

## CHURCH AND STATE

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Faith is the meaning given to life; it is that which gives force and direction to life. Every living man finds this meaning and lives upon its basis. If he does not find it, he dies. In the search after it man makes use of everything worked out by humanity. All this which is worked out by humanity is called revelation. Revelation is what helps man to understand the meaning of life. Such is man's relation to faith.

What a remarkable thing ! There appear men who do their level best to get people to make use of this, rather than of that, form of revelation ; they cannot rest until others will accept their particular form of revelation ; they curse, punish, kill all the dissenters they can reach. Others do the same : they curse, punish, kill all the dissenters they can reach. Others again do the same. And thus they all curse, punish, kill one another, each demanding that all should believe just like them. And it turns out that there are hundreds of faiths, and they all curse, punish, and kill one another.

At first I was startled and I marvelled how it was that such an obvious absurdity, such an obvious contradiction, did not destroy faith itself. How could believing people remain in this deception ?

Indeed, from the general point of view it is incomprehensible, and it proves incontestably that every faith is a deception and that all this is a superstition, as is proved by the now reigning philosophy. Looking from the general point of view, I, too, arrived incontestably at the recognition of this, that all faiths are human deceptions. But I could not help but stop at the reflection that the very stupidity of the deception, its obviousness, and yet the fact that all humanity submits to it, – that all that showed that at the base of this deception there was something which was not deceptive. Otherwise everything was so foolish that it was impossible to be deceived. Even the submission to the deception, a submission common to all humanity living a true life, made me recognize the importance of the phenomenon which served as a cause of the deception ; and in consequence of this conviction I began to analyze the Christian teaching which served as a foundation for the deception of the whole of Christian humanity.

This was the result from the general point of view ; but from the personal point of view, from the one in consequence of which every

man and I, too, in order to live, must have faith in the meaning of life, and does have faith, – this phenomenon of violence in matters of faith is still more striking by its absurdity.

Indeed, how, why, for whom is it necessary that another should not only believe, but also profess his faith like myself ? A man lives, consequently he knows the meaning of life. He has established his relation to God, he knows the truth of truths, and I know the truth of truths. Their expression may be different, the essence must be one and the same, – we are both men.

How, why, what can compel me to demand of any one that he shall express his truth precisely as I do ?

I cannot compel a man to change his belief either by violence, or by cunning, or by deception (false miracles).

Faith is his life, – how then can I take his faith from him and give him another ? It is the same as taking his heart out of him and putting in another. I can do so only when his faith and mine are words, and not what he lives by, – an excrescence, and not a heart. This cannot be done for this reason also, that it is impossible to deceive a man or make a man believe in what he does not believe, impossible, because he who believes, that is, who has established his relations to God and so knows that faith is man's relation to God, cannot wish to establish the relation of another man to God by means of violence or deception. This is impossible, but it is done, has been done everywhere and at all times, that is, it could not be done, because it is impossible, but something has been done which resembles it very much ; what has been done is this, that men foist upon others a semblance of faith, and the others accept this semblance of faith, that is, the deception of faith.

Faith cannot be foisted upon any one and cannot be accepted on account of anything : of violence, deception, or advantage ; and so it is not faith, but a deception of faith. It is this deception of faith which is an old condition of the life of humanity.

In what does this deception consist and on what is it based ? By what is it evoked for the deceivers, and by what does it maintain itself for the deceived ? I will not speak of Brahmanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Mohammedanism, in which there were the same phenomena, not because it would be impossible to find the same here : to any one reading about these religions it will be clear that in these faiths the same happened as in Christianity ; but I will speak exclusively of Christianity, as of a faith known, necessary, and dear to us. In Christianity the whole deception is built upon the fantastic conception of the church, which is based upon nothing and which from the beginning of the study of Christianity startles one by its unexpected and useless absurdity.

Among all the impious conceptions and words there is not a conception or word more impious than the conception of the church. There is not a conception which has created more evil than the

conception of the church. In reality the word means an assembly and nothing more, and is in this sense used in the gospels. In the languages of all the modern nations the word ecclesia signifies a house of prayer.

Beyond these meanings this word, in spite of the fifteen hundred years of the existence of the deception of the church, has not penetrated into any language. From the definitions given to this word by the priests who need the deception of the church it turns out that it is a preface which says : " Everything which I am going to say now is the truth, and if you do not believe it, I will have you burned, and will curse and in every way offend you." This conception is a sophism which is necessary for certain dialectical purposes, and it remains the possession of those who need it. This conception does not exist at all among the people, either among the masses, or in society and in the midst of cultured people, although it is taught in the catechisms. This definition – it is really a shame to have to analyze it, but it has to be done, because so many people give it out so seriously as something very important – is absolutely false. When it is said that the church is an assembly of true believers, nothing is really said (to say nothing of the fantastically dead), because, if I say that an orchestra is an assembly of all the true musicians, I have said nothing, if I do not say what I mean by true musicians. But according to theology it turns out that the true believers are those who follow the teaching of the church, that is, who are in the church.

