul writes, "To the Greek I have become as a Greek, to the Jew as a Jew, so that by all means I might save some." He spoke what was efficient, not unadulterated truth. But God desires *truth in the innermost parts*. (Psalm 51:6) This creates a tension in the soul of everyone which expresses itself in dreams like this. In the dream self-reproach takes the form of reproaches addressed to others.

The acknowledgment of the state of tension as normal will free you from many questions.

# CHRISTIANS AND THEIR PASTORS

## THIRD DREAM

*An artist friend of ours presents me with two paintings, telling me—so I remembered vaguely—that they are works of Goya. I tell this in her presence to a brother in Christ. She does not contradict me, but when she leaves, he accompanies her a bit. When he returns, he tells me that I have heard falsely. The paintings are not Goya's. He adds, "You must speak only what you know exactly." I object to the principle. There are legitimate ways of speaking other than what one knows with certainty, I say. There is exploratory talk, in which one makes all kinds of suppositions. Jesus spoke sometimes about things he did not know. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8)*

*At once, the man who is before me is my son Mihai. He tells me that the Biblical book Ecclesiastes predisposes the reader toward skepticism. We read in it, "Who knows if the soul of man ascends at death and that of the animal descends?" I answer that these words are not an expression of skepticism, but of assurance that there is Somebody who has the answer to the greatest questions. But Solomon did not know who this was. This is Jesus. The Kabbala tells us that in Divinity there exists the sphere of the Mah (what) and that of the Mi (Who). Many see what happens but don't know the Who, the Person who makes things happen and therefore has also all explanations.*

*Now I am in the presence of one of the greatest preachers of Romania. He is dead. Knowing in 1947 that I was threatened with arrest by the Communists, I had consulted him as to whether I should leave the country. He urged me to go. So had all the other pastors from whom I sought advice. I now saw again in a dream the discussion with him. I come home and tell my wife, "If all the pastors had told me that a good shepherd does not leave his flock when the wolf comes, we*

*could have fled, knowing that we were leaving our congregation in good hands. But if they all advise me to flee, they show what they would do if they could. So I consider it my duty to remain."*

With this last dream I have reached the problem of the relationship between Christians and their pastors.

A multitude of the letters which I receive complain about things happening in churches, about pastors and priests, about the World Council of Churches and the Vatican. Some of my correspondents have changed denominations, as a man would change a shirt, in the hope of finding satisfaction for their souls, and they are still unhappy. "My church is as empty of spirit as the Communists would like it to be," a Christian writes.

What is wrong with the churches? Just nothing.

Jesus said to his disciples, which constituted the first church, "You are the light of the world," not "you should be," or "you should strive to become the light of the world." He also said that the church is *the* light, not one of many lights. Those who seek a church which should be the light of the world are again like the man who vainly sought his head when it was upon his shoulders.

The church is Christ prolonged in time, passing through history. Innumerable men had lived in the nearness of Christ, had seen Him eating, studying Scriptures, boiling glue, bargaining when He bought and sold (there is no trade without bargaining in the Orient). Sometimes it was apparent to every onlooker that He was tempted to sin. People would not know if He yielded to the temptation or not. He was known to get angry and said the harshest word, "Satan," even to somebody who would later die for Him. He trembled in Gethsemane, He despaired in suffering. But He did not have to strive to be the eternal Son of God. This is what He was. It was not easy to recognize it.



Neither is it easy to recognize the church, with its many human weaknesses which sometimes amount to terrible crimes, as being the light of the world. But this it is. That Jesus is the Son of God is an article of our creed and therefore indisputable. It is an axiom. If we step down to arguments, we will be swamped by counter-arguments which Jews and Moslems and infidels bring. The same creed says, "I believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church." We have a faith given by God. We keep it as it has been given to us.

And we, members of this church, don't cease to belong to it because of something foolish we think or do. Thoughts or acts don't exclude from the body. We are what we are ontologically, not psychologically. We are members of the body even in moments of disbelief.

During His earthly life, Jesus passed through many stages of evolution: an embryo, a babe, a child, an adult: He passed through many situations: greatly beloved, respected, humiliated, transfigured, crucified, risen. He had different moods. With the church, Christ prolonged in history, it is the same.

Just now she is passing through a spiritual ice-age. Jesus must have suffered from cold. You shiver for cold sometimes even in churches situated under the warm California sun. The weather outside is warmer than the sermons. But look only on the good side. You will see snow flowers breaking the icy shell and gladdening souls with beauty.

There are microbes in the baptismal water and on the cup of Holy Communion, billions of them, more than the sins in the church members. Does this lessen the value of the sacraments?

If all the church members were all righteous, why would they need a church? Is not the church a school for sinners?

It is a school apart. Its teachers are also pupils. They also have to learn what is the subject of the church's teaching:

to become like Jesus in miniature. Without this, no sermon or ritual will help.

As pupils in school are punished by their teachers with reproof and bad marks, so church teachers have to be reprov- ed and given bad marks by other teachers who know better.

Diotrephes mentioned in III John had probably been a bishop. Otherwise he could not have done all the evil for which he received the apostle's rebuke. But he had behaved so badly that St. John does not even give his title. He was not worthy of it any more. Some very harsh epithets have been used against men with high functions in the church. A crook must be called a crook, whatever his position in religion. There exist people whose correct title is His Eminence the Crook, His Grace the Infidel. Faithfulness to the church demands opposition to the renegade leaders.

St. Peter Damianus called Pope Gregory VII, founder of the world position of the Curia, "Saint Satan," "wolf," "tiger." He spoke about the "Sodom and Gomorrah of the clergy."

On the other hand, it would be wrong to expect them to be perfect. They are human.

They are themselves victims of a false system. They are Christians because they are descendants of men who became Christians because of a royal edict. Prince Vladimir gave an order and the whole of Russia was baptized. Emperor Theodosius of Byzantium commanded: "All people over whom our rule extends shall live in that religion which was revealed to St. Peter. We give orders that all these should adopt the name 'Catholic Christian.' The rest we shall let pass for fools, and they will have to bear the reproach of being called heretics. They must come first under the wrath of God and then under ours." (*Codex Theodosianus XVI*) Many bishops, priests, and pastors have never had a personal encounter with Jesus.

How has Latin America become Christian? Indians who knew only their primitive language were gathered and "the Requerimiento" devised by the navigator Fernandez de Enciso in 1513 was read to them solemnly in Spanish or Latin. This set forth a history of the world since its creation, followed by an account of the institution of the papacy, and concluding with the grant of the territory by Pope Alexander VI to the kings of Spain. The Indians were then required to recognize the church, as sovereign and mistress of the whole world, the high priest called the Pope, and the King; and to allow themselves to be taught the Christian religion in Latin. If the Indians did not submit, their masters had the right to reduce them to slavery as idolaters, to take away their property, and to treat them as badly as possible—it would all be their own fault. This frightful theology was enforced with ships and weapons.

Today's Latin Americans know how they have been Christianized. Therefore the church is passing through a terrible crisis.

In Brazil recently forty percent of the decreasing number of priests were foreigners. On the whole continent there is a steady rise in the number of priests abandoning their mission. In four years the number of newly ordained priests declined by a half. The number of nuns also dropped. Only twenty percent of Catholics practice their faith. The number of Catholic baptisms has not changed though the yearly population increase is seven percent. The number of confirmations dropped in four years from 1,500,000 to 500,000. (New York Times, Feb. 2, 1973)

This situation is typical for many Christian countries. The times when St. Patrick brought Christianity to Ireland, St. Boniface to Germany, and St. Willebrord to Holland, from which it went to Sweden, the days of the Pilgrims who had come with the Mayflower, or of the Cambridge seven who scattered to different lands to bring Christ to the world, are no more.

Neither do we have any more an institution bearing the name of church which is the pillar of truth. It has been replaced by "my-views" churches which I can change when I dislike them. We no longer think, "Thus the church teaches, and I have to submit, even if it is difficult for me to understand." We do not accept the Scriptures any more, as did St. Augustine, simply because the authority of the church enjoins us to do so.

Montmartre (in French "mount of martyrs," so called because there saints suffered a martyr's death) is now a favourite place of Parisian debauchery.

In the apocryphal "Acts of John" we read that the apostles encircled Jesus and danced, singing Psalms. This is what we expected. He called religion a marriage feast. Now it is cold in the churches. And when persecution comes, many leave. Millions of laymen, but also many priests, left the church when the Communists seized power in different countries. Under the Nazis, the majority of Christians and their pastors cried, "Heil Hitler."

I was counselled by all pastors from whom I sought advice to leave my flock when the wolf came. (It is unfortunate that I sought advice only from the wrong ones. Among the others were many bishops and pastors who died for Christ.) This taught me that radical changes have to take place among the clergy.

I would say that the one necessary change is to have pastors who are more stupid. The Hebrew word for "righteous" is "*tamim*," a superlative of "foolish." In my eyes, the clergy are much too wise. They know far too many things.

The story is told that St. John Chrysostom, lacking a priest for a village church, ordained an uncultured peasant who had received very superficial instruction. Returning to his bishopric in Byzantium, John feared that he might have committed a big mistake.

He arranged, therefore, to visit that church on a Sunday morning. Entering it unobserved, he hid behind a column, wishing to see if this new priest were worth his salt.

But he was overtaken by emotion. The prayers were said from the very depths of the heart. The song was like that of the angels. The reading of Scripture was reverent. The sermon was simple but inspiring. It was the service of a priest on fire.

When it was finished, the bishop went to the altar, knelt before the priest, and asked his blessing. The poor priest was afraid and said, "You must bless me, not I you." The bishop insisted, "I have never seen a priest serve God as whole-heartedly as you do," to which the stupid and uncultured priest replied, "But, your Eminence, does anybody serve God otherwise?"

We need such ignorant priests.

Most of what is taught in seminaries as theology, the hours lost on Greek and Hebrew, which most pastors forget once they have passed the exams, are more than useless *if* the primary aim of pastors is other than the conversion of souls.

Some do not ever learn to read the scriptures well in church. I know a pastor who read from the pulpit Genesis 12:1— "The Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country," — with such conviction that several in the audience decided to leave the church — this before hearing the end of the sentence let along the rest of the sermon. Why don't all pastors read the Scriptures like this from the pulpits?

Of all doctors of divinity, I prefer Dwight L. Moody, the salesman who spoke such ungrammatical English that the undergraduates in Cambridge set fire to a pile of chairs to protest his speech. Afterwards many were converted. Some of them became great men of God.

When Rembrandt was in his first phase as an artist, he was a master in every detail. Once his reputation was esta-

blished, he became neglectful. Some pastors are like that.

A good pastor is so rare that many have to say with Savonarola, "You, Jesus, are my superior, pastor, bishop, and pope."

In his "To the Christian nobility of the German nation" Luther writes: "If a number of devout Christian laymen would be arrested and banish to a desert, not having with them a priest consecrated by a bishop, and they would agree to choose one of them — if he be an honest man or not — and would entrust him with the office to baptize, to say mass, to absolve and preach, he would be as truly a priest as if all popes and bishops had ordained him. Through Cannon Law, they have deprived us and made unknown to us this great grace and power of baptism and of the state of a Christian... Whoever has been baptized can boast that he is already consecrated priest, bishop, and pope, though not everyone is called to this office."

When I have quoted this to individuals, they have reproached me saying that I contradict myself. I state that there is nothing wrong with the church, that she simply is the light of the world and does not have to strive to be something better. I also state that some things are wrong with the priests and pastors.

I am 66 years old. I have had the rare privilege of doing nothing but think during years of solitary confinement. I could never find out what is wrong with contradicting oneself. All the prophets have said contradictory things. I will put some in two columns:

## HOSEA

14: 6 (Israel's) branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree.	9: 16 Ephraim... shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb.
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## AMOS

5: 2 The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise.  
9: 11 I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins.

## HABAKKUK

1: 2 O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!  
3: 13 Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people.

Beware of every man who does not contradict himself. A rectilinear position is always cant.

But where is the contradiction in this case? The church is substantially Christ prolonged in history. But is there any substance which throws no shadow? Jesus threw a shadow when he walked on earth, a shadow without colour, without beauty, sometimes grotesquely small or huge, according to the position of the sun. There exists even a shadow cast by the Almighty (Ps. 91:1). This makes atheists of many. I believe that every man or institution which does not have a dark side is not whole. The wrongs of the church belong to its shadow, not to its essence which is without stain.

As for what happens in the shadow, you mention it casually and are not worried about it.

What is the right thing to do in view of these evils in the church? Should one step out of the large denominations involved in ecumenism?

I like the grave wisdom contained in some jokes. A man went to the doctor every month, whether he was healthy or sick. He explained, "The doctor has to make a living." Then he would order from the pharmacy the drug prescribed.

“The pharmacist has to live.” He never took the medicine, because he also wished to live.

The churches have to exist. So they will get my attendance. “To whosoever asks you, give,” says the Lord. So I will pay my church contributions. I will listen to the sermons. The priests and pastors have to have an audience. I will take care about following what they say, because I have to live eternally. Therefore, I will check everything with the Scriptures. I will remember that not all men who have the title “right reverend” are right. Not all eminences are eminent.

I need teachers. They are not hard to find. St. Polycarp is a good one. When at a late age he was asked by the Roman pro-consul to worship the emperor and blaspheme Christ, he said, “Eighty-six years I have served Christ and He has never done me harm. How then shall I blaspheme my King Who has redeemed me? I am a Christian. If you would learn the basis of my faith, set a day on which I may instruct you.” As he was led away to be burned at the stake, he prayed, “Lord God, Almighty Father of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, through Whom we have received grace to confess Thee, God of the angels and of all powers, all creatures and all believers who live as before Thy presence, I praise Thee for having counted me worthy to share in the cup of Thy Son Jesus Christ. Take me up before Thy presence as a pleasing sacrifice which Thou hast prepared for Thyself.”

I can choose as teachers St. Timothy and Maura.

Timothy, so the story goes was young, son of the priest Peekolpos. His wife was seventeen when he married her. Twenty years later they were brought before Arian, governor of the bloody Emperor Diocletian.

Timothy told him courageously, “I am a Christian.”

“Don’t you see these instruments of torture which we will use against you if you don’t sacrifice to the gods?”

“How about you? Don’t you see the angels of God



surrounding and strengthening me?" Timothy answered.

They blinded him, so he saw the beautiful, eternal kingdom of God and praised Him. They hanged him head down, with a heavy stone attached to his body. His father, the priest, was in the crowd and prayed for him.

The governor asked for Maura to make her husband yield, promising her much gold for doing this.

