

CHRISTIAN LIFE

A HANDBOOK

ON

CHRISTIAN ETHICS

AND MORALS

BY

JOSEF IMBERG

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By the same author:
THE WAY OF LIFE,
Main lines of the Christian faith, 1987

LET US PRAY,
A handbook for the family prayers, 1989

Both published by:
SCRIPTURA EVANGELISK LITTERATURMISSION,
GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN

Bible quotations:
REVISED STANDARD VERSION

© Judith Imberg, 2004
S-342 34 Alvesta, SWEDEN

Publishers:
SCRIPTURA EVANGELISK LITTERATURMISSION,
GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN

Printed by:
Sjuhäradsbygdens Tryckeri AB
Borås, Sweden

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Evangelisk Litteraturmission - Scriptura, Sweden

FOREWORD

When presenting this work on Christian ethics I find it necessary to explain its background and its aim.

For about thirty years I have been almost continuously working with studies on Christian dogmatics. A little later, when I had to take up more regular studies of ethics, it became clear to me how necessary it is to have a solid dogmatic foundation when expounding ethical principles and their application on morals. There is much arguing about ethics but sometimes very little thinking about the principles behind. This fact can be proved already by the common confusion of the two subjects, ethics and morals: many speakers do not know the difference and therefore, in order to be on safe ground, often use both words together, also when they deal with only one of the two subjects.

With regard to the aim of this book I have found it necessary to show in the clearest way possible that Christian ethics must rest on Biblical and doctrinal ground, or else it will only be mixed up with other views or doctrines or become only a cry in the wilderness. If people hesitate before words like Bible or doctrine, we have to explain the facts further. Everything with regard to Christian dogmatics and ethics, and of course morals as well, rests on CHRIST. He is the Teacher, the Lord and Master, and the Saviour as well. He says: "Apart from me you can do nothing." (Jn 15:5)

This being so, it would be totally wrong to regard Christian life, its ethics and morals, as being basically only a fulfilment of the law. If we did, it would lead us straight to *casuistry and Phariseism*.

The Christian life aims at *sanctification* which should be understood as *being made holy*. It is a continuous work. Christians have not attained it, nor will they attain it as long as they remain in this world, but they have been called to be continuously pressing forward in that direction: "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own." (Phil 3:12) Thus the faith and life of a Christian can

never rest on his own righteousness, because he cannot attain such a thing. His faith, his hope and his life rest on Christ. He is our righteousness and justification. This glory of Christ ought to shine through the lives of all Christians. Thus the proper place for the necessary witnessing about Christ is the daily lives of the Christians. We have to remember, however, that such a testimony depends upon the acceptance of Christ and His righteousness, which is offered to us in His holy Church.

When presenting this work I wish to thank some friends who have gone through my manuscript and given me much valuable advice. Particularly I would like to thank Rev. and Mrs. Dick Bryant, Johannesburg, South Africa, and Rev. A.I. Berglund, Ph. D., Uppsala, Sweden. I also wish to thank those Africans who have asked me to write a book on Christian ethics. Some of them have asked me to write a small book, some have asked for a larger work. As can be found here I have chosen the middle way.

If this book can be found useful to individual readers and to some Christian congregations and institutions, it has served its purpose. Not in the least, however, I would like to find it used among such people, young and old, who ask between themselves about "the way of the Lord" and also wish to be "fervent in spirit" (Acts 18:25).

Alvesta, Sweden, November 1994.

J.I.

CONTENTS

	Page
1. GOD, MAN, AND THE WORLD	7
2. THE TEACHING AND THE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST	19
3. COMMUNITY AND STATE	29
4. ETHICS AND MORALITY	42
5. ETHICS WITH A WORLDLY OR A CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION	59
6. FAITH AND LIFE	70
7. AT THE SERVICE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR	81
8. HUMAN RIGHTS	93
9. LOVE AND MARRIAGE	107
10. HOME AND FAMILY	122
11. POWER AND JUSTICE	134
12. DEFENCE AND WAR	147
13. REVOLUTION	161
14. EDUCATION AND TRAINING	169
15. ART AND SCIENCE	177
16. WORK AND ITS REWARD	189
17. CHRISTIAN WITNESSING	201
18. AT THE CROSSROADS OF LIFE	212
19. LIFE AND DEATH	228
20. TOWARDS THE ETERNAL GOAL	237
INDEX	249

1

GOD, MAN, AND THE WORLD

The only true God has made Himself known among all peoples of the world. There is clear evidence about this in two ways: *in the created world itself, and in the heart of man.* Only God existed, before there was a created world. When He created world and man, He also showed man the good way. The existence of a conscience in man is the proof of this.

Although God is invisible, so that nobody can prove His existence by observing Him with the eyes of his body, it is unreasonable to deny God's existence. Of course many say that they have failed to discover God here in the world, but the mere thought of being able to do so is not very reasonable. It is as little logical as the idea that we can find the builder of a house by an examination of its floor, its walls, or its roof. The fact is that the builder never conceals himself in any part of the house. He is always outside and above his created work. So it is with God also. "God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne... The shields of the earth belong to God; He is highly exalted." (Ps 47:8-9) We cannot explain the existence or the maintenance of the world, unless we may think of an almighty Power that keeps and governs everything. "Ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature, namely, His eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived *in the things that have been made.*" (Rom 1:20)

Thus the first clear evidence about God is His revelation of Himself in Nature, i.e. in the created world. The second clear evidence is found *in the voice of man's conscience.* Everywhere in the world there is an understanding in man of a great difference between good and evil, between right and wrong, and also between what is true and untrue. This evidence about what is good is often found to speak more strongly about God than what the created things speak.

Whatever people we may examine in the world, they have a feeling, strong or faint, about what is right and wrong. Even if they are misled or perverted at times, such a feeling definitely is in them. Whatever this feeling is called by different peoples of the world, according to Christian doctrine and teaching it is called *the conscience of man*. It has been given by the Creator Himself to maintain man and the world. If this understanding of good and evil, right and wrong did not exist, then man could not exist either.

Sometimes it is evident that only a little remains of what God has created in man. This is the case when we find that truth and righteousness are poorly respected among people. Even so a certain "rest" remains, and it helps us to go on living together. Also in countries, where godlessness or "atheism" has been proclaimed to be fundamental to the nation, the leaders speak a lot about "truth" and "honesty" and also demand such qualities from their citizens. Where do truth and honesty originate then?

It is not difficult at all to raise doubts about God or creation. On the contrary, it is very easy to point at evil things which speak against God. It is likewise easy to accuse God Himself because of the existence of such evil: "Why do the evil things exist? Has God created them? Has He only looked on, when they started to appear?" People may also go on, asking: Does God love what is good, because it is good, or has He just ordered that it should be called "good"?

Doubts about God's being or His "Essence"

The last questions mentioned here touch upon God's Omnipotence and His innermost being. The thought that almighty God has just *decided* what should be called good, true, right, etc., is false. If it had been in that way, then His Power had been superior to Truth, and then "truth" among us would be a matter of power only. On the other hand, God did not *call* what is good and right by such names for the only reason that those things had such values in themselves that He must respect their qualities. If it had been that way, then those things would have been superior to God, and then He would not have been God or deserved to be called "God". These matters must be looked upon in a different way: When

God calls the things "good", "true", "just", etc., He does so because they have goodness and rightness emanating from Him, and they are still in agreement with Him. In their particular way they express something of what is in His innermost being, "the Essence of the Deity".

How could an originally good way be lost?

The original position of man is explained in this way: man was created by God, created good, in the image of God, after God's likeness. (Gen 1:26) These words mean that man's will was in total accordance with God's will, thus following God's ways and commandments. Then something happened.

What happened? Our first parents did not wish to abide with their original knowledge, available to them in creation and in their conscience. They wanted to replace the good way, shown to them, with another way of their own will and making. (Gen 3:5) Thus they became "a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices" (Isa 65:2).

Here the question arises: Where did the evil come from? Some people, indeed very many from different religions and from different schools of philosophy, have avoided the thought that God had anything to do with the origin of evil. To be on the safe side they have stated: there was an evil power from the beginning, one that had existed from eternity. Such a doctrine we call *dualism*, meaning there are two gods, one good and one evil. This does not agree at all with Christian teaching. On the other hand we must admit that in Christianity there is a *dualistic streak*. God alone is God, He is eternal God and Creator. The evil power, on the other hand, is not eternal. The one behind all evil was also created by God, but he was good when he left God's hands. When he came into existence he was equipped with great gifts, very great power and also great knowledge. Only after his creation did he become an evil power.

This may sound impossible, or at least very hard to believe, but some reflection and experience may help us to understand. What is wrong and what is evil must have come into existence in some way, either it is created or born. It may also have commenced in a very good way. This very fact we

can study among thieves, traitors, dictators, and tyrants. Many of these were born with great gifts in goodness. To be able to use their gifts they were also equipped with a great personal freedom, because freedom is always necessary for doing what is good. To do good things under compulsion is not goodness and does not prove any goodness. On the other hand freedom can be abused. On this point we have definite proofs: not so few leaders, philosophers, statesmen, etc., started in an excellent way, but somewhere in their career they left the good way and became evil, in some cases extremely bad people. Sometimes it is also possible to point at a certain day and a certain place where they turned off. Something went wrong in them, there was a personal "fall".

In Christianity this is the teaching about the beginning of evil: a good angel of the Lord turned off and became evil. After that he has become a parasite in God's creation: he steals and spoils in the created world and among God's people. His evil work is going on all the time. "And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness." (2 Cor 11:14-15)

Many religions and schools of thought have tried to solve the problem about the root of evil in very different and very special ways. Some of them have even denied that there is anything that can be called "evil". Some have stated that what we call "evil" is only a bit faulty, somewhat lacking in goodness, it is essentially good but to a lower degree. Some have tried another way. They have located all evil on the physical side of man, i.e. in the body, in its needs and lusts, etc., whereas the innermost part of man, mind and soul, are considered to be free, clean, and innocent, etc. In such cases the efforts to "become good" must involve the soul's fight against the body, its weaknesses, its needs and demands, etc. It should be noted that in all this the soul is regarded as pure and innocent, whereas the body is impure and guilty. Very early this kind of thinking and teaching found its way also into the Christian church. The most well-known sects behind these thoughts were the Gnostics and the Manichaeans. Some of their thoughts are still doing great harm in the Church wherever they manage to get in.

In all true Christian teaching, which means according to the New Testament, it is always stated that man is a unit, one complete personal being, the whole of it, body and soul, exposed to good and evil powers. This personal unit may be considered as two or three co-operating parts, called either "body and soul", or "spirit and soul and body". 1 Thess. 5:23. If we follow the division into two parts, then "soul" includes both the mental and the spiritual side of man. If we divide into three parts, then the ordinary "soul" is instead called "the spirit", whereas the word "soul" is used for the mental side of man.

Sometimes we use a totally different word, "the heart of man", when we think of the mental and spiritual sides of man. It is easy to explain why we do so. The physical heart has such an importance for the life of man that we make use of this word also when we speak of such manifestations of life as "love", "faith", "faithfulness", "happiness", etc. In some languages, e.g. in Africa, there may not exist any particular word meaning "conscience". In such cases they use the word "heart", or "the thoughts of the heart", when they refer to the conscience.

Two different views of man

There is one very popular view today: all evil things and all wickedness come from outside, e.g. from a few bad people or from bad influence in the community, "the environment" or "the structures", whereas it is taken for granted that without such influence man is good and will remain good. Jesus gives us a totally different view: "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man." Mt 15:19-20. This is not an isolated expression in the New Testament. It goes right through the Bible: "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Gen 8:21.

Of course such a view and such words will often be misunderstood and abused by lack of knowledge and experience. The words mentioned mainly aim at two things: to give us the spiritual background of man, i.e. our inability of being our own helpers and redeemers, *and* at the same time to direct us onto the only way of redemption, our Lord

and Saviour. In one way this is exactly the work of the Law: it is "a custodian" until Christ comes. Gal 3:24. When this has been said we must also keep in mind that according to Jesus Christ Himself there are also many good sides in man, believers or non-believers, e.g. a sense of goodness and righteousness. Therefore Jesus can say, also to such people who do not believe in Him: "Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?", Lk 12:57, and, "you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children." Mt 7:11.

Here we are dealing with a basic fact in all Christian teaching. If we fail to understand this fact, or if we try to by-pass it, we will also fail to understand many other things and, still more, we will jeopardize or sacrifice many things in the Christian teaching about faith and ethics. This basic fact is *original sin*. The words mean the inner depravity of man as a consequence of the Fall. Gen 3.

Original sin affects all of us, and it will remain in us and with us throughout our lives. It can be counteracted and fought, but it cannot be crushed or removed in this life. It is defeated only in a believing Christian, and then only in a blessed "death in Christ".

The depravity of man was *not a part of the human nature already at the first creation*. It has come into the world after Creation. The proof of this statement is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He has accepted and taken on human nature as it was at the beginning, and as it ought to have been after that. He did not sin. He has no part in original sin. He is "human", as "human" was meant to be, and thus cannot be a sinner. Rom 8:3; Phil 2:6. So man was created as a human being, without any sin, and thus sin has befallen man through those who fell and became the first sinners. By these statements we have indicated, *both* our position as sinners, *and* our possibilities of being saved and given a new form of life through Him who was to restore man.

After the Fall of man there are some bad consequences remaining. One of them is that man is badly damaged and confused with regard to his sense of right and wrong. Yet, in spite of this there is still a good amount of knowledge and power: man can do very well in worldly things, in philosophy, statecraft, business, etc., yes, even in "spiritual

things" and in "good deeds", as he believes. The latter things, however, he will understand in his own ways, if he is left to himself. On the whole he is wrong, because he cannot have a real or full communion with God. Because of his innate hostility to God he will be suspicious against God, he will try to counteract God's doing and prefer to achieve his own aims, also in "spiritual things". Man in himself hasn't the freedom to love God or to do God's will. He might think and say that he has, but he hasn't. All this is due to the fact that man in his innermost parts, heart and soul and mind, has been badly damaged. He is faulty, he is a sinner. Yet it must be said again: these words apply to his relation to God. In worldly things, also in the worldly community, man may look differently and also attain good and great things, but in his standing before God he is a sinner, unless he is given another standing by faith in Jesus Christ.

An evil kingdom

All peoples and individuals have become seriously affected by the Fall. Congregations and churches, as well as communities and states, consist of human beings suffering from this damage and loss. True, we can see a lot of good in this world, also in man, but at the same time we must admit that there is a lot of evil, also in man. Thus good and bad things are mixed to confusion. It would be tempting to many to sort this out, to "put things in order" as they say, but with their poor understanding they would do a lot of harm and often spoil what is good. Therefore Jesus says that this "lack of order" will continue up to the end of time: "Let both /kinds/ grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn." Mt 13:30.

What has been shown here as a matter of Christian doctrine is not accepted by people of different religions or philosophical schools. Even if they agree on some points, e.g. on the existence of evil and some faults in man, they will vehemently deny the existence of original sin and the depravity of man. All this creates a great problem with regard to the understanding of ethics and with regard to the

possibility of co-operation with other parties in matters of ethics. Although this problem will be treated separately (in chapter 5), it may be mentioned here in this way: How should Christians act with regard to people who have a different view of man, e.g. people who are animists, atheists, etc.? According to Christian teaching all people, whatever their religion or belief, belong to God through creation, and therefore Christians ought to regard them as brothers and sisters before God. Secondly, since all people have some knowledge about right and wrong, it is possible and even necessary to co-operate with them in matters of ethics on the basis of what we are told by our consciences. Thirdly, because of the depravity of man and the necessity of salvation, there will always be a dividing-line. The revelation and salvation in Christ is denied by many. On this point understanding and co-operation will be impossible, but even so it is necessary that all people are treated by Christians with dignity, respect, and love. Here all Christians ought to show the greatest respect and love, since they have a greater knowledge of God's love. 1 Jn 4:19. Fourthly, there is the great difference between the two kingdoms. There is God's Kingdom, manifested in the Church of Christ, and the kingdom of evil, represented by Satan, temptations, and sin. Because of this all Christians have to be aware of a great danger emanating from "the world". By this word is meant, not the earth, not the universe, not this or that person particularly, but rather "the wisdom of this world" that is "folly with God". 1 Cor 3:19. The fight of the Christians will, therefore, not be as much a fight against persons or this or that thing in the world, as a fight against the evil power itself, and a fight inside themselves: "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith." 1 Jn 5:4.

Our Lord Jesus has gone before us in His teaching about all this. He points to the whole world as the object of His and our love. At the same time He points to the great difference between the fallen world and those who have been born anew and been transferred to the Kingdom of the Son. Although these people are in the world, they also belong to the Kingdom of God and to the holy Christian church. Although the outer world is one, there is a difference that cannot be

overlooked: "For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him... And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Jn 3:17-19. We can see this development and division going on all the time among us. What St. Paul tells us about Demas, who was "in love with this present world", 2 Tim 4:10, can be equally said about many in our days. When we realize what so often happens, we find it impossible to do what many do: they wish to excuse what is behind words like the "dangers" or the "folly" of this world. They even brand such words as "unchristian", "lack of love", or "Phariseism". Whatever we may say or think personally, the words of Christ and His apostles have the final say in the matter.

God's love for the world

It is obvious that even the fallen world is loved by God, "for God so loved the world that He gave His only Son". Jn 3:16. Therefore the Church and the Christians have been called to share this love of the world. This does not mean to say that the Church or the Christians should adapt themselves to the fallen world. From these statements it becomes clear that by "the world" we understand at least three different things.

The first sense of the word has in view the created world as a whole, "the universe". Here there is no secondary meaning of "fallen" or "sinful". In the second sense of the word we think of the earth, the globe, all the continents, sometimes including their inhabitants and also the conditions prevailing there. In this case we speak about geographical, historical, political, and social conditions and facts. Not even here is there any intimation of a fall or of sinfulness. Only in the third sense of the word, "the world", do we think of the Fall: all people are fallen, they are sinners, the victims of depravation. This is exactly where God's love for the world comes in: God loved this fallen world, i.e. the whole of fallen mankind, so as to give His Son for their salvation. But another point of view applies to this third sense as well: God does not love the spirit behind the Fall, nor does He love the enemy behind this Fall. Therefore the Bible says: "The whole world is in the

power of the evil one." "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him." "Who is it that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" 1 Jn 5:19; 2:15; 5:5.

In the following chapters of these outlines it will be necessary to have this three-fold explanation in mind. It very much concerns all teaching of Christian ethics. Only in this way will it be possible to do justice to two important Christian doctrines: that God is the Creator of the whole world, "heaven and earth", and that the disciples of Christ can and must remain in this world, although "they are not of the world". Jn 17:14-17.

Is there a "freedom of will"?

After the Fall man is not totally free to choose and do what is good. With regard to a possible love for God and to a righteousness that is valid before God man is not free at all. This statement has to be explained, since people very often protest against it and in response to it vehemently claim *that they are free*. They try to prove this with examples of this kind: "If I wish to go here or there, I can do so. If I wish to start some kind of business, commit theft or adultery, or even do 'good works', I can do so. Nobody can hinder me, not even God." By their own words they have proved that they are wrong, because they have mixed up two questions, and the essential problem they have not even touched. The first part of their statement, about making their own decisions, is fairly right, whereas the second part, about carrying out their decisions, is totally wrong. Of course they can wish and also decide to do certain things. There may be no end with regard to such thinking and planning. A totally different problem is: do people succeed in everything they have thought and planned? Not in everything, perhaps only in very few things. A few examples can prove this. They may be disturbed or interrupted just before they manage to do what they have planned to do. On their way to the planned undertaking, whatever it is, theft or adultery, perhaps they meet a friend, and since they cannot say a word to him about where they are going, they go with him for a walk, or they just return home. Have they done then "whatever they wished to do"? It may

happen to another person, planning to do certain things, that he becomes sick, or breaks an arm or a leg just before commencing his planned business. All this shows us that *not even in worldly matters do we manage "whatever we plan to do"*. This shows us that even in worldly thinking it is not correct or advisable to mix up two different things: *the freedom of thinking and planning* on the one side and *the freedom of action* on the other side. The fulfilling of the plans may be hindered in very many ways.

In Christian doctrine the great problem about "the freedom of will" does not at all concern the problems we have mentioned here. Therefore the "answer" so often given is no answer at all. From the Christian side nobody has contested the freedom of thinking or planning in worldly matters. Instead the problem, contained in the words "freedom of will", concerns this point: *Can fallen man, by his own will, try to find God, turn to God, change his own heart, become converted, love God, and do what is righteous and good before God?* The Christian answer according to the Word of God is a definite NO.

It is necessary to keep this in mind, or else all words about "the world", "freedom of will", etc., will be either confusing or meaningless. The difference between the freedom we have and the freedom we do not have is well explained by St. Augustine: "We grant that all men have a free will, free, inasmuch as it has the judgment of reason; not that it is thereby capable, without God, either to begin, or, at least, to complete /anything/ in things pertaining to God, but only in works of this life, whether good or evil." (Augsburg Confession XVIII)

Now, what do ordinary people think of themselves in these matters? No doubt they think: "I can handle my work and my business when and where I like to do so, and in the same way I can deal with God in the way I like: I can love him or leave him, I can believe in him or deny him. It is all up to myself." To such thoughts many like to add: "To what is possibly missing in my power or ability God will add what is needed, because we have been told that He is merciful and full of love." This is, from the very beginning, a free-hand drawing. It totally omits and denies the spiritual realities prevailing

among men and also what God Himself has told us in His Word. What is the spiritual situation, then, and what does God say?

It is not possible to obtain sufficient knowledge about God by looking at the works of Creation. We cannot learn much from there, strictly speaking nothing, about the Fall, about our sins, or about the way of salvation. Nor do the created works tell us who the Saviour is, or who the Holy Spirit is that can lead us to Him. Thus all people do live in the created world, and they may have a faint knowledge about a 'Creator, but the knowledge about how to come to Him or live with Him is not available to them in that way. It is in a similar way with their conscience. They may realize that they have a voice speaking to them in their "heart", telling them what is right and wrong, what to do and what not to do. It is a good thing so far, but the voice does not tell them how they can *attain* the right things. Thus there is a need in man for something new, something clearer and stronger, but how can they ever come to the point of finding it and, what is still more, winning it?

Therefore the question arises: What has God done to make up for the damage through the Fall? The answer is: He has prepared A WAY. It was never created. It is more correct to say that it was born and that it was born of eternity. He who calls Himself THE WAY, THE TRUTH, and THE LIFE is what God has prepared of eternity for fallen man. Jn 1:14; 14:6. We confess about Him that He is "the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds... who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven." (The Nicene Creed) Only in this way, through this salvation, will it be possible for us to be "born again", transformed and renewed, so as to become "a new creation". Gal 6:15. Only in this way will it be possible to *live as Christians*. By these words we have given the key-words of these outlines:

To live in the Christian faith;

To live according to Christian ethics.

2

THE TEACHING AND THE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

We cannot say about ourselves that we are the way. If we did, our words would not make sense. If, in addition, we said that we are the way of all people of all times, it would be still worse. By comparison we may understand the greatness of Jesus Christ, when He says about Himself: "I am the Way." Jn 14:6. The way He speaks about is not an ordinary way, since He adds: "...and the Truth, and the Life." This means that nobody can come to the Father except through Him. This is in accordance with other words, e.g. when He says that He and the Father are one, and also that He lived in the glory of the Father before the world was made. Jn 10:30; 17:5.

There are many words and names showing who Jesus Christ is and how great He is. He is called **THE WORD**. Through this **WORD** we have received the richest revelation about God and also the closest relation to God that is possible after the day of the Fall: "Life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us." 1 Jn 1:2. - From this it becomes clear that Jesus Christ has come to us in two ways: as *true God* and as *true man*. Then the question arises: how is this possible? This is of the greatest importance also for Christian ethics. If Jesus Christ is to be our Way and also help us on our way through this world, then *He must be man*, truly and fully. If He were not man, as we are, it would not be possible for us to understand Him or to be on the way with Him. On the other hand *He must be true God*, because this is a fallen world, where people need a Saviour from sin and death, and only God Himself can be the Saviour of the whole world.

In the following outlines of Christian ethics it will, for the most part, be outside our plan to deal with matters of doctrine and faith. It will, however, be done in connection with such parts of Christian ethics where faith is an essential part. In

general two points from Christian doctrine must be kept in mind. The first point is that with a Christian believer *faith always goes together with Christian life, i.e. ethics, and vice versa*. The second point is that *faith in Christ, and therefore also the following of Him, is totally depending upon justification by grace*: Jesus Christ is our righteousness, which means that He is the condition and basis of all Christian fellowship. This fellowship is always two-sided: it is a fellowship with Christ, and it is a fellowship with those who believe in Him.

Thus, since everything concerning our faith in God and everything concerning our fellowship with other Christians is related to Jesus Christ, it is quite in order that He is given different names and that His work and His importance are described from different points of view. According to this we may be taught that *Jesus is both the great Teacher and the great Model*, which means the best example of life given to us. As the Teacher He is the greatest of all prophets, "the prophet who is to come into the world". Jn 6:14. In all times we need this Prophet and Teacher. And yet, if we had His teaching only, we would fail and go wrong in many ways. Now we also have Him as a model, and His life as a pattern, which helps us to avoid many things where we can go wrong. On the other hand it is not enough to have such a model or pattern. Some people do think it is enough. They also think it is possible to be exactly like Jesus in their lives, and they may even try hard to copy the life He lived, even in outward details. For many reasons it ought to be clear to us that this is a wrong way. The Bible also tells us that we must necessarily fail on such a way. Jesus is not a sinner, but we are. *He is the Saviour, we need one. This makes all the difference.*

Believers and non-believers

There is a point where Christian believers and non-believers definitely disagree. Non-believers often state that they like or even love *Jesus' ethical teaching* and that they look up to him as something like an ethical teacher and model whom they are ready to follow, in many ways at least. Christians do not agree with them when they wish to follow Jesus Christ only partly. To them this would be the same as *reducing Jesus*

Christ into a moral teacher only and denying what is much more: His Sonship with the Father and His position as the Saviour of the world.

At the same time Christians gratefully acknowledge that so many, who do not believe in Christ, yet have found so much in Him. Christians also accept what so many non-believers have found, that Jesus Christ is the great teacher of ethics, and that He is a pattern to follow. In the Christian teaching about discipleship and sanctification it is an important part to try to be like Jesus. It becomes a wrong thought, however, if we think that we can manage to do it, and particularly if we think that this is Christian faith and that it is the condition for being called a Christian. Why would it be so wrong? It would be wrong, because evil is so deeply rooted in the human heart that it originates from there, not from any outside influence only. Therefore we do not solve any ethical problems by having good ethical models or by trying to copy them. Instead something has first to be done to the evil in our own hearts. We need a Saviour, before the outward and inward problems of our life can be solved, and before the problems of our fellowship with other people can be tackled. Non-believers may not agree at all, but this is the Christian way according to Jesus: "First cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside also may be clean." Mt 23:26.

The disposition of the heart

We have touched upon a very important matter in all ethical teaching: the mind and spirit of man, and the disposition of "the heart". Of course it is possible to create such systems of ethics where the outward way of acting is given the greatest weight. It would then be possible to say: *We are good*, because we do not murder, we refrain from all actions of vengeance, we manage to give away both our coat and our cloak, and we even manage to go two miles with a fellow who forces us to go one mile with him. Mt 5:38-42. Will this be all that constitutes good ethics? If we manage to accomplish these things *in an outward way*, how far have we managed *to be good at heart*? Furthermore, if we do these things only because we have been ordered by somebody to do them, or because we have seen other people doing them, how

can we be *good* then? A person doing these outward things perhaps is sad or angry in his heart, when he feels the pressure upon himself to do them. Perhaps he is protesting strongly within himself. Where is the goodness then in his case? There is no goodness at all. The obedience is falseness, and the "goodness" is an empty shell.

The examples given show us most clearly that we cannot treat any ethical questions sincerely or thoroughly without dealing at the same time with the basic questions of evil, sin, and guilt, and also truth, redemption, salvation, and sanctification. When we have studied these basic questions, we may start to tackle the details. In other words, first we have to understand what man is before God, and then we may start to understand what man is and what man can be with regard to his fellow-beings, and how they can possibly live together.

Nobody has taught us about the disposition of the heart as clearly as Jesus has done. He has also given us this instruction: "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment." Jn 7:24. How does such a judgment work? It is not only the outward way of acting that constitutes the difference between good and evil. The evil is situated in the will, in the desires, the thoughts, and *in the general disposition of the heart*. We can also say that the evil is situated *in man himself*, behind the actions, thoughts, and desires. The evil way of acting is an outward expression of what is in man. There is not even one single day when a person is totally free from evil in his heart. Man is evil in the very root of his heart. According to a famous saying by Martin Luther man is "incurvatus in se", which means crooked in such a way that he is bent into himself. This is a serious situation. It is, however, impossible to run away from the evil by "becoming religious", by "starting to think about God", or by "thinking spiritually". To do such things in one's own power is only to deceive oneself. When we realize all this, we must find there is only one way open: to allow oneself to be saved, which means being sentenced and pardoned. When somebody becomes aware of this fact, Jesus Christ has become real to him, not as the great Teacher only, but also, and still more, as the new, great Adam, the man never fallen, and as the Redeemer and Saviour. He is the

High Priest, who has brought forth the only true offering, Himself, for the salvation of mankind, that all may become free, "free indeed". Jn 8:31-36. This is the greatest difference between Christian ethics and the ethical systems of non-believers: the connection between the doctrines of salvation and the principles of ethics. The wisdom and the power to act according to these principles will be affected accordingly.

When we proceed with these outlines of Christian ethics, it will be shown many times what the suffering, sacrifice and death of Jesus Christ mean, also in the field of ethics. In many ways this is the most outstanding model of all Christians. When we are exhorted to "have this mind" among ourselves, which we find in Jesus Christ, it is because He "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, ... and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross". Phil 2:5-8. Our own love will never have a greatness or impact that can match His love, but through our salvation and connection with Him we have been called to such love: "I believe that Jesus Christ... has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and delivered me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil..., in order that I may be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true." (Small Catechism)

Jesus Christ is the Truth

Truth is one side of the Essence of God, just as Holiness, Righteousness, and Love belong to the same Essence. The Truth of God has been revealed to us in His Word. Without this Word we would not know this side of God's Essence, nor would it be possible for us personally to know what is true.

Jesus says that the Word and the Spirit will guide us "into all the truth". Jn 16:13. Here the Word is included, since He says: "/The Spirit/ will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak." This shows us that both the Father and the Son are concerned with the work of the Word and the Spirit. The Son has revealed all this to us. He has shown us the Truth. Holy Scripture speaks about Christ

(Messiah) right from the beginning to the end. Christ is "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end". Rev 21:6. "No one has ever seen God; the Only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known." Thus "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ". Jn 1:18,17.

So it has become clear that Jesus Christ is the only one in this world that can claim that He is the Truth. He is without comparison in the teaching and demonstration of what is true. This will be of the greatest importance in the following. If our teaching is called "Christian" and thus is presented in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, it must have as its foundation Jesus Christ Himself and what He has taught us and given to us. Then we cannot by-pass the teaching about Him in Holy Scripture. He is not a person shrouded in myths or mysteries, nor speaking from a remote and unknown world. On the contrary, He is a living Lord who speaks through His Word and His Spirit, right now and right here.

The importance of this Word can be shown in many ways. *Without faith in Jesus Christ there cannot be any Christian life.* Further, faith in Christ cannot come about without fellowship with Christ where He meets us, in His Church, and in the means of grace available in His Church. About all this He has given us clear information in His own words: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the Truth, and the Truth will make you free." Jn 8:31-32.

There is a continuous need of teaching and admonition among us to keep us *watching spiritually* and make us *fight for our faith*. This is impossible without the Word of Truth, i.e. God's Word. If we act in this way, believing and watching, it is not a selfish care for our own selves or our own aims, as some people say. Rather it is a natural part of a two-sided behaviour. The two sides must be there all the time. Only through faith and personal watchfulness, and through a personal fight to keep the saving faith in Christ, will it be possible to attain and keep the right relation to our fellow-beings and show the right solidarity with them. On our way to the altar of God, which is a matter of personal

relationship with God, we cannot exclude our relations to our brothers and sisters. This is plain teaching by Jesus Himself. Mt 5:23-26.

Is Christian influence on other people allowed?

Many have raised strong objections on this point. They have said it is wrong to try to influence people with regard to their faith or their ways of thinking. With regard to Christian teaching and influence they have mentioned children particularly. They have requested that children be left untouched, "until they are mature enough to decide for themselves". Such objections are extremely one-sided. This was demonstrated at its worst in many countries with a totalitarian outlook and regime. On one hand all information and instruction by the Church and similar bodies were totally forbidden. On the other hand the one-party state exercised all sorts of influence on youths and children down to the lowest ages, even as far as removing small children from their parents "in order to protect them from propaganda". It is obvious that the children and the youths were not left untouched, "until they were mature enough to decide for themselves". Instead they became the victims of the official propaganda of such a state. In all countries of the world that have been saved from such one-sidedness it has been taken for granted, that parents are in their full right when they inform and educate their children in the best way they can think of. If, on the other hand, the parents are forbidden to do so, or if they fail to do it out of ignorance or personal weakness, for sure there will be a host of agents ready to do it instead. They will step in, most willingly at that, to fill the vacuum and give the children all sorts of education and training, in moral, social, and political matters, very often of an evil kind. When such damage has already been done, then the authorities may be called upon by many to find remedies against the evil. This is how it works in many places in our time.

When so many agencies are at work among both adults and children, the Christian church finds it to be her duty to teach and guide all kinds of people she may ever reach, be they young or old. In her case she can also refer to the order given by her Lord and Master: "Go therefore and make disciples of

all nations, baptizing them..., teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Mt 28:19-20. In obedience to this command she wants to show that Jesus Christ is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, and therefore also the Guide and Helper for both time and eternity. With such guidance people will have a goal for their life, and a solid foundation for the fellowship with their fellow-beings.

The purpose of life

In all Christian ethics it is necessary to stress that "life" has a double sense. The first sense of the word is "existence", i.e. to exist, to be alive. The second sense is a kind of life, i.e. the life going on in some way. It is also necessary to remember that the two senses explain two sides of one thing. The way of living demonstrates the kind and qualities of the life itself. Thus there is no Christian way of living, where there is no real Christian life found in the person who is called "a Christian". The aim of the Christian way of living is not to make a show of any kind, its only aim is to live as a Christian and thereby to glorify Christ. He has given us life, and daily He continues to do so. If this life is not there any longer, then an outward life "as a Christian" will only be a false dress, a showing up, as it is said in God's Word: "I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead." Rev 3:1. This mutual relationship between faith and life, faith and deeds, is often explained in the New Testament, and it helps to stress the importance of true ethical knowledge, both generally and in the Christian sense of the word: "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?" Mt 5:13. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." Gal 5:22-23. "Does a spring pour forth from the same opening fresh water and brackish?" Jas 3:11.

The purpose of the Law

After the Fall the world cannot live without law or commandments. According to Christian teaching the Law of God has a double task. The Law has been given to uphold and govern both individuals and the community. Yet, nobody

can make his way into the Kingdom of God by obedience to the Law or by keeping commandments, not even if he tries very hard to follow them all. Instead salvation is a matter of grace, "for we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law". Rom 3:28. Then it may be asked how a man can ever come to the point of being admitted by grace only. By being led to Christ by the Spirit of God. This means being put as a sinner before the throne of grace. Then the Law has done its work in the matter: it has convinced the sinner of his guilt and made him confess that he is a sinner. In this way Law is "a custodian until Christ comes". Gal 3:24. What happens after this? When this same man is in the custody and school of Christ, the Law is needed for its next purpose: to be a guide in the school of fellowship and love. Nobody can tell himself, not even by the help of a sensitive conscience, what the love of Christ demands from him with regard to love, fellowship, and "good works". We all need the Law, also on this point and for this purpose. Without the Law and its commandments as guides we would often be tempted to be self-centred and work for selfish ends, at least secretly.

Many Christian pastors and teachers, yes, even whole schools of theology, have objected to the kind of teaching presented in the preceding paragraphs here. Instead they wish to state that the Law and the commandments do not concern us at all, if we are "real Christians", "if we are totally converted", etc. They are wrong. Their own way of teaching does not agree with the teaching of Christ or His apostles. To prove their opinion they state that St. Paul in Rom 7:14-25 does not write about his time as a converted man, only about his condition at the time when he was a non-believer. Such a statement about Rom 7 is untenable. Furthermore, Phil 3:12-16 does not show us a Christian having passed the point where he needs the help of a law. On the contrary, it shows us a Christian still on his way, still in need of daily conversion and spiritual guidance, still in need of encouragement with regard to good works to be found in a Christian. Thus we find that the double-sided teaching about the Law of God is of the greatest importance to sound Christian teaching about ethics.

We have shown here some of the points where our Lord Jesus Christ has taught us about the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. In the following chapters we will be shown what this means in different walks of life, for individuals, for different groups of people, and for the community as a whole. Here and there we will realize that on many points people will be very much divided. There will be believers and non-believers. There will be the Christian church and its parishes, and there will be worldly societies and communities. Therefore many dividing-lines and borders may be observed, but sometimes also traits that are shared by all, or at least very many, since after all we are human beings, created by God and living in the same world. Matters of this kind will be found in possibly all of the following chapters. Considering all these difficulties we must all the time keep in mind that these outlines aim at presenting *the Christian view and the Christian principles of ethics*.

As far as the Christians and the Church are concerned, they may be looked upon as *the people of God*, not by Creation only, as all people may be called God's people. When Christians are called "the people of God", it means that they belong to the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Christ, since they walk in the light of God's Word and in the light of Christ's atonement and redemption.

At the same time the Christian teaching, on faith as well as on ethics, will have some contribution to give to all kinds of people, yes, to the whole world. Therefore Christ has said, not only "I am the light of the world", but also "You are the light of the world". Jn 8:12; Mt 5:14. This very well corresponds with an old prophecy about the time of the Lord, when the Messianic light would be shining from its stand: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us His ways and that we may walk in His paths." Isa 2:3; Mt 5:14-15.

3

COMMUNITY AND STATE

Man and the world

We cannot penetrate this question without also trying to understand *what man is*. Many are of the opinion that the world and man started to exist by pure chance. If such had been the case, man would be without any purpose whatsoever, and then there would not be any principles for his ethical life, neither individually, nor within a possible community.

According to Christian doctrine the world has been created by God. Therefore there is also *a purpose* behind the existence of both world and man, and *a goal has been set for man's life*.

Another necessary part of life is *fellowship*. Nobody can manage to live isolated from the rest of mankind. Even the soldier, who got lost in the jungle at the end of the Second World War and lived there by himself for many years, came from a community and eventually returned to it. Almost every person has belonged to a family of some kind. In most cases we have some kind of fellowship with relatives, neighbours, fellow-workers, etc. We are also connected with the life of a district, a province, and a country, either these units are big or small. Whatever the degree of development prevailing in these matters, there will always be some kind of institutions. In olden times there were at least three kinds of institutions, the family, the chief, and a kind of court, the latter possibly consisting only of a number of elders.

Either we have more or less of development and institutions, we are always united in a fellowship with rather many. There is always a combination of interests and forces, expressing themselves in the daily and routine work, in festivals, in arts and crafts, in singing and music, in folklore, etc. There is no people in the world without such things. We call all these things together *culture* or *civilization*. In all these things a

people will find it possible to express itself, its feelings and gifts, its spirit and its aspirations. No individual will ever be able to separate himself from these features of his own people.

The people and the country

Very often we take it for granted that each people has and must have its own country. In most cases we are probably wrong: the borders of a country and the borders of a people very seldom are the same. If we think of a people or a tribe, which means such people who have the same language and the same customs, and who feel that they are related to each other, this people or this tribe may be divided in many parts. These parts may be living in two or three different countries, sometimes even more. On the other hand there are countries (states), where there are one or two hundred peoples or tribes living together in one "state" organization, willingly or more or less by force. Thus the borders of a "people" and the borders of a "state" do not always correspond with each other. It is not the aim of these outlines to argue for or against this state of things. For our purpose here it is only necessary to point to this fact: sometimes "state" can be the wider concept, sometimes "people" is the wider.

What is important to us here is to understand the task of the individual and the task of the community *from a Christian point of view*. Perhaps the conditions under which we live in a certain people or in a certain country are not satisfactory: people with different origin and traditions live together in one "state", and this makes it difficult to many of them to live together with the rest. Yet they all have to live together, and they have to find out how they can do this in the best way possible. If the solution is to split up the "state" into several new "states" is a question that falls outside our deliberations here, since it is a political question. Here we have to consider it from the ethical point of view. As long as the different groups live together, it is a duty, and particularly a Christian duty, to find the best ways of doing so. The solution can never be that one group takes the chance of subduing the other, nor that one tradition overrules or replaces the other. The only solution to think of is tolerance, mutual understand-

ding, and co-operation. Thus the living together must be based on *respect for others*. This very well goes together with *self-respect*. Since we were all created by God, there is no reason for us to give up our identity, or our inheritance as a people, unless our customs and traditions are found to be sinful and unworthy and thus harmful to ourselves and to other people. Exactly the same respect that we demand for ourselves we must be ready to grant to others, individuals, or groups, or peoples, as the case may be. Mt 7:12.

State, community, or "the authorities"

"State" is a complicated word, since it may mean so many things: the country where we live, its people or peoples, the organization of the citizens, the authorities and their rule, etc. The word "state" has taken such a grip on us that many have stated: "It is not possible to live at all, unless we are members of a state." Such a statement, although it is wrong, has given many authorities a favour they should not have, and it has given many citizens a disadvantage they ought to be spared. The truth is that there is no absolute necessity for a people to be organized as a state. As proof of this we can point to many of the present African states. Up to the middle of the nineteenth century or later (roughly 1850 A.D. and onwards) they were not "states" at all in the modern sense of the word. They had no parliaments or governments, etc. Instead a number of small peoples or clans were ruled by chiefs, the chieftainships being held together only by an unwritten law, by "the elders", the customs of the people, etc. Only when many of these chieftainships were put together to become much larger units and a common law was introduced, "states" started to exist in the ordinary sense of the word. The reversed order can be seen in later times, for example when in great upheavals states have ceased to exist. Life has gone on in some ways, without a state, in smaller countries or regions. People have then organized themselves on more local levels, chosen their leaders, and thus a "community" exists and works. After some time there may even be some co-operation between such communities, but the previous larger state does not exist.

Although there are such exceptions, nowadays there are "states" all over the world. "State" is not necessarily an evil thing, although on the other hand it is never something totally good. It all depends upon how the state is founded and organized, what it undertakes to do, right or wrong, and what the citizens do with their state. The same applies to the word "authorities". The authorities may be good or bad. Sometimes the word "authorities" can mean more or less the same as the word "state".

Our conclusion here must be: We need fellowship and co-operation between individuals, families, and other groups of people in an organized and official way. This is what we often call "the community". Since everybody cannot be the master of everybody or give orders about everything to anybody he wishes to command, some individuals inherit a kind of leadership or authority, or they are chosen according to some rules, written or unwritten. So it was practised all over the world before there were any "states". Thus we may say: *A state is not absolutely necessary for us to make it possible for us to live together, whereas some kind of community is always necessary.*

By this another thing has become clear: We always need some kind of authorities, not necessarily to "rule" over us, but to organize things for us, represent us, serve us, and altogether help us live in peace and order. This takes us another step further in our thoughts: When we have authorities, we will also have certain institutions, ranging from village chiefs and village courts to parliaments, governments, and supreme courts, from watchmen to police forces, armies, and national defence. What is the aim of all this? It can be said to be "the common good", "the welfare of the people", or something similar. This may sound good enough, but when the leaders or "the authorities" exercise these duties for "the common good", it often happens that some individuals suffer, or they feel that their "right" has been trodden upon. Perhaps the authorities think and say that they have only done their duty, but the individuals concerned think and feel that it is not true. Instead they think that the authorities have done something quite different. What has happened?

Individuals contra authorities

Perhaps it has happened in the community that the authorities have become biased in favour of some party, political, financial, etc., and acted against the interests and rights of some individual or individuals. Or it may have happened that the authorities have chosen to *demonstrate very harshly who is in power*. If this is the case, it does not matter very much to them who will suffer. Or the case may be different. It may happen that what some citizens call their "right" is only a selfish interest for gain, and when they have tried in vain to obtain the support of the authorities, they turn against them and accuse them of being biased in favour of some other interest. - Nobody ought to think that these problems are easy. They are told on the pages of history from ancient times up to now. How can such problems be solved then?

First of all we must admit that no individual can be right in every claim or case against other individuals or against the authorities. We must also admit that no authority is right in every case against individuals or groups or parties. Therefore it cannot be right for the authorities to act *against* individual claims or cases under all circumstances. Nor can it be right for individuals or parties to blame the authorities every now and then without giving proof of their accusations. On the other hand we must admit that every year, in almost all countries, there will be not so few cases somewhat like that of "Naboth's vineyard". 1 Kings 21:1-19. Or how can it be explained that so many people in high position become so extremely rich? On the other hand it is rather easy to present cheap solutions to such problems. There are often political parties that exploit the difficulties and the common dissatisfaction among people by taking the one side or the other: "Help us come into power, and we will see to it that the private interests will be favoured against the authorities", or, "Give us the power, and we will see to it that 'the common good' will prevail over all private interests". Many declarations of this kind will only make things worse, particularly if they are designed to deceive the masses. In one country, where a certain political party had the sole power, it was

stated in law that individuals could not own property, since everything should belong to the state, but in spite of all this one particular leader happened to own twelve luxury or sports cars.