To say nothing of the fact that there are hundreds of such true faiths, the definition does not say anything, and, it would seem, is as useless as the definition of the orchestra as an assembly of true musicians ; but one immediately sees the point of the ear behind all this. The church is true and one, and in it are the pastors and the flock ; and the God-ordained pastors teach this true and one doctrine, that is: "Upon my word, everything we are going to say is the truth." There is nothing else. The whole deception is in this, – in the word and the conception of the church. And the meaning of this deception is only this, that there are people who are dreadfully anxious to teach their faith to others.

Why are they so anxious to teach their faith to other people ? If they had the true faith, they would know that faith is the meaning of life, the relation to God, established by every man, and that, therefore, it is impossible to teach a faith, but only the deception of faith. But they want to teach. What for ? The simplest answer would be that the pope needs cakes and eggs, the bishop – a palace, fish pie, silk vestments. But this answer is insufficient. Such, no doubt, was the inward, psychological impulse for the deception, an impulse which supported the deception ; but, analyzing in this manner, how could one man (an executioner) have decided to kill another man, against whom he has no malice ? It would be insufficient to say that the executioner kills, because he is given whiskey, a white loaf, and a red shirt ; even so it would be insufficient to say that the Metropolitan of Kiev with his monks fills bags with hay, calling them saintly relics, only for the

purpose of having an income of thirty thousand roubles. Both actions are too terrible and too contrary to human nature, for such a simple, coarse explanation to be sufficient. Both the executioner and the metropolitan will, in explaining their acts, adduce a whole series of proofs, the chief foundation of which will be historic tradition. "A man must be executed,— men have been executed ever since the beginning of the world. If not I, another will. I will do it, I hope, with God's aid, better than any one else ! " Even so will the

metropolitan speak : " External worship is necessary, — saintly relics have been worshipped ever since the beginning of the world. People worship the relics of the Grottoes and have been coming here. If not I, another man will manage things here. I hope, with God's aid, to be able to put to better God-pleasing use the money obtained in a blasphemous manner."

To understand the deception of faith, it is necessary to go to its beginning and source.

We speak of what we know of Christianity. Turning to the beginning of the Christian teaching in the gospels, we find that the teaching directly excludes external divine worship, condemns it, and in particular clearly and positively denies every teachership. But since Christ's time and nearer to our own times, we find a departure of the doctrine from these foundations, as laid down by Christ. This departure begins with the times of the apostles and especially with Paul, the lover of the teachership ; and the farther Christianity is spread, the more and more it deviates and adopts those very methods of external divine worship and teachership, the negation of which is so positively expressed by Christ. But in the first times of Christianity the conception of the church is used only as a representation of all those who share the belief which I regard as the true one. The conception is quite correct, so long as it does not include the expression of belief in words, but means the expression of it in one's whole life, since a belief cannot be expressed in words.

The concept of the true church was also used as an argument against dissenters. But previous to Emperor Constantine and the Nicene Council the church is only a concept. Since the time of Emperor Constantine and the Nicene Council the church has become an act, — an act of deception. That deception of the metropolitans with the relics, of the popes with the Eucharist, of the Iberian Virgin, of the Synods, and so forth, deceptions which, for their monstrousness, startle and frighten us so, begin in nothing but the advantage of these persons. It is an old deception, and it did not begin with the advantages to individual persons merely ; there does not exist a man so execrable as to have the courage to do so, if he were the first and if there were no other causes. The causes which led to it were bad. " By their fruit ye shall know them." The beginning was evil, — hatred, human pride, enmity against Arius and others ; and another, a still greater evil, was the union of the Christians with the temporal power. The temporal power, Emperor Constantine, who

according to the pagan conceptions stands upon the height of human greatness (he is counted among the gods), accepts Christianity, gives the whole nation an example, converts the people, and lends a helping hand against the heretics and by means of an ecumenical council established the one true Christian faith.

The Christian Catholic faith is established for ever. So natural it was to submit to this deception, and up to now people believe in the saving power of this event, whereas it was an event when the majority of Christians renounced their faith. Those were the cross-roads, where the vast majority of Christians took the pagan road on which they continue to travel until the present time. Charlemagne and Vladimir did the same.

