

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIANITY MISUNDERSTOOD BY BELIEVERS.

Meaning of Christian Doctrine, Understood by a Minority, has Become Completely Incomprehensible for the Majority of Men--Reason of this to be Found in Misinterpretation of Christianity and Mistaken Conviction of Believers and Unbelievers Alike that they Understand it--The Meaning of Christianity Obscured for Believers by the Church--The First Appearance of Christ's Teaching--Its Essence and Difference from Heathen Religions--Christianity not Fully Comprehended at the Beginning, Became More and More Clear to those who Accepted it from its Correspondence with Truth--Simultaneously with this Arose the Claim to Possession of the Authentic Meaning of the Doctrine Based on the Miraculous Nature of its Transmission--Assembly of Disciples as Described in the Acts--The Authoritative Claim to the Sole Possession of the True Meaning of Christ's Teaching Supported by Miraculous Evidence has Led by Logical Development to the Creeds of the Churches--A Church Could Not be Founded by Christ--Definitions of a Church According to the Catechisms--The Churches have Always been Several in Number and Hostile to One Another--What is Heresy--The Work of G. Arnold on Heresies--Heresies the Manifestations of Progress in the Churches--Churches Cause Dissension among Men, and are Always Hostile to Christianity--Account of the Work Done by the Russian Church--Matt. xxiii. 23--The Sermon on the Mount or the Creed--The Orthodox Church Conceals from the People the True Meaning of Christianity--The Same Thing is Done by the Other Churches--All the

External Conditions of Modern Life are such as to Destroy the Doctrine of the Church, and therefore the Churches use Every Effort to Support their Doctrines.

Thus the information I received, after my book came out, went to show that the Christian doctrine, in its direct and simple sense, was understood, and had always been understood, by a minority of men, while the critics, ecclesiastical and freethinking alike, denied the possibility of taking Christ's teaching in its direct sense. All this convinced me that while on one hand the true understanding of this doctrine had never been lost to a minority, but had been established more and more clearly, on the other hand the meaning of it had been more and more obscured for the majority. So that at last such a depth of obscurity has been reached that men do not take in their direct sense even the simplest precepts, expressed in the simplest words, in the Gospel.

Christ's teaching is not generally understood in its true, simple, and direct sense even in these days, when the light of the Gospel has penetrated even to the darkest recesses of human consciousness; when, in the words of Christ, that which was spoken in the ear is proclaimed from the housetops; and when the Gospel is influencing every side of human life--domestic, economic, civic, legislative, and international. This lack of true understanding of Christ's words at such a time would be

inexplicable, if there were not causes to account for it.

One of these causes is the fact that believers and unbelievers alike are firmly persuaded that they have understood Christ's teaching a long time, and that they understand it so fully, indubitably, and conclusively that it can have no other significance than the one they attribute to it. And the reason of this conviction is that the false interpretation and consequent misapprehension of the Gospel is an error of such long standing. Even the strongest current of water cannot add a drop to a cup which is already full.

The most difficult subjects can be explained to the most slow-witted man if he has not formed any idea of them already; but the simplest thing cannot be made clear to the most intelligent man if he is firmly persuaded that he knows already, without a shadow of doubt, what is laid before him.

The Christian doctrine is presented to the men of our world to-day as a doctrine which everyone has known so long and accepted so unhesitatingly in all its minutest details that it cannot be understood in any other way than it is understood now.

Christianity is understood now by all who profess the doctrines of the Church as a supernatural miraculous revelation of everything which is repeated in the Creed. By unbelievers it is regarded as

an illustration of man's craving for a belief in the supernatural, which mankind has now outgrown, as an historical phenomenon which has received full expression in Catholicism, Greek Orthodoxy, and Protestantism, and has no longer any living significance for us. The significance of the Gospel is hidden from believers by the Church, from unbelievers by Science.

I will speak first of the former. Eighteen hundred years ago there appeared in the midst of the heathen Roman world a strange new doctrine, unlike any of the old religions, and attributed to a man, Christ.

This new doctrine was in both form and content absolutely new to the Jewish world in which it originated, and still more to the Roman world in which it was preached and diffused.

In the midst of the elaborate religious observances of Judaism, in which, in the words of Isaiah, law was laid upon law, and in the midst of the Roman legal system worked out to the highest point of perfection, a new doctrine appeared, which denied not only every deity, and all fear and worship of them, but even all human institutions and all necessity for them. In place of all the rules of the old religions, this doctrine sets up only a type of inward perfection, truth, and love in the person of Christ, and--as a result of this inward perfection being attained by men--also the outward perfection foretold by the Prophets--the kingdom of God, when all men will cease to learn to make war, when all shall be

taught of God and united in love, and the lion will lie down with the lamb. Instead of the threats of punishment which all the old laws of religions and governments alike laid down for non-fulfillment of their rules, instead of promises of rewards for fulfillment of them, this doctrine called men to it only because it was the truth. John vii. 17: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." John viii. 46: "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? But ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth. Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Keep my sayings, and ye shall know of my sayings whether they be true." No proofs of this doctrine were offered except its truth, the correspondence of the doctrine with the truth. The whole teaching consisted in the recognition of truth and following it, in a greater and greater attainment of truth, and a closer and closer following of it in the acts of life. There are no acts in this doctrine which could justify a man and make him saved. There is only the image of truth to guide-him, for inward perfection in the person of Christ, and for outward perfection in the establishment of the kingdom of God. The fulfillment of this teaching consists only in walking in the chosen way, in getting nearer to inward perfection in the imitation of Christ, and outward perfection in the establishment of the kingdom of God. The greater or less blessedness of a man depends, according to this doctrine, not on the degree of perfection to which he has attained, but on the greater or less swiftness with which he is pursuing it.

The progress toward perfection of the publican Zaccheus, of the woman that was a sinner, of the robber on the cross, is a greater state of blessedness, according to this doctrine, than the stationary righteousness of the Pharisee. The lost sheep is dearer than ninety-nine that were not lost. The prodigal son, the piece of money that was lost and found again, are dearer, more precious to God than those which have not been lost.

Every condition, according to this doctrine, is only a particular step in the attainment of inward and outward perfection, and therefore has no significance of itself. Blessedness consists in progress toward perfection; to stand still in any condition whatever means the cessation of this blessedness.

"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God." "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you, but seek rather that your names be written in heaven." "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness."

The fulfillment of this precept is only to be found in uninterrupted progress toward the attainment of ever higher truth, toward establishing more and more firmly an ever greater love within oneself, and establishing more and more widely the kingdom of God outside oneself.

It is obvious that, appearing as it did in the midst of the Jewish and heathen world, such teaching could not be accepted by the majority of men, who were living a life absolutely different from what was required by it. It is obvious, too, that even for those by whom it was accepted, it was so absolutely opposed to all their old views that it could not be comprehensible in its full significance.

