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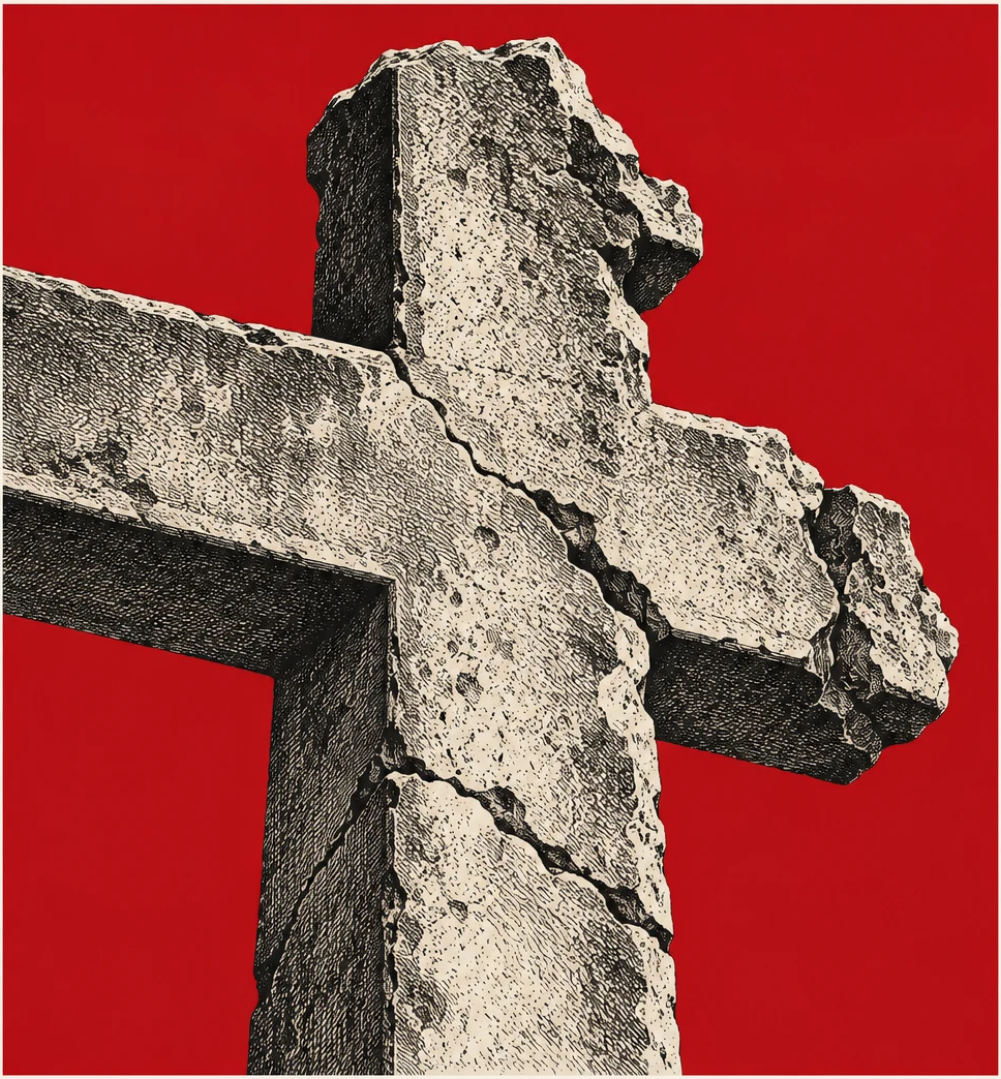
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Friedrich Nietzsche

Plain modern English

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THE ANTICHRIST

by

F. W. NIETZSCHE

Translated from German, with an introduction, by H. L. MENCKEN

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INTRODUCTION

Apart from his loud, wildly emotional life story, "Ecce Homo," "The Antichrist" is the last thing Nietzsche ever wrote. So we can take it as a statement of some of his most important ideas in their final shape. He had been collecting notes for it for years. It was meant to be the first volume of the great masterwork he had planned for a long time, called "The Will to Power." His full plan for this work, as he first wrote it out, went like this:

Volume One. The Antichrist: an attempt to criticize Christianity.

Volume Two. The Free Thinker: a criticism of philosophy as a movement of belief in nothing.

Volume Three. The Immoralist: a criticism of morality, the deadliest kind of ignorance.

Volume Four. Dionysus: the philosophy of everything happening again forever.

Nietzsche made the first sketches for "The Will to Power" in 1884, soon after the first three parts of "Thus Spake Zarathustra" came out. After that, for four years, he kept piling up notes. He wrote them in all the places he visited on his never-ending travels as he searched for better health. He wrote at Nice, at Venice, and at Sils-Maria in the Engadine valley, which was for a long time his favorite place to stay. He also wrote at Cannobio, at Zürich, at Genoa, at Chur, and at Leipzig. Several times other books got in the way of this work. First came "Beyond Good and Evil," then "The Genealogy of Morals," which he wrote in twenty days, and then his short books about Wagner. He changed his plan almost as often. At one point he decided to stretch "The Will to Power" to ten volumes, with the overall subtitle "An

Attempt at a New Interpretation of the World." Another time he chose the subtitle "An Interpretation of All That Happens." In the end he settled on "An Attempt at Turning All Values Upside Down," and went back to four volumes, though he changed the order of them in several ways. In September 1888 he started the real writing of the first volume, and he finished it before the month was over. That summer he had been creating at an almost frantic speed. Since the middle of June he had written two other short books, "The Case of Wagner" and "The Twilight of the Idols." And before the year ended he would also write "Ecce Homo." Sometime in December his health started to break down fast, and soon after New Year's he could no longer take care of himself. After that he never wrote again.

The angry attack on Wagner and "The Twilight of the Idols" were published right away, but "The Antichrist" was not printed until 1895. I suspect the delay came from the influence of the philosopher's sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche. She was smart and passionate in spreading his ideas, but she did not always use good judgment. In his dark days, when people ignored and misunderstood him, and even his family and friends kept their distance, Mrs. Förster-Nietzsche stood by him more than anyone else. But there were limits she, too, was unwilling to cross, and those limits were marked by crosses, meaning by religion. In the book she wrote about his life, which is useful but not always correct, you can see that she clearly wants to clear him of the charge of making fun of holy things. She says he greatly admired "the uplifting effect of Christianity on the weak and the sick," and that he had "a real fondness for sincere, devout Christians," and "a tender love for the Founder of Christianity." She goes on to say that he saved all his anger for "Saint Paul and people like him." According to her, these people twisted the Beatitudes, the blessings that Christ meant only for humble people, into a religion for everyone, a religion that fought against the values of the strong and noble. Clearly, the person speak-

ing to us here cannot forget that she is the daughter of a Lutheran minister and the granddaughter of two more. A bit of guilty conscience slips into the way she reads "The Antichrist." She even hints that after the author's breakdown, some more wicked unbeliever may have tampered with the text. There is no reason at all to think that any such tampering ever happened. Nor is there any proof that the religious upbringing they shared weighed on the brother as heavily as it did on the sister. Quite the opposite: it should be obvious that in this book Nietzsche meant to attack Christianity head-on, with every weapon he had. Even though he wrote fast, he put the greatest care into it, and he wanted it printed exactly as it is. The ideas in it were not new to him at all when he wrote them down. He had been working on them since his earliest days. You can find some of them, easy to recognize, in the very first book he wrote, "The Birth of Tragedy." You can find the most important of them all, the idea that Christianity is bitter resentment, explained at length in the first part of "The Genealogy of Morals," which came out in 1887 under his own watch. The rest are spread all through his huge pile of notes. Sometimes they are just questions, but often they are worked out very carefully. Also, let us not forget what happened with Wagner. When Wagner gave in to Christian sentimental feeling in his opera "Parsifal," Nietzsche went from being his leading supporter in writing to being his bitterest enemy. Nietzsche could forgive every other kind of phony showmanship, but not that. "In me," he once said, "the Christianity of my ancestors reaches its logical end. In me, the strict honesty of mind that Christianity encourages and puts above everything turns against Christianity. In me, Christianity eats itself up."

The truth is, this angry attack on Christianity is needed to complete Nietzsche's whole system, just as the keystone at the top is needed to hold up an arch. All the lines of his thinking curve up toward it. From the first day he wrote to the last, what he threw himself against was

always, when you get to the bottom of it, Christianity in one form or another. He attacked Christianity as a set of rules for everyday behavior, Christianity as a set of political rules, Christianity as a theory about the nature of reality, and Christianity as a way of measuring what is true. It would be hard to name any project on his long list that was not tied, more or less directly and clearly, to this biggest project of all. It was as if leaving the religion of his parents had filled him with the burning zeal of a convert, especially the zeal of someone who has turned against the official belief. And that zeal seems to have blinded him to every other part of the huge way civilized people fool themselves. The drive for power was his answer to the way Christianity pretends to be humble and self-sacrificing. Everything happening again forever was his mocking reply to Christian hopefulness and to the Christian belief in a coming golden age. The superior human was the person he put forward to replace the Christian idea of the "good" man, who carefully bows low before the throne of God. The main things he argued for were all anti-Christian. He wanted people to stop seeing life only in terms of right and wrong. He wanted instinct to be respected again. He wanted weakness and timidity knocked off their pedestal as ideals. He wanted people to give up all the hocus-pocus of rigid religious teaching. He wanted to wipe out false upper classes, meaning priests, politicians and the very rich. And he wanted to bring back the healthy, proud, lordly "innocence" of the ancient Greeks. If you had to sum Nietzsche up in a word, he was a Greek who was born two thousand years too late. His dreams were completely Greek. His whole way of thinking was Greek. Even his particular mistakes were Greek too. But his Greek spirit, I hardly need to say, was nothing like the weak, watered-down version of Plato's ideas that has run like a thread through Western thinking ever since the early Church leaders. Of course he got from Plato what all of us get from him, but his true ancestor was Heraclitus, the earlier Greek thinker. It is in Heraclitus that you find the seed of Nietzsche's basic view of the universe. That

view sees the universe not as something about right and wrong, but simply as a work of art to be looked at. In the end, the God Nietzsche pictured was not far from the God that an artist like the novelist Joseph Conrad pictures. This God is a master craftsman, always experimenting, always getting closer to a perfect balance of lines and forces, and yet always failing to reach the final harmony.

The recent war stirred up all the primitive racial rage of the Western nations, and along with it all their old enthusiasm for religious rules and religious punishments. So, naturally, people focused on Nietzsche, since he was the boldest and most provoking of recent amateur writers about religion. The Germans have a habit of explaining everything they do in the most realistic and unpleasant terms possible. They seem to have grabbed hold of him in a late and unexpected hug. I suspect this horrified the Kaiser, and maybe horrified Nietzsche's own ghost even more. The English-speaking peoples have their own habit, of explaining everything they do in romantic terms. At the same time, they set him up as the Antichrist, which he no doubt secretly wished to be. As a result, he was badly misrepresented and misunderstood. From the pulpits of the Allied countries, and especially in England and the United States, a swarm of patriotic churchmen attacked him in wild language as the cause of all the horrors of the time. In the newspapers, until the Kaiser was chosen as the one and only bogeyman, Nietzsche shared that title with the German generals, officials and princes: von Hindenburg, the Crown Prince, Captain Boy-Ed, von Bernstorff and von Tirpitz. Of course, most of this attack was plainly idiotic. It was the silly nonsense of small-town Methodists, college professors hungry for attention, newspaper writers who could barely write, and other such fools. In much of it, including quite a few official songs of hate, people solemnly announced that Nietzsche had been the teacher of the most extreme German nationalists, such as von Bernhardi and von Treitschke. That

made about as much sense as calling the playwright George Bernard Shaw the teacher of the British prime minister Lloyd George. In other serious-sounding announcements, he was blamed, as the thinker behind it all, for various crimes the enemy never actually committed. These included the mass killing or maiming of prisoners of war, the deliberate burning of Red Cross hospitals, and the use of dead soldiers' bodies to make soap. In those wild days I entertained myself by collecting newspaper clippings that said this sort of thing. Later on I will probably publish a summary of them, to help people study the madness that war brings on. The whole thing went to unbelievable lengths. Because I had published a book on Nietzsche in 1906, six years after he died, agents of the Department of Justice, covered in badges, came to see me. They wanted me to answer the charge that I was a close friend and agent of "the German monster, Nietzsky." I am quoting the official written report, an angry document that was often badly spelled. Poor Nietzsche! He worked so hard to prove that he was not a German but a Pole. He even bravely stood against those who hated Jews, ready to accept the conclusion that if he was a Pole, he was probably a Jew as well! And this is where it got him!

But under all this frightened and ridiculous nonsense, there was at least one healthy instinct. It was the instinct that saw Nietzsche as the most powerful, stubborn and effective critic of the philosophy that the Allies fighting Germany were committed to. It was the same philosophy that, at least in theory, had brought the United States into the war. In actual fact, Nietzsche had very little to do with the enemy you could see, except in distant and passing ways. Officially, the German stayed the most eager of Christians all through the war, and then became a democrat when it ended. But Nietzsche was clearly an enemy of democracy in all its forms: in politics, in religion, and in ideas about how we know what is true. Worse still, he made his case in words that were not only unusually sharp and crushing, but also

unusually insulting. So it was quite natural that he stirred up an anger close to madness in the two countries that had stood most boldly on the democratic platform. And, one might add, those were the two countries that felt that platform wobbling most under their feet. I would guess that Nietzsche, if he had been alive, would have been very pleased by all the hatred piled on him. Partly this is because he was a vain man, and he enjoyed being hated as a sign that he was unusual, and so better than others. But more importantly, he was a very good judge of the human mind, and he would have seen the uneasy doubts hidden underneath that hatred. Suppose Nietzsche's criticism of democracy were as ignorant and empty as, say, the typical evangelical preacher's attacks on Darwin's theory of natural selection. Then the supporters of democracy could brush it aside as calmly as Darwin's followers brush aside the babbling of those holy clergymen. And if his attack on Christianity were just loud noise with no meaning behind it, there would be no need for preachers to curse him from the pulpit. But in fact these attacks are backed by enormous learning and a lot of sharp, believable argument. In short, the gun is loaded and the tiger has teeth. So it is no surprise that they make angry the men whose most basic belief is that accepting such ideas would destroy civilization, black out the sun, and make Yahweh weep on His throne.

But inside all this fear, which is understandable, there is still a false belief. It is the belief that Nietzsche wanted to wipe out Christianity completely, and so take away from ordinary people their goodness, their spiritual comfort, and their hope of heaven. Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is that Nietzsche did not care at all about the false beliefs of ordinary people, at least not for their own sake. It seemed to him to matter very little what they believed, as long as it was harmlessly foolish. What he fought against was not their beliefs themselves. He fought against those beliefs being raised up, through any kind of democratic process, into the official philosophy of

the state. What he feared most was that the gifted few would be poisoned and crippled by a disease of the mind spreading up from below. His clear goal in "The Antichrist" was to fight that danger by finishing the work that others had started. On one side, that work had been begun by Darwin and the other thinkers of evolution. On the other side, it had been begun by German historians and scholars of ancient texts. The overall result of this earlier attack, in the 1880s, was that educated people stopped taking Christian theology seriously. The masses, of course, were hardly shaken at all. Even today they have not given up their belief in the main Christian teachings. But by 1885, the educated class had been fairly well convinced. At the time Nietzsche was planning "The Antichrist," no well-informed man really believed that the world was made in seven days. Nor did he believe that all its animals were once drowned in a flood as punishment for the sins of humans. Nor that Noah saved the boa constrictor, the prairie dog and the head louse by taking two of each onto the ark. Nor that Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt. Nor that a piece of the cross Jesus died on could cure rabies. A hundred years earlier, such ideas had been believed almost everywhere in the Christian world. Now they were held only by the great mass of ignorant and gullible people, which means by ninety-five or ninety-six percent of humankind. If a man from the gifted few said in public that he believed one of them, that alone was enough to mark him as someone who urgently needed a mental doctor. Believing in them had become a sign of being inferior, just like the related beliefs in magic healing stones, witchcraft and ghosts.

So the theology of Christianity had sunk to the low level of a mere false belief of the common crowd, kept alive at that level by the ancient class of priestly parasites. And yet the moral teachings of Christianity were still accepted almost everywhere, maybe even more than ever before. In fact, people seemed to feel that these moral rules

simply had to be rescued from the wreck. They feared that the world would fall into chaos if these rules went the same way as the supposed messages from God that had once propped them up. Many sensible men shared this fear. And so there arose what was really a completely new Christian religion. It was a religion cleaned of all the supernatural ideas that generations of theologians had piled on top of the older faith. It went back to what people imagined was the pure moral teaching of Jesus. This religion is still thriving. Protestantism is slowly turning into the same thing. It is creeping into Catholicism under the name of Modernism. It is supported by huge numbers of men who are clearly intelligent and whose honesty no one can doubt. Even Nietzsche himself gave in to it in weak moments. You will see this when you look at his rather strained attempt to make Saint Paul the villain of Christian theology, and Jesus nothing more than an innocent bystander. But this emotional giving-in never went far enough to pull his attention away for long from his main idea. His main idea was this: that Christian moral teachings were, deep down, just as questionable as Christian theology. They were built, just as surely as childish fairy tales like the story of Jonah and the whale, on the special prejudices and easy beliefs, the particular wishes and hungers, of inferior people. And they fought against the best interests of better kinds of people just as clearly as the wildest superstitions about the outside world. In short, here is what he saw in Christian morality, under all the poetry, the fine display of unselfishness, and all the benefits it claims to bring. He saw a democratic attempt to hold back the self-interest of the strong. He saw a plot by the outcasts against the free action of those above them, and even against the free progress of all humankind. This theory is what he lays bare in "The Antichrist." He brings to the job his amazingly colorful and demanding way of speaking, at its very best. This is the "plot" he lays out with all the weapons of his typical style: his italics, his dashes, his sudden loud outbursts, and his exclamation points.

Well, an idea is an idea. This one may be right, and it may be wrong. One thing is quite certain: you will get nowhere against it by simply calling it immoral. If it is ever to be put to rest at all, it has to be done with evidence and with logic. The opposite view, that you can beat an idea by condemning it, is a deeply democratic one. The masses are the cruelest of all tyrants, and it is always in a democratic society that people most often mix up holding the wrong opinion with committing a crime. Nobody is surprised to hear of a Bismarck calmly thinking out loud, at least in his old age, about how foolish Socialism was. Nobody is surprised to hear of a Frederick the Great spraying his scorn, like water from a hose, on the very kind of total power that was practically his own self. But ordinary people, taken as a crowd, never put up with anyone tearing apart their basic beliefs. And that impatience naturally shows most clearly in the societies where the crowd has the most say. Democracy and free speech are not two sides of the same jewel. Democracy and free speech are enemies forever. But in any fight between an institution and an idea, the idea wins in the end. Here I am not going to make the silly claim that, as the world rolls on, the truth always survives. I believe nothing of the kind. In fact, it seems to me that an idea that happens to be true carries a special handicap, and often a deadly one. Or, to be more exact, I mean an idea that is as close to the truth as any human idea can get while still being understandable to ordinary people. Most people prefer a comforting lie to the truth. A lie calms them down. It is easy to understand. Above all, it fits more neatly than the truth into a world full of false appearances, a world of complicated and senseless events that people only half understand. But even though a true idea is unlikely to win for that reason, an idea that is under attack has a big advantage. The evidence behind it now gets help from people's sympathy, from their sense of fair play, and from their feelings. And feelings are as powerful as an army marching under flags. You never hear of a martyr in history whose ideas are still seriously argued against today.

The ideas that get forgotten belong to people who put them forward calmly and quietly, foolishly hoping they would win just because they were true. Those are the ideas we now have to work hard to dig up again. If Nietzsche had lived long enough to be burned at the stake by furious Methodists in Mississippi, it would have been a wonderful day for his teachings. As things stand, his ideas get a push forward every time someone calls them immoral and against God. The war brought curses down on them from huge crowds of respectable, right-thinking people. And now "The Antichrist," after fifteen years of being ignored, is being printed again....

