

Nietzsche's Critique of Christianity

Nietzsche's Critique of Christianity:

An Exposition of The Anti-Christ

. By

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' A Thesis

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Scope and Purpose: This thesis attempts to set forth clearly
what Nietzsche says about Christianity in The
Anti-Christ. Its goal is the achievement of an
adequate understanding of Nietzsche's critique
of Christianity; it is not meant to be a critical
evaluation of that critique.

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of this thesis is the critique of Christianity contained in Friedrich Nietzsche's book, The Anti-Christ. Believing that this book constitutes perhaps the most profound theoretical attack ever made against Christianity, we have attempted to achieve an understanding of this attack. A thorough comprehension of The Anti-Christ is the goal of this thesis, and hence it is expository, rather than critical in nature. In order to fulfill our fundamental intention of understanding The Anti-Christ, we have been compelled to disregard certain questions of which we are nevertheless aware. We have not been able to examine, for instance, the question of the accuracy or the profundity of Nietzsche's understanding of Christianity. Nothing has been said, moreover, of what the Christian response to Nietzsche has been, or should be.¹ The concern of this thesis is not to accept or to reject the teaching of The Anti-Christ concerning Christianity, but to set forth that teaching as clearly as possible. Such an exposition of Nietzsche's teaching is of prime

¹ A response to questions such as these would require a thorough study of Nietzsche's relation to the theology and Biblical scholarship of the nineteenth century, and his place within the development of these disciplines as a whole. It would also be necessary to look at his teaching about Christianity in the light of the most profound Christian thinkers.

necessity because it constitutes the only basis for any intelligent agreement or disagreement with that teaching. The role which the intellect should play in the response to Nietzsche is inevitably problematic for Christianity. This thesis would not have been undertaken, however, if it had not been assumed that at least part of the Christian response to Nietzsche's critique must be intellectual, and therefore presupposes an understanding of this critique.

The need for a clear account of Nietzsche's teaching in The Anti-Christ is heightened further by the manner in which Nietzsche presents his teaching. The blatant, yet powerful rhetoric of The Anti-Christ and its apparently disjointed, almost casual mode of argumentation tend to persuade one that it is a book which is easy to understand, and which demands immediate and unequivocal agreement or disagreement. It would be nearer to the truth, however, to recognize that, because of its manner, The Anti-Christ is a book which is easy to misunderstand. It stands in need of a clear and orderly setting forth of its teaching. In order to accomplish this, we have required four chapters.

The first chapter, entitled "The Necessity for a Critique of Christianity in Nietzsche's Thought", is meant to serve as an introduction to our exposition of The Anti-Christ. One cannot comprehend adequately Nietzsche's critique of Christianity unless one understands its place within his thought as a whole. This chapter thus attempts to situate Nietzsche's critique of Christianity

within the general context of his thought. In order to do this we have concentrated on writings of Nietzsche other than The Anti-Christ. No reference to secondary sources is made because none were used. This chapter, and indeed, the entire thesis, is based on a careful reading of Nietzsche himself.²

Although the first chapter of the thesis is meant to provide a context for Nietzsche's critique of Christianity, it does not purport to give an adequate account of Nietzsche's thought in its entirety. We have discussed his thought only to the extent necessary to furnish a context for The Anti-Christ. In this establishment of context we have concentrated on one, but perhaps not the only central aspect of Nietzsche's thought: his attempt to overcome nihilism. This approach, we believe, will be seen to provide the most suitable basis for an understanding of his confrontation with Christianity

² The exclusion of secondary sources from this thesis is not meant to imply a knowledge of Nietzsche so thorough as to require no help from others who have thought about his teaching. It has its basis, rather, in a thorough appreciation of the limitations imposed by an imperfect knowledge of Nietzsche, and by the restricted scope of an M.A. thesis. A great deal has been written, in different languages, on Nietzsche. The process of reading this material, selecting what is worthwhile, and then assessing it in terms of the concerns of this thesis would be a huge task in itself. Such an undertaking would presuppose an understanding of Nietzsche sufficient to enable one to judge accurately what has been written about him. It would also presuppose much more time than is permissible for an M.A. thesis. Thus, we concentrated on Nietzsche himself. It was thought that this in itself was more than enough of an undertaking, and that becoming entangled in a mass of secondary material would be both confusing and time-consuming. The study of Nietzsche scholarship may be ultimately necessary, but it is more necessary, initially, and for the restricted purposes of an M.A. thesis, to come to terms with Nietzsche's thought itself.

in The Anti-Christ. It is hoped, as well, that it will be seen that only after understanding why Nietzsche undertakes a critique of Christianity can the critique itself be properly understood.

The second chapter, entitled "The Method of Nietzsche's Critique of Christianity in The Anti-Christ", is also a necessary introductory chapter, but it is less general than the first chapter. Just as the first chapter could be said to answer the question why Nietzsche wrote The Anti-Christ, so this chapter attempts to explain how The Anti-Christ accomplishes its purpose. (It will be seen that there is a very close relation between these two questions, and therefore, between the first two chapters of this thesis.) The manner in which Nietzsche's critique of Christianity is presented in The Anti-Christ is such that it is easy to miss the consistent method of approach underlying this critique. This method, although pervading The Anti-Christ, is not explicitly formulated in the book. References are made to it there, and these are noted in this chapter, but in order to understand it fully we must again turn to writings other than The Anti-Christ. Only subsequent to the attainment of an adequate knowledge of the method of Nietzsche's critique of Christianity will we be in a position to elucidate the content of this critique.

After establishing the context of The Anti-Christ within Nietzsche's thought, and the method, or general mode of procedure underlying the book, we undertake, in the remaining two chapters, to set forth clearly the teaching of The Anti-Christ. These chapters

largely speak for themselves, and they constitute the substance of the thesis. No attempt has been made to go through The Anti-Christ section by section. We have chosen, rather, to concentrate on those sections which comprise what we consider to be the primary thrust of Nietzsche's critique of Christianity.

We have made a distinction in these two chapters between Nietzsche's critique of Jesus Christ, and his critique of Christianity. The former critique is the concern of the third chapter, and the latter of the fourth chapter. Nietzsche himself is very careful to distinguish Jesus Christ from Christianity, and this distinction is one of the central themes of The Anti-Christ. However, the problem of the relation between Jesus and Christianity in Nietzsche's thought is a very complex one, and it does not end in a simple separation of the two. Thus, although we deal with the two critiques separately, we attempt also to show where they come together in Nietzsche's thought.

CHAPTER I

The Necessity for a Critique of Christianity in Nietzsche's Thought

Nihilist and Christian: they rhyme, and
do not merely rhyme... ¹

An adequate comprehension of Nietzsche's critique of Christianity requires not only a careful study of the content of this critique but, moreover, an understanding of its necessity for his task as a thinker. Because of the stature and complexity of Nietzsche's thought, it would be presumptuous indeed to attempt a definitive statement of the fundamental nature of this task. However, for our purposes, it may perhaps be said that the necessity for his critique of Christianity can best be understood in terms of his struggle against nihilism. As we shall see, "nihilism", as Nietzsche understands it, is something more profound and fundamental than the specifically modern nihilism which arose in the nineteenth century in Europe, and is now familiar to most people living in the West. However, it is this modern variety of nihilism which Nietzsche initially confronts; and this confrontation induces him to examine, in depth, the whole problem of nihilism. This profound analysis of nihilism leads him to see the necessity for a vehement critique of Christianity. In this chapter an attempt will be made to clarify the

¹ F. Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ (Great Britain, 1968), p.182. In the German language, "nihilist" and "Christian" do rhyme.

nature of the relation between Nietzsche's attack on Christianity and his self-appointed task of overcoming nihilism.

Nihilism and the Historical Sense

In an essay entitled "The Use and Abuse of History" (1874)

Nietzsche writes:

This is a universal law; a living thing can only be healthy, strong and productive within a certain horizon: if it be incapable of drawing one round itself, or too selfish to lose its own view in another's, it will come to an untimely end.²

The notion of "horizon" is central to Nietzsche's thought. The German equivalent of "horizon" is "der Horizont" which is defined as: "geistiges Weite eines Menschen, Gesichtskreis" (the limit or boundary of one's thought or understanding). In terms of the theatre it is defined in German as: "Abschluss des Bühnenraumes, der den Himmel darstellen soll" (the outer boundary of the stage from which comes the light which illuminates the stage and the actors upon it).³ This latter understanding of the word seems especially appropriate in terms of the role which it plays in Nietzsche's thought. One's horizon is that frame-work of unquestioned presuppositions about the

² F. Nietzsche, "The Use and Abuse of History", Thoughts Out of Season (New York, 1964), p. 10.

³ "Wörterbuch der Deutschen Gegenwartssprache (Berlin, 1970) pp. 1898-9.

nature of things within which one thinks and acts. At the time he wrote "The Use and Abuse of History", Nietzsche thought that proper thinking and acting, or great living, requires an unquestioned horizon which shields men from the paralysing vision of existence as chaos. Its light protects men from the darkness of the abyss. Within the illumination of the horizon, men can think and act effectively, believing that their thought and action is sustained in the nature of things.

While emphasizing the importance of horizons to human life, Nietzsche is also profoundly aware of the 'imminent threat to all horizons presented by the "historical sense". As he writes in "The Use and Abuse of History": "...we are all suffering from a malignant historical fever, and should at least recognize the fact."⁴ What is the "historical sense"? And why does Nietzsche regard it as a threat to life-sustaining horizons? We must now attempt to answer these two questions.

A response to the first question requires an account of the growth of the consciousness of history in the century between Rousseau and Nietzsche. In order to remain within the scope of this thesis, we must make this account very brief and very general. It is hoped that this necessity will not detract from the basic accuracy of

⁴ F. Nietzsche, "The Use and Abuse of History", Thoughts Out of Season (New York, 1964), p. 4.

what is said concerning the development of the historical sense.

Rousseau, in his Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, suggested that man's humanity was historically acquired. His insight into the historicity of man's humanity generated an interest in history which was strengthened by the European reaction to the French Revolution. The revolutionists appealed from tradition to the abstract ideal of the "rights of man". The opponents of the revolution, such as Burke, appealed from abstract ideals to tradition, which they began to uncover and elucidate in detail through the study of history. In opposing the revolutionary doctrine, the counter-revolutionists emphasized the variability and the temporality of political norms. Their study of history appeared to support their contention that different cultures, with different histories, evolved different political and social norms. It was argued that these local norms could not be subordinated, in practice, to bloodless, abstract notions such as the "rights of man".

Although it was originally intended by the counter-revolutionists to combat the universal claims of a certain political ideology, history became the antagonist of all universal principles. As the study of history became more sophisticated, and as it dealt with an ever-widening range of data, the historian was confronted with an apparently endless panorama of various principles of human thought and action. No universally applicable principles of thought and action could be found. The discoveries of the rapidly growing school of historians,

coupled with Rousseau's insight into the historically acquired humanity of man, as well as Kant's account of the history of "pure reason" (in The Critique of Pure Reason), had apparently transformed man into an historical being.

The insight into man's historicity (the "historical sense") seemed to reveal that man occupied the unique position of dwelling within the two distinct realms of "nature" and "history". He was subject to the laws of a non-teleological nature, insofar as he was part of nature, and yet he retained some freedom in a realm other than nature; that of history, which he freely made, and which made him what he was (insofar as he was not merely an animal). According to the teaching of the historical sense, in order to understand man as man, one was required to understand his history. In so doing, one at least implicitly acknowledged that man's principles of thought and action (that is, action other than the performance of basic biological functions) were not natural to man as man, but were historically given.⁵ Since history exists entirely within the domain of the temporal, and since man's principles of thought and action were seen to be historically variable, and even historically acquired, then it could only be concluded that these principles possessed no universal, non-temporal validity. Man, and the principles by which

⁵ The modern theories of evolution have now furnished even man's biological functions with a history.

man lived, became subject to the reign of temporality.

The historical sense had apparently destroyed the possibility of religious or philosophical thought about eternity. Hegel, however, attempted to salvage thought about eternity, not by denying the validity of the insight into man's historicity, but by incorporating this insight into a metaphysical system, which further heightened the historical sense of Europe. In Hegel's thought, history acquired metaphysical status. This status, however, depended on the notion that the historical process was completed in Hegel's time. Only thus could philosophy as the contemplation of the eternal be reconciled with the teaching of the historical sense that a philosophy is the product of its time. After Hegel, Europe became captivated with the notion of history as a rational progress, while tending to abandon the all-important notion of its completedness (although, of course, the origins of the doctrine of progress are not to be found solely in Hegel's thought).

In "The Use and Abuse of History", Nietzsche attacks Hegel's concept of history. He ridicules the notion that the historical process is rational, quoting with approval the assertion of Grillparzer that history cannot be understood according to the universal categories of reason.⁶ According to Nietzsche, history is a chaos rather than a rational process. As well as denying the rationality of history,

⁶ F. Nietzsche, "The Use and Abuse of History", Thoughts Out of Season (New York, 1964), p. 52.

Nietzsche denies that history is completed, that the European of the nineteenth century is the goal of history:

He stands astounded in face of the enormous way that man has run, and his gaze quivers before the mightier wonder, the modern man who can see all this way! He stands proudly on the pyramid of the world-process: and while he lays the final stone of his knowledge, he seems to cry aloud to listening nature: 'We are at the top, we are at the top, we are the completion of nature!'

O thou too proud European of the nineteenth century, art thou not mad? Thy knowledge does not complete nature, it only kills thine own nature! ⁷

Nietzsche finds it dangerously absurd that the modern European could seriously regard himself as the completion of history. He finds it absurd because of the stultifying mediocrity which characterizes the modern European, and dangerous because the prevalence of such a notion can only encourage an idolatry of the actual, thereby adding further to the mediocrity of the modern European. The notion is dangerous, moreover, for the man who is not mediocre, for he must be satisfied with mediocrity as the final, necessary end of the rational process over which he has no control. He cannot act meaningfully within history because history is completed.

Although Nietzsche ardently attacks the Hegelian notion of

⁷ Ibid., p. 76.

history, he is in accord with Hegel in what is perhaps the most essential respect. He assumes the truth of the insight that man is an historical being. He takes for granted that the historical sense has revealed, once and for all, that the principles which have sustained men for centuries are merely historically variable presuppositions about the nature of things, fabricated by men themselves. They are temporary shelters erected by men against the chaos of becoming, although it is not likely that these men were consciously aware that they were surrounding themselves with horizons. They doubtless believed that they were discovering truths about reality, rather than creating them.

According to Nietzsche, the teaching of the historical sense is not only true, but dangerous. The direct consequence of the historical insight is modern nihilism, which he understands to be a profound turning-away from life because of its apparent meaninglessness, and hence valuelessness.⁸ Nietzsche thinks that such a denial of life stems from the inability of a man to live within a horizon. A horizon can only function as a horizon if it is not known to be a horizon. One cannot commit oneself to a horizon which one knows to be merely one possibility among others. And anything less than unqualified commitment, any half-heartedness or detachment, will cause one to fall short of attaining that state of "forgetfulness"

⁸ F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power (New York, 1968), p. 13.

which is necessary for "cheerfulness, a good conscience, belief in the future, the joyful deed".⁹ The historical sense makes it impossible for men to understand existence as having an ultimate purpose, or meaning, or unity. The vision of the meaninglessness of life renders them impotent. Modern nihilists turn away from life, for the absence of an over-arching purpose constitutes, for them, a denial of the value of life.

4

Christianity and the Historical Sense

As an "antidote" to the excess of the historical sense which he believes is destroying the possibility of life-enhancing horizons, Nietzsche exhorts his readers, in "The Use and Abuse of History", to turn towards the "super-historical" realms of art and religion. He advocates a turning-away from "the stream of becoming"¹⁰ towards the Christian religion, which "gives existence an eternal and stable character".¹¹

⁹ F. Nietzsche, "The Use and Abuse of History", Thoughts Out of Season (New York, 1964), p. 10.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 95. Nietzsche does not say explicitly that it is the Christian religion which he has in mind when he refers to the "super-historical" realm of religion. We make this assumption because, whether or not Nietzsche is referring also to religions other than Christianity, it must be the Christian religion which is uppermost in his thought when he discusses the situation of nineteenth-century Europeans.

Fourteen years later, Nietzsche wrote The Anti-Christ (1888) in which he "condemns" Christianity as "the one great curse, the one great intrinsic depravity...the one immortal blemish of mankind".¹² In the earlier writing we find Nietzsche not only accepting the existence of Christianity, but even counselling his readers to use it as a protection against the spiritual devastation which comes from contemplation of an existence without horizons. It is obvious from the briefest perusal of The Anti-Christ that Nietzsche repudiates this earlier view.

The divergence between the attitudes towards Christianity which are expressed in these two writings is not as great as it may appear on the surface. Underlying the different attitudes is the common idea which is so fundamental to Nietzsche's thought. This idea is that of the "finality of becoming".¹³ One could express the content of this notion in a slightly different manner by saying that there is no absolute horizon which is true for all men at all times. Although he is clearly aware of the dangers of the historical sense, Nietzsche fully accepts the truth of its teaching that horizons are made by men and are therefore relative, varying from one histor-

¹² F. Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ (Great Britain, 1968), pp.186-7.