It has been only by a succession of misunderstandings, errors, partial explanations, and the corrections and additions of generations that the meaning of the Christian doctrine has grown continually more and more clear to men. The Christian view of life has exerted an influence on the Jewish and heathen, and the heathen and Jewish view of life has, too, exerted an influence on the Christian. And Christianity, as the living force, has gained more and more upon the extinct Judaism and heathenism, and has grown continually clearer and clearer, as it freed itself from the admixture of falsehood which had overlaid it. Men went further and further in the attainment of the meaning of Christianity, and realized it more and more in life.

The longer mankind lived, the clearer and clearer became the meaning of Christianity, as must always be the case with every theory of life.

Succeeding generations corrected the errors of their predecessors, and grew ever nearer and nearer to a comprehension of the true meaning. It was thus from the very earliest times of Christianity. And so, too, from the earliest times of Christianity there were men who began to assert on their own authority that the meaning they attribute to the doctrine is the only true one, and as proof bring forward supernatural occurrences in support of the correctness of their interpretation.

This was the principal cause at first of the misunderstanding of the doctrine, and afterward of the complete distortion of it.

It was supposed that Christ's teaching was transmitted to men not like every other truth, but in a special miraculous way. Thus the truth of the teaching was not proved by its correspondence with the needs of the mind and the whole nature of man, but by the miraculous manner of its transmission, which was advanced as an irrefutable proof of the truth of the interpretation put on it.

This hypothesis originated from misunderstanding of the teaching, and its result was to make it impossible to understand it rightly.

And this happened first in the earliest times, when the doctrine was still not so fully understood and often interpreted wrongly, as we see by the Gospels and the Acts. The less the doctrine was understood, the more obscure it appeared and the more necessary were external proofs of its truth. The proposition that we ought

not to do unto others as we would not they should do unto us, did not need to be proved by miracles and needed no exercise of faith, because this proposition is in itself convincing and in harmony with man's mind and nature; but the proposition that Christ was God had to be proved by miracles completely beyond our comprehension.

The more the understanding of Christ's teaching was obscured, the more the miraculous was introduced into it; and the more the miraculous was introduced into it, the more the doctrine was strained from its meaning and the more obscure it became; and the more it was strained from its meaning and the more obscure it became, the more strongly its infallibility had to be asserted, and the less comprehensible the doctrine became.

One can see by the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles how from the earliest times the non-comprehension of the doctrine called forth the need for proofs through the miraculous and incomprehensible.

The first example in the book of Acts is the assembly which gathered together in Jerusalem to decide the question which had arisen, whether to baptize or not the uncircumcised and those who had eaten of food sacrificed to idols.

The very fact of this question being raised showed that

those who discussed it did not understand the teaching of Christ, who rejected all outward observances--ablutions, purifications, fasts, and sabbaths. It was plainly said, "Not that which goeth into a man's mouth, but that which cometh out of a man's mouth, defileth him," and therefore the question of baptizing the uncircumcised could only have arisen among men who, though they loved their Master and dimly felt the grandeur of his teaching, still did not understand the teaching itself very clearly. And this was the fact.

Just in proportion to the failure of the members of the assembly to understand the doctrine was their need of external confirmation of their incomplete interpretation of it. And then to settle this question, the very asking of which proved their misunderstanding of the doctrine, there was uttered in this assembly, as is described in the Acts, that strange phrase, which was for the first time found necessary to give external confirmation to certain assertions, and which has been productive of so much evil.

That is, it was asserted that the correctness of what they had decided was guaranteed by the miraculous participation of the Holy Ghost, that is, of God, in their decision. But the assertion that the Holy Ghost, that is, God, spoke through the Apostles, in its turn wanted proof. And thus it was necessary, to confirm this, that the Holy Ghost should descend at Pentecost in tongues of fire upon those who made this assertion. (In the account of it, the

descent of the Holy Ghost precedes the assembly, but the book of Acts was written much later than both events.) But the descent of the Holy Ghost too had to be proved for those who had not seen the tongues of fire (though it is not easy to understand why a tongue of fire burning above a man's head should prove that what that man is going to say will be infallibly the truth). And so arose the necessity for still more miracles and changes, raisings of the dead to life, and strikings of the living dead, and all those marvels which have been a stumbling-block to men, of which the Acts is full, and which, far from ever convincing one of the truth of the Christian doctrine, can only repel men from it. The result of such a means of confirming the truth was that the more these confirmations of truth by tales of miracles were heaped up one after another, the more the doctrine was distorted from its original meaning, and the more incomprehensible it became.

Thus it was from the earliest times, and so it went on, constantly increasing, till it reached in our day the logical climax of the dogmas of transubstantiation and the infallibility of the Pope, or of the bishops, or of Scripture, and of requiring a blind faith rendered incomprehensible and utterly meaningless, not in God, but in Christ, not in a doctrine, but in a person, as in Catholicism, or in persons, as in Greek Orthodoxy, or in a book, as in Protestantism. The more widely Christianity was diffused, and the greater the number of people unprepared for it who were brought under its sway, the less it was understood, the more absolutely was its infallibility insisted on, and

the less possible it became to understand the true meaning of the doctrine. In the times of Constantine the whole interpretation of the doctrine had been already reduced to a RÉSUMÉ--supported by the temporal authority--of the disputes that had taken place in the Council--to a creed which reckoned off--I believe in so and so, and so and so, and so and so to the end--to one holy, Apostolic Church, which means the infallibility of those persons who call themselves the Church. So that it all amounts to a man no longer believing in God nor Christ, as they are revealed to him, but believing in what the Church orders him to believe in.

But the Church is holy; the Church was founded by Christ. God could not leave men to interpret his teaching at random--therefore he founded the Church. All those statements are so utterly untrue and unfounded that one is ashamed to refute them. Nowhere nor in anything, except in the assertion of the Church, can we find that God or Christ founded anything like what Churchmen understand by the Church. In the Gospels there is a warning against the Church, as it is an external authority, a warning most clear and obvious in the passage where it is said that Christ's followers should "call no man master." But nowhere is anything said of the foundation of what Churchmen call the Church.

The word church is used twice in the Gospels--once in the sense of an assembly of men to decide a dispute, the other time in connection with the obscure utterance about a stone--Peter, and

the gates of hell. From these two passages in which the word church is used, in the signification merely of an assembly, has been deduced all that we now understand by the Church.

But Christ could not have founded the Church, that is, what we now understand by that word. For nothing like the idea of the Church as we know it now, with its sacraments, miracles, and above all its claim to infallibility, is to be found either in Christ's words or in the ideas of the men of that time.

The fact that men called what was formed afterward by the same word as Christ used for something totally different, does not give them the right to assert that Christ founded the one, true Church.