You can picture the author as a mocking ghost, chuckling, a little sadly, at this fact. Wherever his spirit is suffering now, it gets many comforts like this these days, and some of them are far more powerful. Think of all the facts and arguments, and even the deeper theories and attitudes, that the enemies of Bolshevism have borrowed from him, knowingly or not, during these last exciting years! The face of democracy, suddenly seen up close and looking horrible, has frightened the protectors of today's rule of the rich half to death, and they have gone to the devil himself for help. Senators from the South, men who can barely read, have watered down his sharp, burning ideas, like acid mixed with well water, and sprayed them out like frightened geysers, without knowing what they were doing. And they are not the first to borrow from him. Years ago I pointed out how much the late Theodore Roosevelt owed him, in "The Strenuous Life" and other places, a debt Roosevelt forgot about, as he usually forgot what he owed others. Roosevelt was a typical defender of the way things are. Whenever the system was threatened, he skillfully threw people off the scent, the way you drag a smelly fish across a trail to confuse hunting dogs. Yet he still managed to fool the gullible public at home, at least until near the end, into seeing him as a fiery champion of pure democracy. Maybe he even fooled himself; fakers usually

do, sooner or later. Studying Nietzsche shows where much of what was honest in Roosevelt came from, and it shows how empty much of what was fake in him really was. Nietzsche had a far tougher and braver mind and could never have gotten his ideas mixed up like that. He seldom let his feelings turn him away from a plain, glaring fact. What people today call Bolshevism, he saw clearly a generation ago, and he described it for what it was and still is: democracy in another form, the old bitter resentment of the lower classes, set loose once more. Socialism, Puritanism, narrow-minded small-town values, Christianity: he saw them all as different forms of the same thing, democracy, the way coal and diamond are different forms of the same element. He saw them as variations on the endless struggle of quantity against quality, of the weak and fearful against the strong and bold, of the failed and broken against the fit. The world needed a shocking exaggeration to make it see even half of the truth. Today it trembles the way it trembled during the French Revolution. Maybe it would tremble less if it could fight the monster with a clearer conscience and with fewer half-hearted theories weighing it down. That is, if it could aim its forces openly at the basic belief underneath, and not just use them to keep order during this passing wild outburst.

In the long run, Nietzsche may help the world become more honest in that way. His ideas get passed along secondhand, then thirdhand, then fourthhand, like cuttings taken from a plant, and from those cuttings, and from those again. Spread this way, they might possibly prepare the ground for a sounder, healthier idea of society and the state. That could free human progress from the stupid things that hold it back now, and free people who truly see clearly from the despair that now makes them sick. I say this is possible, but I doubt it is likely. The soul of humanity and its belly are too evenly matched. The belly will probably never give up its hunger or forget how strong it is. Here, perhaps, we have an example of everything happening again

forever, the idea Nietzsche liked to brood over in his darkest moods. We are right in the middle of one of the uprisings of the lower classes that keep coming back again and again. This one got going long before any of today's Bolshevik devils were born. It got its long, safe head start from the unbearable bullying of the rule of the rich, which was the final result of the Eighteenth Century revolt against the old nobility. Then it found that the resistance against it suddenly weakened, because the rich started a civil war among themselves. One gang of businessmen attacked another gang, while loudly singing hymns and shouting to God. Perhaps this uprising has already reached its highest point. The rich, having learned their lesson, are showing signs of sticking together again, and the wheel keeps turning. But this fight between the working masses and the rule of the rich is, after all, a civil war in itself. Two inferior groups are fighting over who gets the right to dirty up the world. When there is a strike at a steel mill, what real difference does it make to a civilized person whether the workers win or the mill owners win? The fight can only interest him as a show to watch, the way the fight between Napoleon and the old order in Europe interested Goethe and Beethoven. Whichever side wins, the victory will just bring chaos closer. And that will set the stage for a real revolution later on. Out of that, let us hope, will come a new feudal system or something better, and the dawn of a new Thirteenth Century. This seems to be the slow and expensive way things work in the worst of all worlds that people can still live in.

In this present fight, I am betting on the rich. They will win because, in the long run, they will be able to sign up the sharper minds. The masses and their soppy, tearful causes attract only sentimental people and crooks, mostly crooks. In a democracy, politics shrinks down to nothing more than a scramble for office among people who flatter the working masses. Even when a superior man wins at that disgusting game, he has to give up his self-respect to win it. Not many superior

men even try. The typical great leader of the mob, when he is not simply someone crying over wrongs that can never be fixed, is a hypocrite who has gone so far that he does not even notice his own hypocrisy. He is a slimy fellow who stinks. The rich can hire noticeably more respectable soldiers to fight for them, if only because they can make serving your own interests less obviously damaging to your pride. Their flaw and their weakness is that they are still too young as a class to have gained any dignity. They rose only recently out of the very masses they now feed on, so they still show some of the mob's habits of mind. They are loud, stupid, ignorant, and lacking in any delicate instinct or skill at governing. Above all, they are still rather heavily moral. You rarely see them start one of their typical idiotic projects without giving some grand-sounding moral reason. They spend almost as much money backing the Y.M.C.A., campaigns against vice, Prohibition, and other childish things like that as they spend on buying Congressmen, strike-breakers, hired gunmen, paid patriots, and newspapers. In England things are even worse. Over there it is almost impossible to find a rich factory owner who is not also a well-known lay leader in one of the strict Protestant churches outside the Church of England, and even among bankers there are men who are big on prayer. In mainland Europe, things are saved by the fact that the rich class is becoming more and more Jewish. There, the Jew's clever, mocking mind almost makes up for how unpleasant he is socially. If he is fated to lead the world's rich out of their narrow little chapels, he will of course fail to turn them into a true nobility, that is, a class of gentlemen. But at least he will make them clever, and so worth taking seriously. The case against the Jews is long and harsh. It would justify ten thousand times as many violent attacks on them as are now going on in the world. But whenever you find a band of rebels for culture fighting against the narrow-minded, small-thinking crowd, you will find a Jew there swinging hard. Maybe this is why Nietzsche spoke up for the Jewish people just as often as he spoke

against them. He was not blind to their faults, but when he compared them with Christians, he could not deny that they were generally better. Perhaps in America and England, just as in mainland Europe, the rich class becoming more Jewish will cut it off from any chance of ever growing into a true nobility. But it may still raise it to enough dignity that it will at least earn a certain unwilling respect.

But even so, the rich class will stay stuck in a kind of in-between world, halfway between the gutter and the stars. Above it there will still be the small group of people who make up the lasting upper class of the human race. These are the people with imagination and big goals, the ones who bring real progress, the brave and passionate spirits. They rise above small fears and complaints, and they rise just as much above small hopes and small ideals. There were heroes before Agamemnon, the great Greek king of legend, and there will be more geniuses like Bach after Johann Sebastian Bach. And below the rich class, which has become more Jewish, and below the middle class that has been polished and raised up, the ancient working masses will go on roaring forever. That is my guess, anyway. They will be endlessly tortured by their useless hatreds and jealousies. Their old superstitions will scare them, make them tremble, and send them running in a panic. Their cheap and shameful hopes will poke at them and make them miserable. It seems very likely to me that Christianity will keep on surviving among these masses. It is nonsense, that's true, but it is sweet. Nietzsche attacks it as a poison and warns of its dangers, and in doing so he almost makes the mistake of denying that it has a sugary taste, which it clearly does. Of all the religions ever invented by the great pranksters of the human race, this is the one that gives the most for the least money, so to speak, to the lesser man. It begins by plainly denying that he is lesser at all: it says that all people are equal in the eyes of God. And it ends by turning his lowness into a kind of real superiority. It says that it is a good thing to be

stupid, and miserable, and badly treated, because those are exactly the people God chooses for heaven. Not all the speeches of a million Nietzsches, and not all the hard work of a million scientists like Darwin and scholars like Harnack in lining up their evidence, will ever take away the appeal of that great comfort. The most they can ever do is help the better kinds of people see clearly what that comfort really is, and so give them a defense against catching the disease. This is already happening; this work is being done. I think "The Antichrist" has a useful role in that work. It is loud, it often goes too far, and to many sensitive people it is in the worst possible taste. But underneath, it is hugely to the point and does its job well, and on the surface it is certainly a good show. Because people naturally enjoy a bit of spite, there is something fun about watching curses get thrown right back at those who threw them. It is refreshing to see the devil's pitchfork used against the gentlemen who have sent so many endless crowds of people to hell. In Nietzsche, after many long years, these churchmen finally found an enemy who was a match for them. He was not just a fancy fencer playing with words, like Voltaire, or a crowd-stirring speaker like Tom Paine, or a dry nitpicker like the scholars who argued with the Church over how to read the Bible. He was a gladiator with a steel sword and steel armor, and he fought with all the fierce joy of a bishop from the Middle Ages. It is too bad that the Holy Church has no official process for raising up demons, the way it has a process for making people saints. There must be a long list of dark miracles to be blamed on the Cursed Friedrich: sinners whose guilty conscience was wiped away, so that they were happy in their sinning; priests whose beliefs were shaken by visions of a new and better holy city; the strong made to rejoice; and the weak robbed of their old, sad, romantic story. It would be a pleasure to see the Devil's Advocate, the Church official whose job is to argue against making someone a saint, switch from the prosecution's table to the

defense's table, and formally ask for the damnation of the little goblin from Naumburg, Nietzsche's hometown....

Of all Nietzsche's books, "The Antichrist" is the closest to a normal book in its form. It makes one connected argument with very few breaks, and it has a beginning, a middle and an end. Most of his books are collections of short, sharp sayings, and sometimes the subject changes every other page. This fact is one of the charges that conventional critics bring against him. They point to it as proof that he could not think things through in a long chain, so his mind was weak, and maybe he was a downright idiot. It should be obvious that this argument is basically nonsense. What fools the professors is that philosophers have always been so long-winded. The average philosophy writer, when he tries to explain his ideas, uses up so many words that the dictionary is nearly emptied. So these poor observers leap to the conclusion that his actual ideas must be just as weighty. Quite often, this is not true at all. What makes philosophy so wordy is not that philosophers are deep, but that they lack skill as writers. They are like doctors who try to cure a little heartburn by making the patient eat a whole truckload of burned oyster shells. On top of that, there is the endless parrot-like repeating: every new philosopher has to prove how much he knows by slowly going over the ideas of all the philosophers before him.... Nietzsche avoided both of these faults. He always assumed his readers had already read the books, so there was no need to rewrite them. And when he had an idea that seemed new and original to him, he said it in as few words as he could, and then he stopped. Sometimes he fit it into a hundred words; sometimes it took a thousand. Now and then, as in this case, he built a group of related ideas into one connected book. But he never wrote one word too many. He never puffed up an idea to make it look bigger than it really was. Sadly, the school-teachers are not used to that kind of writing in serious subjects. They dislike it, and sometimes they even

try to improve it. In fact, there is a huge, solemn book about Nietzsche by a learned American, in which all of his brilliance is painfully turned into the windy language of religious schools. The book is nice and heavy, but it leaves out the best part, the meat of the coconut: it actually has no discussion of what Nietzsche thought about Christianity!... Nietzsche always scares off the nitpicking scholars. He used too few words for them, and he had too many ideas.

*

This translation of "The Antichrist" is published with the permission of Dr. Oscar Levy, who edits the English edition of Nietzsche's works. Two translations came before this one. One is by Thomas Common, and the other is by Anthony M. Ludovici. Mr. Common's version sticks very closely to the original text, so now and then it uses phrases that sound very German. Mr. Ludovici's version reads more smoothly, but it is somewhat less accurate. I am not offering my own version because I think either of those is useless. Just the opposite: I'm happy to admit that they are very good, and that they helped me with almost every line. I didn't start this new English version hoping to replace them. I certainly didn't think the public was crying out for it. I simply did it for my own enjoyment during difficult times. But as I worked on it, I began to see ways to bring some of the taste of Nietzsche's unusual style into English. So what started as fun turned into fairly serious work. Of course, the result is far from perfect, but at least it is a very hard-working attempt. Nietzsche was always influenced by French writers, and he wrote a German that is really different from any other German I know. It is more tense and energetic, more varied, and faster in pace. It builds up to stronger high points. It is never heavy or dull. You can start to see his influence in the writing of young Germans today. They are moving away from the old booming style, with its long sentences and its boring, complicated grammar.

Over time, I imagine, they will develop a German that is almost as clear as French and almost as colorful and flexible as English.

I want to thank Dr. Levy for his official approval, Mr. Theodor Hemberger for his comments and corrections, and Mr. Common and Mr. Ludovici for showing me how to get around many difficult passages.

H. L. MENCKEN.

Preface

This book is meant for the rarest kind of people. Maybe not a single one of them is alive yet. Perhaps they will be found among those who understand my book "Zarathustra." How could I possibly mix myself up with the people who are only now starting to grow ears to listen? First, the day after tomorrow has to arrive for me. Some people are only truly born after they die.

I know all too well what it takes for someone to understand me, and to understand me in a way they can't avoid. Just to put up with how serious I am, and how strongly I feel, a person has to take honesty of mind so far that it almost becomes harshness. He has to be used to living on mountain tops, high above everything. He has to look at the miserable chatter of politics and national pride as something beneath him. He has to have stopped caring about such things. He must never ask whether the truth will help him or destroy him.... He needs a liking, coming from strength, for questions nobody else is brave enough to ask. He needs the courage to face what is forbidden. He has to be destined for the maze. He needs the experience of seven kinds of loneliness. New ears for new music. New eyes to see what is farthest away. A new conscience for truths that no one has ever heard before. And he needs the will to save his energy in a big, grand way,

holding together his strength and his excitement.... Respect for himself. Love for himself. Complete freedom for himself....

All right, then! Only people like that are my readers, my real readers, the readers I was destined for. What do the rest matter? The rest are just ordinary humanity. You have to raise yourself above ordinary humanity: in power, in how high your soul reaches, and in looking down on it.

FRIEDRICH W. NIETZSCHE.

The Antichrist

1.

Let us look each other in the face. We are the people of the far North, and we know very well how far away our place is. "You will not find the road to the people of the far North by land or by sea": even the ancient Greek poet Pindar,[1] back in his time, knew that much about us. Beyond the North, beyond the ice, beyond death, there is our life and our happiness.... We have found that happiness. We know the way to it. We learned it from thousands of years of wandering in the maze. Who else has found it? Modern people? "I don't know the way out, and I don't know the way in. I am everything that doesn't know the way out or the way in." That is how modern people sigh.... This is the kind of modern life that made us sick. We grew sick from lazy peace, from cowardly deals in the middle, from all the respectable filth of the modern yes and no, where nothing is ever clearly one or the other. This kind of tolerance, this so-called big-heartedness that "forgives" everything because it "understands" everything, feels to us like a hot, sticky desert wind that drains all our strength. We would rather live in the ice than among modern virtues and other warm, weakening winds like these!... We were brave enough. We did not go easy on ourselves or on anyone else. But it took us a long time to figure out where to aim our courage. We became gloomy, and people called us fatalists, people who just give in to fate. But our fate was this: being full, being tense, building up and storing our strength. We longed for lightning and for great deeds. We stayed as far away as we could from the happiness of weak people, from "giving up and accepting things"... There was thunder in the air around us. Our own nature, the nature we carried inside us, grew dark like a cloudy sky, because we had not yet found the way. Here is the formula for our happiness: a yes, a no, a straight line, a goal....

[1] See Pindar's tenth Pythian ode. See also the fourth book of the Greek historian Herodotus. The people of the far North were a people from old myths who lived beyond the Rhipaean mountains, far in the North. They were said to be happy all the time and to stay young forever.

2.

What is good? Anything that makes a person feel more powerful, that strengthens the drive for power, that increases power itself.

What is evil? Anything that comes from weakness.

What is happiness? The feeling that your power is growing, that you are beating whatever stands in your way.

Not being satisfied, but having more power. Not peace no matter what it costs, but war. Not virtue, but getting things done well. By virtue here I mean what the Renaissance meant by it: strength and skill, virtue without the sour taste of moral preaching.

The weak and the failed and broken should die out. That is the first rule of our kind of kindness. And we should help them do it.

What does more harm than any vice? Actively feeling sorry for and helping the failed and broken and the weak. In other words, Christianity....

3.

The question I am asking here is not what will take the place of humans among living things. Humans are the end of that line. My question is this: what kind of human should we deliberately breed, should we deliberately aim for, because it is the most valuable kind, the kind most worth living, the surest promise for the future?

This more valuable kind of human has shown up many times in the past. But it has always come as a lucky accident, as an exception, never as something people planned and wanted on purpose. In fact, it has very often been exactly the kind of person people feared most. Until now it has been almost the most terrifying thing of all. And because of that fear, people wanted, raised and actually produced the opposite kind: the tame animal, the herd animal, the sick human beast, the Christian....

4.

Humanity is certainly not moving toward something better, stronger or higher, the way people today think of progress. This "progress" is just a modern idea, which means it is a false idea. Today's European, in what he is really worth, is far below the European of the Renaissance. Development over time does not necessarily mean rising up, getting better or getting stronger.

It is true that it does work out in single, separate cases, in different parts of the world and in very different cultures. And in those cases a better kind of human certainly appears, someone who, compared to ordinary humanity as a whole, looks like a kind of superior human. Such lucky hits of great success have always been possible, and they may stay possible for all time. Sometimes even whole races, tribes and nations can be lucky accidents like this.

5.

We should not dress Christianity up or make it look prettier than it is. It has fought a war to the death against this better kind of human. It has banned all the deepest instincts of this kind of person. It has built its idea of evil, and even its idea of the Devil himself, out of these very instincts. To Christianity, the strong man is the typical damned soul,

the "outcast among men." Christianity has taken the side of everyone who is weak, low, and failed and broken. It has made an ideal out of fighting against all the instincts that keep a healthy life going. It has even spoiled the abilities of the people with the strongest minds, by teaching that the highest things the mind can value are sinful, misleading and full of temptation. The saddest example is what happened to Pascal. He believed his mind had been ruined by original sin, when in fact it was ruined by Christianity!

6.

What I see in front of me is a painful and tragic sight: I have pulled back the curtain and shown how rotten humans have become. When I use this word, at least one suspicion does not apply: I am not making a moral accusation against humanity. I use the word, and I want to stress this again, without any moral meaning at all. This is so true that the rottenness I am talking about is clearest to me exactly in the places where, up to now, people have tried hardest to reach "virtue" and "holiness." As you have probably guessed, by rottenness I mean decay. My argument is that all the values that humanity now treats as its highest goals are values of decay.

I call an animal, a species or a single person corrupt when it loses its instincts, when it chooses, when it actually prefers, what is bad for it. A history of the "higher feelings," of the "ideals of humanity," and I may have to write one, would almost explain why humans have sunk so low. To me, life itself looks like an instinct to grow, to survive, to gather strength, to gain power. Whenever the drive for power fails, disaster follows. What I claim is that all of humanity's highest values have been emptied of this drive, and that the values of decay, of belief in nothing, now rule while wearing the holiest names.

7.

Christianity is called the religion of pity. But pity works against all the strong, energizing feelings that make us feel more alive. Pity is a downer. A person loses strength when he feels pity. Suffering already drains our strength, and pity multiplies that drain a thousand times over. Pity makes suffering spread like a disease. In some cases it can lead a person to throw away his whole life and all his energy, a loss far bigger than the cause deserved. (Think of how the man from Nazareth died.) That is the first way to look at it, but there is a more important one. If you judge pity by how serious the reactions are that it causes, you can see much more clearly that it is a threat to life. Pity blocks the whole law of evolution, which is the law of natural selection. It keeps alive whatever is ready to die. It fights on the side of those whom life has cut off and condemned. By keeping so many of the failed and broken of every kind alive, it makes life itself look gloomy and doubtful. People have dared to call pity a virtue. (In every higher moral system, it is seen as a weakness.) They went even further and called it the virtue, the source and base of all the other virtues. But we should always remember that this came from a philosophy of belief in nothing, a philosophy that carried turning against life on its shield like a motto. Schopenhauer was right about this much: pity is a way of saying no to life and of making life seem worth saying no to. Pity is the tool of belief in nothing. Let me say it again: this depressing and contagious instinct stands against all the instincts that work to keep life going and make it stronger. By acting as the protector of the miserable, it is one of the main forces pushing forward decay. Pity talks people into dying out... Of course, nobody says "dying out." They say "the other world," or "God," or "the true life," or Nirvana, salvation, eternal happiness... This innocent-sounding talk comes from the world of religious and moral nonsense. But it looks a lot less innocent once you think about what it hides under its grand

words: the urge to destroy life. Schopenhauer was an enemy of life, and that is why pity looked like a virtue to him... Aristotle, as everyone knows, saw pity as a sick and dangerous state of mind. He thought it needed to be flushed out every now and then, like taking a medicine to clean out the body, and he saw tragedy on the stage as that medicine. Our instinct for life should push us to find a way to pop this sick and dangerous buildup of pity, like lancing a boil, so that it bursts and drains away. We see this buildup in Schopenhauer, and sadly also in the whole decay of our literature, from St. Petersburg to Paris, from Tolstoy to Wagner. Among all the unhealthy things of modern times, nothing is more unhealthy than Christian pity. To be the doctors here, to show no mercy here, to use the surgeon's knife here: this is our job. This is our kind of kindness to humanity. This is the mark that shows we are philosophers, we people of the far North!