She said to her husband, "Beloved Timothy, why do you bring upon me such sorrow? I cannot see you suffering. I cannot look upon your ordeal. I weep. My heart aches. You leave me a young widow."

Timothy replied, "O Maura, make with me this beautiful adventure. Let us die together for our Lord, and He will give us crowns in His Kingdom."

Maura answered, "When I came to you, I still loved this transitory life. But now I love what you love. I desire what you desire."

"If so, go and tell it to the governor."

Supported by the prayers of her husband, she went to the governor and said, "You dishonest ruler!—You promised me gold if I convinced my husband to sacrifice to the gods. You wished to destroy my soul. Now I don't fear your sentence. I hope that my heavenly Bridegroom will help me bear the torture."

They tore out her hair, they cut her fingers. The saint said, "Let my hands, which I used to ornament with useless rings, suffer." She did not feel the pain. Then she was thrown into a kettle of boiling water. Before this she said, "I thank the Lord that He washes me from my sins, that I may come to Him with a clean heart." From the kettle she told the governor, "How cold is the water in which you throw me! I don't feel any heat." The ruler, angry because they put her into cold water contrary to his command, ordered that some of this water be shed on his hand. When a little bit of that water was sprinkled

upon him, he jumped because of the pain.

For a moment Arian was impressed and exclaimed, "Blessed be the Lord God of Maura, and there is no God beside Him." He wished to release her, but the devil got the upper hand, and the order came to throw her in boiling tar. St. Maura answered, "Fire is for me like the morning dew descending from heaven to earth."

So the ruler changed his mind and ordered both to be crucified. While they were on their way to death, the mother of Maura encountered her and said, "My daughter, I have sought you everywhere. Don't leave me alone. Who will wear all your jewels, your beautiful garments? To whom will I give your gold?" Maura replied, "My gold will pass away, my garments will be eaten by moths, my young face will be full of wrinkles, but the crown which I receive from my Lord is eternal and unfading. I wish to die on the cross as did my Lord."

Timothy and Maura, it is said were crucified one opposite the other. They hung on the cross nine days and encouraged each other. St. Timothy taught her during the day. During the night, she would speak words of comfort. One night the enemy showed himself to St. Maura in the shape of an angel of light and led her in the spirit to a river flowing with milk and honey, enjoining her to drink. The saint recognized that it was the enemy and answered, "I will not drink water, milk, or honey, or any earthly beverage until I finish the cup of my suffering, the cup of death for my Lord Jesus Christ." When she had said these words the enemy and the river disappeared, and she had a heavenly vision.

She saw before her an angel indeed with shining face. He showed her a throne on which lay a garment white as snow and a crown. He told her, "This is your reward." Then he showed her another throne situated higher in heaven. "This is prepared for your husband." She asked,

“Why are the thrones not together?” He answered, “There is a big difference between you and your husband. He convinced you to suffer for Christ. Thanks to him you received the martyr’s crown. In the morning other angels will come and bring you here.”

The last words of St. Maura were addressed to the crowd, “My brethren and sisters, the Lord gives us, His servants, eternal crowns. Serve the Lord and He will crown you, too.” And so they both passed away.

Such teachers of Christianity live outside of time. The church is never without good teachers. We can learn from Polycarp, Timothy, Maura, and thousands of others like them.

We can learn from the martyrs of our own century.

Ivan Moiseev, a Soviet soldier, was a Christian who brought his comrades to conversion. The Communists forced him to stand for two weeks on the ice, clothed only in a summer uniform, in order to make him deny his faith. He refused. They put him in an inflatable rubber suit, then inflated it so much that he could scarcely breathe. His faith resisted. Under torture he wrote to his mother, “They will kill me. I might not see you again on earth. But I am unafraid. I have seen angels and they have shown me the heavenly city.” Angels are transparent. When you have an angel before you and somebody else stands behind him, the presence of the angel does not keep you from seeing the other man. On the contrary, looking at him through the angel, you see him beautiful, radiant. Afterward, they stabbed him six times in the region of his heart and then drowned him.

Here you have another good teacher in Christianity. From him we can learn to look at our fellowmen through the angel.

And if you will look well you might find some good teachers among the pastors around you. It might not be the one you have in your parish. But if it is true that not all

those called "Eminence" are eminent, it is also true that not all "Eminences" are by definition not eminent.

In any case, I being a pastor myself must be modest in criticizing other pastors.

#### FOURTH DREAM

*I dreamt once that the French magazine Literary Life (which means a magazine dedicated to fiction) had praised me. The subconscious told me thus that praises heaped upon me are based on a myth. In the dream, I kept a poor actor from playing his part. The subconscious criticized me because I, who also am acting, hindered less gifted pastors who have no greater guilt than mine. The dream ended with the fact that I lost the magazines praising me. I sought for them, but they remained lost.*

Beware of "know-better pastors" who criticize their colleagues. You might find a good pastor among the humble ones.

But beware also of being a pastor or having as pastor a man who never gets indignant about sin nor fervent about God, who is neither very good nor very bad.

And don't accept as pastor somebody who does not share the sufferings of persecuted brethren.

#### FIFTH DREAM

*I dreamt one night that I reproached Billy Graham with tears for not sharing the sorrows of Communist prisoners. I told him, "You do not love them." He then asked a guard to bind him and put him into a straight cell where he could scarcely stretch his body. There he fell asleep. When I visited him, I observed that his chains gave him freedom enough to stretch himself. I told him, "How privileged you are. The brethren are tied with their hands behind their back and cannot stretch themselves."*

I awoke. It had been a vain dream. Evangelists of renown usually don't submit themselves to being in bonds, though Hebrews 13: 3 would oblige them to do so: "Remember those that are in bonds as bound with them."

True teachers are not only those who die for Christ, but all those who love Him so much that they would be ready to die for Him if occasion demanded. Look well around you. You might be able to find a true teacher and true brethren for fellowship. If not, then you must become the nucleus of such a fellowship.

This is how I have solved the problem for myself.

You tell me in your letters that my answers are not specific enough and don't give a clear indication about what you should do. Why should I give you clear indications? Why do you seek your head on me? It is right on your own shoulders.



# LOVE PARDONS THE ENEMY

## SIXTH DREAM

*I attended a patriotic meeting in the United States and complained to a person near me that military matters are not kept secret. He told me that he works in a top secret military institution, which he invited me to visit. I refused, expressing my wonder that such institutions can be visited by foreigners. The patriot to whom I spoke at the meeting answered, "We are an open society. We are not used to secrecy."*

*I left the meeting with a Jewish doctor. He reproached me for being a Lutheran. He said, "Luther forced Jews into slave labour." I replied, "He was an anti-Semite, but he did not personally commit acts of violence against the Jews. He was a product of the spirit of his time. Every man is blinded through his main concern. Luther, always busy to disclosing what was wrong with the Papacy, simply could not see that anti-Semitism is also wrong."*

I awoke from this dream afraid. I asked myself if I am not in this position. I write and speak constantly about the evils of Communism. But there are so many other evils. God, keep me from being blind regarding them.

## SEVENTH DREAM

*I dreamt I saw Lucretiu Patrashcanu, the Communist leader who brought the Reds to power in Romania and who was afterwards shot his comrades. But he was before me alive and honoured. I asked him if he had had some religious experience in prison. He replied, "I put to myself the religious problem, but I did not reach any conclusion." Then I read a memorandum written by him while in prison in which he asked for my release for the good of the cause of Christ.*

A Communist asked that a Christian be released or the good of the cause of Christ!!

I love my enemies. Do I love the whole of my enemy? Do I love also what makes him my enemy, which is an essential part of his personality? If I don't love this part, I don't love him, the whole man. For humanitarian reasons, I have protested publicly against the anti-Communist terror in Indonesia and Chile. Would I ever have asked for the release of an imprisoned Communist for the good of the Marxist cause? The dream left me thinking. Would Christ have died for sinners so that they, knowing their present, past, and future sins would be forgiven, might sin without being disturbed by remorse?

St. Peter preached to the Jews, "Ye killed the Prince of life." (Acts 3:15) He finishes the same speech with the words, "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you..."

God blesses first those who killed his son—a preference for the worst of enemies. This shows us that we should treat our enemies as if they were our best friends.

I cannot forget Bishop Hirta, a Greek-Catholic with whom I was in prison. He had been very pleased that I had taken the defense of the Virgin Mary against a Protestant pastor who had belittled her. He told me, "As a reward, I wish to serve you with a powerful anti-Catholic argument. I wonder why Protestants never use it. Jesus taught that if a person has sinned, he should say, 'Our Father who art in heaven, ... forgive us our trespasses.' He did not say 'Go and obtain absolution from the priest'."

He had loved my whole person, including its anti-Catholicism.

The principle is that love for one's enemy must be total. This means that the satisfaction and security of any other person, including that of my enemy, must become as significant to me as my own satisfaction and security. It is only then that the state of love exists.

One of the oldest sermon illustrations, in the catacombs



of Rome, is the following:

A rich man with hundreds of slaves had one by the name of Paulus, whom he trusted fully, making him steward over his whole household. One day he went with Paulus to the slave market to buy some new men. Before bargaining, they examined the human merchandise, observing their musculature to see if they were worth their price. At once, Paulus saw exposed for sale a weak, old man. He implored his owner to buy this slave. The rich man, Proculus, answered mockingly, "But he is good for nothing."

"Buy him. He is cheap. And I promise that the work in your household will go as never before."

So the owner yielded. And it really was true that all the work went better than ever. But Proculus observed that Paulus now worked for three men. The old slave did nothing. Paulus tended him, gave him the best food, and made him rest the whole time. Proculus asked Paulus.

"You know I value you. I don't mind your protecting this old man. Tell me only who he is. Is it perhaps your father who has fallen into slavery?"

Paulus answered, "It is one to whom I owe more than to my father."

"Is it your teacher?"

"No. Somebody to whom I owe more."

"Who is it, then?"

"This is my enemy. He is the man who killed my father and sold us, the children, as slaves. As for me, I am a disciple of Christ, Who has taught us to love our enemies and to reward evil with good."

This is what a Christian feels in his heart. Nobody is accepted unless the very worst in him is accepted.

I had in my congregation in Bucharest a blind Jewess married to a blind man. They had never seen each other. After a time he chose another woman as the object of his love. She suffered much because of this and decided to

commit suicide. She gathered together a great quantity of sleeping pills and diluted them in water. But when she brought the glass to her lips, she, the blind Jewess, saw Jesus in a vision.

"What you do is sin," He told her. "I will show you a better way. Love the mistress of your husband. Love her as she is, as the woman who destroys your happiness. Bring her into your home. Let them embrace each other in your home, and you serve them with meals and with tea. Wash for them. Be their servant."

She, the Jewess, obeyed this strange injunction as few Christians would have done. She loved like the Communist leader in my dream. She loved the adulteress in such a manner as to make her feel freer in her relationship to the man. This love conquered. The husband abandoned the other woman and was again hers. The other woman remained her friend.

# LOVE TOWARD RUSSIA

## EIGHTH DREAM

*On April 1, 1973, I had a dream in Fort Wayne, Indiana. In this dream I prayed, "God, if you don't save Russia, you are not my God."*

I had never before known that I was so bound to Russia. I knew I had a preferential love for Romania, my country of origin, the United States, my actual home, and Israel.

The dream made me realize what a big role Russia played in my life.

I love it because it is the country which in this century has given the greatest number of martyrs, just as Rome was the most honoured place for Christians of the first centuries. When love fears to bleed, it ceases to bless. Russia has given and still gives rivers of blood. There is an appearance of atheism in the population but only because the atheists rule with an iron fist. When the armies of the Axis invaded Russia and reopened the churches, 100 percent of the population attended religious services. The people streamed to baptism, confession, religious marriage, and religious instruction.

In a Siberian camp, the Commander Naploef calls imprisoned nuns "bitches" and tears down the ikons which they put on the walls of their cells. Their fellow prisoners had given them names like "the angels of heaven, the holy Ukrainian virgins." They had baptized a hundred adults in the camp. On a winter's day, when the thermometer registered 50° below zero Celsius, the commander presented them with a declaration to sign: "We, the following nuns, renounce our orders, our religious propaganda, and our activity among other prisoners," and they were told that if they refused, they would be put in frozen isolation cells for a

week, receiving for food only one slice of bread and a cup of hot water. "If this does not suffice, you'll be exposed for three hours to the Siberian frost, dressed only in your shirts, all the inhabitants of the camp being present. We will see who is more powerful : God or winter."

The nuns resisted the ordeal of the isolation cells. They were made to stand barefoot and naked on the ice with 2000 criminals looking at them.

"Sign, or you'll become an ice block in a couple of minutes."

The nuns knelt in the snow and said the rosary with loud voices.

"If you don't sign in five minutes, we'll unleash the dogs against you. They'll tear you in pieces."

Then the nuns loudly recited the creed. The dogs were unleashed and ran as directed. At two yards from them, they stopped and sat down quietly like sheep in the snow. There was no more barking. The criminals began to shout, "Miracle! Glory to the heroic sisters! Shame to the henchmen!" Naploef ordered the criminals and the sisters back into their respective barracks.

It is because of such nuns that I love Russia.

The Mennonite Pastor Klaassen has been in prison for six years. He has seen many miracles in his time. Criminals incited by the Communists prepared a big kettle of boiling water in which to throw him. They ordered him to undress while they put more wood on the fire. Klaassen undressed himself, but the kettle exploded and killed the murderers.

On another day a warden entered his cell with a big dog trained to jump at prisoners and bite them. The guard removed the muzzle, but, surprisingly, the dog jumped at the guard, not at the prisoner. The keeper succeeded in shooting the dog and for some mysterious reason—perhaps remorse at seeing this miracle of God—shot himself, too.

After passing through all these years of starvation,

torture, and such traumatic experiences, Klaassen can still write: "First I counted the years, now I count the days until my liberation. And then...we can prepare ourselves for new tempests, because these have not ceased. Yesterday we received the news that three other brethren have been sentenced to four and five years. I remembered the story when Paul took leave of the brethren in Ephesus, telling them that he knew about persecutions and bonds awaiting him in Jerusalem. But he was ready not only to bear chains, but even to go to death for Christ's sake. Thinking about this, I began to sing. The way is red because of the blood of martyrs, and should I walk on roses? Others passed through the sea; should I stand on the shore? He who wishes to triumph must fight. My Saviour, give me the strength to fight, to suffer in silence as a true soldier. My cell is for me a garden of roses full of fragrance. Here I meet my Saviour and hear His voice."

It is for men like Klaassen that I love Russia.

Sasha is only six years of age. He writes his first poem:

I have a father,

He prays for me;

Christ will not forget

Though Papa is in prison.