Besides, if Christ had really founded such an institution as the Church for the foundation of all his teaching and the whole faith, he would certainly have described this institution clearly and definitely, and would have given the only true Church, besides tales of miracles, which are used to support every kind of superstition, some tokens so unmistakable that no doubt of its genuineness could ever have arisen. But nothing of the sort was done by him. And there have been and still are different institutions, each calling itself the true Church.

The Catholic catechism says: "L'Église est la société des fidèles établie par notre Seigneur Jésus Christ, répandue sur toute la

terre et soumise à l'autorité des pasteurs légitimes,
principalement notre Saint Père le Pape," [see Footnote]
understanding by the words "pasteurs légitimes" an association of
men having the Pope at its head, and consisting of certain
individuals bound together by a certain organization.

[Footnote: "The Church is the society of the faithful,
established by our Lord Jesus Christ, spread over the
whole earth, and subject to the authority of its lawful
pastors, and chief of them our Holy Father the Pope."]

The Greek Orthodox catechism says: "The Church is a society
founded upon earth by Jesus Christ, which is united into one
whole, by one divine doctrine and by sacraments, under the rule
and guidance of a priesthood appointed by God," meaning by the
"priesthood appointed by God" the Greek Orthodox priesthood,
consisting of certain individuals who happen to be in such or such
positions.

The Lutheran catechism says: "The Church is holy Christianity, or
the collection of all believers under Christ, their head, to whom
the Holy Ghost through the Gospels and sacraments promises,
communicates, and administers heavenly salvation," meaning that
the Catholic Church is lost in error, and that the true means of
salvation is in Lutheranism.

For Catholics the Church of God coincides with the Roman priesthood and the Pope. For the Greek Orthodox believer the Church of God coincides with the establishment and priesthood of Russia. [See Footnote]

[Footnote: Homyakov's definition of the Church, which was received with some favor among Russians, does not improve matters, if we are to agree with Homyakov in considering the Greek Orthodox Church as the one true Church. Homyakov asserts that a church is a collection of men (all without distinction of clergy and laymen) united together by love, and that only to men united by love is the truth revealed (let us love each other, that in the unity of thought, etc.), and that such a church is the church which, in the first place, recognizes the Nicene Creed, and in the second place does not, after the division of the churches, recognize the popes and new dogmas. But with such a definition of the church, there is still more difficulty in reconciling, as Homyakov tries to do, the church united by love with the church that recognizes the Nicene Creed and the doctrine of Photius. So that Homyakov's assertion that this church, united by love, and consequently holy, is the same church as the Greek Orthodox priesthood profess faith in, is even more arbitrary than the assertions of the Catholics or the Orthodox. If we

admit the idea of a church in the sense Homyakov gives to it--that is, a body of men bound together by love and truth--then all that any man can predicate in regard to this body, if such an one exists, is its love and truth, but there can be no outer signs by which one could reckon oneself or another as a member of this holy body, nor by which one could put anyone outside it; so that no institution having an external existence can correspond to this idea.]

For Lutherans the Church of God coincides with a body of men who recognize the authority of the Bible and Luther's catechism.

Ordinarily, when speaking of the rise of Christianity, men belonging to one of the existing churches use the word church in the singular, as though there were and had been only one church. But this is absolutely incorrect. The Church, as an institution which asserted that it possessed infallible truth, did not make its appearance singly; there were at least two churches directly this claim was made.

While believers were agreed among themselves and the body was one, it had no need to declare itself as a church. It was only when believers were split up into opposing parties, renouncing one another, that it seemed necessary to each party to confirm their own truth by ascribing to themselves infallibility. The

conception of one church only arose when there were two sides divided and disputing, who each called the other side heresy, and recognized their own side only as the infallible church.

If we knew that there was a church which decided in the year 51 to receive the uncircumcised, it is only so because there was another church--of the Judaists--who decided to keep the uncircumcised out.

If there is a Catholic Church now which asserts its own infallibility, that is only because there are churches--Greco-Russian, Old Orthodox, and Lutheran--each asserting its own infallibility and denying that of all other churches. So that the one Church is only a fantastic imagination which has not the least trace of reality about it.

As a real historical fact there has existed, and still exist, several bodies of men, each asserting that it is the one Church, founded by Christ, and that all the others who call themselves churches are only sects and heresies.

The catechisms of the churches of the most world-wide influence--the Catholic, the Old Orthodox, and the Lutheran--openly assert this.

In the Catholic catechism it is said: "Quels sont ceux qui sont hors de l'église? Les infidèles, les hérétiques, les schismatiques." [Footnote: "Who are those who are outside the

Church? Infidels, heretics, and schismatics."] The so-called Greek Orthodox are regarded as schismatics, the Lutherans as heretics; so that according to the Catholic catechism the only people in the Church are Catholics.

In the so-called Orthodox catechism it is said: By the one Christian Church is understood the Orthodox, which remains fully in accord with the Universal Church. As for the Roman Church and other sects (the Lutherans and the rest they do not even dignify by the name of church), they cannot be included in the one true Church, since they have themselves separated from it.

According to this definition the Catholics and Lutherans are outside the Church, and there are only Orthodox in the Church.

The Lutheran catechism says: "Die wahre kirche wird darein erkannt, dass in ihr das Wort Gottes lauter und rein ohne Menschenzusätze gelehrt and die Sacramente treu nach Christi Einsetzung gewahret werden." [Footnote: "The true Church will be known by the Word of God being studied clear and unmixed with man's additions and the sacraments being maintained faithful to Christ's teaching."]

According to this definition all those who have added anything to the teaching of Christ and the apostles, as the Catholic and Greek churches have done, are outside the Church. And in the Church

there are only Protestants.

The Catholics assert that the Holy Ghost has been transmitted without a break in their priesthood. The Orthodox assert that the same Holy Ghost has been transmitted without a break in their priesthood. The Arians asserted that the Holy Ghost was transmitted in their priesthood (they asserted this with just as much right as the churches in authority now). The Protestants of every kind--Lutherans, Reformed Church, Presbyterians, Methodists, Swedenborgians, Mormons--assert that the Holy Ghost is only present in their communities. If the Catholics assert that the Holy Ghost, at the time of the division of the Church into Arian and Greek, left the Church that fell away and remained in the one true Church, with precisely the same right the Protestants of every denomination can assert that at the time of the separation of their Church from the Catholic the Holy Ghost left the Catholic and passed into the Church they professed. And this is just what they do.

Every church traces its creed through an uninterrupted transmission from Christ and the Apostles. And truly every Christian creed that has been derived from Christ must have come down to the present generation through a certain transmission. But that does not prove that it alone of all that has been transmuted, excluding all the rest, can be the sole truth, admitting of no doubt.