8.

We need to say exactly who we see as our enemies: preachers and theologians, and everyone who has any of their blood in his veins. That is our whole philosophy... You have to have faced that danger up close, or better still, you have to have lived through it yourself and nearly been beaten by it, to understand that it is no small thing. (The so-called free thinking of our scientists who study nature and the body seems like a joke to me. They feel no passion about these matters. They have not suffered.) This poison spreads much further than most people think. I find the proud habit of the theologian in everyone who calls himself an "idealist." I mean everyone who claims that, because he starts from some higher place, he has the right to rise above reality and look down on it with suspicion... The idealist, just like the churchman, holds all kinds of grand ideas in his hand (and not only in his hand!). He throws them, with a kind of friendly scorn, at things like "common sense," "the senses," "honor," "living well," and

"science." He sees these things as beneath him, as harmful and tempting forces, while "the soul" floats high above them as a pure thing as it really is. He acts as if humility, sexual purity, poverty, in short, holiness, had not already done far more harm to life than every horror and vice you could imagine... The pure soul is a pure lie... As long as the priest, that professional denier, slanderer and poisoner of life, is accepted as a better kind of human, there can be no answer to the question: What is truth? Truth has already been turned upside down when the obvious lawyer for pure emptiness is mistaken for truth's spokesman...

9.

I declare war on this preacher's habit of mind. I find its footprints everywhere. Anyone who has a theologian's blood in his veins is sneaky and dishonest in everything. The sad thing that grows out of this state is called blind belief. In other words, it means shutting your eyes to yourself once and for all, so you never have to bear the sight of a lie that can't be cured. People build an idea of morality, of virtue, of holiness, on top of this false way of seeing everything. They base a clear conscience on bad eyesight. They argue that once they have made their own view sacred with the names "God," "salvation" and "eternity," no other way of seeing has any value anymore. I dig up this preacher's habit of mind in every direction. It is the most widespread and the most hidden, underground kind of lying on earth. Whatever a theologian thinks is true must be false. That is almost a test for truth. His deep instinct to protect himself fights against truth ever being honored in any way, or even being spoken out loud. Wherever theologians have influence, values get turned upside down, and the ideas of "true" and "false" are forced to swap places. Whatever does the most harm to life is called "true" there, and whatever lifts life up, makes it stronger, approves of it, justifies it and makes it win is called "false"...

When theologians reach out their hands for power, working through the "consciences" of kings (or of whole peoples), there is never any doubt about what is really going on underneath: the will to bring everything to an end, the will that believes in nothing, is the one using that power...

10.

When I talk to Germans, they understand me right away when I say that the blood of theologians, the preachers' way of thinking running in the family, is what ruins philosophy. The Protestant pastor is the grandfather of German philosophy. Protestantism itself is its original sin. Here is my definition of Protestantism: Christianity paralyzed down one side, and reason paralyzed along with it.... You only have to say the words "Tübingen School" for people to understand what German philosophy really is underneath. It is a very clever form of theology.... The Swabians are the best liars in Germany. They lie without even knowing they are lying.... So why was there so much celebrating when Kant appeared? That joy went all through the learned world of Germany, and three-quarters of that world is made up of the sons of preachers and teachers. And why do Germans still believe, even now, that Kant changed things for the better? The preacher's habit of mind in German scholars let them see clearly exactly what had become possible again.... A back staircase leading up to the old ideal had been left open. Two ideas came back. One was the so-called real world beyond. The other was the idea that morality is the very core of the world. These are the two most harmful mistakes that ever existed! Thanks to a sly and slippery kind of doubt, these ideas could once again be held. Maybe they could not actually be proven, but at least they could no longer be disproven.... Reason, the right of reason to judge, does not reach that far, or so Kant said.... Real life had been turned into mere "appearance," just how things look to us. And a completely false

world, the world of unchanging "being," had been turned into reality.... Kant's success is nothing but a success for theology. Like Luther and Leibniz, he was just one more thing standing in the way of German honesty, which was already pretty shaky.--

11.

Now a word against Kant as a teacher of morals. A virtue has to be something we invent ourselves. It has to grow out of our own personal needs and our own need to protect ourselves. If it doesn't, it becomes a danger. Anything that does not belong to our life is a threat to it. A virtue that comes only from respect for the idea of "virtue," the way Kant wanted it, does real harm. "Virtue," "duty," "good for its own sake," goodness based on being impersonal or on the idea that it applies to everyone everywhere: these are all fantasies. All you find in them is a sign of decay, of life finally falling apart. It is the stiff, rule-bound, Chinese-like spirit of Königsberg, Kant's hometown. The deepest laws of staying alive and growing demand the exact opposite. They demand that each person find his own virtue, his own rule of absolute duty, not Kant's rule of absolute duty for everyone. A nation falls apart when it mixes up its own duty with the general idea of duty. Nothing causes a more complete and deep-reaching disaster than any "impersonal" duty, any sacrifice made to the idol of an abstract idea, like the ancient god Moloch who demanded children as sacrifices.--Just think: nobody has ever seen that Kant's rule of absolute duty is dangerous to life!... Only the preacher's habit of mind stepped in to protect it!--When an action comes from the instinct for life, the amount of pleasure that comes with it shows that it is the right action. And yet that believer in nothing, Kant, with Christian rules filling his insides, saw pleasure as a reason against doing something.... What wrecks a person faster than working, thinking and feeling without any inner need, without any deep personal wish, without

pleasure, like a mere robot of duty? That is the recipe for decay, and for stupidity too.... Kant became an idiot.--And this man lived at the same time as Goethe! This disastrous spinner of cobwebs was taken to be the German philosopher, and he still is today!... I won't let myself say what I think of the Germans.... Didn't Kant see the French Revolution as the state changing from a lifeless form to a living one? Didn't he ask himself whether there was any event at all that could only be explained by assuming that humans have a moral sense, so that, based on that event, "humanity's tendency toward the good" could be explained once and for all? Kant's answer was: "That is revolution." Instinct that goes wrong in absolutely everything, instinct rebelling against nature, German decay turned into a philosophy: that is Kant!--

12.

I set aside a few doubters, the decent, honest kind in the history of philosophy. The rest have no idea at all of honesty of mind. All these great dreamers and child geniuses act like women, as people liked to say. They treat "beautiful feelings" as if they were arguments. They treat a "heaving chest" as the bellows that blow in inspiration from God. They treat strong belief as the test of truth. In the end, with "German" innocence, Kant tried to make this kind of corruption, this lack of a mental conscience, sound scientific by calling it "practical reason." He purposely invented a special kind of reason to use whenever it was convenient not to bother with real reason. That is, whenever morality spoke, whenever people heard the lofty command "you shall." Remember that in every nation, the philosopher is really just a later version of the old kind of priest. Once you remember that, this inheritance from the priest, this way of cheating yourself, is no longer surprising. Imagine a man who feels he has a mission from God, say to lift up humanity, or save it, or set it free. Imagine he feels

a holy spark in his heart and believes he is the voice of commands from beyond nature. When a mission like that sets him on fire, it is only natural that he puts himself above all ordinary, reasonable ways of judging. He feels that the mission makes him holy himself, that he is a being of a higher kind!... What does a priest have to do with philosophy! He stands far above it!--And until now, the priest has been in charge!--He has decided what "true" and "not true" mean!...

13.

Let's not underestimate this fact: we ourselves, we free thinkers, are already a "turning all values upside down." We are a living, visible declaration of war on all the old ideas of "true" and "not true," and a declaration of victory over them. The most valuable insights are the last ones people reach. And the most valuable of all are the ones that decide methods, the ways we go about finding things out. All the methods and all the principles of today's scientific spirit were looked down on with the deepest scorn for thousands of years. If a man leaned toward them, he was shut out from the company of "decent" people. He was seen as "an enemy of God," as someone who mocked the truth, as someone "possessed" by demons. As a man of science, he belonged among the outcasts[2].... We have had all of humanity's sad stupidity against us. Every idea they had about what the truth ought to be, about what serving the truth ought to look like, every "you shall" of theirs, was aimed at us.... Our goals, our methods, our quiet, careful, suspicious way of doing things all looked to them completely shameful and worthless.--Looking back, you could almost reasonably ask whether it was really a sense of beauty, a matter of taste, that kept people blind for so long. What they wanted from the truth was a striking, colorful effect. What they wanted from learned men was something that grabbed their senses hard. It was our modesty that

offended their taste the longest.... And how well they sensed that, these strutting turkeys of God!

[2] The lowest of the Hindu classes.

14.

We have unlearned something. We have become more modest in every way. We no longer say that human beings come from the "spirit" or from "God." We have put humans back among the animals. We see the human as the strongest of the animals because he is the most cunning, and one result of that cunning is his intelligence. On the other hand, we watch out for a kind of vanity that would like to creep in even here: the idea that humans are the great goal that the whole slow growth of living things was secretly aiming at all along. In truth, man is anything but the crown of creation. Next to him stand many other animals, all at about the same stage of development.... And even saying that is saying a bit too much. Because, comparatively speaking, man is the most failed and broken of all the animals, and the sickliest, and he has strayed the most dangerously away from his instincts. Even so, of course, he is still the most *interesting* one! As for the lower animals, it was Descartes who first had the truly admirable courage to call them *machines*. The whole of our science of the body works toward proving that idea right. What's more, it makes no sense to set humans apart, as Descartes did. What we know about humans today goes exactly as far as we have been willing to treat humans as machines too. In the past, people gave man something called "free will," as if it were a gift handed down to him from some higher kind of being. Now we have taken even this will away from him, because the word no longer describes anything we can understand. The old word "will" now only means a kind of outcome: a personal reaction that follows automatically from a set of pressures and signals, some of them clashing and some of them working together. The will no longer "acts" or "moves"

anything by itself.... In the past, people thought that man's consciousness, his "spirit," was proof that he came from somewhere high, that he was godlike. To make himself *perfect*, he was told to pull his senses in like a tortoise pulling into its shell, to have nothing to do with earthly things, and to throw off his mortal body. Only then, they said, would the important part of him, the "pure spirit," be left. Here too we have thought the matter through better. To us, consciousness, or "the spirit," looks like a sign that the body is still somewhat imperfect. It is an experiment, a fumbling around in the dark, a misunderstanding, a burden that wastes nervous energy for no good reason. We say that nothing can be done perfectly as long as it is done consciously. The "pure spirit" is pure stupidity. Take away the nervous system and the senses, the so-called "mortal shell," and *what is left is a mistake in the math*. That is all!...

15.

In Christianity, neither morality nor religion touches real life at any point. It offers only made-up *causes*: "God," "soul," "self," "spirit," "free will," or even "unfree will." And it offers only made-up *effects*: "sin," "salvation," "grace," "punishment," "forgiveness of sins." It describes dealings between made-up *beings*: "God," "spirits," "souls." It gives a made-up *account of nature*, one that puts humans at the center and completely rejects the idea that things in nature have natural causes. It gives a made-up *psychology*: people misunderstanding themselves, and misreading their general feelings of comfort or discomfort. For example, it takes ordinary states of the nervous system and explains them using the code words of religious and moral nonsense, calling them "repentance," "pangs of conscience," "temptation by the devil," or "the presence of God." And it gives a made-up *purpose* for everything: the "kingdom of God," "the last judgment," "eternal life." This completely *invented world* should be kept apart from the world of dreams,

and the comparison makes it look much worse. Dreams at least mirror reality. This invented world twists reality, makes it look cheap, and denies it. Once the idea of "nature" had been set up as the opposite of the idea of "God," the word "natural" had to come to mean "disgusting." That whole invented world grows out of hatred of what is natural, which means hatred of what is real! It is nothing more than proof of a deep discomfort when facing reality.... *This explains everything.* Who is the only one with a reason to escape from reality by lying his way out of it? The person who suffers from it. But to suffer from reality, you must yourself be a *failed and broken* piece of reality.... When pain outweighs pleasure, that is what creates this invented morality and religion. And that same imbalance is also the very definition of *decay*....

16.

Looking critically at the *Christian idea of God* leads unavoidably to the same conclusion. A nation that still believes in itself holds on tightly to its own god. Through him it honors the things that keep it alive, its own strengths. It takes its joy in itself and its feeling of power and places them in a being it can thank. Someone who is rich wants to give from his riches. In the same way, a proud people needs a god to whom it can offer *sacrifices*.... Within these limits, religion is a way of saying thank you. A person is grateful for being alive, and for that he needs a god. A god like this must be able to help and to harm. He must be able to act as a friend or as an enemy. People are amazed by him for the good he does and also for the harm he does. But to cut away the darker side of such a god, against all nature, as if neutering him, and turn him into a god of goodness only, would go against what people naturally want. Humanity needs an evil god just as much as a good one. It does not owe its existence to mere patience and kindness.... What good would a god be who knew nothing of anger, re-

venge, envy, contempt, cunning, or violence? A god who perhaps had never felt the wild, passionate thrill of winning and of destroying? No one would understand a god like that. Why would anyone want him? It's true, though: when a nation is going downhill, when it feels its belief in its own future and its hope of freedom slipping away, when it starts to see giving in as the first thing it must do, and the virtues of giving in as ways to survive, then it *has* to remake its god. Its god then turns into a fake: timid and prim. He recommends "peace of soul," no more hatred, going easy on others, and "love" for both friend and enemy. He preaches morals without end. He sneaks into every little personal virtue. He becomes everyone's god. He becomes a private citizen, a citizen of the whole world with no homeland.... Before, he stood for a people: the strength of a people, everything in a people's soul that was aggressive and hungry for power. Now he is just *the good god*.... The truth is that gods have no other choice. *Either* they are the drive for power, and then they are national gods, *or* they are the inability to have power, and then they have to be good....

17.

Whenever the drive for power starts to weaken, in any form at all, the body weakens along with it. That is decay. The god of this decay loses his manly strengths and passions, and so he is forced to turn into a god of people whose bodies have run down, a god of the weak. Of course, the weak don't *call* themselves weak. They call themselves "the good."... You hardly need a clue to see the points in history when the made-up idea of two gods, one good and one evil, first became possible. The same instinct that pushes the lower people to shrink their own god down to "pure goodness" also pushes them to strip every good quality from the god of the people above them. They get revenge on their masters by turning their masters' god into a *devil*. The *good* god and the devil that goes with him are both misshapen births of

decay. How can we put up with the simple-mindedness of Christian theologians so much that we agree with their teaching? They say that the idea of God grew from "the god of Israel," the god of one people, into the Christian god, the heart of all goodness, and that this should be called *progress*. But even Renan says this. As if Renan had any right to be simple-minded! The truth is the exact opposite, and it is staring us in the face. Think about it. Everything that a *rising*, growing life needs has been removed from the idea of a god: everything strong, brave, commanding and proud. Step by step he has sunk down until he is just a walking stick for the tired, an emergency anchor for people who are drowning. He becomes the god of the poor, the god of sinners, the god of the sick above all. And the title of "savior" or "redeemer" is the only important thing left about him as a god. So *what* does such a change mean? What does it say when a god is *cut down* like this? True, the "kingdom of God" has grown bigger this way. Before, he had only his own people, his "chosen" people. But since then he has wandered off into foreign lands, just like his people did. He stopped settling down quietly in any one place. In the end he came to feel at home everywhere, and became the great citizen of the whole world. Now he has the "great majority" on his side, and half the earth. But this god of the "great majority," this democrat among the gods, did not become a proud pagan god. Just the opposite: he is still a Jew. He is still a god hiding in a corner, a god of all the dark nooks and cracks, of all the filthy, stinking neighborhoods of the world!... His kingdom on earth, now as always, is an underground kingdom, a kingdom below the surface, a ghetto kingdom.... And he himself is so pale, so weak, so full of decay.... Even the palest of the pale can take control of him: the gentlemen philosophers who think about things beyond the physical world, those albinos of the mind. They spun their webs around him for so long that in the end he was hypnotized. He started spinning webs himself, and turned into one more of those philosophers. After that he went back to his old job of spinning the

whole world out of his own deepest self, in the style of the philosopher Spinoza. After that he kept getting thinner and paler. He became "the ideal," became "pure spirit," became "the absolute," became "the thing as it really is."... *The collapse of a god*: he became a "thing as it really is."

18.

The Christian idea of God is one of the most rotten ideas ever set up in the world. This is God as the protector of the sick, God as a spinner of cobwebs, God as a spirit. It is probably the lowest point the idea of God ever sank to as it drained away over time, like the tide at its lowest. God went bad and became the *opposite of life*. He should have been life made glorious, life's eternal yes! Instead, in him war is declared on life, on nature, on the will to live! God becomes the formula for every insult against the "here and now" and for every lie about "the afterlife"! In him, nothingness is made into a god, and the wish for nothingness is called holy!...

19.

The strong peoples of northern Europe did not throw out this Christian god. That does not say much for their talent for religion, and not much more for their taste. They should have been able to finish off such a dying, worn-out product of decay. A curse lies on them because they were not up to the job. They made sickness, old-age weakness and contradiction a part of their instincts, and since then they have not managed to *create* any new gods. Two thousand years have come and gone, and not one single new god! Instead, this pitiful god of Christianity's dull one-god religion is still around, as if he had some built-in right to be. It is as if he were the final word and the very highest point of humanity's power to create gods, of the creative spirit in human beings! He is a mixed-up image of decay, conjured out of

emptiness, contradiction and useless fantasy. In him, all the instincts of decay, and all the cowardice and tiredness of the soul, get their stamp of approval!

20.

When I condemn Christianity, I really hope I am not being unfair to a related religion that has even more believers. I mean Buddhism. Both of them belong among the religions of belief in nothing. They are both religions of decay. But they are very different from each other in a remarkable way. The person who criticizes Christianity owes it to the scholars who study India that he can compare the two at all. Buddhism is a hundred times more realistic than Christianity. Part of what it has inherited, and still carries alive inside it, is the ability to look at problems calmly and fairly, without bias. It grew out of many long centuries of philosophical thinking. The idea of "god" had already been done away with before Buddhism came along. Buddhism is the only truly positive religion you will find in history, and this is true even of its theory of knowledge, which says strictly that we only know how things appear to us. It does not talk about a "fight against sin." Instead, giving in to how things really are, it talks about the "fight against suffering." It sets itself sharply apart from Christianity, because it has left behind the self-deception hidden inside moral ideas. In my own phrase, it stands beyond good and evil. Buddhism builds on two facts about the body, and it pays most attention to them. The first is that the senses are far too sensitive, and this shows up as a delicate, easily hurt reaction to pain. The second is an unusual amount of spiritual and mental life: people spend far too long dwelling on ideas and on logical steps, and because of this, the instinct to be a real individual self has given way to a notion of being "impersonal." (A few of my readers, the ones who try to be completely objective, will know both of these states from their own experience, just as I

do.) These bodily states caused a depression, a heavy, low mood, and Buddha tried to fight it with healthy habits. Against it he prescribed a life outdoors and a life of travel. He prescribed eating in moderation and choosing food carefully. He advised caution with alcohol and drugs, and the same caution about stirring up any strong feelings that make a person bad-tempered and heat up the blood. Finally, he said: no worrying, either about yourself or about other people. He encourages thoughts that lead to quiet contentment or to good cheer, and he finds ways to fight off other kinds of thoughts. He sees goodness, the state of being good, as something that keeps you healthy. Prayer is not part of it, and neither is harsh self-denial. There is no Kant's rule of absolute duty, and there are no strict disciplines, not even inside the walls of a monastery. (You are always free to leave.) All those things would only have made that oversensitivity I mentioned even worse. For the same reason, Buddha does not urge any fighting with unbelievers. His teaching is against nothing so much as revenge, dislike, and bitter resentment. ("Hatred never ends hatred" is the moving refrain repeated throughout all of Buddhism.) And in all this he was right. These are exactly the feelings that are unhealthy, given that his main goal was a healthy way of living. He saw a mental tiredness that already shows clearly in too much "objectivity" — that is, when a person loses interest in himself, loses his balance, and loses his healthy selfishness. He fights this with strong efforts to bring even spiritual interests back to the self. In Buddha's teaching, caring about yourself is a duty. The "one thing that matters," the question "How can you be set free from suffering?", controls and shapes the whole diet of the mind. (Here someone might remember that man from Athens who also declared war on pure "scientific" thinking for its own sake — Socrates — who also raised caring for yourself to the level of a morality.)