From where do all these difficulties come? From the human hearts, where so much selfishness, so much prestige, and so many lusts and desires are at work and also direct so many both private and official interests. The "private interests" are not always pure or unselfish. The few top leaders in totalitarian states, officially working "most unselfishly for the welfare of all citizens", very often are the worst offenders, for example when impoverishing their citizens by collecting an enormous wealth for themselves. Some do such gathering of money within their own country, others do it abroad in secret bank accounts, also for the purpose of having a safe exit, when they have to flee for their lives because of their bad rule and their many abuses.

The remedy against evil of this kind is not to be found in one system or another, in more democracy or more dictatorship. It can be found only in just and fair laws, in the honesty of officials and authorities that do their best to apply law and justice to both individuals and groups of people, to parties, and to the population as a whole. With regard to an individual citizen he should always have the right of obtaining a trial in court. In such a court the judges should be totally independent of other authorities and officials. It should even be possible for an individual with a case to have it tried against his own government or against "the state". Some "closed countries" are a special problem here, since they do not respect international agreements. If they have endorsed such agreements officially, this is only lip service. With "open countries" this is different. There an individual citizen, who feels that his "rights" have been tampered with, can sue the authorities of his own country, and in the end also "the state" itself in an international court. This is not to be a traitor. It means the upholding of national and international law and justice. When cases of this kind are tried, it becomes an enormous help to many, also in other countries. It gives hope to many, that justice is a thing that can be attained after all, although it may seem impossible at times.

The best way is, of course, if *we all* live in such a way that we do not need the help of court cases. Good laws, a general obedience to God, a conscientious life in respect of our neighbour and his rights and interests will help us a very long way to attain such a state of affairs.

Two kinds of rule

We live in a world where there is good and evil in a mixture that affects the whole of mankind. God does not want this disorder, but it has come into the world through the fall of man. Therefore, in order that people may manage to exist and to live together, God has set limits to the evil. One clear example of this fact we find in one of the two kinds of rule we are dealing with here. This particular rule is carried out through *governments and all kinds of worldly authorities*. They exist in order to defend people, look after them, and safeguard their interests, so that evil does not get the upper hand. This kind of rule may be called *the worldly rule*.

The opposite kind of rule is *the spiritual rule* whereby the Church of God is at work. We are going to explain both of these rules more in detail, but be it said at once that both are there according to the will of God. Both should, therefore, be regarded with affectionate esteem, for God's sake, and for the sake of our conscience and welfare.

The outward, worldly rule will appear in different fields and spheres of life, but generally we sum them up by calling them "the authorities", "the community", or "the state", etc. This worldly rule has the task of keeping peace and order in our countries, of protecting all citizens against all kinds of enemies, and of procuring the best outward kind of life that is possible under the circumstances of the time. This kind of authority also includes the right and duty to protect one citizen against another. One of them may think that his right is jeopardized by another citizen. In such cases the law of a good community says that *no citizen is allowed to vindicate himself against another citizen in his own way or by his own power*. If he did, he might do it wrongly, also to the disadvantage of both one and two other parts, and such

"justice" must be hindered by the community. This will become clear from one very plain example. It is brought up here to demonstrate "the worldly rule", although matters of justice will be dealt with more fully in a later chapter.

A certain person has lost his bicycle by theft. He finds it somewhere, and without any formalities he lays his hands on it and brings it back to his home. He has, however, been observed by some witnesses when doing this, and he is reported to the police by the new "owner" of the bicycle. He defends himself and his "right" in court, but there he is convicted of theft, because the new owner can there produce a receipt, proving that he has bought the bicycle from a store and there also paid properly for it. Why did all this happen? The first thief, who was really a thief, stole the bicycle and then sold it to the store as his "own", and the storekeeper made a mistake by forgetting to ask for a certificate of purchase and ownership. Not knowing these facts, nor the procedures prescribed by law, the first owner of the bicycle happened to become a thief *by taking justice into his own hands*. - This very clearly demonstrates how wrong it is, if we take justice into our own hands. Instead of doing so we *have to make use of the channels and means of the law and the legal authorities*. Only in this way will it be possible to live together in peace. Then *our authorities will become mediators and middlemen between the individual citizens*.

If in a case, like the one mentioned here, we are tempted to be critical and a bit harsh, so as to say that "the authorities only make things complicated to us", then let us consider the case of the bicycle again! Say that the bicycle found was not the right one, it was only very similar to the one stolen! Then the person, who called himself the "owner", was a real thief, although he became a thief by mistake. This is what makes this world so difficult to live in, among other things, that so many thieves call the stolen things their own property. Then again this case shows us that *citizens should never be allowed to take justice into their own hands*. If they do, they make things worse. Laws and authorities are there to help us, to safeguard the interest and justice of all, not of one or of a few

only. It is a real proof of God's care for us and for the whole world that *He has given authority and power to the worldly rule.*

The spiritual rule has a task that is completely different. It is given to the Church, and it is performed when people are given the Word of God, when they are put before the almighty and omniscient God, and when they are shown and given the grace of God. The Church wishes to make us the children of God, members of the Kingdom of God, and citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. This message does not come under the worldly rule. It belongs only to the field of grace and faith. In this field worldly authorities have no say.

The relations between the two kinds of rule

Since we live in one world only, there will always exist some relations between the worldly and the spiritual rule. It may be enough here to mention three very clear points of contact.

The first point of contact is *the outward order*. The worldly authorities are responsible for keeping such order, but it is also in the interest of the Church, because such order will benefit the life of all men, either they are believers or not. This outward order is also necessary for the spreading of the Gospel, "the good news".

The second point of contact is *freedom of thought and speech*. If this freedom is tampered with, hindered or even forbidden, then the access to the Gospel will also be very much hindered. On the other hand, where such freedom of thought and speech prevails, the Word of God may be read, preached and heard, and people may have full freedom to believe and live as Christians.

The third point of contact is less clear but not less important. Although the Church does not interfere in the outward rule, *there are things which belong to her prophetic task*: justice, performed without prejudice and without consideration of the worldly position of men, righteousness, and truth. It may happen under worldly rule that authorities fail because of corruption, nepotism, or general weakness, so that justice, fairness, and truth are neglected or even trodden upon. Then the Church has to fulfil her prophetic task. This does not

mean to say that she interferes in single cases, rather it means that she demands the upholding of the general principles of fairness, truth, and justice. If she does, she proves herself to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. (Mt 5:13-16) There are many examples in the Bible of this kind. It may be sufficient here to mention the prophets Nathan and Amos, and Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist.

It is clear that these three points of contact all deal with *the Law*. The worldly rule has only got to do with law. It has nothing to do with the Gospel. Yet the worldly rule assists the work of the Gospel when upholding law, peace, and good order. On the other hand the spiritual rule is not limited to the Gospel, so that it must keep away from all law. The spiritual rule strongly stresses the importance of the law. It also stresses that it is the duty of the worldly authorities to accomplish the outward work of the law. To these facts it should be added that in spiritual matters the law has another task, which is very important: it is a tutor or a custodian that leads to Christ. This work cannot be carried out by any worldly rule. It is the work of the Church by the Holy Spirit. (Gal 3:24)

The conditions under which we live

Sometimes it is not possible to obtain the kind of rule we would like to have. In very many countries of the world people are still living under rules they very much dislike. This state of affairs has been pressed upon them, or they have inherited it from earlier generations. No doubt it is very difficult to live under such circumstances. From an international point of view it is not possible to assist them by force from outside and thus try to deliver them from such a rule. Such intervention would be branded as "interference" or "aggression".

How about Christians, when they are forced to live under a harsh or even brutal kind of worldly rule? It is remarkable, but we have to answer the question in this way: To those who are Christians it is both easier and more difficult at the same time. How can this be explained? It is easier in one way, because as Christians they have Christ in their hearts, and as citizens in the Kingdom of God they have an eternal hope.

(Heb 13:14) Then it is never futile to live, even if their outward life is extremely difficult. At the same time it may be more difficult to Christians than to other people, because as Christians they may be more ill-treated, persecuted, and punished than any other group. In spite of all this they will try to be good citizens. They try to serve their country, also by "praying to the LORD on its behalf". (Jer 29:7) This is in full accordance with the apostolic teaching and the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. (1 Pet 2:18-20; 3:13-17; Mt 5:11-12)

Our duty as Christians

In spite of all difficulties we are bound to accept and respect our worldly authorities and therefore also the community or state institutions as something good or at least comparatively good. If we do so, we do not make unwarranted charges against our nation. (Acts 28:19) When there is a case between the authorities and ourselves, it is better to try to explain what has gone wrong, defend ourselves according to truth and conscience, and, where need be, testify to our faith, and - if this is the outcome - take our punishment humbly, bravely, and with joy. (Acts 5:41)

There is another important side of this matter. If the "cases" we speak of originate in *something that is basically wrong in the community, in the laws, in the courts, in the official procedures or elsewhere*, we should regard it as our duty to work together with other citizens to find the suitable solutions, for example when electing members of parliament, when debating in the press, or by other means at our disposal. Arguing in the streets and public places, with fists or sticks or bullets, does not help, possibly it makes things much worse. There are much better ways: "You ought to be quiet and do nothing rash... If /you/ have a complaint against any one, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls; let them bring charges against one another /there/. But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly." (Acts 19:36-39) Such words were spoken by a non-Christian in authority. It would be a shame if his wisdom surpasses that of Christians.

Very often there is a great difference in the kinds of rule exercised in different countries. There may also be a great difference from one time to another in the same country. Under all circumstances we are all called to co-operate to find the best way of rule for ourselves and for those who may come after us. This applies to the highest authorities, like parliaments, governments, courts, etc., as well as lower authorities, like county and district assemblies and councils, etc. No changes for the better will come, unless the citizens themselves take part in the work and do their best.

What kind of worldly rule is the best? This question cannot be answered here in full so as to cover all possible cases. It can be answered only according to some general principles. Thus it may be said that a mild rule is better than a harsh rule, that a considerate rule is extremely better than a reckless rule, and that some kind of self-governing is far much better than a dictatorship, by which one man or one woman exercises a totalitarian rule.

Where the Christian church has worked over a long period of time, people have become convinced that *a democratic system is the best*. If we exclude here the short period during the times of classical antiquity (some centuries B.C.), the democratic system has developed through the influence of Christian ideas, on the basis of Christian doctrine, Christian ethics, and therefore also Christian brotherhood. Only under such influence will ideas like "civil rights" and "human value" be properly understood. In this field, therefore, all Christians have a great contribution to give to the world, for example in matters of justice, human rights, welfare, social service, relief work, etc. Furthermore, the Christian thoughts, if strongly and well presented, will infuse into the worldly community a spirit of humility, unselfishness, and a mind of stewardship and service. Only a democratic system is capable of attaining such things. On the other hand we should never expect too much of these things in this world, from any political system or from any kind of political party or regime. All authorities consist only of human beings. They are often inconsistent in their minds and in their work. Often they may also be influenced by some kind of fear, that is very common among those in power, or by private and secret aspirations, or

by relatives, by financial contacts, and possibly by many other things, and not in the least by doubtful trends of the time. Yet, Christians have been called to be the salt of the earth. Therefore they have also been called to work, "while it is day; night comes, when no one can work". (Jn 9:4)

This is, therefore, the position of all Christians: as citizens under worldly rule they have the duty to subordinate themselves under its laws and authorities, and *this duty must be recognized also by the spiritual rule*. As citizens in the Kingdom of God they have the duty to subordinate themselves under the laws of this Kingdom, and *this duty must be recognized by the worldly rule, or else it is totalitarian and tyrannic*. It should be noted, however, that "duty" and "laws" in the Kingdom of God are not laws in the same sense as elsewhere. The "laws" in the Kingdom of God are characterized more by the love and grace of God, which have made it possible for sinful men to enter the Kingdom and by faith to remain there as citizens and the children of God.

4

ETHICS AND MORALITY

Quite often there is some confusion with regard to the words "ethics" and "morality". What is the difference between the two terms, or what do they have in common? Often they can be used alternately, which means that if the one word is used it can quite well be replaced with the other word. But on a different level of speech we can find a rather clear distinction between the two words. "Ethics" often means *the principles* governing our ways of acting, and also *the fundamental teaching* about these principles, whereas *the personal application* of such principles is called "morality" or "morals". It is exactly here we touch upon a real difficulty with regard to the two terms. If an ethical way of acting in a certain sphere of life can be called "a moral way of acting", then, logically, the opposite way ought to be called "immoral", but the word "immoral" nowadays is a word often applied to certain bad modes of life, for example in sexual matters. To avoid thoughts in this direction we may rather say "un-ethical", when we speak about modes of life that do not reach a good ethical standard. In the following, therefore, we prefer to use the word "unethical" in such cases to avoid misunderstanding.

How can it be decided what is "right" and "wrong"?

Many prefer to think that such matters will be decided according to the trends of the time and by "the general progress of civilization", or through certain schools of philosophy and similar things which they wish to refer to. When asked which the powers are behind such a "development" they very often fail to give an answer. Other people prefer to speak more generally about "ideas", "progress", etc.

Whatever words we use, and whatever ideas we wish to support, it seems clear that there are different ethical judgments and principles at work. But *how* do they work? On what kind of foundation do they rest? Besides some very popular ideas, sometimes very indistinct and thus very hard to understand and explain, let us mention here two main lines of

thought that have both shaped and coloured the ethical teaching in many parts of the world for two centuries or more.

One principle reads: "*What is useful to the individual is ethically good*", or "*What is useful for personal development is ethically good.*" A second principle reads: "*What promotes true humanity is ethically good*", or "*What is in accordance with true human ideas is ethically good*". Both these lines of thinking are very unsatisfactory. In many parts of the world they also seem to be challenging and threatening to family and community life because of being too individualistic. Furthermore, these lines of thinking are very unsatisfactory from another point of view. They do not answer the question they are supposed to answer. Instead they try to answer it by just repeating it, although this is done with different words. This becomes quite clear, if we change the words of the second question (both alternatives) and of the expected answer only slightly. Question and answer then read: "What is right to do for a person who wants to be human in the good sense of the word?" "It is to act so as to promote what is 'human'." Anybody ought to be able to see that everything here circles round the word "human" or "humanity". To act "humanly" thus means to do what promotes "humanity". Such a statement does not give much sense. It is almost nonsensical.

A third principle is closely related to the two already mentioned. It reads: "Only such things are ethically right and good *that promote the happiness of people.*" An alternative to this principle stresses emotional things, for example *the experience of happiness* in different spheres of life. A second alternative stresses *the sensual and physical feelings of happiness*. Sometimes all the demands according to the three alternatives in this group have been *worded politically*: "*The principle ought to be the greatest measure of happiness to the greatest number of people.*"

The three last-mentioned alternatives are only examples of many existing ideas. Because of their failure they all demonstrate that a superior principle is needed, if we wish to attain a satisfactory order of ethical values, for example if we

wish to answer a question like this: What principle is to be followed, if we have to choose ethically at the crossroads of life?

Which are the answers given to this question? Very many will answer: *Reason*. Then they take it for granted that man can argue with himself according to reason and thus find what is good and right. Is it a correct starting-point? Can we find the right way between satisfying our own wishes and the wishes of other people as well as between short-term and long-term wishes and demands?

In the discussion about these principles we have approached one of the greatest problems of all times in ethical matters. The above-mentioned question about a superior principle can also be worded like this: Who can decide, or who is to decide, what the superior principle in ethics should be? Is it the people itself, e.g. in the country, and, if this is the case, which body in the country? Very few would like to settle the matter in such a way. Instead they prefer to speak about "personal freedom" and "personal integrity", "pluralism", and similar things. In this case "pluralism" means that many different ideas are recognized at the same time, as being of similar value and importance, and allowed to compete on the same conditions. Then, after some time, the great trouble presents itself. None of the competing ideas or systems has managed to lead the way or have a healthy influence on the people or the community. Instead the many competing ideas have worked together in the direction of a moral disintegration. Then there is a general despair about what to do. Under such conditions the people may become the victim of another bad idea: it needs "a strong leadership", "the state must take the responsibility for the people by giving the proper instructions about what is right and wrong". When this has been stated politically, it often means "the creation of law and order". Very often this is a cover-name for dictatorship. This is exactly what has happened to many peoples when the great ethical principles had been lost. In their ethical confusion and disorder people became the victims of a totalitarian rule. Under the new conditions matters very often grew worse. The ethical standards do not increase, sometimes they decrease

terribly. - When we have understood a little of this, we also understand that there is a great ethical question that needs further study.

Who are to decide what is right and wrong in ethical matters?

The suggestion that the state or the highest political authorities should have to decide in ethical matters does not solve any problems. From where can such authorities obtain their principles? Will it be enough *just to decide what is right and wrong* and then punish all people who do not obey or behave? For sure it would be an easy way for many, but such a solution must be totally discarded, particularly from the ethical point of view. If there is not already a principle available to individual members of the community, and also acceptable to them, how can such a principle be known by the authorities of the state? Is such a principle only a matter of power? If such a principle is not known and generally accepted, but has to be found or even drawn up in a state department, *how can it be accepted as ethical*, and how can it have any influence on the minds and lives of the individual members of the community? If it is enforced on them by force through the authorities, then it will only be disregarded or held in very low esteem, in the worst cases objected to and even disgusted.

It is not a satisfactory solution to let the state itself or the political authorities be responsible for the ethical principles, strictly speaking it is not a solution at all. If the citizens in a country have come only that far in their personal development that they are still ignorant about ethics, then the state cannot solve their problems by issuing orders or recommendations from Government departments. It does not make sense to equip a few in a leading position, for example ministers in certain departments, with a greater responsibility for "morality, law and order", and then hope that in a miraculous way the ignorance of the people will be replaced with good ethical standards. In other words, people on Government level will not become less ignorant just by being in power. If ethical knowledge and strength can be found in them, it is most likely to be there because of their personal ethical standing

and through the ethical resources in the people itself. *Thus, what is needed among all citizens is knowledge, responsibility, co-operation, and, above all, principles and a sense of the destination of life.*

A suggestion has been made how to find a leading principle in ethical matters: it may be found "through the public debate". What is meant is the discussions going on in newspapers, books, magazines, over the radio and television, etc. Those who favour this solution use to say: "When people openly discuss the problems in this way, it will be found which principle is favoured by the greatest number of people, and this method will work for some time at least, until the matter has been debated and reconsidered."

Such a suggestion only brings new difficulties. If there is not a superior principle already at work among this people, a principle by which they may feel bound, what kind of principles do all these debaters follow? What kind of methods do they follow when debating, when they try to convince others about the superiority of their own ideas? There are two powers often referred to in such discussions: *the power of reason*, and *the power of the majority*. Such arguments only bring new difficulties.

When people mention "reason", they forget that "reason" can be understood to mean anything we like to support or gain. "Reason" has been responsible for many of the greatest atrocities in the history of mankind, for example the extermination of not tolerated citizens or prospective human beings.

When people mention "the power of the majority", they often refer to the system of *democracy*. Perhaps they put it this way: a matter, whatever it is, "has to be decided in a democratic way". This sounds good, yet there are many obstacles. In many matters it is totally impossible to vote, or it is a waste of time to vote, because there is nothing people can vote about. The matter has already been decided upon, either they accept this or not. A few examples can show this: it is unnecessary to vote about everybody's *need* of oxygen, about the *need* of food and shelter for every citizen, or whether in civil matters truth and honesty should be respected, etc. What the public authorities *can* discuss is *how*

all this can and should be arranged, *not if there is any need of it*. There cannot be any arguing whether honesty or dishonesty should be preferred in the community, only how honesty can be taught and favoured. The same applies to all major principles of ethics. When we speak about ethical values and choices, they all concern badness and goodness, what is right and wrong, true and untrue. In all these matters there is also a spiritual dimension. We cannot and shouldn't speak or argue, as if we were bodies, *materia*, only. Therefore there are many matters in life that cannot be decided upon according to "views", "debates", or "votes". In such matters we cannot act according to the percentage of those who are for or against a certain way of acting. The same applies also to the highest worldly authorities: in a choice between right and wrong we cannot act according to somebody else's view, even if it is worded in this way: "According to the policy of my department all citizens should..." Let it be extremely clear that what is said here applies to *major ethical principles about what is right and wrong*, it does not apply to the realm of worldly matters, where all lawful authorities have their legal sphere of work.

We also have to remember that democracy has been at work during a fairly short period of history, whereas teaching of ethics has been carried out among all peoples of the world at all times, *irrespective of their systems of rule*. Ethics and morality must exist in all peoples, under all kinds of rule. Therefore the principles cannot depend upon debates, more or less open, more or less sincere, nor upon figures in voting, for or against one way or another. Instead this fact must be accepted by all: there is a difference between right and wrong, between good and evil, between true and untrue. Then the question arises: What do these principles demand from us in this or that particular case? Thus *there is a principle already, according to which we have to act*. We are not allowed to look upon ourselves as the masters of good and evil, instead *we are only the servants of principles already at work*.

It has been found all over the world that democracy is the best form of rule among men. Yet it is a brittle rod to lean against, not in the least if we try to deduct ethical principles

from it. Democracy is a method for the community to rule itself according to laws it may write for itself. If we proceed from such a point, a civil form of rule, to deduct ethical principles out of the form, then we are likely to obtain our own questions as answers: "As the question so the answer." In the end the result of this will be "pluralism" also in the ethical field. This will lead to very different views even on the most elementary principles of right and wrong, or, in other words, *pure nihilism*: "We cannot know what is right or wrong, so we just have to decide about it in each case." Very often such views are worded like this: "One cannot make any difference between right and wrong, it all depends upon the circumstances."

If democracy works in this way, taking upon itself to decide what is basically right and wrong, it will only contribute to a great decline in ethics and morality and the total disintegration of the community as a whole. In such cases it will also, sooner or later, end up in a monopoly of power, where the leaders dictate to the citizens what is right and wrong. Many kinds of dictatorship over the ages had their origin in the slackening of the ethical principles and values. Those who had worked for "total freedom" also in ethical matters landed in slavery under a dictator who felt free to dictate his will and principles to them. As the utmost sign of their slavery and of the greatness of their "saviour" they were forced to thank and praise him for their "freedom" and "independence". There are people in the world even today who have to do this, to thank for a "freedom" that has been forced upon them.

When we realize this swaying to and fro in ethical matters, in times past and present, it is quite natural to ask: is it possible, then, to find a way to go instead of such false and unhappy ways?

There is a way

If we want to find this way, then we must look for the Truth and be very eager to find it. We must also be ready to pay a high price for it. Of course it is impossible to pay with money, but it may be necessary to pay in other ways. It will be necessary to give up preconceived ideas, even if they happen to be our favourite thoughts and very much agree with

the trends of the time. The searching for Truth may also separate us from friends and cut us off from previous relations. This kind of searching almost always begins with individuals. All spiritual and ethical renewal work has begun in this way.

When a person begins to look for the Truth in this way, catchwords and slogans cannot satisfy, nor will any new ideas claiming popularity or general acclamation. The most popular views mostly suffer from the fact that they are superficial and shallow. They do not depend upon any deeper thinking, rather upon a rather obvious lack of thought. The bearers have not matured in any way through their thinking, nor have they become ready to suffer because of it, if need be.

The names we give to this searching for the Truth do not matter so much, either we call it morality or the right way of acting. The greatest difficulty arises when we try to determine what "ethics" means, where ethical principles and norms originate, and also from where the power of ethically good acting comes.

Poor ways

There are many poor ways of stating what an ethical way of acting means and how such acting can be achieved. We have already mentioned the role of reason, debate, and democracy. Another, more simple way is to try to obtain an agreement towards a central point, where all people can agree. What is intended in this case is a kind of moderation: "not too much, not too little", or, "no excesses, neither to the right, nor to the left". Let it be stated immediately that such schemes do not solve any problems. They are too superficial and too populist, because if such lines were right, then ethics would always be the science of compromises, not anything firm to rest on, and no clear destination. An ethical way of acting would then be a middle course between what is too good and what is too bad. It would also be a matter of toeing the line, drawn according to the votes from two sides, a matter of compromise between different people about "what should be considered to be the best choice", not a decision from the bottom of one's heart about what is right or wrong, true or false. To act in such a way would be to admit: Such things as

lies, thefts, adultery, and murder are not evil in themselves, if we dare call some actions by such names, we only wish to state that we have drawn up some lines by compromise about how we may look upon them. - Everybody must agree that this is a wrong way of treating the subject of ethics.

There is another popular way of stating what is good or bad, right or wrong. In this case people explain things to be good or bad, but only in different "shades" of something that is in itself fairly neutral, neither black, nor white, rather a greyish mass that differs in colour from perhaps dark grey to light grey, yes, sometimes nearly white. This is not a suitable way of handling matters of ethics.

Other people try the almost opposite way. They solve the problem of good and evil by drawing up a list of evil things and actions that should be considered as really wrong and bad. In accordance with their list they say: This is forbidden, this you must avoid under all circumstances. - This model appears to many to be very good, in fact the safest way of making sure what is right and wrong and what is an ethical way of acting. It is not so. Although the method claims to give a positive contribution in ethics, it can rightly be called "the way of prohibitions". It only tells what we shouldn't do, whereas it is silent about what we ought to do. Besides the superficial way of thinking this model is extremely dangerous in another way: *many will think that what is not on the list will almost automatically be allowed.* Then such new, sinful things that have not yet been included with the list will be allowed! This way of teaching ethics has been practised in many religions, and also in some Christian movements, not in the least during certain periods of revival. The model is very unsatisfactory. It is both superficial and unfair to people. A few examples will show this.

If we look at two persons doing exactly the same outward thing, we might think their action should be credited with the same ethical value. Then we have forgotten that the circumstances may be totally different. The actions must be examined and valued according to these circumstances. To state this is not to make ethical standards and values float, it is exactly the opposite. First one very plain example. We find, at two different occasions, a man smashing a window to

enter a shed near a river. He comes out with some ropes and a couple of oars. It is a thief. At the second occasion we report the case as house-breaking and theft. In fact, in this case a man needed the things to rescue a person from drowning in the river. In this case the man also contacted the owner and returned the things. Perhaps the man was awarded a medal for bravery. - In cases like these all "lists" of "allowed and forbidden" are very poor instruments.

Another example will show the same. Say there are two cases of a man and a woman having sexual intercourse. Place, age, and time of the day are almost the same. Ways of caressing etc. are very much the same. Where are the two couples on the "list"? In one case it is a *married couple*, in the other case it is also *married people*, but *not married to each other*, they are married to two other persons. It is totally impossible to say that the two couples are acting in the same way, ethically speaking, although they are acting in the same outward way. In the first case it is a lawful way of practising one side of their marriage, in the second case the two are breaking clear ethical rules. These are two main lines. Besides the two lines there are dozens of factors that have to be considered, when we speak about what is ethical or not in connection with love and marriage. The principles can never be accounted for on detailed lists, covering everything.

Another example will show the same. Two persons are telling exactly the same story, word by word, and the occurrence they are speaking about has really happened. Thus the story is true, although it is sad. Yet one of them is totally right in telling the story, the other person is totally wrong in telling it. How can this be explained? The first one is giving evidence in court. Being an eyewitness to what has happened he is liable to give evidence. He has been called by the court to do so. His telling of the story is also good for another reason: by giving evidence he serves the community and helps the court to uphold the difference between right and wrong. The blame for what has happened must be administered correctly, possibly by a sentence in court. - The other person, who goes round telling the same story to anybody willing to listen to him, is totally wrong. The thing he speaks about is no matter of his, and thus he is meddling in other people's affairs. To

talk like he is doing, when it is not necessary and when it may become detrimental to an individual or individuals, perhaps a whole family, is un-ethical, and in many cases it may develop into a court-case because of being *defamatory*. On this point many will disagree: "If what he says is true, he cannot be sentenced for telling it." Yes, he can! *It is not necessary to go round, telling anybody what you know is true!* In very many countries there are laws stipulating that you can be sentenced for telling people even things that are true, because it was no business of yours to tell such things. Perhaps the matters have already been settled in court, and your additional words were considered to be spoken with the intention of doing harm. Even without such an intention you can be sentenced. It may be considered that you have made it difficult for the person to adjust himself to an ordinary social life after the court case. Some other aspects about your way of speaking will be taken up later.

The examples given here could be amplified by the dozen. They all show that personal actions can never be examined or compared by the outward look only. *If* we have to examine them, it should always be done according to both the outward and the intrinsic circumstances, their origin, their aim, and also the powers at work when the actions were taken. A person can do a certain thing under extreme pressure, whereas another person can do the same thing quite willingly. Look again at an example of two thieves. The one does not know about any plan whatsoever, when he happens to meet a friend. This friend takes him along for a walk, then threatens him with a weapon and orders him to enter a house and bring out some valuables which are to be found at a certain place inside. If he comes out without those things he will be shot, he is told. The friend has planned everything in detail, also the walk. Now, if the police arrive on the spot and the one outside escapes and the one inside is caught, who is the greatest and the real thief?

The disposition of mind and heart

We can look at the same problem from another side. We find two persons doing, as we may think, the same "good work" in exactly the same manner. Therefore we may also think that

their "good work" has exactly the same ethical value. This is, as a matter of fact, how most people judge in many cases. If, instead, we decide to question the two, point by point, how and why they have acted, we may come upon very astonishing facts. One of them may indicate that his way of acting was not remarkable at all: "It is quite natural to do this", he says very humbly, but when we press him on this point, he says he had no choice. It was an inner force that urged him to do it. He explains this fact in almost the same way as Jeremiah: "There is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot." Jer 20:9. This is exactly how many "good works" can be explained. - Now let us look at the other case, which may look exactly the same to the outward eye. To our astonishment the one who acted may say: "To me this thing does not matter very much, but when I saw this other fellow doing it, I just did the same. Personally I could very well have left it undone, or I could have done a different thing, perhaps also the opposite." - This being so, how can we ever think of comparing two persons, thinking their "good works" are the same?

When assessing the ethical values of different actions we must always consider *the disposition of mind and heart in the person concerned*. We can also add: Actions or "good works", formally looking good, but done in a mood of indifference or with a secret purpose, are not only short of goodness, they must be branded as false and hypocritical. They do not help to create harmony among us. What is untrue and false cannot be integrated into a fellowship or community that wishes to rest on understanding, good-will, and love.

Thus the question remains: from where does the measure come, by which it will be possible to know and assess what is good or evil? Or how can we ever state that something is wrong or false, if there isn't anything that can be called good, or if nobody knows what "good" and "right" is? The argument that we do not know and that we cannot know is totally false. Nobody should be allowed to call a road or a railway straight or curved, if there isn't anything in this world that can be called straight or crooked. On this point we all agree, but the same principle applies also in all matters of

ethics: Nobody ought to allow himself to call things bad, or actions and deeds wrong or bad or untrue, if there isn't anything in this world that can be called right, good, or true. As a matter of fact very few in the whole world would ever testify to such a state of affairs, that we do not know any differences of this kind. On the contrary all people, having all kinds of opinions, make repeated statements about what is right and wrong, good and evil. They may not know *why* they do so. Therefore we may ask them: "Good, bad, true, false, compared to what? What do you compare with?" The very fact, that they make these statements, like "wrong", "false", and "untrue", clearly demonstrates the existence of the opposite, the existence of something "right", and "true". How could they observe the difference then? They must have used a kind of gauge, an instrument, when measuring. Without an instrument for measuring, all statements about badness, evil, and lies, would be like talking to the winds.

The role of conscience in matters of ethics

According to the teaching in Holy Scripture God has revealed Himself to all people by speaking in their "hearts", i.e. through their *consciences*. Every human being has such an instrument in his innermost being. Many have tried to deny this fact, for example by asking *where it is located in the body*. Perhaps they explain this further: We have investigated every part of the human body, by chemical tests, under the microscope, etc., but we have not discovered even the tiniest little thing that could be the locality of a conscience. Such a statement is very poor arguing. It can be answered in this way: Have you examined the migratory birds in the same way and found that they have no sense for migration located in their bodies? According to the seasons they move from one part of the world to another, and it is very remarkable that they return to the place where they were born. Yet the most remarkable thing is that the youngest birds, which have never seen the other continent, the country or the place where their parents came from, very often leave their place of birth separated from their parents. How can they reach their destination, then? There is definitely in them a sense of distance and direction, but where is the instrument? Not even under the strongest microscope will it be possible to find this

instrument, yet it works, and it has worked over thousands of years. Such an unseen instrument is a good illustration of *conscience, the unseen instrument that works in man.*

The word "conscience" exists in very many languages in about the same form: the word has two parts, con-science, meaning "to know together", but knowledge together with whom? The meaning is that the owner of the conscience "knows something together with God". Therefore the meaning of this word is: When we hear the voice of our conscience, we have a knowledge together with God about a basic truth, what is right or wrong here, what is good or evil, what is true or false. It has not been possible to point out even a single people in the world as being totally without such a knowledge. Some may have a rather weak knowledge. Some may seem to have given up their knowledge and no longer know of any difference. Then they have also had the ethical values taken away from them over long periods of time, or they have been brainwashed under immoral propaganda departments. Yet, even so there remains under the smoking ashes a slight fire, or there is heard at times a thin voice speaking to them about right and wrong. This voice can never be totally silenced.

The voice is different and speaks differently in different individuals. This only proves that *no conscience is infallible.* Conscience is an instrument that needs adjustment. Most consciences have been poorly lit by stronger lights. Sometimes they work like instruments that are used only occasionally and are poorly serviced. Sometimes the bearer of a conscience has acted against it so many times that its functioning has been disordered. It can be compared to a mechanical instrument for measuring which has been "adjusted" in such a way that it gives wrong figures. - All these facts must be considered when we examine the functioning of the consciences.

The existence of the conscience among all peoples, whatever their religion or belief, must be acknowledged by all Christians. This is the most important point where there is a possibility of understanding and co-operation, as we shall see later. The Bible says: "When Gentiles who have not the law /of Mose/ do by nature what the law requires, they are a law

to themselves." Rom 2:14. This statement deals with the basic law, showing the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, telling people that they should not steal or murder or speak lies. Anybody can prove what is said here by travelling through areas untouched by "modern civilization" or Christian influence. In such areas people respect the laws of life and property, unless they have become suspicious of tricks against their own safety.

In many cases such people do not have the word "conscience" in their vocabulary. They have other words instead. They may say "the heart", "the thoughts of the heart", or they speak about some uneasiness they feel or about some "groaning" inside. The words in themselves do not decide the matter. It is decided by *the fact that people know a difference between right and wrong*. On this point the work of the conscience is twofold: approving of what is good, condemning what is evil: "What the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accuse or perhaps excuse them." Rom 2:15. To make the right choice can thus be explained in this way: To "take pains to have a clear conscience toward God and toward men". Acts 24:16. Also people of different beliefs and religions will probably accept the words of St. Paul on this point.

Where opinions differ

Many people have argued strongly against the existence of a conscience. They call it "an accumulation of thoughts and ideas over the ages", or they say it is a proof of all kinds of fears people have had in times past. Such statements are strongly contradicted by the testimony of history. All peoples that are known to us through their written documents, in whatever form, dating from over four thousand years ago, have had a clear knowledge about the difference between right and wrong.

It often happens that people misunderstand what the word "conscience" stands for. This becomes clear if they refer to their "conscience" when in fact they are only ventilating their ordinary thoughts, their home-made doctrines, or their

personal judgments about persons or ideas. It is an abuse of the word "conscience" to speak in such a way. The instrument we call conscience is restricted to function only with regard to the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, true and false. This may be demonstrated by an example from the political life. If a certain party wishes to favour a certain group of people in a most unfair way and to the clear disadvantage of other people, a speaker is *right* in saying that it is against his conscience to approve of such a plan. But if he further states that he is bound by his conscience to work against that party *by all means, in all matters*, then he is *wrong*. If the other party is acting wisely in other matters, *his conscience cannot tell him to work against those matters, nor to do this by all means*. The speaker has mixed matters of conscience with matters of political opinion, or rather matters of conscience with party politics. Such mixing is very common and includes an abuse of the word "conscience". Such mixing is also commonly found in other spheres of life.

Some people listen to the voice of their conscience, some do not. Some people listen regularly, some only occasionally. The standard of the consciences therefore is most variant. In some people the conscience is at work, it may be fully awake. In other people it is, as it were, sleeping. When his conscience works, a person may find himself having a "good" or "clear" conscience. Then he knows that he has done what is right. On the other hand he has a "bad" or a "guilty" conscience, when he has done what is wrong. Sometimes we say that a person "has had the conscience" to do a certain thing. It means that he has consented to do the thing, although he knew it was wrong.

When the conscience of a person does not function, it may have been silenced in some way. When such silencing is repeated, the conscience may be nearly dead or completely silenced. Yet it may become aroused by something happening to the person or in the vicinity. In the Christian language we may say that the person has been touched by God or by God's Word in such a way that he has been "waked, like a

man that is wakened out of his sleep". Zech. 4:1. Such wakening may be done by fellow-beings that serve as alarm-bells, but strictly speaking it is only God who can waken up such people who are deeply down in spiritual sleep. Under different headings in the following chapters we shall have to deal with different questions, where many examples will be given of the existence and the work of the conscience.

5

ETHICS WITH A WORLDLY OR A CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION

Sometimes it has been taught that only religious people can have ethical principles and thus also act ethically. This must be a misunderstanding of facts. There are many ethical systems, held and followed by people who do not believe in God but yet have high ethical principles and also try to live accordingly. Such systems must be acknowledged and valued also by Christians, and this for two reasons. Both by their thoughts and their lives such people confirm the Christian doctrine that we have all been created by God, and that by creation we have been equipped with a conscience and a particular talent of thinking and acting according to some spiritual laws. Secondly all people, also non-believers who act according to ethical principles, make a positive contribution to the community and to its welfare and thereby work against the powers of destruction in this world.

On the other hand we must recognize another fact: through the ages the teaching of ethics to a high degree has depended upon religion as a spiritual power for its ethical values and strength. In more recent times different types of worldly or "secular" ethics have become more frequent. Their views vary much from very loose to rather strong ideas about what is good, acceptable, poor, or bad ethical behaviour. Therefore such systems must be valued differently. Yet, as long as they insist on ethics generally and on a clear difference between right and wrong, they have a contribution to give to the life of the community. We must admit this: if such people were missing, the prospects of the community would be much darker.

Why do what is right?

It cannot be denied that there is a great difference already in the fundamental thoughts of those who believe in God, and those who do not have such a belief. Those who deny the

existence of God cannot give a satisfactory answer as to why we should do what is right and avoid doing what is wrong. Thus they find themselves in an awkward position. If they admit that *there are things which are good in themselves and aiming towards a good purpose*, they have somewhat given up their atheistic starting-point. And why? Because what has not been created by a divine power but appeared by mere chance cannot be "good" in itself or directed towards a goal. Their difficulties with an alternative are also great, but for an opposite reason: If they are compelled to admit that there are things that can be called "good" in themselves and also have a "purpose" in themselves, why are they called "good" then? Is the mark "good" only haphazard work? If this had been the case, we would have to admit that there isn't anything that can be called "good", or "ethics", or "morality".

Those who call themselves atheists or non-believers wish to avoid, it seems, two ideas: that there is a Creator, and that already from Creation there is a power that can govern our thinking and acting in ethical matters. In other words, what they wish to avoid is the idea of a conscience or a built-in idea in man of what is right and wrong. They say it is impossible that such an idea has been there from the beginning. Is it really? There are so many other things and ideas that have existed right from the beginning. As examples we can mention two "rules" that people have lived with and that we cannot discard. They are accepted all over the world. When we count, two times two nowhere in the world makes three or five. Stones or balls tossed up in the air quickly come down again. We do not believe there was a time when these two rules did not work exactly in the same way as now, for example that stones or balls earlier disappeared upwards into space. If we use these examples, we cannot imagine either that there was ever a time, when it was considered to be right in general to steal or murder, or that honesty was forbidden. And in the same way with many other things where we speak about right and wrong. Therefore we must agree that the present rules of conscience must have been the equipment of all human beings in all times, whatever the

views of those who call themselves non-believers. Their view is wrong, yet we encourage them when for other reasons they stand up for what is good. On this point we can agree with them.

The difference between Christian and non-Christian ethics

We must all accept to live in the world where we are. We cannot live in a world of dreams only. Since the world we live in is also a fallen world, *we need a law on different levels and for different purposes*. First of all *we need an outward law* to govern our lives, both individually and in the community and in the world in general. Without the existence and the work of such a law all human life would be impossible. Everybody would be everybody's enemy, and nobody else would be able to stop their arguments or fights. *The outward law has an ally in our own hearts, our conscience*. Furthermore the law, often or generally supported by our conscience, tells us what is right and wrong. On these points many non-believers also agree. They disagree, however, on the point, where they have to explain where the sense of law and obedience comes from, and yet they agree on the difference between right and wrong.

As for Christians they know the law in another way: When we are told by the law and by our conscience that we cannot fulfil what the law tells us to do, the law becomes a very strict and severe master, either forcing us to despair or to seek help. If we seek this help from Christ, the Saviour, then the law has become "a custodian" that brings us to Christ, the only one who can help. Gal 3:24. If we look at the law from any of these points of view, it is not an enemy, rather it ought to be regarded as a friend and helper. It becomes an enemy only if we use it instead of Christ, as a way of becoming righteous in our own way, in order to save ourselves by being obedient to the law.

Because of the difference in views there is always an arguing between different systems of ethics. There are some non-believers that call their system "truly human". By these words they wish to dissociate themselves from all thoughts about God or a creation, instead they wish to build their

ethics upon "what is human" and "what is according to reason". In these matters they argue in a circle: first they describe what is "truly human", and then they prove the value of their ethical rules by comparison with their description. Such a way of arguing only proves the lack of a real foundation. In a similar way anybody else can first make his private description of what is "human" and then prove his humanity by a comparison with the description. At the same time we must admit that *practically* many non-believers act more wisely. Instead of following such theories they follow plain and practical ideas of what is right and wrong. This means that they follow the ruling of a conscience working rather much against their theoretical denials of creation and conscience.

Christians, on the other hand, both teach and act from a different startingpoint. They admit and accept the existence of God, a creation by God, and God's revelation of Himself in this world. This revelation is found in God's Word, in "the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us", i.e. Jesus Christ. Jn 1:14.

As a matter of fact there have been Christian scholars holding the view that only the Christian church can teach ethics, because only in the Church of God is there a true knowledge of God. Such teaching must be considered to be wrong. We have already shown why it is so (p 59). Even in fallen man there is a certain knowledge about right and wrong. There is heard a stronger or weaker voice, called conscience. This fact also applies to non-believers. We must also admit that there are systems of ethics also among non-Christians and non-believers, sometimes on a high level. In not so few cases such ethical thinking will surpass what many Christians show in their belief and lives. Therefore all Christians ought to acknowledge all ethical teaching and practising, where it stands up for what is really good and denounces and resists what is evil.

Why the non-believers cannot be recognized in everything

First there are two things that must be kept apart. The one thing is their thoughts and behaviour in ethical matters: if they teach and observe a real difference between right and

wrong they ought to be recognized on these points, because they are on the right side in the fight against all evil. The other thing is their position with regard to matters of religion and faith: it happens that they mingle their ethical teaching and practice with matters of false religion or pure atheism. In these matters their views and teaching cannot be accepted. Therefore *the recognition of their ethical teaching should not be misunderstood and taken as a recognition of their teaching in religious matters, if there is such teaching.* If they use their ethical systems as a way of "proving" that Christianity is wrong and as a way of counteracting Christianity, then they have changed their "ethics" into a religious system and thereby become real enemies of Christianity. These examples also show that only the ethical principles by themselves, and the ethical way of living, if there is such, can be recognized by Christians, not the false religious ideas sometimes attached to the ethics.

It is necessary to have these principles in mind, because very often we find how religious ideas are mixed with ethical ideas, although the bearers themselves have declared themselves to be non-religious. These facts also explain why so many worldly systems of ethics both fail in fulfilling their aims and, still worse, end up in an un-ethical behaviour. A system may have started on a fairly sound ethical basis, but because of an inherent animosity against all religion and anything similar to God and creation, it has ended up in favouring immoral things, yes, even atrocities. Rom 2:14-16; 1:28-32.

"Loans" from the Christian teaching of ethics

It is no secret that many systems of thought, also in ethics, have been influenced by the Christian teaching. Thus there are thoughts about "love", "fidelity", "charity", "brotherhood", etc., which were not originally found in these systems. Thus Christian teaching has become a common source, from which many have drawn. Many of the atheistic doctrines of ethics, which they claim have been worked out according to "reason" only, evidently have their origin in the teaching of Jesus and His apostles. It is not necessary to argue about this fact to prove the source of origin. It is better to accept it as a fact, and then continue to present the Christian teaching in its

clearest form. Then the world and the different schools of ethics will have much more to draw from, to the benefit of the whole of mankind.

The state, ethics, and morality

As we have already seen, it would be totally wrong to say that ethics can be found only within the Christian church. Although morality is to be found only in individuals, either they are believers or non-believers, the teaching about morality and ethical principles is a matter for the whole community, and for the state, if the community is organized in such a way.

The questions about ethics and morality are of the greatest importance to the life of all people. "If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand." Mk 3:24. If a people wishes to continue as a people, it cannot take the risk of allowing or encouraging immorality. It is a very sad fact, however, that in many parts of the world people have come very near such a point. Perhaps it is not done openly, rather it is done in another, more secret way. Under the disguise of such terms as "personal freedom", "personal choice", "personal integrity", etc., it is very often stated, also officially, that the community cannot and shouldn't try to impose any ethical values upon its members. Therefore, they say, the community ("the state" and similar) ought to "remain neutral". Although this sounds both kind and logical, it may be interpreted in a very different way. There are powers at work to exploit for example the youths and their need and demand for amusements. By such powers the signals from the authorities will be taken as green light for further propaganda and exploitation. This is a very difficult matter to handle in all modern nations. Governments and other authorities are very often called upon to act to stop the unsound business, performed by such powers, but parliaments and governments cannot enforce ethics, morality or good behaviour upon people. If they tried to do so by legislation, it would only result in falseness and hypocrisy. On the other hand the "neutrality" of the official authorities is false as well. It is exploited all over the line by agencies that know how to look after their business and scrap ethical views and values.