Every branch in a tree comes from the root in unbroken connection; but the fact that each branch comes from the one root, does not prove at all that each branch was the only one. It is precisely the same with the Church. Every church presents exactly the same proofs of the succession, and even the same miracles, in support of its authenticity, as every other. So that there is but one strict and exact definition of what is a church (not of something fantastic which we would wish it to be, but of what it is and has been in reality)--a church is a body of men who claim for themselves that they are in complete and sole possession of the truth. And these bodies, having in course of time, aided by the support of the temporal authorities, developed into powerful institutions, have been the principal obstacles to the diffusion of a true comprehension of the teaching of Christ.

It could not be otherwise. The chief peculiarity which distinguished Christ's teaching from previous religions consisted in the fact that those who accepted it strove ever more and more to comprehend and realize its teaching. But the Church doctrine asserted its own complete and final comprehension and realization of it.

Strange though it may seem to us who have been brought up in the erroneous view of the Church as a Christian institution, and in contempt for heresy, yet the fact is that only in what was called

heresy was there any true movement, that is, true Christianity, and that it only ceased to be so when those heresies stopped short in their movement and also petrified into the fixed forms of a church.

And, indeed what is a heresy? Read all the theological works one after another. In all of them heresy is the subject which first presents itself for definition; since every theological work deals with the true doctrine of Christ as distinguished from the erroneous doctrines which surround it, that is, heresies. Yet you will not find anywhere anything like a definition of heresy.

The treatment of this subject by the learned historian of Christianity, E. de Pressensé, in his "Histoire du Dogme" (Paris, 1869), under the heading "Ubi Christus, ibi Ecclesia," may serve as an illustration of the complete absence of anything like a definition of what is understood by the word heresy. Here is what he says in his introduction (p. 3):

"Je sais que l'on nous conteste le droit de qualifier ainsi [that is, to call heresies] les tendances qui furent si vivement combattues par les premiers Pères. La désignation même d'hérésie semble une atteinte portée à la liberté de conscience et de pensée. Nous ne pouvons partager ce scrupule, car il n'irait à rien moins qu'à enlever au Christianisme tout caractère distinctif." [see Footnote]

[Footnote: "I know that our right to qualify thus the tendencies which were so actively opposed by the early Fathers is contested. The very use of the word heresy seems an attack upon liberty of conscience and thought. We cannot share this scruple; for it would amount to nothing less than depriving Christianity of all distinctive character."]

And though he tells us that after Constantine's time the Church did actually abuse its power by designating those who dissented from it as heretics and persecuting them, yet he says, when speaking of early times:

"L'église est une libre association; il y a tout profit à se séparer d'elle. La polémique contre l'erreur n'a d'autres ressources que la pensée et le sentiment. Un type doctrinal uniforme n'a pas encore été élaboré; les divergences secondaires se produisent en Orient et en Occident avec une entière liberté; la théologie n'est point liée à d'invariables formules. Si au sein de cette diversité apparaît un fonds commun de croyances, n'est-on pas en droit d'y voir non pas un système formulé et composé par les représentants d'une autorité d'école, mais la foi elle-même dans son instinct le plus sûr et sa manifestation la plus spontanée? Si cette même unanimité qui se révèle dans les croyances essentielles, se

retrouve pour repousser telles ou telles tendances ne serons nous pas en droit de conclure que ces tendances étaient en désaccord flagrant avec les principes fondamentaux du christianisme? Cette présomption ne se transformerait-elle pas en certitude si nous reconnaissons dans la doctrine

universellement repoussée par l'Église les traits caractéristiques de l'une des religions du passé? Pour dire que le gnosticisme ou l'ébionitisme sont les formes légitimes de la pensée chrétienne il faut dire hardiment qu'il n'y a pas de pensée chrétienne, ni de caractère spécifique qui la fasse reconnaître. Sous prétexte de l'élargir, on la dissout.

Personne au temps de Platon n'eût osé couvrir de son nom une doctrine qui n'eut pas fait place à la théorie des idées; et l'on eût excité les justes moqueries de la Grèce, en voulant faire d'Epicure ou de Zénon un disciple de l'Académie. Reconnaissons donc que s'il existe une religion ou une doctrine qui s'appelle christianisme, elle peut avoir ses hérésies." [see Footnote]

[Footnote: "The Church is a free association; there is much to be gained by separation from it. Conflict with error has no weapons other than thought and feeling. One uniform type of doctrine has not yet been elaborated; divergencies in secondary matters arise freely in East and West; theology is not wedded to invariable formulas. If in the midst of this

diversity a mass of beliefs common to all is apparent, is one not justified in seeing in it, not a formulated system, framed by the representatives of pedantic authority, but faith itself in its surest instinct and its most spontaneous manifestation? If the same unanimity which is revealed in essential points of belief is found also in rejecting certain tendencies, are we not justified in concluding that these tendencies were in flagrant opposition to the fundamental principles of Christianity? And will not this presumption be transformed into certainty if we recognize in the doctrine universally rejected by the Church the characteristic features of one of the religions of the past? To say that gnosticism or ebionitism are legitimate forms of Christian thought, one must boldly deny the existence of Christian thought at all, or any specific character by which it could be recognized. While ostensibly widening its realm, one undermines it. No one in the time of Plato would have ventured to give his name to a doctrine in which the theory of ideas had no place, and one would deservedly have excited the ridicule of Greece by trying to pass off Epicurus or Zeno as a disciple of the Academy. Let us recognize, then, that if a religion or a doctrine exists which is called Christianity, it may have its heresies."]

The author's whole argument amounts to this: that every opinion which differs from the code of dogmas we believe in at a given

time, is heresy. But of course at any given time and place men always believe in something or other; and this belief in something, indefinite at any place, at some time, cannot be a criterion of truth.

It all amounts to this: since ubi Christus ibi Ecclesia, then Christus is where we are.

Every so-called heresy, regarding, as it does, its own creed as the truth, can just as easily find in Church history a series of illustrations of its own creed, can use all Pressensé's arguments on its own behalf, and can call its own creed the one truly Christian creed. And that is just what all heresies do and have always done.

The only definition of heresy (the word [GREEK WORD], means a part) is this: the name given by a body of men to any opinion which rejects a part of the Creed professed by that body. The more frequent meaning, more often ascribed to the word heresy, is --that of an opinion which rejects the Church doctrine founded and supported by the temporal authorities.

[TRANSCRIBIST'S NOTE: The GREEK WORD above used Greek letters, spelled: alpha(followed by an apostrophe)-iota(with accent)-rho-epsilon-sigma-iota-zeta]

There is a remarkable and voluminous work, very little known, "Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie," 1729, by Gottfried Arnold, which deals with precisely this subject, and points out all the unlawfulness, the arbitrariness, the senselessness, and the cruelty of using the word heretic in the sense of reprobate. This book is an attempt to write the history of Christianity in the form of a history of heresy.