¹³ F. Nietzsche, "The Use and Abuse of History", Thoughts Out of Season (New York, 1964), pp. 83-4.

ical period to another. When he refers to religion in "The Use and Abuse of History", he regards it as a horizon which is relative. He advises that men submit themselves to the horizon of religion, not because it is true, but because it may be useful in promoting health, in protecting life from the withering effect of a rampant historicism. Nietzsche's ultimate concern in this essay is with "life":

Must life dominate knowledge, or knowledge life? Which of the two is the higher and decisive power? There is no room for doubt: life is the higher and the dominating power, for the knowledge that annihilated life would be itself annihilated too. Knowledge presupposes life, and has the same interest in maintaining it that every creature has in its own preservation. 14

The change in Nietzsche's attitude towards Christianity is not the consequence of a change in his assessment of the truth of Christianity. In both writings he assumes the truth of the teaching of the historical sense that Christianity is merely one horizon among others. What does change is his assessment of the "value" ¹⁵ of the Christian horizon for life.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁵ See F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power (New York, 1968), p. 128, section 221.

Why does Nietzsche's earlier, favourable attitude towards Christianity change into an attitude of violent antipathy? Before proceeding to a discussion of the reasons for this change of attitude, we must first note that Nietzsche's favourable assessment of religion in "The Use and Abuse of History" is made in spite of a theoretical tension which threatens to render it untenable. Nietzsche accepts the truth of the doctrine of the "finality of becoming" which is taught by historical knowledge, but because he regards "life" as more important than "knowledge", he attempts to combat this truth. This attempt results in the contradiction of turning towards a life-enhancing horizon while realizing that this horizon is merely relative. One cannot accept the idea of the "finality of becoming" on one hand, and, on the other, truly envelop oneself within the Christian horizon. Because of this contradiction, it is difficult to understand how religion could function as an antidote to the paralysis of the spirit induced by the historical sense. This early attempt of Nietzsche's to combat the danger of nihilism with the antidote of religion results in a tension which seems to demand an uncompromising choice between the teaching of the historical sense, and Christianity. Nietzsche's eventual response is to follow the teaching of the former to its end; and this implies the thinking through of nihilism to its end. He thus becomes the "first perfect nihilist of Europe".¹⁶ However, Nietzsche is to claim that only

¹⁶ F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power (New York, 1968), p.3.

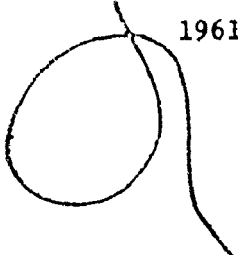
by thus accepting the teaching of the historical sense, and consequent nihilism, can the way to the overcoming of nihilism be revealed.¹⁷

Nietzsche teaches that the final vanquishing of nihilism requires complete acceptance of the doctrine of the "finality of becoming". Such a requirement implies the discarding of any vague impulses towards the religion which gives existence "an eternal and stable character". However, Nietzsche does not merely discard or ignore this earlier impulse. Whereas once he had regarded the horizon of religion as a possible means to the enhancement of life, in The Anti-Christ, he accuses Christianity of being "the most subterranean conspiracy there has ever been -- a conspiracy against health, beauty, well-constitutedness, bravery, intellect, benevolence of soul, against life itself".¹⁸ In Thus Spoke Zarathustra (1883), Zarathustra declares: "Once, as the sea tossed them about, they thought they had landed upon an island; but behold it was a sleeping monster!"¹⁹ How does the "island" of Christianity

¹⁷ See for instance, F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (New York, 1966), p. 68, section 56.

¹⁸ F. Nietzsche, The Anti Christ (Great Britain, 1968) p. 186.

¹⁹ F. Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra (Great Britain, 1961), p. 115.



come to be seen as a "sleeping monster"? We would suggest that in Nietzsche's struggle with nihilism he becomes convinced that its real source is to be found, not in the historical sense, but in Christianity. The Christian horizon, far from being an antidote to modern nihilism, is found to be its fountain-head. It is Nietzsche's insight into the intrinsic relation between Christianity and nihilism which prompts his declaration of war on the Christian horizon. This notion of the connection between Christianity and nihilism must now be explored further.

Christianity and Nihilism

In the critique of Christianity contained in The Anti-Christ, Nietzsche makes several charges. He claims that the Christian concept of God is "one of the most corrupt conceptions of God arrived at on earth...a declaration of hostility towards life, nature, the will to life!";²⁰ that Christianity has "waged a war to the death against the higher type of man" in favour of "everything weak, base, ill-constituted";²¹ that in Christianity is to be found "the principle of the decline of the entire social order";²² that "sickness belongs to the essence of Christianity";²³ and that Christianity is

²⁰ F. Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ (Great Britain, 1968) p.128.

²¹ Ibid., p. 117.

²² Ibid., p. 186.

²³ Ibid., p. 169.

"antinature itself".²⁴ Nietzsche continually uses such terms as "décadent", "corrupt", "sick", "anti-natural", and "nihilistic" to characterize Christianity. They are used so interchangeably that any one of them could stand for the others. We shall use the word "nihilistic" as a general term within which Nietzsche's various descriptions of Christianity may be included.

Nietzsche teaches that the Christian horizon is, at its source, nihilistic. It is a religion founded in a vision of life as valueless; it is founded in a profound turning away from life. Nietzsche's insight into the fundamental nihilism of Christianity can be understood as arising out of his analysis of modern European nihilism. In The Will to Power, Nietzsche himself reveals the nature of the connection between his analysis of modern nihilism and his contention that Christianity is nihilistic:

What has happened, at bottom? The feeling of valuelessness was reached with the realization that the overall character of existence may not be interpreted by means of the concept of "aim", the concept of "unity", or the concept of "truth". Existence has no goal or end; any comprehensive unity in the plurality of events is lacking; the character of existence is not "true", is false. One simply lacks any reason for convincing oneself that there is a true world. Briefly: the categories "aim", "unity", "being" which we used to project some value into the world -- we pull out again; so the world looks valueless.... Suppose we realize how the

²⁴ F. Nietzsche, Ecce Homo (New York, 1969), p. 332.

world may no longer be interpreted in terms of these three categories, and that the world begins to become valueless for us after this insight: then we have to ask about the sources of our faith in these three categories....Once we have devaluated these three categories, the demonstration that they cannot be applied to the universe is no longer any reason for devaluating the universe....Conclusion: The faith in the categories of reason is the cause of nihilism. We have measured the value of the world according to categories that refer to a purely fictitious world...²⁵it is in one particular interpretation, the Christian-moral one, that nihilism is rooted. ²⁶

Nihilism, or the vision of existence as meaningless and hence valueless, comes to the fore, in Nietzsche's view, when life can no longer be interpreted according to the notions of absolute "aim", "unity", or "truth". However, being the product

²⁵ F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power (New York, 1968), p. 13

²⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

of a certain horizon (the Platonic-Christian),²⁷ these notions

²⁷ Any study of Nietzsche's critique of Christianity must be aware of his teaching that "Christianity is Platonism for 'the people'" (Beyond Good and Evil, p. 3). We have acknowledged this aspect of Nietzsche's teaching by referring to the horizon which interprets life in terms of "aim", "unity", and "truth" as a "Platonic-Christian" horizon.

Nietzsche teaches that Platonism and Christianity are, in the most general and fundamental sense, identical. They both impose a horizon (with the categories of "aim", "unity", and "truth") upon the realm of becoming, which turns men away from allegiance to that realm. They both locate the centre of life outside of life. In Nietzsche's view, the fundamentally similar nature of these other-worldly perspectives makes them natural allies. The statement that "Christianity is Platonism for 'the people'" is Nietzsche's expression of the fundamental identity of Christianity and Platonism. It also expresses his vision of their most significant difference: whereas the life-denying perspective of Platonism is restricted to the few who are superior by virtue of their intellect and other qualities of character, in Christianity it is open to the "people" (the uneducated rabble), whose superiority resides in the feeling that they are repentant sinners. The samenesses and differences of Platonism and Christianity are concisely expressed by Nietzsche in Twilight of the Idols (p. 40):

History of an Error

1. The real world, attainable to the wise, the pious, the virtuous man -- he dwells in it, he is it.
(Oldest form of the idea, relatively sensible, simple, convincing. Transcription of the proposition 'I, Plato, am the truth.')
2. The real world, unattainable for the moment, but promised to the wise, the pious, the virtuous man
('to the sinner who repents').
(Progress of the idea: it grows more refined, more enticing, more incomprehensible -- it becomes a woman, it becomes Christian...)

Nietzsche's analysis of the Christian horizon is one aspect, extremely significant though it may be, of his analysis of an "error" which extends beyond Christianity back to Platonism. Although Christianity is one aspect of the "error" which Nietzsche confronts (that is, the error of nihilism), it nonetheless seems to embody most appropriately that "error". For he refers himself as the "Anti-Christ" (Ecce Homo, p. 263).

or "categories" are mere human projections upon the reality of becoming. It is the height of presumption for man to deny life because the validity of his own relative categorizations can no longer be maintained. What is required, rather than a denial of the value of life, is an incisive analysis of the values of "aim", "unity", and "truth". Nietzsche's analysis reveals to him that these values are themselves valueless, for, not only are they merely relative human categories, but they have their source in a denial of life. They are the work of sick men who revenged themselves on life by erecting a fictitious world of "aim", "unity", and "truth" which was imposed as a strait-jacket on the actual realm of becoming. Thus, the true source of nihilism, according to Nietzsche, is to be found, not in the untenability of such notions as "aim", "unity", or "truth", but in these notions them-

Because the scope of this thesis is limited to an exposition of Nietzsche's critique of Christianity in The Anti-Christ, we cannot explore the complexities of his interpretation of the relation between Platonism and Christianity. It seems clear, however, that for Nietzsche the connection between Platonism and Christianity, although a natural alliance based on a fundamental similarity, is not a direct causal relation. The absence from The Anti-Christ of the theme of the relation between Platonism and Christianity would indicate that Nietzsche thinks that Christianity can be understood apart from its relation to Platonism. Thus, because this relation does not figure prominently in The Anti-Christ, and because this thesis must be kept within bounds, we will not deal with this question further.

selves. The overcoming of nihilism thus implies the overcoming of the Christian horizon which for centuries has taught Western man to believe that the actual world of becoming must be understood in terms of an absolute "aim", "unity", or "truth" (that is, "God").

The manner of Nietzsche's attack on Christianity is to expose the nihilism inherent in the Christian conception of God. His critique of Christianity is an attempt to demonstrate that the Christian horizon is, in essence, a denial of life; and, moreover, that the basic impulse to this denial has its origin in a fundamental sickness. As Nietzsche writes in The Anti-Christ:

...this entire fictional world has its roots in hatred of the natural (--actuality!--), it is the expression of a profound discontent with the actual....But that explains everything. Who alone has reason to lie himself out of actuality? He who suffers from it. But to suffer from actuality means to be an abortive actuality....The preponderance of feelings of displeasure over feelings of pleasure is the cause of a fictitious morality and religion: such a preponderance, however, provides the formula for décadence.²⁸

The Anti-Christ, then, is Nietzsche's attempt to expose the fundamental nihilism of the Christian horizon. It contains, as well, his diagnosis of the sick impulse which underlies the Christian disvaluing of life. A careful elucidation of this exposure and diagnosis will be the concern of the third and fourth chapters

²⁸ F. Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ (Great Britain, 1968), pp. 125-6.

of this thesis.

An important aspect of Nietzsche's teaching concerning the relation between nihilism and Christianity is that Christianity has brought about its own destruction. This insight is tentatively and somewhat vaguely given expression in "The Use and Abuse of History". Nietzsche suggests that there is a connection between the "memento mori" of Christianity, "the hopelessness that Christianity bears in its heart towards all future ages of earthly existence", and the excess of the historical sense which "turns away every fresh birth with a shrug of its shoulders, and makes us feel all the more that we are late-comers and Epigoni, that we are, in a word, born with gray hair".²⁹ In his later writing, Nietzsche extends the relation of Christianity to all the disciplines of modern thought included in the word "science".³⁰ He maintains that the "ascetic ideal" of Christianity, which taught that God is truth and that the pursuit of truth is a moral virtue, has been responsible for the tremendous intellectual self-discipline which made modern science

²⁹ F. Nietzsche, "The Use and Abuse of History", Thoughts Out of Season (New York, 1964), ps.68,67.

³⁰ See Chapter II, foot-note #8.

possible. Two millenia of Christian "training in truthfulness"³¹ have provided the prerequisite of an intellectual activity which, in its dedicated quest for truth, has called into question the truth of the Christian horizon which gave it birth. The modern scientist's search for truth, whether he realizes it or not, is a sublimated form of the search for God, and his "integrity" is a form of Christian morality. In The Gay Science, Nietzsche writes:

...it is still a metaphysical faith upon which our faith in science rests...even we seekers after knowledge today, we godless anti-metaphysicians, still take our fire, too, from the flame lit by a faith that is thousands of years old, that Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine. -- But what if this should become more and more incredible, if nothing should prove to be divine any more unless it were error, blindness, the lie -- if God himself should prove to be our most enduring lie? -- 32

Because Nietzsche regards the quest for truth of modern science as the consequence of Christian morality, he declares that Christianity

³¹ F. Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals (New York, 1969), p. 160.

³² F. Nietzsche, The Gay Science (New York, 1974), p. 283.

as a dogma is being destroyed by its own morality.³³ This is the crisis of modern European nihilism, "the awe-inspiring catastrophe of two thousand years of training in truthfulness that finally forbids itself the lie involved in belief in God."³⁴ The crisis of the modern European spirit, which has been brought about by Christian morality, is signified in Nietzsche's famous statement that "God is dead".³⁵

We are thus led once again to Nietzsche's insight that the Christian horizon is responsible for the crisis of modern European nihilism. And we are again faced with the implication of this insight: the necessity of a critique of Christianity as a preliminary to any attempt to overcome nihilism. The "will to truth" of modern scientific thought has "murdered"³⁶ God and precipitated the catastrophe

³³ F. Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals (New York, 1969), p. 161.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 160.

³⁵ F. Nietzsche, The Gay Science (New York, 1974), p. 181.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 181.

of nihilism. This will to truth must itself be brought into question;³⁷ and this implies the bringing into question of the Christian horizon which has nurtured it.³⁸

The will to truth of modern scientific thought has apparently demonstrated that there is no eternal truth (that is, no God). But, for Nietzsche, this does not constitute an argument against existence. For, as we have seen, he regards truth as a Christian category which is of doubtful origin. If the very notion of "truth" arises from a nihilistic denial of the value of life, then the proven absence of truth does not necessarily render life valueless. Indeed, if the tracing of the will to

³⁷ F. Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals (New York, 1969), p. 161. See also F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (New York, 1966), p. 46: "It is no more than a moral prejudice that truth is worth more than mere appearance."

³⁸ As Nietzsche asserts in the passage quoted from The Gay Science in this chapter (page 26), the Christian faith that "God is the truth, that truth is divine" was also "the faith of Plato". According to Nietzsche, Platonism and Christianity share the belief in the divinity of truth. Because Platonism preceded Christianity historically, it must be, for Nietzsche, prior to Christianity as a source of the will to truth which underlies modern science. Thus, when we speak of the Christian horizon which has nurtured the will to truth, we mean the "Platonic-Christian" horizon. For a further discussion of our use of the term "Platonic-Christian", see footnote #27.

truth back to its Christian origins reveals that these origins are, in essence, harmful to life, then the crisis of the death of God, which has called into question the value of truth and the value of the Christian horizon, may be of inestimable benefit to man.

The Anti-Christ as the Prelude to the
"Revaluation of All Values"

In this chapter we have been attempting to clarify the necessity, for Nietzsche, of a critique of Christianity. In such a discussion emphasis must be placed on the urgent sense of crisis which animates Nietzsche in this undertaking. He expresses this crisis in the phrase: "God is dead." For Nietzsche, the death of God represents at once man's hitherto greatest opportunity, and his greatest danger. Something must be said, however briefly, about this opportunity and this danger.