Sometimes it has been suggested that only "an ethical minimum" should be the aim of the official authorities, whereas the field would be open for individuals, spiritual organizations and the Christian church to plead and work for "higher ethical standards". Although this suggestion may look rather acceptable, it involves a great danger. It is very near the suggestion already mentioned that the authorities should remain "neutral". Furthermore "the ethical minimum" is very likely to be understood by many as "a standard as low as possible". Such thoughts would no doubt result in ethical and moral deterioration.

It is impossible to deal here with this great problem in full, but it may be possible to point at a few possible lines of action.

How it can work

In its *lawmaking* the worldly community ought to express *the strongest sense of justice* that is to be found in the people itself. Since no religious believers of any kind whatsoever can dictate such laws to their nation, the lawmakers will have to follow what is wanted and accepted by all people of good will. This means that the laws must be worded *according to reason, the conscience of reasonable people, and sound experience*. Such principles are found in the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", accepted by the United Nations. This Declaration may serve as an illustration of what citizens in all countries can and should agree about, and, to the greatest extent ever possible, also practise. To some particular "human rights" we shall have to come back in the following.

In the "articles" mentioned here "freedom of conscience" is essential. If the states write their laws according to these and similar recommendations, and then also uphold laws through their instruments of justice, for example police, courts, high and supreme courts, etc., then the freedom and integrity of all people will be fairly well safeguarded. In this way it will be possible for every citizen to think and act according to the ethical principles that have convinced him of being the best. This is not to be neutral in matters of ethics, as far as the

community itself is concerned, on the contrary, *it is to stand up for ethical values and standards of high dignity*. It is not to rule over them in detail, but it gives ample room for them in the community.

On the other hand states, courts, government departments, etc., can deal only with outward matters that may be handled and measured by such outward instruments that are available to them. Such authorities do not rule over thoughts or consciences. Therefore spiritual matters, and matters of feelings, sentiments, taste, and conscience, cannot be decided upon by state authorities. In most cases they must be left to individuals, groups and organizations, the Christian church and the like, who may take upon themselves to try to assess what is right from the spiritual point of view, and, wherever possible, advise on the matters and also let such views be known to the lawmakers and the authorities. In this way it will be possible to know more than superficially what ought to be changed or improved in the community for ethical reasons. On the other hand, a completely just and ethical system, that can work also officially, will not be found in this world, and yet it is the duty of all to work and strive in that direction.

Some consequences of these principles

The relation between the ethics of the community (the state) and the ethics of the individual citizens cannot and mustn't be regarded as a relation between superiors and inferiors. There is nothing saying that the ethics of the authorities is higher than that of the citizens. Nor can the authorities demand or impose a certain moral standard upon their citizens. They can demand obedience and compliance with laws and rules, but that is a different thing. The powers of ethics and morality work along other lines, and the ethical standards of a people are raised in a different way, neither by law, nor by Government orders or enforcements. A few examples will be enough to prove this.

During certain periods in history the moral standards of some peoples have been at a low ebb. Cheating, robbery, assaults, adultery, and fornication then were common traits. How did the change come about then, since those peoples did not

continue in that way up to their end? The first ones behind the changes were not the lawmakers or the authorities. If they tried, they often tried in vain. If and when they started to succeed, there had already been a stir among the people itself, when a few conscientious people or a single prophet had first pulled the rope of the alarm-bell. On a smaller scale this is what always happens when there are obvious signs of moral changes in a people.

When there is an awakening in a people it ought to cover all kinds of ethical matters. On this point there is a great problem today almost all over the world. The sense of balance seems to have been lost. While the reins of the authorities seem to have slackened in many departments with regard to ethics, there is a clear stiffening with regard to economical and financial matters. Whereas ethical aspects are more or less disregarded in many fields of the community life, the efforts of many departments and other authorities are directed against "financial crimes", committed in connection with declarations of income, taxation, financial transactions, etc. This official energy does not correspond at all with the somewhat inefficient procedures in other departments. There may be some rather obvious explanations to these facts. One is that money, the false god "Mammon", rules in so many places. Another explanation is that the general teaching of ethics has slackened and deteriorated on so many hands, in education, in the churches, etc., and that many have taken this as a signal to provide themselves with advantages and money by lawful and unlawful means. Weak Government departments and other authorities thus have proved upon themselves the saying that "as you make your bed, so you must lie on it".

If we wish to work for not only a better balance between the different actions against crimes, and still more a real change in attitudes, it is essential that we work together, individuals, officials, spiritual organizations, and, above all, the Church. What must be impressed upon state authorities, courts, organizations, etc., is the necessity of all people co-operating towards obedience, compliance with laws, the upholding of good ethical thinking and acting, and that the good conscience

is everywhere held in good esteem. Only where this is done all over the field can the present unbalance be changed for something better.

How is the Christian teaching on ethics to be presented?

The most important thing is not to present detailed rules in all kinds of matters. There are two strong reasons for not doing so. First, we do not master the facts in all fields of work or life. If we then try to impose our views on all kinds of things, we will only bring Christianity into disrespect. Secondly, if we try to write detailed rules for all situations in life, we will change the character of true Christianity and give people a wrong understanding of what Christianity is. It will be legalistic, and people will understand it as such. Our teaching will then amount to a binding of burdens, "heavy burdens, hard to bear". Mt 23:4. While following any of these wrong ways we will miss the one thing we ought to have in mind in all Christian teaching of ethics: in ethics, as well as in the saving gospel, everything is centred round Jesus Christ. As He is the Alpha and Omega in the one thing, salvation, so He is in Christian ethics as well.

There is a living connection between the Gospel and the Christian principles of ethics. On this point many people fail, both in their belief and in their way of living. Some of them wish to have Jesus Christ as their Saviour, but at the same time they wish to keep their ethics and their morality to themselves. This is what they call their "personal freedom" and their "integrity". On the other hand there are people who wish to have Jesus as a teacher in ethics and as a moral example they wish to follow, but they refuse to recognize Him as the Son of God and the Saviour of man. There are also some standpoints between: some people believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the Saviour of man, *but* what He taught long ago has become outdated on many points and therefore has to be replaced by "what a more modern time and society demand". Of course such a conception of things cannot be regarded as a Christian view.

The Christian teaching of ethics must be based on a solid Christian and Biblical foundation. It must start with the question *who* Jesus Christ is, what He teaches about God,

about Himself and His Kingdom, about man and the world, about time and eternity. Only in this way will it be possible to obtain the right proportions and the right direction of life. It will, therefore, be necessary to start from the right point: *the will of God*. Without knowledge about His will we cannot speak about Christian ethics.

Jesus has shown us such a starting point: "If any man's will is to do /God's/ will, he shall know whether I am speaking on my own authority." Jn 7:17. When somebody starts in this way, to try to do the will of God, he will soon find how far it will be possible for us to do so, and to live in the right way before God and our fellow-beings, and where real help will be needed. Thus all practising of ethics or moral codes will demonstrate the need of light, help, strength, salvation, new birth, etc. All this is included in the teaching of Jesus, in words, pictures, parables, and deeds: "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, no one comes to the Father, but by me." "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." "As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me." Jn 14:6; 14:15; 15:4. Thus the necessity of the closest connection between Christian ethics and a true faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour is often and strongly stressed in the New Testament, e.g. in words like these: "As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving." Col 2:6-7.

6

FAITH AND LIFE

Christian ethics cannot be understood or duly appreciated if it is isolated from faith. Both faith and ethics depend upon their relation to God, but this is not a personal or individual relation only. A Christian is always a member of God's people, i.e. a member of the Christian community and the worldwide Church. Since these relations are normally treated together with other matters of Christian doctrine in "dogmatics", they are only mentioned here in order to stress their importance in matters of ethics as well.

The importance of faith

If worldly systems of ethics can possibly work without faith of some kind, Christian ethics cannot do so. Instead faith is of the greatest importance, if the principles of ethics are to exercise their influence upon the deeds of a Christian and upon his life in general. How can this be explained? We have already mentioned the personal relation to God, and also the relation between the individual Christians and the Christian community. These relations are clearly manifested in several ways and through very definite means: Baptism, the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, Holy Communion, and the Community of Saints, which in this case means the fellowship with other Christians. The Holy Spirit is the working Agent, working regeneration, faith, justification, and, after this, renewal and sanctification. All these gifts, given by God through His Holy Spirit, are accepted by man through faith. Thus faith is of the greatest importance also in ethics, since through faith the sources of spiritual power are opened to the daily life and work of the believer.

These facts are well accounted for in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Art. III: "Because, indeed, faith brings the Holy Spirit, and produces in hearts a new life, it is necessary that it should produce spiritual movements in hearts. And what these movements are, the prophet, Jer 31:33, shows, when he says, *I will put My Law into their*

inward parts, and write it in their hearts. Therefore, when we have been justified by faith and regenerated, we begin to fear and love God, to pray to Him, to expect from Him aid, to give thanks and praise Him, and to obey Him in afflictions. We begin also to love our neighbours, because our hearts have spiritual and holy movements (there is now, through the Spirit of Christ a new heart, mind, and spirit within). - These things cannot occur until we have been justified by faith, and, regenerated, we receive the Holy Spirit: first, because the Law cannot be kept without (the knowledge of) Christ; and likewise the Law cannot be kept without the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is received by faith, according to the declaration of Paul, Gal 3:14: *That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*”

Faith and godliness

The right relation of a Christian both to God and to fellow-beings is clearly described in the Ten commandments, Ex 20:1-17. "Thus we have the Ten Commandments, a compend of divine doctrine, as to what we are to do in order that our whole life may be pleasing to God, and the true fountain and channel from and in which everything must arise and flow that is to be a good work, so that outside of the Ten Commandments no work or thing can be good or pleasing to God, however great or precious it be in the eyes of the world." (Large Catechism)

The first of the Ten commandments has an exceptional position, and this for two reasons. It is placed first, and thereby it is shown that it is the foremost of all. Secondly it embraces all the rest. If a Christian lives in a right relation to God and really lives according to this commandment, then all the remaining commandments will be followed. "Just this is also the meaning and true interpretation of the first and chief commandment, from which all the others must flow and proceed, so that the word: *Thou shalt have no other gods before Me*, in its simplest meaning states nothing else than this demand: Thou shalt fear, love, and trust in Me as thine only true God. For where there is a heart thus disposed towards God, the same has fulfilled this and all the other commandments. On the other hand, whoever fears and loves

anything else in heaven and upon earth will keep neither this nor any. Thus the entire Scriptures have everywhere preached and inculcated this commandment, aiming always at these two things: fear of God and trust in Him." (Large Catechism)

To true godliness also belongs that we place the commandments of God ahead of all commandments of men. Of course this statement does not deny the fact that parents, teachers, superiors, etc., may be in their right when they give us many instructions and rules which as a general rule we have to follow. At the same time, however, we must realize that it may be a temptation at times to put the very occasional and special orders, obtained from certain persons, ahead of the commandments, given by God. Of course His commandments must be valid at all times, for all people, and at all circumstances. Only in the light of His commandments will it be possible to understand and assess the commandments given among men. In the summing up of his teaching about the Ten commandments Martin Luther makes these remarks: "Here one will find his hands full, (and will have enough) to do to observe these, namely, meekness, patience, and love towards enemies, chastity, kindness, etc., and what such virtues imply. But such works are not of value and make no display in the eyes of the world; for they are not peculiar and conceited works, and restricted to particular times, places, rites, and customs, but are common, every-day domestic works which one neighbour can practise toward another; therefore they are not of high esteem... It will be a long time before they will produce a doctrine or estates equal to the Ten Commandments, because they are so high that no one can attain to them by human power; and whoever does attain to them is a heavenly, angelic man, far above all holiness of the world. Only occupy yourself with them and try your best, apply all power and ability, and you will find so much to do that you will neither seek nor esteem any other work or holiness." (Large Catechism)

Faith and obedience

There are different kinds of obedience. A slave or an insubordinate servant may in many cases seem to be obedient, yet it is an obedience under threat or compulsion. The

obedience in connection with faith is altogether different. A person who believes in Jesus Christ as his Saviour "is in Christ". He is "a new creation". 2 Cor 5:17. Instead of living in the old ties, "in fetters and bonds", such a person has been fitted into a new dependence and a totally new relationship. It has been described in this way: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Gal 2:20. In the new life there is a kind of force, or pressure, but it is the force of love: "For the love of Christ controls us... He died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised." 2 Cor 5:14-15.

This is the kind of obedience that will be the true mark of a believing Christian. This obedience can be explained in many ways. It is a most willing obedience, as St. Peter says: it works, "not by constraint but willingly". 1 Pet 5:2. St. Peter also points to the example Christ Himself has given us for our way of living: "For to this /a life of much suffering/ you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps." 1 Pet 2:21.

On this point it is necessary to balance between two extreme standpoints. On one hand it has often happened that people have stressed the obedience and the following of the good example of Christ, even as far as neglecting the importance of conversion, faith, and regeneration. On the other hand many have done the opposite and neglected the importance of obedience, only stressing the necessity of conversion and faith, etc. What will be the effect of the latter way of thinking? It will be, or at least it may be, faith without love, or "faith apart from works". Such "faith" is dead. Jas 2:26. - This shows us how necessary it is to teach and believe according to what we are taught in Holy Scripture, not according to extreme ideas we may have acquired in other ways.

The law of God is of the greatest importance to obedience. It ought to be remembered, however, that nobody can *become* a Christian by following the law of God. *It is always a matter of grace to become and remain a Christian.* On the other

hand no Christian can be independent of the law. The law must be and remain "a custodian" that constantly forces us to turn to Christ. Gal 3:24. But when living the new life in Christ we also need the law to keep us humble, and to demonstrate to us what the new life in love and obedience demands from us, not as "works of the law", rather as the fruits of faith and love. "When man is born anew by the Spirit of God, and liberated from the Law, that is, freed from this driver, and is led by the Spirit of Christ, he lives according to the immutable will of God comprised in the Law, and so far as he is born anew, does everything from a free, cheerful spirit; and these are called not properly works of the Law, but works and fruits of the Spirit, or as St. Paul names it, *the law of the mind* and *the Law of Christ*. For such men are no more under the Law, but under grace, as St. Paul says." (Formula of Concord)

This is one side of the matter. If we look at the other side, we may understand the importance of the Law and also the importance of obedience: "/Those who believe/ delight indeed in God's Law according to the inner man, but the law in their members /of the body/ struggles against the law in their mind; hence they are never without the Law, and nevertheless are not under, but in the Law, and live and walk in the Law of the Lord, and yet do nothing *from constraint* of the Law." (Formula of Concord)

"Spiritual" and "worldly"

When we deal with obedience we have to come back to "the disposition of mind and heart", briefly treated above (p 52 f). This viewpoint is important in all ethics, but it is still more so in Christian ethics, and this for many reasons. If the outward work is not directed and supported by spiritual powers in our heart and conscience, then it is an outward work only, possibly also false and hypocritical. If the works, e.g. in charity, have not been born in the heart of man, they will soon become routine work or quickly come to an end. And again, only the disposition of love can be the real force that makes us carry out the works of love and charity towards our fellow-beings. Our natural disposition of heart, if allowed to rule, very often would tell us to act otherwise.

We are dealing here with the very secrets in Christian ethics: love and the Christian "spirit", as opposed to the spirit of "natural man". Of course they are not secrets in such a way as to be hidden to all other people. On the contrary: they are very often conspicuous in a very clear way. The secret is: how can they come about in man, and how can they be directed towards people who are not amiable at all, rather repugnant? The only true explanation to such secrets we find in Jesus Christ Himself. He loved the fallen world as far as giving His life for the world. Therefore the admonition can be given to all Christians: "Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." Phil 2:5-7. And Jesus Himself says: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart." Mt 11:29.

There is no doubt that on this point, the inner, spiritual strength and forces, and the following of Christ in a way that goes far beyond the outward copying, Christian ethics has a great contribution to give to all ethics all over the world. This contribution should be considered together with the general commandment also known elsewhere in the world, but most profoundly taught by Jesus: "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them." Mt 7:12. All this points to Christ Himself as the one strong power behind all true ethics: "Apart from me you can do nothing." Jn 15:5.

In the world but not of the world

The faith in Christ and the following of Christ have to be practised "in the world". Thus a Christian is always a citizen of two kingdoms, the Kingdom of Heaven, and a kind of worldly kingdom or nation. In this matter of citizenship it is possible to go wrong in two ways: either by choosing the one and leaving the other, or by stressing the one and neglecting the other, or vice versa. As for His Kingdom Jesus has taught His disciples most clearly how He wants them to act: On one hand "they are not of the world", on the other hand He has "sent them into the world". Jn 17:16-18. Although this may sound quite contradictory, the meaning of the words is clear:

since the disciples have been "transferred to the Kingdom of the beloved Son" (Col 1:13), they should not have the mind or the spirit of the fallen world in them any longer, but yet they have to remain in this outward world, as long as it is the will of God, and there perform what is the will of God.

On this point many who are called Christians, but are deviating from the Christian way, have taught otherwise. They have said that it is necessary to leave all "worldly" connections, e.g. civil professions and vocations, in order to be "real Christians" and truly "spiritual". Strictly speaking such thoughts have their origin in a misunderstanding. Nobody living in this world can be only "spiritual", since all who live here have to live in the body.

The regular work in our worldly professions and vocations is a good work, also pleasing to God, provided it is not sinful in itself. By doing our best in our lawful daily work we may honour and glorify God, who has created both ourselves and our facilities of work, and at the same time we may serve our fellow-beings by the work we are doing.

What kinds of work can a Christian do then? Generally it can be said that an honest and humble Christian can serve God in whatever position has been given to him, since "we are /God's/ workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Eph 2:10.

Of course there are many professions in this world which do not please God and which do not render any useful service to any human being. On the contrary, it is obvious that the work performed in such professions is very harmful to many and in the long run devastating. To take only a few examples we may mention only the business in liquor and drugs, carried out among young people, and also the advising and administering business in different kinds of fraud and swindling.

If anybody then, wishing to be a true Christian, happens to have doubts about the righteousness of his work or profession, or his worldly calling, or any particular work he is expected to carry out there, he ought to consult his spiritual adviser, particularly his pastor. It is always wrong to act

against one's own conscience. Furthermore it has terrible consequences, if somebody's daily work is rewarded professionally, although it is detrimental to the welfare of his fellow-beings, be they near or far off.

Among friends and enemies

It may be quite in order for natural man to make a clear distinction between friend and enemy. Perhaps he acts in the same way with regard to relatives and such people who are outsiders to him. On these points everything will be different where the Christian faith comes in. The believers will become acquainted with totally new relations: people who were before like enemies may be regarded as "brother, and sister, and mother" (Mt 12:50) and, on the other hand, people whom we have regarded as Christian friends may be found to be "false brethren". 2 Cor 11:26. There are more difficulties along this line. If some people are regarded as outsiders, not at all as friends, they may in reality be disciples of Christ, "but secretly, for fear of /their own people/" (Jn 19:38). It is self-evident that all this will create many problems, not only in the relations themselves, but also in the daily life of Christian believers. Then one question may be: How should we treat this person, if we meet him today? Another problem will be: If the Christians show their feelings a little too openly, it may create new problems, both with this person and with others.

Generally it may be said that it is advisable not to be too familiar or confidential with other people in matters of faith, if we do not know their spiritual position well enough. It is, of course, necessary to be kind, open-minded and cheerful in our contacts with such people, without speaking up in matters of confessional character. On the other hand there might be opportunities in such conversations, if the person in question gives you an impression of searching for advice and help. An experienced Christian will have something like a special sense, when such a situation is at hand. A few somewhat testing questions will tell him, if it is a serious wish on the side of the other person, and in this case it will be possible to proceed and be more outspoken. In such conversations it is always advisable to proceed step by step, at the beginning

speaking somewhat hesitatingly, while you pray inwardly about your need of help and God's guidance in the matter. Experience has shown that many, who were previously enemies, on or after such a day have come out in the open and become not only friends but, what is more, true believers. The history of spiritual care has many pages about Nicodemian nights. Jn 3:1-15.

A complication in matters of this kind may occur, if we are questioned later by others, privately, officially, or even in court, about a certain meeting or conversation. If the meeting and the conversation with this person did not concern private and secret things, but instead matters of importance to the community, it is possible and permissible to relate what happened and what was said. If, instead, the conversation had dealt with private matters, like a confession of sin, a confession of faith, or advice in spiritual matters, and if the conversation had been performed under a promise of secrecy, it is not permissible to relate anything. - These questions are extremely important, and all Christians ought to be well instructed about them, in sermons, lectures, circles, etc. It should also be stressed that *a minister of the Church* is strictly bound by his *obligation to observe secrecy*. He is not allowed to spread or even mention a single word from what he has heard in a "confession".

When the believer seems to face the greatest difficulties

There is a very popular idea, both among believers and non-believers, that faith will work somewhat automatically or like a remedy against all kinds of difficulties and calamities. Many also believe that they have the support of God's Word for such a belief. They refer to many promises of this kind: "The path of the upright is a level highway" (Prov 15:19), and also to some words of Jesus, like: "All things are possible to him who believes", and "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will" (Mk 9:23; 11:24). Their method of quoting from the Bible is, however, too simple, and their interpretation still more so. They forget to compare with many other words and with the example given by Jesus Christ Himself. The explanation is that the fulfilment of God's promises very often will be given in a

way quite different from our own thoughts. Sometimes God will give His answer in this way: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor 12:9. Above everything that may be said in this matter a word from Jesus Christ piles up like a tower: "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." Mt 26:39. What about the outcome of such a prayer? On one hand it is said: "He was heard for His godly fear." Heb 5:7. On the other hand it is stated: Although "he was heard", He had to suffer and die. He drank the cup. Jn 18:11; 19:30.

The Christian behaviour in suffering and calamities is not aiming at demanding special help for themselves. Such a spirit would be totally against the will of God. The teaching of Jesus is very clear. The Christians may have to suffer with the rest. Jn 9:3; Lk 13:1-5. The righteous may suffer in the same way as the unrighteous and together with them. Eccles 9:2. The uppermost purpose of a Christian in these matters ought to be to find out what is God's will with regard to himself and to submit himself to God's all-wise counsel. Exactly on this point the Christian has some of the strongest promises in Scripture to support and encourage him: "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." Ps 50:15. "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love Him." Rom 8:28. A Christian, who is thus being founded in God's holy Word and likewise holy counsel, will trust that temporary sufferings are not necessarily signs of God's disfavour or wrath. Instead he finds that after the Fall man lives under such conditions, that at times the good way of faith in Jesus Christ (Jn 14:6) may lead him through the valleys of suffering and tears. Ps 23:4. There is also a definite conviction among Christians that in spite of all sufferings that they may have to go through, they will come out as "more than conquerors". Rom 8:31-39; 11:33-36.

Faith will always remain personal

There is full reason to stress, which we have already done a number of times, that a Christian can live and work only as a member of the Christian body, the Church, and that Christian life is always a community life. Although this statement

cannot be contradicted and shouldn't be overlooked, the other side of the matter is likewise important: the individual Christian must be a personal believer, and for his personal life and position he is responsible before God. No feeling of one-ness, fellowship, or community spirit can remove this trait from Christian faith or ethics. The overstating of Christian community life and Christian fellowship will be harmful to the personal faith and life, and also to the sense of responsibility that ought to be found in every Christian. If this happens, then the common feeling of responsibility will also weaken and eventually disappear. This fact can be studied all over the world, where it has happened so many times that both worldly and spiritual communities slacken and eventually collapse. On this point the Christian church and all Christians, individually and together with each other, have the duty continuously to stress the existence and the task of the individual conscience and its obligation to both God and man. All these things are closely related to the personal faith in God and in our Saviour. Jesus told His disciples: "You are the salt of the earth; ... You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Mt 5:13-16.

7

AT THE SERVICE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR

For such service true love is needed

True love is always a flow from God's love. The most important single documents about love are found in the New Testament. If they are understood in their deepest sense, they do not contain law paragraphs, telling us "thou shalt". Much more they are descriptions of the righteousness and love of Jesus Christ Himself. Such documents are "the Sermon on the Mount" (Mt 5-7), and "the Song of Songs of Love" (1 Cor 13). With His love Christ also wishes to fill and penetrate the hearts of His disciples. Then they will, in their turn, become new sources of love. Jesus says: "Apart from me you can do nothing." Jn 15:5. In God's love for us, shown in Jesus Christ, we also find the basic theme of Christian ethics: "We love, because He first loved us." 1 Jn 4:19. Therefore it is a fundamental mistake in all worldly and philosophical systems of ethics, when their spokesmen say that they like and accept the Christian ethics, but refuse to accept "the attached doctrines of salvation and the like". In one way this kind of thinking and speaking is rather foolish. It amounts to about the same as if we say in worldly matters: "I like the fruit of this tree, but I would rather like to be without the tree itself", or, "I like the fresh water from this well, but I do not mind if the well itself is choked up".

Together with true love goes *true humility*. Only from such love will there flow true Christian fellowship and charity. True love never "insists on its own way". 1 Cor 13:5. As love is never created or born on command, nor organized by outward means, it has its origin only in a fellowship, "a relation between an 'I' and a 'you'".

Already in non-religious systems of ethics and community life we are held somewhat responsible with regard to our fellow-citizens. So it is also practised, more or less, all over the world. In the Christian church and according to Christian ethics it should be stressed still more and more clearly that

we are "our brother's keeper". Gen 4:9. "All of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love of the brethren, a tender heart and a humble mind." 1 Pet 3:8. The teaching by Jesus Christ on this point cannot be surpassed by any teaching or doctrine of ethics: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." "So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them." Mk 12:30-31; Mt 7:12. And still more, there is no teacher of ethics that can supply the power or the urge for such a love from spiritual forces, as Jesus Christ can do. From Him there is a flow of love, mercy, and good deeds, and this flow will continue from His followers. Such good deeds can never emanate from human efforts, conceit or pride, they can only flow from the true fountain of love. Jn 4:14. This demonstrates the fact that "He first loved us".

In connection with this we ought to stress another Christian contribution in the field of ethics: the term "our neighbour". This word, probably existing in almost all languages, indicates "someone living next-door", or at least very close to us. In the Christian usage the word means much more: a person who is in a certain way depending upon us so as to make us particularly responsible for him. In many languages, for example the German and Scandinavian languages, there is another word for this, which the English language has not. In German it is "der Nächste", meaning the one who is the nearest, more than any ordinary "neighbour", and yet it is not necessarily a matter of family relation. In worldly ethics the word "neighbour" is often explained in this way: "Such a person, who is in particular need, is your neighbour." In Luke 10 Jesus has given us a new solution to the whole problem of who is nearest. He has turned the whole matter upside down with His parable about the good Samaritan: "Which of these three, do you think, *proved neighbour* to the man who fell among robbers?" Lk 10:36. According to the popular belief the beaten man was the neighbour. For sure he was a neighbour, but there was one who still more proved himself to be a real and true neighbour: the one who saw the need and also felt the compulsion in his heart to step in and help.

Jesus' explanation has a spiritual and ethical force that is not known to the same degree elsewhere. This contribution in ethical matters is a gift to the world that has no parallel in other ethical systems.

Love as understanding and sympathy

Of course it is possible to show love by doing outwardly "good deeds", maybe also on a large scale and with seemingly good results. Such "good deeds" are sometimes looked upon and valued in a rather superficial way. If they are examined more carefully it may be found that they have also done a lot of harm. If, for example, we give plenty of money to children and youngsters, this may seem to be very generous and also a kind of love, but if we do not teach them to be diligent, to study, to take up some work, to look after themselves, etc., we may do great harm to them by only giving them money. An example from a different field of work will show the same. It has happened a number of times that some help to "undeveloped countries" had the form of supplying deep-bored wells in dry areas. Of course this looked very kind and generous, and also wellplanned, when it was being carried out, but a little later the enlarged herds of cattle gathering at the wells for drinking had worn out the soil over large areas and had transformed them into deserts that even increased year by year. Thoughtless "love" or "help" or "good deeds" are not always as good as their intention or reputation. They may be wasteful and do damage to the receivers and to many other people as well. *Real love* will always be combined with ample measures of knowledge, and also with deliberation and consideration: "If we act in this way, what will happen then? Do we help really, or do we spoil more than we help?"

One important but invisible part of all real help in suffering is *sympathy*. The real meaning of this word is not particularly some kind of feelings, it is "*suffering together with*". This should be understood as placing oneself in the same position as the one suffering, so as to understand his feelings, his inner and outward need, and possibly also a way of helping. The latter is not always found, but even so sympathy is of great help. If we think along these lines, we will avoid much that

could hurt our "neighbour" or even increase his suffering. There is another side of this problem: love is not always shown in outward actions, for example by visibly "giving" or "doing" things. Love sometimes may be at its best when it is just sharing something, co-suffering, or when it shows itself only in silent presence, together-ness, in a heart-to-heart understanding.

"Understanding" and "co-suffering" will not always be the same as speaking a lot, e.g. many words of "consolation". Sometimes the best consolation is found from *friends who know when to keep silent*. It is quite clear that *the friends of Job* gave far more consolation to him as long as they kept silent (2:13) than when they started to deliver their long speeches (ch 4-25).

Faith and call in connection with love

As in so many other matters it must be stressed here that the basic relation is the relation to God as our Creator and Father, and to Jesus Christ as our Saviour. Christ says: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit." Jn 15:16. The first part here is the personal call to be a believer in Christ and thereby a child of God. From a Christian point of view it would, therefore, be useless to speak of a call to "Christian ethics", "Christian stewardship", etc., if the call to become a child of God has not been accepted. The latter call comes first, and after it comes the call to serve God in the different tasks in the Kingdom of God. All this is grace, and grace can be accepted by faith only, "in the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of His own purpose and the grace which He gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago". 2 Tim 1:8-9.

When this purely religious call has been considered we can turn to the matters of faith and service, which both rest upon the call of God: "I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit." This is the point where we pass the borderline between dogmatics and ethics, although these subjects are interrelated.

Every Christian has been called to serve God, his fellow-beings, the Christian and the worldly community, in all ways

open to him. Here very much depends upon personal gifts, but also upon what God has decided and how God directs each one personally. The vocations and callings may also be different at the different times and places of one person, and also depend upon age, education, training, and other circumstances, but in all this it will be necessary to find God's will.

One of the greatest difficulties in these matters is *a sort of prejudice in our minds, the idea that one calling or profession is so much "finer" or so much more "valuable" in the eyes of the world and therefore ought to be valued much higher than the rest.* To some extent this is possible and may be accepted as long as we speak in worldly terms. In Christian terms it is different. There everything has become changed by the teaching and service of Jesus Christ. When He was "being found in human form, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death". Phil 2:8. About ourselves St. Paul says: "God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God." 1 Cor 1:28-29.

How should the worldly things be valued, compared to spiritual and heavenly things? On this point it is very easy to go wrong, either by concentrating on the spiritual and heavenly things or on the worldly things. Of course a Christian should not neglect any of these, provided the worldly things are lawful, respectable, and in accordance with his calling. The proper balance between what is "spiritual" and "worldly" can be found only by such Christians who have a solid foundation in faith *and* are aware of their duties as Christians. Such a foundation will give them both the humility that is needed and the fearless mind that comes from a sincere faith in Christ.

Another side of this matter is *"what others do"*. Although we belong together as the branches of a tree and the members of one body, to a very great degree we are independent of each other. Rom 12:3-8. In this way it also becomes clear that the duty of one Christian may belong most to the worldly section of the outward community, whereas the duty of another Christian may belong more to the spiritual side of the

community and to the life of the Church. If we look upon our calling, our duties, and our service, etc., wherever they may be, and faithfully work in them in the name of our Lord, we can be sure "that in the Lord our labour is not in vain". 1 Cor 15:58.

A life in fellowship

Repeatedly we have to stress both the faith of the individual Christian and his individual responsibility before God. This responsibility covers both faith and ethics. Only an individual can hear the voice of his own conscience. At the same time, however, we have to stress the importance of the Christian fellowship in many ways, for mutual teaching and training, support and encouragement, etc. No teacher of ethics has ever stressed these facts more than Jesus has done.

Although we are individuals with an individual responsibility before God and men, total individualism would end in total isolation and loneliness, and therefore be both harmful and fruitless. It would also encourage selfishness and a narrow mind, possibly also cruelty towards others. It would make us blind to the needs of those we have been called to serve.

Jesus has shown us in words, pictures and deeds how we are united in a wide fellowship, since we have all been created by God. He is our Creator and heavenly Father. He is above all and cares for all. Also such people, who do not know God through their Saviour Jesus Christ, are loved by Him and cared for by Him: "He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." Mt 5:45. Such people, who have become God's children through the Saviour Jesus Christ, have come to a deeper knowledge of the fellowship of all mankind: "By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 Jn 3:16.

This doctrine about unity and fellowship has been illustrated by pictures in the writings of the New Testament. One picture deals with the human body and its members. Rom 12:4-8. Another picture shows us a church building and all its parts, down to the single stones or bricks. Eph 2:21; 1 Pet 2:4-5. This kind of examples, given by several apostles, is not a foreign element in the Christian teaching. The examples are

completely in accordance with what Jesus Himself has taught us. He spoke about the vine and its branches: "As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me." Jn 15:4.

How this doctrine about fellowship will work in detail we shall have many opportunities to study in the following, for instance when we come to questions like love and marriage, parents and children, states, citizenship, community life, etc. Already in this chapter it is possible, however, to look at the question from a few viewpoints, like respect and consideration, stewardship, etc.

A life in respect and consideration of our neighbour

There is always a danger when we try to express what "love" is. The same thing happens when we explain things like brotherhood, fellowship, and other Christian virtues. The danger is at least twofold. It may happen that the matter in question becomes a matter of "feelings" or other sentimental reactions, although from ethical points of view love and other Christian virtues must be much more than feelings. The other danger is that in connection with such virtues we become tempted to look upon our fellow-beings as rather stereotyped beings, almost as having been cast in the same mould. It is an old temptation in the Christian church to think, when people have become Christians, that they ought to appear and behave in very much the same way. In many Christian sects this feature has gone to extremes. A rather plain study of the New Testament can show us that such ideas are totally foreign to the teaching of Jesus Christ and His apostles.

Almost the opposite is taught by them. Although we are all created by God, and although we are all human beings, we are very different in many aspects, and we will remain different. We are all individual beings, each one with particular features and gifts. In most cases even twins are fairly different or very different. If we try to harmonize or streamline the features of people, we will only change them into a greyish crowd, somewhat like a flock of sheep. What is said here also applies to inner features, like character, gifts and skills, inclinations and moods, etc. If in a parish or community we wish to create a unified standard with these

methods, no doubt we will sin against the creation of God. To kill the individual features, gifts, and skills is to kill the many kinds and varieties of life, given by God.

Be it enough here to say that in all our fellowship with people and in all our dealings with them it is a Christian duty to respect them in all ways we possibly can, and to respect the variety in them, in outward and inner features, with regard to their personal gifts, etc. If they are wrong or make mistakes on essential points, or if they do what is sinful, these facts do not blot out the basic fact that they are fellow-beings, created by God. In such cases it may be our duty to advise them and help them in all possible ways, but in their work and service as members of the worldly and Christian community we must allow them such a wide span of movement that we allow ourselves. Therefore it is a firm principle in Christian ethics to show respect for God's created people, and consideration for their ability and gifts, for their interests and different contributions to the life of the community. A comparison with the body and its members makes this point totally clear. Rom 12:4-8.

What has been said here about respect and consideration for our fellow-beings does not contradict another fact that is likewise important: the need of unity among us. This fact is stressed in connection with so many questions in these outlines, that it may be enough to point out that this unity is stressed in the same verses from the Bible, where the great difference between the members is taught. There is no contradiction, when we stress the uniqueness of the single members, *and* at the same time the unity between them, because the body is one: "For as in one body we have *many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ.*" Rom 12:5.

Stewardship and responsibility

"By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God." Heb 11:3. Therefore faith must be of the greatest importance when we consider our responsibility for the created things and the creation in general. By faith we are also bound to confess that we are stewards in the service of God. Only in this way is it possible that we can be held

responsible for what we do with the created things and with our environment as a whole.

According to Christian doctrine the existence of all evil has come through an uproar against God. Yet the fallen world has many marks and traces showing that it has its origin from God. God's Word also tells us that there is a hope for the fallen world. Rom 8:19-25. This hope is closely connected with the Saviour, because with Him "the Sun of righteousness" is risen. Mal 4:2.

The main point in the Christian teaching about stewardship is that we do not *own* the talents, gifts or things, instead they have been put *at our disposal* by God. They have been entrusted to us, in order that we may serve God and our fellow-beings with the help of these things. All stewardship carries with it a great freedom, so that we may make our own deliberations and decisions about how to act. This is clearly demonstrated in some of the parables about stewardship. Mt 25:14-30.

There are some questions that must be put every day, not necessarily in words: "What is the best way of using these things at my disposal, for instance my ability, my gifts, my property, my money, etc. What kind of handling of these things can be justified before God and before my conscience?" Yet these matters also have another side: it is totally impossible to treat them as details of an outward, worldly law. Therefore it is also impossible to draw up strict rules, telling everybody in detail at every moment what he should do and what he should not do in each case. Such a way has, however, often been tried in the Church. This kind of deviation in ethics has been called *casuistry*, because it gives detailed rules for every "case" (in Latin: *casus*). Such a method must be considered to be totally wrong. We have all been called to be free men, stewards, not slaves. In our freedom of reason, conscience, and judgment, we must be able to know what is good, suitable, and fitting, not by looking up every case with details, in sections and subsections, in a kind of handbook. All sound ethics will instead be governed by the great principles and the spirit. Only humble and experienced Christians will understand this character of

the Christian life and its ethics and know how to practise these principles. Jesus Himself has told us that it must work in this way: "Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?" Lk 12:57.

The relation to Creation in general

Our exposition of the variety in men and the necessity of respect and consideration must take us a step further: the respect for Creation in general. In one way it is a very popular theme in our days, when there is so much talk about the "environment", which means everything that belongs to the world surrounding us, near and far. One difficulty here is the one-sidedness of so many, another is the pecuniary and financial interest that so many have in different spheres of work, and this may become disastrous to different sections of nature and environment.

A common type of one-sidedness can be observed almost every day. Very often *people protest against this and that* in the handling of nature. It may be about the felling of trees in streets or parks, about the exploitation of forests or rivers, about the building of dams or power-stations, etc. If they can produce good arguments for their protests and point out good alternatives to the things that have been planned, then it is not wrong to protest, provided the protests are made peacefully. It is totally different, if they use force and cause harm to people and destroy property. Then they are doing wrong things themselves, sometimes worse than the thing they are protesting against. There is also a one-sidedness of another kind. Say the protesting groups come to the spot, arguing about the need of "fresh air", the danger of "pollution", and similar things. How did they arrive on the spot? They definitely misuse and contradict their own arguments, if they arrive in big cars, possibly polluting the air much more than the thing they are protesting against. The examples of this kind abound. Furthermore, the one-sidedness has another side. Very often the interest of the protesting groups maybe is fixed on the protection of the outward creation, like trees, forests, rivers, and lakes, whereas the destruction of people,

say the children and the youths, is totally overlooked. While the protesting groups are gathered, perhaps the same village or town is visited by other groups, agents dealing in narcotics, or agents in the entertainment business, who provide the youths of the place with the latest ideas in the entertainment business that are destructive in the extreme. On that side, and about such kinds of "pollution", not even one word of protest is heard.

More details in these matters must be left aside for the time being. Matters of "environment" need particular interest these days. Therefore we must refer more interested readers to books specialized on the subject. Here we are particularly concerned with *the principles from a Christian point of view*. These principles must be: If we wish to cover the matter of "environment" we need a much wider scope, covering the whole field of creation and nature, than has hitherto been the case; we must consider both outward and inner matters and conditions; we must consider not only money and property, but also human and spiritual values; we must have such an interest in the created world that places man in the central place, not as a consumer or culprit only, nor as the master of the created things, but much more as a steward, created by God to be a responsible being, not put here for his own interest, profit, or gain, but for the service of the nature, the environment, and the world, and not in the least of his fellow-beings.

As for the Church, its leaders, parishes, and members, this is a task of the greatest importance. It is necessary, more than at any time before, to take up all these matters and questions for study and for intense co-operation with all who are interested and concerned, and not in the least for intelligent and conscientious action. The time at our disposal may be short, because of the destruction going on all over the world, until the outward nature and the total of mankind come to an end, through pollution, starvation, lack of drinking water, just to mention a few of the dangers, threatening mankind.

Sometimes it has been said that the Church is responsible for the crisis in matters of "environment" because of teaching the

superiority of man over the created things. Reference is then made to Gen 1:26. The fact is rather the opposite. *The abuse of nature and the following crisis have come because of people continuing their rebellion against God, and in their greed being not stewards, as they have been called to be, but exploiters of the earth.* The Church, therefore, must raise its prophetic voice and remind people that *the last warning may already have been received:* "Turn in the account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward." Lk 16:2.

8

HUMAN RIGHTS

What is man?

"When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?" Ps 8:3-4.

The following comments on man could have been placed at the very beginning of these outlines. Quite as well they could have been placed at the end. This fact does not prove that the question about man is unimportant or irrelevant, on the contrary it is so important that all chapters on ethics deal with it. They are all centred round man. This, of course, does not exclude God, but since we are dealing with ethics particularly, and not so much dogmatics, we have man and the community of men particularly in view.

All statements about "what is man" must start with the fact that man was created by God. We have already dealt with such questions in many parts of these outlines. Now we come to a crucial point, overlooked in so many sermons and lessons. This point is: *How does man treat man, and how do governments and authorities treat man, and how do the rich treat the poor? We should also include another question: how do the poor treat other poor people?* All these questions converge towards one main question: what is man in the daily life of the world, what is a human being, examined all by himself? This kind of life starts with the children, the unborn and those already born.

The welfare of the children

There are, in spite of all, many children that are welcome and treated with happiness and joy when they are born. On the other hand there is a countless number of children that meet with sorrow and despair when they are born. They arrive in a

world of *sadness and extreme poverty*, and there is no prospect of improvements later on in life, if life goes on at all.

This is one of the greatest problems of the world today, and so it will be in years to come. Many say there is food enough in the world to feed the thousands of millions living here, but at least the means of transport are not sufficient or efficient enough to bring the food to where the hungry are. Many of these problems belong to other groups of subjects which are not taken up here. In these outlines of ethics we have to concern ourselves with the responsibilities of the parents and families on one side, and the responsibilities of the community on the other.

It is sad indeed that so many children have to grow up in *extreme poverty*. A part of this problem is that the parents have grown up under the same circumstances and have no knowledge of any other kind of life. It may be to demand too much, if we expect these people to take any steps themselves to improve their conditions. What could they ever think of doing? One way out could be that the authorities take a firm grip on the situation. It seems almost futile to give examples, like more opportunities of schooling and training, local industries, children's welfare, mothers' welfare, etc. If the whole situation cannot be totally changed in one or two generations, it may be supposed that the political leaders concerned are not interested or really fit for their posts and tasks.

There is something that is even worse than the poorest poverty: *slavery*. It is amazing, but although slavery was abolished in many countries in the world rather early in the nineteenth century, it still exists in many parts of the world. Many are born into slavery, because their parents were made slaves, e.g. when they couldn't pay their debts. Even today it happens that people are given money in advance on their poor wages, and when the debt is big enough, they are suddenly requested to pay it in full. When they cannot, they become tied to the employer or landowner for the rest of their lives, and their children are also held responsible for a contract that may not even be on paper. Children in some countries become slaves at the age of 6 or 7 years and never get out of

their slavery. Not even labour unions hinder them from working 15 hours a day or more. If they are not slaves on farms or ranches or in factories, they may be slaves in the prostitution industry. What is wrong in this world, when governments, in countries that are members of the United Nations, allow such things to go on? We may approach this question again in a while.

The welfare of the families

When we have mentioned the children, we ought to mention the families as well, although the problem is about the same. Of course the parents and the families have some of the responsibility for the fate of the children, but in many cases parents and families are the victims of the same systems as the children, and so there is not much they can do about it. If and when there is a change for one of these parties, the change will affect them all. Whether the change ought to start with the children or with the parents nobody can say. At least they can share the hope for a change.

The right of the individual

There is some difference between different communities, peoples, religions, etc. This difference depends upon if in spiritual, social and community life they attach the greatest interest to the individual and his conscience and belief, or to the family, the clan, or the community as a whole.

Under all circumstances there are two or three things that must be stressed here: although the individual is and always must be a member of the larger unit (family, clan, community or whatever it is), he is and must remain *an individual in his own right*. As such he is unique and has to be respected as a human being and as a responsible member of the community. Also a child is such a unique being, that is in its right and has to be respected as a young citizen and a worthy member of the community. All this comes from the fact that also the child is a human being and an individual. We have different gifts, this is true, and we have to function and co-operate within a community, but this we cannot do unless we are individuals and function in our own capacity. This capacity

includes the functioning of our conscience, our thinking, our beliefs, our right of choice with regard to many things in life, and so forth. Therefore it is humiliating for a human being to suffer infringement or violation on these points. It is a shame, therefore, to be born as a slave, and it is likewise shameful to be made a slave, either this happens in consequence of inherited bad circumstances or through new wilful actions by fellow-beings. Personal freedom and personal integrity ought to be respected all over the world, although we are far from it yet. For all civilized nations in the world it is a duty to encourage all good work performed to safeguard personal freedom everywhere in the world. For Christians and for the Church it is a still greater duty.