21.

What Buddhism needs is a very mild climate, very gentle and generous customs, and no love of war or armies. On top of that, it has to start among the upper classes, the better-educated people. The main things it wants are cheerfulness, calm, and freedom from desire, and it actually reaches them. Buddhism is not a religion where perfection is just something you hope and strive for. In Buddhism, perfection is actually the normal state.--

In Christianity, the instincts of the conquered and the oppressed rise to the top. Only the people at the very bottom look for their salvation in it. Here, the favorite pastime, the favorite cure for boredom, is talking about sin, criticizing yourself, and putting your conscience on trial. Here, the feeling that comes from power — which they call "God" — is pumped up through prayer. Here, the highest good is seen as something you can never reach yourself, something given to you as a gift, as "grace." Here, too, there is no openness. Hiding things and sitting in darkened rooms is Christian. Here the body is looked down on, and keeping clean and healthy is condemned as giving in to the senses. The church even sets itself against cleanliness. (After the Moors were driven out of Spain, the first thing the Christians ordered was to close the public baths, and there were 270 of them in the city of Córdoba alone.) Also Christian is a certain cruelty toward yourself and toward others, hatred of unbelievers, and the urge to persecute. Dark and disturbing ideas are pushed to the front. The states of mind that are most admired, and that are given the most respectable names, are close to epileptic fits. The diet is arranged so that it produces sick symptoms and overexcites the nerves. Christian, again, is a deadly hatred of the rulers of the earth, of the "noble" and high-born — together with a kind of secret competition with them. (You hand over your "body" to them; you want only your "soul"...) And Christian is all hatred of the mind, of pride, of courage, of freedom, of

the mind running free. Christian is all hatred of the senses, of the pleasure of the senses, and of joy itself....

22.

Christianity left its home ground, which was the lowest classes, the underworld of the ancient world. When it began looking for power among barbarian peoples, it no longer had to deal with worn-out people. Instead it dealt with people who were still savage inside and able to torture themselves — in short, strong people, but failed and broken ones. Here, unlike with the Buddhists, the reason people are unhappy with themselves and suffer because of themselves is not just a general sensitivity and tendency to feel pain. On the contrary, it is a huge thirst to cause pain to others, a tendency to get personal satisfaction from hostile actions and hostile ideas. To get control over barbarians, Christianity had to take on barbaric ideas and barbaric values. Examples of this are sacrificing the first-born child, drinking blood as a holy ritual, looking down on the mind and on culture, torture of every kind, whether of the body or not, and all the showy display of its worship. Buddhism is a religion for peoples who are further along in their development, for races that have become kind, gentle, and too spiritual. (Europe is not ready for it yet.) It is a call that brings them back to peace and cheerfulness, to carefully rationing their mental energy, and to a certain toughening of the body. Christianity aims to tame beasts of prey — wild, dangerous people. Its method is to make them sick. Making people weak is the Christian recipe for taming them, for "civilizing" them. Buddhism is a religion for the last, worn-out stages of a civilization. Christianity shows up before civilization has even started — and in certain situations it actually lays the very foundations of it.

23.

Buddhism, I say again, is a hundred times stricter, more honest, and more fair-minded. It no longer needs to *excuse* its pain, or its tendency to feel suffering, by explaining these things as sin. It simply says what it simply thinks: "I suffer." But to the barbarian, suffering by itself is hard to make sense of. What he needs, first of all, is an explanation of *why* he suffers. (His raw instinct tells him either to deny his suffering completely or to put up with it in silence.) This is where the word "devil" came as a gift. Humans needed an enemy who was all-powerful and terrifying. If you suffered because of an enemy like that, there was no reason to feel ashamed.

Deep down, Christianity contains several clever tricks that come from the East. First of all, it knows that it hardly matters whether something is true or not, as long as people *believe* it is true. Truth and *blind belief* are two completely separate worlds of ideas. They are almost two exact *opposites*, and the road to one is miles away from the road to the other. To understand this fully is almost enough, in the East, to *make* a person a wise man. The Brahmins, the priests of India, knew it. Plato knew it. Everyone who studies secret teachings knows it. For example, if a man gets *pleasure* from the idea that he has been saved from sin, he does *not* actually have to be sinful. He only has to *feel* sinful. But when *blind belief* is raised above everything else like this, then reason, knowledge and patient searching must be made to look bad. The road to truth becomes a forbidden road. Next, hope, in its stronger forms, pushes people to keep living far more powerfully than any joy that has actually come true. A person must be held up in his suffering by a hope so lofty that no clash with reality can crush it. It must be so lofty, in fact, that nothing that actually happens could ever *satisfy* it: a hope that reaches beyond this world. (It is exactly because hope has this power to make suffering people keep going that the Greeks saw it as the worst of all evils, the most *harmful* evil of all.

That is why it stayed behind at the very source of all evil.)[3] Then, so that *love* becomes possible, God has to become a person. And so that the lower, physical instincts can play their part, God has to be young. To excite the passion of women, a handsome saint has to appear. To excite the passion of men, there has to be a virgin. These things are needed if Christianity is going to take over a land where some love-goddess or Adonis cult has already given people an idea of what worship should look like. Demanding *chastity*, staying away from sex, makes religious feeling much stronger and more personal. It makes worship warmer, more excited, more full of soul. Love is the state in which a person most clearly sees things as they are *not*. Here the power of illusion is at its highest, and so is the power to sweeten things and make them look *glorious*. When a man is in love, he puts up with more than at any other time; he accepts anything. So the task was to invent a religion that would let people love. That way, the worst things life throws at us are overcome; people hardly even notice them. So much for the three Christian virtues: faith, hope and charity. I call them the three Christian *clever tricks*. Buddhism has developed too far, and is too grounded in plain facts, to be crafty in this kind of way.

[3] That is, in Pandora's box.

24.

Here I only just touch on the question of where Christianity *came from*. The *first* thing needed to answer it is this: Christianity can only be understood by looking at the ground it grew out of. It is *not* a rebellion against Jewish instincts. It is their unavoidable result. It is simply one more step in the frightening, powerful logic of the Jews. As the Savior himself said, "salvation is of the Jews."[4] The *second* thing to remember is this: we can still recognize the kind of person the man from Galilee really was. But it was only in its most decayed form, both

damaged and loaded down with foreign features, that this type could be used the way it has been used: as the model of the *Savior* of all mankind.

[4] John 4:22.

The Jews are the most remarkable people in the history of the world. When they faced the question "to be or not to be," they chose, with a calm that seemed almost unearthly, to survive *no matter what it cost*. And the cost was a deep *faking* of all nature, of everything natural, of all reality, of the whole inner world as well as the outer one. They set themselves *against* all the conditions under which any people up to then had been able to live, or had even been *allowed* to live. Out of themselves they created an idea that stood in direct opposition to *natural* conditions. One by one, they twisted religion, civilization, morality, history and psychology until each one became the *opposite* of its *natural meaning*. We see the same thing happen later on, in a hugely exaggerated form, but only as a copy: the Christian church, when set next to the "people of God," has no claim at all to being original. For exactly this reason, the Jews are the people who have most *shaped the fate* of the world. Their influence has so twisted human thinking on this subject that today a Christian can embrace hatred of Jews without realizing that this hatred is nothing more than the *final result of Judaism* itself.

In my book "The Genealogy of Morals," I was the first to explain, in terms of how the mind works, the ideas behind two opposite things: a morality of the strong and a morality of bitter resentment. The second one is nothing more than a product of saying no to the first. The Jewish and Christian moral system belongs to the second group, in every detail. It wanted to be able to say no to everything that stands for life rising upward, which means well-being, power, beauty, and feeling good about oneself. To do that, the instincts of bitter resent-

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ment, which here became truly brilliant, had to invent an "other" world. In that other world, accepting life looked like the most evil and disgusting thing you could imagine. When it comes to their minds and nature, the Jews are a people with the very strongest will to live. In fact, it is so strong that when they found themselves in impossible living conditions, they made a choice of their own free will, and with a deep talent for staying alive. They chose the side of all those instincts that lead to decay. They did this not as if those instincts had taken control of them, but as if they had spotted in them a power that could be used to defy "the world." The Jews are the exact opposite of people in decay. They have simply been forced to look like it. And with a skill close to the very peak of acting talent, they have managed to put themselves at the head of every movement of decay (for example, the Christianity of Saint Paul). In this way they have made those movements stronger than any group that openly says yes to life. Think of the kind of men who grab for power under Judaism and Christianity, which means the priest class. For them, decay is just a tool to get what they want. Men like this have a deep stake in making people sick. They also have a stake in mixing up the values of "good" and "bad," and "true" and "false," in a way that is not only dangerous to life but also tells lies about it.

25.

The history of Israel is extremely valuable as a typical example of an attempt to make all natural values unnatural. I point to five facts that prove this. At first, and especially in the time of the kings, Israel held the right view of things, which means the natural view. Its god, Yahweh, was a way of expressing its sense of its own power, its joy in itself, and its hopes for itself. The Jews looked to him for victory and rescue. Through him they expected nature to give them whatever they needed to survive, and above all, rain. Yahweh is the god of Israel, and

because of that, he is the god of justice. This is the reasoning of every people that holds power and feels no guilt about using it. In the religious rituals of the Jews, both sides of this pride in themselves can be clearly seen. The nation is thankful for the great destiny that let it win control over others. It is thankful for the kindly turning of the seasons, and for the good luck that comes to its herds and its crops. This way of seeing things stayed an ideal for a long time, even after it had stopped being true because of terrible blows: chaos at home, and the Assyrians attacking from outside. But the people still held on to a picture of their deepest longings: a king who was both a brave warrior and an honest judge. This picture is shown best in the typical prophet Isaiah, which means a critic and mocker of the events of his day. But every hope went unfulfilled. The old god could no longer do what he used to do. He should have been given up. But what actually happened? Just this: the idea of him was changed. The idea of him was made unnatural. That was the price that had to be paid for keeping him. Yahweh, the god of "justice," is no longer on Israel's side. He no longer stands for the nation's pride in itself. Now he is a god only on certain conditions. The common idea of this god now becomes just a weapon in the hands of religious troublemakers. They explain all happiness as a reward and all unhappiness as a punishment, depending on whether people obeyed or disobeyed him, which they call "sin." This is the most dishonest explanation you could possibly imagine. With it, they set up the idea that God rewards and punishes, and the basic ideas of "cause" and "effect" get turned upside down. Once natural cause and effect have been swept out of the world by teachings about reward and punishment, some kind of unnatural cause and effect becomes necessary. And every other kind of turning against nature follows after it. Now there is a god who demands things, instead of a god who helps, who gives advice, and who is really just a name for every lucky burst of courage and self-confidence. Morality is no longer a mirror of the conditions that lead to a healthy life and

growth for the people. It is no longer the most basic instinct for life. Instead, it has become abstract and set against life. It is a deep twisting of the imagination, like casting an "evil eye" on everything, a look that curses whatever it sees. So what is Jewish morality, and what is Christian morality? It is chance with its innocence stolen. It is unhappiness made dirty by the idea of "sin." It is well-being shown as a danger, as a "temptation." It is a sickness of the body caused by conscience eating away at people like a worm inside them.

26.

First they twisted the idea of God. Then they twisted the idea of morality. But even then, the Jewish priests and their tricks did not stop. The whole history of Israel suddenly had no value anymore: throw it out! These priests pulled off an amazing feat of faking, and a large part of the Bible is the written proof of it. With a scorn that has no equal, and going against every tradition and every real fact of history, they rewrote their people's past in religious terms. In other words, they turned it into a stupid machine for salvation, where every wrong done against Yahweh was punished and every act of devotion to him was rewarded. We would see this faking of history as something much more shameful, if thousands of years of getting used to the church's way of explaining history had not dulled our wish to be honest about history. And the philosophers back up the church: the lie of "the idea that God rewards and punishes" runs through all of philosophy, even the newest kind. What does "the idea that God rewards and punishes" actually mean? It means this: that there is something called the will of God, which decides, once and forever, what people should do and what they should not do. It means that the worth of a people, or of any single person in it, is measured by how well they obey this will of God. It means that what happens to a people, or to a single person, is controlled by this will of God, which

rewards or punishes them depending on how obedient they have been. Instead of that whole pitiful lie, here is what reality has to say. The priest is a parasite, a kind of human being who can only survive by destroying every healthy view of life. He misuses the name of God. He calls the kind of society where he himself decides what everything is worth "the kingdom of God." He calls the methods he uses to get there "the will of God." With cold, sneering calculation, he judges every people, every age and every person by how much they bow down to, or fight against, the power of the priests. Just watch him at work. In the hands of the Jewish priests, the great age of Israel was turned into an age of decline. The Exile, with its long string of disasters, was turned into a punishment for that great age, which was a time when priests did not even exist yet. The strong and completely free heroes of Israel's history were reshaped by the priests, depending on what they needed at the moment, into either miserable narrow-minded fanatics and fakes, or into men who were totally "godless." They boiled down every great event to one stupid formula: "obedient to God, or disobedient to God." Then they went one step further. The "will of God" (which really meant whatever was needed to keep the priests in power) had to be spelled out, and to do that, they needed a "revelation." To put it plainly, a huge writing fraud had to be carried out, and "holy scriptures" had to be cooked up. And so, with all the grand ceremony of the church, with days of repenting and lots of wailing over the long days of "sin" that were now over, these scriptures were officially announced. The "will of God," so the story went, had stood firm like a rock for a long time; the problem was only that people had ignored the "holy scriptures." But the "will of God" had already been shown to Moses. So what really happened? Just this: the priest had written down, once and forever and in the tiniest detail, what payments were owed to him, from the biggest to the smallest. And he did not forget the tastiest cuts of meat, because the priest loves his steaks. In short, he made it known exactly what he wanted,

and that is what "the will of God" was. From then on, everything was set up so that the priest became something nobody could do without, anywhere. At all the big natural moments of life, at birth, at marriage, in sickness, at death, and even at the "sacrifice" (which means at mealtimes), the holy parasite showed up and began to strip these moments of their natural meaning. In his own words, he "made them holy." Because notice this: every natural habit, every natural institution (the state, the courts, marriage, caring for the sick and the poor), everything that the instinct for life calls for, in short, everything that has value in itself, is made completely worthless by the priests feeding off it. In fact, it is turned into the opposite of something valuable. (Or, if you prefer, this is done by "the idea that God rewards and punishes.") Now every fact needs an official approval. A power to hand out values becomes necessary, and the only way this power can create such values is by denying nature. The priest makes nature look cheap and dirty: that is the only price at which he can exist at all. Disobeying God, which really means disobeying the priest, disobeying "the law," now gets the name "sin." And the methods laid down for "making peace with God" are, naturally, exactly the methods that put a person most firmly under the priest's control. Only he can "save" you. Looked at from the point of view of how the mind works, "sins" are something every church-run society cannot do without. They are the only dependable weapons of power. The priest lives off sins. He needs people to keep "sinning." The main rule is: "God forgives the one who repents." In plain English, that means: God forgives the one who gives in to the priest.

27.

Christianity grew out of soil so rotten that the deepest instincts of the ruling class fought against everything natural there, every natural value, every bit of reality. It grew up as a kind of fight to the death

against reality, and no one has ever outdone it at that. The "holy people" had taken on the priests' values and given priestly names to everything. With a frightening, step-by-step logic, they had thrown out everything on earth as "unholy," "worldly," and "sinful." This people then put its instinct into one final rule, a rule so logical that it destroyed itself. As Christianity, it actually denied even the last bit of reality that was left: the "holy people," the "chosen people," Jewish reality itself. This is a hugely important event. The small rebel movement that took the name of Jesus of Nazareth is simply the Jewish instinct brought back to life. In other words, it is the priestly instinct gone so far that it can no longer stand the priest as a real, existing thing. It is the discovery of a way of living even more made-up than any before it, a view of life even more unreal than the one a church organization needs. Christianity actually denies the church itself....

I cannot figure out what the rebellion was aimed at, the rebellion that Jesus is said to have led (whether that is true or false), if it was not aimed at the Jewish church. And by "church" I mean exactly what the word means today. It was a rebellion against the "good and just," against the "prophets of Israel," against the whole ranking of society. It was not against corruption, but against classes, special rights, order, and empty rules. It was a refusal to believe in "superior men," a no thrown at everything that priests and religious scholars stood for. But the ranking system this movement challenged, even if only for a moment, was like the posts a house stands on in the middle of water. Above all else, it was what kept the Jewish people safe in the middle of the "waters" around them. It was their last chance of survival. It was the final leftover piece of their life as an independent nation. To attack it was to attack the deepest national instinct, the strongest national will to live, that has ever appeared on earth. This holy rebel stirred up the people at the very bottom, the outcasts and "sinners,"

the outcasts of Judaism, to rise up against the way things were. And he did it in words that, if we can trust the Gospels, would get him sent to a prison camp in Siberia today. This man was certainly a political criminal, at least as far as anyone could be one in a community so ridiculously uninterested in politics. That is what brought him to the cross. The proof is in the sign that was put on the cross. He died for his own sins. There is not the slightest reason to believe, no matter how often people say it, that he died for the sins of others.--

28.

Whether he himself was aware of this contradiction, and whether this was in fact the only contradiction he was aware of, is a completely different question. Here, for the first time, I come to the problem of the psychology of the Savior. Let me admit, first of all, that very few books are harder for me to read than the Gospels. My difficulties are quite different from the ones that let the curious German scholarly mind win one of its most famous victories. It has been a long time since I, like every other young scholar, enjoyed the work of the unmatched Strauss,[5] picking through it with all the slow, wise effort of a fussy expert in old texts. Back then I was twenty years old. Now I am too serious for that kind of thing. Why should I care about the contradictions in "tradition"? How can anyone call pious legends "traditions" at all? The life stories of saints are the most doubtful kind of writing there is. To study them with scientific methods, when there are no other documents at all to back them up, seems to me to doom the whole project from the start. It is just learned people wasting time....

[5] David Friedrich Strauss (1808-74) wrote "The Life of Jesus" (1835-6), a very famous book in its time. Nietzsche is talking about it here.

29.

What matters to me is the kind of person Jesus really was. That kind of person might be shown in the Gospels, however damaged the picture is and however much it is buried under other characters that don't belong there. In other words, it might show through in spite of the Gospels, just as the figure of Francis of Assisi shows through in the legends about him in spite of those legends. The question is not about honest evidence of what he did, what he said, and how he really died. The question is whether we can still picture what kind of person he was, whether that has been passed down to us. Every attempt I know of to read the life story of a "soul" in the Gospels seems to me to show only a sad lack of seriousness about how people's minds work. Monsieur Renan, that showman of psychology, has added the two most unfitting ideas to this business of explaining what kind of person Jesus was: the idea of the genius and the idea of the hero. But if anything goes against the spirit of the Gospels, it is surely the idea of the hero. What the Gospels make into an instinct is the exact opposite of all heroic struggle, of any love of fighting. Here, the very inability to fight back is turned into something moral ("do not resist evil!" is the deepest sentence in the Gospels, and maybe the real key to them). That is to say: the happiness of peace, of gentleness, of being unable to be anyone's enemy. What does "the good news" mean? It means the true life, the eternal life, has been found. It is not just promised; it is here, it is inside you. It is the life that lies in love, a love that holds nothing back, shuts no one out, and keeps no distance from anyone. Everyone is a child of God. Jesus claims nothing just for himself. As a child of God, every person is equal to every other person.... Just imagine making Jesus a hero! And what a huge misunderstanding is in the word "genius"! Our whole idea of the "spiritual," the whole idea behind our civilization, would have meant nothing in the world Jesus lived in. Speaking strictly as a doctor of the

body would, a completely different word should be used here.... We all know there is a sick oversensitivity of the nerves of touch. It makes the people who suffer from it pull away from every touch and from every attempt to grab hold of something solid. Taken all the way, this kind of bodily condition turns into an instinctive hatred of all reality. It becomes an escape into what cannot be touched, into what cannot be understood. It becomes a dislike of all fixed rules, of all ideas of time and space, of everything established: customs, institutions, the church. It becomes a feeling of being at home in a world where no kind of reality is left, a purely "inner" world, a "so-called real world beyond," an "eternal" world.... "The kingdom of God is within you"....