The profound opportunity for man lies in the prospect of a future which "appears free to us again, even if it should not be bright; at long last our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, our sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an 'open sea'." ³⁹ This "open sea", however, is not an infinitely directionless end-in-itself. It is

³⁹ F. Nietzsche, The Gay Science (New York, 1974), p.280.

the necessary pre-condition for the revaluation of all hitherto life-denying values, which will attain its end in the "Superman". The Superman is the product of man's own self-overcoming: "I teach you the Superman. Man is something that should be overcome." ⁴⁰ What is overcome in man is his spirit of "revenge" against the continual flux, the coming-to-be and, especially, the passing-away which life is: "This, yes, this alone is revenge itself: the will's antipathy towards time and time's 'It was'....The spirit of revenge: my friends, that, up to now, has been mankind's chief concern...." ⁴¹ Man can only achieve his height upon deliverance from his impulse to denigrate, in favour of an illusory realm, the realm of becoming within which he suffers, and out of which he passes into nothingness. The Superman is the overcoming of the human tendency to deny life. He is able joyfully to contemplate existence as endless recurrence of meaningless finitude, and to command into being life-affirming horizons. The Superman's vanquishing of nihilism enables him to create horizons for weaker men which are not tainted in any way by a turning-away from the actual world. The advent of the Superman will thus signify the triumph

⁴⁰ F. Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra (Great Britain, 1961), p. 41.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 162.

of man over his own propensity to deny life. Men will joyfully affirm the world of becoming, just as they did in the era of the early Greek tragedies. However, whereas this Greek tragedy represents a happy accident or a "lucky hit",⁴² man can now consciously and deliberately will the coming-to-be of the Superman: "The Superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The Superman shall be the meaning of the earth!"⁴³ The modern will to the Superman has at its disposal that modern science by means of which man has already gone far in asserting his dominion over the earth. The modern science which arose out of the Christian horizon makes possible a question which was not asked in the era of Greek tragedy: "...who shall be master of the world?"⁴⁴ Modern man's possibility of renewed loyalty to the earth is intimately bound up with the possibility of mastery over the earth.

⁴² F. Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ (Great Britain, 1968), p. 116.

⁴³ F. Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra (Great Britain, 1961), p. 42.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 329.

The modern crisis of the death of God thus constitutes an opportunity such as man has never before known. The great danger which the crisis presents is that man will not take advantage of this opportunity. His failure to overcome nihilism by willing the Superman will result, by default, in the triumph of the "last men" and the "nihilists". The "last men", the great majority, according to Nietzsche, will continue to live within the horizon of secularized Christianity (liberalism and socialism), which teaches that the end of life is "happiness" and "equality". The predominant characteristic of these men is a stultifying mediocrity. Their conception of "happiness" is so banal that it is easily achieved; and its achievement makes them oblivious to the heights and depths of existence. Zarathustra describes them in this way:

No herdsman and one herd. Everyone wants the same thing, everyone is the same; whoever thinks otherwise goes voluntarily into the madhouse....They have their little pleasure for the day and their little pleasure for the night: but, they respect health. 'We have discovered happiness,' say the Ultimate Men [last men] and blink. ⁴⁵

The greater profundity and strength of some men precludes them from inoculating themselves against the abyss of existence by means of shallow notions of "happiness" and "equality". These stronger natures have been taught by the historical sense that there can be no ultimate purpose to their willing. However, as

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 46-7.

Nietzsche asserts, "man would rather will nothingness than not will".⁴⁶ Thus, these "nihilists" continue to strive, although there is nothing to strive for. The dominant presence of modern science and technique means that the directionless activity of the nihilists expresses itself in the drive to acquire mastery over human and non-human nature. However, it is not these nihilists who "deserve to be masters of the earth" because their pursuit of mastery stems from the denial of life, rather than joyful affirmation. Their mastery of life implies the violent destruction of life.

In Nietzsche's thought, the future is open. The advent of the Superman is not a matter of historical necessity; and neither is the triumph of the last men (although this is, for him, an already manifest probability). This uncertainty as to the outcome of the crisis of the death of God further enhances the sense of urgency in Nietzsche's writing. His writing is to be a preparation for the advent of the Superman. It is to be the "revaluation of all values"⁴⁷ which the coming-to-be of the Superman presupposes.

⁴⁶ F. Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals (New York, 1969), p. 163.

⁴⁷ The Anti-Christ was apparently to have been the first book of a projected work entitled "The Revaluation of all Values". See F. Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ (Great Britain, 1968), the last sentence on page 187, and Hollingdale's "Introduction", p. 15.

All hitherto nihilistic values are to be abolished, and replaced by life-affirming values. The initial step in this revaluation must be a critique of Christianity. For, as we have attempted to make clear, Nietzsche thought that he had discovered a relation between Christianity and nihilism which is so intimate that the overcoming of one necessarily required the overcoming of the other.

CHAPTER II

The Method of Nietzsche's Critique of Christianity in The Anti-Christ

All credibility, all good conscience, all evidence of truth come only from the senses. ¹

So cold, so icy that one burns one's fingers on him! Every hand is startled when touching him -- and for that very reason some think he glows. ²

Nietzsche's use of the aphoristic style, and the apparent absence of thematic unity in most of his books have led many to assume that his thought constitutes a haphazard series of brilliant and not-so-brilliant poetical pronouncements on widely varying subjects. If one is content, however, to approach Nietzsche's thought on this basis, without attempting to discover the consistent method which underlies his apparently "random" insights, then one will be precluded from a full understanding of his thought. ³ This is not meant to imply that Nietzsche is a "systematic" philosopher. We are asserting, rather, that he is a thinker with a coherent general approach to the great questions which he confronts.

¹ F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (New York, 1966), p.88.

² Ibid., p. 82.

³ We assume that a thinker can only be understood fully if the relation between his various statements can be perceived. This, in turn, assumes that, among the statements of a great thinker such a relation must exist.

The Anti-Christ is a book which does not exhibit any obvious order. There is thus a temptation to approach it as a collection of more or less disconnected statements which Nietzsche made about Christianity. In order to avoid this temptation an attempt will be made, in this chapter, to outline the method underlying the critique of Christianity contained in The Anti-Christ. Such an outline will enable us to approach The Anti-Christ as a book with an inner unity, even though this unity may not be outwardly obvious.

The word "method" is defined in English as a "special form of procedure, especially in any branch of mental activity...[an] orderly arrangement of ideas; orderliness, regular habits".⁴ It is precisely this definition which we have in mind when we speak of the "method" underlying Nietzsche's critique of Christianity. It is not inappropriate to think this word in its English definition in relation to Nietzsche, for when he uses it, as he frequently does, it is likely that he is thinking it in terms of the great English methodologist, Bacon.⁵

⁴ The Concise Oxford Dictionary (Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 764.

⁵ See, for instance, F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power (New York, 1968), p. 261, section 468.

Nietzsche writes in The Anti-Christ: "The most valuable insights are the last to be discovered; but the most valuable insights are methods,"⁶ Nietzsche thinks that methods are the "most valuable insights", and he maintains that the most valuable method is the method achieved by modern science. He writes in The Will to Power:

It is not the victory of science that distinguishes our nineteenth century, but the victory of scientific method over science....History of scientific method, considered by Auguste Comte as virtually philosophy itself...the schooling through moral hyperbole prepared the way step by step for that milder pathos that became incarnate in the scientific character--...The conscientiousness in small things, the self-control of the religious man were a preparatory school for the scientific character: above all, the disposition that takes problems seriously, regardless of the personal consequences.⁷

It is the modern science which arose out of the ascetic ideal of Christianity that provides Nietzsche with the method underlying his critique of Christianity. As well as adhering to scientific method, Nietzsche accepts and employs in his thought many of the findings of modern science. Thus, to assert, as we shall in this

⁶ F. Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ (Great Britain, 1968), p. 123.

⁷ F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power (New York, 1968), pp.261-2.

chapter, that the method underlying Nietzsche's treatment of Christianity is that of modern science is to maintain that his critique of Christianity reflects, in a general way, the manner of approach and certain of the findings of modern science. The briefest glance at The Anti-Christ is admittedly sufficient to make anyone dubious about the "scientific" character of Nietzsche's approach to Christianity. Underlying the rather hyperbolic style of The Anti-Christ, however, is a general approach to Christianity which is in accord with the method of modern science, as Nietzsche understands it. Also in more obvious evidence, are the findings of scientific disciplines such as physiology, psychology, philology and history. ⁸

⁸ We refer to psychology, philology, and history as "scientific" disciplines because the German word for science, Wissenschaft, which Nietzsche uses includes within its modern meaning the "human" sciences (Geisteswissenschaften), as well as the "natural" sciences (Naturwissenschaften). Although these two branches of Wissenschaft are perhaps distinguishable in their object of study and rigour of method, they are, in Nietzsche's view, fundamentally similar in their assumption of the "finality of becoming". We trust that when the word "science" appears in this thesis, it will be sufficiently clear from the context whether it refers to Geisteswissenschaften, or to Naturwissenschaften or to Wissenschaft in its most general sense. Whenever clarity demands it, we shall include, within parentheses, the particular aspect of Wissenschaft to which the word "science" refers. We shall also sometimes designate Geisteswissenschaften as "scientific scholarship".

Although Nietzsche's reliance on the teachings of modern science in his critique of Christianity must be emphasized, it must also be noted that there appears to be a certain ambiguity in his ultimate attitude towards modern science. In order to understand properly Nietzsche's reliance on the teachings of modern science in his critique of Christianity, we must first attempt to clarify his over-all assessment of modern science. This clarification requires a brief account of the development of his assessment as it is reflected in his writings.

Nietzsche's Attitude Towards Modern Science

In "The Use and Abuse of History" (1874), Nietzsche's attitude towards modern science is one of hostility. He fears the danger to life-enhancing horizons which modern science (the historical sense) presents:

But now men hate to become ripe, for they honour history above life. They cry in triumph that "science is now beginning to rule life". Possibly it might; but a life thus ruled is not of much value. It is not such true life, and promises much less for the future than the life that used to be guided not by science, but by instincts and powerful illusions.⁹

⁹ F. Nietzsche, "The Use and Abuse of History", Thoughts Out of Season (New York, 1964), pp. 60-61.

As we have seen, Nietzsche suggests religion as an antidote to the destructive spirit of modern science. In the same essay, however, one also finds a statement which not only foreshadows Nietzsche's acceptance of modern science, but also hints at the motive underlying this acceptance: "History must solve the problem of history, science must turn its sting against itself."¹⁰ In an essay which offers religion as an antidote to the nihilism arising from modern science, Nietzsche also indicates that it may be necessary for science to solve the problem of nihilism which it itself has fostered by destroying men's horizons.

In Human, All too Human (1878), Nietzsche is no longer attempting to combat nihilism with art or religion. Rather than turning from the historical to the "super-historical", he now consciously and firmly remains within the historical; he contemplates the chaos of becoming without turning away. Nietzsche himself writes of this change of stance as follows:

Human, All-too-Human is the monument of a crisis. It is subtitled "A Book for Free Spirits": almost every sentence marks some victory -- here I liberated myself from what in my nature did not belong to me. Idealism, for example; the title means: "where you see ideal things, I see what is -- human, alas, all-too-human!" -- I know man better.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

...It stirred my compassion to see myself utterly emaciated, utterly starved: my knowledge simply failed to include realities, and my "idealities" were not worth a damn....A truly burning thirst took hold of me: henceforth I really pursued nothing more than physiology, medicine, and natural sciences. ¹¹

Among other things, Human, All-too-Human is Nietzsche's declaration of his liberation from any desire to escape the notion of the "finality of becoming" by turning towards the illusory realms of religion, or traditional metaphysics. Whereas in "The Use and Abuse of History" he warns that the historical sense is inimical to human greatness, he now cites complete acceptance of becoming as a distinguishing mark of the "free spirit". In Human, All-too-Human, Nietzsche first explicitly juxtaposes the illusory "idealisms" of religion and metaphysical philosophy with the "realities" of the modern scientific disciplines of physiology (medicine, biology) psychology, and history. ¹² His acceptance of the teachings of modern science provides the basis for his criticism of all thought which is not familiar with this teaching.

A lack of the historical sense is the hereditary fault of all philosophers... man of the last four thousand years is

¹¹ F. Nietzsche, Ecce Homo (New York, 1969), ps. 283, 286.

¹² F. Nietzsche, Human, All too Human, I. (New York, 1964), ps. 15, 138, 225.

spoken of as an eternal being towards which all things in the world have from the beginning a natural direction. But everything has evolved; there are no eternal facts, as there are likewise no absolute truths. Therefore, historical philosophising is henceforth necessary... ¹³

It is true that in the third essay of On the Genealogy of Morals (1887) and in Part Six of Beyond Good and Evil (1886), Nietzsche seems to be devastatingly critical of modern science. However, it must be emphasized that, in these writings, his hostility is directed more towards the typical practitioners of modern science than towards modern science itself. He is concerned with exposing the delusion current among modern scientists that they have left Christianity behind, when, in truth, they are "not the opposite of the ascetic ideal [of Christianity] but rather the latest and noblest form of it". ¹⁴ This is because they still believe unconditionally in the value of the search for "truth". Nietzsche is concerned with dispelling the notion that the modern scientist represents a new height for human beings. As he writes in Part Six of Beyond Good and Evil:

The objective person who no longer curses and scolds like the pessimist, the ideal scholar in whom the scientific instinct, after

¹³ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁴ F. Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals (New York, 1969), p. 147.

thousands of total and semi-failures, for once blossoms and blooms to the end, is certainly one of the most precious instruments there are; but he belongs in the hand of one more powerful. He is only an instrument; let us say, he is a mirror -- he is no "end in himself". 15

This characterization of the modern scholar as a "mirror" is a clear expression of Nietzsche's final attitude towards the modern scientist and, indirectly, towards modern science. For Nietzsche, the modern scientist can be a useful, and even praiseworthy means to an end posited by a being who is higher than the scientist. This being is higher by virtue of his liberation from the belief in truth, and hence from the Christian horizon. Only such a being, entirely loyal to the earth, is capable of establishing worthy goals, for the attainment of which modern science can be an effective instrument. As Nietzsche writes in On the Genealogy of Morals:

No! Don't come to me with science when I ask for the natural antagonist of the ascetic ideal, when I demand: "where is the opposing will expressing the opposing ideal?" Science is not nearly self-reliant enough to be that; it first requires in every respect an ideal of value, a value-creating power, in the service of which it could believe in itself -- it never creates values. 16

¹⁵ F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (New York, 1966), p.126.

¹⁶ F. Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals (New York, 1969), p. 153.

Thus, modern science and its practitioners are praiseworthy insofar as they are servants of those "new philosophers",¹⁷ living beyond good and evil, who create values.

According to Nietzsche, the pursuit of modern science cannot be an end-in-itself. Its effectiveness as an instrument, however, is evidenced in the same book in which its pretensions to higher things are ridiculed. In On the Genealogy of Morals, Nietzsche utilizes the teachings of physiology, psychology, anthropology, history and philology in order to uncover the origins of Christian morality. His liberation from the Christian horizon and consequent worthiness to employ science as a means is shown when he uses these same scientific disciplines to expose the origins of modern science itself in Christian morality.¹⁸

Why is it that modern science is so peculiarly suited to be used by Nietzsche as a means? Possible responses to this question can be suggested only very tentatively and briefly here. First, and most obviously, by Nietzsche's time modern science had attained to great prestige and power in the intellectual world. As a thinker

¹⁷ See F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (New York, 1966), p. 11.

¹⁸ See Chapter I of this thesis, pp. 25-27.

in latter nineteenth century Europe, Nietzsche could not help but be extremely aware of the predominance and obvious practical success of the rigorous scientific method.¹⁹ More fundamentally, there is an intimate relation between modern science and man's mastery of human and non-human nature. This relation is given theoretical expression in Bacon's dictum that modern scientific method requires that man "put nature to the question",²⁰ and it is given practical expression in the overwhelming presence of technology in the modern world. As we have noted, Nietzsche's vision of man's loyalty to the earth is bound up with the notion of man's mastery of the earth.²¹ Furthermore, the disciplines of modern science may be peculiarly suitable as a means because they dispense with any notion of final cause, in favour of explanation solely according to mechan-

¹⁹ This statement is truer of Naturwissenschaften than of Geisteswissenschaften. However, in our own time we are witnessing to an ever greater degree, whether for good or evil, the practical success of the latter.

²⁰ See F. Bacon, New Organon, Book II, Sections 26, 30-39.

²¹ Chapter I of this thesis, p.31.

ical, or efficient causality. Lacking an extrinsic teleology²² of their own, they can easily be subordinated to purposes established by the "new philosophers".²³ Finally, it is the modern scientific method which has taught men of the "finality of becoming". Its own faith in the quest for truth has led modern science to deny God and to make possible the questioning of the existence or value of "truth" itself. Because Nietzsche accepts the doctrine of the "finality of becoming", it is understandable that he is partial towards the discipline of thought which has made this insight not only possible, but inescapable. In its disavowal of explanation according to final cause, modern scientific method proceeds from the assumption of the "finality of becoming", as does Nietzsche.

²² The notion of intrinsic teleology is not entirely absent from modern science. Kant, for instance, in the Critique of Judgement, regarded it as a useful guide to a proper, non-teleological explanation of biological phenomena.

²³ If we have interpreted Nietzsche's thought on this matter correctly, it seems doubtful that he fully realized as do M. Heidegger and J. Ellul, for instance, that there are profound difficulties involved in the notion of the subordination of modern science to human purposes. The practical application of modern science has brought about a world in which "technique" seems to have a life of its own, and, rather than serving human purposes, it seems to dictate them.