Children who live far away from Sunday Schools and go by train to other villages are attacked by gangs of Communist hooligans and badly beaten up when they return. Next Sunday they go again to Sunday School.

It is for children like these that I love Russia.

Some parents walk hundreds of miles to find a priest who will baptize their child. These parents know that if they bring up their children in the Christian faith, these same children might become martyrs. They don't educate

them to become lawyers, engineers, or doctors, but rather chained prisoners.

It is for them that I love Russia.

I love Russia for its youth who, though ignorant in matters of religion, inscribe their prayers and their seeking after God on funeral stones, hoping that the dead will intercede for them.

A Russian mother was dying when her son was arrested. Relatives wished to hide the news from her. But she guessed the sense of his absence and thanked God for his faithfulness. Dr. Olga Skrebetz quit the Communist Party because of religious convictions and in protest against the rape of Czechoslovakia. As a result, she was interned in a psychiatric asylum. Because of women like this I love Russia.

I love Russia for men like Wiebe. His last letter from the prison in which he died says:

I love Russia, the country in which Christians kiss the locked doors and walls of closed churches because Christ once dwelt in them.

I believe Russia to be the most spiritual country of the Christian world, and even while attending services in a Western church, I share in spirit the religious service held by a pastor in some mine in a Russian concentration camp. The lamps of the miners are the candles. They sing with soft voices. The electricity does not function. Short circuits happen at just the right time. This liturgy is much more solemn than the mass at St. Peter's.

I love Russia because the Christians tortured in it are patriots.

*Vestnik Spasenia*, the secret magazine of the Soviet Baptists (February 1968) published a poem composed in a slave labour camp:

My love and my song are Russia.

For your happiness, I am ready to give my whole life,

my young forces,  
Saying with joy while dying,  
My love and my song are Russia.  
I feel much nearer to the author of these primitive verses  
than to the renowned Mme. Guyon, who wrote in prison:  
To me remains no place or time,  
My country is in every clime.  
I can be calm and free from care  
On any shore since you are there.





## RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

But is it right to speak to God shamelessly like this, "If you don't save Russia, you are not my God"? I would never have said such words consciously. The subconscious mind has its own conceptions.

The conscious mind understands and speculates too much. Luther warned against this: "Living, nay, dying and being damned you become a theologian, not understanding, reading and speculating."

The song "How Great Thou Art" addressed to God is very popular. But nobody gave the answer to it telling us how great God is. I would like rather to compose a hymn on the subject "How Unknown Thou Art."

Sanomdes, when asked who *is* God, pleaded a day's time for meditation, then one more, then one more. "The more I think about God, the more unclear my notions become," he said. God is a mystery.

When I first saw Heisenberg's formula of the world, I shuddered:

$$\sqrt{\frac{d}{Vdx}} \quad \nabla \Psi + \hbar^2 \gamma^4 \gamma^5 \Psi (\Psi + \gamma^4 \gamma^5 \Psi) = 0$$

(quoted from "Biblische Verkuendigung in der Zeitwende", Don Basco Verlag, Munich.)

Multitudes of particles in combination with each other but their sum is 0. The particles are no more than observational positions. They are intellectual fiction. If this is all we can say about the world, what could we say about the Godhead?

We call him Father, Lord, King. But these are kindergarten pictures. Kings and fathers are mortal. We have to

take away these names to behold the splendor of God. Justin Martyr writes in his *Second Apology*, "To the Father of all that is unbegotten, there is no name given, for by whatever name He be called, He has as His elder the person who gives Him the name. These words, 'Father,' 'God', 'Creator,' 'Lord,' and 'Master,' are not names, but appellations derived from His good deeds and functions." God is not a name.

Origen writes, "If I can confess the precise truth, God is unintelligible and cannot be known." St. Cyprian writes, "God cannot be seen— His light blinds the eye; He cannot be understood— He being too pure for our reason: neither can we measure Him— He surpassing our possibility of comprehension. Therefore we say something right about Him only when we confess that we don't understand Him." Gregor of Nazianz taught, "Let us worship the truth of the Divine being only through silence. It is inexpressible, above every thought..."

The Indian name for God, *Brahman*, comes from a Sanskrit word which means prayer. God is a longing, more than a knowledge. Meister Eckhardt says, "Whoever wishes to see God must be blind." The Indians call him *Neti, neti*—"no, no." The Kaballa calls Him *Ein*, the nonexistent, because He is nothing of what we attribute to Him. The God whom we imagine is unexisting. Tantiryakka-Upanishad calls Him "the one from which words and thoughts return without finding him."

We laugh about what Luther wrote 400 years ago, "One of the masterpieces of God is that nine-tenths of men die as children and have no occasion for dangerous temptations." After 400 years others will laugh about the thoughts we connect with God.

I believe that Simone Weil came closest to expressing it when she said that God cannot be present in His creation other than through His absence. Tauler did not wish to

think about God: he wished to think in a divine manner. It is not true that the one who knows God knows something more than other men. He knows things differently. No conversation of his is prosaic any more. When he speaks about cabbage or hay, these objects have a new significance for him. He has a godly manner of giving a cup of water and of working in a factory.

There exists this hidden God about Whom the mystics knew. The only thing you can say is that He is. With Him we communicate through silence. It is important to meditate—more important than to brush our teeth. But about Him we meditate only in the intervals between our meditations.

Never seek to obtain anything from Him. The pupil of the eye receives light only because of itself it is dark. Dance for joy as often as He takes something away from you. It was surely a barrier between you and Him. You prove your love toward the Godhead by defending Him against yourself, against your insistent demands and pettiness.

You reach this God only by denying all false gods. You search for the little which can be obtained by searching and adore the Unsearchable. You reach Him by denying yourself, which means to realize that there exists no "I," but only God. Reality transcends dualistic intellectual analysis, the differentiation between an I and a Him.

To Him the words of Sophocles' Oedipus apply; "No man in the world can make gods do more than gods will."

I cannot say to the Godhead, "Save Russia or you are not my God." He is my God, if I wish Him or not. He is God whether or not He saves Russia. Many countries have no testimony of the Gospel; many generations have passed away without knowing Christ. He owes us no answer. He is good, of a goodness apart. If a human father behaved like Him toward his children, leaving them without essential knowledge, we would not have called him good. God belongs in a category apart.

But Luther teaches, "We must leave God unsearched as He is in His majesty and essence. With Him we have nothing to do. Neither does He wish us to have ought to do with Him. The hidden God in His majesty does not mourn and does not take away death. He causes life and death and all in all. Here God has not limited himself in His word, but has kept Himself in liberty over all."

He recommends that we distinguish between the hidden God and God as revealed, i.e., between the Word of God and God himself. "We have to go after His Word, not after His inscrutable will... We should not strive to discover the high mysteries of the Majesty Who dwells in an impenetrable light."

The hidden God and the revealed God? But is God not one? It is very important to uphold the oneness of God, the oneness of the source of truth. Whoever believes in many gods will get different inspirations and have a confused mind.

But when I say that God is one, it means that He has the qualities of the figure one, within which is also divisibility. If God is conscious He is already multiple; His oneness is no more simple. There exist His reality and His self-reflection, the subject and the object of this knowledge. The Father is the known, the Son the knower. He says, "Nobody knows the Father except Me." If God loves Himself, there exist again the loved, the lover, and the love which unites them, the Holy Trinity.

The one mysterious Godhead has revealed itself through the Son who works within us through the Holy Spirit.

God has revealed Himself. We can find Him. If we open in our hearts a door for Him as big as the point of a needle, He will enter with cartloads of blessings. He makes us strong personalities on our own. He gives us back our "I", which we had denied. He returns it to us as a reality. Therefore, the creed starts with the words "I believe." I believe this, whatever others may believe. St. Athanasius

quarrelled with a council of bishops and the whole world about one "I" in the creed. He allowed himself to be excommunicated under slanderous accusations. He knew the sense of the words "I believe." Nobody can dictate to me what to believe.

This "I" can come daringly to God, though knowing that He is almighty. It is He who has made the amoebas. They can be seen only under mighty microscopes. Everyone is constituted of 100 quadrillions of atoms, of which the principal ones are carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen. This number of atoms could not have met together accidentally in a correct ratio. Each amoeba contains millions of genes with genetic information. If written out, it would fill a thousand volumes.

I can believe about such a God that He can make everything happen. To this God I can cry, "Father," until He becomes a Father to me.

One day some thirty years ago, a girl of thirteen, pale, poorly dressed, thin, entered my office and told me, "I have heard about you that you are good. I have no father. My mother is a drunkard who beats me. I am hospitalized for spinal tuberculosis. I have nobody. You will be my father henceforth." I called my wife and introduced her to her daughter. And that was it. In the same manner I came to God and declared Him to be my Father.

This Father of mine can blow adversaries away like a heap of dust. He can also give me the strength to do it. Hugo writes in *Les Miserables* that Napoleon was defeated not because of Wellington, but because he embarrassed God.

God said to Abraham, "After a year I will return, and Sarah will have a son." He seemingly did not return, but Sarah gave birth to a son, Isaac. Later on in the Bible God is called "the God of Isaac." This is in our English Bibles, not in the original. The Hebrew and the Greek have "God Abraham, God Isaac, God Jacob." God had returned in the sense that

He had identified himself with the new-born babe.

He identifies Himself with me and with all believers. He will save Russia through our fight, our prayers, our activity, and He will be my God.

Against whom do the Russian Communists fight if there is no God? A Russian farmer was asked if he believes in God. "How come?" they mocked him. "Have you ever seen him?"

"No," he replied, "but neither have I ever seen a Japanese. I only know that in the last war Russia fought the Japanese, so they must exist. And you, the Communists, have been fighting God for half a century. You are not mad. You surely don't fight someone who does not exist."

A country in which farmers can give such answers and which sheds so much blood for the cause of God will be saved.

As for ourselves, let us not allow science to shake our belief in God. Men in times past had the key to a lock whose structure they did not know. Now scientists minutely describe the lock but have not the key—which is faith in God. They are like men who would deny the existence of a painter because he is not on the canvass. The canvass could show nothing without the artist.

Believe in God. Communicate with Him. If only ten percent of mankind were to meditate on His Word and pray to Him, the greatest threat hanging over us all would cease to exist. Global peace would permanently ensue. God can be adored. But He is also the greatest Power we can use in our service.

You can use Him first as a power to start a new life.

A pastor rode in a train, in a packed compartment. A teenager disturbed all the passengers by continually leaving and reentering the compartment. The pastor asked him, "Don't you see that there is no place for so much going to and fro? Why don't you stay in one place like everybody else".

else?"

The teenager answered, "I am the prodigal son of the Bible. I have heaped shame on my family by going to jail for theft. Today I was released. From jail I had written to mother asking her to intervene with father to forgive me. I told her that if he does, she should tie a white handkerchief to the cherry tree in front of our house. Our train passes the house. If I see the handkerchief—I wrote—I will return and try to make restitution for my past evil. If not, no other way remains open for me than to rejoin the gang. Our train will soon approach the house, and I am nervous. I don't even have the courage to look through the window. What if there is no handkerchief on the tree?"

The pastor told the young man to stay in the corridor. He would look out on his behalf and tell him. After a few minutes, the pastor, who had gotten the necessary explanations about the house, cried to the youngster, "Sorry, my friend, there is no white handkerchief on the tree—but instead the tree is full of big white sheets! So much does your father wait for you."

Our heavenly Father loves us even more. As a token of His love, He sent His only Son, Jesus, to die for us on the cross. Through believing in Him we can have forgiveness of all our sins.

Use this goodness of God. Get all the forgiveness for all your trespasses. Squeeze from God the maximum of forgiveness. What is less than the maximum is not from Him.

As for persistence in our relationship with God, it sometimes works. Jesus encourages us to use it in the parable about the widow who by persistently troubling an evil judge got what she required. (Luke 18:1-8)

Now, when I think about this dream, I say that a God who would save Russia would be my God, whom I

love. A God who does not save Russia would also be my God, a God whom I would have to accept, before whom I would bow as before an ineluctable fact and a mystery. And I still must love Him.



## THE HEAVENLY MOTHER

Christians always speak about their heavenly Father. But is there not also a heavenly mother? Jung says that the belief in it constitutes one of the essential parts of the collective unconscious. The Hindus call her Kali and have an amazing devotion for her. I saw her adored in Asia under the name of Kun-Yin.

Catholics and Orthodox would call Mary their heavenly mother. Jesus had said to John from the cross, referring to her, "Behold, thy mother." Pope John XXIII, when visited by Adzubei, son-in-law of Khrushchev, and his wife, presented to the latter a rosary. He told her, "I don't expect you to use it for saying prayers. But it should remind you about a perfect mother." Mrs. Adzubei wept.

Protestants would do well to remember that the Scriptures speak not only about a heavenly Father. St. Paul writes in Galatians 4:26, "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."

The Mormons are not mad when they sing:

In the heavens are parents single?

No, the thought makes reason stare.

Truth is reason, truth eternal

Tells me I've a mother there.

The Bible compares God's sentiments toward Israel with *motherly* love: "Can a woman forget her sucking child...?" (Isaiah 49:15) The church in its sermons has also referred to this similitude.

There is a story, often told in churches, about a poor woman who brought her only daughter into town so that she might find a position as a maid. From what she could earn, they would be able to buy in time a field and some cattle. The girl was very beautiful and intelligent.

She found out quickly that a person with her attributes could earn more money by not working than by working. So she passed from one set of arms to another and eventually gained luxury, cars, furs, rings. In the process, she forgot her mother.

After ten years, the moment of great awakening came. "How could I have been so hardhearted as to leave mother without even news about me?" She took a train and arrived at her village late at night. Approaching the gate of her mother's home, she found that it was open, a very unusual thing. She knew her mother was very careful about locking it up in the evening. Looking up, she saw a light burning in her mother's bedroom. Mother usually did not keep the light on when asleep. As she stepped over the threshold, her mother's voice called, "Jeane, is it you?"

"Yes, mother. But how is it that your gate is not locked?"

The mother's reply was gentle. "For ten years, ever since you left, the gate has always remained wide open."

"And why is your light burning?" the daughter questioned.

"Since you left, the light has never been turned off. The loving heart of a mother waited for you."

The simple fact that Christians call God the Father, and not the Author or Creator, identifies him with a sex. How can there be a father without a mother?

Some explanation to this problem is found in Jesus' words: "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and *mother*." (Matthew 12:50)

It is easy to understand that we are called brothers and sisters of Jesus. But how could I be Jesus' mother through doing the will of God? Mother's love is the highest form of love. The love of a child toward his

parents has a mixture of self-interest. Father gives pocket money and mother candies. Wives love their husbands. They also have his protection and his caresses. Husbands love their wives. They also enjoy her attentions, her cooking, and her care. Only a mother's love is completely disinterested. Mother loves even after her child has gravely sinned against her.