In the introduction the author propounds a series of questions: (1) Of those who make heretics; (2) Of those whom they made heretics; (3) Of heretical subjects themselves; (4) Of the method of making heretics; and (5) Of the object and result of making heretics.

On each of these points he propounds ten more questions, the answers to which he gives later on from the works of well-known theologians. But he leaves the reader to draw for himself the principal conclusion from the expositions in the whole book. As examples of these questions, in which the answers are to some extent included also, I will quote the following. Under the 4th head, of the manner in which heretics are made, he says, in one of the questions (in the 7th):

"Does not all history show that the greatest makers of heretics and masters of that craft were just these wise men, from whom the Father hid his secrets, that is, the hypocrites,

the Pharisees, and lawyers, men utterly godless and perverted (Question 20-21)? And in the corrupt times of Christianity were not these very men cast out, denounced by the hypocrites and envious, who were endowed by God with great gifts and who would in the days of pure Christianity have been held in high honor? And, on the other hand, would not the men who, in the decline of Christianity raised themselves above all, and regarded themselves as the teachers of the purest Christianity, would not these very men, in the times of the apostles and disciples of Christ, have been regarded as the most shameless heretics and anti-Christians?"

He expounds, among other things in these questions, the theory that any verbal expression of faith, such as was demanded by the Church, and the departure from which was reckoned as heresy, could never fully cover the exact religious ideas of a believer, and that therefore the demand for an expression of faith in certain words was ever productive of heresy, and he says, in Question 21:

"And if heavenly things and thoughts present themselves to a man's mind as so great and so profound that he does not find corresponding words to express them, ought one to call him a heretic, because he cannot express his idea with perfect exactness?"

And in Question 33:

"And is not the fact that there was no heresy in the earliest days due to the fact that the Christians did not judge one another by verbal expressions, but by deed and by heart, since they had perfect liberty to express their ideas without the dread of being called heretics; was it not the easiest and most ordinary ecclesiastical proceeding, if the clergy wanted to get rid of or to ruin anyone, for them to cast suspicion on the person's belief, and to throw a cloak of heresy upon him, and by this means to procure his condemnation and removal?"

"True though it may be that there were sins and errors among the so-called heretics, it is no less true and evident," he says farther on, "from the innumerable examples quoted here (i. e., in the history of the Church and of heresy), that there was not a single sincere and conscientious man of any importance whom the Churchmen would not from envy or other causes have ruined."

Thus, almost two hundred years ago, the real meaning of heresy was understood. And notwithstanding that, the same conception of it has gone on existing up to now. And it cannot fail to exist so long as the conception of a church exists. Heresy is the obverse side of the Church. Wherever there is a church, there must be the conception of heresy. A church is a body of men who assert that they are in possession of infallible truth. Heresy is the opinion

of the men who do not admit the infallibility of the Church's truth.

Heresy makes its appearance in the Church. It is the effort to break through the petrified authority of the Church. All effort after a living comprehension of the doctrine has been made by heretics. Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, Luther, Huss, Savonarola, Helchitsky, and the rest were heretics. It could not be otherwise.

The follower of Christ, whose service means an ever-growing understanding of his teaching, and an ever-closer fulfillment of it, in progress toward perfection, cannot, just because he is a follower, of Christ, claim for himself or any other that he understands Christ's teaching fully and fulfills it. Still less can he claim this for any body of men.

To whatever degree of understanding and perfection the follower of Christ may have attained, he always feels the insufficiency of his understanding and fulfillment of it, and is always striving toward a fuller understanding and fulfillment. And therefore, to assert of one's self or of any body of men, that one is or they are in possession of perfect understanding and fulfillment of Christ's word, is to renounce the very spirit of Christ's teaching.

Strange as it may seem, the churches as churches have always been,

and cannot but be, institutions not only alien in spirit to Christ's teaching, but even directly antagonistic to it. With good reason Voltaire calls the Church l'infâme; with good reason have all or almost all so-called sects of Christians recognized the Church as the scarlet woman foretold in the Apocalypse; with good reason is the history of the Church the history of the greatest cruelties and horrors.

The churches as churches are not, as many people suppose, institutions which have Christian principles for their basis, even though they may have strayed a little away from the straight path. The churches as churches, as bodies which assert their own infallibility, are institutions opposed to Christianity. There is not only nothing in common between the churches as such and Christianity, except the name, but they represent two principles fundamentally opposed and antagonistic to one another. One represents pride, violence, self-assertion, stagnation, and death; the other, meekness, penitence, humility, progress, and life.

We cannot serve these two masters; we have to choose between them.

The servants of the churches of all denominations, especially of later times, try to show themselves champions of progress in Christianity. They make concessions, wish to correct the abuses that have slipped into the Church, and maintain that one cannot,

on account of these abuses, deny the principle itself of a Christian church, which alone can bind all men together in unity and be a mediator between men and God. But this is all a mistake. Not only have churches never bound men together in unity; they have always been one of the principal causes of division between men, of their hatred of one another, of wars, battles, inquisitions, massacres of St. Bartholomew, and so on. And the churches have never served as mediators between men and God. Such mediation is not wanted, and was directly forbidden by Christ, who has revealed his teaching directly and immediately to each man. But the churches set up dead forms in the place of God, and far from revealing God, they obscure him from men's sight. The churches, which originated from misunderstanding of Christ's teaching and have maintained this misunderstanding by their immovability, cannot but persecute and refuse to recognize all true understanding of Christ's words. They try to conceal this, but in vain; for every step forward along the path pointed out for us by Christ is a step toward their destruction.

To hear and to read the sermons and articles in which Church writers of later times of all denominations speak of Christian truths and virtues; to hear or read these skillful arguments that have been elaborated during centuries, and exhortations and professions, which sometimes seem like sincere professions, one is ready to doubt whether the churches can be antagonistic to Christianity. "It cannot be," one says, "that these people who can point to such men as Chrysostom, Fénelon, Butler, and

others professing the Christian faith, were antagonistic to Christianity." One is tempted to say, "The churches may have strayed away from Christianity, they may be in error, but they cannot be hostile to it." But we must look to the fruit to judge the tree, as Christ taught us. And if we see that their fruits were evil, that the results of their activity were antagonistic to Christianity, we cannot but admit that however good the men were--the work of the Church in which these men took part was not Christian. The goodness and worth of these men who served the churches was the goodness and worth of the men, and not of the institution they served. All the good men, such as Francis of Assisi, and Francis of Sales, our Tihon Zadonsky, Thomas à Kempis, and others, were good men in spite of their serving an institution hostile to Christianity, and they would have been still better if they had not been under the influence of the error which they were serving.