The disciplines of modern science and the philosophers of the future are thus natural allies or, to be more in accord with Nietzsche's thought, they are natural master and servant in the task of assessing the value for life of certain horizons. This relation is given characteristic expression in a special note at the end of the first essay in On the Genealogy of Morals. In this note, Nietzsche advocates a much closer association between philosophy and the modern scientific disciplines of history, philology, physiology, and medicine. The note ends with the following exhortation: "All the sciences have from now on to prepare the way for the future task of the philosophers: this task understood as the solution of the problem of value, the determination of the order of rank among values,"²⁴

We have attempted to suggest very briefly some possible responses to the question concerning the peculiar suitability of modern science as an instrument in the service of the philosophers of the future. This question is especially complex in the light of the following statements of Nietzsche concerning the Graeco-Roman culture which Christianity had supposedly undermined:

Why did the Greeks exist? Why the Romans? --
 Every prerequisite for an erudite culture,
 all the scientific methods were already
 there, the great, the incomparable art
 of reading well had already been established --

²⁴ F. Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals (New York, 1969), p. 56. The entire note (pp. 55 - 56) warrants a careful study.

the prerequisite for a cultural tradition, for a uniform science; natural science in concert with mathematics and mechanics, was on the best possible road -- the sense for facts, the last developed and most valuable of all the senses, had its school and its tradition already centuries old! Is this understood? Everything essential for setting to work had been devised -- methods, one must repeat ten times are the essential, as well as being that which has habit and laziness against it longest. What we have won back for ourselves today with an unspeakable amount of self-constraint... the free view of reality, the cautious hand, patience and seriousness in the smallest things, the whole integrity of knowledge was already there! already more than two millenia ago! And good and delicate taste and tact! Not as brain training! Not as 'German' culture with the manners of ruffians! But as body, as gesture, as instinct -- in a word, as reality...All in vain! Overnight merely a memory! 25

What are we to make of these statements? Do they indicate that, for Nietzsche, there is after all no essential difference in the usefulness of ancient and modern scientific method? This would be contrary to other assertions of Nietzsche concerning modern science, ²⁶ and to his teaching that man can now attain his greatest height precisely because, in passing through the Christian horizon, he now has at his disposal modern scientific method. It is possible

²⁵ F. Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ (Great Britain, 1968), p.182.

²⁶ See, for instance, F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (New York, 1966), pp. 31-2. The Gay Science (New York, 1974), pp.267-9., Human All too Human, I (New York, 1964), ps. 1-35, 136, 138, 225.

that in this particular writing (The Anti-Christ), Nietzsche is determined to say nothing even remotely favourable about Christianity. However, this would be to dismiss the problem in too facile a manner. The entire question of the essential differences between ancient and modern scientific method and Nietzsche's attitude towards both warrants careful consideration. The limited scope of this thesis precludes such a consideration on our part. We can only reiterate here our assertion that Nietzsche considers modern scientific method to be superior to any intellectual method which man has hitherto had at his disposal, and that he makes extensive use of the teachings of modern science in his thought.

The Method of The Anti-Christ

Nietzsche writes in "The Use and Abuse of History" that "science must turn its sting against itself".²⁷ Because he believes that he has discovered that modern science has its roots in the Christian horizon, the questioning of science by science implies the questioning of the entire Christian horizon by science. In examining itself, science is required to undertake an examination of Christianity. We must now turn to The Anti-Christ in order to

²⁷ F. Nietzsche, "The Use and Abuse of History", Thoughts Out of Season (New York, 1964), p. 69.

discuss more concretely the nature of the scientific examination of Christianity advocated by Nietzsche.

The Anti-Christ contains few explicit references to the method of Nietzsche's critique of Christianity. In one of the rare discussions of his method, found at the outset of his critique of Jesus Christ, Nietzsche vehemently denies that his scientific critique of Christianity is similar to the scientific critique of D. F. Strauss:

I confess there are few books which present me with so many difficulties as the Gospels do. These difficulties are quite other than those which the learned curiosity of the German mind celebrated one of its most unforgettable triumphs in pointing out. The time is far distant when I too, like every young scholar and with the clever dullness of a refined philologist, savoured the work of the incomparable Strauss. I was then twenty years old: now I am too serious for that. 28

His brief discussion of Strauss may appear to constitute an arbitrary and isolated attack on one, now rather obscure, nineteenth century thinker. We must note, however, Nietzsche's declaration in Ecce Homo: "I never attack persons; I merely avail myself of the person as of a strong magnifying glass that allows one to make visible a general but creeping and elusive calamity." 29

²⁸ F. Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ (Great Britain, 1968), p. 140.

²⁹ F. Nietzsche, Ecce Homo (New York, 1969), p. 232.

In Nietzsche's view, Strauss is one representative of a larger school of European thought from which he is anxious to distinguish himself. This school, in the most general sense, is that of modern scientific scholarship (Geisteswissenschaften); and, more particularly, it is the school of thought which applies the methods of scientific scholarship to the study of Christianity. By ridiculing Strauss in The Anti-Christ, Nietzsche wishes to distinguish his critique of Christianity from the critique of modern scholarship, and he wishes to distinguish himself from the modern scholar. He considers his critique to be of a higher order than the critique of Strauss, for he himself is a "new philosopher", whereas Strauss is unable to think beyond the Christian horizon.³⁰

The question of Nietzsche's relation to modern Biblical scholarship and theology, represented for him by the work of Strauss, is extremely complex. A thorough treatment of this question is beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, the fact of Nietzsche's direct reference to Strauss in his discussion of method in The Anti-Christ, and the important position of Strauss within modern Biblical scholarship and theology makes it imperative to enter upon a discussion of this question. Furthermore, Nietzsche's view of Strauss serves

³⁰ See this chapter, pp. 43-44.

as a concrete illustration of his attitude towards modern science, which we have attempted to outline in this chapter. We shall thus venture some remarks concerning Strauss and his thought, and Nietzsche's assessment of both. Our concern will be, of course, with Nietzsche's view of Strauss, rather than with Strauss himself.

Strauss' most significant work is perhaps his earliest. In his Life of Jesus, a Critical Treatment (1835), he criticizes previous modes of interpretation of the New Testament because they assume too easily that the Gospels possess an historical content. In his book he establishes both positive and negative criteria for distinguishing the mythical and the historical in the Gospels. Strauss' criteria for determining the historical content of the Gospels leads to a position which can see very little historical basis for Christianity. He maintains that the content of the Gospels consists primarily of mythical-religious ideas expressed in poetic imagery, rather than assertions of historical fact. Strauss' Life of Jesus is significant, then, as a competent work of scholarship which applies the methods of historical-critical research to the Gospels, and attempts to demonstrate thereby the difficulties involved in the assertion that Christianity is an historical religion. This scholarly demonstration of the uncertainty of an historical basis for Christian faith is perhaps the most significant aspect of Strauss' critical analysis of the Gospels.

It seems to be this aspect of Strauss' thought which Nietzsche refers to in his remarks concerning Strauss in The Anti-Christ:

What do I care for the contradictions of 'tradition'? How can legends of saints be called 'tradition' at all! The stories of saints are the most ambiguous literature in existence; to apply to them scientific procedures when no other records are extant seems to me wrong in principle -- mere learned idling....³¹

Nietzsche declares that he is not concerned with a scientific (historical-critical) examination of the Gospels in the manner of Strauss, but with the "psychological type of the redeemer".³² In ridiculing the sort of Biblical scholarship represented by Strauss, Nietzsche never denies the validity of the scientific methods and principles professed by such scholarship. He thinks, however, that he understands these methods in a more profound way. For him, "physio-psychology" is the "path to the fundamental problems",³³

³¹ F. Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ (Great Britain, 1968) p. 140.

³² Ibid., p. 140.

³³ See F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (New York, 1966), pp. 31-32. See also, this chapter, pp. 61-66, for a discussion of Nietzsche's concept of "physio-psychology".

and he refuses to restrict the scope of his physio-psychology within the narrow limits of Biblical scholarship as it is understood and practised in modern Europe. Although his isolation of the "type of the redeemer" is not dependent on the strict historical-critical procedure of close textual analysis, he does not regard this as an objection to his recovery of the undistorted "type of the redeemer". His procedure is still generally that of philology, history, physiology, and psychology, but rather than subordinate his most profound insights to these disciplines, he subordinates the disciplines, where necessary, to his most profound insights. Nietzsche's recovery of the pure "type of the redeemer" is the outcome of a putting of the text to the question. The questions asked are formulated in terms of the most profound insights which arose out of Nietzsche's meeting with philology, history, physiology, and psychology. In his confrontation with Jesus Christ, Nietzsche is concerned, not with "the truth about what he did, what he said, how he really died". He is concerned, rather, with the question "whether his type is still conceivable at all, whether it has been 'handed down' by tradition".³⁴ For Nietzsche, the essential thing is not to become engaged in the impossible and frivolous attempt to ascertain historical facts on the basis of the "most ambiguous literature in

³⁴ F. Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ (Great Britain, 1968), p. 141.

existence",³⁵ but to draw a convincing portrait of Jesus. According to him, the figure of Jesus cannot be critically assessed by debate about historical facts, but only by means of the more profound and comprehensive insights of physio-psychology. The Gospels can be helpful in such a task. They cannot, however, entirely determine the outcome. For Nietzsche is ultimately concerned with Jesus as a "type" which may recur throughout history, not as an historical individual, even though the historical individual may be the initial starting-point for his delineation of this type.

Nietzsche's criticism of Strauss in The Anti-Christ is not a criticism of the historical-critical method employed so competently by Strauss in his Life of Jesus. He intimates that Strauss' work was perfectly acceptable to him when he was a "scholar", or a "refined philologist". He is now, however, "too serious" for Strauss.³⁶ Nietzsche seems to be saying here that Strauss' work is indeed competent scholarship, but that modern scholarship itself is not sufficiently profound, or "serious", to criticize Christianity. The inadequacy of scholarship to rise beyond itself to a larger vision is epitomized, for Nietzsche, in

³⁵ Ibid., p. 140.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 140.

the case of Strauss. At a late period in his life, Strauss wrote a book, The Old Faith and the New (1872) which constitutes an attempt to go beyond scholarship, and to philosophize. In Nietzsche's view, The Old Faith and the New is doubtless a perfect illustration of his teaching that the scholar should only be an instrument in the hands of the more profound philosopher. In his "David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer", Nietzsche maintains that the acceptance by German intellectuals of The Old Faith and the New as a serious work of philosophy is symptomatic of the cultural "Philistinism" of the age.³⁷ Far from being a trenchant critique of Christianity, The Old Faith and the New is a testament to the shallow self-complacency and cowardice of an age of degenerate Hegelianism. The shallow self-complacency of the age is reflected, for Nietzsche, in the ludicrous assumption of superiority which characterizes Strauss' attitude towards Jesus and the Christianity of the past.³⁸ The shallow cowardice of the age is reflected in Strauss' assumption that one can accept the teaching of the historical sense, while quite calmly continuing to profess a belief in absolutes.³⁹

³⁷ F. Nietzsche, "David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer", Thoughts Out of Season (New York, 1964), pp. 62-4.

³⁸ See, for instance, ibid., pp. 48-9.

³⁹ See, for instance, ibid., ps. 56-7, 72, 74.

Strauss' belief in the "All"⁴⁰ is indicative, in Nietzsche's view, of his confinement within the horizon of a decaying Christianity. This unquestioning adherence to the remnants of the Christian horizon makes Strauss more a philosopher for the "last men" than a serious critic of Christianity.

Nietzsche's criticism of Strauss is not a criticism of Strauss as the scholar of the Life of Jesus, but of Strauss as the scholar attempting to be a philosopher in The Old Faith and the New:

Whoever would have desired to possess the confessions, say, of a Ranke or a Mommsen? And these men were scholars and historians of a very different stamp from David Strauss. If, however, they had ever ventured to interest us in their faith instead of in their scientific investigations, we should have felt that they were overstepping their limits in a most irritating fashion. Yet Strauss does this when he confesses his faith.⁴¹

Nietzsche is anxious in The Anti-Christ to dissociate himself from the sort of criticism that is directed against Christianity by the scholar, Strauss. His own criticism is, according to him, that of a philosopher, who uses the work of such men as Strauss as an instrument in his critique of Christianity. In order for this

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 74.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 23.

instrument to serve the philosopher effectively, it must remain within its proper bounds. The competent scholar of the Life of Jesus must not attempt such grandiose undertakings as The Old Faith and the New.⁴²

Nietzsche's critique of Christianity is not the critique of a scientific scholar such as D. F. Strauss. We must now attempt to clarify, in a more positive manner, the method of Nietzsche's own critique of Christianity in The Anti-Christ.

⁴² Reference must be made at this point to our earlier remark (Chapter II, p. 39) concerning the ambiguity of Nietzsche's final attitude towards the practitioners of modern science. He himself was once a philologist, and yet he managed to go beyond philology to a more profound vision. Moreover, the chapter of Beyond Good and Evil in which he criticizes the pretensions of modern practitioners of Geisteswissenschaften is entitled "We Scholars". And he writes in section 211 of this same chapter: "It may be necessary for the edification of a genuine philosopher that he himself has also once stood on all these steps on which his servants, the scientific labourers of philosophy remain standing -- have to remain standing...."

Unlike Strauss, Nietzsche is not concerned with a reasoned questioning of certain Christian assertions. As he writes in The Gay Science: "What is now decisive against Christianity is our taste, no longer our reasons."⁴³ So far as Nietzsche is concerned, the truth of Christianity is no longer an issue. It has already been effectively refuted. God has already been "murdered", and Nietzsche is publicly proclaiming the death of God, not bringing it about. As he writes in The Anti-Christ:

Our age knows...What was formerly merely morbid has today become indecent -- it is indecent to be a Christian today... There is no longer a word left of what was formerly called "truth", we no longer endure it when a priest so much as utters the word "truth". Even with the most modest claim to integrity one must know today that a theologian, a priest, a pope, does not merely err in every sentence he speaks, he lies -- that he is no longer free to lie "innocently", out of "ignorance". The priest knows as well as anyone that there is no longer any "God", any "sinner", any "redeemer" -- that "free will", "moral world-order" are lies -- intellectual seriousness, the profound self-overcoming of the intellect, no longer permits anyone not to know about these things....⁴⁴

⁴³ F. Nietzsche, The Gay Science (New York, 1974), p. 186.

⁴⁴ F. Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ (Great Britain, 1968), pp. 149-50.

Nietzsche is not concerned primarily with refuting Christian teaching. He is concerned with overcoming the nihilism which has arisen with the destruction of the Christian horizon by demonstrating that nihilism has its roots, not in the destruction of Christianity, but in the essence of Christianity itself. The Anti-Christ is Nietzsche's exposure of the fundamental nihilism of the Christian horizon, and his diagnosis of the sick impulse which underlies this denial of life. This exposure and diagnosis is conducted by means of the teachings of certain modern scientific disciplines: notably physiology, psychology, and history. The method of Nietzsche's critique of the Christian horizon in The Anti-Christ could be said to be an examination of the historical origins of the Christian horizon from the perspective of physio-psychology.

The scientific disciplines of history and physio-psychology complement one another particularly well for Nietzsche's purposes. History, or the historical sense, teaches that Christianity is a man-made horizon, and that therefore the only valid approach to an understanding of Christianity is through an examination of its origins within history. Historical thought teaches, moreover, that there is nothing outside of life (the realm of becoming) which can judge life. The Christian horizon, far from being in a position to judge life, is itself to be judged according to its harmful or beneficial effect on life. The historical sense, then, provides the basic framework of Nietzsche's approach to Christianity.

Christianity is to be understood by means of an examination of its historical origins, and this examination is to be conducted from a perspective self-consciously situated within life. It is the modern discipline of physio-psychology which furnishes this perspective.

Nowhere in his writings does Nietzsche state precisely what he means by "physio-psychology". So far as we know, the term itself appears only once in his writings,⁴⁵ although references are continually made to physiology and psychology. We have chosen, however, to use this term to refer to the approach to Christianity, and other questions, which characterizes Nietzsche's thought. This approach is sometimes more psychological than physiological, and sometimes more physiological than psychological; and it is often a combination of both. It is not within the scope of this thesis to enter upon a full discussion of Nietzsche's understanding of, and relation to the modern disciplines of psychology and physiology. It can be said in a general way, however, that Nietzsche employs them as instruments for the detection and diagnosis of sickness and health. If his concern is with sickness as it is related to the

⁴⁵ F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (New York, 1966), p. 31.

human soul,⁴⁶ then the emphasis is upon psychology; and if the concern is with sickness as it is related to bodily functions, then physiology comes to the fore. The explicit presence, however, of one of these disciplines in a particular place in Nietzsche's writings always seems to imply the presence of the other. Physiology and psychology are really inseparable in Nietzsche's thought. This does not mean that one is reducible to the other, although he does seem to maintain, in certain of his posthumously published notes, that physiology is more fundamental than psychology:

...The phenomenon of the body is the richer, clearer, more tangible phenomenon: to be discussed first, methodologically, without coming to any decision about its ultimate significance....Belief in the body is more fundamental than belief in the soul....The body and physiology the starting point: why? -- We gain the correct idea of the nature of our subject-unity, namely as

⁴⁶ The use of the word "soul" here may seem questionable. However, Nietzsche himself states, in section 45 of Beyond Good and Evil, that the concern of psychology is the soul:

The human soul and its limits, the range of inner human experiences reached so far, the heights, depths, and distances of these experiences, the whole history of the soul so far and its as yet unexhausted possibilities -- that is the predestined hunting ground for a born psychologist and lover of the "great hunt".