We can have such love, the highest type of love, for Jesus. Mary was granted the privilege of such love. Jesus had lived in her womb, as He is meant to live in our hearts. She had taken care of all His needs, as we could do, too. Christians with such a love are called His mother by Jesus Himself. If you have found such a mother of Jesus, honour her. Be such a mother yourself.





form of a child. Jerome felt such a love for Him that he said, "You give to my heart great sweetness. I would like to present You with a gift. What would make You happy?"

The child smiled. "What can you give Me? Heaven and earth belong to Me."

Jerome insisted, "I must make You a present. Should I give You all my money?"

The child, still smiling, replied, "If you have spare money, give it to the poor. I don't need silver and gold."

I will not allow You to pass by without accepting atleast some little thing from me. Tell me what You would like most to have from me."

Now the child became earnest and said, "If you really wish to gladden Me, give Me all your sins, passions, and lusts, and I will die for them on the cross. There is no more pleasant gift that anyone can give Me."

Jesus died for us on the cross.

We in the Christian world have become so accustomed to this sentence that it no longer touches us as it should. I once overheard a Russian praying before a crucifix. He had not seen many churches before. "Poor Jesus," he prayed, "how the arms must ache. And You cannot walk anymore. I feel the pain of Your hands, Your feet, Your head. How ashamed You must have felt hanging naked, What a grief to see Your mother weeping. And this all for my sins."

I have always wondered why the commandment that we should not make ourselves images is considered so important that it comes before "Don't kill" and "Don't steal." When I heard the Russian, I understood. Holy images are transparent and they show so much innocent suffering that life would be simply impossible for the true believer if he had them around. We know we are guilty of Christ's death. What murderer can bear to have constantly before his eyes the pictures of his victim?

Many thousands were crucified in Jesus' time. What

makes His crucifixion so important is that He is God.

Through the Virgin Mary, God allowed His creation, the mineral, vegetable, and human spheres, to participate in the eternal birth of His Son. And what happened in eternity, what happened in the stable in Bethlehem, can happen in you. Bohme writes, "The Father brings forth His only-begotten Son in the soul as truly as He brings Him forth in eternity, neither less nor more."

And once He has been born in us, we recognize Him. He had never been entirely foreign. The beauties of this world had been Christ's gentle smile passing through matter.

When we have Him, we have the truth. The Jews have preserved a legend about Him. When He was a boy His teacher taught Him the *Aleph*, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. When he wished to teach Him the second letter, the *Beth*, the child refused. "I have not yet learned everything about the *Aleph*. I cannot go on to the next step." He was a thorough learner. He grew in wisdom. And He was a thorough teacher.

He taught from simple things. "Look at the lilies," He said. And the disciples watched Him looking at lilies. He smiled silently, gazing at them. This was discovery enough. Some understood.

He taught men a simple prayer, the "Our Father." "Give us this day our daily bread." In Greek the word for daily is *epiousion*. Jerome translated it, "*Panem nostrum crastinum*" ("our bread for tomorrow"), the bread for life which follows. We have to ask it from the Heavenly Father.

"Forgive us our trespasses." The Greek word *afes* is deep. It expresses exactly the contradictory currents in the soul while we pray. It means on the one hand "forgive, remit" and on the other hand "leave us our sins," "suffer them to be." Is not the complexity of both the real prayer? Who does not desire to remain with his sin while praying for its forgiveness?

And then the deeply human wish not to suffer. "Lead us not into *peirasmos*," that is, temptation, test, persecution.

Jesus also performed miracles. They are confirmed by the Talmud, the holy book of the Pharisees, Jesus' worst enemies.

He went from place to place doing good, though always under stress because of His consciousness at being the Son of God while at the same time acknowledging the self-limitations of His human nature. Sometimes He felt embarrassed about His grandness. In His human nature, He did not know everything. He confessed this Himself. It was because God did not want Him to miss one of the great joys: surprise.

Then came the last Passover. All the Jews rejoiced, remembering the deliverance from Egyptian bondage. He could not rejoice like the others.

As the Midrash tells the story, when the Jews had passed miraculously through the Red Sea and the Egyptians had been drowned, angels joined the song of the liberated slaves. God chided them for this. He said, "It is understandable that Jews who had been under such terrible bondage should be jubilant now. But I expected better from you. The Egyptians are also My creatures, and My heart aches for their sufferings as much as for those of Israel." Jesus remembered the innocent Egyptian children killed on that night, as well as the children killed in Bethlehem at His birth. Innocent people have to die. He knew that He would be next.

He had already been betrayed by Judas. Judases are human characters encountered very frequently. After World War II, 100,000 Frenchmen were executed summarily, and another 100,000 after legal proceedings, for collaboration with the enemies. One tenth of the population was arrested under this accusation. The percentage was the same in Italy. In Holland it was even more. Four hundred thousand men were sentenced for treacherous acts. In Belgium 200,000 were sentenced. In the Korean War thirty percent of the



United States prisoners under the Communists joined the side of the enemy. We too betray our wives, our employers, our friendships. There is a Judas within every one of us.

Jesus was brought before the High Court. He was asked, "Are you the son of the living God?" His life or death depended upon the answer He gave. He said, "Yes, I am." So He was crucified and mocked by men. On the cross, He also endured the pain of knowing Himself forsaken by God. But whoever knows Himself to be forsaken is not forsaken. Those who are forsaken more often imagine themselves to be God's favourites.

And He died on the cross—one of the most beautiful moments of human history. It is the tragic which gives us most movingly the feeling of beauty: Rigoletto, Aida, Romeo and Juliet, and above all, Golgotha.

Something great had happened on Golgotha. Jesus, the Son of God, was made perfect by His Father through suffering. Golgotha was an inter-trinitarian event, a dealing between the Father and Son. The Son had loved a bride, as Radames had loved Aida. Radames betrayed his fatherland for her. This could not be said about Jesus. But He left His heavenly kingdom for the bride He loved. He had to suffer for this. He bought her with a price—His own blood. And ever since, He has passed through the permanent tragedy of having as a bride only souls whom He has bought, for whom He paid a price, which He has to cover again and again with gifts. His bride would not love Him without His gifts. This was foreshadowed when God said to the prophet Hosea, "Go... love... an adulteress... So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley." (Hosea 3: 1,2)

We can, however, outgrow this low type of relationship with Jesus and have what the New Testament calls *agape*—unmotivated love, love for love's sake.

Jesus died. This did not make the world better. It had

not been Jesus' intention to improve it. Rather, He came to save those who truly believe in Him. He warned that the chances of a man's salvation are slim. He said, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matthew 7:14) Jesus' death on the cross does not give us a smooth entrance into heaven. Even after putting your faith in it you are like a man who takes hold of a branch by his teeth while his body hangs suspended above a precipice. Don't ask a Christian many questions. He is in no position to reply, except as you take his holding the branch by the teeth as an answer. When the Christian has passed this stage and is safe in the arms of Jesus, he receives His ardent kiss. A mouth cannot speak when the lover's lips press it. So don't ask questions of real Christians; rather, imitate them.

The death of Jesus has an effect on all those who believe. We are by nature fallen creatures. Bohme writes, "In the essence of my soul and body, when I was not yet the I, but Adam's essence, I was indeed there. I have forfeited myself my felicity in Adam. This fallen nature has committed sins and crimes. But washed in Jesus' blood, the most heinous things become blessed mistakes, which brought me to the Saviour."

When Luther translated the Bible and worked at the Reformation, Satan appeared to him in a visible manner and mocked him: "You scum of the earth, who have committed the gravest sins, you translate the Bible?" Luther took a long sheet of paper and said to Satan, "Tell me my sins and I will write them down." Satan began to dictate until the sheet was filled. Then Luther wrote in red ink over the whole paper, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sins," and threw the inkwell at Satan's head.

This is what Jesus did for me, too. He freely forgave everything without asking anything in exchange. Grace

which is not gratuitous is not grace. The gate is narrow and faith is bound with many difficulties simply because we cannot accustom our minds to the idea of free grace. We are used to purchasing things.

Jesus puts Himself over our sinful lives and makes us appear righteous in the eyes of God. And when this happens we do not simply become righteous from the moment we believe: He makes us appear to have been righteous always.

At the marriage feast in Cana He changed water into good wine. Good wine is old wine. He did not change water into a liquid which should be wine henceforth. He made it to have been wine always. At creation, He made trees and the first animals and Adam. But the trees must have had rings indicating a certain age. How old was Adam when he was created, and did he have in his chromosomes genes containing hereditary information? If not, the procreation of his children would have been miraculous and not natural. Therefore, as creator He did not make a universe which should be henceforth, but one with a "past".

We meet Jesus today and become men who have always been righteous. And He also changes our character to fulfil henceforth their true role.

Plato said in *Timaeus*, "God placed the soul of the universe crosswise (as a *chiasma*) in the universe." Jesus is the soul of the universe revealed to us. His cross has been erected at the crossroads of life. And He makes us resemble the love which He revealed on the cross. From the species "man" we pass into the species "children of God."

And now we embrace with love everybody and everything. Two disciples on their way to Emmaus after the resurrection of Jesus told him about the things which had come to pass in those days in Jerusalem. He asked,

“What things?” He was interested in all things, in some new ball or doll which a child may have acquired, in the meal prepared with love by a lady, in the earnings of some carpenter, in the difficulties in some marriage, in the oppression of an innocent person, in the health of a Roman oppressor. All things belong to Him and belong now to you, too. He was interested in knowing what had happened to the corpses of the two thieves crucified with Him. He wondered why Joseph of Arimathea had not asked Pilate to give them, too, a decent burial. Had any one of His disciples thought to comfort their mothers? But they, poor creatures, when He asked “What things?” show that their minds were preoccupied, as they should not have been, with only one thing: the fate of Jesus.

This Jesus we love because He is lovable, not because He can answer our questions. It is His privilege to remain silent. I do not agree with those who have not yet clearly formulated questions when they proclaim, “Jesus is the answer.” He is not.

When Annas, the high priest, asked Him a very reasonable question, He, the One called in the Bible “Wonderful, Counsellor” (Isaiah 9:6), gave the reply, “Why askest thou Me?” This is also my reply to your many questions.

Stop a bit to analyze your motives for questioning me. Annas’ life was very bad, Jewish sources tell us. How is yours? Might it not be that you wish to stifle your conscience through discussions about other men and about doctrines, or through letters on such subjects? If such be the case, what answer of mine could help you? You have to help yourself.

Jesus said to Annas, “Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them.” (John 18:21) Tragically, His hearers had understood almost nothing; not even the disciples understood. And further-

more, just at that moment they were not available for answers. The mob was thus easily incited and quick to shout, "Crucify Him!" The disciples had fled. One denied him. The other had sold him.

Jesus does not give you the answer. Men, even Christians, do not have it. You have only one solution: stop asking questions, come to yourself, be born again, have Christ living in your own heart, and life will become luminous. The impulse to ask questions of other people and in your own mind will have disappeared.

When the disciples had drunk the wine of Cana they simply believed on Him. (John 2: 11) It is this wine which gives inner and outer quietness. We wish to drink of it.

There was an atheist meeting in Russia. Attendance was compulsory. The lecturer, who had before him a white vase full of water, told the people, "In times of old, people were ignorant and easily believed in miracles. But look here, I have some powder in my hand. I put it in the water. Do you see how it has become ruby—red like wine? This is what Jesus did. He must have had a powder like this hidden in His sleeve. I can do even better than He. Here is another powder. I pour it into the wine. It has become water again. And now a third powder. I have changed it again into wine. So this is the explanation of the miracle in Cana."

A Christian stood up. "Comrade lecturer, you have amazed us with your skill and almost convinced us. We ask of you just one more little thing: Please drink a glass of this water you have changed into wine."

"Unfortunately, that would be impossible" the lecturer responded. "The powder which I have used is poisonous."

"Well," said the Christian, "this is the whole difference between you and Jesus. He gave us a wine which gladdens us and brings us to full rest. Your wine troubles the mind and soul and makes millions weep."

The Greek New Testament uses in many places instead

of the personal name Jesus the generic name "the Jesus," showing that it speaks not only about a historical being, but also about a type of man. We have to be men of Jesus type, men who follow Him implicitly.

I did not wish to tell you too much about Jesus. My subconscious mind whispered in a dream its view:

Speak about nobody but Him,  
And caress Him day and night.  
May laughter and weeping be indifferent to you.  
Endeavour only not to lose Him.

I find this view attractive. Many contemplative souls whom I admire have gone this beautiful way. But my conscious mind tells me that Jesus is interested in all things happening in the universe. I should not speak only about Him. I should not be caressing only Him. Speaking about all things and caressing everyone I meet with at least a look, I may allow the light of Jesus to shine through my speech and behaviour, as He intends.

# VERBAL ANGELS AND URGENCY

## TENTH DREAM

*I saw Pope Paul VI very sick on a hospital bed in prison. They had just shaved him. I wished to gladden him by telling a joke. But then I observed that he was wearing an oxygen mask. These were his last moments. So instead I spoke to him about heaven, about Jesus and Mary. He told me that he believed.*

*A second afterward, he was on his feet. There was no more oxygen mask. Suddenly he was on the balcony of the Vatican from which he gave the blessing "Urbi et orbi" and he told me, "There are verbal angels. As often as you tell somebody a word which honours him, even if you call him only by an honourable title, like Sir or Pastor, you send him a verbal angel." I turned to my wife who was also there and said to her, "Communists fear nobody. They let the Pope die in prison."*

The last part of the dream is certainly true. In Romania, my homeland, almost all Catholic bishops died in prison. The Communists hastened their death through hunger and torture. This would be the Pope's fate, too, if Italy were taken over by the Reds.

But the words about "verbal angels" gave me much food for thought. Christ was "the Word." Could not "words" be angels? Of what are angles made? Do my words create angels or devils? Or are they just worthless chatter?

A sense of urgency as if I had very little time left often pervades my dreams.

## ELEVENTH DREAM

*I dreamed I was in a prison dining room. Judges sitting with me at a table told about a Nazi serving as waiter who overheard these words about himself: "He has committed a crime." He has*

shot someone. He'll get fifteen to twenty years of prison." I took his defense: "He is not the sort of man who shoots people." The Nazi was thankful that I defended him. He went with me toward the station. There I saw my wife, but I observed also that I had left my jacket and hat in the dining room. It was eight minutes past three. The schedule showed that the only train would leave at nine minutes past the hour. The Nazi ran to bring the things I forgot, but the dining room was far away. Fortunately for me, the train did not leave on time.