The worldwide problems

All international conventions on human rights ought to be fully appreciated, and their observance ought to be encouraged by all means. They are all based on what believers and non-believers in the whole world can agree upon, all according to reason and conscience, either the latter word is used or not. The problem here is not so much what is written in the conventions, it is much more *what is ignored by those who signed them*, and, perhaps to the same degree, *what those nations are doing which have not agreed to sign them*.

The problems in this field are many. It is not difficult to allow states to become members of the international community, for example members of the United Nations. It is not too difficult either to come to international agreements on human rights. It seems too obvious that many count with the possibility of paying lip service to the agreements they have signed. One of the greatest problems is to impress upon states the necessity of following what they have promised to follow.

Here another of the greatest problems turns up. Certain prospective leaders in a country may be aware of a very bad situation in their country, they may also be ready to take real initiatives to cure it, they may even have the plans ready to commence the work, but when they come into power, there is no improvement at all, sometimes there is even a definite

deterioration. What were the obstacles? If we mention only a few, we may be very near the truth. Many political leaders are so bound up by so many things and persons that they are only the tools, yes, even the dummies of some invisible powers or persons who from behind the scene are pulling the strings. Behind the scene there may even be a god who is also pulling his strings to make the dummies move. Although the non-believers and godless often boast of having no god at all, a good number of them are very much ruled by one. His name is Mammon. "You cannot serve /both/ God and Mammon." Mt 6:24.

This is one of the greatest problems in the world today, the devotion to Mammon, or *materialism*, all these ways of enjoying what this world can offer, also when it is done at the expense of the poor man who is then dispossessed of his single little lamb. 2 Sam 12:4. The hunger and thirst for more wealth seem to be unquenchable. Reason, which they so often refer to, seems to be like a joke. What our children and grandchildren ought to have for food and support is harvested and done away with in a shorter time than one generation, all out of, not hunger, but greed. Thus it happens that rain forests are cut down, plants and animals eradicated from the surface of the earth, not in great numbers only, but so as to never come back. It also happens that grossly underpaid children are exploited in factories, while adults in countless numbers are going jobless in the same towns. It happens that children are misused by being exploited in prostitution, or they are rummaging the garbage cans or rubbish-heaps in the big cities in their searching for food. It also happens that whole tribes and other populations are wiped off in brutal wars, not because an "ordinary war" has broken out, but because a new and strong leader from one tribe or people wishes to make room for his own tribe or people at the expense of other tribes or peoples. It also happens that hundreds of thousands of people are both landless and jobless, whereas some leaders or landowners in the same area from their accounts or vaults take out enormous amounts of money to engage in more business, although they have "devoted themselves to the service of the people". Who can understand all this? Where is their oft-extolled "reason"?

Where is the turning-point?

What the whole world requires is, of course, a new spirit, a revival all along the line, but how can such a change come? It seems to be possible only if the consciences of a few leaders are struck, if they really find themselves responsible for the need of their people, their fellow human-beings, for their hunger and thirst, if they put themselves to hard work instead of much talking, and if they feel the pressure upon their consciences to unlift the burdens of many. If this kind of development starts in one country, so that some results become conspicuous, it may spread to other countries, and when many find it easier to live, many more leaders will say: "This is what I have longed for secretly, but my courage was too little, now I am going to follow suit." Many others will then follow them.

Since all these problems have a spiritual root, laws and international agreements are not enough to solve them. Therefore it will be a duty for a few brave souls of fire to wake up the communities, the peoples and nations. Since at its root there is a great spiritual problem, it is also a problem for the Christian church. It is part of her prophetic task to disclose the underground work of the invisible powers of destruction: selfishness, greed, materialism, and Mammon. Only in this way will it be possible to work in a new and more inspired way for human rights. If not even the Christians do this, both soon and most energetically, it may be too late, since we have then come to the end of the road, not a few of us, not only many, no, all of us, the whole of mankind.

A worldly foundation

If the prospects of human rights look rather gloomy in many parts of the world today, there are definitely some streaks of light. Such a streak we find in the fact that so many states have accepted the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", which was passed in the United Nations on 10th December 1948.

Since many prospective readers of these outlines may not know so much about this Declaration, and still less have the

text available in full, we find it more useful to quote the text in full than to just mention a few articles. It ought to be noted here that the signatory powers represent all kinds of peoples and states on the political, social, cultural, philosophical, and religious map. This means: *about these human rights we all ought to be united.*

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore,

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

proclaims

THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-selfgoverning or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11

(1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

(2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14

(1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

(2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15

(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16

(1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17

(1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

(2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21

(1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

(2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.

(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23

(1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

(4) Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27

(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

(2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29

(1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

(2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

(3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any

activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

It should be noted that this Declaration has been achieved through a *consensus* between peoples and nations *about how man ought to be recognized and treated everywhere in the world*. Therefore these human rights can be accepted irrespective of political and religious belief, *provided human reason and the conscience of man are accepted as agents*.

Yet, the difficulties in these matters are enormous. Many of the states, which have accepted and signed the Declaration, allow torture, slavery, children's work in factories, etc., and they also refuse to give their citizens the rights and freedoms defined in the Declaration. What can then be done to change such conditions? The only way will be an energetic work by all people of good will to expose such transgressions to a strong light of criticism, to encourage organizations and churches, etc., to work for improvements and real changes. All this ought to be done particularly in the international society, in order to further clarify the Articles of the Declaration, and also to bring to light cases of abuses and transgressions for international scrutiny and action.

As has been said in connection with other important matters of ethics, it is necessary that such people, who understand this as their particular call, take the lead. Here Christians ought to be among the first and the most eager.

9

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Love and sexuality

Generally speaking two serious deviations in these matters have caused great harm, not only to the Christian church but also to the world as a whole. The first deviation had its root in some Eastern ideas and also appeared in some sects, branching off from the Church after the Apostolic time. These sects were "Gnostic" (see above, p 10). They taught that all evil in man has its root in the body and the desires and lusts of the body, whereas the soul or the spirit is free from such evil and only needs protection from the influence of the body. Such false teaching almost immediately affected the normal and sound physical life in homes and families, including sexuality. Sexuality was regarded as evil in almost all circumstances and therefore had to be suppressed. Up to recent times there have been streaks of such teaching in the Christian church, more in some sections, less in other sections. Particularly in certain religious movements, endeavouring to create a more "spiritual" religion, this kind of teaching has appeared time after time.

Partly as a protest against such teaching, partly as a result of an almost continuous effort to "enlighten" and "free" people from "all kinds of prejudice", totally new ideas have spread almost all over the world. This has gone on at an accelerating speed in Europe and America and elsewhere for more than two hundred years, and the ideas have spread to new countries in later times. These ideas have had a number of consequences, one being the tendency to regard sexuality as such a normal utterance of physical life as eating and drinking, and abstinence from sex as abnormal and dangerous to health. Another consequence has been the disregard and the breaking down of matrimonial life, so that any kind of cohabitation is regarded as equal or even superior to married

life. A third consequence has been a great increase in adultery, divorces, loose living, venereal diseases, and, to end up with, HIV and AIDS.

According to Christian doctrine both body and soul have been created by God. Both share the depravity of man and also have to share the fight of man against all evil, be it physical or spiritual. Thus everything in the human life must be subordinated to the will: physical life, spiritual life, love, sexuality, marriage, etc. "The will" here means both God's will and man's will, the latter also subordinated to the former. We cannot understand or organize any matters with regard to love, sex, marriage or home, without accepting the fact that we have been "created male and female" by God. Gen 1:27. Sexuality and love are excellent things in themselves and therefore ought to be handled according to God's will. This is done, when men and women follow the laws of purity, honesty, and decency.

Problems in connection with Emancipation

By "emancipation" in connection with sexuality is normally meant "liberation from all legal and moral limitation of the natural freedom". This is not a definition from a Christian point of view, rather it is how the representatives of sexual "emancipation" describe it, or at least how they try to make it work.

Such an emancipation usually proceeds step by step. The first step, more or less practised in many cultures, was to be somewhat lenient with the practising of sexuality before entering marriage. When this was done in rather few cases, and the community reacted by regarding it as loose living and a bad practice, then the situation was by no means serious. Another step was taken, when parents and the community deliberately accepted the practising of frequent intercourses between young and unmarried people. Another step was taken again, when parents and the community accepted the lowering of age to lower and lower ages, until it became a practice of only half-grown boys and girls having intercourse, and young people living together without being married. In more recent

times parents and homes have often lost their interest in what is going on between boys and girls. Almost anything may be taken for granted or accepted as "normal", although it is quite abnormal from an ethical point of view.

This development is not a matter for families, schools and courts only. It is also a matter for the community itself because of what is going on in its midst in one of the most important spheres of life. Where formerly matters of love and marriage were matters of high principles, legislation, etc., they have to a great extent been referred to "the private sector of life". It is often explained in this way: "Authorities have nothing to do with such things as sex and love, what people do between themselves in their time of leisure." As we shall see later, the authorities and the community itself in reality get much to do with these matters, particularly when "the private affairs" have their open consequences and get out of control. Everything considered, this is one of the greatest problems of a society that has often prided itself on being "enlightened".

One effect in modern society is that we all suffer from the "over-sexualizing" that has gone on for some time and deeper and deeper penetrated so many sections of our "cultural" life. As quite obvious signs of this development we may mention literature, press, film, radio, TV, and the amusement business. In very many cases the authorities have given up their work against what is conspicuously evil, and, which is worse, declared that it is not their responsibility to work against such things. They consider it may instead be for "the powers themselves" to decide what is right or wrong. In spite of this the authorities have to bear the consequences and the costs at the end and also do the clean-up work that so often becomes necessary.

When the Church has raised her voice against what is going on, she has been accused of being "reactionary" or even of "terrorizing people" with her ethical norms. Such accusations of course disclose the speakers' own ethical standard of values. Many things in the following will also prove this fact.

If the present development in the world will continue in years to come is difficult to say. The signs are contradictory, since

many people hope for an early change, whereas some are definitely pessimistic about it. In the meantime it is a matter of the greatest urgency for the Church to raise her prophetic voice for what is edifying in these matters, and against what is destructive to individuals and to the common life of man. Generally it can be said that the Church ought to disclose the wickedness of such agents that only encourage the evil and the business-minded "emancipation". On the other hand the Church must praise and encourage what has always been highly valued in all kinds of good civilization: "Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." Phil 4:8.

Love between man and woman

Of course feelings will be involved where there is love, but true love between man and woman is much more than feelings. Love also means such a personal attraction that mind and soul will be very much involved. Love engages all senses, and it also has to do with views and outlooks of life, for the present time and for the future. If love does not comprise such things, it may be feared that the first sensational feelings have been misunderstood and are fairly superficial. In this case they may not be lasting very long but soon be replaced by "a new love", as is so often heard. It means that the one who had "fallen in love" has found a new, more attractive object to "fall in love" with.

Real love between a man and a woman involves, as we have seen, the total personalities of both. Therefore they will be ready to share with each other everything in life. In their mutual relation they will be ready to give and take, since "love does not insist on its own way". "It does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." 1 Cor 13:5-6.

The things mentioned here make it clear that there is a great difference between "being in love" and true, lasting love. If the love is ready to "endure", it means that it has passed not

only the first feelings of passion, but also some tests, showing if it is a matter of temporary feelings only, or a matter of personal attachment for life.

Preparations for marriage

It is almost impossible to explain any details here, since customs and laws vary so much from country to country. Generally it may be said that all laws and customs pertaining to "betrothal" have been cancelled in many countries, possibly in most. A kind of "engagement", on the other hand, is practised in many countries, although it has very little importance with regard to legal implications.

In some countries older customs have been preserved: the marriage is preceded by an arrangement through the parents and families concerned, or through special solicitors, sent on behalf of the young man to the girl's father or family.

If we leave aside here all details in procedures, we can state that a legal marriage is of the greatest importance to establish the relation between the man and the woman. This relation will also affect the relation between them and their children, if they get any. Such relations will cover many matters of economical and social nature, including the responsibility of the parents for their children and the responsibility of the community for both the married couple and their children.

From all this it is obvious that it is rather foolish to say that "our living together as man and woman is our private affair, and the community has nothing to do with it". First of all marriage, as an official institution, is much more than a ceremony. It is a mutual undertaking, and it is an official declaration of the two and between them and the community: "We enter into and fully accept these mutual duties and responsibilities." - Here all details, like the possibilities of a preceding engagement or betrothal, publishing of banns, having a wedding feast or not, etc., are of very little importance and can be left aside. The only important thing here is marriage itself, its legal status, and its legal, social, and ethical consequences.

It is instructive to find that marriage has been practised in almost all peoples and cultures over thousands of years. Of course very often marriage ceremonies have been carried out

in very simple ways, e.g. before a chief or headman with only the bride and the groom, a couple of attendants, and the parents concerned or their representatives, present. No outward detail is of any importance here. *Only the promises, the witnesses, and the official procedure are necessary and important, because they are the elements that together constitute a binding contract between the parties involved.* All the procedures in connection with a marriage are carried out, or ought to be carried out, to safeguard the interests of the couple, their possible children, the community, and, more generally, the welfare of man.

Now, who can take upon himself the responsibility for breaking down a beneficial institution, definitely not established by any human being at any particular time in history, but just existing from time immemorial to the benefit and welfare of the whole of mankind?

The contribution by the Church to the understanding of marriage

This contribution can be said to be of a three-fold nature. The first is to stress the need and necessity in all countries and among all peoples of *holding marriage in the greatest esteem.* It would, therefore, be a great shame, if the Church gives up her doctrines on marriage and the good practices together with it, when so many non-Christian bodies and so many non-believers hold marriage in very great esteem.

The second kind of contribution that can be given by the Church is *the teaching given in the Word of God.* There are so many strong points that can and will be accepted by many, although they do not share the Christian belief as such. Thus they are ready to stress sincere and true love, honesty, life-long fidelity, etc. This is what Holy Scripture teaches us, "letting marriage be held in honour among all, and letting the marriage bed be undefiled". Heb 13:4.

The third kind of contribution may be of a more indirect nature. This contribution is not likely to have any direct influence outside the Church and the believers. Indirectly it will, however, have some influence upon the understanding of marriage. Within the Church this doctrine ought to be treated and valued like a precious stone: *The relation and love*

between a man and a woman, when at its best, is like the love between Christ and His Church. Eph 5:28-33. These facts are not open to each and every reader or listener, because it is "a great mystery". If we have heard words like these, how can we ever think of lowering the teaching of the Church concerning love and marriage, down to the principles, standards, or practices of "the world"?

The position of marriage in the worldly community

Our starting-point here must be the fact that laws, customs, and practices are different in different countries of the world. Yet, marriage has existed "from the beginning". Mt 19:4. It was instituted by God in Creation, and it belongs to all, believers and non-believers. Since it belongs to the whole world, and not only to the Kingdom of grace, we cannot expect worldly legislators to write laws to favour particular Christian viewpoints with regard to marriage, or worldly authorities to supervise the observance of Church laws or practices. Although much of this has happened in the past, it cannot be the right way everywhere at every time. Of course worldly authorities can be expected to respect and support what can be regarded as basic, true, and beneficial human views on marriage.

Marriage definitely has a civil and social side, and thus falls within the jurisdiction and care of the worldly community. Thus jurisdiction and care for the marriage institution cannot and should not be in any way reserved for the Church. The community itself has the responsibility for the writing and the keeping of all laws that regulate marriage for all sections of the population. The community also has the responsibility for such courts and other institutions that may be necessary for this work, maybe also for the keeping of advisers that are competent to instruct people on marriage questions and laws, and to assist them when entering into marriage. Further it is the duty of such authorities and institutions to protect the marriages from such factors that may be discouraging or detrimental to married couples, possibly also destructive. All this is definitely in the interest of the community itself, because *marriages, homes, and families are the single units that make and build up the community itself.* In such cases,

where the community has set out in the opposite direction, which means working more or less against marriage as the normal frame for love and families, it is working against itself. It may have started to do so under pressure from such groups that favour "emancipation" in these matters. If this has happened, the community must reconsider its duties and responsibilities.

We need only one example to show that the community itself is involved, and must be involved, when a man and a woman start to live together. In our example they have decided to live together without being legally married. They have declared that it is their own affair: "We love each other. We are mature enough to know what we are doing. We keep our promises to ourselves, and nobody else has got anything to do with it." Perhaps they continue in this way for some years, and there seems to be no problem. Then, suddenly, their cohabitation comes to an end. One of them takes hold of their house and for this action is sued in court by the other party, and there is also a case about other property, and a third case about the custody of their children. In court each one accuses the other party of fraud and breach of promises, and the other party in every case responds: "What promises? When and where were they given?" Nothing can be proved, because there were no documents, no witnesses, no legal procedures whatsoever to safeguard anything or anybody. - The example is self-explanatory. No further explanations are needed on this point, only a couple of remarks. In many "western" countries it happens that both couples and authorities would be happy, if they could rely on such simple procedures that were followed in olden times, when proper authorities saw to it that there were agreements, witnesses, etc., about what had been arranged and agreed upon. Now it happens instead that the courts are wasting much valuable time and great amounts of public funds on trying to sort out the truth in problems of this kind, problems which are the result of a widespread propaganda against marriage as a community institution. How can a community act in so unwise a manner as to counteract itself, its own interests, and the welfare of its own citizens?

What worldly authorities can do and what they should not do with regard to marriage

We have found that it is in the interest of the worldly community to uphold marriage and also to encourage people to contract marriages instead of practising cohabitation. In this way the community can assist both the parents and the young couples, and at the same time the community itself will benefit.

On the other hand the worldly community should not have any detailed doctrines of its own on marriage or try to legislate on such. It is up to the citizens, their schools of thought, their churches, and religions, etc. to have their views on marriage, and to follow their convictions in connection with marriage. This must be the case, particularly when the population consists of different groups of people, with different beliefs, religious or otherwise. Since the worldly authorities cannot favour one of them particularly, or some of them against the rest, and this fact applies to non-religious bodies also, they must allow them all freedom of belief, and freedom of practising such belief, provided such practices do not encroach upon the rights of other groups or disturb common law and order. The basic fact, common to all, is that the marriage institution is needed and has to be protected for the welfare of all.

There are some basic rules, accepted by almost all religions and schools of thought, and also based on decency and common sense, and these rules ought to be respected by all worldly authorities. Such rules refer to honesty and fidelity, which also means the keeping of matrimonial vows, to the protection and the welfare of children, their nursing and education, etc., to the personal integrity of the individuals with regard to treatment by the other party, and likewise the treatment the parties give to each other in their matrimonial life. The rules also concern matters of property and inheritance, etc. Nowadays many of these matters have become somewhat regularized by international agreements. Yet, full unity cannot be attained in these matters, at least it seems to be a very long way to go to reach such a goal. In some countries polygamy is still accepted according to old tradition. In some countries a husband is still allowed to

chastise his wife (wives) by corporal punishment, and details of what is allowed (or recommended) in such cases may also be given in the laws, whereas the opposite chastisement, the wife chastising her husband, is not so much heard of. If we cannot get away from such things through international agreements, all authorities should at least encourage honesty, fidelity, loyalty, and decency. - Particularly in one sphere of community life the worldly authorities could render a good and most healthy service to the community: by holding back such agencies and influential powers that systematically work to exploit children and youths, thus breaking down the sense of morality and decency, and ultimately undermining marriage as a fundamental institution in the community.

There are two particular problems that must be mentioned in connection with the worldly authorities and their handling of marriages. One is the problem of *divorces*. This problem is so complicated and also very different in different countries that it cannot be dealt with in full here. May it, therefore, only be stated in brief that *no worldly authority should ever encourage the way of divorce to solve matrimonial or social difficulties*, either this is done through the educational or the financial system. Instead the worldly authorities ought to arrange such a system that advisers and advisory bodies assist all couples and families in difficulties with the aim of solving their problems without a divorce. There are at least three reasons near at hand for taking such steps. In some countries up to 20, 30, or 40 % of all marriages lead to a divorce within a few years; in some towns or cities in such countries up to 40 % of all households consist of a single citizen or one adult with one or two or more children; a very great number of these single adults are divorced persons, perhaps divorced a number of times. The third reason presents itself almost automatically: A great number of children and youths have to be taken care of by the social and welfare authorities, because "they come from very unhappy circumstances, divorced parents, split homes, street gangs, and have turned to bad life or crime", etc.

The other particular problem in connection with marriage concerns *marriage laws*. In many countries there has appeared a clash between the worldly authorities and the

Church (and similar bodies). If such a thing has happened, it may be the fault of both parties. Perhaps they have not understood what is the duty and the limiting border of the other party or even of their own party. Since *marriage is also a worldly institution*, it may be regularized, and *ought to be regularized, also in worldly law*. Therefore the worldly community has the right to legislate on marriage, also to stipulate how a valid marriage ceremony has to be performed, and what rights and duties a contracted marriage includes. The community is also right, if it states that all marriage ceremonies have to be carried out before certain community (state) officials. There is no reason to argue about such laws, if they are fair and reasonable. On the other hand *it is not necessary to legislate exactly in this way*. Instead the laws may also allow an alternative, or several alternatives, e.g. by *allowing both this official way and a delegation to religious bodies to perform marriage ceremonies that will automatically be officially recognized*. The official registration of the latter ceremonies will then have the same legal status as the former. - Another alternative may be this: The worldly community allows the churches and other religious bodies to have, *besides the official ceremony before the official of the community*, an additional ceremony, which is not in the same way official, to satisfy the wishes of such people to express their religious and ethical views in connection with marriage. Where the worldly authorities do not allow this, they have definitely trespassed on human rights. Where such rights are withheld from the Christian church or similar bodies, they may feel free to demand them in the strongest way possible, and also ask for help from the world community to have their personal and religious rights respected.

Some grave deviations from the true way of love and marriage

Many times it has been said, somewhat like a joke, that *prostitution* is the oldest of all professions. If so, it is also a very old sin. Yet, in some states it has been recognized as a profession, and as such it is organized and controlled, and also provided with many official attributes: registration, health inspection, a security system, and, not in the least, taxation.

Prostitution, either it is officially recognized or not, has only negative sides. It is humanly degrading, both to the prostitute (woman or - man!), and to the clients (men or women). It is also degrading to the whole community. At the same time, when there are a very great number of enormously rich people in the country, there are many poor people, who have to live without regular work, without stable social conditions, and who by the circumstances become engaged in the dirty business of prostitution. In some countries it even happens that girls of ten or twelve years of age have to prostitute themselves, sometimes forced to do so by their own poor and jobless parents. Who are responsible for all this? Of course the political and social authorities, who have not cared enough for the welfare of their own people, have a very great responsibility. But there are more people who are responsible, e.g. the prophets of the unrestrained sexuality, those who have caused this extreme sexual hunger among people, which leads to such abuses as the spoiling of girls and also boys, still being only young children.

And what about the Christians and the Church? Of course they are also responsible in some ways, e.g. by not having influenced the community in a better way. The Christians ought to help more clearly and strongly in teaching and advising about sexuality and love. They can also help a lot by working along the lines of Home Missions, e.g. by starting and running social institutions, night patrols in the popular streets of big cities, etc. Another important thing is to plead with the responsible authorities of the community to take the necessary steps to stop or at least minimize "the sexual traffic".

Prostitution is an evil that cannot be recognized and should never be legalized or supported in any way. It can only be regretted that such an evil exists. As long as it exists it must be strongly counteracted and, wherever possible, also cured.

The second great deviation with regard to sex and love is *homosexuality*, which means, in the first instance, "sexual desire for those of the same sex as oneself", and, if this desire is followed, also the practising of this desire. In earlier times the homosexual inclination has often been hidden, and if it has been practised it has been done secretly. Today it is

coming out in the open more commonly in many countries. It is strongly defended in rather wide circles, not in the least by such people who wish to call themselves "tolerant" and "enlightened". It is often explained to be "a natural alternative to heterosexuality", which means love between a man and a woman. Nowadays many have even gone as far as demanding legal rights for homosexual couples, which means two men *or* two women, to enter into a legalized and registered marriage. In these matters time is now running fast. A strong pressure has also been put on many churches to undertake the formal and solemn Christian blessing of marriages, contracted between homosexuals. Strong groups of interested people are demanding this as "a Christian right" and that such marriage ceremonies even be solemnized in the church.

One argument, very often presented, is that the homosexual inclination is inherited and therefore cannot be avoided. Against this it can be stated, first that such a fact has never been proved in a satisfactory way, secondly that there are countries where homosexuality was totally unknown, until it was taught by a few foreigners and via a few local residents of influence started to spread over the country. There could not be even one case of "inherited inclination" in those decades when it happened. All the cases occurring in that generation were definitely *taught, in words, and by the example, and thus not inherited.*

The space of these outlines does not allow further elaboration here on these matters. May it only be said in brief that the Christian church and its members preferably have to work along four lines in these matters:

having great sympathy with those who happen to have homosexual inclinations, or who suffer from what they have already done, *or* from what others have done to them. The first thing we should do is *not to start talking about sin*, since we do not know all things or circumstances, nor do we know the background of these people;

giving all help possible to all people concerned to get away from a dangerous environment, from bad practices, and from all kinds of consequences of such;

giving real and true information wherever we can, or at least

where such is asked for. There are different kinds of agencies, both inside and outside the Church, that need support and assistance to carry out good work among young and old, *on a sound, truly human and really "natural" ground;*

resting on the solid foundation of the Word of God in everything we do according to the preceding points. The testimony of the Word about homosexuality gives us no doubt about this evil. Lev 18:22-25; Rom 1:18-32. This reliance on the Word of God does not exclude a sensitive and sympathetic approach to people afflicted, in one way or another.

True love and marriage as a call to serve one another

All deviations with regard to sexuality, love and marriage only serve selfish ends, which means serving oneself and the lusts, whereas real and true love always includes *another party for this party's sake*. Thus real love can never use another human being as a tool for satisfying the lusts. Real love instead wishes to satisfy the happiness and welfare of the object of the love. Both prostitution and homosexuality gravely fail on these points. They also fall far below the mark of decency.

Love can never be a means or a way of *only* satisfying one's own self. Pleasure and delight are only parts, and rather small parts, of the whole thing. The whole thing, love itself between one man and one woman, is *a personal union between the two, including a personal and mutual call to serve life itself*. When a man and a woman love each other, not out of temporary lust and craving only, and decide to live together for the future, *their marriage is a covenant*, partly for their mutual service, in body, mind, and soul, partly for the service of their fellow-beings, and their community, and also the whole of mankind. Thus their union is a union for the benefit of life, and to the service of life. Their intimacy and their pleasure and delight in love serve as instruments for this service. If, then, they exclude all thoughts of service, and instead devote themselves to the delight only, this delight will soon fade away, and then they may soon start to look for another delight, if possible "stronger", "better", or "real happiness", as they might say. In such cases all thoughts

about "service", about possible children, or about working for the children they already have, may be brushed into the background, for the sake of more delight and happiness.

Sound Christian ethics on sexuality, love and marriage must always stress the Biblical and blessed view: *love and marriage are images and illustrations of Christ's love for us.* Eph 5: 21-33. This view will always give inspiration to unselfish service to the one who is nearest to us, wife or husband, to those who become the fruits of such love, and to the community as a whole. In this way love, family and home may become something like *a nursery for small plants, children.* One day these plants will be transferred to grow in the open ground, when they leave their nursery. *Such is the service of love: it serves life itself.*

10

HOME AND FAMILY

The fundamental units of the community

Of course it is possible to regard the individuals as the fundamental units, but before the existence of all individuals there exists a couple, the two parents in each case. Furthermore, before the new individual can start to carry out any work or to exercise any influence, this individual needs rearing, care, education, and training. The first parts of all this will normally be done under the guidance of the parents and in the child's home. The fellowship spirit, the education and training that the children receive at their homes together constitute the basis also of the worldly community. There hasn't existed a people or a civilization anywhere in the world where this influence and the importance of the families and homes cannot be observed. If there were exceptions to this rule, such peoples or civilizations did not last very long.

Sometimes it has been suggested that marriages, homes, and families are only later steps in a long development. This idea must be wrong. If we look at the least developed civilizations, families are already there, also having about the same importance as in more "developed" civilizations. Furthermore, where steps have been taken in more modern communities to replace the families and homes with social institutions right from the birth of the children, the results have been only negative. This means that the natural institutions, which we call families and homes, normally cannot be replaced. Instead they are of a fundamental importance, as they constitute the basis of the community.

Parenthood, a gift and a responsibility

In some circles it has been thought that it is necessary for parents to have a good formal education to be able to become good parents. It has also been considered to be an advantage, if they live under fair or good economical conditions, etc. All this has, however, later been found to be very much

exaggerated. Instead it has often been proved that education and money fail in these matters, if other important factors are missing. Such important factors are love, ethical stability, character, outlook on life, goal of life, etc. If some parents wish to give to their children the best they can ever think of, money, property, and a high standard of living, other parents may have nothing of this kind to give. Instead they may foster in their children such things as honesty, unselfishness, industry, and stewardship. Now, which ones among these children have set out in life with the best of odds? Such people, who will say later in life: "I bless God for the best of parents", more often belong to the latter group than to the former.

A good parenthood very often had its beginning *when the parents were still children themselves*, which means *in the homes of their own childhood*. There a young human being, who will one day become a father or a mother, learns much of value for the future. Of course many, who come from unlucky or bad homes, may also succeed in becoming good parents, but it may then depend upon other factors: good influence from other homes, experience in life, or from an initiative often expressed in this way: "I am not going to let my own family go through what I had to go through myself when I was a child."

Children, a nuisance or a blessing?

In almost all kinds of civilization children have been regarded as a blessing. According to the Christian view children ought to be regarded as "a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward". Ps 127:3. A different view has appeared in a kind of civilization, where selfish lusts and desires and the standard of living have prevailed over the spirit of love and the community spirit. On the other hand a very great number of children in a family is not a definite proof of love or responsibility, if the children cannot be taken care of properly with regard to health, clothing, education, or even general supervision. Thus it is extremely important that all people who give birth to children also accept the full responsibility for them, both with regard to their worldly and to their spiritual well-being.

Of course both the local and the larger community can take on a great part of the responsibility for the children, for example by arranging nurseries, infant schools, children's health clinics, advisory officers and committees, etc. Yet, the greatest responsibility will rest with the parents. Of course good schooling and training are very important things here, but, besides such things, the best in life they can ever bestow upon their children are the good examples they have given them from their youngest age. Among such examples we may mention good order in worldly things, respect for people, honesty, obedience, consideration, truth, love, sincerity, joy, and happiness, also in adverse circumstances. It is, of course, impossible to put these virtues in a fixed order. Of more importance is if the parents have found their own way with these problems, a style of life that works, and in addition a spring of inspiration to accomplish a lot of all this.

All children are individuals, with a great difference between them, from all aspects, except with regard to this fact that they are children. Therefore the parents must look upon them as individual beings, like small plants that need individual care in order to grow up well, and, as the hope may be, one day to bear rich fruit. The parents can never expect to do all this by themselves for their children. They need a lot of help from relatives and friends, and also from the community. On the other hand there has appeared a misunderstanding among many who think that it is the responsibility of the schools, or of the social institutions, or of the community as a whole to care for the children. This must be wrong. The community definitely has a responsibility, but the greatest responsibility rests with the parents, both of them if both are alive, because they have given birth to the children and are nearest to them in all ways we can think of.

The education of children

All education and training of children must be planned and carried out with moderation and sound judgment. On this point many parents fail. Such parents, who are well gifted and have received fairly high education, perhaps expect the same

achievements from their children, although some of these may not have the same gifts for studies. On the other hand the gifts that the children really possess may be badly neglected by the parents. Poorly educated parents may make the corresponding mistakes, for example by wishing that their children should obtain in life what they have failed to attain themselves. This may be totally beyond the gifts and capacities of their children. Under all circumstances it is wrong to press or urge the children further than gifts and personal capacities allow. Another mistake is to use the method of punishment or mental and spiritual pressure upon the children, for instance by nagging and taunting. In all these matters the statement by John the Baptist still holds good: "No one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven." Jn 3:27.

In connection with families, homes and education we often come upon cases that are astonishing. Where there are good outward circumstances, and seemingly also a good spirit prevailing at the homes, the upbringing of the children apparently fails, whereas in cases of poor outward circumstances the children develop exceedingly well. These facts well demonstrate that in these matters we cannot take anything for granted. There is no outward guarantee of success. Every home may have not only its "problem child" but also its "prodigal son". Lk 15:11-13. For all of us there remains only one thing to do: to do the best with the gifts we have, and above all to pray for God's help and blessing in everything we try to do with and for the children that have been entrusted to us.

A few principles, which have proved to be valuable in many generations past, may be mentioned here:

First, good upbringing or education of children *does not come about by money or outward property only*. Some people believe it does. They go as far as employing private tutors for their children, but this is no guarantee at all for obtaining good results with them. Their endeavour may instead give the opposite results: because of lack of training in fellowship and co-operation with other children and playmates, these private

pupils may become self-centred, acquire a demanding spirit, and, in the end, find it difficult to live an ordinary life.

Secondly, good upbringing or education *does not come about by receiving lessons and orders only*. Upbringing or education is *not a matter of force or drill*. It is much more a matter of co-operation and of setting a good example to the children and pupils. There is always a silent companion to good parents and to good teachers: their good example. What the oral teaching sometimes fails to accomplish, the example in words and deeds, in honesty, kindness, unselfishness, etc., may accomplish. Such fruits may surpass by far what others have attained by oral lessons.

Thirdly, education and training, whatever the stage or subject, are *always matters of giving and taking*. A teacher, who rides his high horse, is seldom a good teacher, nor is the one who starts every lesson with words like these: "Now I am going to tell you", or, "Listen to me", or, "I will show you." A teacher, on the other hand, who says: "Who can help me to solve this problem", or, "Let us find something together here", puts himself on a level that creates confidence in him. This principle in the same way works between parents and children.

Fourthly, to obtain the confidence of your children is *one of the secrets of good parents*. It may be the key that unlocks many doors that would otherwise remain closed.

If we omit here all aspects of formal education, such as will result in marks, grades, and certificates, there are several goals that can be reached in all kinds of good homes, either they are rich or poor. Such goals can also be reached by all kinds of parents, either they are highly educated or almost uneducated. What we aim at here is a spirit of love, mutual understanding, consideration, and fellowship. Children who have received the impression of such a spirit, and who have had the experience of practising it, will be well prepared for fellowship, co-operation and moderation in the larger community, when their training at home is over.

What kind of parents deserve respect?

In one of the Ten commandments it is said: "Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you." Ex 20:12. Against such a commandment it has often been argued in this way: "How can we honour them, if they do not deserve any respect or honour?" In a matter of this kind there are different cases, and therefore the answer to the question must be at least threefold. First we have such cases where the parents, at least one of them, maybe both, are somewhat peculiar or odd persons. This is no reason for disrespect. Under their circumstances and a somewhat peculiar surface they may have a genuine love for their children. A child that is sensitive enough to discover the qualities of the parental love and care will soon be able to understand the rest and make the necessary allowance for what is missing in other ways.

It is very likely that such children and youths, who hesitate about respect for their parents, do not think so much about oddity or similar features which they may find in them. It is more likely that they think about the poor conditions at home: "Why should we, among all children, have *such poor parents?*" What these children do not see is what so often happens further on: many rich parents suddenly become very poor, or they become bankrupt morally. It also happens that the well-to-do children by the riches of their parents have become spoiled to such a degree as to find it difficult or even impossible to take care of themselves. How had the riches or the prosperity of such parents helped the children then?

Further there is always *something positive in respecting one's parents under all circumstances*, even if it is difficult under the prevailing circumstances to do so. The facts behind this principle become conspicuous when the general respect of parents has disappeared in a people. Where this has happened, many children and youths will look upon their parents mostly as their house-attendants, as suppliers of the necessities of life, and, not in the least, as suppliers of ample pocket-money. If such a spirit has crept into the homes and families, then it will be very hard to defeat it. To do this it will be necessary to reconsider many things, and what is mostly needed is a spiritual and ethical awakening in both parents and children.

The admonition in the Large Catechism is a good summary of what has been said here: "It is a far higher thing to honour than to love one, inasmuch as it comprehends not only love, but also modesty, humility, and deference as to a majesty there hidden, and requires not only that /the parents/ be addressed kindly and with reverence, but, most of all, that both in heart and with the body we so act as to show that we esteem them very highly, and that, next to God, we regard them as the very highest. For one whom we are to honour from the heart we must truly regard as high and great. - We must, therefore, impress it upon the young that they should regard their parents as in God's stead, and remember that however lowly, poor, frail, and queer they may be, nevertheless they are father and mother given them by God. They are not to be deprived of their honour because of their conduct or their failings. Therefore we are not to regard their persons, how they may be, but the will of God who has thus created and ordained."

The parental home, a preparatory school in fellowship and social spirit

The first duty of the parents concerns their own children, but it does not take long before the children meet other people and realize both the pleasure and the discomfort in doing so. It is no solution of the latter problem to lock the children up and in this way help them avoid all risks and troubles. The only solution is to help also the small children establish good contacts, and try to understand what can be done and what must be avoided. These are all hard lessons to learn, but the sooner the better.

Where there is a good spirit in the parental home, showing itself in cheerfulness, fellowship, and co-operation, such a spirit will soon do its work outwards as well. First this may happen with regard to relatives and playmates, later with visitors and people being visited, later again in nursery schools and the elementary schools, etc. In all these cases there will be problems that have to be solved, and in all these problems there will be some lessons about possible traits of behaviour: attentiveness, politeness, openness of mind, willingness to co-operate, etc. It is absolutely impossible to think

of a school or a full-scale community, receiving into its care children who are like blank pages. If it received them blank, what could it do with them then? Now, one can say everywhere in the world, the schools and the communities are receiving human beings that are already somewhat prepared for community life. It has started at their homes. Of course they are still children, but they have learnt and practised many things, also the elementary principles that every community must rest on: a spirit of fellowship and co-operation, a sense of civility and politeness, a basic knowledge of what is right and wrong.

For all this the community as a whole is indebted to the families and homes. These are the minor communities. The larger communities, states and similar, may be replaced by new systems, but the parental homes cannot be replaced, except in very few cases that should also be mentioned briefly here.

Sometimes there are small children, or children at a somewhat higher age, who have lost their original home through the death of their parents (one or both of them), through divorces, bad accidents, etc. Although such cases must be very much regretted, the children should not regard themselves as lost or as left outside all good relations in the community. It very often happens that such children obtain good substitutes for their parental home, for example in the homes of some near relatives, some private home of an adopting couple, a "children's home" or an orphanage, etc. In many cases such children very well understand their initial plight, and then accept with gratitude the help given to them, and eventually come out very well as adults and good members of the community.

What has been presented here with regard to the parental home as a good and positive factor in the community is not accepted by all schools of thought in civic and educational matters. Many of those who have different views follow the ideas of J.J. Rousseau, a Swiss (1712-1778) who is still having great influence in matters of education, the rearing of children, etc. This is rather amazing, since he himself failed so much in these very matters. He even left all his children at young age to be taken care of by the community at a

foundlings' home. Many of the prophets of this kind consider the ordinary parents to be more or less incompetent to handle their own children and that it is the duty of the community to do it. - Many of these schools of thought, not in the least in totalitarian states, have failed completely. Very often they have left the schools and social institutions in great disorder, or, even worse, in a complete mess, extremely far from the goal once set up. This is not amazing at all, since the very basis for the schools, the institutions, and the community was missing: the work and influence of the parental homes.

The Christian home

In many ways the Christian home will be like other good homes, where there is a spirit of order, fellowship, and co-operation. Yet, in a Christian home there will always be something more, a feature quite possible to observe. The fellowship between parents and children is based on the belief that God is our heavenly Father, who has created us, and who cares for us, and who wishes to guide us in life. What the children learn and practise from such a startingpoint may be of the greatest importance for their own lives, and also for what they in their turn may hand over to future generations.

The Christian home is different from other homes, not particularly by making certain demands upon the children, although this is a very popular idea among non-Christians. The difference rather consists in the spirit of mutual understanding, love, and willingness to serve.

This statement can also be observed in its reversed form: what the Christian homes ought to avoid. They ought to avoid being authoritarian, which means having a spirit of demanding and ordering things in a hard or even harsh way. Where Christian homes have a bad reputation this can sometimes be explained with this harsh spirit. If such a spirit prevails, it is a distorted picture of what Christianity means in homes, families, education, and training. Of course commandments (like the Ten commandments), order, authority, and obedience are needed everywhere, also in Christian homes, but *the difference appears in the application of all this*. Order, authority, and obedience always fit together with love, mutual understanding, and a willingness of co-operation.

There is a certain danger that affects many homes and families, particularly in our modern times, and not in the least Christian families that wish to take part in so many things and activities in order to give service to their fellow-beings and to the community. It is the danger of being engaged in so many things outside the home, that the children very often become neglected. It is amazing, if this danger befalls Christians, who ought to be particularly aware of their responsibility for their children. The danger becomes obvious when we get this testimony from one who grew up in a very good Christian home: "My parents in their love for their fellow-beings cared so much for them, that they neglected and almost forgot me."

The blessing, resting upon a Christian home

If such dangers are avoided that have been mentioned briefly here, there will be a definite blessing resting upon every Christian home, and this kind of blessing will be upon both parents and children. It will also have its influence upon generations to follow. This is a fulfilment of God's promise with the commandment: He is showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love Him and keep His commandments. Ex. 20:6. "This ought indeed to encourage us, and give us hearts that would melt in pleasure and love toward those to whom we owe honour, so that we would raise our hands and joyfully thank God who has given us such promises, for which we ought to run to the ends of the world." (Large Catechism)

What about men or women who remain childless or unmarried?

In some cultures it is regarded as something like a shame for a man or a woman to remain unmarried up to the end of their life. This is definitely a misunderstanding. If we believe that God is the Supreme Ruler, we must believe that He can govern all things in our lives, and also allow our circumstances to "work for good". Rom 8:28.

It is a mistake to believe that all individuals, men and women, must become married and give birth to children. First of all it is a fact that many married couples fail to obtain

children in their marriage. Even so their marriage can be happy, and also a rich blessing both to themselves and to many others. Furthermore many parents, who have given birth to children, with great sorrow have wished that they had been childless, since their child or their children developed in a most unhappy way. It can be stated, therefore, that it is not always such a great pleasure or happiness to have children as many believe. Sometimes it is instead *a great trial*.

With regard to childless marriages there is one fact that is mostly overlooked or even unknown. There are many leaders, particularly Christian, who have done outstanding service as leaders of children and youths in parishes and in the Church. Many of these leaders were *either unmarried or married but without any children of their own*. Why and how could they do such service *among children and youths*, when they had no opportunity at all of doing such service on a minor scale in their own homes? This is something like a great secret in the Kingdom of God. It may be explained a little, however, as *God's compensation for what they did not obtain in their own lives and homes: instead of love for children of their own they obtained a special gift of service, and a still greater love for the children and youths of their fellow-beings*.

With regard to the status of remaining unmarried in life there are arguments that are overlooked or even unknown. There are men and women among us who have deliberately chosen to remain unmarried, or they have even felt this as God's call. They have chosen this way in life for the purpose of being able to serve certain people, be they few or many, e.g. a certain community, worldly or spiritual. They have felt or understood that a family and children could have hindered them in their service. From the pages of history we would be able to mention hundreds or thousands of men and women who have chosen this way. Anybody can go on and examine the local and temporal history of his own community and will definitely find similar examples.

The examples given here well demonstrate that we are all "having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us", and that it is God who through His Spirit "apportions to each one individually as he wills". Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:11.

One of the greatest problems in connection with love and family life

We have just treated a great problem that causes so much sorrow to an untold number of married men and women: the fact that they remain childless in their marriages. In order to find small children, suitable for adoption, such couples search for them also in far-away countries. The astonishing fact is that a much greater number of unborn children are aborted than the number of adopted children.

The enormous number of abortions every year is one of the greatest problems in the world, for many reasons:

love and sexuality are used in such a way that the man and the woman do not wish to take the responsibility for the new life;

abortions are then used like delayed contraceptives;

abortions are defended with economical arguments, like: "We cannot afford to have another child." This argument is most unsatisfactory, when the man and the woman can afford expensive housing, expensive holidays, etc.

The most unaccountable fact, however, which the defenders of "legal abortions" have so far failed to explain, is: How can a man and a woman, who really love each other, first give life to a new human being (in the womb), the fruit of their love, and then extinguish this life?

It remains for the world community to come to its senses in these matters, so that we attain a complete re-thinking about them. It remains for the world-wide Church to raise its prophetic voice in order to cause such a re-thinking.

11

POWER AND JUSTICE

What does "power" mean?

Most people probably understand that the community needs some kind of power in order to safeguard its work and interests. When the leaders and authorities are entrusted with such power, this is not done to make it possible for them to attain their own ends. The community would not get any benefit from that. Instead the leaders and the authorities have their power solely for one purpose: to accomplish what is in the interest of the community itself, for its present and more remote aims, and, where need be, to overcome such difficulties and resistance that may possibly occur.

The "power" or "powers" at the disposal of the community and its authorities may be very different from country to country. It does not serve any purpose to try to list them here. If we mention police forces and courts we have only given two examples. Be it enough to say that the powers are not intended to serve themselves, like when certain groups or parties make their claims. The same happens if a civil service department devotes most of its funds and time in the interest of its own officials and employees. Their power, their funds, and their employees are there for the purpose of serving the community and its members. In this service government ministers, assistant ministers, and secretaries, etc. are only tools and instruments.

As a matter of fact the word "power" is somewhat ambiguous. To most people it will mean the institutions and the officials of the community, and also their visible power, when appearing as sheriffs, commissioners, court officers, gaols, fines, and similar persons or things. For our purpose here another sense of the word is of greater importance, since it has to do with *the authority behind all institutions and officials*. This authority is behind all the visible means of

power, and also behind the decisions made by the departments, officials, courts, etc. Then the question arises: *from where does this authority behind all "powers" come?* This is a point where the lines part. Much arguing in civics and sociology has its starting-point here.