For Nietzsche's understanding of the "soul" see, for instance, Section 12 of Beyond Good and Evil.

regents at the head of a communality (not as "souls" or "life forces"), also of the dependence of these regents upon the ruled and of an order of rank and division of labour as the conditions that make possible the whole and its parts....⁴⁷

It is clear from such statements that the primacy of physiology is one of methodological convenience only. The study of physiology serves in Nietzsche's thought as the guide to explanation, rather than the final explanation. It serves as an instrument in the hands of the "new philosopher". Neither physiology, as the study of the body, nor psychology as the study of the soul, can provide final explanations because the body and the soul are themselves ultimately no more than salutary fictions, objects of "belief". They are merely manifestations of a more profound and comprehensive fact. An elucidation of Nietzsche's understanding of "body" and "soul" is well beyond the scope of this thesis. It can be said, however, that, for Nietzsche, the body and the soul are differing manifestations of the "will to power". The will to power is the most fundamental impulse of organic being to discharge energy: "A living thing seeks above all to discharge its strength -- life itself is will to power,..."⁴⁸ According to Nietzsche, the

⁴⁷ F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power (New York, 1968), ps. 270, 271.

⁴⁸ F. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (New York, 1966), p. 21.

concept of will to power is: "the world viewed from inside, the world defined and determined according to its 'intelligible character'".⁴⁹ The will to power of an organism is the substratum of its life; a "pre-form" of life, a "primitive form of the world of affects in which everything still lies contained in a powerful unity before it undergoes ramifications and developments in the organic process".⁵⁰ The body and the soul are thus merely "ramifications" or "developments" of the will to power. Because the body and the soul have a common source in the will to power, the studies of physiology and psychology are inseparably linked in Nietzsche's thought. Physio-psychology, then, is an instrument for the detection and diagnosis of the fundamental sickness or health of the organic unity underlying the different manifestations usually designated as "body" and "soul". The sickness or the health of this unity is ultimately a matter of the abundance (strength) or deficiency (weakness) of the will to power. As Nietzsche asserts in The Anti-Christ:

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 48.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 47-8.

I consider life itself instinct for growth, for continuence, for accumulation of forces, for power: where the will to power is lacking there is decline....
 What is good? -- all that heightens the feeling of power, power itself in man.
 What is bad? -- All that proceeds from weakness. 51

The isolation of Christianity as an historical phenomenon may be the initial step in Nietzsche's analysis of Christianity, but it is succeeded and completed by a physio-psychological analysis of the historical phenomenon. As we shall see, in the following two chapters of this thesis, Nietzsche's isolation of the historical figure of Jesus is a preparation for a physio-psychological analysis of that figure; and his account of the historical origins and development of the Christian church is formulated in terms of the physio-psychological perspective. The physio-psychological analysis is the decisive one for Nietzsche, because it enables him to make judgements concerning health and sickness. The discipline of physio-psychology is able to assess the value for life of a horizon, for it is able to determine whether the source of the horizon is to be found in a deficiency of life (sickness, weakness), or in an abundance of life (health, strength).

51. F. Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ (Great Britain, 1968), ps. 117, 115...

The physio-psychological assessment of the historical origins of Christianity constitutes the general approach which underlies the extraneous of language and the apparent absence of a coherent order of procedure in The Anti-Christ. The physio-psychological perspective, although not always clearly evident in The Anti-Christ, is far from being merely implicit. Nietzsche certainly knows how to employ this perspective in a subtle, refined manner; but, at times, he seems to delight in employing it in a shockingly literal manner, as in the following statements about Christianity:

The religious man as the Church desires him to be is a typical décadent; the moment when a religious crisis has gained the upper hand of a people is always characterized by epidemics of neurosis; the 'inner world' of the religious man is so like the 'inner world' of the over-excited and exhausted as to be mistaken for it; the 'highest' states which Christianity has hung up over mankind as the most valuable of all values are forms of epilepsy — the Church has canonized only lunatics or great imposters in majorem dei honorem. 52

or, in reference to Jesus: "The occurrence of retarded puberty undeveloped in the organism as a consequence of degeneration is familiar at any rate to physiologists." 53

52 F. Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ (Great Britain, 1968), p.167.

53 Ibid., p. 144.

Whatever one's reaction to such statements is, one must not permit their very literalness to obscure the fact that they are in complete accord with the general approach to Christianity employed by Nietzsche throughout The Anti-Christ.

As we have emphasized, for Nietzsche, a demonstration of the fundamental nihilism of Christianity is sufficient to constitute its refutation. Because Christianity is assumed to be a man-made horizon, the issue of the critique revolves around the question of the value of this horizon for human life. Nevertheless, Nietzsche's critique of Christianity is not limited in its scope to those who assume, as he does, that Christianity is merely a man-made horizon. This critique is so far-reaching that it extends to those who still believe in the truth of Christianity. The manner in which it does so is expressed by Nietzsche in "The Use and Abuse of History":

A religion, for example, that has to be turned into a matter of historical knowledge by the power of pure justice, and to be scientifically studied throughout, is destroyed at the end of it all. For the historical audit brings so much to light which is false and absurd, violent and inhuman, that the condition of pious illusion falls to pieces. And a thing can only live through a pious illusion....This can be studied in everything that has life. For it ceases to have life if it be perfectly dissected, and lives in pain and anguish as soon as the historical dissection begins. 54

54 F. Nietzsche, "The Use and Abuse of History", Thoughts Out of Season (New York, 1964), ps. 57-58, 59.

The Anti-Christ is, on the surface, a wild, unrestrained diatribe against Christianity. Below this surface there lies a coherent method of approach which is based on a profound understanding of modern science. Christianity is not so much endangered by Nietzsche's abusive rhetoric as it is by the underlying method, by means of which "one error after another is coolly placed on ice; the ideal is not refuted -- it freezes to death".⁵⁵ We must now proceed to a careful examination of the placing of Christianity "on ice" in The Anti-Christ.

⁵⁵ F. Nietzsche, Ecce Homo (New York, 1969), p. 284.

CHAPTER III

An Exposition of The Anti-Christ:

Nietzsche's Critique of Jesus

The fear of pain, even of the infinitely small in pain -- cannot end otherwise than in a religion of love,...

(section 30)¹

In the critique of Christianity contained in The Anti-Christ, Nietzsche makes a careful distinction between Jesus, the "founder" of the religion, and those who, since the death of Jesus, have called themselves "Christians". As we shall see, this distinction is not final, for Nietzsche's criticism of both Jesus and Christians is ultimately based on the same fundamental notions. However, as Nietzsche himself makes an explicit distinction between the two objects of his critique,² we shall deal with each separately.

¹ Because of the frequent references which will be made to The Anti-Christ throughout the next two chapters of the thesis, we have chosen not to foot-note each reference. Instead, whenever reference is made to The Anti-Christ, by direct quotation or otherwise, the appropriate section number will be given in the body of the thesis. All section numbers given refer to F. Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ (Great Britain, 1968).

² This statement will be clarified in Chapter IV of this thesis.

Our concern in this chapter will be Nietzsche's critique of Jesus, the first and, according to Nietzsche, the last Christian (section 29).

Nietzsche's Search For The Pure

"Type of the Redeemer"

Nietzsche formulates two general propositions as the point of departure for his uncovering of the historical, physio-psychological origins of Christianity. The one which concerns us in this chapter of our thesis states that:

...the psychological type of the Galilean is still recognizable -- but only in a completely degenerate form (which is at once a mutilation and an overloading with foreign traits) could it serve the end to which it was put, that of being the type of a redeemer of mankind (section 24),

In tracing Christianity to its origin in Jesus, Nietzsche found it necessary to distinguish between the true Jesus and the false Christ created by the early Christians. Before discussing the manner in which Nietzsche isolates the pure "type of the Galilean", something must be said concerning the motive underlying this search for the undistorted Jesus.

Nietzsche's thought is characterized by a predilection for analysis and assessment of outstanding figures of human history. While one can appreciate the brilliant wit with which he discusses certain

individuals, as well as deplore the almost hysterical malice with which he treats other individuals, it must be realized that this concern with prominent men is not merely a peripheral aspect of Nietzsche's thought. His praise or castigation of great individuals is central to his thought because, for him, the individual is often also a "type", and as a type, he may embody a "life-affirming" or a "life-denying" tendency within mankind. In "The Use and Abuse of History", Nietzsche writes:

The time will come...when we shall no more look at masses but at individuals, who form a sort of bridge over the wan stream of becoming...The aim of mankind can lie ultimately only in its highest examples. ³

Mankind's "highest examples" are the creators of the horizons within which men have lived. At the source of each great horizon Nietzsche finds an individual who, superior in will to those around him, fabricated, consciously or unconsciously, a shelter against the primal chaos of existence. Other, lesser men may perpetuate or make minor alterations in the horizon, but its ultimate source lies in its individual creator. Since the horizon is the product of the will of a certain individual, a confrontation with any horizon implies, for Nietzsche, a confrontation with the individual source of that

³ F. Nietzsche, "The Use and Abuse of History", Thoughts Out of Season (New York, 1964), p. 81.

horizon. Any assessment of a horizon necessitates an assessment of the individual who created it. This emphasis on the significance of the individual for the horizon is particularly compatible with Nietzsche's physio-psychological approach.

Nietzsche's critique of the Christian horizon, then, implies a critique of Jesus. Such a critique is especially necessary because many Christians, willing to concede the corruption of Christianity after Jesus Christ, nevertheless maintain that this failure of men to follow him properly does not tarnish the purity and truth of Christ himself. Thus, not only is Jesus Christ recognized by Christians as the founder of Christianity, but he is regarded as the essence of Christianity, and as the perfect "type" of the Christian. In confronting Jesus, Nietzsche is not merely confronting a man generally recognized to be a superior individual; for Jesus is also taken by Christians to be the embodiment of eternal Truth and Goodness. By thus regarding the figure of Jesus Christ as absolutely central to itself, Christianity is in accord with Nietzsche's thought. However, the assumption underlying Nietzsche's approach to Jesus is that he is no more than a finite being who can be historically isolated, and then adequately comprehended according to physio-psychological categories.

Hopefully, the reasons for Nietzsche's confrontation with Jesus have been made sufficiently clear. We must now discuss the manner in which he isolates the pure "type of the Galilean".

Nietzsche's search for this type has its starting-point in the possibility that it is to be found "contained in the Gospels in spite of the Gospels, however much mutilated and overloaded with foreign traits: as that of Francis of Assisi is contained in the legends about him in spite of the legends" (section 29). Nietzsche's investigation of the Gospels leads him to conclude that the "type of the redeemer" is given to us in the Gospels, but only in a very distorted form. He suggests that this distortion of the "type of the redeemer" must be understood with reference to the requirements of "propaganda" (section 31), and to the inability of the first disciples to understand the type without reducing it to the more familiar Jewish categories of "prophet", "Messiah", "judge who is to come", "moral preacher" and "miracle-worker". All of these categories are, according to Nietzsche, "so many opportunities for misunderstanding the type" (section 31). These factors, according to Nietzsche, are responsible for the inconsistency of behaviour which characterizes the Jesus of the Gospels. Nietzsche does concede that Jesus, as a "décadence type", could actually have been "of a peculiar multiplicity and contradictoriness" (section 31). However, he himself rejects this possibility because if it were so, "the tradition would have to have been remarkably faithful and objective: and we have reasons for assuming the opposite" (section 31). Thus, Nietzsche resolves

the contradiction between the "mountain, lake, and field preacher" and the "aggressive fanatic, the mortal enemy of theologian and priest" (section 31) by regarding the former as the pure "type of the Master" and the latter as a distortion of this type, motivated by a combination of the ignorance of his early followers and the requirements of propaganda.

An obvious objection to Nietzsche's isolation of the pure "type of the redeemer" is that it is not based on a careful, impartial examination of the content of the Gospels conducted in the light of a thorough knowledge of their historical context, but on his own presuppositions about Jesus and his followers. This is largely true, and Nietzsche would certainly not deny that he fails to treat the Gospels in an "objective", "scholarly" manner. As we have seen in the preceding chapter of this thesis, Nietzsche is "too serious" for the approach of the "refined philologist".⁴ He is not concerned with a scientific examination of the Gospels in the usual manner of modern Biblical scholarship, but with the "psychological type of the redeemer". His aim is to construct a physio-psychological portrait of Jesus.

Nietzsche's Portrait of Jesus (Sections 24 to 39)

At the centre of Nietzsche's portrait of the "type of the redeemer" is his statement concerning the two "physiological

⁴ See Chapter II, pp. 55-56.

realities" which determine Jesus: an "instinctive hatred of reality", and an "instinctive exclusion of all aversion, all enmity, all feeling for limitation and distancing" (section 30). Both of these "physiological realities" are consequences of one fundamental physiological condition, characterized by Nietzsche as "an extreme capacity for suffering and irritation" (section 30), or "a morbid susceptibility of the sense of touch which makes it shrink back in horror from every contact" (section 29). The first of these two "physiological realities" manifests itself in an "antipathy towards every form, every spacial and temporal concept, towards everything firm, all that is custom, institution, Church" (section 29). The second "physiological reality" can really be included within the first, for it is the form which an instinctive hatred of reality assumes within the realm of human relations. The antipathy towards "everything firm" becomes an antipathy towards all enmity, all feeling for "limitation and distancing" between man and man. A tendency towards "limitation and distancing" presupposes a grasp of reality sufficiently firm and strong to enable one to distinguish oneself from inferior beings and to maintain this distinction in practice. The flight from reality, due to an "instinctive hatred" of it, makes such a firm, discriminating outlook upon the world impossible. In the absence of such an outlook indiscriminate love becomes "the sole...the last possibility of life"

(section 30). According to Nietzsche, the "instinctive hatred of reality" manifests itself in the world as an incapacity for resistance of evil or the evil-doer: "The fear of pain, even of the infinitely small in pain -- cannot end otherwise than in a religion of love" (section 30). This absolute tolerance, or love, arises not out of strength, but out of a physiological weakness which renders one incapable of anything else. For Nietzsche, a healthy love of life implies an aversion to certain of its manifestations,⁵ whereas hatred of life disguises itself as an unqualified love of beings.

It is on the basis of the two "physiological realities" noted, both consequences of a physiological weakness characterized as "an extreme capacity for suffering and irritation", that Nietzsche constructs his psychological portrait of Jesus. It is according to these physiological criteria that he is able to distinguish the pure "type of the Galilean" from the distortions of the type. Unlike Renan,⁶ that "buffoon in psychologics" (section 29), who lacks a

⁵ See F. Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols (Great Britain, 1968), p. 91.

⁶ It is noteworthy that Nietzsche refers to only two other men who have written about the question of the historical Jesus. One of these, Strauss, was a highly respected German scholar; and the other, Renan, was a popular French polemicist. Both of them, however, wrote books about Jesus which were widely read in Europe in the nineteenth century. It is thus likely that Nietzsche's contemporaries would be familiar with the work of both men to whom he refers.

proper guidance in the search for Jesus, Nietzsche does not mistake the distorted Christ, the "aggressive fanatic", for the actual Jesus, the "mountain, lake, and field preacher, whose appearance strikes one as that of a Buddha on a soil very little like that of India" (section 31). On the basis of his fundamental insight into the nature of the "type of the redeemer" Nietzsche ridicules the categories which Renan applies to Jesus. Far from being a "hero", Jesus is a being in whom "precisely the opposite of all contending, of all feeling oneself in struggle has here become instinct: the incapacity for resistance here becomes morality" (section 29). And as for Renan's notion of Jesus as a "genius": "To speak with the precision of the physiologist a quite different word would rather be in place here: the word idiot," (section 29)

Portraits of Jesus, such as that of Renan, which characterize him as "genius", "impérieux", "hero", "law-giver", the "ideal man", and so on, fail to perceive the fundamental physiological reality of Jesus which Nietzsche claims to have exposed.

In his own portrait of Jesus, Nietzsche refers to him as the "symbolist par excellence" (section 32). This is not inconsistent with his description of Jesus as an "idiot", for idiocy was meant by him as a physiological term referring to a "morbid susceptibility of the sense of touch which makes it shrink back in horror from every contact, every grasping of a firm object" (section 29). Thus idiocy, as "instinctive hatred of reality" (section 30), manifests

itself in the extreme symbolism which Nietzsche thinks is typical of Jesus. As a being who can survive only in a world divorced from reality of any kind, a solely "'inner' world" (section 29), Jesus looks on the outer world as merely a source of symbols by means of which he can speak of his own inner world: "He speaks only of the inmost thing -- everything else, the whole of reality, the whole of nature, language itself, possesses for him merely the value of a sign, a metaphor " (section 32).