And the deception of the church is continued until the present, a deception which consists in this, that the acceptance of Christianity by the temporal power is necessary for those who understand the letter and not the spirit of Christianity, because the acceptance of Christianity without the renunciation of power is a scoffing at Christianity and a corruption of it.

The sanctification of the power of state by Christianity is a blasphemy, a ruin of Christianity.

Having for fifteen hundred years lived under this blasphemous union of putative Christianity and the state, we have to make a great effort, in order to forget all the complex sophisms by means of which the whole teaching of Christ has for fifteen hundred years been everywhere distorted, so as to please the temporal power, to make its peace with the state, by trying to explain the sanctity of the state and its possibility of being Christian.

In reality the words " Christian state" are the same as the words " warm, hot ice." Either there is no state, or there is no Christianity.

To understand this clearly, it is necessary to forget all those fancies in which we are carefully educated, and to ask directly for the meaning of those historical and juridical sciences which we are taught. These sciences have no foundations at all ; they are all nothing but an apology for violence.

We shall pass by the history of the Persians, Medes, and so forth, and shall take the history of the state which was the first to form a union with Christianity.

There was a robbers' den in Rome; it grew through rapine, violence, and murder; it conquered the nations. The robbers and their descendants, with their leaders, whom they now called Cæsar, now Augustus, at their head, robbed and tortured the nations for the gratification of their lusts. One of the heirs of these robber leaders, Constantine, who had read a lot of books and had grown weary of his lustful life, preferred certain dogmas of Christianity to his former beliefs, – he preferred the mass to the sacrificing of

human victims, and the worship of the one God, with his Son Christ, to that of Apollo, Venus, and Zeus, and ordered this faith to be introduced among those whom he kept under his power.

" Kings rule over the nations, – not thus should it be among you : thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not have riches, thou shalt not judge, thou shalt not condemn, suffer evil," – nobody told him all that.

All he was told was : " Do you want to be called a Christian and to remain a leader of robbers, – to beat, burn, wage war, fornicate, execute, live in luxury ? You may."

And they arranged a Christianity for him, and they arranged it pleasantly, better than could have been expected. They foresaw that, if he read the Gospel, he might come to see that all that was demanded there was a Christian life, and not the rearing of temples and attendance in them. They foresaw this, and carefully arranged for him such a Christianity that he was able, without putting himself out, to live as of old, in pagan fashion. Indeed, Christ, the Son of God, came for the very purpose of redeeming him and everybody else. It was because Christ died, that Constantine could live as he pleased. More than that: he could repent and swallow a piece of bread soaked in wine, and that would be his salvation, and everything would be forgiven.

More than that : they even sanctified his robber's power and said that it was from God, and anointed him with oil. For this he, at their wish, arranged an assembly of the priests, and commanded them to say what should be man's relation to God, and commanded that every man should repeat this.

And they repeated it and were satisfied, and so this faith has existed for fifteen hundred years, and other leaders of robber bands introduced it, and they are all anointed, and everything, everything is from God. (In our country a murderess of her husband, a harlot, was from ( God, and in France Napoleon was from God.)

And for this the priests are not only from God, but almost Gods themselves, because in them sits the Holy Ghost. And He sits also in the Pope, and in our Synod with its commanders, the officials.

And when an anointed person, that is, the leader of a band of robbers, wants to strike down his own people or a foreign nation, they hurry to make some holy water for him, sprinkle with it the cross (the one on which Christ, having carried it, died for having denied these very robbers), and will bless him in his killing, hanging, chopping off of heads.

All would have been well, but they could not agree, and the anointed persons began to call one another robbers, – which they really are, – and the people began to listen, and stopped believing in the anointed persons and the guardians of the Holy Ghost, and learned from them to call them, as is proper and as they call themselves,

that is, robbers and cheats.

But the robbers I only mention in passing, because they have corrupted the cheats. What I have been speaking about is the cheats, the so-called Christians. Such they became through their union with the robbers ; nor could it be otherwise. They lost the road the moment they sanctified the first king and assured him that with his violence he was able to aid the faith, – the faith about meekness, self-renunciation, and endurance of insults. The whole history of the real church, not the fantastic church, that is, the history of the hierarchy under the power of the kings, is a series of vain endeavours <>n the part of this unfortunate hierarchy to preserve the truth of the teaching, by preaching it through the lie and departing from it in deeds. The meaning of the hierarchy is based only on the doctrine which it wishes to teach. The teaching speaks of meekness, self-renunciation, love, poverty ; but the teaching is preached by means of violence and evil.