It is quite normal for me to take the defense of a Nazi. They don't represent any actual danger any more. To punish them today is only retaliation. I would not have taken the defense of a Communist who was in power.

One of the characteristics of the Gospel according to St. Mark is the frequency with which he uses the Greek word *euthus*, which means straightway.

The supposition is that he had been the rich young ruler who asked Jesus what he should do in order to inherit eternal life and went away sadly when required to impart everything to the poor. Later in his life he regretted not having obeyed. Many years had been lost. The regret for this made him constantly repeat the word *euthus*, straightway.

Every moment of hesitation in fulfilling your duty is sin. When Jesus called some fishermen to become apostles, they were so concerned about the fate of their fellowmen that they immediately left their occupation. They had no promise of financial support.

Work with a spirit of urgency. Death comes all too soon.

The Communists have been able to jail and kill many preachers. But nobody can forbid the greatest preacher to deliver his message, the message of death. What first brought me to think about things eternal was lonely walks through cemeteries. I said to myself, "Some day you will lie in a grave. Snow will fall over it. People will pass near your grave site most of them not casting even a glance to



decipher the name on the stone. What will all the affairs of the world mean to you then?"

A nurse was arrested in the Soviet Union. The interrogator reproached her; "You propagatate these old ideas about God and eternal life at a time when we fly to the moon and build socialism."

The nurse replied, "I serve in a ward where people die of cancer. Around their deathbeds are their beloved ones. How should I comfort them? Should I say to them, don't let it bother you that your son or husband is dying, because man has walked on the moon and Socialism will reign after a couple of generations? Don't you see that you have no word of comfort? I have. I can speak to the mourning about a living God and a resurrection from the dead."

Use your seconds well. You will be responsible for every one of them.

Once while riding on a train in Romania, I found myself thinking about the shortness of life. Intrigued, I took out a notebook and pencil to calculate how many seconds I had lived and would have to account for before God. There were some sixty million. A poor peasant seated near me was wide-eyed. Finally he asked me, "What is your business that you have to make your accounts with so many figures? As for us, everything has been taken away. We work for a small salary. Do millions pass through your hands?" I explained to him my accounts. He begged me, "Please write down everything you told me. I wish to show your accounts to our pastor so that he might warn everybody to guard his time. You are the first man to speak to me about this."

We are all mortal, but after the age of fifty men become consciously mortal. The older they get, the more they realize the value of seconds.

One evening a man was walking along a river. It was dark. He hit his foot against a bag filled with stones. He picked it up and amused himself from time to time by throwing

a stone into the water. When he arrived home, he had only two stones left. Then he saw that they had been precious stones. In similar fashion we all carelessly throw away the pearls called "seconds." Some realize only on their deathbeds how much they have lost.

I thought about this when I received a letter from a member of the Salvation Army: "I am after a sleepless night searching the Scriptures to find out if the devil is omnipresent like God. If he were so, there would be no need of demons. What do you think about Job 1:7 where it is said that Satan goes to and fro in the earth? Does this not mean that there are places and instances when you don't have to worry because the devil is in some other place?"

I answered, "while you pondered about these things and sent me the letter, other Salvationists went around in pubs saving the lost. Your brethren made words 'verbal angels.' You make annoying speculations of your words. You could have spent your time better."

Christianity is not a business of knowing all the answers but of spreading the light we have. Could you not have used your time better than to ask me many questions in letters?

Strangely, three days after my dream about the Pope with the oxygen mask on his face, I had a heart attack. An ambulance drove me to a hospital, and the first thing they gave me was oxygen. I put to myself the questions which I had asked of the Pope: whether I believed in God, in Jesus, and in the Virgin Mary. Like the Pope, I answered affirmatively. Then I waited for death. I was very calm.

Later a relative asked me how I could have been so calm. "Did you not realize the danger you were in?" I answered, "I was in no special danger. If God wishes to take me away he needs no heart attack for it. Every second is potentially the second of death. Let us therefore try to make our words 'verbal angels'."

## MORAL PROBLEMS

### TWELFTH DREAM

*In front of the Lutheran Church of Bucharest was a table with books for sale. Someone expressed a doubt if my son Mihai's book should be sold because it spoke about goodness. This man was of the opinion that the wicked must be destroyed. I sat down with him, desiring to tell him examples of goodness which I had encountered, but I could not remember them. I intended to tell him that if the wicked were destroyed, I would be among them. Mihai said to me, "He has doubts. If you present arguments for goodness, they will have the counter-effect of strengthening him in his convictions."*

*We entered into the church. The pastor, with a bottle in his hand, recited a parody in a Saxon dialect I did not understand. I stood up and asked him to speak plain German. "How will I be saved if I don't understand?" He tried to question me. I insisted, "Tell me in German how to be saved." A multitude of women whom I met in the yard told me that they would never come to this church again. Mihai was in the courtyard, indifferent to what had happened.*

### THIRTEENTH DREAM

*I dreamt that I was in Solomon's town, which means in Hebrew the town of peace—my ideal world—but I found no way to reach Jerusalem (the realization of the ideal). I did not even think to ask somebody in the hotel, which I guess symbolized the church, because they would not know. But I wished to reach my brothers who live in Israel. I met S., a deacon of the Orthodox church, with whom I had been in prison. He told me about his fight for the rights of former prisoners. But I discovered that his fight was a farce. His real aim was selfish, to get a job with a higher salary. He*

wished to be employed as a librarian, though he failed to attain his desire. I realized that he did not serve either his own true interest or that of others. As I wandered around, a beggar stopped me. I gave him nothing (which was wrong). I awoke with the clear conviction that to give to those who ask would have been a means of going from the ideal to its realization.

I was in a prison cell with an ugly woman. I had the desire to possess her. I justified myself by saying that this was a subconscious drive and the subconscious is not moral. At once my wife Sabina was also there. She gave me a sad kiss. Wardens called her out of the cell, as if for an interrogation. I told her, "You'll return." She answered, "You know how it is here. It is questionable if I will return." I asked myself, "Is it like this that we are taken to the eternal prison?"

I have received tens of thousands of letters regarding moral questions. I wonder why they are asked of me. I don't feel prepared to give the right answer. It is a fallacy to believe that you are qualified to answer all questions because people ask you so many. Should not anyone who inquires about morality first find out how moral is the man from whom he asks advice? Are you sure that the one whom you ask has no running abscess? Is he fit to perform a surgical operation? His words might cut deep into your heart. Is he the right man for this?

Because I do not consider myself either an example or an authority in matters of morals, I will make just a few remarks on this subject.

I have addressed this book to your conscious mind. The subconscious is not moral. And my conscious level approves of its not being moral.

The endeavour to be moral springs from the idea that we have gone astray and that there exist rules of conduct for returning. We compare ourselves with the prodigal son of the parable, who took his journey to a country far from where

his father lived. This can happen in our relationship with an earthly father. But what country is far from our heavenly Father, who is omnipresent? Christians are the light of the world, and not only when they are on the mountain peaks, but also when they pass through very deep valleys. They are in the paradoxical situation of being called to enter a place which they have never left.

Christians do not have to work at being moral, saintly, Christlike. Whoever tries to become Christlike has a great chance of becoming Devil-like. Christians are men who have denied their "I", who have no "I" to become good or holy. The moral problems do not exist for them. They are Christlike by believing in Christ.

The eighth century Zen-master Huai Jang ground bricks in the yard of a monastery. When asked what he was doing, he replied, "I make mirrors." The monks mocked him, "How can you make mirrors by grinding bricks?" To this he retorted, "How can one become a Buddha by practicing meditation? Whoever is not a Buddha will never become one." It is as vain to become a Christlike being through striving, as to strive to become an elephant. Goethe once said, "You are already everything you become."

The first *koan* (riddle) which is usually given to the Zen disciple to solve is, "Show me the face you had before your parents were born." Some disciples spend years in meditation seeking the right answer. During this period they are allowed to sleep only four hours a day. Then the moment of illumination comes: "There is no before and after for the enlightened. There exists no other man to whom I can show something and me the one who shows. Our worst enemy is the intellect which discriminates subject from object, aims from being. There is no being who can resolve to show something to the master. You simply are what you are and don't have to worry about the absurd demands of the Zen-master."

Christians are moral through simply believing. St. Paul advises a group of men who came from the degraded heathen world, "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin." (Romans 6:11) Once you reckon this to be an accomplished fact—and only in this case—you will be able to oppose sin and to fulfil the commandment, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." (v.12) So you will be "made free from sin." (v. 22)

But in order to be dead unto sin, free from it, must I not have a fixed, absolute, detailed, generally accepted code of things which belong unto righteousness and of things which are opposed to it? Such a code does not exist.

The Bible tells us about a general by the name of Sisera who had fought against the people of God. He was defeated and fled. A woman by the name of Jael went out to meet him and said to him, "Turn in, my Lord, turn in to me; fear not." She gave him milk to drink, covered him, and he fell asleep. Then Jael "took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples... So he died." (Judges 4:18-21)

Now Jael acted exactly like Lady Macbeth, yet the Bible says, "Blessed above women shall Jael be." (Judges 5:24) The motives were the same. Her act was in accord with the will of God. The prophetess Deborah in blessing Jael knew what is more, than the interest of God's chosen nation. Because this was what Jael had in mind, a stratagem and a murder in cold blood were approved. Jael had represented the cause of God.

It is not true that meekness is always good and violence always condemned. A prophet told Jehu, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel. And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master." (II Kings 9: 6-7) Jehu was very thorough in uprooting this wicked dynasty. "And the Lord said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in

executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." (II Kings 10: 30)

God is above all things. He is not tied to any moral rules. He has placed in us the subconscious which also is not moral.

To kill your son can be right if God commands it. God said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, ... and offer him there for a burnt offering." God orders men to go to battle, he orders them to kill those who entice men to serve other gods. (Deuteronomy 13: 6-9)

Christianity as a whole has accepted with enthusiasm a book by Brother Andrew called *God's Smuggler*. There exist God's smugglers who smuggle Bibles into Communist countries. There exist God's spies, like those whom Moses sent to find out the secrets of Canaan, or the Soviet Colonel Penkovsky who gave his life to avert a nuclear war at the time of the Cuban crisis. There exist the devil's spies who try to subvert the free world. There exist white lies, which I have spoken about already. There exist red lies.

The Bible makes a distinction between sins of different colours, which seems to our conscious minds as senseless as fruits of different melody. But sins have a colour. We read in Isaiah 1: 18, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they (the sins, not the sinner) shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Christianity has no fixed rules of conduct. Christians live in communion with God, who tells them what to do, sometimes things which a moral man would normally do, sometimes things contrary to the general opinion even of good men.

It is not a matter of indifference how a man lives. Solomon concluded that everything which happens under the sun is vanity, including good or bad conduct. He was not

a skeptic, a nihilist. He wished to destroy the false world that is under the sun, in which not even the sun is included, in order to prepare us for a new world. In this world, the decisions I make are of the utmost importance, because I am all-important.

Morals are a poor thing. They tell a man what he should do. His actions should correspond to an inner necessity. But they do not. Jesus does better than moralize. He gives a man a sense of value. The consciousness of his worth makes him grand in his attitudes without waiting for shoulds and musts.

A prostitute told a pastor who preached a sermon on morality, "Your rope is not long enough to save me." Christ tells the prostitute drowning in sin, "You are a purchased being, beloved by God just as you are, intended to sit some day with God on his throne, ruling the universes." As a result she refuses ropes which will take her to the shore of a morality as repugnant to one who realizes his eternity as the raging sea of immorality. She simply is safe. She has always been safe. She will ever be so. The awareness of what she really is will change her life.

Once I realize who I am, I no longer judge myself harshly. I belong to eternity. Fifty or seventy years of sin have been less than one second of going astray in my eternal existence. During this eternal existence, I have come to stay for much less than a second in a life in which men have no choice other than between grosser or subtler sins, between the sins of an adulterer or those of a religious man. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." (Isaiah 64: 6) I have sinned much. Thanks be to God that it was not worse. I was born in sin, and nothing better could have been expected of me.

The sexual drive is almost irresistible. If we apply Jesus' standard that "whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5: 28), nobody is chaste, except perhaps cloistered



monks and nuns. But it seem that even they have sinful fantasies.

All marriages would break down if each partner could read all the thoughts of the other.

Truthfulness should be one of the foremost of moral duties. The journalist Brooks said in 1910 ("Corruption in American Politics and Life"): "If anyone of us would have the inspiration to write the truth, he would be unemployed the next day." This also applies to pastors. If we were to fulfil the duty of truthfulness and not hide our insufficiencies, who could keep his position? I personally have had to hide continually from my co-workers my insufficiency for the task of general director of the mission to the Communist world.

Accept the fact of your sinfulness. External and internal circumstances deprive you of the choice of being other than a sinner in this world.

The Bible contains rules. It also tells us their purpose, "that we may live by them," not in order that our whole life might become a burden. Let life live. Don't try to control everything.

A Russian farmer who had spent five years in prison for his faith once prayed after his release, "God, help me fulfil your one request, 'Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.'" He heard an inner voice asking him, "Are you ready to go back to prison for Me?" The Christian shrank back, "Lord, ask of me anything but this. I could not bear it again. The chains, beatings, hunger . . . not to be able to see my family . . . the endless years . . . Lord, ask of me anything but this." The voice replied, "Give up the hope of becoming perfect. Spiritual perfection consists of unconditional surrender to My will." A fight started in the heart of this man. After a few days, he yielded: "Lord, Thy will be done. Send me wherever You like, only make me perfect."

Soon after this, he was imprisoned the second time for having taught children about Christ.

While detained in solitary confinement, he corresponded with his fellow inmates by tapping in Morse code on the walls. One day, a new prisoner told him that his name was Grigoriev, which was his own name.

“Your baptismal name?”

“Alexander”.

It was his oldest son who, encouraged by the heroic example of his father, followed in his footsteps, worked in the Underground church, and also came to be a prisoner of the Communists.

Later, when the father was in a common cell, he succeeded in smuggling out a letter in which he told how happy he was that his son was a confessor of Christ.

Morality cannot be an achievement in this life: it can only be a tendency. We work at our own characters, saying “no” to Satan’s “All things are permitted.” We oppose this pernicious doctrine with God’s “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not.”

But we don’t set our aims too high. The Bible says, “Be men.” Not every biped is a man. Many men are more like animals than men. Kant wrote, “I wished to teach what you should do to be a man.”

But does not the Bible also demand, “Be ye perfect”? Well, it does, but those who have this calling don’t seek advice from me. Mozart was asked by a musician, “Teach me how to write a symphony.”

“If you don’t know,” came the rejoinder, “why don’t you try to compose just a simple song?”