Thus, for Nietzsche, one of Jesus' most characteristic statements is that "The kingdom of God is within you" (section 29). What is this inner "kingdom of God", this "life", or "truth", or "light" of which Jesus speaks by means of concepts pertaining to the real world? Nietzsche, true to his physio-psychological approach, speaks here of "inner feelings of pleasure and self-affirmations" (section 32). However, the nature of the inner "truth" proclaimed by Jesus is not ultimately significant for Nietzsche. The most important thing about this inner "truth", according to Nietzsche, is that it is a flight from reality, motivated by an unhealthy physiological condition. It cannot be adequately described precisely because, as a flight from reality, it is devoid of any reality. The inner "kingdom of God" is for Nietzsche a pathologically conditioned escape into nothingness, which is of benefit to beings such as Jesus because it produces in them sufficient feelings of pleasure to enable them to survive

in life, in spite of their physiological weakness:

The profound instinct for how one would have to live in order to feel oneself 'in Heaven', to feel oneself 'eternal', while in every other condition one by no means feels oneself 'in Heaven': this alone is the psychological reality of 'redemption'" (section 33).

The tendency of Jesus' followers to understand his symbolism in a literal manner is denounced by Nietzsche as "world-historical cynicism in the mockery of symbolism" (section 34). Notions such as the "Son of God", the "kingdom of God", the "kingdom of Heaven" are meant by Jesus to be spatio-temporal symbols of an inner state of being. Since this inner state is divorced from outer spatio-temporal realities it is, in a sense, timeless. Thus, a concept such as "the Son of Man" which is used to denote this inner state is not meant to be "a concrete person belonging to history, anything at all individual or unique, but an 'eternal fact', a psychological symbol freed from the time concept" (section 34). According to Nietzsche, however, Jesus' followers have invariably interpreted his symbolism in a gross, literal manner:

Nothing is more un-Christian than the ecclesiastical crudities of a God as a person, of a 'kingdom of God' which comes, of a 'kingdom of Heaven' in the Beyond, of a 'Son of God', the second person of the Trinity (section 34).

Nietzsche as an "emancipated spirit", who approaches Jesus with a "benevolent and cautious neutrality", is able to understand properly Jesus' symbolism (section 36). Thus, it is "patently obvious" to him that the symbol "Father" signifies the inner feeling of "perfection" (also called "blessedness"), while the symbol of the "Son" indicates the "entry into this feeling" (section 34).

According to Nietzsche's interpretation of the "type of the redeemer", the important thing, for Jesus, is an inner feeling, or state of being, and "the rest, everything pertaining to nature, time, space, history", is merely "occasion for metaphor" (section 34). His symbolism is concerned with signifying this inner "truth", and indicating the manner in which it may be attained. Thus, Nietzsche argues, the teaching of Jesus advocates fundamentally a way of living, rather than an adherence to certain doctrines. All that pertains to rigid doctrine, all that is fixed and formulated, is entirely foreign to a man for whom reality is merely a source of symbols for a vague inner state of being. Nietzsche maintains that: "One could, with some freedom of expression, call Jesus a 'free spirit' -- he cares nothing for what is fixed: the word killeth, everything fixed killeth" (section 32).

According to Nietzsche, it is a crude misunderstanding of Jesus to regard an unwavering adherence to his outward symbolism as the essence of his teaching for men.

Certainly, not all Christians understand such symbols as the "Son of God", the "kingdom of Heaven", and so on, in a literal spatio-temporal way. Those who interpret these notions in a more sublime way nevertheless, according to Nietzsche, fail to grasp the meaning of Jesus' teaching, for they persist in upholding faith in these concepts, however profoundly they are interpreted, as all-important. Thus they never penetrate beyond the symbolism of Jesus to the inner feelings which are signified in that symbolism. Nietzsche declares: "To reduce being a Christian, Christianness, to a holding something to be true, to a more phenomenality of consciousness, means to negate Christianness" (section 39). One only follows Jesus if one treats such notions as "Father", "Son of Man", "kingdom of Heaven", and so on, as symbols pointing towards an inner state of feeling which is attainable.

The inner feeling of "blessedness" is attainable, not by belief in the truth, literal or figurative, of Jesus' symbols but by a certain way of living: "It is not a 'belief' which distinguishes the Christian: the Christian acts, he is distinguished by a different mode of acting" (section 33). Although the goal is a successful flight from reality, this can be achieved only by a certain mode of

behaviour in the real world, The nature of this behaviour is determined by the two "physiological realities" which we have discussed. The mode of behaviour of the true Christian, as exemplified by Jesus, is characterized by an incapacity to resist evil people or things, and by an antipathy towards "everything firm, all that is custom, institution, Church" (section 29). Thus, the practice of the Christian is to "resist not evil" (section 29), to make no distinction between foreigner and native; to stand outside of legal institutions; to refuse, under any circumstances, to divorce one's wife; and to no longer adhere to the Jewish Church (section 33). For, as a "child of God", one no longer requires "any formulas, any rites for communicating with God" (section 33).

The "glad tidings", then, are the promise of an inner feeling of "blessedness", attainable through "evangelic practice". It is this "evangelic practice", according to Nietzsche, which Jesus bequeaths to men, and by means of which men can be "redeemed" from a real life with which they cannot cope. Nietzsche writes of Jesus:

...he knows that it is through the practice of one's life that one feels 'divine', 'blessed', 'evangelic', at all times a 'child of God'. It is not 'penance', not 'prayer for forgiveness' which leads to God: evangelic practice alone leads to God, it is God! -- What was abolished with the Evangel was the Judaism of the concepts 'sin' 'forgiveness of sin', 'faith', 'redemption by faith' -- the whole of Jewish ecclesiastical teaching was denied in the 'glad tidings'. (section 33)

Nietzsche regards the death of Jesus as the supreme illustration of evangelic practice. Jesus does not resist the guards, he does not defend himself before his judges, he does not attempt to avoid death -- rather, he "provokes" it (section 35). And he loves those who are doing him evil (section 35).

Thus, for Nietzsche, as for Christians, the death of Jesus is of supreme significance. However, its significance for Nietzsche has nothing to do with the redemption of sinful man: "This 'bringer of glad tidings' died as he lived, as he taught -- not to 'redeem mankind' but to demonstrate how one ought to live" (section 35).

The manner of living which Jesus bequeaths to men is his true teaching and, in this respect, in its essence, Christianity is still possible for contemporary men: "Even today such a life is possible, for certain men even necessary; genuine primitive Christianity will be possible at all times" (section 39).

The Manner In Which Nietzsche's Portrait

Constitutes An Attack on Jesus

Nietzsche's portrait of the "type of the redeemer" presents us with a man whose primary psychological trait is that of a turning-away from reality in favour of a preoccupation with an inner world of feelings of pleasure and self-affirmation, "a return to childishness in the spiritual domain" (section 32). The outer world is for this "antirealist" (section 32) merely a source of symbol and metaphor.

It is a way of speaking about an inner state of being which has nothing to do with outer spatio-temporal realities. The impetus for this psychological flight from reality is provided by a physiological condition characterized by "an extreme capacity for suffering and irritation". The most characteristic, and indeed, the only possible mode of behaviour of this type is one of complete indifference to religious and civil institutions and traditions, to work, to war, to culture (section 32) and an attitude of indiscriminate love towards all beings, even those who are doing him evil. Such behaviour is the natural consequence of the physio-psychological condition of the "type of the redeemer". It is, moreover, the only means by which this type can survive happily in the world. For "evangelic practice" alone is able to induce those inner feelings which constitute the blessedness of this type.

We must now attempt to understand in what manner Nietzsche's portrait of the "type of the redeemer" is, at the same time, an attack on this type.

Nietzsche never explicitly asserts that he is attacking Jesus. He declares, rather, that his attitude towards Jesus is one of "benevolent and cautious neutrality" (section 36). Although he employs apparently derogatory terms such as "~~decadent~~" and "idiot" in his description of Jesus, it can be claimed that he is using them in a strictly scientific, rather than malicious sense. It could even be

maintained that Nietzsche is still exhibiting the not quite benevolent "neutrality" of the scientist when he says of Jesus: "The occurrence of retarded puberty, undeveloped in the organism as a consequence of degeneration is familiar at any rate to physiologists" (section 32). Indeed, apart from such explicit physiological characterizations of Jesus, Nietzsche's portrait is singularly devoid of the tone of contempt and hostility which is elsewhere so prominent in The Anti-Christ. It would be too much to say that Nietzsche's description of Jesus evinces an attitude of veneration, or love. But there is certainly a feeling of sympathy and respect present, especially in his description of the death of Jesus, which he maintains exemplifies a "superiority over every feeling of resentment" (section 40). He refers to Jesus as a "great symbolist" (section 34), and his scorn for those who "misunderstood" Jesus' teaching is so great that, by contrast, his attitude towards this teaching appears almost favourable.

Although Nietzsche's attitude towards Jesus does not seem to be one of explicit hostility, or contempt, this does not necessarily imply that his portrait of Jesus is not meant to be an attack. For, as he writes in Ecce Homo:

Equality before the enemy: the first presupposition of an honest duel; Where one feels contempt, one cannot wage war; where one commands, where one sees something beneath oneself, one has no business waging war....I only attack things when every personal quarrel is excluded, when any background of bad experiences is lacking.

On the contrary, attack is in my case a proof of good will, sometimes even of gratitude. I honour, I distinguish by associating my name with that of a cause or a person....⁷

In the second chapter of this thesis we suggested that the main thrust of Nietzsche's attack on Christianity in The Anti-Christ is to be found, not in his invective, but in the manner in which "one error after another is coolly placed on ice". Nietzsche attempts not so much to attack Jesus directly, as to "place him on ice" where he "freezes to death".⁸ By exposing, in an attitude of "benevolent and cautious neutrality" the psychological "type of the redeemer", and the underlying physiological basis of this type, Nietzsche believes that the type is thereby refuted. The psychological "type of the redeemer" is characterized by a flight from reality, or denial of life, determined by the physiological condition of "an extreme capacity for suffering and irritation". Thus, Jesus' "evangelic practice" is the consequence of a sickness, or weakness (impotence of the will to power). For Nietzsche, this fact alone suffices to refute Jesus: "What is bad? -- All that proceeds from weakness"⁹ (section 2).

⁷ F. Nietzsche, Ecce Homo (New York, 1969), pp. 232, 233.

⁸ Ibid., p. 284.

⁹ Chapter II of this thesis, pp. 64-5.

The purpose of Nietzsche's critique of Christianity, as we have emphasized, is not to debate its truth but to determine its value for life. In isolating and describing the type of the founder of the Christian horizon, he is attempting to expose the fundamental sickness of this type, and hence of the horizon which arose from it. Nietzsche's portrait of Jesus is at the same time an attack on Jesus because it answers the question of the value of the teaching of Jesus for life by revealing that this teaching stems from a fundamental denial of life due to physio-psychological weakness. For Nietzsche, the meaning of Jesus is a denial of life, an "instinctive hatred of reality", and hence Christianity, at its source in Jesus, is a nihilistic horizon.

It could be said that Jesus is, for Nietzsche, the most sublime and compellingly attractive type of the nihilist. He writes in The Will to Power that: "'Christ on the Cross' is the most sublime symbol . . . even . . . ¹⁰ So powerful a hold on man does the image of the type of the redeemer" have that one of Nietzsche's greatest concerns is the formulation of a new, life-affirming type which will stand in opposition to Jesus and embody a higher goal towards which men will strive. Perhaps "Zarathustra" is meant to be this new type. ¹¹

¹⁰ F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power (New York, 1968), p. 118.

¹¹ See, for instance, F. Nietzsche, Ecce Homo (New York, 1969), p. 298.

"Dionysus" also is such a type, and it is the Dionysian type which Nietzsche most explicitly holds in opposition to Jesus: "It is here I sit the Dionysus of the Greeks: the religious affirmation of life, life whole and not denied or in part....Dionysus versus the 'Crucified': there you have the antithesis." ¹²

¹² F. Nietzsche, The Will to Power (New York, 1968), p.542.

CHAPTER IV

An Exposition of The Anti-Christ:

Nietzsche's Critique of Christianity.

The word 'Christianity' is already a misunderstanding -- in reality there has been only one Christian, and he died on the Cross. (section 39)

In section 24 of The Anti-Christ, Nietzsche formulates two propositions concerning the problem of the origin of Christianity. One of these propositions, that "the psychological type of the Galilean is still recognizable", is expanded into the portrait of Jesus which we examined in the preceding chapter. The other proposition is that: "Christianity can be understood only by referring to the soil out of which it grew -- it is not a counter-movement against the Jewish instinct, it is actually its logical consequence, one further conclusion of its fear-inspiring logic." Nietzsche's elaboration of this proposition will be the concern of this chapter.

Although Nietzsche's critique of the Christian horizon implies, for him, a direct confrontation with the extraordinary figure who stands at the centre of the horizon, he also teaches that Christianity cannot be properly understood except as a distortion of the true meaning of that figure. So radical is Nietzsche's distinction between the pure "type of the redeemer" and the Christian

Church that there seems to be little relation at all between the two. His critical evaluation of the Christian horizon seems to be concerned with two different phenomena: the figure of Jesus and the Christian Church. Apparently, these two aspects of the Christian horizon are not merely different, but antithetical:

That mankind should fall on its knees before the opposite of what was the origin, the meaning, the right of the Gospel, that it should have sanctified in the concept 'Church' precisely what the 'bringer of glad tidings' regarded as beneath him, behind him -- one seeks in vain a grander form of world-historical irony (section 36).

As we shall see, Nietzsche teaches that the origin and history of the Christian Church can be understood entirely apart from reference to the true "type of the redeemer", except insofar as this type functions as a catalyst for historical and physio-psychological trends already in existence.

Because Nietzsche thinks that it is through the Church that Christianity has been presented to the world, rather than through the pure "type of the redeemer", he usually uses the terms "Christian Church" and "Christianity" interchangeably. These terms will be used in the same way in this chapter.

Nietzsche's analysis of Christianity is to be found in those sections of The Anti-Christ which are not directly concerned with a critique of the "type of the redeemer". We do not intend, in this chapter, to deal with all of these sections. We have

chosen, rather, to examine those sections which contain what we consider to be the primary thrust of his critique. In these sections (16, 17, 24 to 27, 37 to 62) we find what could be described as an account of the genesis and development of Christianity. We are presented with a history of Christianity, considered from a physio-psychological perspective. It is this history of Christianity which provides the basis for Nietzsche's more general analysis of the Christian horizon which is found in the other sections of The Anti-Christ.

Four principal stages may be distinguished in Nietzsche's account of the history of Christianity: the triumph of slave morality in Israel prior to Jesus; Jesus' appearance on a soil already "falsified" (section 27) by the rule of the priest, his death and the subsequent reaction of his followers; Paul and the founding of the Christian Church; and the successive triumphs of the Church -- the defeat of Rome, the conversion of the barbarians, the Crusades, the Reformation, and finally, the great victory of Christian slave morality in its secular forms of liberalism and socialism.

We shall deal with each of these stages in turn, and upon completion of our account of Nietzsche's analysis of Christianity we shall again consider the relation in his thought between Christianity and the "type of the redeemer".

The Slave Morality of Judaism

(sections 16, 17, 24, 25, 26, 27)

Nietzsche's fundamental proposition concerning the origin of the Christian Church is that it is a "logical consequence" of the "Jewish instinct" (section 24). In the same section in which he formulates this proposition he tells us that this "Jewish instinct" is "the instinct of ressentiment here become genius". This instinct of ressentiment is the basis of the slave morality which, according to Nietzsche, had triumphed in Israel prior to the appearance of Jesus. In section 24, Nietzsche refers the reader to his On the Genealogy of Morals for a more detailed exposition of these notions of "ressentiment" and "slave morality". We shall thus turn briefly to this other book in order to make these concepts somewhat clearer. After this clarification we shall be able to proceed with greater confidence to a discussion of Nietzsche's teaching concerning the slave morality of Israel.

In the first essay of On the Genealogy of Morals, Nietzsche introduces "for the first time" (section 24) the psychology of the antithetical concepts of a noble morality and a ressentiment (slave) morality.

The noble morality, with its value judgements of "good" and "bad", is the creation of powerful rulers: "...a concept denoting

political superiority always resolves itself into a concept denoting superiority of soul." ¹ The noble masters consider everything high-born, healthy, beautiful, and strong to be "good", and in this judgement they are simply affirming themselves. The "bad" are those who are not masters -- the lowly, weak, ugly, and common. According to Nietzsche, the judgement "bad" in this noble morality does not connote simple hatred, or contempt, but is tempered with nuances of pity and consideration. The noble morality is a strong, joyful, life-affirming morality having its basis in a superfluity of health:

...it acts and grows spontaneously, it seeks its opposite only so as to affirm itself more gratefully and triumphantly -- its negative concept "low", "common", "bad" is only a subsequently-invented pale, contrasting image in relation to its positive basic concept -- filled with life and passion through and through -- "we noble ones, we good, beautiful, happy ones!" ²

The antithesis of the noble morality is the morality of ressentiment (slave morality) with its value judgements of "good" and "evil". This morality is not only contrary to the noble morality, but actually arises as a hostile reaction to it. While the morality of the noble comes forth from the joyful self-

¹ F. Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals (New York, 1969), p. 31.

