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"SUPERMAN"

Friedrich Nietzsche, in "Thus Spake Zarathustra," exalts an imaginary being, called by him the "Superman," whose outstanding characteristic is an insatiable and indomitable "will to power." This being—he can scarcely be called a "human" being—is a ruthless ego-maniac, whose object is to subdue the world to himself, regardless of any considerations of what Nietzsche scornfully described as "slave-morality"—a curt way of summarising Christian ethics. According to Nietzsche, the right to rule is grounded in the "will to power" and nothing else. Nowhere else is the doctrine that "might is right" so baldly and boldly stated. Nietzsche's biography, however, reveals him as a man who failed in nearly everything that he undertook, quarrelled violently with all his friends, and ended in the black abyss of insanity. His "Superman" is perhaps the vivid delineation of the kind of person Nietzsche himself would have liked to be, but was not. To Christians and humanitarians, whom Nietzsche hated and despised, the "Superman" appears a monster. He is assuredly non-moral, in the sense that he stands "Beyond Good and Evil," to quote the title of another of Nietzsche's works.

Yet it would be unfair to charge Nietzsche with Prussianism, militarism or anti-Semitism. He was by birth a Saxon and by outlook a cosmopolitan; much of his life was spent in Switzerland and Italy. With the totalitarian State and the ideals of so-called "National Socialism," he had no sympathy whatever. If ever there was what the

Americans describe as "a rugged individualist," it was Nietzsche. Nietzsche was a poet and prophet, in whose exalted and often confused rhetoric one may discern many brilliant insights, mingled with much that is madly wrong. Wayward and inconsistent he assuredly was, and wicked he may have been; but no one can deny that he had more than a spark of genius. In his concept of the "Superman," Nietzsche reminds us of the saying of Goethe that "He who is steadfast in will moulds the world to himself." All great biography reveals the terrific power of the concentrated human will. Will and skill, united, can work miracles. This is true, not merely in the field of military and material achievement, but in the moral and spiritual realm as well. Nietzsche is right in thinking that the vast majority of men and women fail to discover, much less to exploit, their inner possibilities. Ignobly content to accommodate themselves to the standards of conventional mediocrity, they fool away the hidden resources which might lift them to altogether new planes of life and achievement. There is in the full exercise of human freedom a dynamic power which wilts when freedom dies of inanition, as in so many people it seems to do.

The generality of critics regard Nietzsche as a kind of Antichrist, for which, indeed, there is much superficial justification. Probably Nietzsche wanted to be so regarded. Yet Christians of all schools and sects agree in hailing Christ as the "Superman." Unquestionably He towers over the centuries as none other does. He, too, had the "will to power." "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." But He found the way to power, not in the way of ruthless self-

assertion, but in that of uttermost self-sacrifice. He turned the cross into a throne. From the cross He reigns over an empire wider and more wonderful than ever was dreamed of by Caesars and Napoleons. Nor does His power arise from dominating and exploiting people. On the contrary, He exhibited an amazing faith in the possibilities of the "common people" whom Nietzsche so utterly contemned. The constraint of His love enabled ordinary people to do most extraordinary things. Nietzsche once declared:—"I want comrades, but living ones, not corpses." It was the cry of a lonely soul. Christ also wanted comrades and He made them out of humble and despised folk, whom the great ones of the earth regarded as hardly better than corpses. He fired them with a "will to good," which proved also a "will to power," since the work they did proved more durable than the Empire which sent them to the lions.