“Should I be satisfied with a song? You compose symphonies.”

“Yes,” replied Mozart, “but I ask nobody.”

The present book is written only for those who ask

questions. For them it is enough to strive for the time being to be men.

At a given point in time, a man can do only the things for which his character has been prepared. Do therefore the little moral duties which you can fulfil, instead of asking advice about great achievements which are beyond your capacity.

Work with the moral material you have. If you wish to learn how to advance, learn from thieves. I have been with them in prison for many years. I learned from them some simple lessons which have helped me considerably.

Thieves do much of their work during the night. Jesus used His nights for prayer. He instituted holy communion late at night. It is still called the Last Supper—not the last breakfast. Gamblers play more during the night. Drunkards stay awake till late at night. Use your quiet nights for good reading, meditation, self-analysis the sort of thinking which will produce in you some little improvements.

If a thief does not succeed in making his break-in one night, he will try again some other time. Never be discouraged. Be persistent. Be like the thief whose failure impels him to try again.

Thieves unite in a gang to get what they want. Gather with like-minded people, men who desire to become more loving and truthful, who have the same problems you have. In unity there is strength.

Thieves risk their lives to gain a few thousand dollars. Gamblers put at stake even the bread of their children. Decide what you wish to achieve. But don't set your goals too high. Calculate how much you are willing to risk to attain your goals. Then invest straightway the capital of energy, money, time, or renunciation which you feel is needed.

Curiously, even Jesus compared Himself to a thief: "Lo, I come as a thief in the night." There is something to be

admired in thieves too. In a Romanian prison, a thief was brought back from interrogation. He had been badly beaten. As soon as the guard had locked the door, he said to me, "It is in vain that they beat me. I love stealing. I will never give it up." It was a lesson for me.

Just as we should be straightforward in doing what is right, so we should be hesitant in doing what is wrong. When you don't know what to do, do nothing. When you are not sure, delay. Herod hesitated to accept the preaching of John the Baptist. But later, he showed no such procrastination. When Herodias counselled her daughter to ask for John the Baptist's head, she wanted it to be brought immediately. And Herod yielded immediately. He did something wrong which he might not have done if he had thought things over. Bergson is correct when he says, "Think like a man of action; act like a man of thought".

Sometimes it is easier for us to do His will, sometimes more difficult. We are not sheltered from the moral climate which surrounds us. It is surely harder to heat a house in winter. But we are called to do His will. We are not wolves and do not have to howl with them.

He may call us to a normal, moral life. This is what He usually does. We then perform moral actions, not because they are moral but because they are His will. He may call us, in exceptional circumstances, to acts considered immoral. In both cases difficulties will attend us. We know that there is a hardship in doing His will, because though ideas influence conduct, it takes much time and repetition for them to do so. A person is not apt to give up something wrong all of a sudden just because he discovers it is unreasonable or unbiblical. And criticism rarely helps.

So it is that much more can be obtained through prayer than through human effort. God's children can get much from Him. St. Augustine used to pray, "God, give what Thou commandest and command what Thou wilt." He also

taught: "God does not ask the impossible. Do what you can and pray what you cannot do."

Bring your impulses consciously to the bar of reason. Think for a long time before doing. We often desire things inordinately when we haven't thought through the outcome or alternatives.

We all know the myth of Prometheus, the god who stole fire from heaven and gave it to men. *Pro-methee* means in Greek the one who thinks before. Most of us are *Epi-methees*, men who think after we have acted. Then we realize that we have acted badly, and our minds, which should serve as a light to illuminate our paths, are instead like a stepmother nagging us about things which can no longer be changed.

Sit down and think before you act. Consider a range of choices. Don't be the captive of a single point of view or assume that spontaneous reactions are the right ones. Consider that security may be your greatest enemy. A Biblical personality, Sisera, felt secure in the bed of a woman named Jael. She graciously offered him milk to drink. When he had fallen sound asleep, she cut off his head. I believe there is validity to the expression "you lose your head" when you give free rein to your emotions. Your head is too precious to lose.

Enrich your knowledge; learn to apply with precision the rules of logical and dialectic thinking. Passions can distort the workings of the mind. Therefore work at your character. Whoever wishes to have a bed of lilies must do a lot of spadework. Take into consideration the possible consequences of your actions. Remember that you will be judged by your own conscience, by your fellowmen, and eventually by God according to your deeds.

Religiosity will not help you then, any more than a faith which did not prove its genuineness by deeds.

When Jerusalem was besieged by the Roman hosts in

71 A. D. and starvation had driven despairing people to acts of cannibalism, Rabbi Jokhananben Zakkai succeeded in sneaking out of the city and reaching the tent of the Roman General Titus. He begged him,

“Master, have pity upon the city, inhabited by so many innocent women and children.”

Titus replied, “You lie, rabbi; your first word was a lie. You called me master. If I am the master, why don’t you open the gates of the city for me? Why have you not prepared an arch of triumph for me? If I am the master, where is your obedience?”

When we call Jesus “Lord, Lord,” might we not receive the same rebuke?

In order to think rightly, put some distance between you and your thinking. Think about yourself as about a third person.

St. Paul asks, “Who is Paul?” not “Who am I?” By phrasing the question this way he had a better chance of getting the right answer. Jesus very often speaks about Himself as about a third person, as little children speak. He says, “The Son of man” instead of “I.” If I think about what a certain Wurmbrand has done or has to do, I come to an entirely different conclusion than when I think about *my* achievements, mistakes, or duties.

In this short span of life you have far to go. Watch and be careful.

You would not think of giving your body to just anyone to be handled at will. Why then do you allow other men to manipulate your mind and injure your soul? Choose carefully the people with whom you are disposed to speak or correspond. Select with care your topics of discussion and the movies and TV programmes you watch. Read only newspaper articles and books which will enable you to pass your “final exam.” A student does not waste his time on cheap novels before his finals. What you read and hear

should be to your soul what the exquisite perfumes and spices were to Esther, who thus prepared herself for a whole year to win the love of King Ahasuerus.

Doing good is not the first step in achieving morality. This is difficult. Start with avoiding what is obviously evil, remembering that you strike God as often as you hit a fellow man. The fact that the fellow man is bad is no excuse. In Dostoevskii's *Crime and Punishment* Raskolnikoff wished to kill only a parasite, a usurer. But circumstances obliged him to kill her lovely sister also, because she happened to enter the room at the wrong time and could have been a witness against him. Can you kill a guilty man without making an innocent mother weep and wronging his children?

How would you feel if the evil you do to others were done to you?

Beware of doing evil, and always remember, "In the beginning was the word." Judas said a word of denunciation. This was all there was at the beginning; a word. An arrest and murder resulted, and Judas himself committed suicide.

For every word written in Hitler's *Mein kampf* 125 men were killed; 4700 for every page; 2,200,000 for every chapter.

Jesus was tempted in all things like us. But He mastered His passions. So can you if you follow in His footsteps.

I don't see how a human being can live without doing some evil, but he must never seek to justify it. The man who does indecent things is not necessarily indecent, but the man who enjoys doing them is.

From fighting evil within, you will progress toward the good which is love. Heaven and earth endure only because they don't exist for themselves. The excellency of water is that it benefits all men and seeks the lowest places. There is a great need for unselfish love. I have known children who

have never been kissed. Be a lover. Be among those ready to die for the beloved.

Tolstoy once told a little story. In a time of drought a child went to bring a jug of water to her mother. But she could not find any water and fell asleep in the field. When she awoke, the jug was full of water. The girl was tempted to taste it, but she remembered her mother and decided not to. Running with the jar toward home, she fell over a little dog and overturned the jug, but the water did not spill. Then she gave some to the dog, but the jar remained full—except that the vessel was no longer earthen, but silver.

When she brought the water home to her mother, the mother said. "I die anyway; you drink it." At once the jar turned to gold. The girl was just about to drink when a thirsty traveler entered and like a king demanded the water. The girl gave it. Then seven diamonds came out of the vessel and brooks issued from every one of them. The diamonds ascended higher and higher and became the seven stars—the great bear.

Love does not seek to prefer one above another. A Jewish merchant once supported a rabbi, and the more he gave to the rabbi, the more he earned. One day when he came to bring his gift, he was told that the teacher was not at home.

"Where is he?"

"He has gone to the Rabbi of Meseritch, who is the one from whom he learned the law."

The merchant then said to himself, "If by helping a little rabbi I was enriched, how much more will God bless me if I support the great Rabbi of Meseritch." So henceforth he brought his tithe to the latter. But the more he gave, the less he gained, until he was on the threshold of bankruptcy. He went back to his rabbi and asked him how this happened. The rabbi answered, "As long as you did not choose, but gave to your first teacher of religion, God did not choose either.



But when you began to make distinctions, God began to make them too. Why should He give good profits to you? Cannot He find somebody worthier than you to whom to impart His favours?"

Christians should love everybody without making distinctions.

As for Jesus, they reserve the best for Him.

The emperor of Japan, upon hearing that one of his samurai bred splendid orchids in his garden, told him that he wished to see them.

On the appointed day, the emperor arrived. The samurai took him directly to the garden. The earth was plowed. Not one flower was left. The emperor said nothing. The samurai invited him into the tea room. Here in a vase on the table was one orchid of indescribable splendour. The samurai said, "I have kept the most beautiful flower for the worthiest of emperors. The other flowers had no right to live."

Bring to Jesus the most beautiful flower.

This most beautiful flower need not be some great deed. We can love men in an exquisite manner in small deeds.

In Burma men made a shrine to an American lady who taught old people to put a handle on their brooms. Until then they had swept with bent backs, which ached as a result. Do some small thing profitable to men. For example, instead of pointing an accusing finger, cover somebody's sin. The *Pateric* has a story.

Father Amnon was told that a monk was hiding a woman in his cell. When the guilty monk saw the brethren coming to search his cell, he hid the woman under an overturned tub. Upon entering, Father Amnon observed some movements under it. He sat on the tub and ordered the brethren to seek. They found nothing. He told them, "May God forgive you your suspicions." They left. When the two were alone, he told the sinner, "Beware, and sin no more.

Now send the woman away.”

Show yourself meek even toward a murderer, remembering that you are worse than he. You are guilty of the blood of the Saviour. St. Paul, referring to holy communion, writes, “Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” (I Corinthians 11:27) Did you ever take communion unworthily? If so, how can you look down on a man guilty of shedding the blood of mere man?

Jesus taught, “Love your neighbour,” not only those far away. We praise missionaries who go to distant lands. We praise those who show an unusual love for their enemies. Start with loving your fatherland. Patriotism is a high Christian virtue.

A nation is not simply a historico-geographical entity. It exists by the will of God and will exist in eternity. In the heavenly Jerusalem there is provision for “the healing of the nations.” (Revelation 22:2) But be thoughtful about your patriotism, which is a virtue that has often been misused. Caiaphas said, “It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people.” (John 11:50) Since that time, other rulers have concluded that it is expedient for them that tens of millions should die for the people. The nations have not profited thereby.

Your moral life will have the privilege of sowing seed. The life of others around you will thus be improved.

It is only the saint who is moral in the absolute sense of the word. The saint denies self, knowing the simple truth that it is only the empty part of a vessel or room which can be used. Therefore he divests himself of his “I” and entrusts to God his naked soul. He serves God as if he were His only servant.

He does not despair about the weakness of the flesh. It will be saved too. “If flesh were not in a position to be saved, the Word of God would not have become flesh,” says

St. Irenaeus.

Bear with your weakness. Keep it to yourself, remembering that by confessing your sins to others you might destroy confidence in men.

In the last part of the dream in which I saw my wife departing, I asked myself, "Is it like this that we are taken to eternal prison?" Great thinkers of the church, Origen, Maxim the martyr, St. Ambrose of Mediolan, St. Gregory of Nyssa, believed that eventually all reasonable beings will be saved. This teaching shows their loving heart but proves nothing.

The doctrine of hell as taught by the church is not only Biblical, but also of great practical value. Only men who believe that a sinner will go to everlasting destruction feels real pity for him. In *The Brothers Karamazov* the abbot Zosima bowed before Smerdiakov the parricide, explaining that he bowed before the endless sufferings which awaited him.

I read recently a highly interesting study about the subliminal method used in American advertising. It is a form of advertising which does not appeal to the conscious part of the mind.

A film projector with a high-speed shutter flashes messages every five seconds at 1/3000th of a second. These flash messages are super-imposed over motion pictures in theaters and on television. The high-speed messages are invisible to the conscious mind, but plant an order such as "Eat popcorn" in the viewer's subconscious mind. As a result, the sale of popcorn in the foyer of the respective theaters increased in six weeks by fifty-seven percent.

#### FOURTEENTH DREAM

*During the night I dreamt that I was reading the foregoing study and asking myself if this subliminal method could*

be used for preaching the Gospel. The Bible opened to Matthew 1. I said to myself, "How unappealing to the mind the beginning of the New Testament is. No writer would have started a book like this, with a dull genealogy." A thought flashed through my mind: But does it not appeal to the subliminal?

*I think about it in my dream. A casual reader would just pass over the genealogy with a glance. It is meant not to be studied but just to be looked at superficially.*

The glance is enough to entice the subconscious mind of an unbeliever: "son of Abraham, a polygamist; son of David, a known adulterer and murderer; son of Solomon, the husband of one thousand wives." There will be plenty of sex and crime in this book. It is worth reading.

I never doubt the authenticity of the Bible. If it had been a late invention, why should the readers be taught to greet each other in the Aramaean language with "*Maranatha*" the Lord comes? None of them knew this extinct language. The Bible does not consciously set out to prove its authenticity. Two or three Aramaic words in the text are sufficient to assure the subliminal that it is on firm historic ground.

The Bible is open to misuse. The Gospels, for instance, were not intended to be the biography of Jesus. His features are never described. Thirty years of his life are passed over in silence. The Evangelists say themselves (Luke 18:34) that they spoke about a subject they did not comprehend. They certainly failed to understand the necessity of the cross of Jesus. What appeals to people, therefore, is not always "the merchandise" in the Bible, but rather its "advertising" that stimulates the appetite to want the "merchandise."

The Bible makes a perfect appeal to the subliminal by arousing its curiosity. Why should the accepted manuscripts contain so many orthographic mistakes, and why have these been perpetuated for hundreds of years? Why have they never been corrected? Day after day even now, Jewish writers of

the Law copy with fidelity these obvious mistakes. Why?

And why should the Bible have a text with such a confused meaning? Its great assertion, the creed of the Jewish faith, *Shema Israel, Jehovah Eloheinu, Jehovah echad* ("Listen, Israel, Jehovah our God is one single God") can be translated correctly in at least three ways. And which, precisely, is the "Lord's Prayer"? The texts in the Gospels which mention it are not identical. God choose for His first revelation the Hebrew language, in which the verbs "to be" and "to have" are not used, in which there exist no clear past, present, and future tenses. Much, therefore, remains open to the imagination of the reader.