² ibid., p. 37.

affirmation of the strong and healthy, slave morality stems from a ressentiment of the weak and sick which can find no outlet in action. The word "ressentiment" is borrowed by Nietzsche from the French language, and its meaning in his thought is perhaps most suitably expressed in its French definition: "souvenir que l'on garde d'un mal, d'une injustice, d'une injure, que l'on a subis, avec le désir de se venger",³ or "le fait d'éprouver encore, de se souvenir avec animosité des maux, des torts qu'on a subis."⁴ Just as the unsatisfied ressentiment of the weak exists only in relation to the dominating presence of the strong (or the memory of that presence), so the morality of the weak exists only as a denial of that of the strong:

While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is "outside", what is "different", what is "not itself"; and this No is its creative deed. This inversion of the value-positing eye -- the need to direct one's view outward instead of back to oneself -- is of the essence of ressentiment: in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all -- its action is fundamentally reaction.⁵

³ Dictionnaire du français contemporain (Paris: Larousse, 1966), p. 1008.

⁴ Le Robert (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1969), V, p. 857.

⁵ F. Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals (New York, 1969), pp. 36-37.

It is the impotence and ill-constitutedness of the weak which makes their morality one of reaction to external stimuli, rather than one of spontaneous self-affirmation. The weak do affirm themselves in their morality, but only indirectly, in opposition to and at the expense of the values of the noble. There is nothing within themselves which they can affirm with joy, but they find outside themselves that which they can deny with the hatred of impotent vengefulness. Thus, in the slave morality "evil" is the primary value, and it is applied to all that the noble morality calls "good". The "good" are those who, ruled and oppressed by the "evil", cannot express their ressentiment in outward action." They must resort to revenging themselves on their masters in imagination only. The weak, who are ill-constituted to begin with, become even sicker because of the poisoning effect of a ressentiment which, unable to express itself outwardly, turns against its bearer. Nietzsche does not maintain that the noble do not feel ressentiment. However, the ressentiment which may appear in the noble man "consummates and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, and therefore does not poison".⁶ Among the lowly, the occasions for feeling ressentiment are more numerous because they are continually subject to those more powerful than they, and the possibility of any outward expression of this feeling is minimal for the same reason.

⁶ Ibid., p. 39.

Slave morality, then, arises from the impotent vengefulness of the weak. They revenge themselves on the strong by inverting the noble morality and calling "evil" that which the noble consider to be "good". Concomitant with this inversion of noble, life-affirming values is the invention of "another world from which that life-affirmation would appear evil, reprehensible as such" (section 24). With the creation of "another world", the revenge of the weak is accomplished, for they can then, with immense satisfaction, consign the strong to perpetual other-worldly punishment as fearful as their imagination and bitterness permits.⁷ The concept of "good" is derived from the notion of "evil". Those who are not "evil", that is, the weak, must be "good". Thus, qualities of character which the weak cannot help possessing, such as impotence, anxious lowliness, and cowardly submissiveness are translated into "goodness of heart", "humility", and "obedience". The "virtues" of the weak are sanctioned by the notion of the "other world" which holds out to them the promise of an eternal reward for a manner of conduct which is natural to them. The moral edifice erected out of the ressentiment of the weak is completed and perfected with the addition of yet another "lie": that of freedom of the will.⁸ This notion makes of weakness a merit consciously

⁷ Nietzsche uses an excerpt from the writings of Tertullian in order to illustrate this statement. See ibid., pp. 48-52.

⁸ See Ibid., p. 46.

chosen by those who desire to be "good", and strength a defect consciously chosen by those who desire to be "evil". Thus, eternal punishment of the latter and reward of the former is "just". Although ressentiment morality has its basis in weakness, the weak can become cleverer than the strong: "A race of such men of ressentiment is bound to become eventually cleverer than any noble race; it will also honour cleverness to a far greater degree."⁹ According to Nietzsche, the invention of a morality which is the inversion of the noble morality testifies to a cleverness which makes the weak more than a match for the strong.

The antithetical concepts of a noble morality and a ressentiment morality are meant to be extremely broad in their scope. Nietzsche finds this antithesis almost everywhere, and at every time. He often identifies this universal conflict, symbolically, as the struggle between Rome and Israel. As he declares in On the Genealogy of Morals:

The two opposing values "good and bad", "good and evil" have been engaged in a fearful struggle on earth for thousands of years; and though the latter value has certainly been on top for a long time, there are still places where the struggle is as yet undecided....The symbol of this

⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

struggle, inscribed in letters legible across all human history, is "Rome against Judea, Judea against Rome"; -- there has hitherto been no greater event than this struggle, this question, this deadly contradiction.¹⁰

This identification of slave morality with Judea brings us back to The Anti-Christ. In the same section (24) in which Nietzsche equates the Judeo-Christian morality with ressentiment morality he declares, rather enigmatically, that:

The Jews are the counterparts of décadents: they have been compelled to act as d cadents to the point of illusion, they have known, with a non plus ultra of histrionic genius, how to place themselves at the head of all d cadence movements.

Is it an error, then, to see in Nietzsche's thought a simple equation between Judaism and the d cadence morality of slaves? What precisely is the nature of the relation between the Jews and ressentiment morality? Perhaps the most adequate response to these questions is to be found in the concept of the "priestly" kind of man, which is introduced by Nietzsche immediately after his puzzling assertion that the Jews are "the counterparts of d cadents". In order to clarify Nietzsche's notion of the "priestly" type of man we must again turn, very briefly, to

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 52.

On the Genealogy of Morals, which contains "the first psychology of the priest", ¹¹

In the first essay of On the Genealogy of Morals, Nietzsche observes that within the ruling caste of the nobility there may be in conjunction with the healthy warrior caste, a caste made up of high-born, politically strong, but fundamentally sick "priestly" types. The noble caste, then, often consists of two castes: the "knightly-aristocratic" (or, warrior) and the "priestly-noble". ¹² The priest is too powerful a man, both in station and will, ¹³ to

¹¹ F. Nietzsche, Ecce Homo (New York, 1969), p. 313.

¹² F. Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals (New York, 1969), p. 33.

¹³ Nietzsche speaks of the strength of the will to power of the priest, and, at the same time, he speaks of the sickness of the priest. Elsewhere in his writing, he attributes health to the strength of the will to power, and sickness to the weakness, or impotence, of the will to power (see Chapter II of this thesis, pp. 64-5). When he speaks of the strength of the priest's will to power, then, he likely means a relative strength. Relative to the herd which he shepherds, the priest's will to power is strong. Relative to the will to power of the healthy "knightly-aristocratic" men, however, his will to power is deficient enough to make him a sick man.

be relegated to the great mass of the downtrodden. Nevertheless, because it is physiologically decadent, the priestly caste is filled with ressentiment against the healthy warrior caste; not because it is oppressed by the warriors but because it is envious of their healthy love of life, and feels their naive contempt. The priestly-noble caste thus takes the part of the weak against the knightly-aristocratic caste. The priest, himself sick, takes charge of the sick herd:

We must count the ascetic priest as the predestined saviour, shepherd, and advocate of the sick-herd: only thus can we understand his tremendous historical mission. Dominion over the suffering is his kingdom, that is where his instinct directs him, here he possesses his distinctive art, his mastery, his kind of happiness. He must be sick himself, he must be profoundly related to the sick -- how else would they understand each other? -- but he must also be strong, master of himself even more than of others, with his will to power intact, so as to be both trusted and feared by the sick. He has to defend his herd -- against whom? Against the healthy, of course, and also against envy of the healthy....¹⁴

Nietzsche's attitude towards the priestly type is not one of unmitigated hostility. He maintains, in partial praise of

¹⁴ F. Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals (New York, 1969), pp. 125-26.

the priest, that he "alters the direction of ressentiment".¹⁵ The dangerously explosive accumulation of ressentiment in the sick herd is channelled by the priest in a direction which, although rendering the sick even more sick, preserves social order.¹⁶ Moreover, Nietzsche asserts, it was on the soil of the priestly form of existence that "man first became an interesting animal, that only here did the human soul in a higher sense acquire depth and become evil -- and these are the two basic respects in which man has hitherto been superior to other beasts!"¹⁷ In On the Genealogy of Morals, Nietzsche's depiction of the priestly type presents us with a strong-willed but essentially sick man (often a member of the noble caste) who fulfills the function of shepherd to the sick herd. Slave morality is thus, for the priest, an instrument by which he controls the potentially dangerous ressentiment of the weak. His own feeling of ressentiment is partially satisfied as he watches the noble morality weaken and then

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 128-29.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

succumb to his cleverer morality. It is all too often the case, according to Nietzsche, that the healthy contempt of the strong^{will} for the priests is slowly transformed into a peculiar awe.

If we note that Nietzsche refers to the Jews in On the Genealogy of Morals as the "priestly nation",¹⁸ then we are now in a position to understand his assertion in The Anti-Christ that the Jews are "the counterparts of décadents". Just as the priest, although sick, still evinces a relatively strong will to power, so too the Jewish nation is "a nation of the toughest vital energy" (section 24); and just as the priest places himself at the head of the sick herd, so the Jewish nation, "from the profoundest shrewdness in self-preservation, took the side of all décadence instincts" (section 24). It did so because, at some point in its history, it found itself "placed in impossible circumstances" (section 24). This implies that the Jewish nation was not always a priestly nation, and hence perhaps not always a sick nation. We must now turn to Nietzsche's account of the history of Israel, in which he traces the process whereby the Jews were compelled to become a priestly people.

Nietzsche maintains that at one time, in the period of the Kingdom, Israel was a strong, life-affirming nation which believed

¹⁸ See ibid., p. 53.

in itself. This healthy self-affirmation was reflected in its concept of God: "Their Yaweh was the expression of their consciousness of power, of their delight in themselves, their hope of themselves" (section 25). It is a people's conception of God which, for Nietzsche, indicates its health and strength:

A people which still believes in itself still also has its own God. In him it venerates the condition through which it has prospered, its virtues -- it projects its joy in itself, its feeling of power on to a being whom one can thank for them (section 16).

Rather than regarding the "cosmopolitan" (section 17) Christian god as a concept superior to the concept of Yaweh, the national god, Nietzsche maintains that it is the latter concept which signifies a strong, life-affirming will to power. The former is merely a manifestation of "the impotence for power" (section 16). Thus, the concept of Yaweh as a national god is a clear indication, to Nietzsche, that at one time in its history Israel was worthy of a noble morality.

The healthy period in Israel's history was brought to an end by certain historical circumstances, summed up by Nietzsche as "anarchy within, the Assyrian from without" (section 25). Although the concept of the national god long remained the ideal, it was evident that the "old God could no longer do what he formerly could" (section 25). Rather than submit to the overwhelming forces

of history, however, the Jews, "faced with the question of being or not being...preferred, with a perfectly uncanny conviction, being at any price" (section 24). In order to survive as a people, the Jews were compelled to alter their conception of God. No longer "an expression of national self-confidence" (section 25), Yaweh degenerated into a dispenser of the rewards and punishments authorized by the slave morality. He became "an instrument in the hands of priestly agitators" who fulfilled their historical function of altering the direction of ressentiment by interpreting Israel's treatment at the hands of foreign conquerors as a just punishment for "sin" (section 25). At the same time, the ressentiment of the people was partially appeased by the priestly teaching that the Jews were the "holy people", the "chosen people", whereas their oppressors were merely "world", "unholy", and "sinful" (section 27).

At the time of Israel's decline, the priestly types came to the fore to alter the direction of Jewish ressentiment with their teachings about "sin" and the "moral world-order". Nietzsche teaches that the ascendancy of the slave morality in Israel depended on these two concepts. The existence of the "moral world-order" guaranteed the eventual punishment of the "evil" and the rewarding of the "good" (section 26); and the notion of "sin" explained the otherwise incomprehensible suffering of the "good" as the outcome of disobedience of God (that is, disobedience of the priest) (section 25). Nietzsche

maintains that, in order to further consolidate their power, the Jewish priesthood falsified the history of Israel in accord with the notion of the "moral world-order". It became an account of disobedience of God and consequent punishment, obedience to God and consequent reward (section 26). The period of Israel's national confidence, which Nietzsche admired, was re-interpreted by the priests as a time of decay; and, worst of all in Nietzsche's view, "according to their requirements they made the mighty, very freely constituted figures of Israel's history into either pathetic ~~and~~ clinging bigots or 'godless men'" (section 26). The priests thus re-interpreted the colourful, sometimes glorious past of Israel as a mere prelude to their hegemony. They also obtained complete dominion over Israel's present by means of the "Law" revealing the "will of God" and found in the "sacred book" which the priests supposedly discovered (section 26). By means of the Law the priest exercised power, not only over the eternal destiny of his herd, but over all the natural events of temporal life (birth, marriage, sickness, death, even eating), and over all the natural functions of society (administration of justice, caring for the sick and poor). The requirement of the priest's presence at the inevitable concerns of life is indicative to Nietzsche of the life-denying tendencies which underlie slave morality. The presence of the priest is continually necessary because the natural events of

life possess no value in themselves: "...a sanction is subsequently required -- a value-bestowing power is needed which denies the natural quality in these things and only by doing so is able to create a value" (section 26).

In order to survive the circumstances of history the Jews resorted to the most spiritual sort of revenge against their conquerors. With the indispensable aid of the priests among them, they inverted the values of their masters. The values of the masters were life-affirming, since they had their source in strength and health.¹⁹ Thus, in order to survive, the Jews adopted a life-denying morality and succumbed to the rule of priests. The great strength of will of the Jews made their slave morality particularly virulent. Accordingly, they are, for Nietzsche, the "priestly nation". The "vital energy" (section 24) of the Jews made them, relative to other slave peoples, as the priest is to the sick herd. In Israel, the life-denying morality of the slaves assumed a peculiarly powerful form. Nietzsche

¹⁹ Nietzsche generally associates pagan peoples with the healthy affirmation of life. He declares in section 55: "...pagans are all who say Yes to life, to whom 'God' is the word for the great Yes to all things."

sums up the situation in Israel at the time of Jesus' appearance:

...all nature, all natural value, all reality had the profoundest instincts of the ruling class against it... The 'holy people', which had retained only priestly values, priestly words, for all things and with a consistency capable of inspiring fear had separated itself from everything else powerful on earth, calling it 'unholy', 'world', 'sin' (section 27).

The Appearance of Jesus in Israel, His Death,
and The Reaction of His Followers (sections 27,
28, 29, 31, 33, 40, 41, 44)

The Jewish society ruled by the priests had its foundation in a profound denial of reality. This turning-away from reality was the price of the Jewish people's continued existence. One reality, however, remained intact: that of the "holy people", the "chosen people", that is, "the Jewish reality itself" (section 27). Jesus and his followers appeared to be in revolt against the Jewish Church, which constituted the Jewish reality. To the extent that Jesus' activity signified such a revolt, this activity was actually yet another manifestation of the Jewish instinct of life-denial, "...in other words the priestly instinct which can no longer endure the priest as a reality, the invention of an even more abstract form of existence, an even more unreal vision of the world than one conditioned by an organized Church" (section 27).

Thus, according to Nietzsche, the movement headed by Jesus was really the Jewish instinct of denial carried to its ultimate conclusion of self-negation.

In sections 27 and 28 Nietzsche implies that the interpretation of the activity of Jesus as a revolt against the Jewish Church could be a misunderstanding. In light of his portrait of Jesus in the following sections (29 to 39), however, it may be said that such an interpretation would be mistaken only insofar as it attributes to Jesus a consciousness of being in revolt against the priesthood. For it is clear from Nietzsche's portrait of Jesus that the fundamental impulse of the "type of the redeemer" is towards a denial of every reality, including the Jewish reality. As Nietzsche declares: "...the whole of Jewish ecclesiastical teaching was denied in the 'glad tidings'" (section 33). The Jewish priesthood, then, was to some extent justified in divining in Jesus a serious threat to the continued existence of Jewish society. They knew that Jewish survival required that the "holy people" be distinguished from "the world", and that they exercise absolute power over their people. In his teaching that every man is a "child of God" (section 29), Jesus threatened both this power and the slave morality which called the Jews "good" and the remainder of the world "evil". In his teaching and in his activity Jesus denied the priest and the slave morality which is the priest's instrument. He had overcome every feeling of ressentiment within himself, and thus he had no need of the priest,

or of the slave morality, Jesus' denial of the Jewish Church, whether explicit or implicit, constituted "an attack on the profoundest national instinct, on the toughest national will to life which has ever existed on earth" (section 27). In this sense, then, Jesus was a "political criminal" (section 27) of the most dangerous sort, and it is this which incited the Jewish ruling order to bring him to the Cross.