For the hierarchy to have something to teach and to have disciples, it must not renounce the teaching ; but to clear itself and its illegitimate union with the power, it must by every cunning device conceal the essence of the teaching, and so transfer the centre of gravity of the reaching from the essence of the teaching to its external . side. That is precisely what is done by the hierarchy, the source of that deception of faith which is preached by the church. The source is the union of the hierarchy, under the name of the church, with the power, – with violence. The source of people's wishing to teach the faith to others is in this, that the true faith arraigns them, and they are obliged for the true faith to substitute their own invented faith, which can justify them.

The true faith may be anywhere, except where the faith is obviously false, that is, of the nature of violence, – it cannot be in the state religion. True faith may be in all so-called schisms, heresies, but certainly cannot be where it has united with the state. Strange to say, the appellations, " Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant faith," as established in common speech, mean nothing but " faith united with the temporal power," state religion, and so are false.

The concept of the church, that is, of the agreement of many, of the majority, and at the same time its nearness to the source of the teaching in the first two centuries of Christianity, was only one of the poor external proofs. Paul said, " I know from Christ Himself." Another said, " I know from Luke." And all said, " We think correctly, and the proof that we do is this, – there is a large assembly of us, ccclcsia, the church." But it is only with the Council at Nicæa, which was established by the emperor, that for a part of those who professed the same teaching there began the direct and palpable deception.

"It seemed good to us and to the Holy Ghost," they began to say then. The concept of the church not only remained a poor argument, but even became a power for some people. It united with the temporal

power and began to act as a power. And everything which united with the temporal power and fell under its sway stopped being faith and became a deception.

What does Christianity teach, regarding it as a teaching of any church or of all the churches ?

Analyze by mixing or subdividing it, as you please, and the whole Christian teaching immediately divides up into two distinct parts, the doctrine of the dogmas, beginning with the divine Son, the Holy Ghost, the relation between these persons, and ending with the Eucharist with wine or without wine, leavened or unleavened bread, and the moral teaching : of meekness, abstinence from litigation, bodily and spiritual purity, non-condemnation, liberation from the fetters of slavery, and love of peace. No matter how much the teachers of the church tried to mix these two sides of the teaching, they never did mingle, and, like butter separating from water, always keep apart as large and small drops.

The difference between these two sides of the teaching is clear for anybody, and anybody may observe the fruits of either side of the teaching in the lives of the nations, and may from these fruits conclude which side is more important and, if it be allowable to speak of " more true," which is more true. Looking upon the history of Christianity from this side, one is horror-struck. Without exception, from the very beginning to the very end, up to our own time, no matter what dogma we may view, even beginning with the first, the dogma of Christ's divinity, down to the folding of the fingers, the communion with wine and without wine, the fruits of all these mental labours, used for the elucidation of the dogmas, are : malice, hatred, executions, expulsions, the murder of women and children, the stake, tortures. Looking upon the other side of the moral teaching, from the removal to the wilderness for the purpose of communing with God to the custom of distributing white loaves in the prisons, we find the fruits of this to be : all our concepts of goodness, all that joy and comfort, which serves us as a torch in history. -

It was possible for those people to err before whose eyes the fruits of either had not yet become evident, and it was even impossible not to err. It was even possible for those to err who were sincerely drawn into these disputes about the dogmas, without noticing that with these dogmas they were only serving the devil, and not God, without noticing that Christ had expressly said that he came to destroy all dogmas. It was also possible for those to err who, having inherited the traditions about the importance of these dogmas, received such a perverse mental education that they could not see their error ; and it is possible for those ignorant people to err, to whom these dogmas mean nothing but words or fantastic representations. But for us, to whom the first meaning of the Gospel, which denies all dogmas, is revealed, for us who have before our eyes the fruits of these dogmas in history, for us it is impossible to err. History is for us a verification of the authenticity of the teaching, it is even a mechanical verification.

Is the dogma of the immaculate conception of the Virgin necessary, or not ? What came from it ? Malice, curses, scoffing. Has it been of any use ? None. Is the doctrine about not punishing the harlot necessary, or not ? What came from it ? Thousands and thousands of times men have been softened by this reminder.

Again: do all men agree on any of the dogmas? No. Do all agree that to him who asks should be given ? Yes.

Now, the first, the dogmas, on which all men do not agree, which are of no use to any one, which ruin men, are what the hierarchy has been giving out as faith ; and the second, what all men agree upon, what all men need, and what saves men, this the hierarchy, without daring to deny it, has not dared to advance as the teaching, because this teaching denied the hierarchy itself.

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