The dividing line

It is rather amazing, but there is more of common ground here between Christians and believers of non-Christian religions, including those of "traditional religion", like animists, than there is between Christians and atheists. Not in the least can the difference be explained by the different views in matters of responsibility. To demonstrate this we can take an example from the field of "environment". It is difficult to find a people more sensitive in matters of nature and environment than the old "red Indians", if for this purpose we may look upon them as one people. Generally they considered themselves responsible for the continued existence and welfare of all animals, trees, and plants, because they knew that they were responsible to "Nature", to the "ancestors", and to "the Great Spirit". This is definitely a strong belief in Creation, and therefore also an acceptance of a great responsibility. Then, as an opposite view, let us look at all schools of thought that deny that there is a Creator: according to them "evolution", "mere chance", or whatever they place instead of Creation, has commenced everything. Thus they do not count with anybody, before whom they are expected to "turn in the account of their stewardship", when they "can no longer be stewards". Lk 16:2. In such schools of thought the only responsibility will come from "reason", "the consensus of the voters", "the enlightened leader", or whatever their thoughts have produced.

What all these ideas deal with is the paramount question: how can a community be ruled, so that it is done for its real welfare, not for a short time only, but for days and years to come? This means: how can it be ruled reasonably, honestly, with humility and consideration, and, above all, *with responsibility?* The latter word is like the hub of the wheel in all community life, since everything circles round it. *Responsibility, yes, but to whom?*

The answer is: *first of all to the people itself, the whole community.* Therefore, Ye Absolute Rulers, "don't bother yourselves"! Such rulers, who are responsible only to themselves, the world has already had enough of, not even one more is needed. Thus, if those who "are in power" are really good and efficient, they should never strive for absolute power, since, after all, they are only human beings, with faults, deficiencies, and mistakes. Instead they ought to work for and together with their people in the best way they can, and they should feel responsible to the people itself, and also account before their people for both success and failure. This is how confidence is created. *When those in power serve in this way they also serve their Creator.* It may happen that they are not believers, it may even happen that they deny that there is a God, yet they serve His purposes by following their common sense and their consciences. The position is the same with rulers of different religious confessions: where there is a real sense of responsibility, their service will be for the common good. Where, on the other hand, the ruling is carried out *together with the furthering of private interests*, or the pleasing or supporting of relatives or friends, groups or parties, or "power for power's sake", then the rule will be only poor or even extremely bad. When the ruling is performed according to what "mere chance", "good luck", "the forces of development", etc., allow or demand, also the word "responsibility" will be interpreted according to what "chance" or "good luck" may possibly give in "deals" or "shares".

Law and Justice

When the authorities of the worldly community do their work, *two leading principles ought to be followed: Justice and the Welfare of the Community.* These two principles are interwoven and therefore also interact and check each other. The one cannot exist or work properly without the existence and work of the other. Thus the welfare of the community cannot be achieved without justice, and justice always must be administered in such a way that it facilitates the welfare of the community and at the same time controls it, and, as far as

possible, hinders all abuse. Justice should never be administered in a spirit of unreasonableness or superiority. In all cases, where such practice becomes a temptation, it is best checked by the spirit of service, a true "public spirit".

All this may be quite reasonable to think and say, but from where does Justice come? How can those who are particularly responsible for the administration of justice know what is "right"? We must all agree that we cannot expect all government ministers, governors, commissioners, prosecutors, or judges, just to mention a few in authority, to be believing and confessing Christians. After all this is not necessary, *as long as we deal with the worldly community*. God has cared for His created world in such a way that "what the law requires is written on /men's/ hearts". Rom 2:15. Therefore the work of the law, going on in men's hearts and in worldly matters in the worldly community, is God's work, either people believe this or not, either they believe in Him or not. *Where the worldly laws are good*, as they are in many countries, and where the authorities perform their ruling and judging duties according to the laws before them, and also according to their consciences and according to the two principles mentioned above, then they act according to God's will. Then they follow the law that has been written on men's hearts. *This is the practising of law in a sense that is valid for both believers and non-believers*. There should not be any conflict on this point. All authorities, officials, and servants of the community, ruling, judging, or serving along these lines, ought to be honoured, respected, and encouraged by all, irrespective of religious beliefs on either side. "A goal is set up here for our jurists that they be careful to deal truly and uprightly with every case, allowing right to remain right, and, on the other hand, not perverting anything (by their tricks or technical points turning black into white and making wrong out to be right), nor glossing it over or keeping silent concerning it, irrespective of a person's money, possession, honour, or power. This is one part and the plainest sense of this commandment." (Large Catechism) What Martin Luther has said here can be applied not only to "jurists", but with the same spiritual power to all who are entrusted with ruling, judging, or serving duties in the community.

Where power is needed

It may sound amazing to many, but an ordinary statement that "outward power is needed to make it possible for the authorities to carry out their duties" has been flatly denied by some schools of thought. To contradict it they have even gone as far as saying that the existence of police and defence forces are the factors behind the violence in the community. Their thought is that the mere existence of such forces have a provocative effect. Thoughts of this kind originate from certain writing-desks, not from real life. We need only a look at two facts to prove that such thinking is false. The first fact is that we live in a real world, not in a world of theories or dreams. In this real world there is plenty of evil, either we have police and defence forces or not. Secondly we can point at some plain, unsophisticated communities where only a few families live, and these having very little money or property that can be stolen. If such a community does not have regular watchmen on duty continuously, they can at least call upon such to turn up when it is necessary, to defend the little property there is. When looking at such an example we may wonder if even one community of that type in the whole world has ever thought of remaining totally unprotected, or if the people there have ever fancied the idea that the existence of their watchmen has produced the evil of thefts or assaults.

The problem has another side: Say that the little tax demanded by the chief of such a local community is not delivered by a certain man, or, still worse, that he refuses to pay it. Who is the chief then, that will just fold his arms, saying: "That's all to it! There is nothing I can do, since this fellow does not like to pay"? Probably there is no chief of such a kind. He can exist only in theory. The fact is that every worldly community needs some outward power, first of all to *demonstrate its authority*, secondly also to *use it, when this becomes necessary*. This is a fact all over the world, denied only by such theorists who refuse to understand.

A state or community without any means of outward and visible authority will become powerless, not only in the long run, but immediately. The outward power exists to defend and maintain law and justice. A state or a community without any outward and effective power is not only powerless, but it

will soon also become lawless. The written law might remain on paper, but what does it help, if people refuse to follow it, and if the authorities have no power of upholding it? Then the position of the community is already the same as in the old Israel, when there wasn't any judge: "Every man did what was right in his own eyes." Judg 17:6.

There are, however, many opportunities when justice can be eliminated in other ways. No law in itself can give any guarantee against abuses, if those in power personally choose or allow such abuses. All depends upon the spirit and the moral stamina in the people itself. Three ways of safeguarding the community against such abuses can be mentioned. First a spirit of watchfulness in the people itself. If such a watchfulness is there, there will be at least some government ministers or officials ready to give the alarm, if need be. Secondly such teaching and training is needed among the citizens that many become aware of a bad development, when there are abuses of such a kind. Thirdly people ought to obtain the help of the spiritual rule. Its servants ought to be ready to raise their prophetic voice, when justice is clearly jeopardized, not by a few individuals of low importance, but by the very ones who have the greatest responsibility for maintaining justice. Woe unto the country, if the highest watchmen of the Church are blind, if they are "all dumb dogs, /that/ cannot bark". Isa 56:10.

Church and Justice

It has already been shown (p 37) that the Church and the worldly rule have a common interest in *the upholding of law*. This is part of God's providential work when He keeps His created world in order and prevents it from becoming too evil. Therefore it is the duty of the Church to help and inspire the worldly authorities in their important work *to write good laws and to maintain justice according to such laws*. When it comes to the administration of justice it is the sole task of the worldly rule, except in such cases *where the Church is bound to speak* (see above, p 37).

It is rather astonishing that the Church itself sometimes fails on this point by doing exactly the opposite of raising its prophetic voice. This happens when the Church keeps silent

with regard to obvious abuses. Sometimes it also happens that the Church interferes in the judicial system and makes it difficult for the police and the courts to fulfil their duties.

Let us state at once that the latter is not the case, if Church authorities point out that proceedings are wrong, that sentences are unjust, that similar cases are treated differently, and that some cases are disregarded intentionally, for example out of consideration for certain persons. All this falls within its field of authority, where its prophetic voice should be heard, for example like this: "Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place." Jer 22:3. In general the prophets of Israel give us good examples, valid in all times. Amos is among the strongest. 5:6-13; 8:4-8.

Now the remarkable thing happens that now and then churchmen interfere with police and courts and other authorities and *publicly take the side of offenders*. Of course such actions could be somewhat right under certain circumstances, e.g. if unlawful things are done to the offenders. The interference becomes wrong, when the cases are tried correctly and humanly according to law. Yet such interference occurs now and then in many countries. It also happens that Christians turn up and not only plead for "love instead of justice", "leniency instead of harshness", and sometimes even cause disturbances almost like riots. It may be noted, at the same time, that such "love" and "consideration" is not pleaded for with regard to the victims in the same cases. We cannot give any details here, since all cases differ very much. We should only note that the representatives of the Church, either they are individuals or officials, make it very difficult for the judicial authorities to apply justice, if the Church acts unwisely in matters like these. The raising of the prophetic voice should never be mixed up with unwise and unwarranted meddling in the judicial duties of the lawful worldly authorities.

There is another side of this matter. When such meddling is done, it is often done with reference to "extenuating circumstances". In normal cases there is no need of church

people or church authorities interfering, in order to point to such circumstances. Instead it is the duty of both the defence and the court itself to consider such circumstances. There are paragraphs for this in every decent code of laws. If there are not such paragraphs, it is the duty of all enlightened people to work for a change, in order to have such paragraphs included in the law. Generally, therefore, instead of protesting every now and then against the handling of individual cases, it is much better to work along the main lines, for strict, wise, human laws, and also for consideration, whenever such is needed, both for the offender and not in the least for his victims. It is also wise to work much more for "common welfare" and for the rehabilitation of the offender, etc., than to interfere every now and then in the administration of justice. Such interference mostly creates confusion and lowers the reputation of the Church as well as of the judicial authorities.

The greatest contribution the Church can ever give to the welfare of the worldly community and its members is to uphold and strengthen the sense of justice and righteousness and the observance of law.

The test of the judicial system

The judicial system is put to the test every time when law and justice are applied in courts, both by the preliminary work carried out by the police and the prosecutors, and by the following and final work in the courts through the judge and his assessors. On all these points it is tested if the community is strong or weak, if it has a strong ethical foundation or not. The "strength" does not become conspicuous by harsh sentences, rather in well founded, wise, and just sentences. The wisdom on these points must be a combination of strict adherence to the law and a thorough consideration of all circumstances. The latter part is not a weakening or contravention of the law, on the contrary it is in true accordance with the law, at least in all countries worthy of the mark "civilized". The development and ethical standing of a worldly community to a certain extent can be verified, if it is examined on these points.

All Christians and the Church itself should regard it as their duty always to assist the worldly community in attaining such a standing. It is also *a part of the teaching on ethics that the Church has to carry out among all peoples in all times.*

Justice and punishment

The old kind of prisons still exists in some countries: a crowded, dark, and most unhealthy place, with little or no care at all, and where prisoners will gradually change for the worse, both mentally and physically. In quite many countries such imprisonment is forbidden, because there all matters of imprisonment are strictly regulated by law. Prisons have to be decent buildings with fair space, with good and nourishing food, good hygiene, and even entertainment and permission to receive visitors. The time in prison will, however, even under such circumstances be trying for almost all prisoners, either their period there is short or long.

What is *the reason for keeping people in prison?* In these outlines we do not consider such cases where those in power keep their opponents in prison, since this is a very different thing, totally unworthy of all states calling themselves a juridical community. Instead let us consider such communities, where law and justice prevail. There *the reason for imprisonment of some of their own citizens cannot and shouldn't be vengeance.* The acceptable reasons are two, and both are totally different from vengeance. The first reason is the aim of the law *to draw up a borderline between what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in a juridical community.* Since the earliest time of mankind it has not been enough to tell people in words only: this you are allowed to do, and this you are forbidden to do. Because of our innate tendency to be tempted to do wrong, we sometimes need a stronger admonition than words can give. Sentences in a court are a clear way of marking such a borderline between right and wrong. - The second reason for imprisonment is *a wish to rehabilitate the offender,* which means to help him change his mind and ways. The two reasons always are somewhat combined in the efforts of the community.

In a community really ruled by law we usually distinguish between three kinds of sanctions after a conviction in court:

probation, fines, or imprisonment. *Probation* means, as the word says, a test period. If this time is well used, imprisonment will not follow. The test period aims at instruction, improvement, and, generally, rehabilitation. For youths under a certain age special rules have to be followed, since it is found unwise to put young people in prison. - *Fines* are something like a middle way, whereas *imprisonment* is meant to be the strongest way of marking the character of the offence or crime committed. Even the imprisonment should be regarded from the positive side: *The community wishes to prepare a way for the convict to come back to a normal life in the community.* Also for this reason the prison ought to be a decent place with edifying qualities. Of course all kinds of corporal punishment and torture must be absolutely forbidden. Every prison employee ought to consider this: *a decent and ethically minded citizen cannot have as his occupation to work as a gaoler, if he is supposed to practise corporal punishment in prison.* The prisoners have already been sentenced in court. *What follows after that should be rehabilitation, not a breaking down of body and soul.*

Since roughly the middle part of the nineteenth century there has been a worldwide work going on to humanize all prisons and to work for the welfare of all prisoners. This includes their health, entertainment, possible studies, spiritual care, etc. Such communities and countries that do not follow international conventions and standards thereby prove that they dissociate themselves from the ethical codes of the international community. It should also be pointed out that it is one thing to accept them orally and in writing, another thing to follow them in practical work.

Some problems in connection with court sentences

We have mentioned the need of drawing the borderline between right and wrong. This is done *in the interest not only of justice but also of righteousness.* The latter word tells us more clearly what it is about. Strictly speaking full justice can never be attained. One very plain example can demonstrate this. If in one city one hundred bicycles are stolen every month, perhaps as an average only thirty or forty are retrieved. If about twenty thieves are supposed to be

responsible for these thefts and taken to court, perhaps only fifteen will be convicted, whereas five are released because of lack of evidence. When this happens we are tempted to say that justice in such a city is very poor, and perhaps the citizens there complain bitterly about such a fact. It is somewhat true, and yet *the work of the police, the prosecutors and the courts is a great work in the service of righteousness, not to accomplish full justice, but to testify what is right and wrong.* Besides all teaching in homes and schools about honesty and about the badness of stealing, forgery, and fraud, we are given a most conspicuous demonstration through the work of the said authorities: *In a decent community we are all called upon to be law-abiding, honest, just, and righteous in our living together.*

On this point many will protest, for example by saying: Can it be a just community, if, say, only ten or twenty percent of all thieves are caught and tried in court, and perhaps only fifty percent of all murderers? We must answer: Which are the alternatives? On the whole there are only two: *either* we must all repent, change our lives on a large scale, so that we become more law-abiding citizens, *or* we shall have to increase on a very large scale the number of patrolling policemen, watchmen, guards, prosecutors, judges, and courts. "On a large scale" may mean five to ten times. It will cost a tremendous lot of money. In such a way we may reduce the number of crimes over a short period. But over a longer period the community will land in a tremendous poverty: the whole population will have to pay the high costs for the keeping of the police forces and the judicial system. And what is the intended "advantage"? In the many "police states" they happen to know. The many policemen, guards, watchmen, etc., so poorly paid because of their great numbers, will in many cases become the new criminals, "sucking the blood" out of their poor fellow-citizens. They may apprehend anybody for fake offences, and frauds and bribes will be almost normal features in the every-day life. - There is, after all, no alternative to a community, building itself up in a spirit of self-respect, obedience to the law, and mutual assistance.

Earlier "*the deterrent effect*" was often stressed in connection with imprisonment sentences. Then it was also meant that the punishment ought to be "severe", also physically. Today we recommend a different view, although a certain degree of deterrent effect remains. Offenders ought to understand that crimes are not worth while, "crime doesn't pay". If the convict himself finds it a little difficult to understand this point, at least *all who are tempted to commit crimes ought to understand*: It does not pay in the long run, and further it is an unworthy way of solving one's problems.

The more modern times have not brought any improvement with regard to some of the problems of prisons and convicts. Many prisoners return to the prisons time and again, and some of them become specialists in training newcomers in old and new vices and devices. Thus prisons often become centres for gambling and drug business. All this makes it necessary for all authorities concerned and for many voluntary organizations to take steps for further reforms, and for alternatives to imprisonment, wherever possible. The best way, no doubt, is to carry out such information work in the large community that as many as possible will make a sincere decision early in life: *I will live such a life that if one day I become imprisoned it will not be because of a crime on my side.*

It very often happens that those who have been sentenced to fines or imprisonment say, when it is over, that they have "atoned" for their crime. This is not a correct description of what has happened. Perhaps they have not repaid anything of the stolen money, and, if they are murderers, of course they have not managed to restore the life of the one they have murdered. What they wish to say is: the community has punished me by giving me this kind of punishment, I have gone through it, and now the community and myself ought to be square, it is settled. - Although this is a very layman-like interpretation of what has happened, there is a point in it. If the punished convict wishes to say that the matter is "settled", he may mean that "the old has passed away, behold, the new has come", then he has learnt his lesson and may want to make a new start in life. This is what all treatment of offenders aims at: *rehabilitation of human beings to a life in*

human fellowship. We may be far from it in many places, but it is an undisputed duty for all of us to strive in that direction. All Christians ought to be in the first line to do so.

Capital punishment

The most common argument for this kind of punishment is that it is a strong deterrent factor. The thought then is that others will refrain from murder and other grave crimes, when they see how this kind of offenders lose their lives. This explanation does not, however, hold good, if we look at the countries where capital punishment is practised: their figures for crimes are not lower than in other countries, rather they are much higher. How has the capital punishment succeeded in becoming a deterrent factor then?

Furthermore, in most civilized countries it is regarded as *unworthy to take an offender's life.* Instead it is found to be a *most unsuitable way of trying to mend anybody's bad character.* There are many better ways. Many have come out from prisons and from juvenile probation institutions as changed characters. This is very encouraging. A few successes of this kind more than counterbalance dozens of such people who frequent the prisons and continue to cause problems. Furthermore, *a human being, also a criminal, has an immortal soul.* As long as there is life, there is also hope for such a soul. Even such an offender may be restored and renewed, so that upon him the aforementioned word may be found true in another and deeper sense: "The old has passed away, behold, /something/ new has come." 2 Cor 5:17.

12

DEFENCE AND WAR

Love of one's own country

Many questions about defence and war are extremely difficult to answer, partly because all motives both for and against are so easy to disguise, partly because it is so easy to misunderstand one's own feelings. The same difficulties therefore apply to every exposition of Christian ethics in these matters. Another difficulty consists in the difference between theory and practice. A theorist may sit at his writing-desk, expounding his theories about a world of non-violence, where no military defence will be needed. At some noise from a door or window he phones the police to obtain immediate help against what he thinks is housebreakers. This incident may be taken as a proof that he is more in favour of his own safety and the protection of his own house than a corresponding safety for his own country. Against this it may be said that perhaps he expects the police to come without any weapons but with an intention of arguing with the robbers. Well, then he has definitely proved that he is a theorist: the housebreakers or burglars will not hesitate to be armed with weapons much more dangerous than his arguments.

Such people who argue against defence and all kinds of military power often act against their own principles in another way. It has happened many times, when a country has been attacked from outside, that theorists of the abovementioned type, together with draft resisters and conscientious objectors, have immediately reported for military training in order to become able to assist in the defence of their country. What has happened then? In many cases they have understood more clearly than at any time before, that we live in a world of much evil, and that also a country may have to set limits to such evil, also when this has to be done by force. This is what happens already when a community arms its police forces, although this may at first be done with batons

only. With so much evil and brutality round us, fists, sticks, or batons will not be enough, since thieves and other evil-doers may be prepared to shoot. The weapons of the police will be a deterrent power, and if it becomes necessary the weapons will also be used.

Now, what is it that makes us defend our country? Just as we love our home, our home village, our home town or home province, so we also love our country. Yet there is much more in it. In our native country we have a common heritage, of language, customs, history, and cultural activities and practices, etc. Our people have lived in the same country, perhaps for many generations, and we are deeply rooted in the layers of tradition they have handed over to us. Then the question certainly arises: Can we simply hand over all this to others? "The others", who are they? If it is an invasion of an army, or if it is an attack from the air, we can be sure they are not fugitives from a foreign country who come to ask for food and shelter. It is an enemy force, sent by a foreign power. Perhaps the rulers of that country are bad people who have mismanaged their own country and people for a long time and caused a deep discontent. To divert such discontent and stop international criticism they have started a war, covering their deepest aim with slogans about "repeated attacks over the borders", "mistreatment of our minority groups within their borders", etc. What purpose or what gain would there be in exposing our own country to such rulers and giving them more land, and more people, more institutions and industries to mismanage?

Basic facts

Our starting-point may be that God is our Creator, Father, and Keeper. Then we must also admit that He is the One who has given us our land and people. This land is our home in the world. We are all stewards who have to account for what we are doing with it. Can it be taken for granted that our people will be left in peace here tomorrow, next year, or for all future? If we wish to live in peace tomorrow and in the future, one condition is that we take care of our country. In the same way as we build roads, and railways, and irrigation systems, in order to run it and look well after it, so we also

have to defend it, if it becomes endangered through enemies. From the olden times of the Christian church, *peace has been counted as part of our "daily bread"*, which we need in order to manage to live. For our daily bread "it is not only necessary that our body have food and covering and other necessaries, but also that we spend our days in peace and quiet among the people with whom we live and have intercourse in daily business and conversation and all sorts of doings, in short, whatever pertains both to the domestic and to the neighbourly or civil relation and government. For where these two things are hindered (intercepted and disturbed) that they do not prosper as they ought, the necessaries of life also are impeded, so that ultimately life cannot be maintained. And there is, indeed, the greatest need to pray for temporal [=worldly/ authority and government, as that by which most of all God preserves to us our daily bread and all the comforts of this life. For though we have received of God all good things in abundance, we are not able to retain any of them or use them in security and happiness, if He did not give us a permanent and peaceful government. For where there are dissension, strife, and war, there the daily bread is already taken away, or at least checked." (Large Catechism)

It is rather easy to explain why all these things may be threatened or even taken away from us. The explanation is the same as when "thieves break in and steal". Mt 6:19. Nobody has ever made these things clearer than Jesus has done in His teaching. All evil in the world comes from the heart of man, also the evil that causes wars and manifests itself in wars. Wars were not created by God, nor are they wanted by Him, instead they most clearly demonstrate that the world has followed another road than the one God had planned for man.

There are many who cherish the idea that all wars could be stopped and even be made impossible, if we all refrain from arming ourselves and scrap existing armies and weapons. There are three answers to this ready at hand. First of all, which is the authority in the world that can make all nations scrap their armies and weapons? Secondly, are all draft resisters, who plead for such ideas, honest men and women? Are they all free from all kinds of evil, e.g. readiness to betray their own country? Do they never steal or speak lies?

Of course anybody among them can do such things. People in other countries are not different from them. It is the same with the people in such countries that border on our country. Now, *is it possible to think, that they can have all kinds of vices and evil except the wish to attack us, rob land from us and interfere in our affairs?* Such a possibility seems to be beyond imagination. Furthermore, can we be sure that *the leaders* of bordering or other neighbouring countries are the most reliable people that can be found? No, in these matters there is not even one point where we can state that we have definite guarantees of safety, or loyalty to agreements, or to promises given.

One of the poorest arguments ever produced in favour of disarmament is almost unbelievable: "If a possible enemy sees that we have disarmed ourselves, he will respect this and leave us in peace." One could quite as well say: "If a thief finds some houses locked, and some unlocked, he will leave the unlocked houses in peace out of respect." If we bring the arguing back to the case of the disarmed country, what would happen to it? It would not take long, before it becomes occupied by forces from another country. Why so? The official reason, broadcast to the world, most probably would be: "Since this neighbouring country from now on is open to foreign and hostile interests, we feel compelled to protect it against such. It is also in our interest to do so, because we cannot tolerate that other countries use this vacant territory as a basis for plots or attacks against us." Another thing could also happen: that the undefended country is taken over by two or three neighbouring powers, each of them slicing off a piece of the territory thus laid open. In such a case the undefended country would be more or less erased from the map of nations. This has happened so many times that we ought to know the lesson by now, but some people find it difficult to learn anything from lessons given.

The teaching from Holy Scripture

On this point we have to proceed very carefully. On one hand it is impossible to say that Scripture gives us detailed instructions about what we have to do in connection with matters of defence. On the other hand it is impossible to say

that Scripture forbids us to defend ourselves or our country. The latter statement has, however, been made now and then through the ages, claiming support from such words as Ex 20:13 and Mt 5:39. It should be noted, however, that the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount deals with the individual believer in his personal dealings with his fellow-beings. Such statements cannot be applied to parliaments, governments, or other authorities who have to look after the interests of the nation and the people as a whole. Furthermore, Scripture must be allowed to explain itself. This means that a single word should never be interpreted in such a way that it neutralizes or totally contradicts other words that deal with the same matter.

Thus, when we look at the Scriptural teaching as a whole on this matter, we find that Jesus Christ Himself has touched upon defence as an alternative to "asking for terms of peace" or surrender. Lk 14:31-32. Neither Jesus, nor His apostles have ever told anyone among the many officers or soldiers they met at their time of service in the Holy Land, that they ought to give up their military service. Nor did John the Baptist do so, when he was asked about it in the most straightforward way: "And we, what shall we do?" Nobody after John the Baptist, neither Jesus, nor an apostle, has ever stated that the Baptist was wrong in his teaching: "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages." Lk 3:14. Thus their position in the defence forces, yes, even in war, could be consistent with Christian discipleship. Scripture also tells us most clearly that "there is no authority except from God", and that "who is in authority ... does not bear the sword in vain". Rom 13:1-10.

The deviations in these matters

Such deviations occur for different reasons. One is a loose and blurred conception of love. First such a conception is worked out, fairly much "free-hand", and then different problems are explained and solved according to the pattern of such a "love". Many of these ideas about a society or community "without strife or war" go back to the "Age of Enlightenment" when "the Reason of Man" took such a grip on many minds. Some schools of thought took the lead and

tried to find a new way, free from old traditions and, not in the least, free from the influence of the Church and the Word of God. When this happens, no distinction is made any longer between "the worldly rule" and "the spiritual rule" (see above, p 35). The worldly rule is also from God, and it has at its disposal worldly means, also of great power, in order to manage to carry out its duties. To disarm the worldly rule is to try to reshape it into a different thing altogether, not worldly, not spiritual, rather semi-worldly *and* semi-spiritual at the same time. Such a falsified thing cannot perform any of the duties on either side: it cannot be a spiritual rule, and it has been robbed of its means of being a worldly rule.

Different kinds of war

What has been said here is *not a general justification of wars, and still less a justification of all kinds of war*. A full explanation of these difficult questions cannot be given here, only a few general lines.

No single war is ever fully righteous, even if it happens to be fully justified as being a defensive war, because in almost every war so many evil people turn up and so many evil things are done under the cover and pretense that "so is war". Among such things we may mention cruelty to prisoners, looting, and rape. These deviations from international conventions about warfare we have to leave aside here. Instead we will point out that in general there are *two kinds of war: defensive wars, and aggressive wars*. Normally it ought to be easy to distinguish between the two kinds and also to find out about a particular war what it is, but there are some difficulties here as well. Many political leaders will do their best to disguise an aggressive war to look like a defensive war. This is often done by intensive propaganda in a most nationalistic way. It can also be done in such a way that the attacking side looks like the one being attacked. There is one very common trick of this kind: Some minor military forces, dressed in uniforms from the other country (imitated or bought from secret agents), attack some villages and cause some damage and deaths. Then the propaganda department takes over, explaining that "we cannot tolerate that enemy forces every now and then assault and slaughter our innocent

citizens in this way", and then "the counterattack" is labelled as "a defensive war for the protection of our beloved native land". Such dirty tricks are used so often in different parts of the world that they ought to be extremely suspected every time they are used again.

Another difficulty is that in a country, that is on the point of being attacked, there are often clear signals or reports telling that the enemy is on the march or on the seas, approaching to attack. Here political and military wisdom will not allow the enemy to cross the border or to land, because at such a moment the war, although officially not yet started, would already be halfway lost. In most cases it is likely that all who are taking part in the defence will know that it is a purely defensive war, even if they have to meet the enemy on his side of the border.

There are more difficulties. *Many kinds of wars and many kinds of weapons are strictly forbidden according to international law, for example certain kinds of bullets and bombs, and all kinds of gas and chemicals.* Some chemicals may be purely poisonous, whereas other chemicals may have a more suffocating effect, or causing blindness. Although they are very different, they have one thing in common: they cause harm only to those who come near the stuff, or touch it, or inhale it. There are worse things. Some nations breed germs and store them in packages, covers, or containers, and when a war breaks out they are ready to spread the germs over the enemy's territory. Then the whole nation or even adjoining peoples will be in danger, either of contracting deadly sickness or of contracting *diseases that will cause harm even in following generations.* There are possibilities of exterminating large populations over continents in this way.

More and more "development" has gone so far and spread to so many spheres of human and biological life, that warfare along such lines cannot be stopped on the defensive side. Therefore all these things must be prevented and stopped in peacetime at the places where the schemes are worked out. Science has come to a crossroad. It is not enough to ask the soldiers or military officers to refuse to take part in warfare of this kind. Those who ought to refuse are the scientists and the assistants in the laboratories and chemical factories. All

people, who are conscientious enough to think more deeply about these matters, ought to do their best to stop all these abominable things in connection with war. In peacetime it is still possible to withdraw from all kinds of co-operation. When a war has broken out, it is not possible to withdraw, without taking the risk of the most severe punishment.

The international side of these matters

The argument is put forward at times that instead of having defences of our own in different countries, we ought to rely on the international community to uphold the peace between all nations. It is often suggested that international units, like "international police forces", could be sent to such places where there is a crisis of some kind, and matters could be settled in international courts after that. All this sounds very good, but the effectiveness of such plans may be described in this way: "When the international community had managed to come to an agreement on the matter and slowly begun to send its forces, the local war was already over." The League of Nations (commenced in 1920, dissolved in 1946) and the United Nations (commenced in 1945) have both shown that the necessary authority and power behind such organizations are still missing. Yet the United Nations can be of great value in many matters of mutual interest to the member states, and also be a tool for continuous efforts in the service of peace.

Refusal to do military service

In some countries there are movements of this kind: Such young men that object to all kinds of warfare and military service organize themselves to win public and official acceptance of their personal conviction that it is against their conscience to do military service and also to be trained for such. In other countries there are no movements of this kind, and possibly no personal actions of this kind either. The reasons behind such movements are many: a personal and conscientious objection to all handling of weapons and to personal partaking in the killing of other people. Reference is often made to the above-mentioned personal prohibitions of killing (see p 150 f). We have, however, pointed out that such conscientious objectors both claim and benefit from the

protection given them by the community, which at the end cannot be done without arms, e.g. in the hand of the police. The question then is: Since they live under a protection by means of arms, is it only the personal handling of arms they object to, or what is it?

Here they claim to follow a wider and higher principle: If we refuse to carry arms and to rely on arms, we will commence a new development in the world, for a peaceful world, and for a new understanding between the nations, etc. On this point they are making many obvious mistakes. First, they count with a general approval of their ideas, also among possible "enemies", which should be understood as "if we lay down the arms, they will do the same". The truth is that if we lay down the arms, many possible "enemies" will only look upon us as fools. They may have their own ideas about "freedom", "power", "national interest", and so forth. Secondly, in the conscientious objectors there is, in many cases, a mixture of thoughts about the two "rules", i.e. the worldly rule and the spiritual rule. The worldly authorities cannot behave as if they were the Church or individual Christians. The authorities of the country "do not bear the sword in vain", instead they are "the servant of God to execute His wrath on the wrongdoer". Rom 13:4. This cannot be interpreted as taking action only against citizens who fail to pay taxes, and leaving the borders open to wrongdoers from outside. Thirdly, it is wise and good to be a sincere, "spiritual" and thinking Christian, following one's conscience, yet it is always necessary to remember that we live in an evil and sinful world, full of evil plots and machinations. This evil we can meet on an individual basis by allowing people to strike us on our right cheek and yet turning to them the left one also. Mt 5:39. We can be personally kind to evildoers of all kinds, but *we have never been instructed to do so by allowing them to enter our houses to strike women and children.* Our doors and thresholds are the borderlines we may defend, if our "love" is not going to be laughed at. The worldly authorities are the defenders of the doors and thresholds of the country. If they fail to be such defenders, it means that they have flung the doors of the nation open, and then perhaps hundreds of thousands of our countrymen will become the victims of their failure. Is it love? Is it "a way of international understanding"? Is it "a

way of peaceful development"? Fourthly, the spiritual warfare against weapons and wars has to be carried out at two other front-lines: the enlightening on a large scale about international conflicts and warfare, and a strengthening of the international work on the understanding and solving of conflicts, and, not in the least, a broader and deeper teaching in ethics, about what is right and wrong, in order that the disguise of "national interests" be disclosed, so that the true factors behind evil and evil-doers may be told in the proper way to the international bodies.

A difficult personal decision

In these matters the most difficult decision by an individual does not come when he is called up for military training in peace-time. Such training may be useful in many ways: the army may assist in relief work within the country, possibly also *in international service to prevent wars, etc.* No, the difficult decision has to be made when he is called up for military service in a war that is already going on or is just about going to be started. In the latter cases it is not enough to state: "This is my country. I just do what I am ordered to do." It is not that simple. No, if there is ever a reason to think about conscientious objection, the time has come to think. Why should there be any objection? It all depends upon what kind of war that is going to be started or is already going on. Theoretical deliberations can lead astray here. *What is it really about? What is the real purpose of the war?* It may be helpful to examine a couple of examples here.

The first one: The regime of the country has been bad for a number of years and lost more and more of its credibility and support. The leaders have eventually found that something must be done. Now and then there has been a little quarrelling with a neighbour state about some trifle matters. All of the sudden these quarrels are blown up into a very big conflict, so as to look like being fatal to the future of the nation. In the most sentimental way the leaders plead with all citizens of the nation "to stand up as one man against this enemy, in order to defend the independence of our native land". Very many understand that the propaganda and the vocabulary are all nonsense, but very few have the courage to

prick the propaganda balloon. Then it happens: A few brave men, say a few military officers and a few soldiers, refuse to take part in the coming war, because "it is only a disguised attack on an enemy, that is not really an enemy, it is only a people that has been chosen to become the victim of our national mistakes". Under the "laws of war", which may already be in force, "for safety's sake", such officers and soldiers may be severely punished, possibly with the loss of their lives, but before such things happen there may be such a stir in the country that the leaders have to resign, the planned war is stopped, and a general clean-up in the official handling of the matter is carried out. If the war is started it may happen that a little later the few brave men are regarded as the heroes of the nation, even if they have already sacrificed their lives. On the other hand, what about if the war is won against "the enemy", or if the war is lost? It may happen that in the history of the nation the few who gave their lives by refusing to take part are looked upon as beacons of light in a time of great darkness. Have the few given their lives in vain? No, whatever the outcome, it was a conscientious action against unscrupulous leaders and a likewise unscrupulous war. "They loved not their lives even unto death." Rev 12:11.

The second example: The war is planned in order to "secure national safety", as it is said in the official information. The fact is that it is planned in order to obtain rich fields of agriculture, or rich fields of oil, or some mines of ore, or a river basin, suitable for a big dam, which in its turn is suitable for big power or irrigation schemes. Many honoured nations have gone to war for less. Now, if the plan for such international assaults is quite obvious to many, but quite professionally disguised under national propaganda phrases, it becomes a matter for conscientious people to react in all ways they can: by creation of opposition groups, by widespread pamphlets, by conscientious objection, etc. This is quite easily said in a handbook, but what happens in real life, when the problem has come to the fore?

The wrong thing is so often done by such people who call themselves "conscientious objectors" *in peace-time*. When a wrong and filthy war is in the making, and when already

martial laws prevail, then perhaps they do not object at all. Perhaps out of fear they take part in a terrible war, sometimes against totally unprotected civilians. - The examples shown here do not give a clear way to follow, they only show us that there is a tremendous difference between theories and practices, between talking and acting. Therefore *the matters about defence, military service and war must be well considered and decided upon in peace-time, not when the war signals sound*. Then it is too late to start thinking. Then it is time to act, the one way or the other.

The task of the Church in these matters

The Church may act wrongly here, on the one side or the other. She may walk with the propaganda makers, if there are such, encouraging the warmongers and even blessing them. She may take the side of *all* conscientious objectors, whatever their open or secret aims may be. Both ways are wrong. Everything depends on what kind of war it is about. It is also necessary to find out the difference in minds and thoughts. Particularly the Church ought to examine the difference between the possible propaganda version of the matter and the real facts behind the matters presented as "facts". Behind what is presented as "national interests" we often find pure selfishness, greed, hunger for power, etc. If such is the case, the nation ought to be informed, before it goes to war. The Church, more than any other body, ought to be able to discern the difference between nationalistic propaganda and true love for the native land, between a necessary defence of the native land and an infamous attack on an innocent neighbouring country. If the Church fails in these matters, where are its leaders, and of what kind are they?

There is another important and urgent task for the Church: to stress to all people concerned, on both sides of all borderlines, the immense value and importance of a human life, both in this life and in eternity. Human lives ought to be protected as far as possible, and yet human lives may be sacrificed, if need be, not at the whim of a selfish and brutal leader, if there is such one, but by the owners themselves of these lives, when they feel called and compelled to give their lives for a right cause. Many single, ordinary Christians have

almost changed the course of history, when they have laid down their lives for the sake of truth and for the sake of Christ. This is exactly what He did Himself, and therefore it must be taught also by the Church: "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master; it is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master." Mt 10:24-25. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jn 15:13.

In the wake of wars

If it is a call to all people of good will to work against all wars, it is also a call to assist, in all ways possible, such people who have become victims, e. g. fugitives. In olden times there was only one way open to them: passing the nearest border in order to obtain refuge. Nowadays, with such better facilities of transport, it is possible to find fugitives in certain countries who have come from the other side of the world.

The problem has many sides: hunger, persecution, loss of human rights, the need of humanitarian help, the need of co-operation between the receiving nations, etc. There are also problems of a totally different kind. It happens that the fugitives pass many borders, also oceans, in order to reach a popular receiving country, which they wish to become their new homeland. Thus it also happens that people, who call themselves "fugitives", have no urgent reason to leave their country of origin. Instead they have taken a chance to arrange for a new and better future, particularly for economical reasons. This is what complicates all official handling of these matters: Who can find out who are really fugitives, and who are not? It also happens that when fugitives try to leave their country of origin, they are misled by individuals or firms dealing in the business. This is a problem in many parts of the world, year after year.

When all wars will come to an end

There is a slogan among many well-wishers and well-doers: they state that they wish to "do away with all wars". Although this sounds pretty good, it is not based on facts. Such statements do not consider deeply enough the reality of

evil in this world or the position of man. Evil will exist up to the end of time. Before the end of time many things in the world will even become worse. Mt 24. What can we do about this, then? Of course we cannot declare that Jesus must be mistaken, nor can we declare that in spite of His words we are going to eradicate all wars. For sure it is our duty to do all we can to eliminate all wars, or to neutralize or minimize them, or to limit the consequences of the wars that come. We also ought to diminish the use of war as an instrument to solve international strife. In spite of all we can and should do there will be wars, more or less, up to the end of time.

What do we have to do as Christians? Since we are members of the Christian church, it is one of our duties to distribute correct knowledge about facts, both with regard to possible international conflicts and with regard to wars that have already broken out. The foremost duty is not far from any of us: it is to teach ourselves and all we possibly reach that the root of all evil is in man himself, and thus in ourselves, not in "the generals", not in "national funds spent on war preparations", as a popular saying goes. Where these matters are wrong, it depends upon some evil in men. Many disputes and wars could be hindered, if this knowledge had been brought home to such people who have the deciding authority. Proper Christian teaching and information could help many to seek a spiritual basis and background for their lives, when there is still time, and, not in the least, they could be prepared for "the evil day", when it comes, and "be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand". Eph 6:13.

13

REVOLUTION

"Revolution" is a phenomenon often disguised in a romantic light and dress. When people long for a revolution, they often think about it as a wonderful task, performed by a few heroic men that will remove almost all evil in the community, and inaugurate a new era, and they are convinced that people will then become grateful, prosperous, and happy.

There is no doubt that many revolutions have started with such visions and also aimed at a change for something better: to do away with injustice and corruption, to end unnecessary wars, etc. Some revolutions have also started with real plans, made up almost in detail. Yet it is easy to find that most of this failed. Sometimes it happened that the leaders were daydreamers, who had started to play with romantic thoughts about becoming "the saviours of the nation", "the heroes of the masses", etc., and when the revolution broke out they had no possibility of controlling what they had started. Instead they became the tools of things they could not dream of, and of interests that were totally against what they had intended. The revolution found its own way, like the torrent of a spring flood.

How the masses can become misled

One of the standard arguments in favour of revolution can be found in a very common question of this kind: "If the situation in a country is terrible and, as it seems, without any hope for changes, and if there appears a leader or some leaders who feel sorry for their own people and promise to save them, is it not right then to follow them on the path of revolution?" The weakest point here is the dependence of many people upon words, sentiments, feelings, and promises. Just for a while turn the matter round: Where is the revolution leader that tells his people, before the revolution breaks out, that it will demand from them "blood, sweat, and tears"? Does he tell them that they may have to go through many years of hard suffering, hunger, and war, all much

worse than what they have already suffered? No, in most cases the leader will say the opposite: if people follow him, he will end the hardships, and a new and prosperous time will come instead.

With regard to the aims of a revolution it is almost impossible to know until afterwards what they were. In the cases of revolutions that failed, the following legal proceedings have very often shown that the aims were totally different from what was said before the revolutions started. Sometimes the reason behind the revolution was pure jealousy, or hunger for power, or a desire for vengeance upon some people. If, on the other hand, we look at revolutions that were successful in an outward way, their "aims" or "goals" do not make a stronger impression: nothing of the promises given did materialize, instead the situation of the farmers, the workers, and the poor, etc. deteriorated still more. The most conspicuous facts were that the cases of intrigues and corruption shifted from the old to the new set of leaders.

When the false promises have been disclosed and the false nimbus has fallen from so many revolutionary "heroes", it is no longer necessary to explain what almost anybody can see: What happened after the revolution? A very common answer to this question is: "We have not seen any change for the better. Instead it seems that our old problems have become much worse and that many new problems have been added."

Such information is amazing, to say the least, since "changes" have been on the programme of so many revolutions. Therefore another question may quite reasonably be asked: If there is no change for the better after so many revolutions, why did people take the trouble and suffering, then? In spite of all information available about such consequences, many consider starting a new revolution, only for the purpose of having "a change". The plan must be met with the question: "For what? For better, or for worse?" Very many find again, after their new revolution, that they have only received a new set of corrupt leaders, new faces round the flesh-pots, and, not in the least, hands with larger spoons or forks. Altogether the people may have new and greater difficulties, together with those they had been promised to be saved from.

Definitely there are changes after a revolution, but a "change" in itself does not solve any problems. It all depends upon what the changes have led to.

A political revolution is something abnormal

No human community can live without justice and order. For such a system laws, courts, police, and a public spirit are needed. If there are no laws in force, what can the citizens be expected to obey, or from where can orders come? When a revolution has taken place, the situation in many cases is that the previous laws have been suspended and that there is no law to be followed, until new laws have been drawn up. How is it possible to live without valid laws? The answer may be that after the hour of revolution "martial law" is in force, or the revolution leaders rule "by decree", which means that a word from them is equivalent to law.

How can people ever come to such a situation that there is no real law, and that nobody knows what is right, and that courts do not work according to a code of laws? Those who have started the revolution, or those who are already defending it, may say that the legal system had already broken down and that there was no justice in the country any longer. This might be what they say, but there might be many more who say the opposite. They say there was some weakness, and some mistakes were committed now and then, but those who started the revolution either wanted to have some excuse for starting it, or they were dissatisfied because some court verdicts had been passed against them. Instead of being put in jail because of this, they preferred to turn over the whole judicial system and everything. Thus for their own gain, and also to satisfy their nearest supporters, they were ready to turn over the whole system rather than complying with justice, or, if something had been really wrong with the system, working for a step by step reformation of the laws and court procedures.

Also on this point facts speak against the too common glorification of revolutions. It is often said about some revolutions that they aimed at the establishment of justice, peace, and common order in the country. Further investigations of what happened often show that justice had its faults

before the revolutions but became only worse after, and if so, what had the oppressed people gained from having a revolution?

There is another point here: Who can assess, honestly and for sure, that "justice had ceased to work"? What kind of people have such a position that they can examine such a wide and difficult field? Yet "justice has ceased to work" is a phrase so often repeated that it is almost useless as an argument. Yet it is the first argument that is available, when plotters sit together to draw up their plans. A little money, scattered around in the most suitable places, will also find willing errand-boys to carry the message round. If, on the other hand, revolutions in at least 75 % of all cases brought a new and better state of affairs with regard to law and order, then the argument would carry more weight. Now in a good many cases the facts are the opposite: law and order deteriorate still more during and after a revolution, sometimes irreparably over long periods. How can revolutions be good for law and order then?