In the manner of his dying Jesus demonstrated "the freedom from, the superiority over every feeling of ressentiment" (section 40). The reaction of his immediate followers to his death, however, was determined by the feeling of ressentiment. As is natural in those motivated by ressentiment, the first impulse of Jesus' followers was to determine who or what was to blame for the death which had shaken and disappointed them to their depths (section 40). It was obvious where the blame should be located: the Jewish ruling order was responsible for Jesus' terrible death on the Cross. From this moment, according to Nietzsche, commenced the distortion of the "type of the redeemer". He was explained by his faithful disciples as a conscious rebel against a social order which had consequently put him to death: "Only now was all that contempt for and bitterness against Pharisee and theologian worked into the type of the Master -- one thereby made of him a Pharisee and theologian!" (section 40). Filled with ressentiment against the Jewish social

order, the disciples could not let the affair rest with the victory of the Jewish priesthood. They accordingly made use of the popular Jewish concept of the "Messiah", and interpreted Jesus according to this notion, claiming that he would come again (the "Second Coming") in his divine power to pronounce "judgement" on his enemies (section 40).²⁰ Jesus' symbol of the "Kingdom of God", which was meant to signify an inner state of bliss, became a spatio-temporal reality promised to the "good" and denied to the "evil". Jesus, who had taught that everyone is a "child of God" was exalted to divine status, above all men, by the "enraged reverence" of his followers (section 40). This process of taking the originally sublime symbolism of Jesus, and rendering it progressively cruder, was carried further when the disciples confronted the question of how God could have permitted the death of Jesus. Their "downright terrifyingly absurd" (section 41) answer to this question was that God gave his Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. Thus, the Jewish ecclesiastical concept of the guilt sacrifice, the sacrifice of the innocent for the sins of the guilty, became part of Christianity.

²⁰ It goes without saying that Nietzsche would regard whatever evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus is asserted in the Gospels as mere fabrication for the purposes of propaganda.

According to Nietzsche, then, the distortion of the true meaning of the "type of the redeemer" began from the moment of his death on the Cross. The motive underlying this process of distortion lay in the ressentiment of the followers of Jesus. These were "crude" people, who never really understood Jesus (section 31). Never having understood him, they were far from being able to comprehend or imitate the "evangelical practice" which was epitomized in his manner of dying. Hence, their ressentiment against the Jewish ruling order, which seemed to be responsible for his death, mastered them, and the meaning of Jesus was distorted according to the demands of this ressentiment. This process of distortion accounts for the contrary images of Jesus in the Gospels as a "mountain, lake, and field preacher", and, at the same time as an "aggressive fanatic, the mortal enemy of theologian and priest" (section 31).

It should be noted that, for Nietzsche, the progressive distortion of the "type of the redeemer" was a progressive process of Judaization. The notions of "Messiah", "guilt sacrifices", and "forgiveness of sins" were Jewish ecclesiastical notions. We noted earlier, however, that Nietzsche regards Jesus' teaching as a denial of the Jewish ecclesiastical teaching. It must be said, in resolution of these apparently contradictory assertions, that Christianity did deny Judaism, but not in the manner of Jesus. So peculiarly resilient was the Jewish ecclesiastical

teaching, that it became incorporated into Christianity, which then used it to negate Judaism:

Once the chasm between Jews and Jewish Christians opened up, the latter were left with no alternative but to employ against the Jews the very self-preservative procedures counselled by the Jewish instinct, while the Jews had previously employed them only against everything non-Jewish (section 44).

According to Nietzsche, Christianity is the antithesis to the Gospels. It is so because, whereas Jesus denied Jewish ecclesiastical teaching, his followers incorporated this teaching into their movement. This, then, is the meaning of Nietzsche's proposition that Christianity cannot be understood apart from the Jewish soil out of which it grew. It is this soil which furnished the Christian concepts of the Judgement and Second Coming, the guilt sacrifice, and the Resurrection. This last notion, the doctrine of the Resurrection, brings us to the subject of Paul, who, according to Nietzsche, employed it as the chief means to the founding of the Christian Church.

Paul (sections 42, 43, 44, 45, 58)

Nietzsche points to Paul as the principal figure in the process whereby a Christian horizon came into being which was the very antithesis of the true meaning of the "type of the redeemer":

The type of the redeemer, the doctrine,
 the practice, the death, the meaning
 of the death, even the sequel to the
 death -- nothing was left untouched,
 nothing was left bearing even the
 remotest resemblance to reality
 (section 42).

It is Paul who suffers the fiercest onslaught of Nietzsche's
 invective in The Anti-Christ. As we have noted, for Nietzsche,
 the critique of a horizon implies a direct confrontation with the
 extraordinary figure who stands at the centre of that horizon.
 His critical analysis of Christianity thus requires the confront-
 ation with Jesus which we dealt with in the preceding chapter.
 Nietzsche teaches, however, that the Christian horizon came into
 being as an antithesis to the "type of the redeemer"; and thus,
 a confrontation with Jesus, although necessary, is not sufficient,
 for he bears too little relation to Christianity. According to
 Nietzsche, Paul is the extraordinary figure who stands at the
 centre of the Christian horizon which arose as an antithesis to
 Jesus' teaching: "In Paul was embodied the antithetical type to
 the 'bringer of glad tidings'" (section 42).

Nietzsche's confrontation with Paul, however, is of a different
 order than his confrontation with Jesus. His attitude towards Paul
 is one of unqualified hatred and contempt. It is obvious that
 Nietzsche does not consider Paul so worthy an enemy as Jesus.
 Nevertheless, according to Nietzsche, Paul is far more responsible
 than Jesus for the creation and consolidation of the Christian horizon.

We must now examine Nietzsche's account of the manner in which he did this and of the motives which inspired his activity.

Whereas Nietzsche regards Jesus' activity as essentially apolitical (section 32), albeit with political consequences, he regards Paul's activity as primarily political in nature. He is concerned above all with Paul's consolidation and extension of the power of the Christian Church. In this undertaking, Paul was essentially fulfilling the office of the Jewish priestly type: "His requirement was power; with Paul the priest again sought power -- he could employ only those concepts, teachings, symbols with which one tyrannizes over masses, forms herds" (section 42).

Paul's goal, then, was the traditional goal of the priestly type -- power over the sick herd. He employed various "concepts, teachings, symbols" in the attainment of this end, but none was more effective than the notion of "personal immortality":

That, as an 'immortal soul', everybody is equal to everybody else, that in the totality of beings the 'salvation' of every single one is permitted to claim to be of everlasting moment, that little bigots and three-quarters madmen are permitted to imagine that for their sakes the laws of nature are continually being broken -- such a raising of every sort of egoism to infinity, to impudence, cannot be branded with sufficient contempt. And yet it is to this pitiable flattery of personal vanity that Christianity owes its victory -- it is with this that it has persuaded over

to its side everything ill-constituted,
 rebellious-minded, under-privileged,
 all the dross and refuse of mankind
 (section 43).

It was by means of "the great lie of personal immortality"
 (section 43) that Paul, the priest, attracted masses of followers;
 and it was by the same means that he exercised power over them.
 For the notion of personal immortality brings in its wake the doc-
 trines of sin and judgement which teach that those who do not
 repent of their sin (that is, submit to the priest) will be eternally
 punished (sections 26 and 42).

The existence of the herd-forming priestly type presupposes
 a mass of sick men. According to Nietzsche, there was no scarcity
 of such sick men in the Roman Empire at the time of Paul. The
 Romans had conquered a great deal of the world, and thus the collect-
 ive feeling of ressentiment among the weak and oppressed must have
 been tremendous. The conquered Jews, as we have seen, exhibited a
 peculiarly virulent form of ressentiment. So great is the antithesis
 between the slave morality of the conquered Jews and the noble morality
 of the triumphant Romans that Nietzsche regards this particular his-
 torical conflict as symbolic of the age-old struggle between the
 masters and the slaves. Paul was of the priestly people of Israel,
 and his political activity was, for Nietzsche, another stage in the
 battle between Rome and Israel. Paul's goal was priestly power, but
 beyond that there was another, larger end -- the undermining of the

Roman Empire. The Jews had begun this subversive process by labelling as "evil" all the values upon which the prosperity of Rome depended: public spirit, gratitude for one's descent, integrity, intellect, manliness, pride, beauty, liberality of heart, and strength. Paul's contribution to the dissolution of Rome was his extension of the Jewish slave morality to all the weak, conquered peoples of the Empire. His genius was that of the priest. He gathered together and channelled in a certain direction the collective ressentiment of the Roman Empire:

Paul, Chandala hatred against Rome, against 'the world', become flesh and genius, the Jew, the eternal Jew par excellence...What he divined was that with the aid of the little sectarian movement on the edge of Judaism one could ignite a 'world conflagration', that with the symbol 'God on the Cross' one could sum up everything down-trodden, everything in secret revolt, the entire heritage of anarchist agitation in the empire into a tremendous power (section 58).

Paul extended the Jewish slave morality throughout the Empire. As Nietzsche declares:

The Christian is only a Jew of a 'freer' confession (section 44). He also radicalized this morality, rendering it more powerful by means of the notion of personal immortality: This was his vision on the road to Damascus: he grasped that to disvalue 'the world' he needed the belief in immortality, that the concept 'Hell' will master even Rome -- that with the 'Beyond' one kills life (section 58).

Paul's priestly genius was manifest in his insight that the promise of eternal damnation of the "evil" and eternal blessedness of the "good" would exert a magnetic attraction on all the weak, sick, and disinherited elements in the Empire. Such a massive adherence to values that were the extreme antithesis of the values on which the strength of Rome depended was enough to bring down the Empire. Christianity constituted a rebellion against Rome which was infinitely more effective than an armed rising could have been:

This organization was firm enough to endure bad emperors...But it was not firm enough to endure the corruptest form of corruption, to endure the Christian...These stealthy vermin which, shrouded in night, fog and ambiguity crept up to every individual, and sucked seriousness for real things, the instinct for realities of any kind, out of him, this cowardly, womanish and honied crew gradually alienated the 'souls' of this tremendous structure -- those precious those manly-noble natures who found their own cause, their own seriousness, their own pride in the cause of Rome (section 58).

Paul, then, completed the process of distortion which had begun with the death of Jesus. He did so, not as a "first Christian" (section 46), but as a Jewish priest who allied himself with first Christians in order to wage more effectively the old struggle between Israel and Rome. Nietzsche maintains that Paul himself did not even believe in the concepts by means

of which he moulded Christianity into a formidable movement:
 "Paul willed the end, consequently he willed the means....What he himself did not believe was believed by the idiots among whom he cast his teaching" (section 42). Paul, as a priestly Jew, was not a slave, but an ally and leader of slaves. This does not mean that he was not filled with ressentiment, but his strength of will was such that he could become "the greatest of all apostles of revenge" (section 45).

Nietzsche maintains that, with Paul, any relation between the "type of the redeemer" and Christianity was finally severed. The Jewish Church and ecclesiastical teaching, which had been denied in the "glad tidings", re-asserted itself triumphantly through Paul. The Jewish reality was indeed almost entirely negated by Christianity, but only because it was extended throughout the world. As Nietzsche asserts elsewhere, the Christian Church founded by Paul is really an "ecumenical synagogue".²¹ It was a gross distortion of the meaning of Jesus that Jewish notions such as the "Messiah", "divine judgement", the "guilt sacrifice", and so on, were applied to him by his crude, naive followers. The distortion became a complete antithesis upon

²¹ F. Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals (New York, 1969), pp. 53-4.

the advent of the Jewish priestly type, Paul, with his teaching of personal immortality and his founding of a great ecclesiastical institution.

The History of Christianity

(sections 39, 43, 46, 55, 60, 61)

The undermining of the Roman Empire was, in Nietzsche's view, one major episode in the continuing conflict which he symbolizes as the conflict between Rome and Israel. This particular episode constituted a triumph of "everything that crawls along the ground" over "everything noble, joyful, high-spirited on earth" (section 43). Nietzsche interprets the history of Christianity from the perspective of this struggle between slave morality and noble morality. Each triumph of Christianity signifies, for him, a triumph of sickness and life-denial over health and affirmation of life. Nietzsche's account of the "real history of Christianity" (section 39) can be briefly summarized in terms of this perspective.

After "taming"²² the healthy barbarians who "say Yes to life" (section 55), the Christian Church then used them to wage its war against Islam. German knighthood, on behalf of the Church deprived Europe of the harvest of Islamic culture. Christianity

²² See F. Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols (Great Britain, 1968), pp. 55-56.

hated the culture of Islam because "it was noble, because it owed its origin to manly instincts, because it said Yes to life" (section 60). Although it successfully barred this noble Islamic culture from Europe, Christian slave morality almost succumbed to its antithesis during the Renaissance:

Is it at last understood, is there a desire to understand, what the Renaissance was? The reevaluation of Christian values, the attempt, undertaken with every expedient, with every instinct, with genius of every kind, to bring about the victory of the opposing values, the noble values. (section 61).

The noble morality of Rome would have perhaps triumphed over Christian slave morality in its very seat, the Papacy. The situation in Rome at this time was such that it was not impossible that a man such as Cesare Borgia could have become Pope. As it was, "Christianity no longer sat on the Papal throne! Life sat there instead! the triumph of life! the great Yes to all lofty, beautiful, daring things!" (section 61). Christianity was almost abolished. However, once again the Germans came to the aid of Christian slave morality; not the German knighthood this time, but a German monk. Luther, seeing what he regarded as the corruption of the Papacy, attacked the Church, and thereby restored it (section 61). Christian slave morality re-asserted itself in a re-vitalized Roman Catholic Church, and in the new Protestant Churches.

The next great success of Christian slave morality was not directly that of the Church. The French Revolution heralded the victory of the doctrine of equal rights, which was a secularized version of the Christian teaching of the equality of all souls before God. According to Nietzsche, the "poison of the doctrine 'equal rights for all'...has been more thoroughly sowed by Christianity than by anything else" (section 43). The French Revolution inaugurated the sort of slave morality which Nietzsche sees governing his contemporaries. He maintains that, whereas the Christian Church has been declining in power since the Revolution, secularized Christian morality is becoming increasingly prevalent as the movements of liberalism and socialism gain strength. Although Nietzsche thinks that Christianity has finally been defeated by the modern scientific thought which it fostered, he also believes that it has left the West with a legacy which could prove ineradicable -- the secularized Christian slave morality of the "last men". So far as Nietzsche is concerned, then, the history of Christianity ends with the "last men" who are the heirs of the last pale remnants of the Christian horizon.

Nietzsche's Condemnation of Christianity

As we noted in the second chapter of the thesis, Nietzsche is concerned above all, not with refuting Christianity, but with assessing its value for life. The exposure of the fundamental nihilism of the Christian horizon would, in Nietzsche's view, constitute a refutation of that horizon. Christianity has its source in the morality of ressentiment, and therefore, according to the physio-psychological perspective, it is the product of sickness, or weakness. In Nietzsche's view, a horizon which stems from weakness can ultimately only be inimical to life: "What is bad? -- All that proceeds from weakness" (section 2).²³ The denial of life which Nietzsche claims to discover at the centre of Christianity leads him to condemn it as "a conspiracy against health, beauty, well-constitutedness, bravery, intellect, benevolence of soul, against life itself" (section 62).

The Relation Between the "Type of the Redeemer" and Christianity in Nietzsche's Critique

In this chapter of the thesis we have emphasized the distinction between the "type of the redeemer" and Christianity in The Anti-Christ. It was noted that Jesus denied Jewish slave

²³ See Chapter II of this thesis, pp. 64-5.

morality and its accoutrements, whereas it was precisely this Jewish reality which re-asserted itself in the Christian Church. According to Nietzsche, then, the Church was created out of the antithesis to the Gospels. There is, however, an immensely significant point of identity between Jesus and Christianity in Nietzsche's critique.

Nietzsche teaches that Jesus' denial of the Jewish reality was, in fact, the Jewish instinct carried to its ultimate conclusion of self-negation. In his impulse to deny reality, Jesus was manifesting the Jewish instinct, and thus he must, to some extent, be understood by reference to the Jewish soil from which he arose. In this sense, then, Nietzsche's two fundamental propositions about Christianity (section 24) are related. The divergence of these propositions is such that his critique of Christianity is a two-fold critique, each aspect of which is dealt with in a separate chapter of this thesis. Nevertheless, they ultimately converge in a manner which enables us to assert that Nietzsche's criticism of the "type of the redeemer" and of Christianity is fundamentally one. Christianity arose from the ressentiment slave morality of Israel, and hence it is fundamentally nihilistic. The "type of the redeemer", although having overcome Jewish slave morality, did not overcome the fundamental propensity to deny life which is associated with that morality. Jesus, although regarded by Nietzsche as a far greater man than any "Christian"

who came after him, shared with those Christians a deep-rooted nihilism, an "instinctive hatred of every reality" (section 30). His denial of life manifested itself in a more sublime way, but it was nevertheless a denial of life which proceeded from a fundamental sickness, or weakness. Thus, in Nietzsche's view, the "type of the redeemer" and Christianity are ultimately subject to the same judgement: "What is bad? → All that proceeds from weakness" (section 2).

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