But why should we speak of the past and judge from the past, which may have been misrepresented and misunderstood by us? The churches, with their principles and their practice, are not a thing of the past. The churches are before us to-day, and we can judge of them to some purpose by their practical activity, their influence on men.

What is the practical work of the churches to-day? What is their influence upon men? What is done by the churches among us, among the Catholics and the Protestants of all denominations--what is their practical work? and what are the results of their practical

work?

The practice of our Russian so-called Orthodox Church is plain to all. It is an enormous fact which there is no possibility of hiding and about which there can be no disputing.

What constitutes the practical work of this Russian Church, this immense, intensely active institution, which consists of a regiment of half a million men and costs the people tens of millions of rubles?

The practical business of the Church consists in instilling by every conceivable means into the mass of one hundred millions of the Russian people those extinct relics of beliefs for which there is nowadays no kind of justification, "in which scarcely anyone now believes, and often not even those whose duty it is to diffuse these false beliefs." To instill into the people the formulas of Byzantine theology, of the Trinity, of the Mother of God, of Sacraments, of Grace, and so on, extinct conceptions, foreign to us, and having no kind of meaning for men of our times, forms only one part of the work of the Russian Church. Another part of its practice consists in the maintenance of idol-worship in the most literal meaning of the word; in the veneration of holy relics, and of ikons, the offering of sacrifices to them, and the expectation of their answers to prayer. I am not going to speak of what is preached and what is written by clergy of scientific or

liberal tendencies in the theological journals. I am going to speak of what is actually done by the clergy through the wide expanse of the Russian land among a people of one hundred millions. What do they, diligently, assiduously, everywhere alike, without intermission, teach the people? What do they demand from the people in virtue of their (so-called) Christian faith?

I will begin from the beginning with the birth of a child. At the birth of a child they teach them that they must recite a prayer over the child and mother to purify them, as though without this prayer the mother of a newborn child were unclean. To do this the priest holds the child in his arms before the images of the saints (called by the people plainly gods) and reads words of exorcizing power, and this purifies the mother. Then it is suggested to the parents, and even exacted of them, under fear of punishment for non-fulfillment, that the child must be baptized; that is, be dipped by the priest three times into the water, while certain words, understood by no one, are read aloud, and certain actions, still less understood, are performed; various parts of the body are rubbed with oil, and the hair is cut, while the sponsors blow and spit at an imaginary devil. All this is necessary to purify the child and to make him a Christian. Then it is instilled into the parents that they ought to administer the sacrament to the child, that is, give him, in the guise of bread and wine, a portion of Christ's body to eat, as a result of which the child

receives the grace of God within it, and so on. Then it is suggested that the child as it grows up must be taught to pray. To pray means to place himself directly before the wooden boards on which are painted the faces of Christ, the Mother of God, and the saints, to bow his head and his whole body, and to touch his forehead, his shoulders and his stomach with his right hand, holding his fingers in a certain position, and to utter some words of Slavonic, the most usual of which as taught to all children are: Mother of God, virgin, rejoice thee, etc., etc.

Then it is instilled into the child as it is brought up that at the sight of any church or ikon he must repeat the same action--i. e., cross himself. Then it is instilled into him that on holidays (holidays are the days on which Christ was born, though no one knows when that was, on which he was circumcised, on which the Mother of God died, on which the cross was carried in procession, on which ikons have been set up, on which a lunatic saw a vision, and so on)--on holidays he must dress himself in his best clothes and go to church, and must buy candles and place them there before the images of the saints. Then he must give offerings and prayers for the dead, and little loaves to be cut up into three-cornered pieces, and must pray many times for the health and prosperity of the Tzar and the bishops, and for himself and his own affairs, and then kiss the cross and the hand of the priest.

Besides these observances, it is instilled into him that at least once a year he must confess. To confess means to go to the

church and to tell the priest his sins, on the theory that this informing a stranger of his sins completely purifies him from them. And after that he must eat with a little spoon a morsel of bread with wine, which will purify him still more. Next it is instilled into him that if a man and woman want their physical union to be sanctified they must go to church, put on metal crowns, drink certain potions, walk three times round a table to the sound of singing, and that then the physical union of a man and woman becomes sacred and altogether different from all other such unions.

Further it is instilled into him in his life that he must observe the following rules: not to eat butter or milk on certain days, and on certain other days to sing Te Deums and requiems for the dead, on holidays to entertain the priest and give him money, and several times in the year to bring the ikons from the church, and to carry them slung on his shoulders through the fields and houses. It is instilled into him that on his death-bed a man must not fail to eat bread and wine with a spoon, and that it will be still better if he has time to be rubbed with sacred oil. This will guarantee his welfare in the future life. After his death it is instilled into his relatives that it is a good thing for the salvation of the dead man to place a printed paper of prayers in his hands; it is a good thing further to read aloud a certain book over the dead body, and to pronounce the dead man's name in church at a certain time. All this is regarded as faith obligatory on

everyone.

But if anyone wants to take particular care of his soul, then according to this faith he is instructed that the greatest security of the salvation of the soul in the world is attained by offering money to the churches and monasteries, and engaging the holy men by this means to pray for him. Entering monasteries too and kissing relics and miraculous ikons, are further means of salvation for the soul.

According to this faith ikons and relics communicate a special sanctity, power, and grace, and even proximity to these objects, touching them, kissing them, putting candles before them, crawling under them while they are being carried along, are all efficacious for salvation, as well as Te Deums repeated before these holy things.

So this, and nothing else, is the faith called Orthodox, that is the actual faith which, under the guise of Christianity, has been with all the forces of the Church, and is now with especial zeal, instilled into the people.

And let no one say that the Orthodox teachers place the essential part of their teaching in something else, and that all these are only ancient forms, which it is not thought necessary to do away with. That is false. This, and nothing but this, is the faith

taught through the whole of Russia by the whole of the Russian clergy, and of late years with especial zeal. There is nothing else taught. Something different may be talked of and written of in the capitals; but among the hundred millions of the people this is what is done, this is what is taught, and nothing more. Churchmen may talk of something else, but this is what they teach by every means in their power.

All this, and the worship of relics and of ikons, has been introduced into works of theology and into the catechisms. Thus they teach it to the people in theory and in practice, using every resource of authority, solemnity, pomp, and violence to impress them. They compel the people, by overawing them, to believe in this, and jealously guard this faith from any attempt to free the people from these barbarous superstitions.

As I said when I published my book, Christ's teaching and his very words about non-resistance to evil were for many years a subject for ridicule and low jesting in my eyes, and Churchmen, far from opposing it, even encouraged this scoffing at sacred things. But try the experiment of saying a disrespectful word about a hideous idol which is carried sacrilegiously about Moscow by drunken men under the name of the ikon of the Iversky virgin, and you will raise a groan of indignation from these same Churchmen. All that they preach is an external observance of the rites of idolatry. And let it not be said that the one does not hinder the other,

that "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." "All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matt. xxiii. 23, 3).