It is said twice in II Chronicles 21 that King Jehoram died at the age of forty. Then how could his son Ahaziah have been forty-two when he succeeded him to the throne? (II Chronicles 22:2) In II Kings 8:26 this same story is told again. But according to this author King Ahaziah was twenty-two years of age when he began to reign. Which is true?

In this case, there is a good explanation for the apparent contradiction. In the Hebrew Bible the literal translation of II Chronicles 22:2 reads, "Forty-two years of old Ahaziah in the kingdom." Many commentators feel that the forty-two refers to the age of the godless reign of the house of Omri in Israel. Ahaziah's father was Jehoram, who had taken to wife the daughter of King Ahab in Israel and therefore introduced the godless idolatry of Ahab to Judah. The short reign of the house of Omri was forty-two years: Omri six, Ahab twenty-two, Ahaziah two, and Joram, the last one, twelve years. This totals forty-two years. Ahaziah was really twenty-two years old but became king in the forty-second year of the house of Omri.

There probably exists a satisfactory explanation for every puzzle of the Bible. But in order to find it, one must be a

scholar and must know the Hebrew language and ancient history.

The above-average reader who compares one passage with the other but is not thus equipped finds himself in a state of confusion. His conscious mind is paralyzed. Then the subconscious enters into its work. This is just what is intended. The Bible appeals to the subliminal, through which much more can be achieved.

The Hebrew in which God gave His first revelation was a very poor language. One and the same word often had the most diverse meanings. It was a tool which made precise thinking impossible. God wished the subconscious to be powerfully at work. If someone were to tell his fellowmen that Jesus was born in a stable, he had to use for stable the word *naveh*. His listener could understand it in two ways: either that Jesus has been born in despicable surroundings among animals, or that He had been born in pleasant circumstances, because *naveh* means also what is pleasant. The aim was to leave the listener's conscious mind perplexed. The Almighty, the One who could provide for His son better than we earthly parents can, prepared for Him a pleasant place of birth—a stable.

The Bible through its very language gives wide scope to the natural tendency of the human mind to create myths and legends, which are useful to express veneration for a founder of religion. Religion is a subject which lends itself readily to the use of metaphor.

The Bible begins in Hebrew. From time to time it reverts to Chaldean, then returns to Hebrew. In the thick book of Jeremiah, all in Hebrew, just one verse, 10:11, is in Aramaean, and for good reason. Even in this verse the last word is in Hebrew again. Then in the New Testament the Bible passes to Greek, but the Lord spoke Aramaean. From the beginning we have His words in a Greek translation, with great variations among the Evangelists and variations of texts

in the manuscripts.

The change of language is intelligible. Rainer Maria Rilke composed his poems in German. Toward the end of his life he felt that he had exhausted the possibilities of the German language to carry his feelings, and he changed to French. Thus one can also explain the changes in the Bible. But do not expect scientific accuracy in these circumstances. There is none. The name of the king in Judah is spelled in four different ways: Hezekiah, Hizkiah, Hizkijah, and Ezekias.

The contents of the Bible are often puzzling. Reason is sometimes shocked.

The Lord states that the very hairs of our head are all numbered. (Matthew 10:30) But in Communist and Nazi and Moslem prisons unnumbered Christians have had their hair pulled out. The Bible tells us to honour father and mother. The Bible also tells us to hate them for Christ's sake. Would you like to know something about the prophet Hosea? He prophesied for forty years. Were his prophesies valuable? How is it then that only a few pages of them were preserved? And why did God command him to take to wife an adulteress, thus diminishing his influence? Why should God put His prophet in such a difficult position?

Why could God not bear to see Abraham offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice, and yet was pleased to see the crucifixion of His own Son? It is written in Isaiah 53, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him." What kind of God is this? The conscious mind is bankrupt before such thoughts. One cannot form any image of this God. And that was the purpose of the authors of the Bible.

Sir James Jeans contests our right to expect that the real universe be picturable. If we compose mental pictures to illustrate quantum physics, we are moving further away from reality, not closer to it. By the same token, neither are spiritual realities picturable, or even explicable. Sinclair Lewis

points out rightly that Biblical expressions such as "we died in Adam," "we live in Christ" imply that man as he really is differs a good deal from man as our categories of thought and our three-dimensional imaginations represent him. The separateness which we discern between individuals is balanced in reality by some "interanimation" of which we have no conception.

Every Bible verse understood is a Bible verse misunderstood, because only to a small extent does it appeal to the understanding. And even this is conveyed not simply by reading the Bible, but by the teaching ministry instituted by God.

Reduced to essentials, the Bible has one aim: to drive you to Jesus, who will not give you the answer, but who is the answer, because when you have met Him, you cease to ask questions. Why should you care about them when you gaze in adoration at Beauty incarnate, when you are taken into His embrace and receive His holy kiss?

For our reason, it is enough to know that He loves us, as we read in Revelation 1:5. This word was spoken to unloved slaves. He loves us to the depths of our soul. Religious life is a marriage night between bride and bridegroom. Reason has to remain outside. She is not received into this intimacy.

If reason is sanctified, she knows that she has another role. Exodus 19:1 in the original sounds, "In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, *on this day* came they into the wilderness of Sinai." In Deuteronomy 26:16 it is written, "*This day* the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments." The Bible says "in this day," not "on that day." Reason must not think about Biblical events as pertaining to history. They have to become actuality in the conscious life.

For this purpose, the English Bible has seven monosyllables in one sentence (Leviticus 18:3), "You shall not do as



they do," and again in Matthew 6:8 an even shorter sequence of monosyllables, "Do not be like them."

In the practical side of life, by warning against heathen practices and directing one to follow the statutes of God, reason fulfils its role in religion. All the rest is for the subconscious, sometimes called in the Bible the heart. It pleases the Lord to sit in thick darkness.

The Bride of Christ meditates, not so much about the text of the Bible as about what is missing from it. She ponders the words of Jesus, "I have yet many things so say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." She wishes to strengthen herself to be able to carry heavy burdens and to hear the words which Jesus could not tell the apostles on that last evening. She wonders what St. Paul had in mind when he wrote, "The time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets." (Hebrews 11:32) She wishes to learn from Paul what he would have taught if time had not failed him. Jude (v.3) tells of his intention to write about the subject of common salvation, but there is no record of his having done so. These are the things we wish to know.

We get to know them through personal communication with Jesus, who impresses them on our heart, or as we would say today, on our subliminal mind.

He impresses us through His words. He also impresses us by showing us the uselessness of words.

The two Bible verses that I find most beautiful are verses whose beauty consists in their absence from the Bible.

The first verse: Never did Jesus ask anybody what sins he had committed, how many, of what gravity, under what circumstances. Rather, He said again and again, "Be of good cheer, son or daughter. Your sins are forgiven." I appreciate the fact that there exists no such questioning in the Bible.

The second verse: Never during His earthly life did anybody say to Jesus, "Please forgive me. I am sorry. I apologize." When disciples met the risen Lord after having deserted and denied Him in His crucial hour, none of them as far as we know ever apologized. It was not necessary. Whoever looked upon Him could see on His face so much goodness and love that His forgiveness was self-evident.

Learn from Bible verses. But learn too from the beautiful absence of certain verses.

# DREAMS ABOUT PRISON AND PRISONERS

## FIFTEENTH DREAM

*I have just come back from prison. I meet Pastor Solheim, with whom I had worked in times past in the Norwegian Mission to Israel in Bucharest, and also my fellow prisoner Pastor Milan Haimovici. I tell them that I need a salary. They tell me, "Voluntary workers are much more effective." I answer, "Pastors with a salary are always eager to have voluntary workers and voluntary workers eager to get a salary."*

*I see myself with Marcel Pauker (an important Romanian Communist leader shot by Stalin) and his wife Anna (Romanian foreign minister, later dismissed in a Party purge and arrested). They ask me to act as a translator at an upcoming large congress of salesmen. I am still very young. I tell Marcel Pauker,*

*"I fear that there exists a social heredity just as there exists a biological heredity. The Socialist society is born of the Capitalist. Will it not inherit its injustices? Even when the state disappears, someone will always have to lead the textile or the metallurgical industries. Will he not misuse his position? Kamenev was a top Bolshevik leader. He was dismissed by Stalin because of his oppositionist views and given a low assignment. When brought before the court for Trotskyite activities, he was asked by the judge, 'Why did you not confine yourself to the modest job given you instead of meddling in big things which were no more your concern?' He answered, 'He who has once been in a high position cannot become a small man again.'*

*How then will dictators ever willingly give up being dictators? Socialism has inherited from Capitalism. You and I, we have been in both Capitalist and Communist prisons. The latter were the worst." He nodded sadly.*

He tells me that the girl in the home in which we stay adores me for having such distinguished friends as Marcel and Anna Pauker. But she does not know their real identity.

I wonder that Pauker does not offer me salary for translating. I could not leave my present job without this.

I have been imprisoned recently and am worried because I left my family with debts. I would have a chance to escape from prison, but it would be difficult to find somebody to hide me. He would be discovered. At the headquarters of the police in Bucharest, an officer said he would free me if I gave him 10,000 lei (the Romanian currency) as a bribe. I think that this would make my financial position even worse. He tells me to deny everything and even gives me a written document to this effect. Several are implicated in my trial, including women, among whom is one by the name of Niculina (I don't remember ever having known anyone by that name). I hear someone in the crowd shouting, "Merchants, unite! Merchants, unite!"

I am in prison. Somebody from another cell has come to visit me. One of my cellmates asks me who it is. I say, "A former high judge," though I did not know what position he had had. When I remain with this man, he asks me to lend him some money, since he is very poor. I promise to bring the money to his cell. When I am on the way, a priest who is also a prisoner reproaches me for being a miser. I understand the respective Romanian word which he did not pronounce correctly as "slanderer." He corrects himself, "You rather commit blackmail." I ask him for proof. I argue with him. When I go to bring the money to the other prisoner, his door is barred. The whole prison is almost empty. It seems I have come too late. In the end I find him and can give him 100 lei. I return immediately to find out what the priest can prove against me. I find him with many other priests who sing together, "We are the inventors of God." I am reminded of Luther's words, *Fides est creatrix dei*—"Faith is the creator of God."

You will have observed that almost all my dreams are about prison or prisoners. My dreams are in black. I see myself writing on dark indigo paper. I am imprisoned almost every night. While in reality I have left jail, jail never has left me. Almost all my reading, conversation, writing, and preaching is about suffering.

Though today I am free, in my dreams I am almost every night in prison. While in jail I always dreamt that I was free. I lived enchanting nights. Now my nights are dreadful, restless. We live on two planes—the night life being the compensation for what is missing during the day to make one a whole person.

But those who know me consider me a happy man.

The Talmud says, "The glory of God rests only in the man who fulfils a commandment in a joyful spirit." Savonarola preached, "The first sign of repentance is jubilating joy. The truly penitent is joyful and patient in all things."

I once knew a Christian who lived up to this. He was Surbianu, an Orthodox priest. He had been arrested at the age of seventy. One of his sons died in prison. Another son, his daughter, and his sons-in-law were sentenced to fifteen and twenty years. His whole family was destroyed. Yet he always had a smile on his face. His greeting was "Always rejoice!"

But he felt no great physical pain. I consider it out of the question that Savonarola had jubilating joy when he was tortured. There are always some who are being tortured. Therefore Christians never laugh unreservedly. While I laugh, some of my brethren in Cuban prisons might be in what they call "the incubator," an upright coffin with a 400-watt light bulb reflected from mirrors above, and refrigerated pipes to freeze the feet beneath.

What is the sense of this and so much other suffering? This is a question I am often asked.

When the *Titanic* sank, some people chose to put women

and children on a lifeboat at the cost of their own lives. For these men the values of honour and chivalry meant more than life without them. The sense of suffering might indicate the same values.

Chains are used in prison for despicable purposes. But in Communist prisons, we used chains as musical instruments to accompany our songs of praise. Thus they became sacred treasures. This might be another clue to the sense of suffering.

It is the self which suffers. But we are made to sit with Him on His throne. The self is too simple a throne for a personality like myself. Therefore I have to be made to leave myself, even if it is through suffering.

Those who have suffered are best able to differentiate what is true from what usurps the appearance of truth. This is how the church in Rome, the city which provided the largest number of martyrs during the first centuries, became predominant in Christianity. This is why the Underground church of Communist countries will soon have a more decisive voice in the church universal.

Don't be afraid of suffering. On the cathedral in Chartres (France) there is an inscription, "God created man with great awe." He handles us respectfully. He never inflicts unnecessary pain.

Don't be sad about your sufferings. An Orthodox priest with whom I was in prison under terrible conditions said, when I asked if he were sad, "I know only one sadness; that of not being a saint."

"To Him be glory both now and for ever," says St. Peter (II Peter 3:18). The times when we glorify Him should not alternate with times of complaint and dissatisfaction.

The father of the Soviet Christian David Klaassen, who was in Soviet jails for ten years, wrote: "I cannot thank God enough for all His grace toward us." When the Czech Salvation Army officer Korbel received the coffin containing the

body of his twenty-year-old son who had been shot in the army because he had witnessed for Christ, the family began to sing, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

Count your suffering of no great importance. St. Augustine wrote, "Two loves have made two cities: self-love in contempt of God made an earthly city; love of God in contempt of self the heavenly city." Show contempt for yourself with its sorrows.

The question arises, will we have the power to suffer? Many who have read my books ask me how they can get the power to endure if called upon to suffer. My answer is that the ability to endure is not specifically Christian. Everyone is capable of suffering much for what he loves much. In Singapore at the Hindu festival of Taipusam the image of the god Subramaniam is pulled through the city on a silver cart, followed by penitents who have hooks biting into their skin and a small spear piercing through their lips and tongues. Others are burdened with a large and heavy kavadi—a metal framework with peacock feathers which holds darts and needles against the skin. Every moment is torture. They love the god Subramaniam. If you love Christ, you will surely be able to endure everything for Him.

If you choose to be one of Jesus' disciples, see that you become a beloved disciple, for such a one has many privileges, according to Scripture. He lies on the bosom of Jesus. He knows beforehand the names of traitors and cannot be easily deceived. He stands faithfully near Christ's cross when others flee. He has the mother of the Lord entrusted to him. He is the first to arrive at the tomb of Jesus to see that it is empty, but he also yields to another by allowing him to be the first to enter the empty tomb. Being a beloved disciple will make it easier for you to suffer.





