Friedrich Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ, 32-34

32.

I can only repeat that I set myself against all efforts to intrude the

fanatic into the figure of the Saviour: the very word *imperieux* ('imperious') used

by Renan, is alone enough to annul the type. What the "glad tidings"

tell us is simply that there are no more contradictions; the kingdom of

heaven belongs to children; the faith that is voiced here is no more

an embattled faith--it is at hand, it has been from the beginning, it is

a sort of recrudescent childishness of the spirit. The physiologists, at

all events, are familiar with such a delayed and incomplete puberty in

the living organism, the result of degeneration. A faith of this sort is

not furious, it does not denounce, it does not defend itself: it does

not come with "the sword"--it does not realize how it will one day set

man against man. It does not manifest itself either by miracles, or by

rewards and promises, or by "scriptures": it is itself, first and last,

its own miracle, its own reward, its own promise, its own "kingdom of

God." This faith does not formulate itself--it simply lives, and so

guards itself against formulae. To be sure, the accident of environment,

of educational background gives prominence to concepts of a certain

sort: in primitive Christianity one finds only concepts of a

Judaeo-Semitic character (--that of eating and drinking at the last

supper belongs to this category--an idea which, like everything else

Jewish, has been badly mauled by the church). But let us be careful not

to see in all this anything more than symbolical language, semantics

an opportunity to speak in parables. It is only on the theory that no

work is to be taken literally that this anti-realist is able to speak at

all. Set down among Hindus he would have made use of the concepts of

Sankhya, and among Chinese he would have employed those of

Lao-tse --and in neither case would it have made any difference to

him.--With a little freedom in the use of words, one might actually call

Jesus a "free spirit" --he cares nothing for what is established: the

word killeth, whatever is established killeth. The idea of

"life" as an experience, as he alone conceives it, stands opposed to

his mind to every sort of word, formula, law, belief and dogma. He

speaks only of inner things: "life" or "truth" or "light" is his word

for the innermost--in his sight everything else, the whole of reality,

all nature, even language, has significance only as sign, as

allegory.--Here it is of paramount importance to be led into no error by

the temptations lying in Christian, or rather ecclesiastical

prejudices: such a symbolism par excellence stands outside all

religion, all notions of worship, all history, all natural science, all

worldly experience, all knowledge, all politics, all psychology, all

books, all art--his "wisdom" is precisely a pure ignoranceof all

such things. He has never heard of culture; he doesn't have to make

war on it--he doesn't even deny it.... The same thing may be said of the

state, of the whole bourgeoise social order, of labour, of war--he has

no ground for denying "the world," for he knows nothing of the

ecclesiastical concept of "the world".... Denial is precisely the

thing that is impossible to him.--In the same way he lacks argumentative

capacity, and has no belief that an article of faith, a "truth," may be

established by proofs (--his proofs are inner "lights," subjective

sensations of happiness and self-approval, simple "proofs of power"--).

Such a doctrine cannot contradict: it doesn't know that other

doctrines exist, or can exist, and is wholly incapable of imagining

anything opposed to it.... If anything of the sort is ever encountered,

it laments the "blindness" with sincere sympathy--for it alone has

"light"--but it does not offer objections....

33.

In the whole psychology of the "Gospels" the concepts of guilt and

punishment are lacking, and so is that of reward. "Sin," which means

anything that puts a distance between God and man, is abolished--\_this

is precisely the "glad tidings."\_ Eternal bliss is not merely promised,

nor is it bound up with conditions: it is conceived as the \_only\_

reality--what remains consists merely of signs useful in speaking of it.

The results of such a point of view project themselves into a new way

of life, the special evangelical way of life. It is not a "belief" that

marks off the Christian; he is distinguished by a different mode of

action; he acts differently. He offers no resistance, either by word

or in his heart, to those who stand against him. He draws no distinction

between strangers and countrymen, Jews and Gentiles ("neighbour," of

course, means fellow-believer, Jew). He is angry with no one, and he

despises no one. He neither appeals to the courts of justice nor heeds

their mandates ("Swear not at all"). He never under any

circumstances divorces his wife, even when he has proofs of her

infidelity.--And under all of this is one principle; all of it arises

from one instinct.--

The life of the Saviour was simply a carrying out of this way of

life--and so was his death.... He no longer needed any formula or ritual

in his relations with God--not even prayer. He had rejected the whole of

the Jewish doctrine of repentance and atonement; he knew that it was

only by a way of life that one could feel one's self "divine,"

"blessed," "evangelical," a "child of God." Not by "repentance," not

by "prayer and forgiveness" is the way to God: only the Gospel way

leads to God--it is itself "God!"--What the Gospels abolished was

the Judaism in the concepts of "sin," "forgiveness of sin," "faith,"

"salvation through faith"--the whole ecclesiastical dogma of the Jews

was denied by the "glad tidings."

The deep instinct which prompts the Christian how to live so that he

will feel that he is "in heaven" and is "immortal," despite many reasons

for feeling that he is not "in heaven": this is the only psychological

reality in "salvation."--A new way of life, not a new faith....

34.

If I understand anything at all about this great symbolist, it is this:

that he regarded only subjective realities as realities, as

"truths"--that he saw everything else, everything natural, temporal,

spatial and historical, merely as signs, as materials for parables. The

concept of "the Son of God" does not connote a concrete person in

history, an isolated and definite individual, but an "eternal" fact, a

psychological symbol set free from the concept of time. The same thing

is true, and in the highest sense, of the God of this typical

symbolist, of the "kingdom of God," and of the "sonship of God." Nothing

could be more un-Christian than the crude ecclesiastical notions of

God as a person, of a "kingdom of God" that is to come, of a "kingdom

of heaven" beyond, and of a "son of God" as the second person of the

Trinity. All this--if I may be forgiven the phrase--is like thrusting

one's fist into the eye (and what an eye!) of the Gospels: a disrespect

for symbols amounting to world-historical cynicism.... But it is

nevertheless obvious enough what is meant by the symbols "Father" and

"Son"--not, of course, to every one--: the word "Son" expresses

\_entrance\_ into the feeling that there is a general transformation of

all things (beatitude), and "Father" expresses that feeling

itself--the sensation of eternity and of perfection.--I am ashamed to

remind you of what the church has made of this symbolism: has it not set

an Amphitryon story at the threshold of the Christian "faith"? And a

dogma of "immaculate conception" for good measure?... And thereby it

has robbed conception of its immaculateness--