Further arguments against starting revolutions

How can such a step ever be defended, if an individual starts a revolution and allows his own people to enter a period of total uncertainty and, perhaps, total confusion and lawlessness? A revolution very often means that uncontrolled powers are let loose. There may follow contra-revolutions, or a revolution inside the revolution, which means that suddenly there is a *coup among the new leaders*. To put this most briefly and clearly, let us take this example: In a democracy, that works fairly well but under some difficulties, there is a revolution "to establish more democracy", but during the unforeseen happenings one of the leaders breaks away from the rest. He takes a chance and establishes himself as the sole ruler. Then the revolution ends at the very opposite of its aim. This is exactly what happens in many revolutions: their result is the opposite of the proclaimed aim. Here is another alarm signal: when there is some talk going on about the possibility of starting a revolution, then look out for such people who are like the untamed tongue: "a restless evil, full of deadly poison". Js 3:8. The fact is that many who talk their people

into a revolution keep their aims secret, until the revolution is well over. Therefore the conclusion must be: how can it ever be defensible to let such unforeseen powers loose that are at work in times of revolution?

From a Christian point of view two further points have to be stressed. First of all, "there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." Rom 13:1. This may be hard to believe sometimes, but those who have replaced a poor rule with a much poorer rule by revolting against the previous one very often must ask themselves: "Why did we do this?" When they see and admit their mistake, there isn't anything they can do, because the new rulers are firmly established in power. - What can people do then, when it does not help them if they start a revolution? Since "God is not a God of confusion but of peace", 1 Cor 14:33, it is always a Christian rule to work for peaceful changes and improvements step by step, also if it takes quite a long time. Such people, who have been impatient in these matters and revolted against their rulers, afterwards have found that in a generation or two they have had several consecutive revolutions but no visible signs of improvement. Therefore, both from a Christian and a worldly point of view it can be stated: *no revolution can ever be justified, unless there are extremely strong reasons for starting it.*

Under what circumstances can a revolution be justified?

There are cases when almost everything in a country has deteriorated to such a degree that everything seems to be wrong: there is no rule, and no authority. There are no laws in force, except possibly "the law of the jungle". Most people then long for a change, but there is nothing to hope for from the authorities. *If this is the situation, something must be done.* Many would say: "Only a revolution can save such a country." And yet there is an alternative: There is an urgent need of some brave and respected individuals taking the lead *in a process towards the shaking up and the reshaping of the nation. This is not a revolution, it is the new birth of the nation.* Things like these have happened in not so few cases the world over.

What is the difference between such a change and what in most cases we call a revolution? In a revolution the facts are somewhat ambiguous. This means that from all facts and all information available it is possible to come to totally different conclusions, whereas in the "new birth" there is no ambiguity of such kinds. Furthermore, such people who start a revolution can do so for very different reasons, as has already been shown. In a reshaping of the nation, on the other hand, beginning at a time of almost total collapse, the situation is totally different: there is no choice, those who become the new leaders have not elected themselves but have instead been called upon by the people itself for the very purpose of doing the salvage work needed, and further there is no suspicion of obscure aims, since the aim is conspicuous enough: the people must be helped to stand up again after its pitiful collapse.

There is, however, one point where the people awakening in such a way may find itself in a situation somewhat like a revolution. The fact is that in times of political and social unrest certain evil powers in the soul of the people itself may easily be let loose. There may also be openings for personal power and gain. In the turmoil many will think there are chances of settling some old affair with personal enemies without any risk of being discovered. There is also the danger of gangs or crowds taking power, at least locally, if there isn't from the very outset a spirit of self-restraint and responsibility.

Is there a way of making all revolutions unnecessary?

It is very difficult to find an example of a revolution that was, at the same time, needed, without dubious aims, successful, and having only good consequences for the future for the people concerned. Therefore it is very tempting to think that we would do much better the world over, if there were no revolutions at all. Yet many revolutions are likely to come. It is fairly easy to explain why. There are two main reasons for revolutions: on the one side the many bad rulers, so frequent in many parts of the world, on the other side the hunger for power, so frequent among those who think they would

become much better rulers themselves, if only they came into power. Behind both of these groups of leaders or may-be leaders there is one power in common: the feature they share with all people they rule, *the evil in man*. This means that the people have and will always have such leaders that are exposed to much evil in their own hearts, of course together with many good features. Under such circumstances it is a striving in vain to wait for the unselfish or perfect leaders, either they are expected to be obtained through revolution or through peaceful development.

What is to be done, then, with regard to the danger of having new revolutions among us? First of all we need good teaching about real statecraft and good citizenship. We are all citizens in one country or another. We have all a certain responsibility for our own affairs and for the affairs of the community. In all this there is always a danger of speaking about "them", aiming at rulers and authorities, when something is found to be wrong. Then we must remember that "they" are not to be separated or totally distinguished from "us". They are all part of our community, as we are. They are "our" people. Their responsibility is ours, and vice versa. If all citizens work diligently, according to their means and gifts, and also according to their consciences, if all citizens co-operate for the common good, and if they assist their authorities instead of only criticizing them every now and then, then many reasons and excuses for a revolution will be eliminated. If there are complaints, and if agitators try to stir up, we should always try to find out what is true and what is false. If anything is really wrong, we should all do our best to find remedies and peaceful solutions. The longing for a revolution may be not only daydreaming, it may be a longing for something extremely difficult, yes, even something totally unworkable, shadow-figures that we haunt in our thoughts, and, which may be still worse, it may be a craving for an extremely dangerous and deadly tool. Revolution always is an extremely dangerous tool that so often slips. How it will be used, and by which hands when it cannot be controlled any longer, nobody will know. Furthermore, when it cannot be controlled any more, or when it is totally over, it has left cuts and wounds that it may take generations to heal.

The particular task of the Christians and the Church

The general principle about the two rules, the worldly rule and the spiritual rule, explained above (p 35 f), applies here as well. It is never for the Christians or for the Church to lead a revolution or to advise people to start one. The first and foremost duty of the Church is to stress that "there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." Rom 13:1. Principle number two in these matters says that when and where there are abnormal and unjust actions on the rulers' side, these facts should be pointed out to the rulers in a decent but strict way. This is one of the best and safest ways of avoiding revolutions. There is nothing to fear. If Church leaders, the clergy or laymen, are fined or put in prison for raising the prophetic voice of the Church (see above, p 37 f), this only proves that they are doing their work. On the other hand, if the Church does not speak up against wrong-doings, she will be counted among the wrong-doers herself and also held responsible afterwards, because of being silent when so much wrong was done.

Also when a revolution is going on, or when it is already over, the Church must be ready to speak against all evil that is done in the wake of the revolution. She has double reasons to do this, because if the revolution fails and the Christians and the Church have not spoken up against the shedding of innocent blood or other atrocities, she will stand there with the innocent blood on her hands, as if she had shed it herself, and she will also be suspected of having been involved both in the starting of it, and in the wrongs it brought about.

Everything taken together there is definitely an alternative to revolution as a means of bringing changes in a people or in the community: the peaceful way of enlightenment and co-operation towards a common goal. This goal must be the building of a fair and just community, as far as this is possible in this imperfect world.

14

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

To the Church and to the Christians all matters of culture and civilization create a certain problem. Here, as in so many other matters of human life, it is necessary to find the somewhat narrow path between "being in the world" and "not being of the world" (see above, p 75 f). Living in the world demands a lot from every citizen, also every Christian. To *understand* what it means to be a Christian demands *knowledge*. Knowledge only comes from *education*, in one way or another, and from *training*. To be a good citizen also demands *mutual service, serving one another*.

Sometimes "education" is understood and also practised, as if it were a matter of learning how to read, etc., and also learning from books only. Certainly such mistakes are the root of much evil in many countries, e.g. careless studies, hunting for "marks", selfish fights about admittance to certain schools and institutions, striving for certain teaching posts, etc.

Every kind and every stage of schooling must have *its aim and its responsibility*. Learning and studies are no ends in themselves. It is very easy to miss the original aims, which are *to help oneself to understand and know and to help others understand and know* and, as a consequence of both, *to become useful to our fellow-beings and to the community*. This is the point where it so often goes wrong and where all secondary aims are missed. A certain student in arithmetic, bent over his square-ruled papers, was asked by a reporter why he busied himself with such difficult things. He said he needed this work in order to obtain a certain university degree. "And what will this degree be good for?" was the following question. The answer: "I need it in order to teach other secondary school students arithmetic." - "And what will they need it for?" - "Well, that is no business of mine." - It is evident that something has been lost here. The teaching,

studies, and examinations have become an end in themselves: the student is going to become a teacher who teaches new students, but for what? Where does the community and the common man come in? Where is the use, the applied knowledge, how will all the knowledge become useful to the people outside the classrooms? These are the problems we should never forget in matters of education and training: what is it good for, and what aim and purpose does it serve?

The first aim in all education is the personal one: to obtain the elementary knowledge that can become the foundation of all further studies and all professional training. In earlier periods there was much talk about "the three R's", a saying and spelling derived from a somewhat funny spelling: "reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic". Certainly these elementary things are needed in all kinds of knowledge and science. Therefore it is an ethical duty of everybody wherever there is a fair chance of doing so, to acquire for himself such elementary knowledge, preferably as early as possible, and for parents to help their children to obtain such knowledge. Yet the duties go still further. It is an ethical duty for all authorities concerned, in all countries of the world, to work for at least primary education being available to all citizens of their country. As for Christians and the Church they cannot work for such programmes or schemes that wish to *reduce* the possibilities for some groups or classes of obtaining good elementary schooling. As for the Christians they must have a further aim, also when it demands extra work and time: their aim in the elementary school system should be not only "the three R's" or the ordinary worldly subjects, that all citizens can agree upon, but also basic Christian knowledge.

Education and "the Word"

All Christians have the same reason as anybody else to want and encourage elementary knowledge in school subjects for all citizens of their country. Yet Christians have another reason strongly to plead for literal knowledge and training. "Literal" comes from the Latin word "littera", which is connected with "letter" (in a word), "writing", and "litera-

ture". All these words touch upon the basic elements of the Christian faith: *how God has revealed Himself to us in His Word*. The elementary knowledge of a Christian, therefore, ought to be a fair knowledge of Holy Scripture, what is therein, and what it means to us as members of the Christian church. Of course it is possible to be a Christian without the ability of reading, but the outlook and the experience will then be more limited, and the same also applies to the capability of service.

To Christians all matters about reading and writing, education, and knowledge in different subjects, have obtained an extraordinary background in "The Word" itself. First of all there cannot be any reading without letters and words. There is no understanding without notions, definitions, phrases, sentences, or, together with all this, grammar. Either our communications are carried out in a very simple way or in the highest scientific way, something of this kind is needed. At the very bottom of all this, if we talk to each other, there are *sounds and words*. No knowledge, in brains or books, can be formulated, silently or loudly, without *words*. Now the original source of all Christianity says: "*In the beginning was the Word.*" "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." Jn 1:1,14. This connection between God, creation, salvation of man, and the fellowship of mankind, is the unique feature of Christianity. To all Christians it also gives a unique connection between the words themselves, and the art of reading, and all kinds of good knowledge on one side, and the Christian faith and the ethical life on the other side. Everything taken together *it becomes impossible to defend ignorance within the Church or among Christians*. Instead it becomes necessary to make a clear distinction between such knowledge that is mostly negative to Christian faith or perhaps even destructive, and such knowledge that is edifying with regard to Christian faith and morality.

The endeavour of the Christian church with regard to knowledge and education must be twofold: to facilitate and encourage these things, and secondly to make it possible for

as many as possible the world over to have "The Word", meaning Holy Scripture, within reach and to understand it.

The importance of education

This importance is very great. On the other hand it is easy to stress this importance to such a degree that we overlook many other sides of human life. Sometimes we meet people who have received very good education and in whom we can notice that they are puffed up with conceit because of their achievements and their position. It is a remarkable fact that we are not impressed by their ability or work as much as could be expected, rather we are very disappointed. The reason is that we find something missing in them personally.

This picture has its counterpart. Sometimes we meet people who have had very little formal education, perhaps not even full primary education, if they are elderly perhaps only two or three years at school, and yet it is obvious that they are real personalities and have done extremely well in later life. Some have become very useful servants of their community, yes, they may have performed an excellent service in different spheres of work. How can this be explained? To mention only a few sides of the matter there may have been three or four factors at work. First, the ability to read, acquired very well in the first school year, has functioned like a key to the world of knowledge. As a matter of fact there are even such people who never went to school but started to master the art of reading in other ways. This could happen, if they were taught reading at home or in a Bible class in their home church. Secondly there has been an openness of mind. Such a disposition helps a person to accumulate impressions, sort them out, and not in the least use them to turn them into a personal knowledge and experience. Also in this way "the eye is the lamp of the body". Mt 6:22. Thirdly there is in such personalities both a humility and a real character of stature. Such features help a person to overcome difficulties and to raise himself above all futile adversities. Fourthly there must be a considerable degree of love for the fellow-beings. Without such a love a person with rather poor odds on his side would not consent to devote himself to the service of his fellow-beings, among whom there are many who could quite

as well have given service to him, since they had many more advantages in life to rely on and to draw from.

What has been said here does not in any way excuse those who try to delay or even counteract the educational programmes in their communities. When we have mentioned splendid exceptions, people who have gone far without much education, we must remember that they are exceptions. The general rule is that we all need good education, and as much of it as possible. Yet education is not an end in itself, instead it ought to be regarded as an instrument for a certain purpose. This purpose is twofold: the personal development and training in order to become a good pupil, a good student, a good character, and a good citizen, and, secondly, a citizen and servant ready to assist in the life and service of the community, both locally and on a national level wherever this is demanded. If such a public spirit is not infused into the pupils right from the beginning, there is a great risk that it will not appear later. Instead the pupils and students will learn and study only with their selfish aims and possibly also be contaminated with such a pride of knowledge that is pure vanity.

The responsibility that goes together with good education

Very often this side of the matter is overlooked or totally forgotten. We have already stated that education means to be continuously prepared for service. How can this be forgotten? It happens when the pupils go from one class to another, from one school to another, perhaps also for higher and higher certificates. When all this comes to an end, perhaps the student continues his studies abroad. This may be all right, if later he comes back to serve his country, or if he starts to serve the world community. Yet something may go wrong along the line. It happens if what he is doing is above all a service to himself. In all his studies there may be a piling up of certificates and diplomas in order to reach "the top job", or "the top salary". If such jobs and salaries have very little or no connection at all with the lives and problems of his own country, what was all the striving for, then? And from the people's point of view: Why did they educate him up to the

top level of their resources, when he only turned his back on them? Such a student could very well confess: "I applied my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly." And so this kind of acquiring wisdom is "a striving after wind". Eccl 1:17.

It is possible that the many years of learning at the end result only in selfish ways of finding employment and money. Yet there are even worse ways. Two examples may be enough to demonstrate such ways. A student of technology after twenty or thirty years of continuous studies obtains a top job in a large concern manufacturing toys for children that are very dangerous. Because of the harm they can do to children they are totally forbidden in some countries. Through tricks and bribes they can be exported to many other countries. What about this engineer and manager, does he serve his country or the world community to a degree comparable to the expenses he has cost his home country? No, he is drawing a top salary for a solely destructive work. The other example: A student, specializing on philosophy and literature, after prolonged academical education devotes himself to the service of a publishing company producing mostly such literature that is subverting the character and the morality of the youth. This is where "the big money" can be collected. If this is the outcome of his high education, why was he given such a long and expensive tuition by his community? What was the gain of it? Can destructive work be called a gain?

This problem in matters of education can never be solved by introduction of strict laws, for example through a certain department supervising what all pupils and students learn, and how they use their studies, and how they become employed. Such a system has never worked in totalitarian states, nor will it ever work elsewhere. In some countries the worst atrocities have been carried out with the assistance of such departments, or even at the instigation of such departments. Therefore there is only one way open, if we wish to make sure that the education available in our community is used for good purposes: the people itself having such ethical goals that elementary education and higher studies are planned and used *for personal character training and for the service of the community in all things that are good and respectable.*

Another sense of responsibility

This responsibility has to do with the inside and everyday life of the public schools and other institutions for education and training. Everything there must necessarily have an ethical and moral side, because education cannot be a matter of brains and formal knowledge only. Certainly education must comprise body, and mind, and soul, the whole of the personality. In consequence hereof it must be the aim of the school and the institution to assist all pupils and students to grow spiritually and ethically, to develop their personalities, to take the full responsibility for their way of life, and also for their forthcoming dealings with their fellow-beings.

Here the work of many schools and institutions fail, sometimes in two ways, either by neglect, or by clear wrong-doings.

In the first case the pupils are not well looked after, and so it has become possible that many bad things are going on at the school, nobody seeing anything, nobody knowing anything. It sometimes happens that children who leave a certain school can tell that certain bad things have gone on there all the years they were there, nobody intervening. If anybody asked the teachers about the matter, they would probably deny the fact, stating: "No, not as far as we know." Then, instead of being a place of good character training, the school for years has been almost the opposite.

In the second case mentioned it may happen that the teachers, or some of them at least, are the ones who are responsible for the bad practices at the school. If such things really happen at a school, that the teachers are teaching in practice morally bad things, then education at such a place has fallen to a deplorably low mark: instead of being a place where edifying work is going on, the institution has become a place of destructive work. On this point we have two lessons to learn. First of all a school can never be a place for teachers and pupils only, it always has to be an enterprise where the whole of the community takes part and in certain ways also shares the responsibility. Secondly, in all communities people ought

to be bent on such education work that includes character moulding, the building up of good ethical standards, and high personal integrity and morality among all concerned.

From olden times there has been a saying among God's people that false or conceited knowledge will always "puff up", whereas true love and knowledge will build up. 1 Cor 8:1. It has also been known that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." Prov 1:7. These words, of course, apply to the deepest kind of knowledge that can be obtained in this world.

15

ART AND SCIENCE

The world over there is a cry for more schools and education. It seems to be a demand that can never be satisfied. It would seem, therefore, that without schools the cultural life in many places would be poor or even non-existent. A look at the history and culture of all known peoples will definitely rectify such a view. A visit to one of the larger cultural museums in almost any part of the world will also convince us that wonderful things in arts and crafts were done hundreds, yes, even thousands of years ago, at times when there were no real schools. Where did the knowledge, gifts, and talents come from then? The answer must be: *from the deepest sources of the peoples themselves*, from traditions over the centuries, from the secrets of families, homes, villages, and guilds. Well, all this is also a kind of education and training that mustn't be overlooked or neglected. If the formal school system is handled in such a way that it replaces all this, or if it suffocates all such things through unwise theories or methods, or by an almost superstitious belief in the formalities of later times, then a kind of cultural mismanagement has befallen us.

Folklore

What has been said here can be demonstrated in a way that ought to be incontestable. In all peoples known, the world over, there are "tales", "stories", or "sagas" of many different kinds, often accounted for in a more scholarly way under the designation of "folklore". This term does not denote only sayings and tales of a more historical interest, much more it covers an enormous stock of life wisdom. We must note here, however, that most of the material available among different peoples originate from times when there were no formal schools. The tales, stories, and sagas instead have been told orally at leisure hours in homes and families, in connection with work in the homes, fields, and workshops, etc., and so they have been handed over from generation to generation.

In very many ways such tales and stories are extremely different. Therefore it is also possible to study the migration of peoples by an examination of the flow and influence of these things in the treasure of folklore. Another lesson we may learn, when studying these treasures, is humility. When these unlearned people, in very simple and poor circumstances at that, could work out such masterpieces of both literature (earlier only oral) and wisdom of life, what do we produce that will be worth while listening to after a number of generations?

For our present purpose, the drawing up of some general principles in Christian ethics, there are two aspects of particular interest. The first is *the need of preservation*: So many valuable things, taken over from earlier generations, mustn't get lost! This fact applies to almost all peoples of the world. There are so many treasures that we ought to save. This is also a Christian duty. Of course everything in the folklore is not valuable. There are many indifferent and almost useless things, but there are extremely valuable things as well.

Here the second aspect is of particular interest. What the tales and stories so often deal with is *the continuous struggle between good and evil*. Under the interesting details of an everyday story *there is often an ethical memento*: "Mind you ...". Sometimes such stories, going from one generation to another, give us hints about what life is, what it means, and what kind of responsibility it carries with it.

Since the circumstances are so different in different parts of the world, all Christians at their different localities ought to consider what is most important to do there, what to preserve, and how to use the treasures taken over.

Art and environment

If we look at the old kinds of art that existed in the world hundreds of years ago, much can be said in favour of them. Not in the least we ought to stress their importance to *the welfare of the environment*. In olden times there were almost no refuse heaps at all, since almost everything was made of perishable materials, and everything was used and re-used until almost nothing remained. Compare with this the

machine-made things that overflow the market in almost all countries today. These things are manufactured in order to suit the "buy-and-throw-away" mentality that has dominated the market for some decades. All arguments in favour of such a mentality and such a civilization fail completely if compared to these facts: round big cities there is an enormous shortage of land, not in the least due to the wide areas required for refuse heaps and waste disposal plants. This is a peculiar kind of inheritance for coming generations to take over: incredibly large and deep layers of filthy things that cannot even be destroyed, in metal, glass, or plastic, not to speak of all disadvantages with regard to the poisoning of air, ground, and water. Under the manufacturing of all the things mentioned, *resources of the earth that cannot be replaced were used to satisfy people once, a single time in history, i.e. the period when certain consumers happened to live here.* We have nothing to boast of with regard to culture and civilization, unless we learn how to live together with the earth itself, the soil, the minerals, the plants, the animals, the water, the air, and everything existing. Almost all the past generations could be our teachers and tutors in the art of doing so. This is a kind of art surpassing most of the things usually called "art".

The Church and cultural life in general

All cultural life brings with it a certain danger to the Church, the danger of becoming "worldly", which means becoming so engaged in worldly things, activities, and outlooks, that the Kingdom of God and the eternal outlook become neglected or possibly also forgotten. This danger should always be remembered and counteracted in all ways possible. If this is done, the Church and the Christians can work most sincerely and conscientiously in this world, each in his call and position, "while it is day; night comes, when no one can work". Jn 9:4. The concentration on spiritual things can never be an excuse for neglectation of worldly duties. The proper handling of the daily work instead ought to be carried out in a spiritual way, considering one's worldly, spiritual, and eternal duties, and also God's purposes when He gave us all these duties. Here again it is both demanding and encouraging to

look at the many generations past, how they laboured in so many fields of arts and crafts, yes, in culture and civilization generally, for the welfare of man and the glory of God. What they created and performed we are still using as a foundation for our present life.

Our duty on this point can be described most briefly in this way: our Christian call and duty cannot be a hindrance in our cultural life or environment. Instead it is our call and duty to serve God and our community in finding and practising the best way of using God's gifts for the service and welfare of our fellow-beings, for the welfare of mankind, and to the glory of God. This is the only way of remaining "in the world" in a meaningful way, as long as we are called to be here, and yet not "becoming of the world".

This problem now brings us back to the point touched upon at the beginning of this chapter. How can it be that so often there is so much cultural life to be found also where there is no formal schooling? The explanation is that all real cultural life depends upon *the cultivation of the mind*, without which all cultural life will be only outward work, manufacturing, production, factories, marketing, business, and profit. If the cultivation of the mind and the spiritual processes therein are excluded, then we achieve only a distortion of what culture and civilization mean. If we look at a fine piece of art, for example in weaving, embroidery, basketry, pottery, and similar arts, it is never a matter of production only, or of making money. When it is "art" it is also a fruit of learning, it is a matter of inheritance from older generations, it is a matter of love, love for the material, its beauty, and for the work itself. This we can find when we look at a real artist, whatever his material: he is somewhat caressing the material he is using and the thing he is making. In such a kind of love there can also be found thoughts about the forthcoming use, about the people who will use the thing, and about the circumstances when and where people will live with this thing. If we do not consider any of these aspects, then the aspects of fellowship, service, and real art will also be excluded. Then much of our community life will be only thoughtless and sterile manufacturing, consumption, and, to a high degree, collecting things for the refuse heap.

It is possible to go deeper in this matter than to the cultivation of the mind. From a Christian point of view we then touch upon *faith and sanctification*. From this point of view man himself is part of the clay, but then in the hands of the great Potter Himself, or, with another picture, man is the little straw in the hand of the great Basket-maker, or one of the threads in the weft of God's big loom. All this is an old thought from the Word of God: "Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words... The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he worked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do." Jer 18:2-4. This is the basic lesson we all have to learn to become useful tools in the hands of God, our Creator and Father, and in our service to our fellow-beings. If we are thus re-shaped, time and again, as may be "good to the Potter", we may be fit to serve Him in the ways He wants us to do. This demands both humility and faith on our side. Where such humility and faith exist, something can be created that is both durable and serviceable, not created for the refuse heap only.

If the Church does not give her contribution to the cultural life of the community, then she is not "the salt of the earth" or "the light of the world". Mt 5:13-16. These words also apply to all Christians individually.

The tasks of "art"

The word "art" has many different meanings, or "art" is manifold. In this connection with ethics we think of activities that are practised the world over in handicraft, painting, sculpture, music, literature, etc. Since this subject embraces so much of theory and practice it can be treated only in brief here. Any interested students or classes are therefore recommended to make themselves acquainted with more specialized and detailed books on the subject.

In many parts of the world there has been a tradition to describe many kinds of art as *a way of representing or reproducing what is beautiful*. When we study monumental works of art, for example in painting, sculpture, or architecture, definitely there is a point in such a description.

Such works *are* very often beautiful, sometimes overwhelmingly beautiful. Yet the description of art as a presentation of what is beautiful is *not satisfactory on the whole*. If we look at some outstanding works of the mentioned kinds of art, and many other kinds as well, for example in literature, we find that these works have not limited themselves to create a visible, readable, or audible description of what is beautiful, "what is good", etc. Many times there is a most penetrating description of what is evil as well. A description only of what is beautiful or good would, particularly if it is in any way one-sided or exaggerated, or painted in a rosy colour, give a strong impression of being sweetish and untrue. There are, for example, many books that must be strongly criticized on this point. The picture they give of human life, or community life, or love and service among people, is not true, and if it is not true, what is it then? Not in the least much "Christian" literature, painting only in pinkish or "black and white", has come under severe criticism and quite rightly been regarded as very poor art.

Since both good and evil, with the shades between, have to be represented in a true picture of human life, the struggle of mankind in some way has to be represented. How this ought to be done is a matter to be decided upon according to the circumstances prevailing. We are all children of our own time and generation. We do not write books in the same way as the old Greek or Roman classical writers, nor do we paint as Raphael or Rembrandt, nor do we build as Michelangelo. We are all somewhat limited to what we master and to what our readers or spectators, etc., can understand or accept. Yet it is the duty of every artist and every reader or spectator, as well as the generation they belong to, to try to raise themselves above the standard level of their home village, town, or city. Art, therefore, is something that has to be acquired, learned anew, and reshaped in every place and every new generation.

This being so, art can never be a matter of copying what has already been created by others. If it were, then all art would be reduced to the simple profession of running copiers or casting machines working with moulds. All true art has something to do with creation, not the creation of completely new things as in the first creation, and yet a kind of creation,

working with the material, with things and ideas already existing in this created world. Particularly this work has to do with the situation of man, his environment, his condition, the struggle of mankind between good and evil, and its prospects in the present time, in future, thus with regard to both time and eternity.

Deviations in art

Such deviations are many. It serves no purpose to list a number of them here. It serves a much greater purpose to mention that they exist, and that they cause a lot of harm. If we mention a couple of examples, they may demonstrate the badness and the fact that this kind of "art" sails under false colours. One example may be taken from the field of literature. If only filthy things and perversities are described, and no alternatives are given, such literature is only a pecuniary speculation in the deprivation of man. When there is no description at all of what is beautiful, right, or worthy of praise, and when there is no struggle at all pictured of people fighting against the evil, then there is no truth, nothing edifying, it is only a one-sided kind of business. The other example may be taken from the field of music. There are certain kinds of music that according to their origin, taste, and setting almost automatically go together with the use of narcotics. Then it cannot be art. There is also a kind of music that almost systematically brings young people to a state of fainting, or to a kind of "possession". Be it enough to say that there is no "art" in this. Rather it is a matter of using dangerous tools that may bring physical, mental, and spiritual harm to many.

The special task of the Christian church

No organization or body the world over, all continents and centuries taken into account, has ever produced as much art as the Christian church has done. These works cover all fields of real and beautiful art, for example in literature, music, painting, and architecture. This work has not ceased. This work must go on, in many other fields as well, to demonstrate what man is, what beauty is, what the struggle between good and evil is, but also to demonstrate to the world the

magnificent goal, to which all mankind has been called: the eternal Kingdom of God, which has commenced its rule and glory already here in the present world. Definitely all spoken and written languages are needed for this purpose, and also all known ways of expression that deserve the beautiful name of "art".

The task of science

In accordance with an old tradition it has often been stated that the task of science, whatever its subject, is "to find the truth". This cannot be denied, provided the science in question is honestly searching for the truth and not, intentionally or on a way of decline, serving opposite aims. Such double aims can be found in some industries, supporting scientific research work or having their own departments for such. There is no risk or harm of this kind in the case of "pure arithmetic", philology, philosophy, or similar subjects. Everything in the field of research becomes totally different, when we come to subjects like chemistry and medicine. The research work becomes extremely dangerous, if in it there are included not only questions but also experiments about life itself and a tampering with life itself.

Already *the technical side of science* has brought many disadvantages and much harm to man and environment. One may wonder at times, if man is the master of the machines and devices, or vice versa. One example may be enough to explain this situation. On the mental and intellectual side the computers have become something like an enemy of man. When a citizen complains in a government or business office of *some wrong information or figures connected with him personally*, it may happen that he receives this answer: "Sorry, we cannot do anything, it comes from the computer, the information is already computerized." The citizen goes on saying: "Yes, but this is exactly what I am complaining about. Such wrong information should not be computerized. I have brought with me official documents that can prove that the information on the computer is wrong." Then the clerk impatiently counters: "Don't you understand that the information is already computerized and cannot be changed?" This is not an acceptable answer. Who teaches an official clerk to

answer in such a haughty and yet ignorant way? The clerk speaks, as if the computer were a court of appeal, against which no further appeals can be made, although the court itself has committed the mistake. - Is such a state of affairs an achievement which a highly praised "science" can be proud of?

The technical achievements of science began long before the time of the computers. Many of its achievements have given help and blessing to mankind. Not all of them have done so. The burning of coal, petrol, and oil has polluted the air to such a degree that life in some cities and areas is almost unbearable. In many ways agriculture has been brought to such a state of affairs through the use of chemicals that the food has become dangerous, in some cases almost unedible. How far is science going to take us, before we have to put a definite stop?

Definitely the dangers are great and should not be underestimated. The only way of checking the dangerous development is to show *human responsibility*. Such a responsibility can come only from a *conscientious knowledge about the position of man in the created world*. Man is not the master of everything, man is a created being, and a steward in the service of mankind and of the world. What man is "creating" in our days is in many ways terrifying things. If we mention the nuclear development, such a word does not say much to ordinary man. If we mention other, more everyday things, many more will understand. Through human research and breeding experiments there are pigs that cannot perform natural mating any more. The backs of the boars of such a breed have become that long and weak that the boars cannot mount a sow. Such breeding is not a human work we can be proud of. It can be accounted for only by human hunger for pork, chops, and money. The cattle do not suffer less. Through special breeding cows develop such huge udders and such a rich lactation that the udders, nearly touching the ground, are easily damaged by the hooves of the hind legs. Therefore such cows are provided with a harness equipped with a kind of bag holding up the udders. Another peculiar thing in cattle breeding is the production of calves, unnatural in shape and size, so that they cannot be delivered naturally

by the cows. Instead they are removed by Caesarean section. The cows wearing the scars after such human achievements demonstrate clearly enough how far "human development" has proceeded. How far will man stretch his fiddling with nature and created life?

Respect for life or not?

In medicine there has been an ethical rule right down from ancient times that a physician is called to save and preserve life as far as ever possible. This rule has, however, been doubted or even contravened in later times, for instance through abortion laws, laws about euthanasia, etc. Yet there are things that in the long run may become even worse: *the tampering with genes*, which means the hereditary factors governing all life. To start with, or according to what can be said openly, it is explained to the public that the scientists are *searching for methods suitable to cure certain diseases*. This explanation is, however, contradicted by the fact that *the same methods are used to decide which un-born children can be regarded as "not wanted" because of expected or only "possible" deficiencies in them.*

What can be done to human life in a near future is already carried out in many ways on plants and animals, as has already been mentioned. In all these questions there is a progressive scale of difficulties. Many ways of selecting seeds for better harvests have been known since olden times. Some ways of influencing the qualities of the seeds have also been known. Here many difficulties arise: Nowadays scientists know how to influence or even change the genes, the hereditary factors, to change the qualities of the plants, fruits, etc., and also somewhat change one plant into another. If we get startled here, it is only a beginning of what may happen later. It is already possible to exchange genes from animals to plants to increase the volume and other properties of the product. Where is the limit here? Where does the responsibility of man come in? What will happen, if genes from other beings are grafted into man, or from man to animals? The underlying question here can be worded: *where is the bordering line between tampering with and the creation of life?*

Science has already committed great mistakes and caused great suffering and harm. Who can stop this development from proceeding further? Definitely there is a great need of re-thinking and consideration: do we work for the keeping of life in the created world, or are we ready to risk it? The question must be asked time after time: what is the intention behind all research work concerning life? *What is not said honestly and openly may be a decision or at least an intention to create life or a new kind of life.* If this is the case, then two old questions have been repeated, both tremendously important and dangerous: Is it really forbidden to eat "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"? and, will not this eating give as its result that "you will be like God, knowing good and evil"? Gen 2:17; 3:5. In whatever way we deal with these matters of science, there is a knowledge that is not open to man, and if man tries to acquire it or look into it, man will have gone too far. To demonstrate this danger we need only mention that some scientists play with the thought of producing a "superman". This is what not even God has done in His creation. Only fallen man can think of doing such a thing.

If science is used and applied according to truth, reason, honesty, and conscience, and also to the welfare of nature and mankind, many things and dangers will be avoided. Such dangers are one-sidedness and conceit, greed and materialism. If as human beings we could avoid becoming the hand-maids of Mammon, everybody could also encourage and support the work of science. The advantages and the great achievements are not to be denied. What is needed is a mind of humility and stewardship, a sincere wish to be the servants of nature and of mankind, not their masters or "supermen".

The task of the Christians and the Church

Of course the Church has no particular science of her own. Yet she has a solid foundation in THE TRUTH, revealed by God Himself in His Word, and in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Nobody, sincerely searching for the Truth, will be regarded as an enemy of the Church, "for we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth". 2 Cor 13:8. In this search for the truth we have, however, some holds on

us, just to mention a few: Do we work for the building up of the human community, or for its collapse? Do we work for the service and welfare of men, or for the material and pecuniar gain of a few only? Do we work for a speedy and profitable gain or, if we fail, a far greater loss later? Do we work for a speedy fame now, or, if we fail, a very bad reputation later, when the fruit of our work has ripened? Do we have the support of a clear conscience, doing what we know is right, or do we act, knowing or not knowing, as "liars whose consciences are seared"? 1 Tim 4:2.

More detailed facts about "science" cannot be given in this little book. All interested students are therefore referred to larger works, specializing on these and similar subjects, particularly from a Christian point of view.

16

WORK AND ITS REWARD

After the Fall the situation of mankind can be described as toil, thorns, and thistles. Gen 3:17-18. Even such people who endeavour to find an easy life, with little or no trouble but with much gain, will find it necessary to work, in one way or another, to win their bread.

In more modern times much has been changed in the field of work. Many machines have been invented with the purpose of making life easier to man and the daily bread more easily available. Together with this another thing, likewise important, has happened: since machines can replace so many men, many have become without work. The industrialization of the modern countries has changed the conditions of life to such a degree, that in one way bread can be produced to many more than ever before, but in another way the daily bread has been taken away from many.

Whatever the conditions are, under which we have to live, we will all be very much concerned with a number of questions, irrespective of our riches or poverty. These questions have to do with our daily bread, with work, its reward, money, capital, and systems of rule.

Our daily work is a vocation

It is almost impossible to think of a fairly healthy, grown up person that has no duty and no work to perform. If we could find such a person, he would either be a dreamer, or a loafer, or a sluggard. The only cases we can think of must be such sick or handicapped persons who are *hindered to perform any kind of regular work*. As has been shown elsewhere (see above, p 84 f), it is possible also for such persons to carry out certain things, to have certain responsibilities, and to find life under their circumstances and in their community meaningful. Thus the general rule applies to the members of a good community: work belongs to the ordinary life of a citizen, work is a duty, and work is a vocation to each and everybody.

What is *the purpose* behind the work we are all called to perform? One of the foremost purposes is, of course, to win our own bread, and also the bread of those who belong to our own family or household, often together with them. Everybody cannot do every kind of work. Thus every member of the family cannot plough the fields, cook the food, look after the children, take up work in a factory, an office, a hospital, or a school. The necessary jobs have to be divided, but taken together they help the members of a family or a household to win their bread and to organize their life in the best way possible.

It would, however, be totally wrong to limit our work to the duty of looking after our own family or household. Every family and household also depend upon the work of the other parts of the community. This fact becomes clear if we think of what is produced in the fields, what is sold on the markets, what is produced in the factories and sold in the stores and shops, what is taught in the schools, what is done in the many offices and courts, etc. All these kinds of work are mutually helping, serving, and supporting each other. This means that every kind of honest work is part of the community life, making it both possible and meaningful.

Money and riches

It is not difficult to exaggerate when we speak about money, either we do this in a positive or in a negative way. Probably there is no community life in the world where the members do not handle money in one way or another. The matters of property have been dealt with earlier (p 89 f). Here we have to concern ourselves with *money as a reward for work*. Some of the greatest problems here arise where a community of agriculture has been almost replaced by an industrialized community. Then difficulties seem to multiply. A farming community can live in a most regular way, more or less like the change of seasons, whereas an industrialized community is much more depending upon the changes on the money-market. What can the workers do in a factory, when the demand for their products decreases? What can they do when the prices of their raw material are soaring, while their buyers refuse to pay the corresponding higher prices for the end

products? It is not amazing at all that so many problems have become constantly difficult in the communities depending upon industrial work.

In this somewhat new world there are many problems totally unknown to the ordinary citizen or easily overlooked by him. How can he make himself acquainted with "invested capital", "interest" on this, and "profit needed" in order to cover all this and much more, just to "keep the business going"? In fact many people, not so well acquainted with these matters, despise the talk about profit by saying: "Why should there be a profit? Why don't these people just do their work as a matter of duty?" The argument is not the result of much thinking. Those who use it, would they buy expensive machines with their own money, employ workers, and sell the products at a price calculated only on what the raw material and the labour cost? Who will buy new machines, when the present ones have to be replaced? Further, who will pay the taxes, and who will pay the employer and the banks which have lent him money? The unavoidable fact is that work, carried out in farming or manufacturing or otherwise, must be worth while in one way or another, which means in goods or money, or, in a more professional term, *it must be remunerative, it must have its reward*. If it has not, it will soon be closed down. In spite of this fact there must be in a community many kinds of work that do not pay in the sense mentioned here. We can think of the work of the police, the courts, the dispensaries and hospitals, counselling ministeries, public cleansing departments, etc. All these kinds of work must be there, in one way or another, and since they do not bear all their own costs or give any profit in money, they have to be supported by means of the income through other channels, which means taxation on other sections of the community, and yet this money cannot be said to be wasted. All the mentioned kinds of service, and many more besides, keep the citizens sound in body and soul, they help them to live and work, and so all these kinds of work are by no means a negative factor in the economy of the community, instead they are a very positive factor.

Since there are so many difficulties in the community life and so many mistakes are easily made, there has been much

arguing during the two last centuries about the best political, economical, and social system. The problems to a very high degree circle round this point: work and its reward.

Two different systems

Most of the problems mentioned here have grown and matured in connection with the industrialization that has been undertaken in many countries. There are many schools of thought involved in what is usually called *capitalism*, mostly understood as *private capitalism*. The advocates of this idea believe that individuals are best fitted to look after money, capital, investments, profits, etc. Although they admit that profit plays an important role in their thinking, they also believe that many individuals with the same interests, for example when joined in companies and associations of companies, may work well together with other interests and contribute to the common good of the community. Although there are many facts in favour of these ideas, much can also be said against them. If all the individuals are more or less selfish and have planned to work for their own profit and gain, how will it be possible then, that the aggregated or final result can become good and favourable to many? It cannot be denied that this also happens now and then, but how can it be taken for granted that it will or must happen? There are also many risks involved in this system that many individuals, and many groups, and very often also the community as a whole, will be suffering because of what money, the capital and the profits, etc., have accomplished.

The history of capitalism provides us with many examples of human suffering and extreme poverty as a consequence thereof. One very common example is *the exploitation of labour*, juvenile workers, and even young children in many countries. Earlier we have mentioned child labour (p 94 f). How can such things be allowed? What kind of rule, what kind of social system do people have in such countries? The answer is that the systems differ, but there is one factor in common in them: money, capital, and profit.

Another side of capitalism is the frequent manufacturing of things which, strictly speaking, are not needed by anybody. On the contrary, the many things of this kind may be

dangerous or poisonous, but definitely they are superfluous. How can they be sold then? Well, it becomes necessary to do what in capitalistic terms is called "to create a market". This is done by much and expensive advertising. The flow of such brochures and pamphlets is like the leaves from the trees in a storm. The cost of such advertising will increase the selling price of the articles in question. Many people in the industrialized countries strongly react against this kind of business, for example by pointing out the wastage of wood and pulp on all the advertising material, but at the same time they almost despair about the possibility of stopping the follies. They feel it is like a fight of dwarfs against giants, which means a fight of ordinary citizens and taxpayers against the owners of the great manufacturing companies and the shareholders behind them.

When so many cases of injustice, waste, and folly have become obvious, it is quite natural that there has been reactions, first as unrest among workers and labourers, then also among many more who have understood that so many things have gone wrong. Such was the origin of *the first socialistic and communist movements*. The same things have happened many times later in many countries, also in other fields of work, for example in the struggle between great landowners and poor, landless farm labourers. Thus there appeared both labour-leaders and sociologists who tried to work out an alternative to capitalism. This school of thinking is almost as old as capitalism. Generally it may be divided into two different forms, *socialism and communism*, although the names may differ from time to time, and also from country to country. There are also intermediary forms.

Since money, capital, interest, profit, and wages cannot be excluded in this case either, it is possible to speak about socialism and communism as a kind of *state capitalism*. Such is practised in communist states, whereas in the socialistic states a kind of "mixed economy" may be preferred. In the communist-inspired community the state itself plays the role of owner of all property and also of all capital. In principle all kinds of private enterprises and companies are suspected, in the extreme kinds of communism they are also forbidden. Nobody should obtain any favour or profit for himself,

instead everything ought to be undertaken in the name of "the labouring class", or "the proletariat", which in this case constitutes the state itself, at least in theory. There shouldn't be any profits at all, since "nobody should be allowed to be a 'blood-sucker'".

Much of this may sound good, but the facts speak differently. The welfare of "the labouring class" is very often conspicuous by its absence in the communist states. The conditions of labour are very often extremely bad, but it is impossible to complain about them, since all strikes are forbidden. The explanation for this is self-explanatory: "There are no reasons for strikes, since the whole community is ruled by the labourers themselves." The products are very often cheap, so that the manufacturing companies are run at a loss, but it does not matter, since the losses are covered by the state, and the money for this purpose is taken from the purchase tax levied on many items of stuff and merchandise.

To a diligent observer it is evident that this system has many built-in mistakes in common with capitalism. One of these mistakes is that the system does not count with man's in-nate corruption and depravity. If individuals are not considered to be capable of planning and running private enterprises, how can they be capable of doing the same kind of work on a much larger scale, for example when they are entrusted with the leadership of large enterprises or the whole department of industry commanding all enterprises in the communist system? If the leaders of the industries have to take orders from above, this does not help at all, since those who are "above" have been chosen in the same way, by one or by very few at the very top. This demonstrates how far "the labouring class" is from "ruling" anything. And furthermore, if those in power in a "people's democracy" have obtained power by a coup or by intrigues against those who preceded them, how can it be guaranteed that what they do will be in the interest of the people or for the welfare of the people? It has, on the contrary, been proved in state after state, that the resources of the countries have been spoilt, mismanagement has been the rule, and the suffering of the people has been extreme.

A very common mistake the world over has been to choose between a capitalistic and a communist system. Therefore so many mistakes have become conspicuous by their consequences. On the capitalistic side one of the basic mistakes is the belief that man is good in himself and almost automatically will work and render his services with great responsibility. It has never been properly explained, however, before whom this responsibility is supposed to function. Therefore many seem to be satisfied if such responsibility is found with regard to the capital owners or shareholders. Another built-in mistake is the belief that a great number of rather selfish individuals, when taken together, will constitute a well-wishing, rather unselfish and benevolent company. Thus one of the greatest difficulties with capitalism is its built-in materialism and, at its worst, its profit-hunger. Now the situation is not better on the communist side, sometimes worse. In many places it has been found that one does not bother if a man is good or bad, if only "the dictatorship of the proletariat" becomes established. This doctrine has made the workers in many countries believe that they would become the new leaders, or at least have a say in the governing of their country. They were all deceived. Labourers or workers have never governed any communist countries. When they expected that they would, they did not know that their super-leaders had their secret weapon near at hand: "We will not hesitate to keep the masses at bay by terror." For nearly one hundred years, for a longer or shorter period in the different countries, dozens of nations the world over have suffered under this doctrine and this kind of rule, where the great masses had been promised so many great things but instead became harshly ruled by a few.

The poor

There will always be poor people in the community, whatever political system there is. The greatest problem is not that there are poor people, instead the problem is what we do with the poverty.

In all periods of history there has been a more or less organized system of helping the poor with "alms", a way of distributing gifts here and there to keep the people alive,

which means feeding the hungry and keeping the social unrest somewhat under control. Although much of this is "good works", it allows many of the factors behind the poverty to remain untouched. Of course this is not satisfactory at all.