30.

First, the instinctive hatred of reality. This comes from being extremely sensitive to pain and irritation. The sensitivity is so great that simply being "touched" becomes too much to bear, because every feeling goes far too deep.

Second, the instinctive shutting out of all dislike, all hostility, and all limits and distances in feeling. This also comes from being extremely sensitive to pain and irritation. The sensitivity is so great that any resistance, or any need to resist, is felt as unbearable agony. In other words, resisting is felt as harmful, as something the instinct to protect oneself forbids. And so such a person believes that happiness, or joy, is only possible when there is no longer any need to resist anyone or anything, no matter how evil or dangerous. Love becomes the only way left to live, the final possibility of life....

These are the two real facts of the body on which, and out of which, the teaching of salvation grew. I call them a lofty, overgrown version of the pursuit of pleasure, sprouting from thoroughly unhealthy soil. The thing most closely related to them is Epicureanism, the pagan

theory of salvation, although it had a large dose of Greek liveliness and nervous energy mixed in. Epicurus was a typical case of decay. I was the first to see that about him. The fear of pain, even of the tiniest possible pain, can lead nowhere except to a religion of love....

31.

I have already given my answer to this problem. It starts from the idea that the picture of the Savior has come down to us only in a badly twisted form. This twisting is very likely. There are many reasons why a person of that kind would not be passed down in a pure form, complete and without things added. The surroundings in which this strange figure lived must have left their marks on him. Even more marks must have been stamped on him by the history, the fate, of the early Christian communities. In fact, those communities must have looked back and decorated his picture with features that only make sense as tools for fighting and for spreading their message. The Gospels lead us into a strange and sickly world. It seems to come straight out of a Russian novel, a world where the lowest people in society, nervous illnesses, and "childlike" foolishness all meet together. That world must, in any case, have made the picture cruder. The first followers, especially, must have had to translate a way of living that could only be seen through symbols and puzzling things into their own rough terms, just to understand it at all. In their eyes, he could only become real after he had been reshaped into a familiar pattern.... The prophet, the messiah, the coming judge, the teacher of morals, the miracle worker, John the Baptist: all these labels were just more chances to misunderstand him.... Finally, let us not forget a special feature of all great worship, and especially the worship of small religious groups. It tends to wipe away all the original features and quirks of the thing being worshipped, quirks that are often painfully strange. It does not even notice them. It is a great pity that no

Dostoyevsky lived near this most interesting example of decay. I mean someone who could have felt the moving charm of such a mixture of the lofty, the sick, and the childlike. When all is said and done, he may really have been, as an example of decay, unusually complicated and full of contradictions. We should keep that possibility in mind. Still, the odds seem to be against it. If it were so, the tradition would have had to be especially accurate and fair, and we have reasons to believe the opposite. Meanwhile, there is a contradiction between two pictures. One is the peaceful preacher of the mountain, the seashore, and the fields, who looks like a new Buddha on soil very different from India's. The other is the aggressive fanatic, the deadly enemy of religious scholars and church officials, whom Renan, out of spite, praises as "the great master of irony." I myself have no doubt that most of this poison, and just as much of the cleverness, got into the idea of the Master only because Christian preaching was so heated and worked up. We all know how unscrupulous small religious groups are when they set out to turn their leader into a defense of themselves. When the early Christians needed a skillful, argumentative, combative, and spitefully clever religious scholar to take on other religious scholars, they made up a "god" who fit that need. In the same way, they did not hesitate to put certain ideas into his mouth that they needed but that clashed completely with the Gospels: "the second coming," "the last judgment," and all kinds of hopes and promises that were popular at the time.

32.

I can only say it again: I fight against every attempt to slip the fanatic into the picture of the Savior. The word Renan uses for him, "impérieux," meaning bossy and commanding, is by itself enough to cancel out the whole type. What "the good news" tells us is simply that there are no more opposites. The kingdom of heaven belongs to chil-

dren. The blind belief spoken of here is no longer a belief that has to fight. It is right here, it has been here from the start. It is a kind of childishness of the spirit that has come back again. In any case, doctors who study the body know about this kind of late and unfinished growing-up in a living creature, which comes from decay. A blind belief like this is not angry. It does not attack others, and it does not defend itself. It does not come "with the sword"; it has no idea that one day it will turn people against each other. It does not prove itself with miracles, or with rewards and promises, or with "holy writings." From beginning to end, it is its own miracle, its own reward, its own promise, its own "kingdom of God." This blind belief does not put itself into fixed words. It simply lives, and that is how it protects itself from being turned into formulas. Of course, the chance of where a person lives and how he was raised brings certain ideas to the front. In early Christianity you find only Jewish and Middle Eastern ideas. The idea of eating and drinking at the Last Supper is one of these, and like everything else Jewish, the church has badly twisted it. But we must be careful not to see in all this anything more than a language of symbols, a way of using signs, a chance to speak in stories that stand for something else. This man was against taking things as plain reality, and he could only speak at all on the understanding that no word was meant literally. If he had been born among Hindus, he would have used the ideas of Sankhya. If he had been born among the Chinese, he would have used the ideas of Lao-tse. And either way, it would have made no difference to him. If we are a little loose with words, we could actually call Jesus a "free thinker." He does not care at all about what is fixed and settled. The written word kills; whatever is fixed and settled kills. He sees "life" as something you experience, in a way only he understands, and in his mind this stands against every kind of word, formula, law, belief and official teaching. He talks only about things inside a person. "Life" or "truth" or "light" is his word for what is deepest inside. In his eyes, everything else, all of reality, all of

nature, even language itself, matters only as a sign, as a picture standing for something else. Here it is extremely important not to be misled by the traps set by Christian prejudices, or rather church prejudices. A way of speaking in symbols like this, the purest example there is, stands outside all religion, all ideas of worship, all history, all science, all experience of the world, all knowledge, all politics, all study of the mind, all books, all art. His "wisdom" is exactly a pure ignorance of all these things. He has never even heard of culture. He does not need to fight against it. He does not even reject it. The same goes for the state, for the whole middle-class social order, for work, for war. He has no reason to reject "the world," because he knows nothing of what the church means by "the world." Rejecting things is exactly what he cannot do. In the same way, he has no ability to argue. He does not believe that a point of belief, a "truth," can be shown by proofs. His proofs are inner "lights," private feelings of happiness and of being at peace with himself, simple cases of "'it works, so it's true.'" A teaching like this cannot argue against anything. It does not know that other teachings exist, or could exist, and it is completely unable to imagine anything against it. If it ever does meet something like that, it feels truly sorry for the other side's "blindness," because it alone has the "light." But it does not argue back.

[6] The German text has the word "Semiotik," the study of signs, but Nietzsche probably meant "Semantik," the study of meaning.

[7] One of the six great schools of Hindu philosophy.

[8] The man said to have founded Taoism.

[9] Nietzsche's name for someone who accepts his own philosophy.

[10] That is, the strict wording of the law, which was the main thing Jesus attacked in his early preaching.

[11] This points to the "pure ignorance" (in German, "reine Thorheit") of Parsifal, the innocent hero of Wagner's opera.

33.

In the whole way the "Gospels" picture the human mind, the ideas of guilt and punishment are missing, and so is the idea of reward. "Sin," meaning anything that puts a gap between God and human beings, is done away with. That is exactly what "the good news" is. Endless happiness is not just promised, and it does not come with conditions. It is seen as the only thing that is real. Everything else is just signs that help us talk about it.

The results of this way of seeing things show up in a new way of living, the special way of life of the Gospels. What sets the Christian apart is not a "belief." He stands out because he acts in a different way; he behaves differently. He does not fight back against those who are against him, not with words and not in his heart. He makes no difference between strangers and his own people, between Jews and non-Jews. (In the Bible, "neighbor" of course means a fellow believer, a fellow Jew.) He is angry with no one, and he looks down on no one. He does not go to the courts for justice, and he does not obey their orders ("Do not swear at all"). He never, for any reason, divorces his wife, not even when he has proof that she has cheated on him. And beneath all of this lies one single principle. All of it comes from one single instinct.

[12] Matthew, chapter 5, verse 34.

The life of the Savior was simply living out this way of life, and so was his death. He no longer needed any set words or ceremonies in his dealings with God, not even prayer. He had thrown out the whole Jewish teaching about being sorry for your sins and making up for them. He knew that only by a way of living could a person feel "di-

vine," "blessed," "full of the good news," a "child of God." The way to God is not through "being sorry," and not through "prayer and forgiveness." Only the Gospel way of living leads to God. In fact, that way of living is itself "God!" What the Gospels got rid of was the Jewish part in the ideas of "sin," "forgiveness of sin," "blind belief," and "being saved by blind belief." The whole official church teaching of the Jews was rejected by "the good news."

There is a deep instinct that tells the Christian how to live so that he feels he is "in heaven" and "will never die," even though he has many reasons to feel he is not "in heaven." This instinct is the only real thing, in terms of the mind, behind the idea of "salvation." It is a new way of living, not a new blind belief.

34.

If I understand anything at all about this great teacher who spoke in symbols, it is this. He thought that only things felt on the inside were real, were "truths." Everything else, everything in nature, in time, in space and in history, he saw only as signs, as raw material for stories with a lesson. The idea of "the Son of God" does not mean a real person in history, one single, separate individual. It means an "eternal" fact, a symbol of an inner state, freed from the idea of time. The same is true, and even more so, of the God of this typical speaker in symbols, of the "kingdom of God," and of being "a child of God." Nothing could be less Christian than the crude ideas of the church: God as a person, a "kingdom of God" that will come someday, a "kingdom of heaven" somewhere beyond, and a "son of God" as the second person of the Trinity. All this, if you'll forgive me for saying so, is like shoving your fist into the eye of the Gospels, and what an eye it is! It shows a disrespect for symbols so huge that it amounts to mocking all of history.... And yet it is clear enough what the symbols "Father" and "Son" mean, though of course not everyone sees it. The word "Son"

means stepping into the feeling that everything has been changed, a feeling of deep happiness. And "Father" means that feeling itself: the sense of eternity and of perfection. I am ashamed to remind you what the church has made of this symbolism. Didn't it put a story like the Greek myth of Amphitryon right at the doorway of Christian "blind belief"? And on top of that, a teaching about a "conception without sin"?... And by doing that, it took away the purity from conception itself, making the ordinary way children are made seem dirty.

[13] Amphitryon was the son of Alcaeus, the King of Tiryns. His wife was Alcmene. While he was away, the god Zeus visited her, and she gave birth to Heracles.

The "kingdom of heaven" is a condition of the heart. It is not something that will come "beyond the world" or "after death." The whole idea of natural death is missing from the Gospels. Death is not a bridge, not a crossing over. It is missing because it belongs to a completely different world, a world that only seems real and is useful only as a symbol. The "hour of death" is not a Christian idea. For the bringer of good news, "hours," time, the life of the body and its crises simply do not exist.... The "kingdom of God" is not something people wait for. It had no yesterday and it has no day after tomorrow. It is not going to arrive in some "thousand-year age" to come. It is an experience of the heart. It is everywhere, and it is nowhere....

35.

This "bringer of the good news" died the same way he lived and taught. He did not die to "save mankind." He died to show people how to live. What he left behind for people was a way of life: the way he behaved in front of the judges, in front of the officers, in front of the people accusing him. The way he behaved on the cross. He does not fight back. He does not stand up for his rights. He makes no at-

tempt to avoid the harshest punishment. More than that, he invites it.... And he prays, suffers and loves together with the very people who do him harm, and from within them.... Not to defend yourself, not to show anger, not to blame anyone.... Instead, to give in even to the Evil One, and to love him....

36.

We free thinkers are the first people to have what it takes to understand what nineteen hundred years have misunderstood. What we have is that instinct and passion for honesty which fights the "sacred lie" even harder than it fights all other lies.... People were unbelievably far from our kindly and careful neutrality, from that training of the mind which is the only thing that makes it possible to solve such strange and delicate puzzles. What people always looked for, with shameless selfishness, was their own advantage in it. They built the church out of the rejection of the Gospels....

If someone were looking for signs that a mocking god was at work in the great drama of life, he would find a big clue in that enormous question mark called Christianity. People kneel before the exact opposite of what started the Gospels, of what they meant, of what was their law. In the idea of the "church," the very things are declared holy that the "bringer of the good news" thought were beneath him and behind him. You could not find a better example than this of history's great joke.

37.

Our age is proud of its sense of history. So how could it fool itself into believing that Christianity began with the crude fairy tale of the miracle-worker and Savior, and that everything spiritual and symbolic in it only came later? It is the exact opposite. The whole history of

Christianity, from the death on the cross onward, is the history of a misunderstanding of an original symbolism, a misunderstanding that kept getting clumsier. Every time Christianity spread to bigger and rougher crowds of people, who were even less able to grasp the ideas it was born from, it had to be made more and more crude and savage. It soaked up the teachings and rituals of all the underground religions of the Roman Empire, and the nonsense produced by every kind of sick thinking. It was Christianity's fate that its belief had to become just as sick, as low and as crude as the needs it had to serve, which were sick, low and crude too. In the end, a sick kind of savagery rises up to power in the form of the church. The church is the living form of deadly hatred toward all honesty, all greatness of soul, all training of the mind, and all natural and kind humanity. Christian values against noble values: it is only we, we free thinkers, who have brought back this greatest of all clashes between values!...

38.

I can't help letting out a sigh at this point. There are days when a feeling darker than the darkest sadness comes over me: contempt for human beings. Let me make it perfectly clear what I despise and whom I despise. It is modern people, the people I am unlucky enough to be living alongside. Modern people: their foul breath is choking me! When it comes to the past, I am very tolerant, like everyone who truly understands. That means I hold myself back generously. With grim care, I walk through whole thousands of years of this madhouse of a world, whether you call it "Christianity," "Christian belief," or the "Christian church." I am careful not to blame humanity for its fits of madness. But my feeling changes, and bursts out in a way I can't stop, the moment I reach modern times, our own times. Our age knows better. What used to be simply sick has now become shameful. It is shameful to be a Christian today. And this is where my disgust be-

gins. I look around me. Not a single word is left of what people once called "truth." We can't even stand to hear a priest say that word anymore. Even a person who claims only the smallest bit of honesty must know this: when a theologian, a priest, or a pope speaks today, he is not just mistaken, he is actually lying. And he can no longer excuse his lie by saying he was "innocent" or "didn't know." The priest knows, just as everyone knows, that there is no "God" anymore, no "sinner," no "Savior." He knows that "free will" and "the idea that God rewards and punishes" are lies. Serious thinking, and the deep self-discipline of the mind, do not let anyone pretend he does not know this. All the ideas of the church are now seen for what they are: the worst fakes ever made, invented to drag down nature and everything natural that has value. The priest himself is seen as he really is: the most dangerous kind of parasite, the poisonous spider of the whole world. We know, our conscience now knows, what all those dark inventions of the priest and the church have really been worth, and what purposes they have served. They have dragged humanity down into a state of making itself filthy, a sight that fills you with disgust. The ideas of "the other world," "the Last Judgment," "the immortality of the soul," and the "soul" itself: they are all just tools of torture, systems of cruelty, by which the priest becomes the master and stays the master. Everyone knows this, and yet things stay the same as before. What has happened to the last bit of decent feeling and self-respect, when our politicians, who are otherwise a bold, rule-breaking sort of people and completely anti-Christian in what they do, now call themselves Christians and go up to take communion? Picture a prince at the head of his armies, a splendid picture of the selfishness and pride of his people, and yet he admits, without any shame at all, that he is a Christian! So then, what does Christianity reject? What does it call "the world"? Being a soldier, being a judge, being a patriot. Defending yourself. Guarding your honor. Wanting what is good for you. Being proud. Every everyday action, every instinct, every judg-

ment of value that turns into a deed, is now anti-Christian. What a monster of lies modern people must be, to call themselves Christians anyway, and without shame!

39.

Let me go back a little and tell you the real history of Christianity. The very word "Christianity" is a misunderstanding. Deep down, there was only one Christian, and he died on the cross. The "Gospels," the good news, died on the cross. What people called the "Gospels" from that moment on was the exact opposite of the way he had lived. It was "bad tidings," bad news.[14] It is a mistake so big it becomes nonsense to think that "blind belief," and especially blind belief in being saved through Christ, is the mark of a Christian. Only the Christian way of living, the life actually lived by the man who died on the cross, is Christian. Even today a life like that is still possible, and for certain people it is even necessary. Real, original Christianity will always be possible, in every age. It is not about belief, but about actions. Above all, it is about not doing certain things, about a different way of being. Things that happen in the mind, a kind of belief, accepting something as true, for example: as every psychologist knows, these things are worth almost nothing, they are fifth-rate, compared to the instincts. Strictly speaking, the whole idea that our thoughts are what cause our actions is false. If you reduce being a Christian, the Christian condition, to accepting something as true, to something that just happens in your mind, you are describing the very opposite of Christianity. In fact, there are no Christians. The "Christian," the person who has passed as a Christian for two thousand years, is simply someone fooling himself about his own mind. Look closely and you see that, despite all his "blind belief," he has been ruled only by his instincts, and what instincts they are! In every age, for example in the case of Luther, "blind belief" has been nothing more than a cloak, a pretense,

a curtain behind which the instincts played their game. It has been a clever way of not seeing that certain instincts were in control. I have already called "blind belief" the special Christian form of cleverness: people always talk about their "belief," but they act according to their instincts. In the Christian's world of ideas, nothing even touches reality. On the contrary, you can see that an instinctive hatred of reality is the driving force, the only driving force, at the bottom of Christianity. What follows from that? That even here, in matters of the mind, there is a deep error. That is, an error at the very foundations, an error in the core of the thing. Take away one idea and put something truly real in its place, and the whole of Christianity crumbles into nothing! Seen calmly, this is the strangest thing that has ever existed: a religion that not only rests on errors, but is inventive and clever only at making up harmful errors, errors that poison life and the heart. It remains a show worth watching for the gods, for those gods who are also philosophers, the kind I have met, for example, in the famous conversations on the island of Naxos. Once their disgust passes (and ours too!), they will be grateful for the show the Christians have put on. Maybe it is only because of this odd spectacle that the miserable little planet called Earth is worth a glance from an all-powerful being, a sign of divine interest. So let's not underrate the Christians. The Christian, so false that he becomes innocent, stands far above the ape. When it comes to Christians, a well-known theory about humans descending from apes turns out to be just a polite compliment.

[14] This is how it appears in the original text. It is one of the many words Nietzsche made up, clearly based on "Evangelium," the German word for "gospel," which means "good news." His word means "bad news."

40.

The fate of the Gospels was settled by a death. It all hung on the "cross." It was only that death, unexpected and shameful, and only the cross, which was usually kept for the lowest of the low. It was only this shocking contradiction that forced the disciples to face the real riddle: "Who was he? What was he?" They felt dismay. They felt deeply insulted and hurt. They suspected that such a death might prove their cause wrong. They asked the terrible question: "Why did it have to happen this way?" This state of mind is all too easy to understand. For them, everything had to be explained as necessary. Everything had to have a meaning, a reason, the highest kind of reason. When a disciple loves his master, he cannot accept that anything happened by chance. Only then did the deep pit of doubt open up: "Who put him to death? Who was his natural enemy?" This question struck like lightning. The answer was: the Jewish religion in power, its ruling class. From that moment, the disciples found themselves rebelling against the established order. And they began to see Jesus as someone who had rebelled against the established order too. Until then, this fighting side of his character, this side that said no and acted against things, had been missing. More than that, he had seemed to be the very opposite. Clearly, the little group had not understood the most important thing of all. They missed the example his way of dying gave: being free of all bitter resentment and rising above it. That shows how little they understood him at all! All that Jesus could hope to achieve by his death itself was to give the strongest possible proof, or example, of his teachings, in the most public way. But his disciples were very far from forgiving his death, even though forgiving it would have fit the Gospels perfectly. Nor were they ready to offer themselves up for a similar death, with a gentle, calm, and peaceful heart. On the contrary, they were now gripped by the feeling most opposed to the Gospels: revenge. It

seemed impossible to them that their cause should die along with him. So "payback" and "judgment" became necessary. (And yet what could be further from the Gospels than "payback," "punishment," and "sitting in judgment"!) Once again, the common Jewish belief in a coming messiah, a promised rescuer, moved to the front. Everyone's attention was fixed on a moment in history: the "kingdom of God" is going to come, and with it judgment on his enemies. But all of this was a complete misunderstanding. Imagine treating the "kingdom of God" as a final scene at the end of time, as nothing but a promise! In fact, the Gospels had been the living form, the fulfillment, the making-real of this "kingdom of God." Only now did the familiar scorn and bitterness against the Pharisees and religious scholars start to show up in the picture of the Master. In this way he was turned into a Pharisee and religious scholar himself! On the other hand, these completely unbalanced people worshipped him in a wild way, and they could no longer stand the Gospel teaching of Jesus that all people have an equal right to be children of God. Their revenge took the form of raising Jesus up to an extreme height, and so setting him apart from themselves. It was just like what the Jews had done in earlier times: to get revenge on their enemies, they separated themselves from their God and placed him high above. The One God and the Only Son of God: both were products of bitter resentment.