This was spoken of the Pharisees, who fulfilled all the external observances prescribed by the law, and therefore the words "whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do," refer to works of mercy and goodness, and the words "do not ye after their works, for they say and do not," refer to their observance of ceremonies and their neglect of good works, and have exactly the opposite meaning to that which the Churchmen try to give to the passage, interpreting it as an injunction to observe ceremonies. External observances and the service of truth and goodness are for the most part difficult to combine; the one excludes the other. So it was with the Pharisees, so it is now with Church Christians.

If a man can be saved by the redemption, by sacraments, and by prayer, then he does not need good works.

The Sermon on the Mount, or the Creed. One cannot believe in both. And Churchmen have chosen the latter. The Creed is taught and is read as a prayer in the churches, but the Sermon on the Mount is excluded even from the Gospel passages read in the churches, so that the congregation never hears it in church, except on those days when the whole of the Gospel is read. Indeed, it could not be otherwise. People who believe in

a wicked and senseless God--who has cursed the human race and devoted his own Son to sacrifice, and a part of mankind to eternal torment--cannot believe in the God of love. The man who believes in a God, in a Christ coming again in glory to judge and to punish the quick and the dead, cannot believe in the Christ who bade us turn the left cheek, judge not, forgive these that wrong us, and love our enemies. The man who believes in the inspiration of the Old Testament and the sacred character of David, who commanded on his deathbed the murder of an old man who had cursed him, and whom he could not kill himself because he was bound by an oath to him, and the similar atrocities of which the Old Testament is full, cannot believe in the holy love of Christ. The man who believes in the Church's doctrine of the compatibility of warfare and capital punishment with Christianity cannot believe in the brotherhood of all men.

And what is most important of all--the man who believes in salvation through faith in the redemption or the sacraments, cannot devote all his powers to realizing Christ's moral teaching in his life.

The man who has been instructed by the Church in the profane doctrine that a man cannot be saved by his own powers, but that there is another means of salvation, will infallibly rely upon this means and not on his own powers, which, they assure him, it is sinful to trust in.

The teaching of every Church, with its redemption and sacraments, excludes the teaching of Christ; most of all the teaching of the Orthodox Church with its idolatrous observances.

"But the people have always believed of their own accord as they believe now," will be said in answer to this. "The whole history of the Russian people proves it. One cannot deprive the people of their traditions." This statement, too, is misleading. The people did certainly at one time believe in something like what the Church believes in now, though it was far from being the same thing. In spite of their superstitious regard for ikons, housespirits, relics, and festivals with wreaths of birch leaves, there has still always been in the people a profound moral and living understanding of Christianity, which there has never been in the Church as a whole, and which is only met with in its best representatives. But the people, notwithstanding all the prejudices instilled into them by the government and the Church, have in their best representatives long outgrown that crude stage of understanding, a fact which is proved by the springing up everywhere of the rationalist sects with which Russia is swarming to-day, and on which Churchmen are now carrying on an ineffectual warfare. The people are advancing to a consciousness of the moral, living side of Christianity. And then the Church comes forward, not borrowing from the people, but zealously instilling into them the petrified formalities of an extinct paganism, and striving to thrust them back again into the

darkness from which they are emerging with such effort.

"We teach the people nothing new, nothing but what they believe, only in a more perfect form," say the Churchmen. This is just what the man did who tied up the full-grown chicken and thrust it back into the shell it had come out of.

I have often been irritated, though it would be comic if the consequences were not so awful, by observing how men shut one another in a delusion and cannot get out of this magic circle.

The first question, the first doubt of a Russian who is beginning to think, is a question about the ikons, and still more the miraculous relics: Is it true that they are genuine, and that miracles are worked through them? Hundreds of thousands of men put this question to themselves, and their principal difficulty in answering it is the fact that bishops, metropolitans, and all men in positions of authority kiss the relics and wonder-working ikons. Ask the bishops and men in positions of authority why they do so, and they will say they do it for the sake of the people, while the people kiss them because the bishops and men in authority do so.

In spite of all the external varnish of modernity, learning, and spirituality which the members of the Church begin nowadays to assume in their works, their articles, their theological journals,

and their sermons, the practical work of the Russian Church consists of nothing more than keeping the people in their present condition of coarse and savage idolatry, and worse still, strengthening and diffusing superstition and religious ignorance, and suppressing that living understanding of Christianity which exists in the people side by side with idolatry.

I remember once being present in the monks' bookshop of the Optchy Hermitage while an old peasant was choosing books for his grandson, who could read. A monk pressed on him accounts of relics, holidays, miraculous ikons, a psalter, etc. I asked the old man, "Has he the Gospel?" "No." "Give him the Gospel in Russian," I said to the monk. "That will not do for him," answered the monk. There you have an epitome of the work of our Church.

But this is only in barbarous Russia, the European and American reader will observe. And such an observation is just, but only so far as it refers to the government, which aids the Church in its task of stultification and corruption in Russia.

It is true that there is nowhere in Europe a government so despotic and so closely allied with the ruling Church. And therefore the share of the temporal power in the corruption of the people is greatest in Russia. But it is untrue that the Russian Church in its influence on the people is in any respect different

from any other church.

The churches are everywhere the same, and if the Catholic, the Anglican, or the Lutheran Church has not at hand a government as compliant as the Russian, it is not due to any indisposition to profit by such a government.

The Church as a church, whatever it may be--Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian--every church, in so far as it is a church, cannot but strive for the same object as the Russian Church. That object is to conceal the real meaning of Christ's teaching and to replace it by their own, which lays no obligation on them, excludes the possibility of understanding the true teaching of Christ, and what is the chief consideration, justifies the existence of priests supported at the people's expense.

What else has Catholicism done, what else is it doing in its prohibition of reading the Gospel, and in its demand for unreasoning submission to Church authorities and to an infallible Pope? Is the religion of Catholicism any other than that of the Russian Church? There is the same external ritual, the same relics, miracles, and wonder-working images of Notre Dame, and the same processions; the same loftily vague discussions of Christianity in books and sermons, and when it comes to practice, the same supporting of the present idolatry. And is not the same thing done in Anglicanism, Lutheranism, and every denomination of

Protestantism which has been formed into a church? There is the same duty laid on their congregations to believe in the dogmas expressed in the fourth century, which have lost all meaning for men of our times, and the same duty of idolatrous worship, if not of relics and ikons, then of the Sabbath Day and the letter of the Bible. There is always the same activity directed to concealing the real duties of Christianity, and to putting in their place an external respectability and cant, as it is so well described by the English, who are peculiarly oppressed by it. In Protestantism this tendency is specially remarkable because it has not the excuse of antiquity. And does not exactly the same thing show itself even in contemporary revivalism--the revived Calvinism and Evangelicalism, to which the Salvation Army owes its origin?