The solution practised under communist systems is not a good solution either. Officially they prided themselves on having no unemployment. This policy worked according to very plain methods. Factories, offices, schools, etc. were just ordered to take on a bunch of workers, either they needed them or not. They were given poorly paid odd jobs. The other side of the story is not better. The whole population was given bright promises, year after year, of a coming paradise for "the working class". In such countries it is repeatedly said to the poor masses, that when all citizens have been "saved from the capitalistic yoke" and instead been given their equal share of everything, then they will all prosper. The "class-less community" will then come into existence. This has not happened in any communist country, not even in those that have exposed themselves as "models" or "the workers' paradise". The truth is the opposite. After a generation or two of communist rule the resources of the country have been wasted on many useless enterprises, and the poverty of the many has increased, whereas the leaders live a luxury life. This can be illustrated by their fancy summer-houses or their great villas or even castles, sometimes with golden equipment also in the bath-rooms, while the masses are crying for decent housing and for bread.

The problems of the poor must be handled and, as far as possible, solved in a totally different way. Every poor person must be treated as an essential member of the community, with special gifts and a definite responsibility for himself, for his fellow-beings, and the community. If such gifts in the individuals are not discovered and recognized by the community, it may be feared that the community itself is poor, both socially and spiritually. Every honest work, however simple it may be or look, ought to be recognized and rewarded in such a way that it gives the worker his living, not anybody's charity. When people are not properly paid for their work, this is not only a mistake, committed by the employer, it is also a mistake by the whole community. The

latter deprives itself of a good supporter, since the worker gets so little to draw from that he cannot give anything away. "The penny soul never came to twopence." This saying is proved every time the honest workers are poorly paid: If they had been paid properly, their money would have circulated, and thus it would have assisted their fellow-citizens and the community as a whole. It would have created new jobs and assisted the community in becoming more efficient in many fields of work. Thus where the proper treatment of the poor is neglected, the community itself will become poor and create still more poverty. These facts can be studied in all kinds of communities.

The task of the Church

The Church can never be one-sided in the arguing about these economic, social, and political systems. Thus she cannot side with capitalism against communism or vice versa. As it has already been shown in this chapter, both systems have such great faults in their thinking and practice, that siding with any of them would be a great mistake. Under all circumstances the Church must be faithful to her Lord and Master, and in such a spirit also perform her teaching and prophetic duties.

One duty is to point out the in-nate depravity of man. This means to say that also seemingly reliable and honest people in high position are likely to commit mistakes and to be tempted to do wrong things. This also means that in a community we cannot and shouldn't put a definite trust in anybody to run our affairs or to rule us under all circumstances. Instead there must be a control also of officials and authorities. There must be a kind of Supreme Law, under which all, however high in authority, have to bow. A dictatorship in the hands of one person or a small group of persons should never be accepted. It is injurious to the dignity of man to live under such systems.

The same applies to all kinds of trades and business. Since "the love of money is the root of all evils" (1 Tim 6:10), it is extremely dangerous to many, if a few obtain the executive power over much wealth, money, and many people. An individual may set out with good purposes also in such a position, but the temptations accompanying all kinds of

power are extremely great, also in business. It is always possible to twist the arguments and to turn the truth in such a way that black becomes white and white black. Thus the worst things can be presented as good works, welfare, and benevolence. The Church has got a tremendous responsibility here. It does not consist in "speaking up" in all sorts of trivial matters, instead it should be done when truth and honesty, justice and righteousness are at stake. As has been pointed out above (p 37 f), the prophetic voice of the Church must be heard, whenever justice and righteousness are shovelled aside or trodden upon, when major matters of decency, honesty, the rights of the poor, etc., are mishandled officially or in the big business. If a Church official speaks up in such matters, and the political leaders of the country arrest a number of churchmen and close down a number of Church institutions, so what? If the case is right and honest on the side of the Church, then the Church has not lost her case, even if a great persecution is started against her. No, she has saved her soul, and many other souls also. It may take one, ten, or twenty or thirty years, but then the things will be put right again. The seed has given its harvest in justice and righteousness. The Church should never be after political influence, in the matters mentioned here she should only be a witness for Truth and Righteousness. A brave archbishop, who was shot through the mouth by a dictator personally, will live for ever, also in the history and the minds of his people, whereas the dictator was spiritually dead already when he lived and "ruled", as he believed he did.

Another duty of the Church is performed much more secretly: *the care of the souls*. There will always be an unknown number of poor, ill-treated and suffering members of the community. Perhaps it is impossible to help them in a more efficient way openly or officially, e.g. by demanding political or social changes in their favour. Very many cases are of such a kind that it would be unwise "to sound the trumpet before you" (Mt 6:2) when you do such things. Yet it is very often possible to help such people by good counselling, by giving them personal help, or by directing them to such

persons or institutions where they can obtain further help. There is, of course, a danger here that it becomes a help in words only, as a kind of "cheap consolation". Very often the Church can do much better than that. If she has love, and it is her duty to have such, she will be able to find ways of real help, which often means "the works of love".

Besides a general reference to the old, great prophets of Israel, and to the words spoken by Jesus Christ and His apostles, let us quote here some words by Martin Luther in his Large Catechism: "Beware of this: When the poor man comes to you (of whom there are so many now) who must buy with the penny of his daily wages and live upon it, and you are harsh to him, as though every one lived by your favour, and you skin and scrape to the bone, and, besides, with pride and haughtiness turn him off to whom you ought to give for nothing, he will go away wretched and sorrowful, and since he can complain to no one, he will cry and call to heaven, - then beware (I say again) as of the devil himself. For such groaning and calling will be no jest, but will have a weight that will prove too heavy for you and all the world. For it will reach Him who takes care of the poor sorrowful hearts, and will not allow them to go unavenged. But if you despise this and become defiant, see whom you have brought upon you: if you succeed and prosper, you may before all the world call God and me a liar."

Although it is one of the duties of the Church and of individual Christians to point out mistakes, committed by worldly leaders, political systems, etc., it is not the greatest duty. The greatest duty is the everyday work in homes, parishes, schools, and places of work. There the task is to teach and explain God's holy will and with all effort try to carry it out. If the Law and the Gospel are thoroughly taught to all Christians and to the surrounding world, many things will definitely happen. All kinds of temptation through power and wealth will be clearly exposed. The duties of all citizens to work for the common good will be explained. The welfare of the individuals and the whole community will be put forward as a call and a vocation to many. Much evil will be

avoided or even done away with as a result of such teaching and exhortation. If the Church teaches and acts wisely and strongly in this way, then the community as a whole and many, many citizens will both gain and prosper.

Here we can go one step further: If the Christians had performed their duties in a clearer and better way in generations past, then such abnormal things as capitalism and communism could possibly have been avoided and never appeared on the scene of history. Now, when they have appeared, it is the duty of the Church and of the Christians to do what can be done: to present both the Law and the Gospel of God in such a way that people all over the world find it possible to live in a way that is worthy of mankind. After all we have not been called here to be the masters of anybody, nor to be the slaves of anybody, not to serve Mammon or dictators of whatever shape, *instead we have been called here to live, and to work, and to serve, and in all this to be fellow-beings, "neighbours", brothers and sisters in the family of God.*

17

CHRISTIAN WITNESSING

This chapter could have been put at the beginning of these outlines, since the testimony in words and deeds by all Christians is such an important part of their ethics. Another way could have been to end every chapter with a summary like this: "What has been said in this chapter can be applied to the Christian testimony in the following ways..." The latter method could, however, have been somewhat dangerous: it could have given the impression that the Christian testimony can be outlined in detail, in advance, point by point. Although this method has often been practised in the Christian church, it is not to be recommended. A detailed instruction about every single opportunity for witnessing leads to a very superficial kind of ethics, and also a kind of Phariseism. Such kinds of ethics are called *casuistic* (see above, p 89). What we need in Christian ethics is not so much detailed instructions for every possible case, much more we need *the guiding principles*. If such principles are very much needed in other matters of Christian ethics, they are not less needed in the Christian witnessing.

The imitation of Christ

This word is often used as a synonym for Christian witnessing. It is, however, easy to misunderstand the word "imitation", particularly in connection with Jesus Christ. It can be misunderstood in such a way that we try to "imitate" Christ also in the details of our everyday life. This would be wrong, because it would be the same as changing Christian faith and life *in a legalistic way*, into a matter of only law. Furthermore it would be wrong to copy Jesus Christ in such a way, because we have a task different from His. He is the eternal Son of God and the Saviour of the world. In much of His daily life He was occupied with His Messianic work, first to teach and to demonstrate to believers and non-believers that the promised Messiah had come into the world. His

Messianic work also manifests itself in His suffering, death, and resurrection. In these matters nobody can ever follow Him. *Definitely Christians can witness about these things, but they cannot witness by doing them.*

These matters are explained in a very clear way by St. Peter, when he writes: "You have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps." (1 Pet 2:21) Here it becomes particularly clear that the doctrine about the imitation of Christ cannot be separated from the other doctrines. Thus the imitation must go together with and also rest upon the teaching about salvation and redemption through Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. An imitation of Christ, not resting upon this foundation, will be totally untrue.

Thus "imitation of Christ" is *not a matter of law and obedience only*. It mustn't be understood as a commandment to accomplish in our own lives what we have seen and understood in the life of Jesus Christ. Imitation should rather be understood as *faith in Christ, and the life that flows from such a faith*. Such an understanding of the words will agree with Christ's own teaching: "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him, whom He has sent." "You also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning." Jn 6:29; 15:27.

Searching for the Truth and witnessing for the Truth

Truth belongs to the Essence of God in the same way as holiness, righteousness, and love, etc. The truth of God is revealed to us in His Word and in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit works together with the Word of God to create faith and a holy life in man. Jesus has promised us that the Holy Spirit will teach us all things and bring to our remembrance all that He has taught us. Jn 14:26. All this helps to guide us "into all the truth" and to glorify Christ. Jn 16:13-14.

In the same way as Truth is the foundation of all Christian doctrine, it must also be the foundation of Christian witnessing and ethics. "We cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth." 2 Cor 13:8. If our ethics bears

the name of Jesus Christ, it must also have as its foundation Jesus Christ and His teaching. Thus it is impossible to by-pass God's Word.

The importance of God's Word can be proved in several ways. Without faith in Christ there cannot be life in Christ, nor can there be any Christian ethics. Such life in Christ cannot exist without such fellowship with Christ that is possible only through the Holy Word and in the Holy Christian Church. This is what Jesus Christ has promised us: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Jn 8:31-32.

Truth is not only a means of salvation and freedom. It is also one of the most essential means of managing to live personally and to live in fellowship with our fellow-beings. This can also be demonstrated in the negative. When we see a person who, for some reason, has staked his life on a lie, we realize that everything goes wrong, sooner or later. In the long run the lie does not help or save him. If he seems to succeed, even up to the end of his life, his complete failure may be obvious after his death. This fact gives us a positive lesson: "Only for the truth" can we accomplish what we wish to accomplish, this is the principle that ought to shape and guide our ethical life. This is also one of the strongest contributions Christians can ever give to their community: "to bear witness to the Truth". Jn 18:37.

Truth is a duty that applies to all conditions of life. It is the Truth, not the lies, that must characterize the life of the Christians. Truth has such dimensions that the whole life in faith and in Christ can be described as "a life in the truth". 2 Cor 5:17; 3 Jn 4; Jn 14:6. When this has been said, it must be admitted that many problems remain: *how often* do we have to bear witness for the truth, *to whom*, and *in what way*?

First of all we must understand that there is a great difference between "always speaking the truth" and "always speaking". This means that before we speak anything at all, we must make clear to ourselves if it is necessary or wise to speak at all. Many difficult situations have occurred, because there

were people who had not understood what the circumstances were, and yet they spoke, perhaps words that were not only unnecessary, but even dangerous and harmful. Even true words can be unnecessary at times, say, if nobody has asked for a statement or a testimony, or if the atmosphere is such that nobody is willing to listen, or if what is spoken will immediately be twisted to mean almost the opposite of what is meant. Many things can be true, and yet *it is not necessary to tell them then or just there because of the prevailing circumstances*. When, on the other hand, the circumstances become different, it may be necessary to speak. This has been known from olden times: "For everything there is a season, ... a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." Eccl 3:1,7.

Speech, truth, and love

There is a lot of talking that may look quite harmless. Yet, if we think of the waste of time and the nonsensical contents, we have all reason to doubt the harmlessness. All our speech ought to be examined by these tests: is it true, is it necessary, is it consistent with love? Many, many things would remain unspoken, if they had been tested in this way.

Here we should also observe the opposite: "Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise." Phil 4:8. This may very well be the contents of our thoughts and our speech. Yet such things are not necessarily ready at hand. They may not either be according to the prevailing taste at our place. The good things, mentioned by the apostle, appear only in such Christians who readily devote themselves to faith in Christ and to a life that agrees with such a faith. This is called *sanctification*.

In His teaching about our speech Jesus uses an expression that has often been misunderstood. He says: "I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Mt 12:35-37. Here people have tried to guess *which particular words we ought to avoid*, while we can feel free to use other words. This is a wrong way that leads to a superficial and

Pharisaical way of thinking, because then we would only have to avoid the forbidden words and feel free to use other words. Of course Jesus must have aimed at something completely different. He tells us, for instance, that our words are like our deeds, they give an outward evidence about what is in us (Mt 15:18-20), and thus also about our relation to God. He has also told us how it works in connection with our "good works": *either* they are done for selfish reasons and then there is no real love behind them, *or* they are connected with a true faith. In the latter case they are God's own work, first performed in our hearts by His Holy Spirit, and then also in our outward lives by the love the Spirit has created in us. This is clearly explained at many places in the New Testament. Of course there can be no real difference between "words" and "deeds" in this connection. *The words reveal what is in man, just as the deeds do: the words of a Christian are futile, if there is not behind them a true faith in Christ and a true love for the fellow-beings.* "Faith" here does not mean a theoretical belief or theory, a kind of brain-work, instead it means a "trust in", a "reliance upon". This kind of faith is described as God reckoning righteousness upon the one who believes in Christ (Rom 4:6), or, expressed in a different way: "The righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" Rom 1:17.

Two personal tests with regard to the witnessing for Christ

One of these tests will occur very seldom in the lifetime of an ordinary citizen, to most people it may not occur at all. It is *the call to give evidence in court*. When the courts try to sort out facts and to find what is true or untrue in a case, the members of the court to a high degree depend upon the truthfulness of the witnesses. If these are not truthful, the case may remain unsettled, or a wrong verdict may be given. To speak a lie in court is to take upon oneself a tremendous responsibility. To a Christian, more than to anybody else, it is an undeniable duty to speak the truth when giving evidence. If a witness does not know the facts he is asked about, then,

of course, he should tell the court that he does not know, but what he knows he should tell the court, and what he says should be *absolutely true, without any partiality on either side*. To speak for the truth, also in court, is one of the best examples, by which a Christian can make a good confession.

Another test with regard to witnessing will occur more often, almost to everybody. This test comes in matters concerning "*honour and good report*". Why are these things so extremely valuable to us, and why is it so wrong and shameful to harm the honour and good report of our fellow-beings? Martin Luther has explained these things in his Large Catechism: "Over and above our own body, spouse, and temporal possessions, we have yet another treasure, namely, honour and good report (the illustrious testimony of an upright and unsullied name and reputation), with which we cannot dispense. For it is intolerable to live among men in open shame and general contempt." On these points it is very easy to sin, both by listening to gossip and defamatory talk about other persons and by carrying such talk further. Martin Luther continues his exposition in this way: "What concerns us all, this commandment /'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour'/ forbids all sins of the tongue whereby we may injure or approach too closely to our neighbour. For to bear false witness is nothing else than a work of the tongue. Now, whatever is done with the tongue against a fellow-man God would have prohibited... Here belongs particularly the detestable, shameful vice of speaking behind a person's back and slandering, to which the devil spurs us on, and of which there would be much to be said. For it is a common evil plague that every one prefers hearing evil to hearing good of his neighbour, and although we ourselves are so bad that we cannot suffer that any one should say anything bad about us, but every one would much rather that all the world should speak of him in terms of gold, yet we cannot bear that the best is spoken about others."

This is a chapter in ethics where too many people operate in the wrong field: they neglect the defending of their neighbour's honour, whereas they devote so much more time, and speech, and energy to do harm to their neighbour's "*honour and good report*". Here many will raise an objection:

"What about, then, if our neighbour is wrong, if he has failed?" This objection can be answered easily: "Can your neighbour be put right by gossip, whispering, or slandering? What sort of cure will that be?"

When our neighbour has done wrong

The only action some people can think of, when somebody has done something wrong, is to spread the news about the wrong thing and about the person who has done it. Of course this does not help him in the slightest way, instead it may break him down completely. There is, however, a real way of helping him. This has been explained by Jesus in this way: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." Mt 18:15-17. This word has been further explained in this way: "Here you have a precious and excellent teaching for governing well the tongue, which is to be carefully observed against this detestable misuse. Let this, then, be your rule, that you do not too readily spread evil concerning your neighbour and slander him to others, but admonish him privately that he may amend (his life). Likewise, also, if some one /reports/ to you what this or that one has done, teach him, too, to go and admonish him personally, if he /has/ seen it himself; but if not, that he hold his tongue." (Large Catechism)

When silence is the best way

Sometimes the Christian duty of witnessing has been stressed in such a way that *Christian talking* has been understood as a Christian duty as well. It has already been shown above (p 203 f) that this is wrong. Here we have to stress that *silence can be regarded as a duty, almost as often as talking*.

First of all it should be stressed that we all need hours and periods of rest, quietness, and silence, for the welfare of both body and soul. There is also a need of seclusion, when we

have the opportunity of making clear to ourselves our own situation, thoughts, and feelings. Although we are very different, everybody has a right of being left in peace, without being disturbed by talkative people who may be too keen on helping and advising. Helping and advising certainly are welcome parts of our social and community life, but it should always be on the conditions of the person who needs it and is willing to receive such help.

The need of silence also applies to *our own innermost being*. It is not advisable to disclose to almost anybody our innermost thoughts, feelings, temptations, or experiences. There are, for example, experiences in the field of faith and disbelief, which cannot be handed out in a thoughtless way. If disclosed to the wrong person such thoughts and words might do a lot of harm. A countless number of Christians over the centuries have been convinced that there are things we have to keep to ourselves, with very few exceptions. *If* we need help or consolation, first of all these things should be handled very carefully, and only together with one or very few who are reliable persons and experienced Christians. A single example may be enough here: The Mother of the Lord, Mary. From the day of the Annunciation she kept a great secret in her own heart. She may have shared it only with Joseph and her relative Elizabeth. Only when God's plans with her and with her son Jesus had been placed in their full light through Jesus' death and resurrection, was it possible for her to disclose to anybody else what had happened. In the years between she had gone through a lot of suffering, for example when her son was insulted and shamefully treated. Since Luke is the evangelist who is best informed about these matters and openly states that he has questioned "eyewitnesses" (Lk 1:1-2), this may indicate that Mary herself had disclosed the secret things to him, because the time for doing so had come.

The need of silence also applies to *things that have been told to us under the promise of secrecy*. This is an extremely strict duty of all ministers of the Church. Few things can damage the reputation of the Church more than if pastors have a talkative fashion, e.g. if they boast of what they have been told in confessions. Such a practice is extremely foolish, and

for three reasons. First it is an open breach of promise. Secondly it is an open demonstration in front of listeners that the pastor in question is not capable of administering one of his foremost duties: to receive confessions, and afterwards to keep his mouth shut. Thirdly, who will after such disclosures of confessions trust this or other pastors with a secret?

There is also a kind of silence about personal and spiritual matters that is rather difficult to handle. It is found with such *people who are uncommunicative by nature and character*. Sometimes it is evident that they suffer from this themselves, but they have not found a way out. In such cases it may be the duty of those in their neighbourhood to try to help. It is a most delicate duty to help them open their minds and hearts, so that they become ready to speak about what is their difficulties. It is also a duty to assist them in receiving the help that the Christian fellowship can give, and in their turn to become helpful to others, a blessing, of which they have so often deprived themselves.

There is a kind of silence that is extremely difficult to many to accept and practise: the necessity of keeping silent about *things they have seen or heard about their neighbour*. Here the necessity of silence most painfully collides with their need of "witnessing" to anybody, ready to listen. "We should note that no one is allowed publicly to judge and reprove his neighbour, although he may see him sin, unless he /has/ a command to judge and to reprove. For there is a great difference between these two things, judging sin and knowing sin. You may indeed know it, but you are not to judge it. I can indeed see and hear that my neighbour sins, but I have no command to report it to others. Now, if I rush in, judging and passing sentence, I fall into a sin which is greater than his. But if you know it, do nothing else than turn your eyes into a grave and cover it, until you are appointed to be judge and to punish by virtue of your office." (Large Catechism)

Different ways of witnessing to the outside world

There are good ways, just as there are poor and wrong ways. A right and good way, whatever the place or time, is "to account for the hope that is in you". 1 Pet 3:15. These words are spoken as an admonition to Christians not to fear any

adversaries, but instead in one's heart to "reverence Christ as Lord". Opportunities to witness in these ways may become lost through fear and cowardice, but they may also be lost by a wrong understanding of what it means to give a Christian testimony to such people who are without faith. Thus it will always be wrong to *speak many words*, and to *speak much about oneself*, about feelings, experience, etc. It is always wrong to *dissimulate oneself*, which means trying to look "pious", or an extraordinary believer, or trying to make a stronger impression by *speaking about Christ and faith with a specially adapted voice*, which is the much renowned "tongue of Canaan". Such speaking will impress upon very few, on most people it gives a very negative impression, since they always connect it with falseness, duplicity, or hypocrisy.

If we keep in mind that to be a Christian means faith in Christ and reverence for Him and His work, it will be right to say that the Christian witnessing in the first instance should be about Christ, His Kingdom, and His Church. With regard to words and the voice a *natural way of speaking* is the best under all circumstances. A *matter-of-fact style and wording* impresses more on outsiders, since it is more in accordance with their own style than anything we may invent to please them.

It should also be stressed that *it is better to use a few words than to use too many*. A few words, that are well said, may also call forth questions, and the answers to such questions may give more to the listeners than many words we perhaps would prefer to speak.

Lastly we have to warn against *too much planning of the testimonies we wish to give*. The planning may become too obvious and lessen the impression of our words. It is better to use the opportunity that presents itself. Then a Christian, while silently praying to God for wisdom and help, will find that the Lord keeps His promises: "Do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour." Mt 10:19.

In spite of all difficulties and dangers that may occur, Christians should not fear the opportunities to witness for their Lord. It is a duty of all Christians to do so, whatever their position in the worldly community or in the Church. It is

a mistake, and a matter of wrong teaching and practice, if they try to reserve this duty for their "professionals", for instance their pastors, or "evangelists", or specialized team-workers.

The witnessing of the Christian community itself

Instead of "church service" we often use the word "liturgy". This word, when used, ought to cover everything in the church service, including the sermon, thus not only the "altar service". "Liturgy" means "service (or work) to the people". Although this fact is not commonly understood, the liturgy or the church service of the confessing Christians ought to be a testimony to the surrounding world, to "the people". So it was meant, and so it has also worked. Isa 2:2-4; Mt 5:13-16.

"Liturgy", meaning "service to the people", has, however, another side, which may be understood from the translation of the word. The witnessing in confession, text readings, prayers, sermons, etc., must go together with another part, which is likewise important: *the caritative work of the Church*, in Greek "Diakonia". It has been proved many times during the history of the Church that the "good works" many times have done what the witnessing in words did not manage to do: to open the hearts of many who had before closed their hearts to the message of God. This fact is a reminder to the Christians of all times: *words become of no avail, if they are not initiated by true love and followed by the corresponding deeds of love*. The apostolic message in these matters is extremely strong and clear: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." 1 Cor 13:1. "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him?... So faith, by itself, if it has not works, is dead." Jas 2:14-17.

Thus no Christian witnessing can ever do its work properly without being deeply inspired and formed by the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and of His apostles.

18

AT THE CROSSROADS OF LIFE

Where are the crossroads?

Nobody can know in advance where they will be found, and nobody can choose any of them in advance. The rule is that when we may not expect it, we come to a crossroad, finding two or more roads to choose from. Sometimes it will be possible to make a wrong choice, then realize that it was a mistake, and then make a better choice when we come to a similar crossroad.

What is the choice about at such a crossroad? It may be about quite ordinary things in life, but the most sincere crossroads always concern the most important things in life, like conversion, faith in God, a choice between God and the world, a return to God or the abandoning of God. Many of these choices may bring suffering. The choice may at times present itself as being between "a life without suffering" and "a life of suffering". Such a kind of choice may be presented to us by the great Enemy, but the way he presents it is wrong. He presents his false way as being without suffering, and the way with Christ as a way of suffering. This way of presenting the case will, however, soon look quite different. If the Enemy manages to make us fall, or to cause us to give up our faith in Christ, there will be no opportunity to complain later. He only says to the one who has made the wrong choice: "What is that to us? See to it yourself." Mt 27:4.

Some of us may come to such crossroads quite often, some only a few times, but every time it happens it involves a hard choice. Whatever the choice may be about, it is necessary to understand the circumstances and the consequences. Such an ability of understanding will not be acquired easily. It is possible to acquire only together with a solid Christian foundation, which means to live in fellowship with Him, who calls Himself "the Way, and the Truth, and the Life" (Jn 14:6).

To choose between the truth and a lie

There are many crossroads of this kind. If, for instance, we witness an accident, if we have visited a sick-bed, or if we are questioned by an occupation or enemy force, how do we act then, or how should we act according to Christian principles? How much are we allowed to disclose in each case, and to whom? If we speak, how should it be worded in order to comply with the rules of Truth? Of course there are many ways of acting under these and similar circumstances. Some ways are right, and some are wrong. The first crossroad is the choice between *speaking* and *keeping silent*. If we have decided to speak, the question remains: *how* should we speak? Sometimes the speaking can be done in such a way that it becomes something between the truth and a lie, sometimes even a pure lie.

In many philosophical and religious schools of thought there have been *mainly three ways of handling the kind of cases mentioned here*. The first way suggested is to *speak, and speak the truth, whatever the consequences may be*. This may sound all right to many, but in the actual and similar cases it has very often become disastrous. Two examples may demonstrate this. If I come from a sick-bed and then somebody asks me about the condition of the patient, perhaps I decide to give a frank answer, and thus I openly state that the patient is dying. In fact I was in a bad mood myself, when I visited the patient, and the patient himself just then had a bad period when everything looked gloomy. I had no direct information from the doctor, only a few words from those attending to the patient. In spite of this, when asked by an interested person about the condition of the patient, I spoke according to my "sincere conviction", to the best of my understanding, and said that the patient was dying. The following day the relatives of the patient receive information that the crisis is over and that the patient has already started to recover. In the meantime the rumours, which have come from me, have spread in wide circles, so that some have already started to prepare themselves for the funeral. All this comes from the fact that I had felt compelled "to speak the

truth, and the truth only", which, in fact, I did not speak. This figured story, about myself and my speaking, could be anybody's story, because it has happened hundreds and thousands of times, although *it is never necessary to act in such a way.*

The second example comes from the many sad cases when part of a country has been occupied by enemy forces or by a revolutionary force. When out on a walk I meet a small military force, and the commanding officer asks me where such and such a person can be found. Then I have come to a crossroad. If I answer him that according to the last information available to me he is hiding in such and such a village, the only result may be that they do not find him there, and as a punishment many of the villagers are shot down and many of the houses burnt down. But shouldn't I "speak the truth, and the truth only"? Well, where was the truth? I could have guessed that the man searched for had not remained in the same village overnight. Now, because of my foolish answer a number of people and the life of a village were sacrificed, but for what purpose? This is what has happened to an innumerable number of villages the world over.

The second way suggested by many is *to speak only generally, in a con-committal way*, with such wording that can be understood in one way or another. The intention behind this teaching is that whichever interpretation is applied to the words, it will be impossible to say that the person in question spoke a lie. In all cases he can say: "Wasn't this what I told you?" It is to be feared that no honest person will be satisfied with himself using this way out.

The third way is the intentional use of a lie, a "white lie". Those who defend such lies say: "What is the alternative? If I speak the truth, I may cause a lot of harm to another person, or possibly to many, sometimes also cause their death. If, on the other hand, I speak a lie, I can save many." Further they defend their argument in this way: "A real enemy does not even deserve to hear the truth." - The arguments in favour of "white lies" are all very poor. Only consider two points:

What happens to my trustworthiness, when people realize that I have told them a lie about a sick person? And what happens, if I tell the enemy force that the person they ask for hides in another village, one which I know he has not visited at all? Does not the enemy force search that village in vain, and then take vengeance upon it? What is the blessing of the "white lie" then?

The discussion between the adherents of these three schools of thought will never end. We find it reasonable, therefore, to approach the whole question from another angle.

The possible way of action, when it seems we have to choose between the truth and a lie

Generally we must realize that many lies in pressing situations are completely unnecessary. Many people are too talkative in such situations. They are too ready to answer questions, also such questions that they could consider themselves incompetent to answer. When one hasn't proper information at hand, it is always a good rule to say so. To take only one example we may return to the case of the sick-bed or "death-bed". If we have yielded to the temptation "to speak the truth, and the truth only", we may suddenly wake up to the fact that we had not received any information from reliable sources. Thus we had only misled first ourselves, and then others. From this example, and many similar, let us receive a general warning: *Nobody can be expected at any time to give proper information about things he does not know exactly himself, and if such is the case, he may honestly say that he does not know.*

Since we cannot list here all possible questions where we may have to face this situation, let us instead note *some general rules.*

First, we have to realize that in God such qualities as Truth, Love, and Righteousness are all united in One Essence. Therefore in Him "there is no variation or shadow due to change". Jas 1:17. If we are Christians such a unity also ought to be in us. There should never be a change in us between truth and lies, not even at the crossroads of life.

Secondly, and this comes from the first, we should never count with lies as a possible way out of difficult situations.

Thirdly there is always an alternative to the untrue way of speaking, if we find it impossible to be outspoken about what is true: *silence in its different forms*. This is not always an easy way. Sometimes it may demand a high price, quite as high as the speaking.

Fourthly it must be clear too us that *nobody will ever be able to solve any of these problems on behalf of anybody else*. Everybody has to make his own choice and to take the responsibility for it. It is always easy "to be wise after the event". When somebody gets wise in this way and realizes that he has failed, it is not for an outsider or onlooker to criticize or judge. Also with regard to mistakes and sins of this kind *we ought to refer the offender to the grace of God*.

At the crossroads of sin

No crossroads are like that of sin, because from that point you enter "ways of darkness", "perverseness of evil", "crooked paths", etc. Prov 2:13-15. The danger of all this evil is that at the beginning it presents itself as innocent things or trifles. When the real nature of it has been revealed, it becomes clear that it has already directed its victims onto the evil way.

The temptations do not come from God (Jas 1:12-15), but in His all-wise counsel He may allow them for some time. He will then direct what happens in such a way that it helps the tempted person to get away from the trial, strengthened and equipped with an experience that may be helpful to himself and others. If, on the other hand, the tempted person takes the wrong way, he comes out from his temptation with a sore heart. He has chosen the sin.

It is never advisable to acquaint ourselves with persons or places that may induce us into temptations. No good will come out from it, in most cases only the falling in sin, and after that the suffering under its consequences. For those who choose to play with temptations there is no promise of help while their play is going on, although the sins can be forgiven if they are truly confessed.

If somebody, on the other hand, realizes that he has fallen in sin and thus his presumptuous thoughts are over, *it is still possible to search for the good way, leading back to God. Here is another crossroad.* There is one way leading to further sins, and in the end to despair, but there is also the way, so wonderfully described by David: "I acknowledged my sin to thee, and I did not hide my iniquity." Ps 32:1-5. There is no doubt that this is one of the cardinal matters in Christianity: the possibility of repentance, confession, and forgiveness. At this crossroad one of the roads leads to life, to renewal of life, powers of life, and eternal hope.

In many cases there will be found a new crossroad, although the forgiveness of the sin itself has already been received. At this crossroad the problem will be: *What should be done with the remaining consequences of the sin?* To a sincere confession also belongs the willingness, first to leave off everything that belongs to the sin or goes together with it, and then also to try to put right what has gone wrong in connection with the sin. Some other person or persons may have suffered a loss or damage or been hurt in connection with the sin. *Wherever it is at all possible such things ought to be remedied.* No details can be given here, since they are of so many different kinds, but anybody, realizing under the work of the Holy Spirit that he has caused harm of any kind to somebody else, ought to try to settle the matter, and, whenever this is found necessary, ask for the counsel of an experienced Church minister. It may be sad to find oneself at such a crossroad of life, but it is really necessary at such a point to search for the right road and then also walk it. Only such a road will lead to spiritual health and life, in this time and eternally. Another choice of road will be the same as acting totally against the teaching of Jesus about this kind of cases. He gives us the example of a man who at the altar of God remembers some consequences of his sins: his "brother" has something to complain about. Therefore Jesus says that he should go to his brother and be reconciled with him. Mt 5:23-24.

At the crossroads of the worldly vocation

Some crossroads in life are characterized by fear and anxiety, for example like this: "What shall we eat?" "What shall we drink?" "What shall we wear?" Mt 6:31. Nobody has taught us more strongly than our Saviour that we can free ourselves of such burdens, because our heavenly Father knows that we need all this. Mt 6:32. Yet we may all come to such crossroads in life, where all this becomes doubtful to us. The only way at such a crossroad is "to cast all /our/ anxieties on Him, for He cares about /us/." 1 Pet 5:7.

Every person, growing up under ordinary circumstances, knows what it means to choose when the questions about schools, education, employment, career, etc., arise. These are questions so many young people think of and also remember afterwards as their most conspicuous crossroads. In many cases it becomes even more difficult to choose, if the questions of love, engagement, and marriage come up at the same time. Here much more help could be given to young people. It would be much easier for them to choose the right way, if parents, teachers, school authorities, older friends, pastors and congregations did their part of the work better than they do, for example by good teaching and counselling. Of course the choice ultimately remains with those who have to make it, but if they had been taught and advised and warned in a better way, everything could have been much easier.

With regard to vocational work everybody should be anxious to make full use of the gifts which have been bestowed upon him. Those who have almost thrown away their possibilities by leaving school early or abruptly, or by entering an early or unwise marriage, have found it extremely difficult to make up for such things later in life. Of course all mistakes and sins can be forgiven, but it is a heavy burden to carry through life, if you realize that you could have done much more of it, if you had not made an essential mistake at an early crossroad. How can such mistakes be avoided then? To a Christian the answer can be twofold. First, do not choose your road too quickly, but instead think it over thoroughly, also taking the

advice of experienced and reliable people. Secondly, turn to God in prayer, often and over the whole period before the necessary choice, asking for His help and guidance, and then rely upon Him that He will lead you according to His promise: "If we ask anything according to His will He hears us." 1 Jn 5:14.

When a new call reaches us

This has happened to many, as we can find from the lives of prophets, apostles, and disciples in the Bible. It also happens that a new call reaches people in our time, in worldly or in spiritual matters. To ordinary, worldly people such a call will mostly raise questions about reputation and remuneration. To Christians it should, more than anything else, raise the question about God's will, and about the possibilities of service to their fellow-men and to the community. Where everything is measured and decided in terms of money and worldly reputation, the matter will be handled most superficially and perhaps lead to no blessing at all. The whole matter is a crossroad in life. To Christians the outcome to be asked for ought to be: "... a door opened for me in the Lord". 2 Cor 2:12. Also in questions of this kind it is advisable, whenever we feel uncertain or fail to reach a decision, to take the counsel of experienced Christians, and, besides and above all, to pray to the Lord for His help and guidance.

In strife and struggle

The Christian teaching in these matters is twofold. On the one hand we are instructed to "live peaceably with all", "so far as it depends upon /us/", and to "pursue what makes for peace". Rom 12:18; 14:19. On the other hand Jesus has told us: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." Mt 10:34. How can these two aspects be held together? Of course the matter itself has two sides: Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace, but when His Gospel and His Kingdom enter the community of men it rouses opposition and resistance. Therefore He goes on to say that the opposition will even take the form of hatred: "You will be hated by all for my name's sake." Mt 10:22.

Who are the enemies, then, that will be against all Christians in such a way that they even hate them? First of all it is God's great enemy, "the great dragon", "that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world". Rev 12:9. Secondly it is "the world". By this word is not meant the outside, created world, instead it is meant "the godless men", those who have turned themselves away from God and also hate Him, His Kingdom, and His servants. Thirdly it is meant the evil in man himself. This evil exists also in converted and believing Christians. This is why they have such a struggle with themselves. This evil is often called "the flesh". It manifests itself in hostility against God. "It does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot." Rom 8:5-8; 7:21-23.

Many believe that the fight against Christ and His people belongs to the past. This is definitely wrong. Such things as hatred, persecutions, trials, imprisonment, and manslaughter against Christians still exist. There has been more of this kind in the twentieth century than in any previous century. If nothing of this kind has come to us yet, we have to be prepared for it, if and when it comes. Those who follow Christ must be prepared for suffering, because it will almost regularly befall anybody who professes himself a believer in Christ. "For where the Word of God is preached, accepted, or believed, and produces fruit, there the holy cross cannot be wanting. And let no one think that he shall have peace; but he must risk whatever he has upon earth - possessions, honour, house and estate, wife and children, body and life. Now, this hurts our flesh and the old Adam; for the test is to be steadfast and to suffer with patience in whatever way we are assailed, and to let go whatever is taken from us." (Large Catechism)

Complications in this struggle

Sometimes it is extremely difficult to know who are the friends, and who are the enemies. Thus it is easy to be mistaken on this point. A person, who seems to us to be an opponent or an enemy, may be "a disciple of Jesus, but

secretly for fear". Jn 19:38. On the other hand a person, who is supposed to be a disciple of Jesus, may be a false disciple, one who together with us ate the bread of communion but became the guide of the persecutors and lifted his heel against his Lord and Master. Ps 41:9; Acts 1:16-17. From these facts we ought to draw the conclusion that on one hand we should not too quickly regard anybody as a friend or an enemy, on the other hand we ought to be open-minded, friendly, and obliging against all, but not let anybody be taken into our innermost fellowship too quickly. It is better to wait and see what kind of spirit and fellowship is to be found with the other part.

How should we meet opponents or enemies in order to keep peace, "if possible, so far as it depends upon /us/"? Rom 12:18. First of all we must keep two questions apart, namely the matter itself, and the person involved in it. This means that we must be able to speak for or against a certain matter, without attacking or hurting the person to whom we speak. It is, in spite of all difficulties involved, possible to be strict in the matter itself, but friendly and obliging towards the person we have to deal with. As in so many other matters we must remember that unwise speaking and acting on our side may cause difficulties to ourselves and cause harm to the side we defend. On the other hand, when it is necessary to speak, it is necessary to speak clearly, and to be honest and reliable.

How far is it possible, then, *to make concessions* "for the sake of peace"? Our Lord and Saviour has given us all answers we need. With regard to *personal concessions* we can go very far. Mt 5:38-48. It becomes totally different when the arguing is *about our faith and about the truth*. The Truth does not belong to us. We can not negotiate about it or give it away. Instead we are supposed to "stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by /our/ opponents". Phil 1:27-28.

Peace with God is both our foundation and our spiritual and eternal hope. It cannot be obtained or kept without fight and struggle. Such are the conditions of a single Christian, and

also of the Church as a whole. Therefore it is also a call, which has to be accepted by all who wish to be the children of God: "Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." Heb 12:14.

When it becomes necessary to confess one's Christian faith

For ordinary people, who live in a Christian community, such a confession will be a somewhat regular part of life, for example in the family, at school, in church services, and in the fellowship with friends and relatives. It may be very different, if the Christians at the place are few and surrounded by non-believers or adherents of other religions. The one way or the other it may become necessary, also for an ordinary Christian, to confess his faith at special occasions. This is not a matter where the believer should take the initiative, at least not in a thoughtless or propagandistic way, rather the confession should be made when the circumstances demand it, and then always in a humble, personal, and very realistic way. All sentimentality, and all unnatural changes of voice or behaviour should be regarded only as poor tricks. Only a frank and natural behaviour will be respected by such people who ask us about our faith.

There will, however, come situations, when a Christian confession will be both needed and demanded. The best way of demonstrating this fact is to refer to an example in the New Testament. When Peter and John had been teaching in the Temple of Jerusalem, they were charged by the authorities "not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus". Acts 4:18. In such a situation many Christians would accept the prohibition as a fact and abide with it. The apostles did not do so. Instead they replied: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." 4:19-20. The full explanation of their ways of thinking and acting is given later, when they had repeated their lessons in the Temple, been arrested again, and charged again "not to teach in this name". They then replied that "We must obey God rather than men." 5:28-29.

The circumstances may be different. We may be asked or ordered to do this or that, by officials, authorities, relatives, friends, co-workers or others, it will then be necessary to confess our Christian faith, if we are ordered or recommended to act against it. In extreme cases the number of ways open may be reduced to two: to give up our faith or to keep it, to obey the order or to refuse. This must be regarded as an extreme kind of crossroad.

What has been said here applies to such cases where, for example, the authorities themselves are wrong and demand a thing that would involve violation of other laws, particularly the law of God. Furthermore, no one ought to look for opportunities to demonstrate against authorities by disobedience. Instead the cases will present themselves, just as they did in the example of the apostles.

If the result of such a test will be suffering, this suffering may lead to a temptation to show extreme sorrow, as if asking for compassion, and to complain: "Why should these bad things come upon me?" Here again we ought to remember the lesson from the apostles: "They left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name /of Jesus/." Acts 5:41.

At the crossroads of suffering or trials

The afflictions we meet with can be of many different kinds. They may concern our health, our living, our family, our relatives, etc. Sometimes it may be a temptation in our thoughts to exaggerate about our afflictions. They may be less than what others have had to face.

It would be totally wrong to state that God has nothing to do with our suffering. Instead it may be according to His will if suffering befalls us. The suffering may be His punishment for the wrong we have done and the wrong ways we have chosen. If we do not listen to His warnings, we prepare for the bad things that follow. This is what we ought to tell ourselves now and then, so that we do not follow the ways of sinners or scoffers. Ps 1:1. Yet it must be stressed here that

the admonition about sins and punishment should be made preferably to ourselves, since it would be a different thing altogether to tell others that their sufferings are due to their sins and thus can be understood as God's punishment. Only in extreme cases will it be possible to say such words to others.

When we look upon afflictions and trials, it may at times be tempting to give oneself up to bitter thoughts and complaints, for example about "a cruel and inexorable fate" that has befallen us. It may also be tempting to scold certain people, for example in our family or in our neighbourhood for what has become our share. Some people prefer to scold "the authorities" or "the powers at work" in the community for what they dislike in their own lives. Also a believing Christian may be tempted to do certain of these things, maybe all of them and a lot more. All this shows how necessary it is in all kinds of afflictions and trials *to be ready to listen to what God wishes to say*. Only in this way will it be possible to find God's will in what happens, and thus learn the lesson God wishes to give and to find the guidance and the way out that is needed.

Suffering and faith

Of course it is good and praiseworthy to show patience in all suffering, but there is a thing that is needed much more, *faith*. Only by faith will it be possible for us to yield to God's will to such a degree that we become willing and ready to accept even suffering. This is a great Christian secret: by faith it is possible to endure "as seeing Him who is invisible". Heb 11:27.

When we have mentioned faith, another thing must follow. With a Christian *all suffering must be connected with Christ*. Suffering that comes upon us without any connection with Christ will be only our own, because it will be connected only with what we have done or acquired without faith. On the other hand, to have a true relation to God in all suffering is to have the mind among ourselves, which we have in Christ Jesus. Phil 2:5-11.

The other side of such a faith is *love*. It is difficult to show love for God in the midst of all suffering, and in spite of all suffering, in which we are involved. Yet it must be the way of all Christians: "In everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose." Rom 8:28. This is also a great Christian secret, which it is difficult to find and understand but wonderful to experience when it has disclosed itself: "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." Rom 5:3-5.

At the crossroads of difficult decisions

Sometimes, when we have to make a certain decision, we ask ourselves: "Why is it so difficult to decide, and why is life itself so complicated?" The deepest answer is that we live in an imperfect and sinful world, and therefore our reason and judgment are not completely reliable: "Our knowledge is imperfect", and "we see in a mirror dimly". 1 Cor 13:9-12.

This is our both worldly and spiritual background, when the difficult decisions have to be made. It does not help, if learned people draw up long instructions for us how to choose and decide in every possible case. In the complicated situations of life there will be many opportunities to choose side-tracks or to slide in our thoughts, which means giving another interpretation to the Christian principles, all to our own liking.

Every difficult decision has an ethical implication. *In extreme cases it seems impossible to find a way that can be called a good way or the one good way. Not even the best way then seems to be a really good way.* With reference to this problem some thinkers have pointed to "the approximate decision", which is meant to be "what comes next to the best". With a Christian explanation this could be understood in this way: When after thorough thinking and deliberation, and after sincere prayer to God for His help and guidance, the

time has come for a decision, then you just do what seems best to you. You have asked for help, and now there isn't anything more to choose from. There is also a certain argument in these matters that is conclusive: the reference to *God's omniscience and providence*. Our heavenly Father cares for all living things, also for the birds and lilies. Therefore He can reasonably ask us: "Are you not of more value than they?" Mt 6:25-34. In this case the interpretation ought to be: Even in the most difficult situations we may tell ourselves that God has created a meaningful world, therefore He is more than ready to help us find the solution we need. Perhaps it is not easily found, but "every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds". Mt 7:8.