## BIBLICAL PROBLEMS

I am asked many Biblical questions. For instance, people ask me if I believe that all the miracles which the Scriptures report are literal.

This reminds me of a Salvation Army officer who rode in a train. She was young and attractive. A man sitting opposite wanted to have a chat with her but could not because she read the Bible for a long time. Finally he exploded:

“I have been watching you for an hour. You are bent over this silly book. You have such an intelligent look. How can you believe all these fairy tales? Do you really accept the fact Jonah was swallowed by a sea monster, arranged himself comfortably within its belly, and was then able to compose a prayer in beautiful literary style? Then the monster or fish or whatever it was traveled in three days the whole distance from the Mediterranean around Africa to what is Iraq today and spat him out just on the right shore? After such an adventure Jonah did not go to a clinic to be examined, he took no pills for his headache, and he received no injections. He felt just fine and could preach without a loudspeaker to the many thousands of inhabitants of Nineveh, and they were all converted. Can you buy this?”

The Salvation Army officer answered, “To tell you the truth, I myself find it difficult to accept the story. I will have to wait till I get to heaven. There I will surely seek out Jonah and ask him for more details.”

The man got mad. “What kind of an answer is this? How do you know that Jonah is in heaven? We know he was obedient to God that one day of his life. Who knows what wicked things he might have committed afterwards? Perhaps he is in hell.” The Salvation Army officer was undisturbed. “Don’t worry,” she said, “If he is in heaven, I will inquire of him. If he has gone to hell, you will have the opportunity to

ask him all these questions yourself.”

Biblical problems should not give us headaches. The rich man from hell had the opportunity of asking Abraham all the details of his life. Those who go to heaven will have this privilege many times over.

Let us not make the Bible a subject of vain questioning. It is a book which shows us the Saviour and offers us a chance to get rid of our sins so that we may become citizens of Paradise.

The world goes toward destruction. Every day erodes my life. I am in the body, as in a sinking vessel which will inescapably go down. When water has already half filled the ship, should I analyze its chemical composition or seek a means of escape?

Others ask me political questions. All the problems of our century have come from men who believed they knew the answers: Marx, Lenin, Hitler, Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt, Nasser, Ben-Gurion. They have all proven to be wrong. Some have not only been wrong, but have committed great crimes against humanity under the conviction that they thus assure the future felicity of mankind. How wonderful it would be if political leaders would simply acknowledge the fact that the problems of the world have become much too complicated for solution.

Jesus Himself predicted that there would be “distress of nations, with perplexity.” (Luke 21:25) Let us pray together that God may guide in the affairs of nations. One common night of prayer on the part of Ford, Wilson, Schmidt, Giscard d’Estaing, Kosygin, Sadat, and Rabin would do more for the peace of the world than hundreds of parleys at the U. N. My answer to all political problems is that I have no answer. Let God fulfil His plans.

The range of questions which I get is very broad. I have even been asked to name a lucky lottery number. Just for

fun I indicated a number. It won. The incident became known and now I am in demand. People now ask the size of my collar, shoes, hat, my height, weight and so on, so that they can compose numbers from these. I am told that they are lucky.



## WHAT ABOUT CHURCH UNITY?

I am asked much about church unity. We all assert when we recite the creed that we believe in one church, but *contra factum non valet argumentum*—against facts no arguments are valid. The church is divided.

It has been divided from the very beginning. At Pentecost cloven tongues appeared (Acts 2:3). They were cloven, but from one root. Everyone heard the apostles speaking in his own tongue. But tongues are so different, their possibilities vary so much, that they cannot all have understood the same thing. Those present said, "We hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." For "wonderful" the Jew heard the word *pala*, which evokes the meaning "hidden." (It is used in this sense in Deuteronomy 30:11.) In Greek they heard *megaleia*, which means "great." For "works" the Jews heard *melakha*, which is akin to "angelic," "royal." Greeks heard *energeia* (energy), *logos* (word), or *poiema*, which would have evoked in their minds the idea of a wonderful poetry of God. And so on and on. As for the Parthians, Medes, Asians, what would they have heard? Only professional translators can tell you how difficult it is to put a word or an idea into another language.

But the different messages had something in common. The proof of this is that three thousand of all different nations were baptized on that day. They were of one soul and one heart, though surely not of one understanding. One understanding is impossible among men belonging to different races, cultures, and levels of education, and having different ages, temperaments, languages, and experiences of life. A cultured British Catholic approaches holy images with sentiments different from those of an African Catholic in the jungle for whom the ikon is only a new fetish.

The first Christians had a unity in diversity. The

diversity has grown since then, first, because such a great mystery can never be discovered by following only one avenue of research, and second, because different churches passed through very different situations and were exposed to different influences. If the church is to influence the world, she cannot do so without exposing herself to the influences of the world, which vary very much.

There is nothing wrong with the increasing diversity within the church. It was unavoidable, but it displeases Christians that unity and mutual love did not grow along with this diversity.

Unity is necessary. Christians are weak as reeds. It is easy to break a reed. But you cannot break a bunch of reeds well tied. These considerations created the ecumenical movement. They provided the starting point of the World Council of Churches, as well as the ecumenical tendencies among Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestants. But I believe that the wrong method has been chosen.

I have no high esteem for ecumenism, and I don't believe that it will achieve anything. Cardinal Bea said that the door leading toward church unity is so low that it can be entered only on your knees. The way to unity is not through mergers, conferences (always accompanied by countless luncheons), and theological debates, but through uniting to spend hours kneeling in adoration before the Holy Trinity. When we are outwardly and inwardly silent, we all agree. The differences arise when we talk. Then what good are the talks?

I am against ecumenism for the following reasons:

1) The heretic Marcion met the future martyr Polycarp. He asked Polycarp, "Do you know me?" Polycarp's answer was, "Yes, I know the first-born of the devil."

Saints have always made a distinction between Christians and heretics. Being a heretic is as grave a matter as being a murderer. It is said about both that they will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. (Galatians 5:19-21)

Who unites with whom in ecumenism? Can it be that Christians unite with heretics? I must have the real treasure and not be deceived by what only seems to be gold.

Many theologians are at work in the ecumenical movement. But there is not necessarily a close connection between theology and Christianity. In fact, there are Christian theologians who are not Christian. They lack the one thing by which you recognize a Christian. You don't feel that they marvel at the wonderful works of God. Their books are more often cold. The Gospel has not made them either glad or sad or mad. What does it profit the church if such theologians of different denominations come to an agreement? They will agree never to rejoice and never to weep, since they have never done so before.

Their talks might result in some kind of unity. But unity around whom or what? What a soul needs is an infallible rule of faith. St. Ambrose wrote, "*Adversus regulum nihil scire omnia scire est*"—To know nothing which is against the rule means to know everything. Can a reliable rule of faith be obtained through bargaining, the one party yielding in one point, the other party in another?

*Didache*, the first Christian book written after the New Testament, enjoins us to receive the legitimate envoys of the church as the Lord Himself. Who will be the legitimate envoy after all the parleys? Who will accredit him as legitimate?

2) The ecumenical movement tends to modernize the church, which means to howl with the wolves. "Be not conformed to this world", says St. Paul (Romans 12:2) The world changes its fashions. We have an unchangeable truth.

The church is a living organism which needs renewal, as renewals take place continually in our bodies. This renewal is effected not by adaptation to the requests of the world, but by a change in hearts and lives, according to the pattern of apostolic times.

The ecumenical movement cannot change hearts; only the Gospel can do that. The Good News about eternal salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ is replaced in the World Council of Churches with the so-called Social Gospel, which puts the cart before the horse. It asks a renewal of social institutions on the part of men who have not become children of God through the new birth. These strivings are doomed to failure. They are useful, though. They might remind the real saints not to forget that the oxen were meant to drive a cart. Christians must get involved in fighting social injustice.

3) The ecumenical movement has opened the door to Communist influences in all denominations.

An Australian newspaper reported that a black American nun arriving at the Brisbane airport gave the black power salute and declared that violence is justified. (*Courier Mail*, February 17, 1973)

A Soviet diplomat was invited to lecture in a Baptist church in Washington about the (non-existent) religious liberty in his country.

The Cuban government forbade the feasting of Christmas. Soon after that the papal nuncio declared that the relationship between the Vatican and the government of Castro was good. (*Replica*, January 1973)



## VISIONS AND DREAMS ABOUT ME

Since I have been in the West, many articles and books about me have appeared—some highly favourable, some unfavourable.

I will not comment on them. As I spoke so much about my dreams, I will rather tell some interesting visions and dreams about me.

A Mrs. Nina Schwarzkopf from West Germany, 717 Schwabisch Hall, Sulmeisterweg 27, wrote to tell me that before I had appeared in the West or she had ever heard about me, a voice told her while she was cleaning the bathroom, "Pray for Wurmbrand." It was a name unknown to her. After a while she heard about my meetings and books in Germany.

A Romanian sister, mother of six children, writes, "I dreamt that you were with us. You were on one shore of a river and we on the other. It was an unusual river. Its whole bed was of white marble. One block was put above the other, so you had the impression of stairs. The water was crystal clear. You bowed again and again, took water from the river and then let it fall back from your hands, which gave you visible pleasure. In the meantime, you repeated without interruption, 'Complete your work before everything is finished. It is very important to do so.' You never explained what we have to complete. My mother said, 'The brother is right, because so it is written in the book of the prophet Joel,' but neither did she say what was written."

After a fortnight she had another dream: "You had come again. It was like winter and I was sick. while I lay in bed, I heard your voice in the courtyard. I said to myself, 'It is his voice. But how is it that he came? Perhaps I am in error. But no, it is his voice. I know it too well.' Then you entered the rooms with a great bouquet of chrysanthemums in your

arms. The flowers were exceptionally big and of all colors. When I realized it was you, I jumped from bed, embraced and kissed you, asking again and again, 'Did you really come?'

"Then I told you the dream which I had had two weeks before. You listened to me attentively and asked me if I knew its meaning. I kept silent. Then you explained, 'The blocks of white marble which formed the riverbed represent us, the believers. The flowing water represents the Word of God. The water remains pure only if the stones amidst which it flows are clean. If they are dirty, the water gets polluted.' You said that however much we would call men to God by telling them the Word, it would be of less value than the fact of being clean and of keeping the Word of God undefiled. This will have the greatest effect. You said that the stones are clean because of the water and the water because of the stones. I rejoiced very much in my dream about the explanation."

## EPILOGUE

With this I have finished my book.

I know you will say that the most important questions have remained unanswered. It is like the complaints of many that their prayers remain unanswered. Every prayer is answered by God. With many of them the answer is No.

No question of yours has remained unanswered. To most of your questions my answer is, "You have asked plenty. You will remain without reply." Why? Angelus Silesius finishes his book, *The Cherubic Wanderer* with the words, "Friends, it is enough now. If you wish to read more, go and become yourself the writing and the essence." That is why you have your head on your own shoulders. It makes no sense to go around seeking for it.

Enlightenment is like the bottom of the tub falling out. Jesus offers you not the solution to problems, but freedom from your problems. These problems belong to the self, which Christians transcend.

The human mind is an inexhaustible source of questions, but it has very few answers.

Instead of seeking answers, you should seek the right questions. The formulation of a question is its solution.

Somebody asked me once the meaning of the words of the Bible, "The Lord comes from Paran." It reminded me of the story of the Monk Hong Chou, who asked the Zen master Ma Tsu, "What is the meaning of Bodddhi-Dharma (founder of Zen) coming from the West?" Ma Tsu answered, "Bow down to me." When Hong Chou did so, Ma Tsu gave him a kick in the chest. Hong Chou asked, "Why did you hit me?" to which Ma Tsu replied, "So this is your real question!"

Who is interested in knowing why a verse in Deuteronomy is written as it is? People ask this question and busy

themselves with many intellectual problems, while actually they are bothered the whole time by one thing: Why did life hurt them so much? What is the sense of all the trauma they suffer? If you must formulate questions, be willing to forego any answers, just as Jesus asked a tragic "Why?" on the cross and died without reply. The answer was the resurrection. This will be the answer for you, too.

But must I not have clarity now in order to have reasonable attitudes? My reply is, "No." Great decisions in life have more to do with instincts and other subconscious factors. You will try in vain to apply to them the criterion of reason. The hours in which the mind can function intelligibly are few.

Don't try to attain clarity now. To feel that you have all the answers now is the surest sign of having gone astray.

The king of Nineveh, when told by a prophet that his city would be destroyed, said, "who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" (Jonah 3:9) With only a "Who can tell?" he and his people changed their hearts, fasted, and obtained forgiveness. Why do you need more than questions?

You consider yourself blind if you don't have all the answers. Jesus met a man born blind and added to his blindness by covering his eyes with clay. You add to your problems the willingness to forego solutions. Predigested spiritual advice might be harmful. The day will come when the clay will be washed away and you will discover that the eyes beneath it have regained sight.

What more could I give you as answer than these poor words? What can words explain or define?

Hindenburg once asked a philosopher, "What is a brush? would you say that a piece of wood with five hundred threads of swine's hair would rightly be called a brush?"

"Yes, and a big one."

"What about a piece of wood with only twenty threads. Would it also be a brush?"

“Well, a small one”

“And if it had only ten?”

“This would be no brush.”

“So a brush would be a piece of wood with at least eleven threads?”

This whole book was not written in order to impress you with words. I wrote it on the subliminal level.

I have a special veneration for the Joseph of the New Testament, whose name appears fourteen times in the Bible. Not one single word of his is recorded. He worked as a carpenter, knowing that human work is the continuation of creation, its perfection. He was good and honest and a saint. He had been so righteous that angels guided him at every step. But he was absolutely taciturn.

Knowing that the intellect has no answer to the biggest questions, the ancient sages of India evolved Yoga as the technique to get rid of them. We propose Joseph's Yoga: quiet, modest work and silence.

I wrote this book in the hope of leading you to the great silence where questions get no answers. Their foolishness becomes so apparent that you give up asking them. I have passed through such silence during my years of solitary confinement.

And after death will come the great thank you to God, who has suffered so much from us. With Him we will have light.

Pastor Richard Wurmland 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 Wurmland wrote eleven other books which have been published by major houses around the world, translated in over 50 languages, and sold over four millions.

He became famous due to his activity as founder of Jesus to the Communist World, an interdenominational Christian organization with offices in 53 countries, which helps Christians persecuted behind the Iron Curtain.

Because of his unusual experience, many people depend on Pastor Wurmland 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.

In ANSWER TO HALF A MILLION LETTERS, Pastor Wurmland answers some of the most interesting, unusual, or common questions asked. They reflect the trend of thinking and preoccupations of people around the world today.