41.

And from then on, a ridiculous problem came up: "How could God allow it!" The confused minds of the little group came up with an answer that was frightening in how ridiculous it was: God gave his son as a sacrifice so that sins could be forgiven. And with that, the gospels were finished at once! A sacrifice for sin, and in its most disgusting and savage form: the sacrifice of the innocent for the sins of the guilty! What horrible paganism! Jesus himself had gotten rid of the

very idea of "guilt." He denied that there was any gap set between God and humans. He lived this oneness between God and humans, and that was exactly his "good news." And not as a special privilege for a few! From then on, the picture of the Savior was spoiled, bit by bit. It was spoiled by the teaching of judgment and of the second coming, the teaching that his death was a sacrifice, and the teaching of the resurrection. Through these, the whole idea of "blessedness," which was the whole and only reality of the gospels, is tricked away, in favor of a life after death! Saint Paul, with the nerve of a rabbi that shows in everything he does, gave that idea, that shameful idea, the look of logic, like this: "If Christ did not rise from the dead, then all our blind belief is useless!" And at once, out of the Gospels came the most contemptible of all promises that can never be kept: the shameless teaching that each person lives on forever. Saint Paul even preached it as a reward.

42.

Now we start to see exactly what it was that ended with the death on the cross. It was a new and completely original attempt to start a Buddhist-like peace movement, and so to create happiness on earth. This happiness would be real, not just promised. Because, as I have already pointed out, this is still the basic difference between the two religions of decay: Buddhism promises nothing, but actually delivers. Christianity promises everything, but delivers nothing. Right on the heels of the good news came the worst news you could imagine: the news of Saint Paul. Saint Paul was the living opposite of the bringer of good news. He stands for a genius for hatred, a vision built on hatred, the merciless logic of hatred. What has this bringer of bad news not sacrificed to hatred! Above all, he sacrificed the Savior: he nailed him to his own cross, the cross Saint Paul himself built. The life, the example, the teaching, and the death of Christ, the meaning and the

rule of the whole gospels: nothing of all this was left once that forger, driven by hatred, had bent it to his own purposes. Certainly not reality, and certainly not the truth of history! Once again the Jewish priest's instinct committed the same old master crime against history. He simply crossed out Christianity's yesterday and the day before, and made up his own story of how Christianity began. Going even further, he faked the history of Israel too, so that it became nothing but an opening act for his own achievement. Suddenly, it seemed, all the prophets had been talking about his "Savior." Later on the church even faked the history of all humankind, to turn it into an opening act for Christianity. The figure of the Savior, his teaching, his way of life, his death, the meaning of his death, even what came after his death: nothing was left untouched, and nothing stayed even slightly connected to reality. Saint Paul simply moved the center of weight of that whole life to a place behind this life, beyond it: into the lie of the "risen" Jesus. Deep down, he had no use for the Savior's life. What he needed was the death on the cross, and something more on top of it. Saint Paul came from a place at the very heart of Stoic philosophy and learning. So when he turns a hallucination into proof that the Savior rose from the dead, or when he claims he had that hallucination himself, it would be truly foolish for a student of the mind to see anything honest in it, or to believe his story. Saint Paul wanted the goal, and therefore he also wanted whatever means would get him there. What he didn't believe himself was swallowed easily enough by the fools he spread his teaching among. What he wanted was power. In Saint Paul, the priest once again reached out to grab power. He only had use for ideas, teachings and symbols that helped to rule over the masses like a tyrant and to organize crowds. What was the only part of Christianity that Mohammed later borrowed? Saint Paul's invention, his tool for setting up the rule of priests and organizing the crowd: the belief that the soul lives forever, which means the teaching of "judgment" after death.

43.

When you put the center of weight of life not in life itself, but in the afterlife, which means in nothing at all, then you have taken away life's center completely. The huge lie that each person lives forever destroys all reason and all natural instinct. From then on, everything in our instincts that is good for us, that helps life grow and protects the future, becomes something to be suspicious of. To live in such a way that life no longer has any meaning: that now becomes the "meaning" of life. Why care about your community? Why be proud of your family line and your ancestors? Why work together, trust one another, or care about the common good and try to serve it? All of these are just so many "temptations," so many wanderings off the "straight path." "Only one thing is necessary," they say. And what do they claim? That every person, because he has an "immortal soul," is just as good as every other person. That in an endless universe of things, the "salvation" of every single person can claim to matter forever. That small-minded fanatics, three-quarters crazy, can believe the laws of nature are constantly being switched off just for them. You cannot pour enough scorn on this blowing up of every kind of selfishness into something endless and shameless. And yet Christianity owes its victory to exactly this pathetic flattery of personal vanity. That is how it drew to its side all the failed and broken, the unhappy, the ones who had fallen on hard times, all the trash and leftovers of humanity. The "salvation of the soul" means, in plain words: "the world revolves around me." The poisonous teaching of "equal rights for all" has been spread as a Christian principle. From the hidden corners of bad instincts, Christianity has waged a deadly war against every feeling of respect and of distance between one person and another. And that feeling is the first requirement for every step upward, for every advance of civilization. Out of the bitter resentment of the masses, Christianity has made its main weapons against us, against

everything noble, joyful and bold on earth, against our happiness on earth. Granting "immortality" to every ordinary Tom, Dick and Harry was the greatest and most vicious insult ever done to noble humanity. And let's not underestimate the deadly effect Christianity has had, even on politics! These days nobody has the courage anymore to claim special rights, the right to rule, or a feeling of honorable pride in himself and in his equals, that is, the feeling of rank between people. Our politics is sick from this lack of courage! The noble, aristocratic way of thinking has been worn away by the lie that all souls are equal. And if the belief in the "privileges of the majority" causes revolutions, and will keep causing them, then let's have no doubt: it is Christianity, and Christian values, that turn every revolution into a festival of blood and crime! Christianity is a revolt of all the creatures that crawl on the ground against everything that stands high. The gospel of the "lowly" drags everything down low.

44.

The gospels are priceless as evidence of the rot that had already set in deep *inside* the earliest Christian community. What Saint Paul later carried through to its end, with the cold, cynical logic of a rabbi, was really just a process of decay that had started with the death of the Savior. You cannot read these gospels too carefully; there are traps hidden behind every word. I admit it, and I hope no one will hold it against me: this is exactly why they give a student of the human mind a first-class delight. They are the *opposite* of simple, innocent corruption. They are refinement at its very finest, an artistic masterpiece of corruption of the mind. In fact, the gospels stand alone. The Bible as a whole cannot be compared to them. Here we are among Jews. That is the *first* thing to keep in mind if we don't want to lose track of the matter. Here is a real genius for creating an illusion of personal "holiness," unmatched anywhere else, whether in books or in people. Here

lying in words and in poses is raised to the level of an *art*. None of this is an accident, the lucky gift of one gifted person, or some freak of nature. What is responsible is *race*. In Christianity, the whole of Judaism shows itself as the art of making up sacred lies. And there, after many centuries of serious Jewish training and hard practice of Jewish technique, the craft reaches true mastery. The Christian, that final and highest form of lying, is the Jew all over again. He is the Jew *three times over*. Underneath it all is a will to use only those ideas, symbols and poses that fit the priest's way of doing things, and an instinctive rejection of every *other* way of thinking, every other way of judging what is valuable and useful. This is not just tradition; it is *inheritance*. Only because it is inherited can it work with the force of nature. All of humanity, even the best minds of the best ages (with one exception, who was perhaps hardly human), has let itself be fooled. People have read the gospels as a *book of innocence*. That is surely no small sign of how skillfully the trick was pulled off. Of course, if we could actually *see* these amazing fanatics and fake saints, even for a moment, the comedy would be over. And it is exactly because *I* cannot read a single word of theirs without seeing them strike their poses that *I am finished with them*. I simply cannot stand the way they roll their eyes up toward heaven. Luckily, for most people books are just *literature*. Let us not be fooled. They say "judge not," and yet they send to hell anyone who gets in their way. By letting God do the judging, they are judging for themselves. By praising God, they are praising themselves. They *demand* that everyone show the virtues they themselves happen to be capable of, and even more, the virtues they *need* in order to stay on top. And while doing so they put on the grand look of men fighting for virtue, men waging a war so that virtue may win. "We live, we die, we sacrifice ourselves *for the good*" (or "for the truth," "for the light," "for the kingdom of God"). In reality, they are simply doing what they cannot help doing. Like hypocrites, they are forced to be sneaky, to hide in corners, to creep along in the shadows.

So they turn what they must do into a *duty*. They explain their humble lives as a matter of duty, and that humility then becomes just one more proof of how holy they are. Ah, that humble, pure, kind-hearted brand of fraud! "Virtue itself will speak up for us." You can read the gospels as books of *moral* seduction. These small-minded people latch onto morality, because they know what morality is good for! Morality is the best tool there is for leading people around *by the nose*! The truth is that the deliberate arrogance of people who think they are chosen hides itself here as modesty. That is how *they*, the "community," the "good and righteous," place themselves once and for all on one side, the side of "the truth," and put the rest of humanity, "the world," on the other side. In *that* we see the deadliest kind of madness of self-importance the earth has ever seen. Little misfits, fanatics and liars began to claim that the ideas of "God," "the truth," "the light," "the spirit," "love," "wisdom" and "life" belonged only to them, as if these words simply meant themselves. In this way they tried to fence themselves off from the "world." Little super-Jews, ready for some sort of madhouse, flipped values around to suit *their* ideas, as if the Christian were the meaning, the salt, the measuring stick, and even the *final judgment* of everyone else. This whole disaster was only possible because a similar madness of self-importance already existed in the world, related to this one by race: namely, the *Jewish* one. Once a deep split opened up between the Jews and the Jewish Christians, the Jewish Christians had no choice but to use the same survival tricks that the Jewish instinct had invented, and even to use them *against* the Jews themselves, while the Jews had only used them against non-Jews. The Christian is simply a Jew of the "reformed" denomination.

45.

Here are a few examples of the kind of thing these small-minded people got into their heads, and what they *put into the mouth* of the Master: the pure, undiluted creed of "beautiful souls."

"And if anyone will not welcome you or listen to you, when you leave that place, shake the dust off your feet as a sign against them. I tell you the truth, on the day of judgment it will be easier for Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town" (Mark 6:11). How very much like *good news*!

"And if anyone causes one of *these* little ones who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a millstone hung around his neck and be thrown into the sea" (Mark 9:42). How very much like *good news*!

"And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell, where the worm never dies and the fire is never put out" (Mark 9:47). It is not exactly the eye that is meant here...

[15] Nietzsche adds verse 48 to this without saying so.

"I tell you the truth, some of the people standing here will not die before they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1). Well *lied*, lion!

[16] This plays on the line "Well roared, Lion!" spoken by Demetrius in Act 5, Scene 1 of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The lion, of course, is the well-known Christian symbol for Mark.

"Whoever wants to follow me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. *For*..." (*A psychologist's note:* Christian morality is dis-

proved by its own "fors," by the reasons it gives. Its reasons speak against it, and that is exactly what makes it Christian.) Mark 8:34.

"Do not judge others, so that you will not be judged. Whatever measure you use on others will be used on you in return." (Matthew 7, verse 1.[17]) What an idea of fairness, of a "fair" judge!...

[17] Nietzsche also quotes part of verse 2.

"If you love only the people who love you, what reward will you get? Don't even the tax collectors do that? And if you greet only your own brothers, what are you doing that is more than others do? Don't even the tax collectors do that?" (Matthew 5, verse 46.[18]) Here is the rule behind "Christian love": it demands to be well paid in the end....

[18] The quotation also includes verse 47.

"But if you do not forgive other people their wrongs, your Father will not forgive your wrongs either." (Matthew 6, verse 15.) This makes the so-called "father" look very bad...

"But first look for the kingdom of God and his goodness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6, verse 33.) All these things means food, clothes, everything you need to live. That is a mistake, to put it mildly.... A little before this, God even shows up as a tailor, at least in some cases....

"Be glad on that day, and jump for joy, because your reward in heaven is great. That is how their fathers treated the prophets too." (Luke 6, verse 23.) What a shameless crowd! They compare themselves to the prophets....

"Don't you know that you are God's temple, and that God's spirit lives in you? If anyone damages God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple." (Saint Paul, 1

Corinthians 3, verse 16.[19]) For talk like that, you cannot have enough contempt....

[19] And verse 17.

"Don't you know that God's holy people will judge the world? And if you are going to judge the world, aren't you fit to judge the smallest matters?" (Saint Paul, 1 Corinthians 6, verse 2.) Sadly, this is not just the talk of a madman.... This terrible fraud then goes on: "Don't you know that we will judge angels? So how much more can we judge the things of this life?"...

"Hasn't God made worldly knowledge look foolish? Since the world, with all its cleverness, did not come to know God through God's wisdom, God decided to save those who believe through the foolishness of preaching.... Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many came from noble families when you were called. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly and despised things of the world, yes, even things that are nothing, to wipe out the things that are something, so that no human being could boast before him." (Saint Paul, 1 Corinthians 1, verses 20 and following.[20]) To understand this passage, which is a perfect example of the way of thinking behind every morality of the outcasts, you should read the first part of my book "Genealogy of Morals." There, for the first time, I showed the conflict between the morality of the strong and a morality born of bitter resentment and of a desire for revenge that has no power to act. Saint Paul was the greatest of all the preachers of revenge....

[20] Verses 20, 21, 26, 27, 28, 29.

46.

So what follows from all this? It follows that you had better put on gloves before you read the New Testament. There is so much filth in it that this is a very good idea. You would no more choose the "early Christians" as your companions than you would choose Polish Jews. It is not that you need to go looking for a reason to object to them.... Neither of them smells pleasant. I have searched the New Testament for a single likable touch, and I found none. Nothing in it is free, kind, open-hearted or honest. In it, humanity does not even take the first step upward, because the instinct for cleanliness is missing.... Only bad instincts are there, and there is not even the courage to own up to those bad instincts. It is all cowardice. It is all a closing of the eyes, a lying to oneself. Every other book seems clean once you have read the New Testament. For example, right after reading Saint Paul, I happily picked up Petronius, that most charming and naughty of mockers. You could say of him what Domenico Boccaccio wrote about Cesare Borgia to the Duke of Parma: "è tutto festo," meaning "he is all celebration." He is forever healthy, forever cheerful and sound.... These small-minded, narrow believers make a huge mistake in their thinking. They attack things, but everything they attack is made more honorable by that attack. Anyone who is attacked by an "early Christian" is surely not dirtied by it.... In fact, the opposite is true: it is an honor to have an "early Christian" as your enemy. You cannot read the New Testament without coming to admire whatever it insults. And that is not even counting the "worldly knowledge" that a shameless windbag tries to get rid of "by the foolishness of preaching."... Even the scribes and Pharisees gain from being opposed like this. They must surely have been worth something to have been hated in such an indecent way. Hypocrisy! As if the "early Christians" had any right to throw that charge at anyone! After all, the scribes and Pharisees were the privileged ones, and that was enough. The hatred of the outcasts needed

no other excuse. The "early Christian," and I fear also the "last Christian," whom I may even live to see, is deep down, by instinct, a rebel against every kind of privilege. He lives and fights forever for "equal rights."... Strictly speaking, he has no other choice. When a man claims that he personally stands for the "chosen of God," or that he is a "temple of God," or a "judge of the angels," then every other way of measuring worth becomes simply "worldly," and so evil in itself. That goes for any standard based on honesty, on intelligence, on courage and pride, or on beauty and a free heart.... The lesson is this: every word that comes out of the mouth of an "early Christian" is a lie, and every act he does is dishonest by instinct. All his values and all his goals are harmful. But whoever he hates, and whatever he hates, has real value.... So the Christian, and especially the Christian priest, works as a measuring stick for values: whatever he hates is worth something.

Do I need to add that in the whole New Testament there is only one single figure who deserves respect? It is Pilate, the Roman governor. To take a Jewish squabble seriously was simply beyond him. One Jew more or one Jew less, what did it matter?... A Roman's noble contempt, as he watched the word "truth" being shamelessly abused in front of him, gave the New Testament the only saying in it that is worth anything. And that one saying is both a criticism of the whole book and its destruction: "What is truth?..."

47.

What sets us apart is not that we cannot find God, whether in history, or in nature, or behind nature. What sets us apart is how we see the thing that people have honored as God. We do not see it as "divine." We see it as pitiful, as ridiculous, as harmful. We see it not just as a mistake, but as a crime against life.... We deny that God is God.... If anyone were to actually show us this Christian God, we would be

even less willing to believe in him. To put it in a short formula, in Latin: "deus, qualem Paulus creavit, dei negatio," which means "the kind of God that Saint Paul created is the denial of God." A religion like Christianity does not touch reality at a single point, and it falls apart the moment reality claims its rights anywhere. So such a religion must always be the deadly enemy of "worldly knowledge," which means the enemy of science. It will call "good" anything that helps to poison, slander and run down all mental discipline, all clear thinking, all strictness when it comes to being honest with oneself in matters of the mind, and all noble calm and freedom of the mind. "Blind belief," when it is made into a command, forbids science. In practice, it means lying at any cost.... Saint Paul knew very well that lying, that is, "blind belief," was necessary. Later the church took this lesson over from Saint Paul. The God that Saint Paul invented for himself is a God who "made worldly knowledge look foolish," especially the two great enemies of superstition: careful reading of texts and medicine. In truth, this God only shows that Saint Paul himself was firmly set on doing exactly that. To call your own will "God," to call it the "Torah," the holy law, is something deeply Jewish. Saint Paul wants to get rid of "worldly knowledge." His enemies are the good scholars of careful reading and the good doctors of the school of Alexandria, and he wages his war against them. In fact, nobody can be a scholar of careful reading or a doctor without also being the Antichrist. That is because, as a careful reader, a person sees what lies behind the "holy books." And as a doctor, a person sees what lies behind the bodily decline of the typical Christian. The doctor says, "incurable." The careful reader says, "fraud."...

48.

Has anyone ever really understood the famous story at the start of the Bible, the story of God's deadly fear of science?... No, in fact, nobody

has understood it. This book, which is the priest's book above all others, begins, as it should, with the priest's great inner problem. The priest faces only one great danger. Therefore, "God" faces only one great danger too.

The old God, who is all "spirit," all high priest, all perfect, is taking a stroll in his garden. He is bored, and he is trying to pass the time. Even gods fight boredom and lose.[21] So what does he do? He creates man, because man is fun to watch. But then he notices that man is bored too. God feels endless pity for the one kind of misery that creeps into every paradise, so he quickly creates other animals. That was God's first mistake. Man did not find these other animals entertaining. He wanted to rule over them; he did not want to be an "animal" himself. So God created woman. And by doing that, he did put an end to boredom, but he also brought a lot of other things into the world! Woman was God's second mistake. "Woman, deep down, is a snake, Eve": every priest knows that. "Every evil in the world comes from woman": every priest knows that too. So it follows that she is also to blame for science, for knowledge. It was through woman that man learned to taste from the tree of knowledge. And what happened then? The old God was gripped by deadly fear. Man himself turned out to be his biggest blunder. God had created a rival to himself. Science makes people like gods, and once man starts using science, it is all over for priests and gods! So here is the moral of the story: science is the forbidden thing in itself. It is the only thing that is forbidden. Science is the first sin, the seed of every sin, the original sin. That is all morality really amounts to. "You shall not know": everything else follows from that. But even in his deadly fear, God was still clever. How do you protect yourself against science? For a long time, that was the main problem. The answer: throw man out of paradise! Happiness and free time encourage thinking, and all thoughts are bad thoughts! Man must not think. And so the priest invents suf-

fering, death, the deadly dangers of giving birth, every kind of misery, old age, weakness, and above all, sickness. All of these are nothing but tools for waging war on science! Man's troubles keep him from having time to think. And yet, how terrible, the great building of knowledge starts to rise higher and higher. It pushes into heaven and casts a shadow over the gods. What can be done? The old God invents war. He splits the peoples apart. He makes people destroy one another. (Priests have always needed war.) War, among other things, is a great disrupter of science! But unbelievably, knowledge, which means freedom from the priests, keeps growing even in spite of war. So the old God makes his final decision: "Man has become scientific. There is nothing else to do: he must be drowned!"