Uniform is the attitude of all the churches to the teaching of Christ, whose name they assume for their own advantage.

The inconsistency of all church forms of religion with the teaching of Christ is, of course, the reason why special efforts are necessary to conceal this inconsistency from people. Truly, we need only imagine ourselves in the position of any grown-up man, not necessarily educated, even the simplest man of the present day, who has picked up the ideas that are everywhere in the air nowadays of geology, physics, chemistry, cosmography, or history, when he, for the first time, consciously compares them with the articles of belief instilled into him in childhood, and

maintained by the churches--that God created the world in six days, and light before the sun; that Noah shut up all the animals in his ark, and so on; that Jesus is also God the Son, who created all before time was; that this God came down upon earth to atone for Adam's sin; that he rose again, ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and will come in the clouds to judge the world, and so on. All these propositions, elaborated by men of the fourth century, had a certain meaning for men of that time, but for men of to-day they have no meaning whatever. Men of the present day can repeat these words with their lips, but believe them they cannot. For such sentences as that God lives in heaven, that the heavens opened and a voice from somewhere said something, that Christ rose again, and ascended somewhere in heaven, and again will come from somewhere on the clouds, and so on, have no meaning for us.

A man who regarded the heavens as a solid, finite vault could believe or disbelieve that God created the heavens, that the heavens opened, that Christ ascended into heaven, but for us all these phrases have no sense whatever. Men of the present can only believe, as indeed they do, that they ought to believe in this; but believe it they cannot, because it has no meaning for them.

Even if all these phrases ought to be interpreted in a figurative sense and are allegories, we know that in the first place all Churchmen are not agreed about it, but, on the contrary, the

majority stick to understanding the Holy Scripture in its literal sense; and secondly, that these allegorical interpretations are very varied and are not supported by any evidence.

But even if a man wants to force himself to believe in the doctrines of the Church just as they are taught to him, the universal diffusion of education and of the Gospel and of communication between people of different forms of religion presents a still more insurmountable obstacle to his doing so.

A man of the present day need only buy a Gospel for three copecks and read through the plain words, admitting of no misinterpretation, that Christ said to the Samaritan woman "that the Father seeketh not worshipers at Jerusalem, nor in this mountain nor in that, but worshipers in spirit and in truth," or the saying that "the Christian must not pray like the heathen, nor for show, but secretly, that is, in his closet," or that Christ's follower must call no man master or father--he need only read these words to be thoroughly convinced that the Church pastors, who call themselves teachers in opposition to Christ's precept, and dispute among themselves, constitute no kind of authority, and that what the Churchmen teach us is not Christianity. Less even than that is necessary. Even if a man nowadays did continue to believe in miracles and did not read the Gospel, mere association with people of different forms of religion and faith, which happens so easily in these days, compels him to doubt of the truth of his own faith. It was all very well when a man did not see men of any other form of

religion than his own; he believed that his form of religion was the one true one. But a thinking man has only to come into contact--as constantly happens in these days--with people, equally good and bad, of different denominations, who condemn each other's beliefs, to doubt of the truth of the belief he professes himself. In these days only a man who is absolutely ignorant or absolutely indifferent to the vital questions with which religion deals, can remain in the faith of the Church.

What deceptions and what strenuous efforts the churches must employ to continue, in spite of all these tendencies subversive of the faith, to build churches, to perform masses, to preach, to teach, to convert, and, most of all, to receive for it all immense emoluments, as do all these priests, pastors, incumbents, superintendents, abbots, archdeacons, bishops, and archbishops. They need special supernatural efforts. And the churches do, with ever-increasing intensity and zeal, make such efforts. With us in Russia, besides other means, they employ, simple brute force, as there the temporal power is willing to obey the Church. Men who refuse an external assent to the faith, and say so openly, are either directly punished or deprived of their rights; men who strictly keep the external forms of religion are rewarded and given privileges.

That is how the Orthodox clergy proceed; but indeed all churches without exception avail themselves of every means for the purpose

--one of the most important of which is what is now called hypnotism.

Every art, from architecture to poetry, is brought into requisition to work its effect on men's souls and to reduce them to a state of stupefaction, and this effect is constantly produced. This use of hypnotizing influence on men to bring them to a state of stupefaction is especially apparent in the proceedings of the Salvation Army, who employ new practices to which we are unaccustomed: trumpets, drums, songs, flags, costumes, marching, dancing, tears, and dramatic performances.

But this only displeases us because these are new practices. Were not the old practices in churches essentially the same, with their special lighting, gold, splendor, candles, choirs, organ, bells, vestments, intoning, etc.?

But however powerful this hypnotic influence may be, it is not the chief nor the most pernicious activity of the Church. The chief and most pernicious work of the Church is that which is directed to the deception of children--these very children of whom Christ said: "Woe to him that offendeth one of these little ones." From the very first awakening of the consciousness of the child they begin to deceive him, to instill into him with the utmost solemnity what they do not themselves believe in, and they continue to instill it into him till the

deception has by habit grown into the child's nature. They studiously deceive the child on the most important subject in life, and when the deception has so grown into his life that it would be difficult to uproot it, then they reveal to him the whole world of science and reality, which cannot by any means be reconciled with the beliefs that have been instilled into him, leaving it to him to find his way as best he can out of these contradictions.

If one set oneself the task of trying to confuse a man so that he could not think clearly nor free himself from the perplexity of two opposing theories of life which had been instilled into him from childhood, one could not invent any means more effectual than the treatment of every young man educated in our so-called Christian society.

It is terrible to think what the churches do to men. But if one imagines oneself in the position of the men who constitute the Church, we see they could not act differently. The churches are placed in a dilemma: the Sermon on the Mount or the Nicene Creed--the one excludes the other. If a man sincerely believes in the Sermon on the Mount, the Nicene Creed must inevitably lose all meaning and significance for him, and the Church and its representatives together with it. If a man believes in the Nicene Creed, that is, in the Church, that is, in those who call themselves its representatives, the Sermon on the Mount becomes

superfluous for him. And therefore the churches cannot but make every possible effort to obscure the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount, and to attract men to themselves. It is only due to the intense zeal of the churches in this direction that the influence of the churches has lasted hitherto.

Let the Church stop its work of hypnotizing the masses, and deceiving children even for the briefest interval of time, and men would begin to understand Christ's teaching. But this understanding will be the end of the churches and all their influence. And therefore the churches will not for an instant relax their zeal in the business of hypnotizing grown-up people and deceiving children. This, then, is the work of the churches: to instill a false interpretation of Christ's teaching into men, and to prevent a true interpretation of it for the majority of so-called believers.