The example from Christ's own life

The clearest example illustrating all these problems we find in the life of Jesus Christ. If we look at the details of His suffering and death from a strictly human and rational point of view, few things in the world could be more meaningless. From a deeper and more spiritual point of view the same things had the greatest meaning and even eternal importance. If we think of the crossroads in the life of Jesus, He could have spoken in the same way as we so often do: "Why is everything so difficult? No possible way seems to be the good way." There is not a single word from Him of this kind. The words from Him are totally different: "Now is my soul troubled", and, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!" Jn 12:27; Lk 12:50. After such words everything He said can be summed up in two words: "Thy will be done", Mt 26:42, and "I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do." Jn 17:4.

Thus, if in all difficulties we remain in faith, and yet at some crossroad of life have to make the extremely difficult decisions, we may trust in God's providence and fatherly love, and then also be convinced that there is a way leading us through everything. *This is not one way among other ways. It is the way. Its name is Jesus Christ.* Jn 14:6.

Although we may have understood that there is a way through all difficulties, this is by no means a guarantee that we always choose it and follow it. Instead it may happen that we choose another way, and thus sin and fail. The remarkable thing is that God's promises are valid also for such situations. Then the promises point to the way of forgiveness for the sinner who had chosen a wrong way at one of the crossroads of life: "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim 1:15.

19

LIFE AND DEATH

Life is short

"Man is like a breath, his days are like a passing shadow." Ps 144:4. Therefore we all ought to think of the goal of life, "while it is day". Jn 9:4. Life cannot be its own goal, so that we can think it is enough just to live, or to have dwelt here for some time. Life must have some meaning, some contents, and a goal. In an ordinary human life there must be an opportunity for a call to work in some way, and to serve other people and the community.

Thus what gives a meaning to the human life is not its number of years and days. Either it is long or short it can have a great importance, also to many people we do not even know. There is a common misunderstanding about life, for example when people think that only such a life is rich and meaningful that provides man with success and happiness, influence and property. All thoughts of this kind are strongly contradicted in the teaching of Jesus. In the Kingdom of God all the mentioned things can be balanced by the gain of spiritual and eternal things. Therefore it is of much greater importance to find "life" itself than to gain a long life or possessions.

Life has been entrusted to man as a loan or, in other words, it is held in trust. Therefore God will call man to account for life, what became of it, what it gave as a result. Mt 25:14-30. The meaning of life and the contents of a Christian life can be described in a threefold way: to live with Christ, to live for the service of our fellow-beings, and to live in preparation for the life to come, which means the eternal life. If a Christian lives in this way, the service and the blessing of his life will continue among people, also when he himself has left this world.

If we consider the shortness of life, we must repeatedly also ask ourselves: How can we make ourselves ready to depart

from this world, when our time here is up? No outward rules will be of any avail here. The best way is an ordinary Christian life among men, in the vocational call, in the light of the Word, in prayer and Christian fellowship, and in sanctification. In such a way we will be ready to depart, whenever we are called by the Lord, since we know that "here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come". Heb 13:14.

Increasing and decreasing

It is tempting to believe that a Christian, walking in a true fellowship with his Saviour, will always increase in faith, spiritual strength, and sanctification. It is not so. Instead it may happen that a true Christian finds in himself quite as much decreasing as increasing, possibly even more. According to the words of John the Baptist this is quite a normal development, in order that our Lord and Saviour may become so much greater to us. Jn 3:30.

It must be observed, however, that in Christians there is a development they cannot but slightly observe themselves. Others may see how much the Holy Spirit and the Word of God have accomplished with regard to faith, sanctification, and "good works". Such a development will be accomplished also by means of temptations and failures they have gone through, which they have possibly regarded as only negative experiences in their lives. Scripture, however, gives us a different view: "Count it all joy..., when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness." Jas 1:2-3. Such teaching is well testified by Christian experience: "We Christians must be armed and daily expect to be incessantly attacked, in order that no one may go on in security and heedlessly, as though the devil were far from us, but at all times expect and parry his blows. For though I am now chaste, patient, kind, and in firm faith, the devil will this very hour send such an arrow into my heart that I can scarcely stand. For he is an enemy that never desists nor becomes tired, so that when one temptation ceases, there always arise others and fresh ones." (Large Catechism)

The *decreasing in spiritual strength* is very often connected with increasing age. It is often believed that faith, sanctification, and spiritual wisdom will always grow in a steadfast way together with the increasing number of years. It may be so, but it is not always the case. Old people very often become one-sided and irritable. They very often complain about things and conditions, for instance by saying: "Everything was much better in earlier times." Sometimes they also yield to some of the special temptations of old people, for example petulance and stinginess. When such trials of character, together with weakness, illness, and senility, have started to develop, increasing faith and sanctification are not so easily found with them. All this makes it necessary for all Christians, already from their earliest years, to try to learn one difficult lesson in life, to "fight the good fight of the faith". 1 Tim 6:12.

Sickness and suffering

Sickness will affect believing Christians as much as any other people. Therefore it is a false belief and a false doctrine if we believe that we can ask God to be exempted from all sickness and suffering, because we are His children, or, if such tidings befall us, ask Him to deliver us at once from such evil. Certainly we are allowed to ask for God's help, and also ask to be completely cured, so as to be restored to full health. All this is both possible and allowed, but all prayers of this kind ought to be said in the same spirit as when Jesus prayed to His heavenly Father: "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done." Mt 26:42.

This also applies to all kinds of suffering and sacrifices we may be called upon to go through or to give. It is possible to speak about both suffering and sacrifices in a superficial way and to give hasty promises about our willingness to suffer and sacrifice. The example from the life of St. Peter in these matters is instructive. Lk 22:31-34. We ought to pray to God to be saved from such rashness. Sickness, temptations, trials, and suffering are too difficult things to be handled with foolish bravery. These things ought to be handled in a totally

different way: in humility and faith. If we do so, God will guide us and help us through, when the difficult things befall us, and *when His time has come*. The situation will often be the opposite of bravery: perhaps we wonder if it will at all be possible to endure. Under such circumstances God's answer, in both words and deeds, is the most suitable one: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor 12:9.

Facing "the incurable sickness"

There are some sicknesses, particularly when they have reached a certain stage, that are considered to be "incurable". Besides the difficulty with the sickness itself, there are some circumstances that are difficult as well. First we have no reliable rules as to what should be regarded as "incurable". Secondly there often arises a question what we can or what we should tell the patient or the nearest relatives about the character of the sickness.

Nobody ought to use the word "incurable" carelessly. We have all reasons to be careful with our words in these cases. People sometimes die in an everyday sickness that normally is easily cured, whereas it happens that extremely sick people recover, although doctors and relatives have already given up all hope. This shows that we have to be prepared for almost anything at any time. First of all we must all agree that we have no power over life or death. Secondly we must realize that *there is a difference between what God sends and what He allows to happen*. He never sends any evil upon us, but He may allow such things to happen to us that may look hard or even evil. Here it is necessary to remember that "in everything God works for good with those who love Him." Rom 8:28.

When a believing Christian suffers from what is called "an incurable sickness", this may be an outstanding opportunity for him to testify about his faith and about his hope, which is Christ, "the hope of glory". Col 1:27. Many, also non-believers, may be astonished to realize the endurance and happiness, with which the suffering Christian looks forward. This is like saying: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." Rom 8:37.

Another question in connection with the "incurable" sickness is whether Christians are allowed to ask for a divine intervention in order to cure the sickness. The words, "the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up" (Jas 5:15), are definitely true, either the man is cured or dies in faith. The words cannot be quoted to contradict the words of Jesus, when He teaches us about God's will: "Thy will be done." Under all circumstances we are bound to have a double humility: first, when we pray to God for His help and mercy and, if it so pleases Him, to restore the patient to health, secondly, when we pray to God to give the patient a blessed departure and a joyful entrance in heaven, if it has pleased God to call him now.

The "prayer of faith" should never be used as an argument against medical or hospital treatment, nor as an alternative to such treatment. Sect-minded Christians have sometimes argued and acted in such ways, and this behaviour has caused a lot of harm to the Christian church. Faith and prayer are not alternatives to medical or hospital treatment, since God Himself has given us all these gifts and ways. Thus nobody can hinder us to pray the "prayer of faith" also in hospital wards and operating theatres. It should be regarded as a privilege by all Christians that they can use all these ways, wherever they are available, and that in all this they may rely upon God that His will may be done. All this is according to the apostolic admonition: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you." 1 Pet 5:6-7.

Perseverance and thankfulness

During our lifetime we may have to go through many difficult things, like periods of anxiety, struggles, sickness, accidents, disasters, etc., and at the end death. No wonder, then, that the apostolic writer sums up: "You have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised." Heb 10:36. Nobody knows in advance if the greatest difficulties will come early or late in life, at the beginning or at the very end. Death itself may look very difficult to some, and rather easy to some, at least from an

outward point of view. Here we also have to consider these matters with reference to the eternal Kingdom of God: We shall never know in advance, if the difficulties at "the time of the end" (Dan 12:9) will come in our own lifetime, or if they will be preceded by our own death. Whatever will be the case, it is necessary to watch: "Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." Mt 24:42. All these facts tell us one thing clearly: "You have need of endurance." Therefore all Christians ought to tell each other very strongly: "We are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls." Heb 10:36,39.

To the wise and right behaviour of Christians in all afflictions also belongs *thankfulness*. Either it seems to ourselves that we are decreasing in faith and love, or we can hope that we have been taken some steps forward, we have to thank God for everything. This also applies to sickness, suffering, and whatever our afflictions may be. Whatever we have to go through, and whatever we feel under these circumstances, we must realize that we are in God's almighty hands, and then there is only one conclusion we can make: "The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning... 'The LORD is my portion', says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in Him.'" Lam 3:22-24.

This kind of outlook on life and death is not easily acquired. It may be found among people almost irrespective of age. It cannot be taken for granted that it will be missing in young Christians and always found in old and more experienced Christians. Instead it is personal, it is the fruit of grace and sanctification, and therefore it does not depend upon the numerical age. It is a spiritual gift which we have to plead for in our prayers. It comes from "the God of steadfastness and encouragement". Rom 15:5.

The art of dying

In the same way as the old Romans spoke of "ars vivendi" (the art of living), they also spoke of "ars moriendi" (the art of dying). They also coined the expression: "Memento te mortalem esse" (Remember that you are bound to die). As

has been the case in some other peoples, they admired the bravery in men that could face death without fear and die in a dignified manner.

All this is easily said, it is much more difficult to practise it in one's own life. It is one thing to be brave in life, if we have full physical and mental power, and if bravery seems to give its reward, like respect and honour, but it is a totally different thing to be brave, when sickness and long suffering have broken down almost all our power.

Now it is with the art of dying as it is with so many other kinds of art, it is not learnt quickly, rather it takes a long time to learn and also a lot of practising. It may sound altogether impossible to learn or practise anything in connection with death, and yet it is possible. Of course we die only once, but during our lifetime we become confronted with death so many times: in our personal experience of serious sickness, when there are cases of sickness or fatal accidents among friends and relatives, or when we stand at their sickbeds or deathbeds. All this will give us opportunities to think much about life and death and to remember that one day we also shall have to depart from life.

The main question with regard to our own death is not its "when", when it will occur to us, a much more important question is its "how". By this "how" it is not meant in what kind of sickness or accident we will die, since such questions concern only the details in the art of dying. Instead there is one "how" towering up high above the rest, and it is of an enormous importance to us: *does our day of death, whenever it comes, and whatever the reason may be for our death, find us well prepared, ready to die, ready to depart from this life and to enter the unseen world?* This shows how necessary it is "to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom". Ps 90:12.

Our last days and hours

People often tell us how they would like their own last days and hours to be. Some would prefer to die suddenly or after only a brief period of sickness. Some would prefer to doze off to be unconscious when death comes, whereas some

would prefer to be in full possession of all their senses at that moment. Let us admit that all thoughts of this kind are fairly futile, since we cannot do the simplest thing ourselves to have it the one way or the other. On the other hand such thoughts are somewhat dangerous. They tend to lead us away from a thing that is of much greater importance: *our spiritual position, and our relation to God at the time of death, either we are in full possession of our senses or not.* The most important thing is that we do not have any matter unsettled with God or man. Jesus has taught us in a most striking way how to settle things with men, also before we come to the altar of God in His temple. Mt 5:21-26. This is also the crucial point with regard to unsettled matters at the time of our death: How can we settle any matters when we are seriously ill, when we are almost unconscious and just about to die? On the other hand, if we have settled all things and quarrels, "if possible, so far as it depends upon /us/" (Rom 12:18), and if we have received and given forgiveness, well, then the last sickness may proceed further, and the end may come whenever it pleases our Lord. Whatever the outward circumstances are, they do not change anything with regard to our relation to God. We live in the forgiveness of sins, we are in His hands and may die in peace.

In many churches the world over it is a practice to ask for the Holy Communion, if such an opportunity can be found, when death seems to be near. It is a great blessing to a dying Christian to meet his Lord in this way and thus look forward to what is to come, according to what Jesus promised His first disciples: "I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Mt 26:29. It is also a great blessing to a wife, or a husband, or children, or other near relatives, if they can take part in such a holy service at the deathbed. - It should, however, not be regarded as a bad sign, if, for some reason, it is not found possible to celebrate the Holy Communion in the way mentioned. All such circumstances are in the hands of God. The main thing at the departure from life is faith in God. Such a faith may be there, either we get the opportunity of having one service or another at the deathbed.

Without a living faith in our Lord Jesus Christ it is difficult to die. To die without Him is to die without "a living hope". 1 Pet 1:3; Tit 1:2. On the other hand, to "die in the Lord" is not difficult: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth." "Blessed indeed", says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them!" Rev 14:13.

20

TOWARDS THE ETERNAL GOAL

Every task we may plan and undertake has a purpose, a beginning, and an end. The life of man is in no way different. It has also its purpose, a beginning, and an end. The end does not mean that it is finished, instead it means, if it has been a real life, that it has reached its goal.

From the Christian point of view, which must always be according to God's revelation of Himself in His Word, God is the beginning of our life, or rather He is there already before the beginning. So He will also be at the end, since nothing will ever come after Him: "You are my witnesses, says the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am He. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me." Isa 43:10.

This truth about God is described in many ways in Holy Scripture. The centre in all these descriptions is the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, who is called not only THE WAY (Jn 14:6), but also "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" (Rev 21:6). Jesus Christ has revealed to us, as far as can be understood by human brains and hearts, what is in God and what is in man, where we come from, what we are meant to be, and where we are expected to go. Thus He has told us in the clearest way where our goal is: "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." Jn 3:16. "And this is eternal life, that they know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Jn 17:3. It can be said that everything in the Christian doctrine and creed is contained in the name JESUS CHRIST, and also in the one word used about Him, "the WORD": "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." Jn 1:14.

From Jesus Christ we have also received the most important principles of ethics. As has been shown in the preceding chapters, "The Way" can also be described as "The Truth"

and "The Life". Either we use the one word or the other, the walk of a Christian through life will depend upon his Lord and Saviour, either we bring up and consider matters of "heart", "conscience", "love", or matters like "neighbour", "fellowship", "community", "good works", etc. Thus everything that can be treated in Christian ethics is centred round Jesus Christ and must be closely connected with Him. He is "the Alpha" and "the Omega" not only of the Christian belief, but quite as much of the Christian ethics. Therefore the life of a Christian has its beginning in the will of God, and its end is no real end, since death is only a door leading into the eternal world, where God's will shall rule without end.

Common deviations along the road

God ought to be the Father and Helper of all, and His heavenly home ought to be their goal. Heb 13:14; Jn 14:2. These thoughts could also give help and consolation in all difficulties and afflictions along the road, in accordance with the old promise: "The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Deut 33:27. Yet it is amazing to find how many leave the good way, because they have felt the craving in their hearts for other things, even bad things, and extremely harmful things. Already in the New Testament we find many who chose the deviations instead of the right way. Thus we find the rich young man (Lk 18:18-27), the rich man "in purple and fine linen" (Lk 16:19-31), Judas Iscariot (Jn 12:6; Mt 26:14-16), Demas (2 Tim 4:10), and many others. Such people have, unfortunately, been followed by many others up to our own days. "Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor 10:12.

If we mention a few things here, like money, luxury things, comfort, and fame, they are only examples of what is so often considered to be almost natural for anybody to strive for. To the list of what is considered as "natural", many things are added from time to time. During our century sexuality has been added in ways that were not even thought of earlier. In this connection one side of it needs particular attention. The "prophets" of these new kinds of sexuality, and particularly of

the "sexual freedom" they advocate so eagerly, never take any responsibility for the fate of those they have misled. The tragic consequences in the lives of such followers will be met with only a shrug of the shoulders or with a faint excuse, like "this is only a case of misunderstanding what we meant", or "this development is a thing nobody could anticipate", etc.

A similar development is very often found in some branches of sport. When things go wrong there, it often happens in connection with money, so that the apostolic word can be applied in full: "The love of money is the root of all evils." 1 Tim 6:10. Such sport that in earlier times was sound and healthy, and also edifying to the youth from the community's point of view, has all too often deteriorated and become destructive and demoralizing, when money has been allowed to rule it. The examples abound. In many circles of sport narcotics, doping, and gambling have taken a firm grip on many partakers and supporters. After the second world war a poor country bought clever soccer players at high prices from another country. At the same time the latter country paid huge amounts of money for relief work in the country that could afford to import soccer players at high costs. Where is the logic, and where is the ethical decency?

Here is another side of the same problem: there is a great discrepancy nowadays between the money available in sports, and the money available in important fields of scholarship and culture. A speaker pointed to this fact with this example: An outstanding university professor in Greek has a salary that is only a trifle of what a famous soccer player is paid. When he added: "Isn't this ridiculous?" a person answered him: "No, I cannot agree with you on this point. Have you ever heard a public of 100.000 people shouting with joy and happiness during a university lecture in Greek?" In the argumentation of the latter speaker everything is judged only according to temporary success, joy, amusement, and money. There is no reference to the future of the famous soccer player, what becomes of him when he is "sacked", when his career is over, for example when a similar public shouts even stronger: "Away with him!" Perhaps, already in his early twenties, the famous player is not only out, he is also down, since he has become a drunkard, or a drug addict, or a

gambler, poorer than the youngest boy in the youngest boy team of the great soccer club. Perhaps he also dies very young, in a shabby backyard, forgotten by all. Such is the case and the worldly end of many, previously called "stars" and having price tickets with fantastic figures on them, like race-horses from the richest stables. Examples of such cases could be given by the hundreds and thousands from different kinds of sports, and such cases today become known also in "new" countries the world over. Another side of these sad matters is that their families, leaders, clubs, and sponsors have failed enormously in their own ethics as well as in their teaching of ethics to those concerned. When they could have given hints about another goal, of tremendous importance for the future, both in worldly and in spiritual matters, they mostly hinted at gold, as a goal for a good goalgetter, a common word for a good goal-scorer. To what avail, if he never reached any goal worth while? To deceive young people in these ways is in complete contravention of the soundest advice ever given to young and to old in these and similar matters that may tempt us: "What will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?" Mt 16:26.

To forfeit one's life

The problem of the many who become popular in this world, or who become successful, rich, etc., is treated in Holy Scripture. In some of the psalms it is treated eloquently and seriously. One of these psalms is number 73, where the foolishness of the wicked is described at length. In some places the foolishness and its consequences are described in a few striking words: "The wicked... are like chaff which the wind drives away." Ps 1:4. "I have seen a wicked man overbearing, and towering like a cedar of Lebanon. Again I passed by, and lo, he was no more; though I sought him, he could not be found." Ps 37:35-36.

The examples of such wickedness can be drawn from all walks of life, business, literature, entertainment, sports, etc. It is very easy to say in the good days: "How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?" (Ps 73:11), or "There is no God" (Ps 14:1). All this becomes different when the good days are gone and the rich or renowned man has lost his

talent, his beauty, his strength, his riches, his fame, etc. Then all the friends, supporters, and admirers are gone, like the friends of the prodigal son (Lk 15:14-16). To warn us against all mistakes of these kinds and against the folly of abandoning God, He Himself has told us: "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when you will say, 'I have no pleasure in them'." All these things we ought to think over and over again, "before the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." Eccl 12:1, 6-7.

In the world, and not of the world

This theme, which we have touched upon before (p 75 f), must be brought up again in this connection. In almost all matters and problems in Christian ethics we become concerned with this theme. Although Christian faith has an eternal goal, and "our commonwealth is in heaven" (Phil 3:20), our faith must be practised in this world, to the service of our common-beings, our "neighbours". This practising of a "both...and", both *in* the world and yet not being *of* the world, is both a task and a problem. Therefore it is a stumbling-block to many. It is also the point where so many who started their race well have left the good road.

There have been some suggestions how to solve the problem in a way that could be considered to be both smooth and Christian. Many have suggested, particularly during the last two or three centuries, that the Church should co-operate with religious and idealistic bodies with the purpose of changing the human society and the general outlook of man, step by step, towards mutual understanding, love, and fellowship. In such a way, they have thought, the whole of mankind would change radically and become something like the Kingdom of God already in this world, and then it would not be necessary to have an eternal heaven, because "heaven" would be here. - These thoughts are extremely dangerous, and they do not agree with the Gospel of Christ, nor with the eternal outlook He has taught us. There are also great theoretical obstacles to

the thoughts mentioned, for example these: what has happened to "original sin", what about the need of forgiveness of sins, what about all the hardened hearts that have for ever abandoned God? What happens to the Last Judgment with its separation of good and evil?

The fact is that we have not been authorized to unite the fallen world and the Kingdom of God into one balanced and equalized community or kingdom. Instead we have to live here for a short time, being members of a worldly community and citizens in the Kingdom of God. This is our problem, but also our duty and our struggle. It is difficult, it is dangerous, and yet, by the grace of God, we "may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom /we/ shine as lights in the world". Phil 2:15.

There is no possibility of solving these theoretical problems or of mastering the practical problems in connection with these doctrines about "the world" and the Kingdom of God *without upholding the Christian teaching about the Last Judgment and the eternal life*. Only if we look upon our lives in the eternal perspective can we find our foundation in life, our way through life, and our eternal goal. Also the solving of our ethical problems needs the eternal perspective. The philosophical and ethical scholars of the purely worldly schools have great difficulties in finding and describing any motives why we should be obliging, courteous, socially minded, and self-sacrificing towards each other *for only worldly reasons*. In whatever way they turn their explanations, they more or less circle round "the gain" we shall have, if we behave in such ways. The meaning is that "it pays". Well, this is more or less to found ethics on gain and selfishness, since no motive is accepted, if it is supposed to come from what they call "outside". This is the enormous problem on their side: If God and the eternal world do not exist, why should there be any unselfishness, why can't we seize our fellow-servant by the throat and just tell him what he has to do to please us? Mt 18:23-35.

When the apostles turned up in heathen cities, also among the wisest philosophers of the time, Athenians and Corinthians, they brought to them the message about the resurrection of

Christ and the coming judgment of "all the nations". Mt 25:31-46; Acts 17:22-31; 1 Cor 1:18-25; 2:1-5.

The world to come

The resurrection of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the following great Judgment must needs have far-reaching consequences for the lives of all human beings: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12. In the same way as this fact concerns all individuals, it also concerns their life together, their service, and their fellowship.

This also means that the ethics of the individual Christians and of the Church must in some way be related to the end, to the resurrection of the dead, and to the eternal Judgment. This fact can be explained in several ways. The apostles of Christ have shown how necessary it is "to hold our first confidence firm to the end" (Heb 3:14). While many try to deceive us by scornful questions: "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Pet 3:4), the apostles state that the Lord "is not slow about His promise", instead He "is forbearing toward /us/, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Pet 3:9).

Many opponents ask for or demand detailed answers about many things before they will be ready to believe, as they say. We cannot answer all their questions. Furthermore it is not necessary for our adversaries to have them answered. It is enough for all of us, if the main questions about man, life, death, resurrection, and our Saviour are answered according to the Word of God. Then the road is clear ahead of us, as far as we have need of seeing it.

After the call from Jesus: "Follow me!" (Jn 1:43; Mt 9:9), there is only one way to go, if we wish to be Christians. When following Jesus a Christian may continuously confess: "Not that I have already obtained /the goal/ or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own... I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Phil 3:12-14.

A summary of Christian ethics

If we look back on what has been said in the previous chapters, we once more realize how great the difference must be between a totally worldly system of ethics and Biblical, Christian ethics. The latter will be formed, right from its foundation and beginning, on the faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord, on the resurrection from the dead, on a coming Judgment, and the eternal life. Anybody wishing to profess himself an adherent to Christian faith and Christian ethics must consider these basic facts. It is correct to say that everything here is centred round the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This can be illustrated by a plain example. From the classical Antique we have taken over as a death symbol the broken pillar, the purpose of which is to demonstrate that life is totally over, it is gone, everything is finished. This is not a Christian symbol. On the Christian side we have a different symbol, it is the cross. It is not a symbol of our suffering or death, instead it is the symbol of Christ, His suffering, His death for sinners and for the whole of mankind, and His glorious resurrection. Therefore we can greet the cross as our banner of victory, the complete opposite of the broken pillar. We can "glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal 6:14). It is like saying: "To us who are being saved it is the power of God." 1 Cor 1:18.

In this way, because of the victory of our Lord and Saviour, we can look forward in faith to the eternal world. When this is called "a hope", it is a Christian hope, a hope "set before us". "We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf." Heb 6:19-20.

Will this eternal hope have negative or positive consequences with regard to Christian ethics? The adversaries state that the consequences will be negative. They say the eternal hope, as well as all thoughts about salvation and an eternal bliss, must have a very negative influence on the interest of Christians in worldly matters, for instance in connection with social and community work. The testimonies of history, however, speak differently. Already during the first Christian centuries the heathen were astonished to see the charity of the Christians,

also towards the dead among the heathen themselves. *The Christians did in worldly matters what the heathen did not do themselves.* Thus the heathen marvelled at the Christians, who in the mornings collected dead human bodies from the streets, which had just been thrown out as rubbish. The Christians did this work, both to give the dead a decent burial and to keep the streets clean. - A second example: What was it that gave the countries of medieval Europe such a time of cultural prosperity? It was the Christian church with its grand efforts in mission, teaching, literature, and charity. - A third example may be taken from the two or three last centuries. What was the power behind the abolishing of slavery and behind the great number of large social institutions? It was the revival-minded Christian organizations which took the lead. Here we may think of the institutions in Germany, inaugurated and led by such pious men as August Hermann Francke, Theodore Fliedner and others. By the work of such Christian pioneers as William Wilberforce and Florence Nightingale in England even parliaments and governments were forced to join in the new social work and the reshaping of the community. Thus it cannot be denied that *confessing Christians have given an outstanding contribution to the ethical and social side of their worldly communities, and this they did, while they were most eagerly keeping their eternal hope.*

The question reversed

What has just been said can be confirmed if we reverse the question and put it this way: When Christians nowadays, as seems to be the case in many countries, neglect the Word of God, the salvation of their souls, and their eternal hope, and when they instead concentrate their interest on worldly matters, community and social work, have they managed better in this way to accomplish anything? In general the answer must be a definite no. When and where this development has gone on in the Christian church, she has managed to do less, and her influence on these very matters has been reduced in a remarkable way. Compared to what happened in the Church of Europe one or two centuries ago in social matters, the later achievements have been fairly small. This proves once more that *if the eternal perspective is*

allowed to weaken or disappear, then the ethical and social strength will also diminish and finally disappear. Therefore the Lord once more can upbraid His Church: "I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent." Rev 2:4-5.

Soli Deo Gloria - Glory be to God only

To a Christian, while living in this world, two things are the most important among all. The first thing is to hold to Christ, that in all He may be glorified, "whether by life or by death". Phil 1:20. This first thing is more fully explained in this way: "... to gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith". Phil 3:8-9. The second thing of the greatest importance to a Christian, while living here, is to let his "manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ". Phil 1:27. This will be a testimony also to such people who do not believe.

The life described here at the same time means *being in the world, while there is a call to remain here, and yet not being of the world.* Nobody will be through with this task before his departure from this world, instead this task must be going on all the time. Therefore the renewal in Christ must be going on continuously, every day of life. What is meant here is a renewal "in the spirit of your minds", a putting on of "the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness". Eph 4:23-24. This work is performed by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. It includes the work of the Law, by which the believer is brought continuously to know his own sins and failures, and the work of the Gospel, by which he is brought to know and to receive the grace of God through Jesus Christ, his Saviour and Lord.

How long will this kind of work have to go on? The Formula of Concord answers: It has to go on, "until the body of sin is entirely put off, and man is perfectly renewed in the

resurrection, when he will need neither the preaching of the Law nor its threatenings and punishments, as also the Gospel any longer; for these belong to this (mortal and) imperfect life. But as they will behold God face to face, so they will, through the power of the indwelling Spirit of God, do the will of God (the heavenly Father) with unmingled joy, voluntarily, unconstrained, without any hindrance, with entire purity and perfection, and will rejoice in it eternally."

If Christians believe and live in this way, then they are the children of Light and walk in the Light. Jn 12:35-36; Eph 5:8. When they profess themselves adherents of Christ, this is, however, not done in a spirit of selfpraise. It is solely a confession to Christ, and it is a praise of Him in words and deeds. By His Word and His Spirit, and in His holy Church, He has guided them onto the Way of Life, since He Himself is the Way and the Life. Jn 14:6.

Therefore, "dear Father, we pray, give us first Thy Word, that the Gospel be preached properly throughout the world; and secondly, that it be received in faith, and work and live in us, so that through the Word and the power of the Holy Spirit Thy Kingdom may prevail among us, and the kingdom of the devil be put down, that he may have no right or power over us, until at last it shall be utterly destroyed, and sin, death, and hell shall be exterminated, that we may live forever in perfect righteousness and blessedness." (Large Catechism)

GLORY BE TO THE FATHER,
AND TO THE SON,
AND TO THE HOLY SPIRIT;
AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING,
IS NOW,
AND EVER SHALL BE,
WORLD WITHOUT END.

AMEN

INDEX

("f" = "and some following page or pages")

- Abortion 133, 186
Abstinence 107
Adversaries 243, 244
Advertising 193
Afflictions 224
Age 228, 230
Agents 25, 64, 91
Agression 38 f
Agressive wars 152 f
Agriculture 185, 190
AIDS 108
Alms 195 f
Ambiguity 214
Amusements 64
Animism 14, 135
Annunciation 208
Anxiety 218 f
Approximate decision 225 f
Architecture 181 f
Arithmetic 169, 184
Art 177
Atheism 8, 14, 59 f, 61 f,
63, 135
Atonement 28, 145
Atrocities 46, 63, 168, 174
Authoritarian spirit 130
Authority 134 f, 165, 168
Authorities 31 f, 33, 35 f
- Basketry 180, 181
Beauty 181 f
Betrothal 111
Blessing 131
Breeding 185
Brotherhood 40, 63, 100
- Calamities 78 f
Call, God's 84 f
Capital (money) 189 f, 192
Capital owners 195
Capital punishment 146
Capitalism 192, 197 f
Capitalistic yoke 196
Care of souls 198
Caritative work 211
Casuistry 3, 89, 201
Celibacy 132
Character 123, 172, 174 f
Charity 63, 74, 81, 196, 244 f
Chastisement 115 f
Chemical weapons 153
Child labour 106, 192
Childlessness 131 f
Children 93 f, 123 f, 125 f
Choice 212, 213 f, 216 f, 218
Church 24, 25 f, 37 f,
112 f, 139
Citizenship 102, 167
Civil rights 40, 93, 100 f
Civility 129
Civilization 42, 56, 59 f, 122,
169, 177 f, 179 f
Class-less community 196
Cohabitation 107, 114, 115
Comfort 238
Common good 32, 33
Communism 193, 196
Community 31 f, 35, 59,
190 f
Companies 190 f, 192, 194
Compensation 132
Complaints 167

- Computers 184
 Conceit 172, 176, 187
 Concessions 221
 Confession 208 f, 217, 222, 247
 Confession of sins 78
 Confidence 126
 Confusion 164 f
 Conscience 7 f, 18, 54 f, 59 f, 76 f, 79 f, 98, 106, 137, 167, 185, 187
 Conscientious objector 147, 154 f, 156 f
 Consideration 87 f, 126, 140, 141
 Consideration of person 37 f, 140
 Consolation 84, 198 f, 208
 Contempt 206
 Contrarevolution 164
 Conventions, international 96, 98, 143
 Conversion 27, 212
 Conviction 213
 Copying 20, 21, 75, 182
 Corruption 37, 161, 194
 Counselling 76 f, 198 f, 217 f, 219
 Country 30, 147 f, 155
 Coup 164, 194
 Courts 29, 34, 39, 51, 65 f, 101, 141, 205
 Cowardice 210
 Crafts 177
 Creation 7, 18, 60 f, 90 f, 93, 135, 182 f
 Creation of life 186 f
 Creator 16, 136, 148
 Cross 23, 244
 Crossroads 44, 212 f
 Cruelty 152
 Cultivation of mind 180
 Culture 29 f, 169, 177, 239, 245
 Custodian (Law) 21, 38, 61, 73 f
 Custody of children 114
 Daily bread 149, 189
 Death 228 f, 233 f
 Deathbed 215, 235
 Decency 107, 115, 120, 198, 239
 Decisions 225 f
 Decree 163
 Defamation 52, 206 f
 Defence 147 f
 Defensive Wars 152 f
 Democracy 34, 40, 46 f
 Demonstrations 90
 Departure from life 233 f
 Depravation, depravity 12 f, 15, 108, 183, 194, 197
 Deterrent effects 145, 146, 148
 Development 29, 42, 43, 156
 Deviations 238
 Deviations in art 183
 Diakonia 211
 Dictatorship 34, 40, 44, 48, 195, 197
 Dignity of man 99, 100
 Disarmament 149 f
 Discipleship 21, 25 f
 Disintegration 44, 48
 Disobedience 222
 Disposition of the heart 21 f, 52 f, 74 f

- Dissimulation 210
 Divorce 116
 Draft resisters 147, 149 f,
 154 f, 156
 Drill 126
 Dualism 9
 Duties 39, 41, 105
- Earth 15
 Economy 191 f
 Education 104 f, 122, 124 f,
 169 f, 218
 Emancipation 108 f, 113 f
 Employment 104
 Endurance 225
 Enemies 77, 213, 220
 Engagement 111
 Environment 11, 90, 135,
 178 f, 183
 Essence, God's 8 f, 23,
 202, 215
 Eternal hope 38 f
 Eternal life 242 f
 Eternal perspective 243 f,
 245
 Euthanasia 186
 Evidence, in court 51 f, 205 f
 Evil 9 f, 21 f, 35, 167, 178,
 182, 220
 Evolution 135
 Example 124, 126, 202, 226
 Exploitation 64, 90, 92,
 202, 226
 Extenuating circumstances
 140 f
 Extermination 153
- Faith 19 f, 24, 26 f, 70 f,
 181, 202, 212, 221,
 224, 244
 Fall 10, 12, 13, 16, 18,
 35, 189
 Fallibility of conscience 55
 Family 29, 122 f
 Fear of the Lord 176
 Fellowship 20 f, 24, 26, 27,
 29, 32, 70, 80, 86, 128,
 180, 209
 Fidelity 63, 112, 115
 Fight, Christian 24
 Financial crimes 67
 Fines 143
 Folklore 177 f
 Forfeit 240
 Forgiveness 217, 227, 235
 Freedom 10, 64, 68, 95,
 100 f, 155
 Freedom of conscience 65,
 103
 Freedom of speech 37, 103
 Freedom of thought 37, 103
 Freedom of will 16 f
 Friends 77
 Fugitives 159
- Gain 174, 188, 189, 192,
 226, 242
 Gas 153
 Genes 186
 Germs 153
 Glorification of Christ 26
 Gnosticism, gnostics 10, 107
 Goal 26, 29, 60, 174, 183 f,
 228, 237 f, 240, 242, 243
 Godliness 71 f
 God's people 28, 70

- Gold 240
 Good deeds 13, 82, 83
 Good works 16, 27, 52 f,
 195 f, 205, 211
 Gospel 37, 38, 68, 246
 Grace 27, 37, 73 f, 216
 Great Spirit 135
 Greed 92, 158
 Guilds 177
 Guilt 22, 27
- Happiness 43, 228
 Harshness 199
 Heart 11, 21 f, 34, 54, 56,
 61, 149
 Hereditary factors 186
 Heritage 148
 Heterosexuality 119
 High Priest 22 f
 HIV 108
 Holy Communion 235
 Holy Spirit 23, 27, 202
 Home 122 f
 Home missions 118
 Homosexuality 118 f
 Honesty 112, 116, 123,
 144, 198
 Honour 102, 206
 Hostility to God 13
 Human development 186
 Human life 158
 Human rights 40, 65, 93, 96,
 98 f, 117, 159
 Humanity 12, 43, 61 f, 188
 Humility 81, 172, 178,
 187, 230 f
 Hypocrisy 53, 64, 74, 210
- Ignorance 171
 Image of God 9
 Imitation of Christ 201 f
 Immorality 63, 64
 Imprisonment 142 f
 Incurvatus in se 22
 Independence 48
 Individual(s) 33, 43, 85 f,
 95 f, 124
 Individualism 43, 86
 Individuality 87 f, 124 f
 Industrialization 189, 190 f,
 192
 Influence, Christian 25
 Inheritance 180
 Iniquity 217
 Injustice 161, 193
 Integrity 44, 64, 68, 95 f,
 115 f, 175 f
 Interest on money 191
 Interests, private 33 f, 35
 Interference, international 38
 Intervention, divine 232
 Invasion 148
 Investments 191
- Jealousy 162
 Jurists 137
 Justice 34 f, 36 f, 65 f, 134,
 136 f, 139, 142, 161,
 163 f, 198
 Justification by grace 4, 20,
 70 f
 Juvenile workers 94 f, 97,
 192

- Kingdom, evil 13 f
 Kingdom of God (of Christ)
 14 f, 28, 38 f, 41, 68 f,
 75, 84, 179, 184, 241
 Knowledge 169
- Labour 194
 Lactation 185
 Last judgment 242 f, 244
 Law 38, 61, 73 f, 100,
 136 f, 247
 Law, God's 26 f, 38, 41, 61,
 70 f, 73 f
 Lawlessness 163, 164
 Lawmaking 65 f
 Leadership 32, 44
 League of Nations 154
 Legalism 68, 201
 Leniency 140
 Lies 203 f, 213, 215 f
 Life 18, 19, 26, 69, 70,
 158, 228 f
 Liturgy 211
 Looting 152
 Love 27, 81, 107 f, 133, 172,
 204, 211, 215, 225
 Love, man-woman 110 f
 Luxury 238
- Machines 189
 Majority 46
 Mammon 67, 97, 98,
 187, 200
 Man 29 f, 93 f
 Manichaeans 10
 Marketing 193
 Marriage 107 f, 111, 112 f
 Marriage laws 116 f
- Martial laws 163
 Masses (of people) 33 f,
 161, 195
 Materialism 97, 195
 Matrimony 107 f, 115
 Measurement, ethical 53 f
 Medicine 184
 Messiah (Christ) 23 f, 28,
 201 f
 Minimum, ethical 65
 Mismanagement 177, 194
 Mission 245
 Mixed economy 193
 Model, ethical 20
 Moderation 49, 124 f, 126
 Money 125, 190 f, 197 f,
 219, 239
 Money-market 190 f
 Morality 42 f, 64, 175 f
 Moulds 182
 Music 183
 Mutual understanding 241
 Myths 24
- Narcotics 91, 183, 239
 National interests 150,
 152 f, 158
 Nationality 29 f, 102
 Neighbour 81 f, 200, 206 f,
 209, 241
 Nepotism 37
 Neutrality, in ethics 49 f, 64
 New birth, of nation 165 f
 Nihilism 48
 Non-believers 59 f, 62 f
 Non-violence 147
 Nuclear development 185
 Nursery 121

- Obedience 21 f, 66, 67, 72 f
 Occupation 213, 214
 Oddity 127 f
 Omnipotence 8
 Omniscience 226
 Opposition 219
 Original sin 12 f, 242
 Outward order 37
 Over-sexualizing 109, 118
- Parenthood 122 f
 Parents 25
 Partiality 206
 Pattern, ethical 20
 Peace 35, 148 f, 221 f
 People 29 f
 People's democracy 194 f
 Persecution 39, 159,
 198, 219 f
 Perseverance 232
 Personal development 43
 Personal freedom 44, 68
 Perversities 183, 216
 Phariseeism 3, 15, 201
 Pluralism 44, 48
 Poisoning 179
 Politeness 129
 Pollution 90, 185
 Polygami 115 f
 Possession, spiritual 183,
 195 f
 Pottery 180, 181
 Poverty 94, 127, 189,
 192, 195 f
 Power 44, 134 f, 199 f
 Prejudice 85, 107
 Preservation 178, 186
 Prince of Peace 219
 Prisons 142 f, 145
- Probation 143, 146
 Problem child 125
 Prodigal son 125, 241
 Profession, worldly 76, 189 f
 Profit 192, 240
 Profit-hunger 195
 Progress 42, 52
 Prohibitions 50
 Proletariate 194 f
 Propaganda 25, 55, 152,
 156 f, 158
 Property 102, 122 f, 125 f,
 127, 193 f, 228
 Prophet 20
 Prophetic task 37, 98
 Prophetic voice 92, 109 f,
 133, 139, 140, 168, 197 f
 Prostitution 95, 117 f
 Providence 139, 226
 Public debate 46
 Punishment 39, 100, 101,
 125, 142 f, 145, 146, 157,
 214, 223 f
 Purpose of life 26 f, 29, 60,
 170, 173, 190, 237
- Quietness 207
- Rain forests 97
 Rape 152
 Reason 44, 46, 61 f, 65,
 100, 106
 Rebellion 99
 Reconciliation 217
 Red Indians 135
 Redeemer 22, 23
 Redemption 28
 Rehabilitation 141, 142,
 145, 146

- Remuneration 191, 219
 Renewal 246
 Repentance 217
 Reputation 206 f, 219
 Residence 102
 Respect 30 f, 87 f, 127 f
 Respect for life 186
 Responsibility 79 f, 88 f,
 135, 136, 166, 169, 175,
 185, 186, 195, 196, 205
 Resurrection 243, 246 f
 Revelation 7 f, 19, 62,
 171, 237
 Reverance 209 f
 Revolution 161 f
 Reward 189 f, 191
 Riches 127, 190 f
 Righteousness 4, 8, 20, 141,
 143, 198, 205, 215
 Rights, civil 33, 98 f
 Rule (authority) 32, 35,
 37, 38 f
 Rumours 213
- Sacrifice 23, 230
 Sagas 177
 Salvation 18, 27
 Sanctification 3, 21, 22, 181,
 204, 228 f, 233
 Satan 10, 220
 Saviour 19, 20, 22 f
 Scholarship 239
 Science 153 f, 177 f, 184 f
 Seclusion 207 f
 Secrecy 77 f, 208 f
 Self-governing 40
 Selfishness 242
 Sentimentality 222
 Sexual intercourse 51
- Sexual traffic 117 f
 Sexuality 107 f, 132 f, 238 f
 Shareholders 193, 195
 Sickbed 213
 Sickness 230 f
 Silence 168, 207 f, 213, 216
 Sin 21 f, 216 f
 Sinner 12 f, 27
 Slavery 48, 94 f, 100, 245
 Social service 40
 Social work 244 f
 Socialism 193 f
 Solicitors (before marriage)
 111
 Solidarity 24 f
 Son of God 21, 23 f
 Speaking 84, 203 f, 207, 213
 Spirit, the Christian 75
 Spiritual rule 35, 37, 41, 139,
 152, 155
 Split homes 116
 Sports 239 f
 State 30 f, 32, 35 f, 64
 Statecraft 167
 Stewardship 40, 88 f, 91,
 123, 135, 148, 187
 Strife 219 f
 Structures 11
 Struggles 219 f
 Subordination 41
 Success 228
 Suffering 23, 73, 83, 212,
 220, 223, 224 f
 Superiority 66, 92, 136 f
 Superman 187
 Surrender 151
 Sword 151, 155, 219
 Sympathy 81 f, 83 f, 119

- Talents 89, 177
 Talkativeness 215
 Tampering with life 186 f
 Taxation 191
 Temptations 216 f, 229
 Ten commandments 71 f
 Terror 195
 Testimony 201 f, 231 f, 246
 Thankfulness 232 f
 Tolerance 30 f
 Torture 100, 143
 Totalitarian regimes 25, 34,
 40, 41, 44, 130, 174
 Traditional religion 135
 Training 122, 124, 169 f
 Transport 94
 Trials 223, 224
 True God 19
 True Man 19
 Trustworthiness 214 f
 Truth 8, 18, 19, 23 f, 48 f,
 69, 184, 187 f, 197 f,
 202 f, 213 f, 215 f, 221
 Truthfulness 205 f
- Uncommunicative people 209
 Understanding 83
 Unemployment 104, 189, 196
 Uniqueness 88, 95
 Unit, of man 11
 United Nations 65, 95, 96,
 98 f, 154
 Unity 86, 88
 Universe 15
- Vanity 173
 Vengeance 142, 162
 Victory 244
 Violence 138
 Vocation 76, 189 f, 218,
 228 f
 Voting 47, 103
- War 147 f, 152 f, 154 f,
 159 f
 Wastage 193
 Watchfulness 139
 Watching 24 f, 233
 Way 18, 19, 26, 69, 226,
 237 f
 Wealth 97, 119
 Weaving 180
 Welfare 32, 40, 114, 135,
 180, 188, 194, 199 f
 White lies 214
 Wickedness 240 f
 Witnessing 4, 164 f, 201,
 231 f
 "WORD" 19, 171, 237
 Word of God 24, 62, 170 f
 Work 189 f
 "Working class" 196
 World 7, 14 f, 75 f, 220,
 240 f, 246
 Worldly rule 35 f, 41,
 152, 155