[21] This is a twist on a line by the poet Schiller: "Against stupidity even gods fight in vain."

49.

So you see what I mean. Right at the start of the Bible lies the whole way a priest thinks. The priest knows only one great danger, and that is science: a clear understanding of cause and effect. But science, on the whole, only grows when conditions are good. A person needs free time, and a mind with energy to spare, in order to "know" things. "So man must be made unhappy": in every age, that has been the priest's logic. And it is easy to see what this logic brought into the world first: "sin." The idea of guilt and punishment, the whole idea that God rewards and punishes, was set up to fight science, to stop people from freeing themselves from priests. Man must not look outward; he must look inward. He must not look at things carefully and cleverly to learn about them. He must not look at all. He must suffer. And he must suffer so much that he always needs the priest. Get rid of doctors! What people need is a Savior. The idea of guilt and punishment, along with the teachings of "grace," "salvation," and "forgiveness," are lies

from top to bottom. They have nothing to do with how the human mind really works. They were made up to destroy man's sense that things have causes. They are an attack on the very idea of cause and effect! And it is not an open attack, with fists or knives, or with honest hate and honest love. No! It is an attack driven by the most cowardly, the most sneaky, the lowest instincts there are! An attack by priests! An attack by parasites! The blood-sucking of pale leeches that live underground! When the natural results of what people do are no longer seen as "natural," but are thought to be caused by ghostly inventions of superstition, by "God," by "spirits," by "souls," and are treated only as "moral" results, as rewards, punishments, signs, and lessons, then the whole foundation of knowledge is wrecked. Then the greatest crime against humanity has been committed. I say it again: sin, the way man most completely dirties and degrades himself, was invented to make science, culture, and every way of raising man up and making him nobler impossible. The priest rules by inventing sin.

50.

—At this point I can't allow myself to leave out a psychology of "belief" and of the "believer," written especially for the benefit of "believers." If there are still people today who don't yet know how *indecent* it is to be "believing"—*or* how much it is a sign of decay, of a broken will to live—then they will know it well enough tomorrow. My voice reaches even the deaf.—It seems, unless I've been told wrong, that Christians have a kind of test for truth that is called 'it works, so it's true.' "Blind belief makes you happy and blessed: *therefore* it is true."—Right away one could object that this happiness is not shown to be real. It is only *promised*. It depends on "blind belief" as a condition—you *will* be blessed *because* you believe.... But what about the thing the priest promises to the believer, the afterlife, which lies completely

outside this world—how could *that* ever be shown to be real?—So this idea of 'it works, so it's true' really comes down, at bottom, to nothing more than a belief that the results promised by blind belief will surely show up. Put as a formula: "I believe that blind belief brings happiness—*therefore* it is true."... But that is as far as we can go. As a test of truth, this "therefore" would be absurdity itself.—But let's admit, just to be polite, that happiness through blind belief could be proven (—*not* merely hoped for, and *not* merely promised by a priest's untrustworthy lips). Even then, *could* happiness—or, to use the technical word, *pleasure*—ever prove that something is true? This is so far from the case that it is almost proof *against* truth when feelings of pleasure affect the answer to the question "What is true?" At the very least, it is enough to make that "truth" highly suspicious. A proof by "pleasure" proves only that there is "pleasure"—nothing more. Why on earth should we assume that *true* judgments give more pleasure than false ones? Why should we think that, by some harmony arranged in advance, they must bring pleasant feelings along with them?—The experience of all disciplined and deep minds teaches *the opposite*. Humans have had to fight for every tiny bit of truth. They have had to pay for it with almost everything the heart, human love and human trust hold on to. This work takes a great soul: serving the truth is the hardest service of all.—So what does honesty of mind actually mean? It means that a person must be strict with his own heart. He must look down on "beautiful feelings." And he must make every yes and no a matter of conscience!—Blind belief makes you happy: *therefore*, it lies....

51.

Blind belief may, in certain situations, make people happy. But happiness produced by an obsession does not in any way make the idea itself true. And blind belief does not really move mountains—instead,

it *piles them up* where there were none before. A walk through a *mental hospital* makes all of this clear enough. *Not*, of course, to a priest: his instincts push him toward the lie that sickness is not sickness and mental hospitals are not mental hospitals. Christianity *needs* sickness, just as the Greek spirit needed an overflow of health. The real hidden purpose of the church's whole system of salvation is to *make* people sick. And the church itself—doesn't it hold up a Catholic madhouse as its highest ideal?—The whole earth turned into a madhouse?—The kind of religious person the church *wants* is a typical example of decay. Whenever a religious crisis takes hold of a people, it is always marked by outbreaks of nervous illness. The "inner world" of the religious person is so much like the "inner world" of people who are overstrained and worn out that it is hard to tell them apart. The "highest" states of mind, which Christianity holds up to humanity as worth more than anything, actually look like epileptic fits. The church has given the name "holy" only to madmen or to enormous frauds, all "for the greater glory of God".... I once dared to describe the whole Christian system of *training*[22] in repentance and salvation (best studied today in England) as a way of producing a kind of manic-depressive madness, a mind swinging round in circles, in soil already prepared for it—that is, in soil that was thoroughly unhealthy. Not everyone can be a Christian. You are not "converted" to Christianity—you first have to be sick enough for it.... We others, who have the *courage* to be healthy *and* also the courage to look down on things—we have every right to despise a religion that teaches people to misunderstand the body! A religion that refuses to let go of the superstition about the soul! That makes a "virtue" out of not eating enough! That fights against health as if it were an enemy, a devil, a temptation! That convinces itself you can carry around a "perfect soul" inside a body that is practically a corpse! And that, to do this, had to invent a new idea of "perfection" for itself: a pale, sickly, foolishly ecstatic way of living called "holiness"—a holiness that is really just a list of

symptoms of a weakened, drained and hopelessly disordered body!... As a movement in Europe, Christianity was from the very beginning nothing more than a general uprising of every kind of outcast and human leftover (—who now, hiding behind Christianity, are reaching for power). It does *not* stand for the decline of one race. On the contrary, it stands for a big pile-up of the products of decay from every direction, crowding together and seeking each other out. It was *not*, as people have thought, the rotting of the ancient world—of the *noble* ancient world—that made Christianity possible. The learned stupidity that defends this theory today cannot be challenged too sharply. At the very time when the sick and rotten outcasts all across the Roman Empire were becoming Christians, the *opposite type*, the nobility, was reaching its finest and ripest development. The majority became the master. Democracy, with its Christian instincts, *won*.... Christianity was not "national." It was not based on race. It appealed to every kind of person that life had cut off from its gifts, and it had allies everywhere. At its very core, Christianity carries the bitterness of the sick —the instinct against the *healthy*, against *health* itself. Everything that is well made, proud, brave and, above all, beautiful offends its ears and eyes. Once again I remind you of Saint Paul's priceless saying: "And God has chosen the *weak* things of the world, the *foolish* things of the world, the *low* things of the world, and things that are *despised*": [23] *this* was the formula. Under *this* sign, decay won its victory.—*God on the cross*—will people always miss the terrible hidden meaning of this symbol?—Everything that suffers, everything that hangs on the cross, is *divine*.... We all hang on the cross, so *we* are divine.... We alone are divine.... So Christianity was a victory: a nobler way of thinking was destroyed by it. To this day Christianity remains humanity's greatest misfortune.—

[22] The word *training* appears in English in the original text.

[23] 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 27 and 28.

52.

Christianity is also against every kind of healthy thinking. The only kind of reasoning it can accept as Christian is sick reasoning. It sides with everything that is stupid. It puts a curse on "the mind," on the proud confidence (what the Latin calls "superbia") of a healthy mind. Since sickness is built into Christianity, it follows that the typical Christian state of "blind belief" must also be a kind of sickness. It also follows that the church must ban every honest, direct and scientific way of finding things out, calling them forbidden paths. So doubt is a sin right from the start.... The priest has no inner cleanliness at all when it comes to his own mind, and you can see it just by looking at him. This is a result of decay. You can watch hysterical women and children weakened by rickets, and you will see how regularly the same signs of decay appear: their natural instincts get twisted, they enjoy lying just for the sake of lying, and they cannot look straight at anything or walk a straight path. "Blind belief" means wanting not to know what is true. The extremely pious person, the priest, whether man or woman, is a fraud because he is sick: his instinct demands that truth must never be given its due on any point. "Whatever makes you sick is good; whatever comes from having plenty, from having more than enough, from strength, is evil": that is how the believer thinks. The urge to lie: that is how I recognize every person who was born to be a theologian. Another mark of the theologian is that he is unable to do careful reading. By careful reading I mean, in a general sense, the skill of reading in a way that actually teaches you something. It means being able to take in facts without twisting their meaning, and without losing caution, patience and fine attention while trying to understand them. Careful reading means holding back your judgment when you explain things. (The Greeks had a word for this, "ephexis.") That applies whether you are dealing with books, newspaper reports, the most important events, or weather records,

not to mention "saving your soul."... Take the way a theologian, whether in Berlin or in Rome, will explain a "Bible passage," or something that happened to him, or a victory won by his country's army, by shining the grand light of King David's Psalms onto it. It is always so bold and reckless that it could drive a careful reader up the wall. But what is the careful reader supposed to do when the pious types, and other such dumb cows from Swabia, use the "finger of God" to turn their miserably ordinary and muddled lives into a miracle of "grace," a sign of "providence," and an "experience of salvation"? Even the smallest use of the mind, never mind basic decency, should be enough to show these people how completely childish and unworthy it is to misuse God's handy fingerwork like this. Even if we had only a tiny bit of religious feeling, imagine meeting a god who always cured our head cold at just the right moment, or got us into our carriage at the exact second heavy rain started to fall. Such a god would seem so ridiculous that we would have to get rid of him even if he really existed. God as a house servant, as a mailman, as the man who prints the yearly calendar: deep down, this "God" is just a name for the dumbest kind of luck.... "Divine Providence," the idea that God is looking after us, is something that one out of every three people in "educated Germany" still believes in. Yet it is such a strong argument against God that you could not think of a stronger one. And in any case, it is an argument against the Germans!...

[24] That is to say, doubt that holds back judgment, or scepticism. The Greeks sometimes also called this kind of doubt "ephecticism."

[25] This refers to the University of Tübingen, in the region of Swabia, and its famous school of Bible study that questioned the Bible's stories. The leader of this school was F. C. Baur. One of the men strongly shaped by it was David F. Strauss, a man Nietzsche especially hated, and who was himself from Swabia. See section 10 and section 28.

53.

It is so far from true that martyrs, people who die for a cause, prove that the cause is true, that I am tempted to say no martyr has ever had anything to do with truth at all. Just listen to the tone a martyr uses when he throws what he thinks is true in the face of the world. That tone shows such a low level of honesty of mind, and such a dull lack of feeling for the problem of "truth," that there is never any need to argue against him. Truth is not something one person owns and another person lacks. At most, only peasants, or peasant-preachers like Luther, can think of truth that way. You can be sure of this: the more a person cares about honesty in thinking, the more modest and careful he will be on this point. He will know something in five cases, and politely refuse to claim he knows anything more.... "Truth," as the word is used by every prophet, every member of a sect, every free thinker, every Socialist and every churchman, simply proves that they have not even started on the mental discipline and self-control you need to dig up even the tiniest truth. The deaths of the martyrs, I might add, have been accidents of history that did harm: they led people astray.... Idiots, women and common people all jump to the same conclusion: that there must be something to a cause if someone is willing to die for it (or if it sets off waves of people wanting to die, as happened in early Christianity). This conclusion has been a huge drag on checking the facts, and on the whole spirit of asking questions and looking into things. The martyrs have hurt the truth.... Even today, the simple fact that a group has been persecuted is enough to give a respectable name to the emptiest little sect. But why? Does the value of a cause change just because someone gave his life for it? A mistake that becomes respectable is just a mistake with one more tempting charm. Do you really think, gentlemen theologians, that we will give you the chance to become martyrs for your lies? The best way to get rid of a cause is to put it on ice, politely, and leave it there.

That is also the best way to get rid of theologians.... This was exactly the great historical stupidity of all the persecutors: they made the cause they were fighting look honorable. They handed it the gift of the glamour of martyrdom.... Women still kneel before a mistake because they were told that someone died on the cross for it. So is the cross an argument? But about all these things, only one person has said what needed saying for thousands of years: Zarathustra.

Zarathustra says: "They left signs written in blood along the road they walked, and their foolishness taught them that blood proves the truth.

But blood is the worst of all witnesses to the truth. Blood poisons even the purest teaching and turns it into madness and hatred in people's hearts.

And if someone walks through fire for his teaching, what does that prove? Truly, it means far more when your teaching comes out of your own inner fire!"[26]

[26] These quotations come from "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," part two, section 24: "Of Priests."

54.

Don't let yourself be fooled: great minds are doubters. Zarathustra is a doubter. The strength and the freedom that come from mental power, from having more than enough mental power, show themselves as doubt. People with fixed beliefs don't count when it comes to deciding what is truly basic about what has value and what doesn't. People with fixed beliefs are prisoners. They don't see far enough. They don't see what lies below them. But someone who wants to say anything worthwhile about value and lack of value must be able to see five hundred beliefs beneath him, and behind him. A mind that reaches

for great things, and that wants the tools to get there, has to be a doubting mind. Being free of every kind of fixed belief is part of being strong, and part of having an independent point of view. A doubter has one great passion. It is both the ground he stands on and the force that drives his life. It sees more clearly than he does, and it rules more harshly than he does. This passion drafts his whole mind into its service, like soldiers into an army. It makes him willing to bend the rules. It gives him the courage to use unholy methods. In certain situations, it doesn't even refuse to let him have beliefs. A belief can be a tool: you can get a lot done by using a belief. A great passion uses beliefs and uses them up. It doesn't give in to them. It knows that it is the one in charge. On the other hand, the need for blind belief, for something fixed and absolute that is beyond any yes and no, for what I might call "Carlylism," is a need that comes from weakness. The person of blind belief, the "believer" of any kind, is always a dependent person. Such a person cannot set himself up as his own goal, and he cannot find goals inside himself. The "believer" does not belong to himself. He can only be a tool for someone else's purpose. He has to be used up, and he needs someone to use him up. His instinct gives the highest honor to a morality of making yourself small and disappearing. Everything pushes him to accept it: his caution, his experience, and his vanity. Every kind of blind belief is in itself a sign of making yourself small, of becoming a stranger to yourself. Think about how badly most people need rules that hold them back and keep them in place from the outside. Think about how much control, or, in a deeper sense, slavery, is the one and only thing that keeps a weak-willed man, and especially a weak-willed woman, doing well. Once you think about that, you understand right away what fixed belief and "blind belief" are for. For the person with fixed beliefs, they are his backbone. To avoid seeing many things, to be fair about nothing, to take one side completely, to judge all values strictly and without ever doubting himself: these are the things such a person

needs in order to exist at all. But for the same reason, they are the enemies of the honest person, and of the truth. The believer is not free to decide whether something is "true" or "not true" by listening to his own conscience. Being honest on this one point would destroy him on the spot. His vision is limited in a way that is almost a sickness, and this turns the person of fixed beliefs into a fanatic. Savonarola, Luther, Rousseau, Robespierre, Saint-Simon: these kinds of people are the opposite of the strong, freed spirit. But the grand, dramatic poses of these sick minds, these people whose minds have fits like epileptics, have a big influence on the masses. Fanatics make a striking picture, and people would rather watch someone strike a pose than listen to reasons.

55.

Let's go one step further into how conviction works, into how "blind belief" works. Quite a while ago, I first raised a question for people to think about: aren't convictions even more dangerous enemies of truth than lies are? ("Human, All-Too-Human," Part I, aphorism 483.)[27] This time I want to ask the question plainly: is there any real difference between a lie and a conviction? Everyone in the world believes there is. But then, what doesn't everyone in the world believe! Every conviction has its own history. It has early, crude forms. It goes through a stage of trying things out and getting things wrong. It only *becomes* a conviction after spending a long time *not* being one, and then an even longer time *barely* being one. So what if a lie is also one of these early, unformed stages of a conviction? Sometimes all it takes is a change of people: what was a lie in the father becomes a conviction in the son. Here is what I call lying: refusing to see what you see, or refusing to see it *as* it really is. It makes no difference whether the lie is told in front of other people or not. The most common kind of lie is the one a person tells himself. Fooling other people is actually a

fairly rare offense. Now, this wish *not* to see what you see, this wish *not* to see it as it is, is almost the very first requirement for anyone who belongs to a party of any kind. A party member is bound to become a liar. Take the German historians, for example. They are convinced that Rome meant tyranny, and that the Germanic peoples brought the spirit of freedom into the world. What is the difference between this conviction and a lie? Should we be surprised that all party people, the German historians included, automatically roll the fine words of morality around in their mouths? Should we be surprised that morality almost owes its very *survival* to the fact that party people of every kind need it every single moment? They say: "This is *our* conviction. We announce it to the whole world. We live and die for it. So let us respect everyone who has convictions!" I have actually heard words like these from the mouths of anti-Semites. Quite the opposite, gentlemen! An anti-Semite certainly does not become more respectable just because he lies as a matter of principle. The priests are more skillful at this sort of thing. They understand very well the objection against the idea of a conviction, which really means a falsehood that becomes a principle *because* it serves a purpose. So they borrowed a clever trick from the Jews: right at this point, they sneak in the ideas of "God," "the will of God," and "the revelation of God." Kant, too, with his Kant's rule of absolute duty, was on the same path. This was what he called his *practical* reason. [28] The argument goes like this: There are questions where it is *not* up to man to decide what is true or untrue. All the most important questions, all the big problems of deciding what has value, are beyond human reason. Knowing the limits of reason, *that* alone is true philosophy. Why did God reveal Himself to man? Would God do something unnecessary? Man *could not* figure out on his own what was good and what was evil, so God taught him His will. And the moral of the story: the priest does *not* lie. The question of "true" or "untrue" simply doesn't apply to the things the priest talks about. It is im-

possible to lie about such things. To lie about them, you would have to know *what* is true. But that is more than man *can* know. Therefore the priest is simply God's spokesman. This kind of priestly reasoning is not just Jewish and Christian, not at all. The right to lie and the *clever trick* of "revelation" belong to priests in general. They belong to the priest of decay just as much as to the priest of pagan times. (Pagans are all those who say yes to life, and for whom "God" is a word that means accepting everything.) The "law," the "will of God," the "holy book," and "inspiration": all these are just words for the conditions *under* which the priest gains power and *by* which he keeps it. These ideas are found at the base of every priestly organization, and of every system of government run by priests or by priest-like philosophers. The "sacred lie" is shared by Confucius, by the Laws of Manu, by Mohammed, and by the Christian church. It is not even missing from Plato. "Here is the truth": wherever you hear those words, they mean *the priest is lying*.

[27] That aphorism, which has the title "The Enemies of Truth," says it directly: "Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies."

[28] This, of course, refers to Kant's book "Kritik der praktischen Vernunft" (Critique of Practical Reason).

56.

In the end, it all comes down to this question: what is the lying *for*? What is its goal? My objection to the methods Christianity uses is this: in Christianity, you cannot see any "holy" goals at all. Only *bad* goals show up. There is the poisoning and the slandering. There is turning against life and looking down on the body. There is the way the idea of sin drags people down and makes them feel dirty inside. *And so* its methods are bad too. I feel the very opposite when I read

the Laws of Manu. That is a far smarter and finer work, beyond comparison. It would be a sin against *intelligence* even to *mention* it in the same breath as the Bible. The reason is easy to see. There is a real philosophy behind it, and *inside* it. It is not just a stinking mess of Jewish rabbi-talk and superstition. It gives even the pickiest student of the human mind something to really sink his teeth into. And, *not* to forget the most important thing, it is completely different from every kind of Bible. Through it, the *nobles*, the philosophers and the warriors stay in control over the majority. It is full of the values of the strong. It shows a sense of things being complete and perfect. It says yes to life, and it feels triumphant about oneself and about life. The *sun* shines over the whole book. Christianity pours out its bottomless crudeness on certain things, for example having children, women and marriage. But here all these things are treated seriously, with respect, with love and with trust. How can anyone actually hand a book to children and ladies when it contains such disgusting things as this: "to avoid sexual sin, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband; ... it is better to marry than to burn with desire"?[29] And is it even *possible* to be a Christian as long as the way humans come into the world is made Christian, which means *made filthy*, by the teaching that Mary conceived without the stain of sin?... I know of no book that says so many gentle and kind things about women as the Laws of Manu. These old grey-bearded men and holy men have a way of being charming and courteous to women that perhaps could never be beaten. "The mouth of a woman," it says in one place, "the breasts of a young girl, the prayer of a child and the smoke of an offering to the gods are always pure." In another place it says: "there is nothing purer than the light of the sun, the shadow of a cow, air, water, fire and the breath of a young girl." And finally, in yet another place, and perhaps this is a sacred lie too: "all the openings of the body above the belly button are pure, and all those below are impure. Only in a young girl is the whole body pure."

[29] First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 7, verses 2 and 9.

57.

You can catch the Christian methods being *unholy* red-handed, and it is simple to do: just put the goals Christianity aims for next to the goals the Laws of Manu aim for. Put these two hugely opposite sets of goals under a bright light. Anyone who criticizes Christianity cannot avoid having to make Christianity look *contemptible*. A book of laws like the Laws of Manu comes from the same place as every other good book of laws. It sums up the experience, the wisdom, and the moral trial and error of many long centuries. It wraps things up. It no longer creates anything new. Before you can write down laws like this, you first have to understand one fact: the way you make people accept a *truth* that was reached slowly and painfully is completely different from the way you would prove that truth. A book of laws never lists how useful a law is, or the reasons for it, or the long debates over cases that led up to it. If it did, it would lose its tone of command, the "you shall," and that command is what makes people obey. This is exactly where the problem lies. At a certain point in a people's development, the group among them with the deepest understanding, meaning the people who see furthest into the past and furthest into the future, announces that the long series of experiences deciding how everyone should live, or *can* live, is now finished. The goal now is to gather as rich and as full a harvest as possible from all those years of testing and *hard* experience. So the thing to avoid above all is more testing. They want to stop the situation where values keep shifting and are tested, chosen, and criticized forever. Against this, they build a double wall. On one side is *revelation*. This is the belief that the reasons behind the laws did *not* come from humans. It says they were *not* searched for and found slowly, after many mistakes. Instead, it says they came from God, and arrived complete and perfect, with no his-

tory, as a free gift, a miracle... On the other side is *tradition*. This is the belief that the law has stayed the same since the beginning of time, and that questioning it is disrespectful to God and a crime against your ancestors. So the law's authority rests on this claim: God gave it, and our fathers *lived* by it. The higher purpose behind doing things this way is to slowly pull people's conscious minds away from thinking about how to live rightly, meaning the ways of living that have been *proven* right through wide and careful experience. The point is that instinct should become fully automatic. That is the first thing you need for any kind of mastery, for any kind of perfection in the art of living. Writing a book of laws like Manu's means giving a people the chance to reach mastery in the future, to reach a perfection that is actually possible. It lets them aim for the very highest levels of the art of living. *To get there, the whole thing has to become unconscious, something people do without thinking*: that is the goal of every sacred lie. The *ranking of classes*, the highest law, the law that rules over all, is simply the official approval of an *order of nature*, a natural law of the highest rank. No random command and no "modern idea" can change it. In every healthy society there are three kinds of people, built differently in body and mind. They tend to separate from each other, but they also depend on each other. Each kind has its own way of staying healthy, its own field of work, its own special mastery, and its own sense of perfection. It is *not* Manu but nature that puts into one group the people who are mainly people of the mind, into a second group the people marked by physical strength and fiery temper, and into a third group the people who stand out in neither way and are only average. That last group is the great majority. The first two are the chosen few. The top class, which I call *the fewest*, is the most perfect, so it has the privileges of the few. It stands for happiness, for beauty, for everything good on earth. Only the most intelligent people have any right to beauty, to what is beautiful. Only in them can goodness avoid being weakness. As the Latin saying goes, *beauty belongs to the few*:[30]

goodness is a privilege. Nothing could suit them worse than rough manners, or a gloomy face, or an eye that looks for *ugliness*, or anger at the way things are in general. Anger is the privilege of the outcasts. So is gloominess. "*The world is perfect*": that is what the instinct of the thinking person tells him, the instinct of the person who keeps saying yes to life. "Imperfection, everything that is *below* us, distance, the feeling of rank between people, even the outcasts themselves, are all part of this perfection." The most intelligent people, like the *strongest* people, find their happiness where others would find only disaster: in the maze, in being hard on themselves and on others, in hard effort. Their joy is in controlling themselves. For them, strict self-discipline becomes second nature, a need, an instinct. They see a difficult task as a privilege. For them, playing with loads that would crush anyone else is a kind of *rest and play*... Knowledge itself is a form of strict self-discipline. They are the most honorable kind of people. But that does not stop them from also being the most cheerful and the friendliest. They rule, not because they want to, but because of what they *are*. They are not free to take second place. Now the *second class*. This group includes the guardians of the law, the keepers of order and safety, the nobler warriors, and above all the king, as the highest kind of warrior, judge, and protector of the law. The people in second rank are the working arm of the thinkers, the ones just below them. They take over everything *rough* in the job of ruling. They are the thinkers' followers, their right hand, their best students. In all of this, I say again, there is nothing random, nothing "made up." Whatever goes *against* it is what is made up, and it puts nature to shame... The ranking of classes, the *order of rank*, simply puts into words the highest law of life itself. Keeping the three types separate is necessary to keep society going and to allow better kinds of humans, and the very best kinds, to develop. *Unequal* rights are needed for any rights to exist at all. A right is a privilege. Everyone enjoys the privileges that fit their way of existing. Let's not underestimate the privileges of *ordinary* people. Life

always gets harder the higher you climb toward the *heights*: the cold grows, and so does responsibility. A high civilization is like a pyramid. It can only stand on a wide base. The first thing it needs is a strong, solid, well-settled mass of ordinary people. Crafts, trade, farming, *science*, most of art, in short, the whole range of *jobs*, only fit people with ordinary ability and ordinary ambition. Such work would be out of place for exceptional people. The instincts that go with these jobs are just as opposed to rule by the best as they are to anarchism, the rejection of all rule. If a person is useful to the public, if he is a wheel in the machine, a working part, that shows a natural tendency in him. It is not *society* that turns most people into intelligent machines. It is the only kind of happiness they are able to have. For ordinary people, being ordinary is a kind of happiness. They have a natural instinct for mastering one thing, for specializing. It would be completely unworthy of a deep mind to see anything wrong with ordinariness in itself. In fact, it is the *first* thing needed for exceptional people to appear. It is a necessary condition for a high level of civilization. When the exceptional person treats the ordinary person more gently than he treats himself or his equals, this is not just kindness of heart. It is simply his *duty*... Who do I hate most deeply among all the crowds of today? The crowd of Socialists, the preachers to the outcasts. They weaken the worker's instincts, his pleasure, his feeling of being content with his small life. They make him jealous and teach him revenge... What is wrong is never unequal rights. What is wrong is claiming "equal" rights... What is *bad*? I have already answered that: everything that comes from weakness, from jealousy, from *revenge*. The anarchist and the Christian come from the same family tree...

[Note 30] Few people are truly noble.

58.

In fact, the purpose behind a lie makes a big difference. Does the lie protect and keep things going, or does it destroy? The Christian and the anarchist are exactly alike here: their goal, their gut instinct, points only toward destruction. You only have to look at history to see the proof, and there it shows up with frightening clearness. We have just looked at a religious law code whose aim was to take the conditions that make life thrive and turn them into a social order meant to last "forever." Christianity saw its mission as putting an end to exactly that kind of order, and it did so precisely because life thrived under it. In that law code, the good things that reason had won through long ages of trial, error and danger were put to use for the far future, and people worked to bring in a harvest as big, as rich and as complete as possible. Here, with Christianity, it is the opposite: the harvest is ruined overnight.... There stood the Roman Empire, built to last longer than bronze. It was the most magnificent way of organizing people under hard conditions that has ever been achieved. Next to it, everything before and after looks like patchwork, clumsy fumbling, the work of amateurs. And those holy anarchists made it a matter of "religious duty" to destroy "the world," which really meant the Roman Empire. They kept at it until not one stone was left standing on another, so that even Germans and other such brutes could become its masters.... The Christian and the anarchist are both products of decay. Neither of them can do anything that does not break things apart, poison, weaken and suck the blood out of life. Both have a deadly hatred, deep in their instincts, for everything that stands tall, that is great, that lasts, and that promises life a future.... Christianity was the bloodsucker of the Roman Empire. Overnight it destroyed the huge achievement of the Romans: they had prepared the ground for a great culture that could take its time to grow. Is it possible that people still do not understand this? Think of the Roman Empire as we know it,

and as the history of the Roman provinces teaches us to know it better and better. This most admirable of all works of art built on a grand scale was only the beginning. The building that was meant to follow would not prove its worth for thousands of years. To this day, nothing on that scale, nothing built with eternity in mind, has ever been created, or even dreamed of! This organization was strong enough to survive bad emperors. Whoever happened to be in charge did not matter, and that is the first rule of all truly great architecture. But it was not strong enough to stand up against the most rotten of all kinds of rot: the Christians.... These sneaky worms crept up on every single person under cover of night, fog and lies. They sucked people dry of any serious interest in real things, of any feeling for what is real. This cowardly, soft and sugar-coated gang slowly, step by step, turned all "souls" away from that giant building. They turned against it all the worthy, manly and noble people who had made the cause of Rome their own cause, their own serious purpose, their own pride. The sneakiness of hypocrisy, the secrecy of little hidden prayer meetings, ideas as dark as hell, such as the sacrifice of the innocent, the "mystical union" gained by drinking blood, and above all the slowly relit fire of revenge, the revenge of the outcasts: all of that became master of Rome. It was the same kind of religion that Epicurus had fought against in an earlier form. You only have to read Lucretius to know what Epicurus was waging war on. It was not the old pagan religion. It was "Christianity," meaning the corruption of souls through the ideas of guilt, punishment and life after death. He fought the underground religions, the whole of Christianity before it had a name. To deny that the soul lives forever was already a true form of salvation for him. Epicurus had won, and every respectable mind in Rome followed Epicurus, until Saint Paul showed up.... Saint Paul was the outcasts' hatred of Rome, of "the world," made flesh and driven by genius. He was the Jew, the eternal Jew above all others.... What he saw was this: with the help of the small Christian sect that had split off from

Judaism, a "world-wide fire" could be lit. With the symbol of "God on the cross," all the hidden rebellions, all the results of anarchist plotting throughout the empire, could be melted together into one enormous power. "Salvation comes from the Jews." Christianity is the formula that outdoes and at the same time sums up all the different underground religions, for example the worship of Osiris, of the Great Mother, of Mithras. Saint Paul's genius showed in the fact that he saw this. His instinct here was so sure that, doing reckless violence to the truth, he took the ideas that made every kind of outcasts' religion so attractive and put them into the mouth of the "Savior," as if the Savior had invented them himself. And not only into his mouth: he turned him into something that even a priest of Mithras could understand.... This was his real revelation on the road to Damascus. He grasped that he needed the belief in life after death in order to strip "the world" of its value. He saw that the idea of "hell" would conquer Rome, and that the idea of the afterlife is the death of life itself.... The believer in nothing and the Christian: in German the words "Nihilist" and "Christ" rhyme, and they do more than just rhyme....

59.

All the work of the ancient world was wasted. It came to nothing. I have no word to describe what I feel when I think about something this monstrous. And think about this: all that work was only a beginning. With rock-hard confidence in itself, the ancient world laid only the foundations for a project meant to go on for thousands of years. So once that was lost, the whole meaning of the ancient world disappeared! What was the point of the Greeks? What was the point of the Romans? Everything needed for a learned culture was already there. All the methods of science were already there. People had already mastered the great, unmatched skill of reading well and usefully. That skill is the first thing a culture needs to pass itself on, and it ties all

the fields of knowledge together. The natural sciences, working hand in hand with mathematics and mechanics, were heading in the right direction. The sense for facts, which is the last of all the senses to develop and the most valuable one, already had its schools, and its traditions were already hundreds of years old! Does anyone really understand this? Everything essential for starting the work was ready. And the most essential things, I can't say it often enough, are methods. They are also the hardest to develop, and habit and laziness fight against them the longest. Today, with huge self-discipline, we have won these things back for ourselves, because certain bad instincts, certain Christian instincts, still hide inside our bodies. I mean the sharp eye for what is real, the careful hand, patience and seriousness about even the smallest things, the complete honesty of knowledge. All of these things were already there, and had been there for two thousand years! And there was more: there was also a fine, excellent sense of tact and taste! Not just as drilling of the brain! Not as so-called "German" culture, with its clumsy, rude manners! But as something lived in the body, in the way people carried themselves, in their instincts. In short, as something real. And all of it was wasted! Overnight it became only a memory! The Greeks! The Romans! Natural nobility, taste, careful and orderly research, a genius for organizing and running things, belief in the future of humanity and the drive to make that future secure, a great yes to everything that belonged to the Roman Empire and could be seen and touched by all the senses, a grand style that went beyond mere art and had become reality, truth, life. All of it was swept away in a single night, but not by some natural disaster! It was not trampled to death by Germanic tribes and other heavy-footed peoples! No, it was brought to shame by sly, sneaking, invisible, bloodless bloodsuckers! It was not conquered. It was only sucked dry! Hidden revenge and petty jealousy became the masters! Everything miserable, sick at its core, and full of bad feelings, the whole ghetto-world of the soul, suddenly rose to the top!

You only have to read any of the Christian agitators, for example Saint Augustine, to see, and to smell, what filthy people came to the top. But it would be a mistake to think the leaders of the Christian movement lacked brains. Oh, they were clever, so clever it reached the point of holiness, these fathers of the church! What they lacked was something completely different. Nature failed, maybe even forgot, to give them even a small share of decent, honest, clean instincts. Just between us, they are not even real men. If Islam looks down on Christianity, it has a thousand times the right to do so. Islam at least assumes it is dealing with men.

60.

Christianity destroyed for us the whole harvest of ancient civilization, and later it also destroyed for us the whole harvest of Muslim civilization. The amazing culture of the Moors in Spain was, at heart, closer to us than the culture of Rome and Greece, and it appealed more to our senses and our tastes. And it was trampled down. I won't say by what kind of feet. Why was it destroyed? Because it owed its beginnings to noble and manly instincts. Because it said yes to life, even to the rare and refined luxury of Moorish life! Later the crusaders made war on something they should have bowed down before, face in the dirt. It was a civilization next to which even our own nineteenth century looks very poor and very "senile", like a doddering old man. What they wanted, of course, was loot: the East was rich. Let's put our prejudices aside! The crusades were a fancier kind of piracy, nothing more! The German nobility, which is at heart a nobility of Vikings, was right at home there. The church knew only too well how to win the German nobles over. The German noble was always the "Swiss Guard" of the church, its bodyguard, always serving every bad instinct of the church, but well paid for it. Think about this: it is exactly the help of German swords, German blood and German cour-

age that let the church carry out its fight to the death against everything noble on earth! At this point a crowd of painful questions comes up. The German nobility stands outside the history of higher civilization, and the reason is obvious. Christianity and alcohol: the two great means of corruption. Really, there should be no more of a choice between Islam and Christianity than there is between an Arab and a Jew. The decision has already been made. Nobody is free to choose here anymore. Either a person is one of the outcasts or he is not. "War to the death against Rome! Peace and friendship with Islam!" That was the feeling, and that was the action, of that great free thinker, that genius among German emperors, Frederick the Second. What! Does a German have to be a genius and a free thinker first before he can feel decently? I can't understand how a German could ever feel Christian.

61.

At this point I have to bring up a memory that must hurt Germans a hundred times more. The Germans ruined, for all of Europe, the last great harvest of culture that Europe would ever gather: the Renaissance. Do people finally understand, will they ever understand, what the Renaissance really was? It was turning Christian values upside down. It was an attempt, using every possible means, every instinct, and all the power of genius, to make the opposite values win, the nobler values.... This was the one great war of the past. There has never been a more important question than the question of the Renaissance, and it is my question too. There has never been an attack more basic, more direct, or more fiercely carried out by a whole army against the very center of the enemy! The plan was to strike at the most important place, at the very headquarters of Christianity, and to put the nobler values on the throne there. That means slipping them quietly into the instincts, into the deepest needs and desires, of

the very people who sat there.... I can picture the possibility of something truly heavenly, a magical sight. It seems to me to sparkle and tremble with a fine and delicate beauty. Inside it there is an art so godlike, so devilishly godlike, that you could search for thousands of years and never find another chance like it. I see a sight so full of meaning, and at the same time so wonderfully full of contradiction, that it ought to make all the gods on Mount Olympus burst into laughter that never ends: Cesare Borgia as pope!... Do you understand me?... Well then, that would have been the kind of victory that I alone am longing for today. With it, Christianity would have been swept away! What happened instead? A German monk named Luther came to Rome. This monk had in him all the revengeful instincts of a priest who had failed, and he started a rebellion against the Renaissance in Rome.... He should have grasped, with deep gratitude, the miracle that had happened: Christianity had been conquered in its own capital city. But instead, the sight only made his hatred stronger. A religious man thinks only about himself. Luther saw only how corrupt the popes were, at the very moment when the opposite was becoming clear. The old corruption, the original sin, Christianity itself, was no longer sitting on the pope's throne! Instead there was life! Instead there was life winning! Instead there was a great yes to everything high, beautiful and bold!... And Luther brought the church back to life: he did it by attacking it.... So the Renaissance became an event with no meaning, a huge waste!... Oh, these Germans, how much they have cost us! Waste: that has always been what the Germans produce. The Reformation; the philosopher Leibniz; Kant and so-called German philosophy; the so-called war of "liberation" against Napoleon; the German Empire. Every time, it was a useless replacement for something that once existed, something that can never be won back.... I admit it: these Germans are my enemies. I despise how unclean and muddled their ideas and values are, and how cowardly they are in front of every honest yes and no. For almost a thousand years

they have tangled up and confused everything they touched. They are guilty of all the half-measures, all the three-eighths-measures, that Europe is sick of. They are also guilty of the dirtiest kind of Christianity that exists, the one that is hardest to cure and hardest to destroy: Protestantism.... If humanity never manages to get rid of Christianity, the Germans will be to blame....

62.

With this I reach my conclusion, and I give my verdict. I condemn Christianity. I bring against the Christian church the most terrible charge that any accuser has ever spoken. To me it is the greatest corruption anyone could imagine. It aims at the final corruption, the worst corruption possible. The Christian church has left nothing untouched by its rot. It has turned every value into something worthless, every truth into a lie, and every bit of honesty into meanness of soul. Let anyone dare to talk to me about its "humanitarian" blessings, the good it supposedly does for people! Its deepest needs set it against every effort to end suffering. It lives off suffering. It creates suffering in order to make itself last forever.... Take the gnawing worm of sin, for example: it was the church that first gave humanity this misery as a gift! Then there is the "equality of souls before God." This is a fraud, an excuse for the grudges of every low-minded person. It is an explosive idea that ends in revolution, in modern ideas, and in the plan to tear down the whole order of society. This is Christian dynamite.... The "humanitarian" blessings of Christianity, indeed! It took humanity and bred out of it something that contradicts itself, a skill at dirtying oneself, a will to lie no matter what, a disgust and contempt for every good and honest instinct! All of that, to me, is the "humanitarianism" of Christianity! Living as a parasite is the only thing the church really does. With its pale, bloodless, "holy" ideals, it sucks all the blood, all the love, all the hope out of life. It uses the afterlife as a

way to deny everything real. It uses the cross as the badge of the most underground conspiracy anyone has ever heard of: a conspiracy against health, beauty, well-being, intelligence, kindness of heart, against life itself....

This charge against Christianity, which will stand forever, I will write on every wall, wherever there are walls. I have letters so big that even the blind will be able to see them.... I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great rottenness at the core, the one great instinct for revenge, for which no weapon is poisonous enough, or sneaky, hidden and petty enough. I call it the one permanent stain on the human race....

And humanity counts its years starting from the cursed day when this disaster struck: from the first day of Christianity! Why not count instead from its last day? From today? Turning all values upside down!...

The End

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